CAREER RESILIENCE - A PASTORAL NARRATIVE APPROACH

by

FRANÇOIS WESSELS

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

In the subject

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY - WITH SPECIALISATION IN PASTORAL THERAPY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF D KOTZE

JOINT SUPERVISOR: DR ME HESTENES

NOVEMBER 1999

Summary

This research investigated the ability of employees to survive experiences of major career changes and how they managed to build career resilience during the process. Adopting an action research approach, it continues to research the role the church can play in this process, suggesting ways in which the exponents of practical theology, and more specifically, pastoral ministries can extend their role into non- or de-institutionalised areas, becoming industrial or organisational pastoral professionals in their own right.

The second research question investigated ways in which career resilience can improve agency in upholding values in the face of the employee exploitation onslaught?

A narrative approach was used and discourses of ethics and power were discussed. It was indicated how these could be subjected to a process of deconstruction to create alternative and preferred career stories.

Key terms:
Narrative Approach; Career Resilience; Pastoral; Discourses; Ethics; Power; Small Group Ministries; Relationships; Change; Postmodernism; Social Constructionism; Agency; Values

CHAPTER 1. "ONCE UPON A TIME.."

This chapter serves as an introduction, positioning practical theology in a changing society and, via the changing society, in changing organisations. The research question will be stated and motivated, and the methodology described.

1. Background and general description of the area of concern

"Creating a culture of excellence and enterprise has come to represent the key to economic and corporate success (Deal and Kennedy 1982, Kanter 1990, Peters and Waterman 1982). In this management 'newspeak', enterprise does not only refer to the restructuring of organisational activity according to the model of business enterprise (e.g. orientation toward the customer, lean and flexible structure), but also a moral project for the self (Du Gay 1991, Keat 1991). Accepting responsibility for 'taking care of oneself', demonstrating qualities such as boldness, autonomy, self-reliance, energy, willingness to take risks are what it takes to be an 'enterprising subject'. Individuals are invited to take on the enterprise challenge, and thus, to turn both themselves and their organisations into winners.

Through various career techniques, individuals are seduced into joining the enterprise project and share its rewards. In particular, the emergence of a new career model [of a new self-managed career], has been celebrated in managerialist discourse as the panacea for individual and organisational development "(e.g. Arthur 1994; Fournier 1997).

These discourses and some political factors like employment equity, are prevalent in South Africa and have contributed to a certain sense of confusion and anxiety among a great number of South African employees. The resultant lack of security experienced by these people has generated an attitude of hopelessness.

This poses the challenge of being career self-reliant or career resilient to the employee. The dictionary definition of resilience focuses on the ability to bounce back or rebound. Career resilience can be defined as "the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, even when the circumstances are discouraging and disruptive" (Collard et al, 1996:33) or "the result or outcome of being career self-reliant" (:34). Elements of career resilience may include self-confidence, the need for achievement, the willingness to take risks, and the ability to act independently and co-operatively. These may be demonstrated by behaviours like adjusting to changes, doing one's best, taking initiative to do what is

needed to achieve career goals, articulating one's ideas even when unpopular, seeking projects that would require learning new skills, and being innovative. It is also the ability to say "No" when it is necessary.

2. Need for and significance of the study.

Personal experience and discussions with other people going or having gone through business transitions at work (e.g. mergers, business process re-engineering, downsizing or general restructuring) seem to suggest that in situations like these, the business process receives the lion share of attention - to the detriment of the staff members involved. There seems to be general consensus that very little effort is spent to equip the people going through the transition experience for the challenges it poses.

Facilitating career resilience building may be invaluable in these changing times. It also offers the opportunity for pastoral involvement - thereby extending its impact into the corporate world. This could be a practical application of the words of Heitink (1979:15): "Wij zien pastoraat als een vorm van dienstverlening, die niet de kerk maar de samenleving als horizon heeft. Mensen binnen en buiten de sfeer van de christelijke gemeente mogen, wanneer zij willen een beroep doen op een pastor."

This may form an integral part of the response the church offers to the challenge of Moltman (1989: 223-225) for the church to be *church in the world*.

3. Research Question.

Employers are taking increasingly less responsibility for personnel long-term security and career development. Motivation, support structures and values have moved from corporate level to become challenges to the individual employee. This change in organisational culture is exposing the need to be self-aware, values-driven, dedicated to continuous learning, future focused, organisationally connected and flexible. These characteristics pose a culture change challenge, and therefore combine to identify a need for career resilience.

The research questions thus can be formulated as:
1. How can narrative pastoral counselling contribute and play a role in building career resilience?
2. How can career resilience improve agency in upholding values in the face of the employee exploitation onslaught?

4. Purpose of the study.

This study responds to the career crisis, which has been described in the first paragraph. The study will therefore explore and develop an approach, which will allow the pastorate profession to form part of the resilience building forum of the corporate world in transition. More specifically, this study will reflect upon the stories people tell in a corporate environment, thereby exploring how a narrative approach can be followed in managing change.

5. Theoretical / conceptual framework of the study

"Is this work better defined as a world-view? Perhaps, but even this is not enough. Perhaps it's an epistemology, a philosophy, a personal commitment, a politics, an ethics, a practice, a life, and so on" (Michael White, 1995: 37).

While modernism defined an epistemology that was characterised by a belief in an objective truth that is knowable and researchable, postmodernism celebrates an inherent distrust in so-called objective truths as hope for society (Müller, 1996: 55). Referring to Foucault's conception of power/knowledge (Townley, 1994:6), consideration of the modernist world-view opens up very interesting perspectives on the interplay of power in its inherent knowability of truths.

Freedman and Combs (1996: 22) suggests that adopting a postmodern, narrative, social constructionist worldview offers useful ideas about how power, knowledge, and "truth" are negotiated in families and larger cultural aggregations. The first of these ideas is that realities are socially constructed. Furthermore, realities are constituted through language. Realities are also organised and maintained through narrative, and, lastly, there are no essential truths.

In discussing the implications of these on faith and religion, Müller (1996: 56) quotes Anderson (1990:6) in describing three processes which defines a transition of one manner of thinking (modernism) to another way of thinking (postmodernism).

Firstly, the collapse of a singular belief system. There is currently no universal consensus on what truth is.

The second of these processes is the birth of a world culture. Each faith becomes aware of other faiths. Each faith is naturally associated with a moral ethical code.

7

Consequently, it becomes more difficult to accept one's own faith system as the absolute truth.

A new polarisation is developing. Conflicts about the nature of communal truths and values develop. Culture wars erupt over critical issues like education and moral development.

In describing what he considers the net and inevitable consequence of the rise of the postmodern life experience, Küng (1990: 64) quoted by Müller (1996: 55) is saying that it is associated with enormous tension and polarising in society, state, labour unions, churches and even between different generations within families.

In an approach similar to what Pieterse (1996:55-63) is suggesting (and heeding the cautions he is expressing!), this situation offers an ideal opportunity to the church to adopt an outwardly focused stance. In an application of contextual theology, the church could then get involved in cultivating an environment characterised by a *non-essentialist understanding of subjectivity*, implying a move away from a belief in essential objective truths and recognition of the subjective nature of reality. An appreciation of *the plurality of subjectivities* opens up the way for multiple viewpoints. The negotiated nature of ethics is implied by the *potential for indeterminacy between different subjectivities*. Pieterse suggests (:56) that there exists an urgency in new types of organisations - at the level of motivating 'ideologies' and modes of organising and mobilising. The church could play a role in developing tools to deconstruct and expose the inherent oppressive nature of dominant discourses in society (and therefore also the corporate world!), which serve to entrench existing relations of inequality between different classes and groups. This could be achieved if we could maintain a quiet confidence to embrace ambiguity, difference, contradictions, open-ended futures and uncertainty. In a true contextual approach to practical theology, the church can foster organisational practice which is always relative to and contingent upon the context from which it comes - in other words, more modest and more provisional. This may be facilitated by reflexivity: being able to continuously and deliberately subject one's practice (individually and collectively) to scrutiny and critique, as the very essence of learning and acting organisational. And then, if we could only be more susceptible to being 'playful', along with being committed to 'serious' action. Thus we could become at ease with hybridity as non-purity and cross-articulation of identities are welcomed and affirmed.

If we use the definition of practical theology offered by Heyns and Pieterse (1994:1), namely

'that part of theology which critically considers the actions of people, aimed at ensuring that God and His Word reach people and is embodied in their lives',

or as Firet (1987: 260) describes it,

'communicative action in service of the Gospel of Christ',

we are already shifting the responsibility described above to the discipline of Practical Theology. However, it is when we use the definition offered by Poling and Miller (1985:62) (quoted by Burger (1991:57), that practical theology is really positioned as the discipline of choice to assume responsibility for this task. According to this definition, Practical Theology is "[a] critical and constructive reflection within a living community about human experience and interaction, involving a correlation of the Christian story and other perspectives, leading to an interpretation of meaning and value, and resulting in everyday guidelines and skills for the formation of persons and communities." Burger (1991:59) cites this definition and continues to describe the contextual approach. With this approach, the context and situational analysis of praxis are important, and there is a world orientation rather than a church orientation. The task of practical theology thus becomes bringing about social change and a reconstruction of society. Invariably the community of believers will then be taking precedence over individuals. A very important implication, of which the very fact that I have been allowed into this masters program as a non-theologian bears evidence, is that the major concern is no longer with the training of ministers, but rather with equipping the community of believers. Lastly, this is done by following an ecumenical approach.

It seems as if certain cultural discourses about the role of the church may stand in the way of the church as operational or executive arm of practical theology assuming this responsibility. During the course of the action research done, one of the participants remarked that we were moving away from the pastoral field into a work philosophy discourse [my own terminology]. This is a case in point reflecting on the expectation about the role that the church can or is supposed to play in career matters. This may be indicative of a perception rooted in a modernistic classification culture defining church matters and world or secular matters. Support coming from the church is severely delimited and limited by this discourse.

In order to extend the role practical theology can play in society and organisation beyond what is implied in the definitions above and the role Heitink (1977: 15) envisages, it is useful to adopt part of the vision proposed by Pieterse (1996: 61). Thus, in a more

practical sense, Pieterse (: 61) suggests that the church and Christians may play a role in aligning ourselves to the importance of a discursive framework within which different groups can assert their interests and work towards them. We can strive to fulfil an interlocutor role in creating spaces for different groups to share and express subjective understandings with a view of fostering critical alliances. This will not be possible if we cannot provide a caring and supportive environment for members who struggle with the complexity and tiring consequences of organisational practice at the margin. We can launch this from a platform balanced upon renewing theology and spirituality in ways by which cross-sectoral and cross-identity cultural experiences can be signs of religious praxis.

This study therefore proposes that practical theology can play an invaluable role in a corporate context, guiding people through the apparent turmoil they experience. The vessel suggested for this purpose is a narrative approach.

Adopting a postmodernist perspective, it is proposed that the language we use, constitute our world and beliefs. It is in language that societies construct their views of reality. These realities are kept alive and passed along in the stories we tell. The central role of narrative in organising, maintaining, and circulating knowledge of ourselves and our worlds has been stressed by many postmodern writers (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 29-30). While social realities may not be "essentially true", it does not stop them from having very real effects.

The French intellectual and historian, Michel Foucault, considered language to be an instrument of power, suggesting that people have power in a society in direct proportion to their ability to participate in the various discourses that shape their society. He argues that there is an inseparable link between knowledge and power: the discourses of a society determine what knowledge is held true, right or proper in that society, so those who control the discourse control knowledge. At the same time, the dominant knowledge of a given milieu determines who will be able to occupy its powerful positions (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 38).

By means of a process of reflective listening and deconstructing meanings, it is possible to re-author life stories. To this effect, the approach suggested by Epston and White (1990:38ff) was followed.

6. General description and motivation of research approach

Qualitative research has been done to investigate the question stated in the previous section. A narrative approach was followed, thus giving the study an action research perspective or focus. This perspective implies that the study aimed to be participatory and emancipatory. The research questions require that a qualitative approach be followed, as a quantitative analysis may restrict the horizon of responses, and be directive in its findings.

7. Data collection strategies

Storytelling was used, not only as data collection strategy, but also as method of reporting the responses. The researcher recruited five volunteers from his congregation – the Monument Park West Dutch Reformed Church – and entered into a discussion with these research participants as a co-explorer of ideas relevant to the other participants. The setting has therefore been characteristic of action research, being a process of reflecting questions, themes and metaphors generally and loosely linked to the properties indicated in the problem statement on page three, **but not confined to any preconceived ideas the researcher may entertain about career resilience.** The researcher is therefore entering into the process in a not-knowing fashion (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988). Rather than following a structured interview, the discussion followed the "loose" format of a narrative, much along the lines of the description of the narrative process in Chapter 2.

8. Data analysis strategies

As this has been a qualitative study and a narrative approach was followed, no formal quantitative data analysis or statistical analyses was employed. Instead, the stories told by the respondents are reported in interpreted format.

Towards this end, this study explored the stories of the research participants in deconstructing and managing change. Organisational cultures and ethics was elicited through the medium of organisational narratives. Individual narratives as integral part of these multifaceted texts or chapters in the stories of organisations have been reflected upon. The study explored ways in which these texts may build upon resilience as process and not as product. The neologism resiliation (indicating resilience as process and not product) was explored as an integral part of organisational and religious and spiritual discourse.

11

9. Ethical considerations

The research was done in such a way that the participants would be the primary beneficiaries. The ethical considerations which have been respected in this study, can be defined as powerplay and ethics in organisations, focusing on resilience of respondents and not on achieving the agendas of management, and generally an agreement of trust and confidentiality between interviewer/facilitator and the respondents.

Information sheets and forms similar to those proposed by McLean (1997), have been used to inform participants and obtain informed consent from the research participants (see Appendix 1 to 3). The participants have been invited to edit the research report, to review it, comment on it and make sure it meets with their approval.

CHAPTER 2. "..AND THEY AIN'T NOTHIN' UNTIL I CALL THEM."

The study will be positioned in a postmodernist worldview. Meaning is subsequently discussed from a social construction theory perspective. This chapter will then describe the narrative approach, which has been suggested in chapter 1.

> '[Three umpires] are sitting around over a beer, and one says, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em the way they are." Another says, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em the way I see 'em." The third says, "There's balls and there's strikes, and they ain't nothin' until I call 'em."
>
> *Walter Truett Anderson (1990:75), as quoted by Freedman and Combs (1996:19)*

The way that we attribute meaning to life events is largely responsible for the part they will play in our life stories. In fact, this will effect the way they are cast in the dramas of our lives. The way we perceive our roles in our families, society and more specifically, in our careers, will all be constituted by our basic epistemology. For the purposes of this study, we shall be interested in how this epistemology will affect our experience of trials and tribulations, or failure, or **change** – especially in a career context.

Cochran (1997:4) mentions three ways of creating meaning. Firstly, something is meaningful if it has purpose, e.g. a personal quality, such as industry, is apt to assume personal importance if it is conceived as important for achieving future goals (Raynor and Entin, 1982). Second, something is meaningful if it has rich, rather than impoverished, implications; e.g. a particular action might have significance because it reflects a personal ideal. "The deed becomes an expanding sphere of meaning". A third alternative is that something is meaningful if it has a sensible point; e.g. an aphorism or proverb succinctly conveying the point of a fable, making explicit what was implicit in the narrative plot or theme of the fable. "Stories of life are all potential fables conveying lessons of life"!

It will therefore be important to study the concepts or, as I would prefer to refer to these, the discourses involving reality, objectivity, truth, knowledge, power and ethics.

For the purposes of this study **epistemology** may be described as "what we can know and how we know it" (Lacey, 1976:56, as quoted by Dill & Kotze (1996:2).

Discourse refers to *".. a form of power that circulates in the social field"* (Diamond and Quinby, 1988:185). Roger Lowe describes discourse as *systematic and institutionalised ways of speaking / writing or otherwise making sense through the use of language* (1991:45, my italics). Hare-Mustin and Maracek (1995) and Shotter (1989, 1990a, 1990b), quoted by Madigan (1996:50) introduces a community of discourse as a cultural creation which allows for social norms to be dictated through a complex web of social interchange mediated through various forms of power relationships.

Adopting a postmodernist approach, I shall follow Freedman and Combs (1996:22) in positioning our epistemology and posit that realities are socially constructed, realities are constituted through language, realities are organised and maintained through narrative, and there are no essential truths.

From this statement it becomes clear that we are positioning ourselves firstly within the postmodernist discourse, adopting a social constructionist approach and mediated by a narrative discourse. These concepts will now be investigated as they refer to meaning.

1.   Postmodernism

As Lowe (1991: 42) indicates, postmodernism is (true to its nature) not easily defined; it is sometimes used to signify "an intellectual or artistic movement", and sometimes "to denote an historical epoch or culture[1]. He continues to say that for some "postmodernism is primarily a form of analysis or critique, while for others it is a contemporary experience."

Scholars from the Frankfurt School use the term to denote an epoch also defined as "late capitalism" This refers to the last stage of the industrial society, our society at the end of the century. They describe it as being characterised by the huge development of science and technology 'which became its main value reference, generates economic prosperity[,] but creates an "undimensional man", stripped of sociological imagination and the capacity to react creatively to the human challenges of the new society.' The main social discourse of the "late capitalism" is "the language of the purpose" instead of "the language of meaning". The scholars of the Frankfurt School "considered thus the postmodern society as an epoch of decadence" (Gitta Tulea and

---

[1] Also note the distinction between postmodernity and postmodernism made by Lowe: Lowe and a number of other authors seem to agree to *postmodernity* refers to society or technology, whereas *postmodernism* would refer to culture.

14

Ernest Krausz, 1997). It is clear that this view of postmodernism is actually a postmodernist evaluation of certain strong modernistic trends (and failures!), which are emerging in the latter part of the twentieth century (Tulea and Krausz, 1997).

Postmodernism and post-structuralism are sometimes used interchangeably. Post-structuralism, typically associated with French philosophers like Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard and Lacan, refers to a movement away from the structuralist view that the individual is shaped by sociological, psychological and linguistic structures over which (s)he has no control, but which could be uncovered by using their methods of investigation (Piercy, 1996).

The French historian and philosopher, Michel Foucault, came to be known as the most important representative of the post-structuralist movement. Having been regarded as a structuralist in his early life (Jones,1999:1), he disagreed with the structuralists on two counts. Firstly, he did not think that there were definite underlying structures that could explain the human condition, and secondly, he thought that it was impossible to step outside of discourse and survey the situation objectively [compare positivism].

Jacques Derrida, another philosopher, developed deconstruction as a technique for uncovering the multiple interpretation of texts. Influenced by Heidegger and Nietzsche, Derrida (e.g. 1988 quoted by Freedman and Combs, 1996:46) suggests that all text has ambiguity and because of this the possibility of a final and complete interpretation is impossible. This view has profound implications and potential for (dis)solving problems as in therapy, 'change management' and counselling.

Roger Jones (1999), in his article titled 'Post Structuralism', proposes that post-structuralism and deconstruction can be seen as the theoretical formulations of the postmodern condition. He continues: 'Modernity, which began intellectually with the Enlightenment, attempted to describe the world in rational, empirical and objective terms. It assumed that there was a truth to be uncovered, a way of obtaining answers to the question posed by the human condition. Postmodernism does not exhibit this confidence; gone are the underlying certainties that reason promised. Reason itself is now seen as a particular historical form, as parochial in its own way as the ancient explanations of the universe in terms of gods.

According to Jones: "The postmodern subject has no rational way to evaluate a preference in relation to judgements of truth, morality, aesthetic experience or objectivity. As the old hierarchies of thought are torn down, a new clearing is formed on the frontiers of understanding: quite what hybrids of thought will metamorphose, interbreed and grow in this clearing is for the future to decide." These thoughts open up space for new constructions of meaning. The statement that 'no rational way' of evaluation is available in postmodernist thinking, signifies a movement away from Descartes' "cogito ergo sum" philosophy.

Post-colonialism and the advent of the so-called information age brought promises of openness and improved communication, thus having the potential to resolve conflict and facilitate peace. However,

> "Habermas, speaking of the postmodern society, remarked that the extension of the means of communication allows not only a wide range of information but is also conducive to a permanent connection between different people, different cultures, different social discourses and thus facilitates a better general understanding, a blurring of real or apparent contradictions. But he warns, at the same time, that this process may become really positive, only when it is performed between equal members. In the end, in spite of its beneficial aspects, the globalization of information doesn't minimize the possibility of conflicts or terrorism, as long as the fundamental social problems are not resolved or at least approached in an active way" (Tulea and Krausz, 1997).

We only have to reflect on experiences of conflict and misunderstanding in the workplace, church, community and the world at large to appreciate the significance of this statement.

The following definitions for postmodernism are offered by Van Piercy, English Dept., Indiana University, in a document of frequently asked questions (FAQs) (1996). I focused on aspects of these definitions which would reflect careers and organisations.

> "[A] cultural and ideological configuration variously defined, ... postmodernity is seen as involving an end of the dominance of an overarching belief in scientific rationality and a unitary theory of PROGRESS, the replacement of empiricist theories of representation and TRUTH, and increased emphasis on the importance ... a plurality of

16

viewpoints. Associated also with the idea of a post-industrial age, theorists such as BAUDRILLARD (1983) and Lyotard (1984) make central to postmodernity a shift from a 'productive' to a 'reproductive' social order, in which simulations and models - and more generally, signs - increasingly constitute the world (compare the metaphor of text or story as constitutive of reality in this respect), so that any distinction between the appearance and the 'real' is lost. (This is, of course, written from a modernist perspective suggesting that reality can be defined objectively.) Lyotard, for example, speaks especially of the replacement of any 'grand narrative' [les grands recits] by more local 'accounts' of reality as distinctive of postmodernism and postmodernity. Baudrillard talks of the 'triumph of signifying culture.' If modernism as a movement in literature and the arts is also distinguished by its rejection of an emphasis on representation, postmodernism carries this movement a stage further. "
(David Jary and Julia Jary, 1991: 375-6)

"Among the characteristic gestures of postmodernist thinking is a refusal of the 'totalising' or 'essentialist' tendencies of earlier theoretical systems, especially classic Marxism, with their claims to referential truth, scientificity, and belief in progress. Postmodernism, on the contrary, is committed to modes of thinking and representation which emphasise fragmentations, discontinuities and incommensurable aspects of a given object, from intellectual systems to architecture" (Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders, Martin Montgomery and John Fisk, 1994: 234)

This lengthy quotation is provided to appreciate the diversity of thinking around the postmodern paradigm. But even so, that in itself is perhaps the best way of appreciating what the postmodern wants to propose. There seems to be agreement, though, that postmodernity is concerned with subjective perspectives of reality, non-essentialism and plurality – a move from "meta" to "multi".

"So what is the 'postmodern world'? One short definition is provided by the French critic Lyotard, who defines the postmodern as "incredulity towards metanarratives." In more chewable usage, "postmodern" refers to a vast maelstrom of trends in architecture, music, literary criticism, political theory and other intellectual and popular currents. These break away from the traditionally "modern" ideas of linear progress, rational control, and one right (usually white, male, European) way of doing things. Let

us attempt to bring these thoughts together by the following quote from Anderson: "What seems to bind these currents together, at the centre of the vortex, is a question that has no absolute answer - or the act of questioning itself" (Anderson,1991:32).

"It can be underlined also, as a concluding remark that if the pluralist society and the pluralism of cultures of the postmodern era discarded 'reason' as a unique etalon of humankind [:] it discarded also its fundamental connotations: freedom, democracy, universal values of justice, truth and good, the ethos of the dignity of man beyond differences of race, sex, religion, national belonging and so on" (see also Tulea and Krausz, 1997). It is, rather, in a postmodern paradigm that ethos and dignity move beyond a cultural definition and cultural rigidity to assume a negotiated meaning, built on similarities rather than differences.

Hekman(quoted by Lowe, 1991:43), suggested that modernism "insisted that knowledge can be founded upon or grounded in, absolute truth. It assumes that knowledge is 'about' something external to the knower[2], and can present itself objectively to the knower." Postmodernism, however, "represents a radical questioning of the foundationalism and absolutism of modern conceptions of knowledge." Lowe then adds another description of the implications of postmodernity, this time by Parker (1989: 133):

> "Postmodernity provokes an attitude of uncertainty, of studied doubt, and
> any attempt to gain knowledge involves a continual reflexivity which
> underlines the provisional and transitory nature of that knowledge. This
> doubt and reflexivity also informs and subverts self-knowledge."

It is this 'reflexivity' which will translate into deconstruction and form an integral part of the resilience-building process or resiliation observed among the participants of this project. This definition also manages to provide a link to social constructionism later in this chapter, as it suggests a "transitory nature" of knowledge, which implies that it is dynamic in nature and may vary with varying meaning-generating relationships or groups.

Three postmodern themes discussed by Lowe, are worth noting, namely the rejection of modern metanarratives, the displacement of modern dualities and differentiation, and the development of discourse-sensitivity.

---

[2] Confer 'positivism'

1.1 Metanarratives

There are a number of implications of rejecting modernist metanarratives mentioned by Lowe.

Firstly, the social construction of individual attributes and attitudes is emphasised and all "real" and "original" positions disappear. There is a tendency to de-naturalise phenomena that had been taken for granted.

The power of language in the form of discourse, rhetoric and texts is seen to undo all claims to scientific truth. Language is viewed as mediating or even constituting reality, rather than reflecting or representing reality. In this regard, Gergen and Joseph (1998) propose, "More broadly, this is to say that language for the postmodernist is not a reflection of a world, but is world-constituting. Language does not describe action, but is itself a form of action" (Gergen and Joseph, 1998 - my underlining). Power and the social nature of meaning will be discussed in later sections of this study.

The third implication is that the possibility of direct access to experience, or the direct expression of experience is questioned. This questioning of "authentic" experience has been associated with an emerging postmodern ethos of conscious imitation, self-contradiction, paradox, and pastiche.

The "self" loses its privileged position as the central creator of meaning; it is constituted through pre-existing discourses and social processes, and is thus "de-centred". The locus of enunciation moves from *mind* to *text* and *difference* is emphasised over *identity* (Poster, 1989 as quoted by Lowe, 1991:43). (This last statement may be questioned though: one only has to read texts by authors like Madigan (1996: 47-60), Gergen (e.g. 1997:191-192) and Shotter and Gergen (1989) to appreciate how much is said about identity in a postmodern context – perhaps unity or being identical would have been a better choice of words! Modernism positively thrived on definitions which had differences at their essence. Modernist politics is another example of the role *difference* played in the modernist era! Whole industries developed around *difference* as a modernist concept, e.g. conflict resolution, negotiating skills and assertiveness training. The next paragraph on dualities and differentiation expands this argument and, in my opinion, identifies a certain anomaly in Lowe's reasoning.)

There is a radical scepticism surrounding the claims of grand or totalising theories of scientific "progress" or political "emancipation". In analysing such "regimes of truth"', attention is drawn instead to the *gaps, silences, ambiguities and implicit power relations* which inhabit them. This general strategy is often referred to as *deconstruction*, a somewhat broader application of a term conventionally used in the study of literary and philosophical texts.

As is also indicated by Lash (1990), modernism makes *representation* problematic, while postmodernism makes *reality* problematic.

1.2 Dualities and Differentiation

Lowe (1991: 44) quotes Hekman and Tyler (1990) listing some of the many dualities associated with the notion of the objective knowledge which can be 'discovered' and accumulated. Lowe then makes himself guilty of exactly such a dualism as he states: "The postmodern critique suggests that such dualisms are socially constructed rather than real, and that they result in the privileging of one side of the dichotomy over the other, and the artificial segmentation and enclosure of experience within false dichotomies." This implies that something is no longer real when it is socially constructed. A similar sentiment has been expressed by Kate Kearins (1997:2) in her paper on power in organisational analysis.

Quoting Maranhao, Lowe (1991:44) introduces what he calls the 'unholy trinity' of *knowledge, power and rhetoric.* According to him, postmodern modes of analysis attack the myth of rhetorical innocence and argue the impossibility of separating knowledge from power, knowledge from rhetoric and power from rhetoric. These are "inextricably connected with the attendant irony that ... *every attack on power conjures power, every attack on rhetoric brings rhetoric forth, and every attack on knowledge needs a knowledge platform from which it can be launched."*

Lowe continues by suggesting that modernism is a process of increasing *differentiation,* referring to the breaking up of experience into either-or dualities, but especially into separate *layers, fields or levels,* which are 'assumed to be inherently different and to operate autonomously. Postmodern forms of analysis cast doubt on the 'epistemological legitimacy and political desirability of such forms of differentiation. A deliberate *de-differentiation* of levels and fields and a tendency to favour *aesthetic* models, questions and modes as the basis for describing the world, characterise the postmodern discourse.

1.3 Discourse-sensitivity

Collins (1989) suggests that one way of characterising postmodern experience would be to describe it as being discourse-sensitive (Lowe, 1991:44).

For our purposes and following Lowe, discourse may be taken to relate to the process of conversation and refers to ...a *multifaceted public process through which meanings are progressively and dynamically achieved* (Davies and Harre, 1990:46 quoted by Lowe, 1991:44). Bearing in mind the postmodern "repudiation of a representational view of language", this suggests that meanings are not dis-covered or un-covered in conversation, but are "progressively made or fashioned through conversational action itself." Thus, discourse-sensitivity would refer to an emphasis on the "*constitutive force* of discourse, on the ways in which particular conversational practices fashion realities and set in train certain consequences"(Lowe, 1991:45).

The second use of discourse relates to a broader and "more overtly political" form of analysis according to Lowe. On page 45 of his paper, he refers to the tendency of post-structural theory to displace attention from language to discourse, which *historicises* and *politicises* the study of language use through emphasising the historical specificity of what is said <u>and what remains unsaid</u> (my underlining). Lowe then states the "definition" of discourse which will be used in this study:

"..., discourses ... refer to *systematic and institutionalised ways of speaking / writing* or otherwise making sense through the use of language" (: 45).

"These discourses constitute knowledge, but none of the discourses is assumed to represent essential, fundamental realities; they are not pre-given, or *natural, but socially constructed* " (my italics). Introducing a Foucauldian perspective, he continues by saying that "discourse refers not only to the actual words and statements themselves, but their connection with the complex of social and power relations which prevail in a given context and which constrain what is said" (: 45).

As Ball (1990) said: "<u>*Discourses are thus about what can be said and thought, and also about who can speak and with what authority.*</u>" Discourses thus constitute knowledge and confer power, implying that meaning results not from language itself, but <u>from *institutionalised discursive practices* which constrain its use and pre-empt alternative uses.</u> Thus, a discourse can be seen as a form of *rhetorical imposition*; and truth can be said to represent the unrecognised fiction of a successful discourse (Lowe, 1991:45 quoting Fowler: 1987).

Thus, it is evident that postmodern discourses provide a critique to certain strong discourses which form the basis of modernity. Especially important are essentialism and the emphasis on representation, the definitive nature of truth and objectivity. These resulted in *directive deductions*, and *empirical realities* (which imply passive observation - cf. positivism - and rational reasoning - see reference to the strong link to the Enlightenment).

As will become clear from the rest of this dissertation, these issues have a profound effect on organisational and work issues. No longer will hard and fast rules and definitions of career progress, productivity, employee loyalty and ambition be accepted as above criticism and as objective truths.

2.   Social constructionism

"The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people. From the constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship.

-    Gergen (1985:267)

The previous section often referred to meaning as social construction. In this section, that element will be expanded upon. Freedman and Combs (1996: 1) refers to this as "[u]sing the metaphor of social construction leads us to consider the ways in which every person's social, interpersonal reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and human institutions and to focus on the influence of social realities on the meaning of people's lives." Later on in the same text (: 16), they provide this useful description of *social constructionism*:

"...its main premise is that the beliefs, values, institutions, customs, labels, laws, divisions of labour, and the like that make up our social realities are constructed by the members of a culture as they interact with one another from generation to generation and day to day. That is, societies construct the "lenses" through which their members interpret the world. The realities that each of us takes for granted are the realities that our societies have surrounded us with since birth. These realities provide the beliefs, practices, words, and experiences from which we make up our lives, or, as we would say in postmodernist jargon, "constitute our selves.""

22

The progression from an objectivist approach, or perhaps more specifically, a cybernetics approach, is described by Hoffman (1990). She describes the process in terms of her own evolution from a so-called cybernetics approach, to a subsequent second-order cybernetic approach and then onto a social constructionist approach. The description given by her is useful for the distinction between a constructivist and social construction epistemology.

Hoffman (1990:1-2) describes cybernetics as the brainchild of Norbert Wiener; he called it the "science of communication and control". It described the activity of feedback cycles, both in machines and human affairs. Through this metaphor, she ascribed to a theory (or better perhaps, a discourse) of family therapy in which a symptom was described as part of a homeostatic cycle that stabilised the family.

Quoting Hoffman, the following historical description of constructivism is given: Based on the work of the biologist Humberto Maturana and his colleague, cognitive scientist Francisco Varela, constructivism derives from the work of Kant, Wittgenstein, Piaget and others. Von Glasersfeld formulated it as follows: "...constructs are shaped as the organism evolves a fit with its environment, and ... the construction of ideas about the world takes place in a nervous system that operates something like a blind person checking out a room. The walker in the dark who doesn't bump into a tree[,] cannot say whether he is in a wood or a field, only that he has avoided bashing his head."

Efran and Lukens (1985: 24) single out six ideas essential to an appreciation of Maturana's view of constructivism.

The first of these is that living systems are "structure-determined" - their operation is a function of how they are built, arrayed, or put together. Secondly, living systems are "informationally-closed", suggesting that their autonomous organisations cannot be described as being simply "caused" by or directly "instructed" by outside forces. Next, organisms survive by fitting with one another and with other aspects of the surrounding medium - i.e. become "structurally coupled". When the fit of the organism and its medium is insufficient, there is disintegration - in our more usual language, the organism "dies".

The career of a living system consists entirely of a purposeless "drift" in a medium. There are continual shifts in response to changes in both the external environment and internal perturbations until the point of disintegration, which can come at any time.

The fifth point of importance is that human beings are observing systems who describe, distinguish, and delineate in words and symbols (language). Without the observer nothing exists. (This reminds one of the philosophical question about a tree falling in a forest without an observer – does it make a noise?)

Lastly it is proposed that we do not perceive an objective universe. The objects we think we see and study are products of the activities of our own nervous system. There is no objectivity, only "objectivity in parentheses."

As Efran, Lukens and Lukens (1988:2) suggest, "an objectivist enterprise... is built almost entirely on the belief that objective truth is discoverable" and can be "properly revealed". In an informative paper on constructivism, they refer to George Kelly who insisted that we do not "confuse our inventions with discoveries", suggesting that "any so-called reality is – in the most immediate and concrete sense – the *construction* of those who believe they have discovered and investigated it." According to them the "heart of constructivism is the recognition that our hypotheses about the world are not directly provable". This implies that scientific hypotheses persist for two reasons: first, because of utility or the fact that they are useful in the scientist's work, and secondly, "because no one has yet been able to either disprove them or come up with a better alternative." As George Kelly (1969) put it: "None of today's construction's - which are, of course, our only means of portraying reality - [are] perfect and, as the history of human thought repeatedly suggests, none is final." (quoted by Efran, Lukens and Lukens 1988:28).

Furthermore, Varela (1979) (quoted by Efran, Lukens and Lukens, 1988:28) proposed that for a constructivist, 'everything said is said from a tradition,' and has meaning only within that tradition. Constructivism lays a strong emphasis on the value-laden nature of all human undertakings (Efran, Lukens and Lukens, 1988:29). They also point out that constructivism takes the position that hard and fast boundaries cannot be objectively drawn around *any* particular social unit. Another fundamental position in constructivism is that any unit of analysis selected for attention, no matter how arbitrarily chosen, has an impact on the direction our thinking takes and the problem-solving pathways that appear to open before us. New units suggest new possibilities. A third constructivist discourse is that language is the one essential that ...complex coordinations of action in a social community cannot do without, and that is why constructivists insist on talking about human lives as "conversations".

The question why we think we know when we "simply imagine, construe, think or believe", is discussed in terms of seven 'illusions' by Furman and Ahola (1988:30). First there is the aspect of Searching for confirmation. Our ideas about causes of people's behaviour encourage us to look for information that supports our assumptions, while inadvertently ignoring information that would challenge them. Then it also suggests that Anything can be evidence for anything. Human beings have a wonderful talent for interpreting any observation as evidence for beliefs to which they are committed. Another so-called illusion is the Making up of causes. This means that we tend to forget that correlation is not the same as causality. A fourth point they are making is the use of Provoked reactions as evidence. Our beliefs shape the way we deal with other people. Then when they respond to us, we may interpret their responses as evidence of the validity of our beliefs (cf. hyperactivity or ADHD).

A concept which may be familiar to most of us is that of Self-fulfilling prophecies. Often our presumptions about people's behaviour come true. For example, a man may belief that his wife is too emotional to deal with the burden of him losing his job and consequently would not tell her about the impending possibility; when she discovers this and becomes distressed, it may be construed as a confirmation of his presumption. Then also, we may tend to Regard cure as proof. When we intervene on the basis of a particular explanation and a situation improves, we may conclude that our theoretical assumption was right. Lastly, there is The illusion of unanimity. The more people appear to agree on something, the more we tend to think that it must be true.

Hoffman (1990:3) explains the difference between constructivism and the social constructionist discourse by indicating a departure from the positions held by constructivism: social constructionism sees the development of knowledge as a social phenomenon and holds that perception can only evolve within 'a cradle of communication'. Furthermore, 'social construction theory posits an evolving set of meanings that emerge unendingly from the interactions between people. These meanings ... may not exist inside what we think of as an individual "mind"'.

Gergen (1994:49-54) posits the following suppositions as central to a social constructionist account of knowledge:

The terms by which we account for the world and ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects of such accounts. This assumption owes a special debt to Saussure's (1983) elucidation of the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified. It benefits directly from the various forms of semiotic analysis and textual critique demonstrating how accounts of worlds and persons depend for their intelligibility and impact on the confluence of literary tropes by which they are constituted. It is also informed by analysis focused on social conditions and processes in science that privilege certain interpretations of fact over others.

The terms and forms by which we achieve understanding of the world and ourselves are social artefacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people. Descriptions and explanations are neither driven by the world as it is, nor are they the inexorable outcome of genetic or structural propensities within the individual. Rather, they are the result of human coordination of action. Words take on their meaning only within the context of ongoing relationships. They are in Shotter's (1984) terms, the result not of individual action and reaction, but of joint-action. This means that to achieve intelligibility is to participate in a reiterative pattern of relationship, or if sufficiently extended, a tradition. If forms of understanding are sufficiently long-standing, and there is sufficient univocality in their usage, they may acquire the veneer of objectivity, the sense of being literal as opposed to metaphoric. In Schutz's terms, understandings become *culturally sedimented*; they are constituents of the taken-for-granted order.

The degree to which a given account of world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the vicissitudes of social process. By this he means that versions of the world and self may be sustained despite changes, or changed despite consistency.

Language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationship. In making the statement that 'it is the form of relationship that enables semantics to function', Gergen (:52) proposes that propositions do not derive their sense from their determinant relationship to a world of referents. He also suggests that the semanticist view can be reconstituted within a social frame, and that the semantic possibilities for word meaning are brought into being by following the treatment of reference as social ritual, with referential practices as socio-historically situated.

26

Gergen continues to suggest that social-constructionism is a 'congenial' companion to Wittgenstein's (1953) conception of meaning as a derivative of social use, with words acquiring their meaning within what can be described as "language games".

The view of meaning as derived from micro-social exchanges embedded within broad patterns of cultural life, as proposed by Gergen (:53), lends to social constructionism strong critical and pragmatic dimensions, by drawing attention to the way in which languages, including scientific theories, are used within the culture.

To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life; such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves. To support his view that 'evaluative dialogue' may constitute a significant step toward a humane society, Gergen (p.53-54) indicates how the "empirical validity" of an assertion offers "no means by which to evaluate itself, its own constructions of the world, and the relationship of these to the broader and more extended forms of cultural life".

3. **Social construction and organisational discourse**
    Gergen and Joseph (1998) add their voice to authors like Boje (1992), Clegg (1990) and Parker (1992) joining postmodernist thought to management discourse, to suggest that in a number of prominent ways traditional organisational science is rooted in modernist assumptions.

As Cooper and Burrell (1988) point out, "The significance of the modern corporation lies precisely in its invention of the idea of performance, especially in its economising mode, and then creating a reality out of the idea by ordering social relations according to the model of functional rationality" (: 96).   These performance discourses are transferred to employees to become driving forces like ambition and productivity incentives. To this we can add that some Enlightenment arguments have succeeded in unseating the totalitarian power of crown and cross, and, it is argued, they now give rise to new structures of power and domination.

Another discourse used to full advantage by modernist organisational culture is that of rationality. To argue "rationally" is to "play by the rules", as modernist thought tends to suggest, is favoured within a particular cultural work tradition, and may translate to security discourses and change resistance patterns.

Putting a scientific perspective on Organisational Science Gergen and Joseph (1998) suggest the following: "Scientific research may lead to technical accomplishments, but it does not improve our descriptions and explanations of reality; descriptions and explanations are, rather, like lenses through which we index our accomplishments. From the postmodern perspective, it is imperative to strive toward pluralism of understanding. Finally, in the broadened conception of research, methods may be sought to generate new realities, to engender perspectives or practices as yet unrealised. Thus far, the most favourable technologies for achieving these ends take the form of dialogic methods." Reflecting in the workplace – as an integral part of management – may thus build on shared understanding of excellence in the way suggested by advocates of appreciative inquiry. This may put a social constructionist perspective on excellence and use it in a way which may build resilience rather than exploit employees.

"It is not technological capability (or 'knowing how') that is called into question by postmodern critique, but the truth claims placed upon the accompanying descriptions and explanations (the 'knowing that')" (Gergen and Joseph: 1998).

Cultural life largely revolves around the meanings assigned to various actions, events or objects; discourse is perhaps the critical medium through which meanings are fashioned. And, because discourse exists in an open market, marked by broadly diffuse transformations (Bakhtin, 1981; Foucault, 1978), patterns of human action will also remain forever in motion - shifting at times imperceptibly and at others disjunctively. This means that the efficacy of our professional technologies of prediction, intervention, and enrichment are continuously threatened. In this sense we find organisational science as a generative source of meaning in cultural life. This is to say that organisational sciences should be active participants in the more general debates about values and goals within the culture, and most specifically, as these are related to organisational practices.

Shotter and Gergen (1989:5) suggest that "[s]ocieties create both the types of character essential to societal reproduction and the ideologies necessary so that those characters will function to achieve this reproduction." Here it would be very interesting to note how Christian discourses of work (as encountered in the order to earn your bread in the sweat of your daily toil) have been exploited. Thus cultures of manhood (especially), which link work and self-respect to benefit the employer to the detriment of social relations were created and maintained.

"These latter views, while placing modernist presumptions in jeopardy, also offer an alternative vision of organisational science, one that places a major emphasis on processes of social construction. Rather than 'telling it like it is,' the challenge for the postmodern scientist is to 'tell it as it might become'" (Gergen and Joseph, 1998).

4. Narrative Approach

"..stories serve as meaning-generating interpretive devices which frame the present within a hypothetical past and an anticipated future."

(Freedman and Combs, 1996:99 quoting Bruner, 1986a: 18)

For our purposes, we shall follow White's (1998:4) description of the structure of a story: *'[A story is constituted by] events linked together in particular sequences through time, and according to a plot or theme.'* (my italics)

From this description it becomes evident that the narrative metaphor adds a temporal dimension to Bateson's (1972) notion of map. In this regard, White and Epston (1990:3) quote Edward Bruner (1986a:153) who stated:

"I conclude by noting that narrative structure has an advantage over such related concepts as a metaphor or paradigm in that narrative emphasi[s]es order and sequence, in a formal sense, and is more appropriate for the study of change [cf. the potential for use in career change situations and hence the need for resilience building!], the life cycle, or any developmental process. Story as a model has a remarkable dual aspect - it is both linear and instantaneous."

White (White and Epston, 1990:3) then proceeds to refer to the way that persons 'organise their lives around specific meanings and how, in doing so, they inadvertently contribute to the "survival" of, as well as the "career" of, the problem. This opens the way for an exploration of the influence of the problem on the life of the person as well as the influence of the person on the life of the problem. In the context of this study we may wonder about the problem of the career as well as the career of the problem.

Cochran (p.5) says about the temporal organisation of stories or narratives, that "as applied to life, the temporal organization of a narrative offers the possibility of establishing personal continuity over time (Linde, 1993), anchoring a sense of identity". As White (1992:41-42) points out, however, personal narratives fail to explain life events as an algorithm without contradictions, contingencies and gaps.

And it is these contradictions, contingencies and gaps ("for which a person's dominant self-narrative is not tailor-made") which open up space for alternative stories (which may represent preferred life narratives). As they perform these narratives, persons can then also transform narratives of self. "So, although personal narratives are shaping of persons' lives, there is a certain *indeterminacy* to them – one which *emphasises the role of agency* and of the subject in the constitution of one's life." (my italics)

Cochran also suggests (p.11) that this temporal nature of narrative facilitates a "dynamic adjustment of constructions" as an ongoing matching between ideal and actual plots are enacted. Thus, expressing decisions as narrative constructions, a career decision becomes a "dramatization of one's course of life in work", with the decision-maker "'emplotted' to adopt a dramatic role within a plot that involves other characters, settings, and characteristic activities towards a desired end.

In another paper, White (1992) elaborates on this discourse, launching from the premise that persons are self-interpretive – persons are not passive in their response to lived experience, but active in ascribing meaning to this. These interpretations arrived at by the person are informed by a criterion of narrative coherence (cf. the implications on narrative-defined ethics). These personal narratives are not reflections of lives as they are lived, but narratives that are actually constitutive of life (cf. the problematic of representation and postmodernist and constructionist views on the matter). As the interpretation of experience according to narrative is an achievement, then so is identity.

Perhaps the most concise description of a narrative metaphor or the narrative discourse is found in White (1998:1-2). Here White supplies a number of propositions which are central to the narrative discourse.

The primary focus of a narrative approach is people's expressions of their experiences of life. These are expressions of people's experiences of a world that is lived through, and all expressions of lived experience engage people in interpretive acts. It is through these interpretive acts that people give meaning to their experiences of the world. These interpretive acts render people's experiences of life sensible to themselves and to others. Meaning does not pre-exist the interpretation of life. Expressions of experience are units of meaning and experience. In all considerations of people's expressions of life, meaning and experience are inseparable. Acts in the

interpretation of experience are achievements that are dependent upon people's engagement with interpretive resources that provide frames of intelligibility. Expressions are constitutive of life – expressions have real-effects in terms of the shaping of life – in that, as expressions constitute the world that is lived through, they structure experience and subsequent expressions. Furthermore, expressions are in a constant state of production, and these *productions are transformative* of *life*. Also, action in the world is prefigured on meaning, the specifics of action being determined by the particularities of the meanings that are derived in the processes of interpretation. It is important to note that expressions have a cultural context, and are informed by the knowledges and practices of life that are culturally determined. Making sense is a relational achievement in that all acts of interpretation require a frame of intelligibility, one that locates specific experiences in contexts of experiences of a similar class, one that brings particular events of people's lives into some relationship with each other. The relational aspect is also apparent in that linearity is invariably evoked as people's experiences of events are situated in progressions of events that unfold through time (also note the comments on the temporal nature of narratives). All people traffic in meanings that are relevant to and shared by communities of people. Social construction is also evident in that the meanings of experiences that are, in the first place, ambiguous and/or uncertain are negotiated in communities of people according to established procedures (cf. the correspondence interpretation of truth or meaning – Du Toit, 1998:946).

In that it is through expressions that people shape and re-shape their lives, expressions are not an "academic" matter. Expressions cannot be considered a static reproduction of some experiences that they refer to. They are not "maps of the territory of life" (see also White and Epston, 1990:2), not "reflections of life as it is lived"[3], not "mirrors of the world", and not perspectives on life" that stand outside of what is going on. The structure of narrative provides the principle frame of intelligibility for people in their day-to-day lives. It is through this frame that people link together the events of life in sequences that unfold through time according to specific themes. Linear causality is a dominant feature of narrative structure – events are taken into linear progressions, in which each event contributes to the foundations of possibility for subsequent events.[4]

---

[3] cf. the foundationalist view on representation – White, 1992:35

[4] Cochran suggests that "[c]ontinuity is filled out by causality (not one thing after another, but one thing *because* of another). Causality forms the plot of a narrative, elevating the sheer

White (1998:2) also proposes that "Human beings are interpreting beings" – we are all active in the interpretation of, in giving meaning to, our experiences as we live our lives. An act of interpretation is an achievement. But, it is not possible for us to interpret our experiences in a vacuum. A frame of intelligibility is necessary for any interpretation of lived experience. This implies a *relational* aspect to making sense, giving meaning to an experience (cf. social construction). Such frames provide a context for experience, and make the attribution of meaning possible. Meaning does not pre-exist the interpretation of experience. The meanings that we derive in the process of interpretation have real effects on the shape of our lives, on the steps that we take in life. Thus, such meanings are not neutral in their effects on persons' lives, but are constitutive of these lives. The personal story or self-narrative provides the principal frame of intelligibility for our lived experience. The personal story or self-narrative is not radically invented inside our heads. Rather, it is something that is negotiated and distributed within various communities of persons and in the institutions of our culture. The personal story or self-narrative structures our experience. It is the personal story or self-narrative that determines which aspects of our stock of lived-experience are selected for expression. It is the personal story or self-narrative that determines the shape of the expression of particular aspects of our lived experience. It is the stories that we have about our lives that actually shape or constitute our lives. Our lives are multi-storied. No single story of life can be free of ambiguity and contradiction. No sole personal story or self-narrative can handle all of the contingencies of life.[5] As our lives are multi-storied, so are they multi-motived. The act of living requires that we engaged in the mediation of the dominant stories and of the sub-stories of our lives." (White, 1992:3-4)

Cochran (1997:5) adds to this, proposing that a narrative "offers powerful resources for composition and for making meaning" by providing a temporal organisation, integrating a beginning, middle, and end into a whole. He also suggests that a narrative is a synthetic structure that configures an indefinite expansion of elements and spheres of elements into a whole (Ricoeur, 1984). Meaning is further created by the plot of a narrative carrying a point.

---

succession of chronology to a pattern of explanation. To tell a story is to explain how an end came about from a particular beginning (Danto, 1985)".

[5] We shall later come across the concept or discourse of multiple career narratives referred to by Cochran (1997: 12).

Freedman and Combs (1996:98) latch onto two discourses coined by Jerome Bruner (1986:14) and extensively described by White (1998:4-5) to introduce another perspective, namely that if a story has to have meaning, it must also be developed in the *landscape of consciousness* (also referred to as landscapes of meaning or identity by White. Landscapes of consciousness refer to "that imaginary territory where people plot the meanings, desires, intentions, beliefs, commitments, motivations, values". Thus, people would reflect on the meaning of the stories told in the landscapes of action in the landscapes of consciousness. They add another two significant thoughts about the narrative metaphor (Freedman and Combs, 1996:88). Firstly, the 'performance of stories does not happen automatically or every time someone tells a story. It does happen when a person is immersed[6] in the story and when he (sic) experiences the story as meaningful.' Secondly, "Stories become transformative only in their performance" (Edward Bruner. 1986a:25).

Barry (1997) and Rhodes (1996) applied the narrative metaphor to organisational change, referring to the relationship between stories and power (Barry, 1997:32 quoting White, 1991) and performance and audiencing (Barry, 1997:35). These papers will be discussed in more detail at a later stage.

5. Truth

As Wittgenstein (1963) proposed, language gains its meaning not from its mental or subjective underpinnings, but from its use in action ("language games.") Or, again emphasising the significant place of human relatedness in postmodern writings, language gains its meaning within organised forms of interaction. To "tell the truth," on this account, is not to furnish an accurate picture of "what actually happened," but to participate in a set of social conventions, a way of putting things sanctioned within a given "form of life." To "be objective" is to play by the rules of a given tradition (Gergen and Joseph, 1988).

6. Conclusion

To write a conclusive paragraph to a chapter dealing with postmodernism, social constructionism and the narrativist approach would imply a certain definitive statement, a final word. That would, of course, appeal against all that has been written in these paragraphs. It would write a storyline tangential to the letter and theme of this chapter. It is therefore more appropriate to think of the following

remarks as the thoughts from the text that have stayed with me, and could perhaps serve as conversation hooks for the ideas of the next chapters.

Postmodernism proposes a new paradigm shifting from rigid definitions, essentialism and objective truths. These discourses have had a profound effect on society, organisations and role functional behaviour. If one adopts a social constructionist perspective on meaning and deconstructs the politicised concepts or discourses in organisations, the essential truths prescribing normative behaviour in the workplace become contextualised and a certain of these dissolution takes place. This reflecting process opens up possibilities of alternative ways of storying one's work life. The power relationships in the workplace may thus be seen against a different background.

---

[6] Cf. the description of being "emplotted" by Cochran (1997:11)

CHAPTER 3. ETHICS AND POWER AND THEIR ROLES IN THE CAREER NARRATIVE

This chapter will discuss ethics and power in the context of careers and organisations. Ethics will be discussed from a narrative perspective. Power will be discussed in the context of its role in career discourses and power relationships. The ideas of Foucault will be explored in this regard. In the process, a retelling of his Panopticon concept or rather metaphor will be given.

1. Ethics

It is common to find the following definition of ethics:

Ethics generally is the study of what ought to be, and how people can be liberated and motivated to realise it (Eybers, König and Stoop, 1982:227). According to these authors, this suggests that people, as free and responsible beings, find themselves between a concrete situation requiring moral decisions, and their deepest resolutions, which call them to justice about their decisions.

They offer the following derivation of the word ethics: "The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'ethos' that indicates something that you have grown used to, your house, your customs and habits, your habits" and "The Latin word 'mos', from which our words 'moral' and 'morale' stem, indicate custom, character, good intentions or legality".

This may be the link to our understanding of the discourse of ethics: our understanding of ethics will be positioned within a dominant narrative – that of the self, the self as 'careerer', the organisation. Thus the narrative becomes the guiding metaphor, within which ethics as a way of conduct, of behaving, is situated. Ethics no longer defines or dictates, but becomes a function of or a construct in the life narrative: I do thus, because it fits in with my life narrative, and NOT, I have adopted a certain ethics and that forces me to do thus.

Typical of modernist readings on the subject, different types or fields of ethics are usually discerned: thus it is common to read about Christian ethics (e.g. Eybers, König, Stoop 1982: 227) and business ethics (e.g. Smith and Johnson 1996:2). A social constructionist or narrative perspective on ethics would obviate this distinction: if ethics is a social construct within a life narrative, the life narrative becomes the realm and not ethics. Whether it is in business, my career, my family life or church, if

the ethics do not comply with the theme of my life narrative, they would not be acceptable to me! Modernist layering or categorising of life areas would have us make this distinction, but I would like to suggest that this may only result in different ethics being applicable in different life situations – one set of ethics is fine in business, but the same set of ethics would not do for church matters!

In this regard, Barbieri (1998: 362) notes that "[t]he central thesis of narrativist ethics, broadly stated, is that morality is, at root, constituted by stories – that our judgements about right and wrong and good and evil, and our resulting actions, are dependent on the stories we tell and are shaped by". He continues to say that the actions one takes "will depend on the ways in which different stories impinge on these situations: stories concerning myself as a mother, as a Christian, as a modern woman, as a human being, as a resident of the ghetto, and so on. From this supposition about morality it follows that ethics, in its methods, should recognise the primacy of the narrative."

In this important paper, Barbieri identifies "a confrontation of two accounts of ethics, one emphasising morality's embeddedness in and dependence on narratives, the other focused on the search for moral criteria that bind us independently of our formation through various and diverse stories". This latter account will be discussed later in a modernist business ethics context.

Three "standard" issues of concern of ethics are then discussed in this paper, namely agency, relativism and critical distance:

As an introduction, Barbieri starts off by declaring that "rule-oriented ethics are, as a rule [sic], unable always to respond to the moral complexity of actual situations" and they can therefore "provide only a limited source of ethical guidance"(1998:363). This reminds us of what White refers to as the "contradictions", "contingencies" and "gaps" in personal narratives (1992:42). Furthermore, Barbieri once again emphasises that "we shape our stories even as through them we are shaped" (p. 366). Against this background, it then follows that "narratives, by shaping morality, form us" (p. 368).

In order to sustain agency, we must "be seen as free to endorse or depart from the stories that guide our conduct in order for ethics to remain a meaningful endeavour" (p.370). The narrativist view is that "our freedom is not from our stories but in them and through them" (p.370). It is useful to refer to White's contradictions, contingencies and gaps once again, and to consider how these open up spaces for alternative, and

perhaps more preferred and tenable versions of our ethics story. This insight leads us to recognise our freedom as unavoidably contextualised. Barbieri thus concludes that our agency "consists in our ability to shape our character through metaphors and stories we inherit from our social setting, .. but only as they are received and interpreted in the descriptions which we embody in our intentional action" (p.373).

The relativism issue is also addressed by the embeddedness of narrated ethics, or its contextualisation. As a social construct, the ethics narrative does not exist in isolation, but defines a discourse of right and wrong in society. This issue is best addressed by Gergen (1994: 79-82, 93-94, 102-112).

It reminds me of a Polynesian outrigger canoe: if stability were the issue, one could tie the canoe up to a pier, or to a stake in the bay of the fishing harbour, but that would not get the canoe very far. If a canoe (without any stabilising devices) were let loose on the wide ocean, it may be at the mercy of every current, strong wind and high swell or breaker, reduced to drifting flotsam on the high seas of life. When we attach outriggers, however, the canoe becomes connected, but not fixed; stable, but not immobilised - a dynamic platform from which one can carry on with day to day life. Such is relationships or relatedness - outriggers making meaningful action possible without it becoming irrelevant or rigidly fixed.

Gergen addresses the question of relativism by three arguments. These are *"Shall I compare thee to a Summer's Day?", Ethics as discourse launched from within a Western psychologist narrative,* and *The potentials of a constructionist relativism.*

1.1 Shall I compare thee to a Summer's Day?

Pointing to the long-term deterioration of moral certainty, Gergen (1994:80) suggests that "there is no well-defined, well-defended, and broadly accepted view of morality against which to oppose a constructionist relativism." We only have to consider the current ethics situation in this country with the confluence of a large number of ethics streams like Christian ethics, Muslim ethics and traditional African ethics, to appreciate the gravity of his statement. Even though these different ethics traditions were presented as homogeneous in the previous sentence, we know that that consistency does not exist. Constructionist approaches to ethics may have succeeded in opening up space for moral deliberation, without championing any one set of moral suppositions, however. Furthermore, he remarks (1994:81) that "[a]s a more general surmise, few would wish to have a theory of the good and the right that

did not justify or sustain the way of life they already valued. And herein lies the critical problem, for there is no single value, moral ideal, or social good that, when fully pursued, will not trammel upon the alternatives and obliterate the social patterns these alternatives support." Privileging one ethics code over another will therefore invariably lead to resistance to universal acceptance. But he adds "simply because our ontologies - and in this case our value systems - are socially constituted is no argument against bearing them into action. In fact, that they contribute to ongoing cultural patterns may be their best justification."

1.2 Ethics as discourse launched from within a Western psychologist narrative

One would just have to look at our constitution to appreciate Gergen's next argument: the thinking in Western tradition is oriented very much around the individual - as Gergen puts it: "the single individual serves as the atom of moral concern" (1994:94). This implies that life narrative would be translated to become self-narrative almost in a constructivist manner. Freedman and Combs (1996:265) refer to Vicki Dickerson and Jeff Zimmerman who shared this sentiment.

Examples noted by Gergen include philosophers seeking to establish essential criteria for moral decision making, religious institutions concerned with states of individual conscience, courts of law establishing criteria for judging individual guilt, and educational institutions motivated to instil personal values.

Society would therefore not play a leading role in narratives constituted in this way. Ethics as a theme and part of the contents of such narratives would therefore be developed in isolation and with only the individual's interest at heart - and would thus be considered unacceptable. Gergen concludes by saying that "in matters of ethics, morality, and, ultimately, the good society, Western peoples are psychologists."

If, however, the individual is removed as the central concern of moral deliberation and the narratives in which we are embedded become products of ongoing interaction, then problems of moral action may be separated from issues of mental state. Gergen (1994:103) proposes that "[m]oral action is not a byproduct of a mental condition, ... but a public act inseparable from the relationships in which one is ... participating." And concludes: "According to this account, morality is not something one possesses within, it is an action that possesses its moral meaning only within a particular arena of cultural intelligibility." And, "A moral life, then, is not an issue of individual sentiment or rationality but a form of communal participation."

38

Concepts like personal values, intentions and individual moral sentiment are not abandoned in the process, but are rather reconstituted by means of ontological deconstruction and a discursive reconstruction (Gergen, 1994:104). These can be reconstituted as linguistic forms of communal practice.

1.3 The potentials of a constructionist relativism

As an introduction to the potential in constructionist relativism, it should be noted what Gergen's opinion on the necessity of moral discourse in creating an organised and coherent social life is. According to him society would not necessarily deteriorate to savagery without moral language (1994:105-106). Thus moral language is "not so much responsible for the generation of agreeable forms of society as it is a rhetorical means for reinforcing lines of action already embraced." No amount of debate over the nature of the good and no amount of moral instruction will ensure good acts.

Gergen then shares a number of thoughts as he continues to explore what potential constructionist relativism could offer (1994:108-112). He says that, "It is the terrain of human relatedness in which concern with human well-being is rooted." It is only within relationships that persons come to be identified and to be valued. The very richness of patterns of relationship furnishes a resource, a set of potentials that might be absorbed with advantage into neighbouring traditions. Constructionism invites a more pragmatic or practice-centred orientation to reconciling contrasting modes of life.

In addressing the issue of relativism, Freedman and Combs (1996:35) take the following position: 'When we say that there are many possible stories about self (or about other aspects of reality [- which will then include ethics]), we do not mean to say that "anything goes." Rather, we are motivated to examine our constructions and stories – how they have come to be and what their effects are on ourselves and others.' They continue to quote Jerome Bruner (1990:27) who refers to an 'unpackaging of presuppositions'. On p.265 they put this into the perspective of accommodating marginalised voices and marginalised cultures.

I end this section by referring back to Barbieri. He concludes by saying the following (1998:386) that 'In developing a narrativist ethics, we must first and foremost take seriously our embodied, socially conditioned, personal relationships to our knowledge and moral perceptions; and this involves taking responsibility for our stories. This leads to the suggestion that we must utilise the descriptive strategy of phenomenology

in our quest to understand how we invest ourselves in morality and how we interact with narratives of different sorts. It is proposed we must be sensitive to the complexity and ambiguity of particular moral situations and alive to the possibilities for grasping them through the creative tools at our disposal: symbol, metaphor, analogy. Lastly, ethics is limited by language – by, that is, what we can communicate to others – and it is this limit that we must approach, training ourselves to hear the slightest whisper of meaning, if we are to reconnect ethics with our moral life as we experience it.'

> "Narrating their lives is something.. people do at times well and at times poorly; and some of their narratives remain serviceable over time while others atrophy. In the end, how they fare with their stories – and hence the quality of their moral lives – depends, perhaps, as much on the calibre of their imagination as it does on the depth of their conviction." - **William A Barbieri (1998:386).**

2.   Power and Power Relationships

Ethics dealt with our ways of doing things, our 'social practices'. And As Pinkus (1996) proposes: "Here, I proceed from the assumptions that one cannot use the term 'social practice' independently of the discourses that form and inform the material actioning of language practices in the world (that is, practices are inseparable from their medium - language), and further that language and ideology are intimately connected." This implies that we should perhaps revisit our understanding of discourse.

In chapter 2, I proposed that discourse refers to ".. a form of power that circulates in the social field" (Diamond and Quinby, 1988:185). Further, Roger Lowe describes discourse as *systematic and institutionalised ways of speaking / writing or otherwise making sense through the use of language* (1991:45, my italics). Referring to Hare-Mustin and Maracek (1995) and Shotter (1989, 1990a, 1990b), Madigan (1996:50) introduces a community of discourse as a cultural creation which allows for social norms to be dictated through a complex web of social interchange mediated through various forms of power relationships.

Each discourse claims to say what the object really is, claims to be the truth. Claims to truth and knowledge are the issues that lie at the heart of discussions of identity, power and change. We can now say that our identity is constructed out of the discourses culturally available to us, and which we draw upon in our communications with other people. For each of us, a multitude of discourses is constantly at work,

constructing and producing our identity. Our identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings.

In emphasising the relationship between identity and power, Madigan (1996:50) suggests that 'a person's identity is viewed within the politics and power plays of a culturally manufactured and constituted self'. The discourses that form our identity are thus intimately tied to the structures and practices that are lived out in society form day to day, and it is in the interest of relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of 'truth'. We live in a capitalist society, with institutions such as law, church, etc. so it positions attributes there like employed, married etc. All of these social structures and social practices are ensured and encouraged by the law and other state controls.

In addition, as Foucault reminds us, 'available discourses' simultaneously enshrine, maintain and constitute both knowledge and power relations. Change is possible but both enabled and constrained by the systems, structures and practices that are established within the given culture. This again affirms the point that language does not merely reflect 'reality' but actively constructs a 'reality' and becomes the central focus for understanding and analysing social organisations, social meanings, power and individual consciousness (Pinkus, 1996).

All these references somehow alluded to **truth** or **knowledge** and **power** as inherent to discourse, and therefore also to the ethics discourse. We can say that discourses are embedded in power relations. When we consider power as discourse, however, it is important to note the following:

> "[This] discourse on power is not, in effect, about power; rather it *produces* power. A discourse produces its object, multiplies it and thereby grows stronger itself. To speak of the demystification of the *discourse on power* is to become aware of, and to draw attention to, the *power of discourse*, i.e. that power which holds us prisoner of our own discourses (Daudi, 1986, pp. 13-14)" (quoted by Kearins, 1997:5).

Modernist readings about **power** almost without exception define it as an inherent property of an individual or organisation. Thus, it comes to be defined as "the faculty to or capacity to act, the strength and potency to accomplish something. It is the vital energy to make choices and decisions. It also includes the capacity to overcome

deeply embedded habits and to cultivate higher, more effective ones" (Covey, 1994: 109). The central interest in studying power then becomes "an interest in the (attempted or successful) securing of people's compliance by overcoming or averting their opposition" (Kearins, 1997:2). According to her, the structuralist view of power is that power is a capacity and can be possessed (1997:3). "The issue of power relations in organisations is commonly reduced to superiors rightfully exercising power over subordinates in order that the supposedly more noble ends of the former are served" (p.5). Lukes (quoted by Marsden and Townly, 1996:5) is saying: "A exercises power over B when A effects B in a manner contrary to B's interests".

Some other views of **power** tend to imply a relatedness or identity aspect to it. Kate Kearins (1997:1) quotes Hawley (1963:422) saying that "[e]very social act is an exercise of power, every social relationship is a power equation, and every social group or system is an organization of power." Marsden and Townley (1996) provided a novel reading of Marx and power, introducing a relational concept of power.

Foucault, on the other hand, described power as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" (Fillingham 1993:140). Pinkus (1996), in linking knowledge and power, writes:

> "How do different ways of talking and writing about a subject either
> enable or constrain our thinking, knowledge and/or practices that are
> based upon those discursive constructions? Central to addressing
> these questions, are some poststructuralist theories regarding the link
> between knowledge and power: that is, the notion that knowledge is
> not neutral, so that often those who have power also regulate what
> counts as truth and are able to subjugate alternative knowledge
> practices (for example, what Foucault terms 'the will to truth' - see
> 'The Order of Discourse' (1970)); or what Gramsci refers to as the
> practise of hegemony by dominant groups (see Fraser, 1992: 178-
> 80); or perhaps what Bakhtin refers to as heteroglossia (see Stam, in
> Kaplan, 1988: 121-2))."

Lamer (1995) comments, "[The] analysis of power by Foucault and his followers in family therapy may require the very modernist account of truth and knowledge they critique... Thus to claim that power permeates and constitutes all discourses and the

social is to claim a relational ontology of power. It is to speak of power as a real force that acts on bodies in social space through discourse."

A more detailed overview of power theories and discourses is beyond the scope of this dissertation, though. We will limit our focus to a Foucauldian perspective of power:

2.1 An overview of Foucault's thoughts about power

Foucault recognised the relationship between 'self-understanding' and power, dealing with identity while highlighting the way that a "double-bind" operates in contemporary culture, which makes us individually responsible for social processes, and which also implicates us in the reproduction of relations of domination. A theme running through most of his work was his endeavour to work towards a culture where human beings are made subjects (Parker, 1989:57).

For Foucault, knowledge is intimately bound up with power. White and Epston (1990:21) calls them inseparable when they discuss the constitutive dimension of power - so much so that Foucault prefers to place the terms together as power/knowledge. They are two sides of a coin and not linked as a discernable relationship of cause and effect (Kearins 1997:9). Thus "a domain of knowledge becomes a domain of power, and a domain of power becomes a domain of knowledge:

> There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth, which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (1980, p.93, quoted by White and Epston, 1990:22)"

Foucault argued that what counts as true knowledge is defined by the individual, but what is *permitted* to count is defined by discourse (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 38). Any version of an event brings with it the potential for social practices, for acting in one way rather than the other, and for marginalising alternative ways of acting. The power to act in particular ways, to claim resources, to control or to be controlled depends upon the 'knowledge' currently prevailing in a society. We can exercise

power by drawing upon discourses which allow our actions to be represented in an acceptable light. Foucault therefore sees power not as some form of possession, but as an effect of discourse. For him, knowledge is a power over others, the power to define others:

> "Power is not a commodity, a possession, a prize or a plot; it is the operation of the political technologies throughout the social body. The functioning of these political rituals of power is exactly what sets up the nonegalitarian, asymmetrical relations" (Foucault, 1982:185 quoted by Kearins, 1997:9).

Since there are always different discourses over one event, the dominant or prevailing discourse is constantly challenged and needs to resist. If we were sure that something is the 'truth' there would be no need to keep asserting it. For Foucault power and resistance are the same, since the power implicit in one discourse is only apparent from the resistance implicit in another. Repression is used when the limits of power have been reached.

Foucault rejects the view of power as an essentially repressive force, seeing it instead as at its most effective when it produces knowledge - "it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (Kearins, 1997:9). He believes that over the last hundred years or so we have seen the rise of a number of institutional and cultural practices[7] that have as their product 'the individual' that we know today in the western industrial society.

This 'knowledge' is very powerful, in that it manages the control of the society and its members efficiently and without force, through what he calls 'disciplinary power', in which the population is effectively controlled through their own self-monitoring process. Foucault believes that there has been a radical shift in the way western societies are managed and controlled. It has been a shift from 'sovereign power', in which the sovereign controlled the populace by the power to punish, coerce or kill them. This shift has been towards a 'disciplinary power', in which people are disciplined and controlled by freely subjecting themselves to the scrutiny of others (especially 'experts') and to their own self-scrutiny. Disciplinary power is a much more effective and efficient form of control.

---

[7] epistemes - see also Chapter 4 by Ian Parker in Shotter and Gergen, 1989

In this respect, one has to refer to Foucault's ideas on the Panopticon. A Panopticon is an idea proposed in 1791 by the architect Bentham (quoted by White and Epston, 1990:24, 67) consisting of a central guard tower encircled by cells which are backlit so as to render visible the activities of the inmates. These cells were "small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible" (White and Epston, 1990:68). The inmates do not see the observers. Bentham pointed out that what is important is that the inmates should believe themselves to be seen.

Parker (1989:63) discusses the Panopticon as a metaphor of power. It illustrates the placing of power-subjects in relation to authority in such a way that the power is not reducible to any intentions to exert power. It is not necessary that anyone should actually 'occupy the guard tower' - this mechanism of power had the effect of "inciting persons to act as if they were always being observed" (White and Epston, 1990:69). Thus the ever-present gaze experienced by the persons occupying the individual spaces or cells was in effect a "normalising gaze". Because the inmates had no contact with each other, they could not share and compare experiences, to generate alternative knowledges, and to establish coalitions that would enable them to protest the subjugation. Counter-power, which could develop from multiplicity, was thus effectively neutralised. This system "recruits people into playing an [ever] active role in their own subjugation, into actively participating in operations that shape their lives according to the norms or specifications of the organisation". They become their own guardians, policing their own gestures and becoming the objects of their own scrutiny (White and Epston, 1990:71). Then we become, in Foucault's words, "... difference ... our selves the difference of masks" (Parker, 1989:67). This implies that we put on a different face as the situational (power-infused) discourse requires.

Foucault's prime focus was on the analysis of the 'archaeology of knowledge' in order to understand the origins of our current understanding of ourselves. So we can start to question their legitimacy and resist them. He aimed to bring to the fore the previously marginalised discourses. These marginalised voices and discourses are seen as important sources of resistance for us all in challenging the legitimacy of the prevailing 'knowledge'. Foucault has come up with some original ideas about the development of institutions such as prisons, asylums and schools.

Kearins (1997:10-11) add these aspects of the Foucauldian approach to power - these thoughts will just be noted, but not discussed in detail as they may require too much time, and seeing that power is not the main focus of the study:

His first contention is that power is maintained and reproduced through a range of programmes, technologies and strategies which may be more or less evident (for example, discursive practices which limit what may be said and by whom it may be said). Power "is the name one attributes to a complex strategical relationship in a particular society" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 93). The strategical relationship is always in the process of being achieved because of the resistance of those subjected to it. Thus power relations are never fixed, nor are they immutable.

Further to this he posits that power relations are implicated in what Foucault (1977a) calls the "political economy of the body".

This suggests that the political investment of the body is bound up in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection... the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjective body (pp. 25-26). [The implications this discourse has for career and work narratives are self-evident and intimidating!]

The ultimate is pastoral power where people discipline themselves: "... this form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p. 212).

Furthermore, "Power masquerades as a supposedly rationalist construction of modern institutions, a regime of truth which induces and extends the effects of power" (Foucault, 1980b).

Foucault's concern in his later studies is with micro power. The emphasis on local strategies, according to Oliver (1991) quoted by Kearins (1997:11), provides the hope that individuals can make a difference. For in resisting power at the local level, changes within institutions could lead to changes in

the effect of the multiplicity of institutions. Foucault argues for resistance performed by 'specific intellectuals' - ordinary people who have knowledge of their circumstances and are able to act "within specific sectors at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations)" (Foucault, 1980b:126 qutoted by Kearins, 1997:11). [This is of particular interest to problematic career narratives!]

Just prior to his death, Foucault began to link his notions of power with those of governmentality[8]: "The regulation of the conduct of the individual was to become linked ... to the objective of improving the condition of the population as a whole.... the calculated management of life" (Miller, 1987:141). So Foucault's interest in power was in how power was extended and its effects made far-reaching.

2.2   Does the social constructionist view of power remove agency?

Does the social constructionist view of power remove agency? The answer to this question may be argued to be 'no', and then for the following reasons:

Firstly, the process of constructing and negotiating our own identities will often be conflict-ridden, as we struggle to claim or resist the images available to us through discourse, especially if it explicitly challenges existing social institutions. Secondly, power is always relative: even those in marginal positions can gain some validation by drawing upon suitable discourses. Thirdly, power is a two-way street, as explained above.

Discourses can operate to obscure the power relations operating in society. This seems to imply that, by taking on board particular discourses as ways of representing our experience to ourselves, we are living under an illusion. But what, if we are really happy in our illusion?

2.3   Power and the workplace

Townley (1994:1) explicitly states that the experience of work is located in, and constituted by, power relations.

In the workplace there seems to be a continuous need to measure success. Thus, individual performance need to be assessed, company performance as indicated in

financial statements need to be compared to different reference periods, accident free days are calculated as an indication of safety awareness, and personality type as indicator of employee-job fit. All these measurements imply that a surveillance culture is integral to the work place. Not only are employees surveyed by others, but a certain amount of self-surveillance of self-performance against perceived work discourse expectations, is continually taking place in a Panopticon fashion.

The practice of surveillance requires information about people, which can then be used to establish norms for 'healthy' or 'morally acceptable' or productive behaviour. Products of this surveillance culture like intelligence tests, aptitude tests and personality type tests constitute the production of knowledge which can be used to control people while making it appear as though it is in their own interests, and with the stamp of science to authorise such knowledge.

Townley (1994) notes the following implications of Foucault's ideas for human resource management. Areas of knowledge, the boundaries of a discipline, are not given - they are (socially) constructed. As a series of categories, manpower planning, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, compensation and training and development have become so familiar that they are seen as 'an order which is in the phenomena' rather than as a 'way of ordering'. The ordering of material necessarily operationalises an underlying theoretical model, as statements are made as to what subject matter is important, if not why. Although rarely directly addressed, these topics, and the order in which they are usually considered, reflect an underlying functionalist or systems maintenance model derived from classical managerial concerns of organisational efficiency.

Foucault's work shows that what counts as 'truth' depends on the conceptual system in operation, and that established ways of ordering material limit our analysis. Mechanisms of power are simultaneously instruments for the formulation and accumulation of knowledge. The more it is known the more controllable it becomes. Intervention is achieved through procedures for the formation and accumulation of knowledge: modes of representation, which render into information the events and phenomena which are to be governed.

Power is relational: it is not a possession. It is exercised rather than held, a property of relations, manifest through practices. Power does not have a necessary central

---

[8] this is a neologism created by combining discourses of Government and Rationality

point or locus. Power is productive in that it creates 'objects'. When Foucault refers to the positive aspects of power, it is this productive property that he is indicating. The constitutive nature of power does not acknowledge a neutral concept of knowledge formation.

Central to the employment relationship, is the indeterminacy of contract, the naturally occurring space between expectation and deliverance of work. It is this gap or space which is involved in much of the problematic work narratives. Knowledge according to the Foucauldian understanding of it, is made up of three principal areas: knowledge about the work population or work force; knowledge about the job or work; and knowledge of the individual or worker. A Foucauldian analysis focuses on those practices and discourses which establish domains and objects and the power relations which most directly affect people at work, those microphysics of power, which directly inform people's experiences.

An emphasis on the minutiae of power also helps dispel the notion that these are in anyway normal, and, therefore, somehow irrevocable. **Seeing normal practices in a Foucauldian way, undermines their self-evident nature and opens up the possibilities of challenge.**
In a Foucauldian analysis, the focus does not privilege either the (alienated) individual and the presence or absence of motivation; or managerial intentions and strategies of control. It stresses the importance of practices of organising, not organisation: how individuals and their activities become organised and translated,. And the mechanisms and the practices which have been developed for this. The emphasis is with issues of how. From a Foucauldian perspective, what is needed within the workplace is a form of history, which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses and domains of objects.

To this Kearins (1997:15) adds that a Foucauldian approach allows for the study of organisations to be freed from the functionalist notions of progress and continual refinement. Researchers using a Foucauldian approach of interpretive analytics as Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) preferred to call it, are encouraged to accept that they have no privileged external position outside the practices which they are studying, and that they have been involved in and shaped by disciplinary power and other normalising practices.

This chapter is included as an important perspective of the social dynamics discourse of the workplace, as it informs an understanding of the individual narratives of the study participants, which will be retold in Chapter 5. Power relationships, especially as they are manifested in work discourses will be seen to play an important role in the way employees experience work or organisational cultures. Ambition and self-reliance are some metaphors of the work ethic prevalent in the modernist work environment. Practical examples of these power relationships and work ethics will be illustrated in the work or career narratives of the study participants related in chapter 5. The alternative perspectives offered in this chapter will form the basis of and inform some of the discourses like resilience introduced later in this dissertation.

Foucault: "power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanism."

CHAPTER 4. RESILIENCE, A DISCOURSE FOR MANAGING CHANGE

In this chapter, the **resilience discourse** will be discussed as part of a **change management discourse**. We shall start with popular **definitions** for resilience and inquire into its motives and objectives. An attempt will be made to discern the **voices** present in these discourses and to identify which of these may be **privileged**. Thus, **power relationships** will be illustrated where appropriate. In this respect, reference will be made to the work done by Foucault – more specifically the part of his contribution dealing with the relationship between **power and knowledge**, and his **Panopticon** discourse and how it applies to or represents a voice in the resilience discourse.

By means of a **deconstruction** approach, any **dualities** will be identified, **hierarchies** pointed out and a **re-situation** process embarked upon. The term **resiliation** as an ongoing process will be developed and applied to signify **agency** in the discourse.

Change management has become an important discourse in organisations. An important voice that was added to the change management course, has been that of the **global village discourse** (Fournier, 1996). Associated with this discourse is the voice of competitiveness. This voice proposes the inevitability of change as a requirement for adjustment and flexibility. Too often the voice of management, and more specifically top management, is privileged in the narrative of organisational change. Unfortunately the lonely voice proclaiming change as part of a process of sensemaking (Johannsson, 1997) is not heard often enough.

Within this general discourse of change and change management, resilience exists as a metaphor tainted by the power relationships within which it is situated. The result is that resilience has come to be seen as a quality essential to be a worthy worker. **Worthy** in this sense containing the duality of being valuable and being respected. If the metaphor of "labour is capital" (see also Boje, 1999) were to be linked to this theme and it is supported by the power relationships defined between productive and unproductive labour, all too soon one starts to suspect that a modernistic measure is applied to assess resilience as it benefits the organisation, and more specifically as it benefits management. In the process, resilience loses its capacity to be an agency co-generating characteristic.

Part of this modernistic discourse is that resilience is perceived from an expert position to be characteristic inherent to the individual. London and Moore (1987) (quoted by Collard, 1996:4) for instance, defined resilience as "the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, even when the circumstances are discouraging or disruptive". As is clear from this definition, resilience

becomes a passive or submissive "roll over and play dead" trick. This disregards the social construction of resilience, and moves it onto the side of the perceived or presenting problem of change as disruption. In the process its ability to become a life-skill or life knowledge is lost and it becomes a latent characteristic which is associated with the dichotomy of its presence or absence.

To distinguish resilience as posivistically defined survival quality from a socially defined knowledge-supporting agency, I would like to define the metaphor of resiliation. Resiliation is therefore the ongoing process of being able to face up to the challenges of change as a process of meaning seeking, which implies a certain social dynamic of meaning-making. To use a grammatical metaphor, the noun resilience is transformed into the present participle of the transitive verb resiliating.

1.   **Literature review of career resilience**

Career resilience is mostly mentioned in the context of organisational change (Brown, 1996:1, Collard, 1996:1 and others). Change is then introduced as something disruptive in nature, inevitable, and terminating of (job) security. As a reactive response to this traumatic disruption, career resilience is then defined mostly as a "coping mechanism". This is illustrated by the definitions and descriptions provided for the discourse.

The definition by London and Moore (1987) for resilience has already been supplied in the previous paragraph. The Career Action Centre defines career resilience as "the result or outcome of being career self-reliant" (Collard, 1996:34). Brown (1996:1) suggests that career resilience "refers to individual career development developing the knowledge and skills required to make a visible and personally motivated contribution to the organisation and its customers." Note the beneficiary, rationale or motive suggested in this definition.

From a review of the literature a few things become evident:
Firstly, career resilience and career self-reliance are often used interchangeably. Career self-reliance is defined as "individual career self-management taking responsibility for one's own career and growth while maintaining commitment to the organisation's success (Brown, 1996:1). In my own re-telling of the definition I would be inclined to understand it as supportive of a discourse which presents the heroes in society as those people who (isolated themselves and) made it on their own without the support of any social networks. The problem of change management then

52

becomes internalised into the individual as those who did not possess the characteristics to make it on their own. This discourse may be linked to discourses which suggest that (especially) the husband (as breadwinner) has to carry the burden of any career-related concerns *nobly!* without sharing these with his wife (portrayed as the weaker one, the worrier). See some of the case studies presented later.

The second generalisation is that career resilience is described as an inherent characteristic of some workers, but for their own good only as far as it benefits the organisation and its clients. This implies that (career) resilience is only relevant or meaningful if it makes sense to the organisation. What constitutes resilience for the individual or the ability to bounce back or *resiliate* is denied by this discourse. This in turn, is supportive of the discourse that defines the individual's worth in terms of his/her value to the organisation. The potential consequences this may have on somebody losing his/her job are self-evident.

This discourse is developed further in another popular metaphor, namely that of the learning organisation: Career self-reliant employees are described as continually updating "their skills, looking ahead to the future and to market trends as well as to the current demands of the workplace" (Collard et al, 1996 as quoted by Brown, 1996:1). Learning thus is described as knowledge building (as it is defined by a powerful minority of top management actors in the organisation narrative). [9] A certain mindlessness in organisation workers reminiscent of drone bees or worker ants, is intimated by this voice.

The definitions of resilience that are used in the literature generally seem to be absolving employers and organisations of all responsibility toward employee development and "maintenance". The worker now assumes responsibility for career development, security and skills development. This may imply that the employer has the "better of two worlds" — while no longer subscribing to the loyalty/job security contract, employee loyalty is still overtly or covertly part of the employer's expectation of the worker. The *pro quo* part of *quid pro quo* has become obsolete, and all that remains is the quid (and sometimes a much reduced quid as well!).

---

[9] The relationship between knowledge and power as suggested by Foucault has been re-told in an earlier chapter.

Career resilience is modernistically confined and restricted to a certain area of life, thus being isolated from a more holistic "life resilience". This only adds to the discourse of "you-are-your-work".

2.   Is an alternative career narrative possible?

The answer to the question of the possibility of an alternative career narrative may be a resounding "yes". For this to happen, we will have to embark on a deconstruction process. As a result, certain less audible voices may now be heard, and the story they tell may result in the pun coined by Barry (1997:30), namely "telling changes", and an alternative story for careers and organisations may be cultivated. These stories will construct new meaning, which may be preferable to the storytellers and define ethics and cultures for organisations.

Deconstruction will be attempted in the manner suggested by Boje as "Type Three" in his course notes on Critical Organisation Analysis (COA).

Deconstruction will look at some of the myths at play and how they are reinforced and enforced. The previous paragraph introduced some of these myths. Often, some of these myths are presented as dualities. These may suggest that change is unavoidable / if you don't change, you won't be competitive any longer. "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

John F. Kennedy (quoted by Boje, 1999)

The second of these dualities is that job security is dead / employees should become self-reliant, and become business enterprises themselves. Also, loyalty from companies and employees has become extinct and has been replaced by transactional partnering, with the employer always being the senior partner.

Us and them - management and the workers - is another popular duality present in organisational texts.

Keeping your job and being dependable and hard working versus job-hopping and being irresponsible and unreliable is a strong discourse that is alive and well on Planet Laboria.
Professional life versus family life presents yet another career duality.

"ours is not to reason why, ours is just to do and die" still exists as a metaphor in the work place.

Ambition and being a well-balanced individual as member of some bigger system is often contrasted and presented as a career duality.

How can these dualities be reinterpreted. The stronger voices in the career narrative may present the following story of work and organisations:
It is the self-reliant employee with a vision of self-as-entrepreneur who survives and thrives in the new generation work place. If you do not display ambition - narrated as a willingness to dedicate all your time to the organisation, to be willing to sacrifice personal arrangements to accommodate sudden changes of plan by management, to leapfrog the naïve and "slow" in an attempt to further your own career - then you deserve to be marginalised and overlooked, even perhaps regarded with contempt. You are your own business. Workers are not being exploited by current career discourses. It is for their own good that workers adopt a self-reliant approach to careers.

The rebel voices in this narrative are represented by workers who try to manage the conflict of job progress and personal development and fulfilment. Typically these individuals are facing a values crisis revolving around meaning. This mostly manifests itself as disappointed - even disillusioned - individuals finding themselves sacrificing all their time to a career which they do not perceive to be making a contribution to some worthwhile cause. They tell a story of selling time and commitment at the expense of personal lives. "Personal lives" is a construct which is presented to consist of family time, space to develop their "talents and gifts".

Aggravating this problem-saturated story, is the risk of obsolescence: the worker is at risk to be declared redundant and "retrenched" without much warning. This has serious security implications in a traditionally risk-averse society. Gone is the expectation of being rewarded for dedication by means of salary increases, job promotions or retirement benefits. This is a discourse of causality (or cause and effect) which is a popular theme in career narratives.

This encourages an attitude of trying to manage the responsibilities of a job with the least effort, turns work pride into a discourse belonging in the Jurassic age, and abruptly terminates the leitmotiv of the personal career narrative.

The plot of the new career narrative is that a mutually beneficial work environment is being created with the organisation managing its human resource (another metaphor well-worth investigating and deconstructing) in an optimal cost-effective way, and the worker being encouraged to develop self-reliant life-skills which facilitate flexible movement along a chosen career path.

Embedded in this text is a story-line of employees being utilised as and as long as they are useful to the employing organisation, only to be discarded as soon as they do not fit into the organisational narrative as constructed by a powerful minority of top managers any more.

This deconstruction approach could be complemented by relative influence questioning in the manner suggested by White and Epston (1990:42-48). This process is effective in elucidating both that the influence that the change discourse has on the life of the worker, and the influence the worker has on the life of the change discourse.

An alternative story could then be constructed by expanding stories of resiliation by means of questions about the landscapes of action and landscapes of identity (see also Freedman and Combs, 1996:96-99, 102-103, 140) shaping of the career narratives and problem-solving knowledges and skills of the employees. These stories would consist of a sequence of career and other crisis management events linked over time, and all supporting the same theme of resilience. Not only would a short, medium and long-term history of these events be co-constructed, but resilience would be transformed into resiliation by projecting this knowledge into the future as well.

In my own experience of career counselling (adopting a narrative approach), storying the career as one of the themes in one's life narrative worked well. The challenge then becomes aligning one's career story with one's life story. As was proposed in the chapter on ethics, the employee then behaves in a way congruent with their life story, and not in way that follows rules imposed by the discourses within a working culture. Another (alternative) power relationship is activated here: the "true knowledge" (see

the chapter on power relationships and Foucault) of work and career is now dictated by the texts of the life story discourses. This power relationship is not experienced as in conflict with, but rather as reinforcing of the life narrative. As such, it is mostly experienced as a preferred narrative.

At all times it is to be ensured that the interviewer is de-centred and does not assume the position of the expert. This is done to ensure that any meaning created would constitute a preferred version of a career narrative to the employee. Thus, the employee assumes agency within his/her own career narrative, and the dominant voices are not those of the organisation or employee. A certain integrity is therefore built into the resiliation process.

This chapter illustrates how modernist business attempted to capture the metaphor of resilience and use it to exploit employees into becoming their "own business entities". Resilience could then quite easily become the discourse within which employers changed the working conditions of employees and still managed to convince them that the challenge is to adapt and survive. This chapter then posed an alternative career narrative – that of resiliation, an act of agency restoration as the preferred alternative career story. This forms the conceptual background from which the career narratives in the next chapter approach center stage to be narrated as tales of resistance.

CHAPTER 5. NARRATIVES OF RESILIENCE

In this chapter, the stories of resilience of five people will be retold. Invariably, my retelling of their career narratives will be informed by my own life narrative as a white male who has worked mostly in the private sector in a predominantly capitalist country. My own career narrative and the dominating work discourses in our society will co-constitute these in a social constructionist manner. This chapter can therefore not lay any claims to so-called objectivity. In this respect, I would like to refer the reader back to the postmodernist, social constructionist positioning described in Chapter 2.

I had interviews with five people who either lost their jobs or work in organisations which have retrenched or are retrenching employees in a process of change or transition. These people were all volunteers from the same church group (Dutch Reformed Church, Monument Park West congregation), white and, but for one, male.

While I was interviewing the interviewee, the rest of the group acted as reflecting team, retelling their understanding of the story told by the interviewee and adding some other thoughts this has evoked with them. The interviewee was then invited to comment on this retelling of his telling, editing the text as they did.

1.   Harry

Harry started by positioning his story in an era where downsizing, consolidation and organisational change and rationalising are the order of the day. He mentioned the banking industry as an example of this trend.

An ex-militarist, Harry was working for an insurance company when he learned that a downsizing process was becoming a reality. Despite his information and conclusions about this imminent change, he still believed that he was not going to be affected by this. Although he believed that he was not going to lose his job, he still investigated and invested in other opportunities.

When he finally learned that he was being retrenched, he experienced a strong feeling of disloyalty from his employer – a company who prided themselves of their employees as their most important resource. This also engendered a major disappointment in that which he had been satisfied with. He realised that the possible grudge and feeling of negativity which may develop as a result of this, could be extremely dangerous in a time when a positive attitude was most important.

He considers himself as a realist and unperturbed thinker. He dealt with it in a difficult emotional way for a single day before he took the bull by the horns and continued with his life.

He considers this type of event also to have an important impact on one's family. He shared this with his wife and they discussed their options. They did not announce this to their children, but gradually let them in on the developments, dealing with it as though it were a normal transition process.

He recognised the importance of other people in one's circle of friends and colleagues in a situation like this. He is of the opinion that withholding such knowledge from them could only aggravate the situation; sharing it with them actually opened up even more opportunities. His current situation is a direct effect of sharing his experience with other people: so positive is his current position that he is almost glad he lost his job!

Right from the outset he made the statement that people would be better off to shift from being career oriented to an entrepreneurial view of work or jobs. In his opinion the situation where one could find a comfortable job at the railway or postal service was a thing of the past. These career directions fostered a discourse of security and comfort – "a comfort zone".

To Harry, the metaphor of the employees as greatest asset of an organisation resulted in a "sense of belonging" – being part of a family. From a Foucauldian perspective, this can be seen as a discipline relationship, which enhances motivation and therefore improves the economic value of the employee. This sense of belonging could be expected to be instrumental in the formation of mutual loyalty between employer and employee, but in effect is merely responsible for employee loyalty. Furthermore, this sense of belonging is associated with employee input, which is important for productivity.

The breach of loyalty to the employee, convinced Harry that he would not go back to his former employer even if he were offered a job, and secondly, would not be persuaded easily to go and work for another employer – henceforth he would be "doing his own thing".

His resilience was identified by himself as coming from sharing the story of his predicament with important others in his life. The dynamics of relatedness has therefore led to socially constructed resiliation in his life.

Things could have turned out differently if he were career oriented, rather than following an entrepreneurial approach with the appropriate knowledge and skills.

Then he also made this a matter of prayer. He does not story himself as being a loser – he can stick it through. He can stay calm and look for new opportunities. Some other attributes that he recognises in himself were "guts" and the will to survive. This metaphor – survival – is commonly associated with resilience in a job loss situation. This implies a certain equivocation of job loss and (career) death (see also Pulley, 1997:125).

He "searched in his faith" and made a new life.

Harry was not troubled by breadwinner discourses – if he was not able to provide for his family, his wife could take over the role. He has been considering alternative career paths before they become necessary. Harry discovered that externalising the problem prevents the story from becoming problem-saturated.

Harry identified some situations he considered to be potential concomitant factors, which could aggravate job loss. One is being forsaken by one's spouse. To this could be added a tendency to become emotional in situations of adversity.

A certain history for this story of resilience existed in the way that Harry – previously "the most loyal infantryman" in his own words – was let down by the institution that he was so loyally serving, literally kicked out of his army home, and left to find his own accommodation. He did not take this lying down either, and immediately left to find another job.

Reflecting on Harry's telling, the rest of the group commented on his observations about the impermanence of one's position in a company. They recognised the need for alternative career options to be developed all along and not only once they become imminent or unavoidable. These alternative options need not necessarily "blur" one's focus on the job at hand. They supported a view that these local trends are bringing South Africa in line with international career / job developments. These

career shocks come at a time in one's life when one would have liked to be settled in a comfortable (job / security) situation. Being settled is a discourse strongly associated with other family security and financial discourses, inherent to the Afrikaans culture of a generation having gone through a period of Depression and poverty. The reflecting group mentioned the need for strong support systems, thus supporting earlier references to the same made by Harry.

Another discourse introduced by the reflecting team, was an association between academic studies and career expectations. These academic achievements form part of the goals one sets for one's life. These expectations form part of a cause and effect discourse implying a certain return on one's investment of study and work input. Closely associated with this perhaps, is human dignity and how it is associated with career success. The group acknowledged how a singular or monolithic focus could result in a very traumatic experience of job loss.

Divine grace is another important discourse which carries people through crises like these. "Social grace" comes from the realisation that not only inefficient or lazy people are now losing jobs, but a certain measure of this stigma may still be associated with the process of job loss. Although Harry did not experience a feeling of anger, the group recognised this as a possible feeling associated with the process.

In his reflection on the group's retelling Harry commented that losing one's job may be a blessing in disguise – at an advanced stage in one's career, one may actually become stagnant. He used the metaphor of driving a car downhill with one arm out of the car window, implying a lack of direction, reduced control, a lack of agency! Being able to recognise the potential for job loss and acting upon it, is how he advises people to deal with crises like these. Faith and the church in the form of a prayer group and the associated fellowship were an important part of his success story. In this prayer group, stories of adversity and success could be shared in an environment of trust and integrity. Despite apparent differences in their background narratives, these men shared a faith narrative. The act of interceding for each moved participants from problem saturated narratives - constituted in problem language - to text of resilience constituted in competency language. Prayer allows participants to co-create alternative stories of hope and expectation in a non-intrusive, non-prescriptive, non-invasive way.

Today Harry is an equal partner and director in a very successful company involved in medical insurance. The discourse prevalent in where Harry is today, is one of reaching his one objectives in a way which did not depend on corporate structures and traditional methods of furthering careers. To some extent, he was still being the traditional father figure – a provider, not looking up to his family for support, going home with the solutions, rather than sharing the challenges with his family. The discourses in the alternative story are still rather traditional in that they link a man's worth to his career, and defining career prowess in terms of financial progress.

2. Anton

Anton was working for a non-profit (Article 21 company). He did an MBA course, and while doing a course in organisational management, he came across a paper on danger signals for organisations. Of the 13 indicators listed, 11 were present in the organisation he was working for. This alerted him to the impending danger of the organisation heading for trouble (and the possibility of him losing his job!).

Despite the potential of becoming less dependent on government funding, warning signals were not heeded by the top management structure in the company. As a result of this oversight, the organisation went down, and everybody lost their jobs.

He started off his professional life working for the then "Bantu Administration Board". After changing its name with every new minister taking over this portfolio, this department was disbanded. Anton then joined the Rural Foundation, and after it was also dissolved, he made a transition to the insurance industry.

Having gone through an organisation dissolution process previously, Anton found that he could be a pillar of support to his colleagues when the Rural Foundation stopped its operations. This helped create a history of Anton as somebody who could not only manage career changes well, but whilst doing that, could also be a support to fellow victims of the process. A long-term history for his ability to manage life changes is constituted by the way in which, as a child, he resiliated through two episodes of rheumatic fever. As an aspiring sportsman, this impacted on his active life in a very severe manner: not only was he not allowed to take part in any sport, he even had to walk slowly. In this situation too, he found grace with the Lord and made peace with the predicament. A future was created by asking Anton a question about looking back at the current situation five years from now, using this as a lens for an alternative career change story.

Anton furthermore found that his training in organisational development (including strategy development) assisted him in working through these change processes for himself and some of his colleagues.

He considered the process to be an exercise in faith (not a test for his faith, though!). At a time when people started losing their jobs around him with ever-increasing regularity, Anton started praying that he would be saved from a plight like that. But then a realisation dawned upon him as he realised that a lot of these people were fellow Christians. Instead of causing him to lose his faith, though, this effected a change in his prayer focus: now he was praying for the ability to be able to deal with a situation like that – and the practical effects of this he was experiencing from one day to the next.

Anton identified the effects of losing his jobs as not being isolated to himself, but impacting on his wife, his children, his friends, his church involvement and all the other communities of which one forms a part. In this regard, he mentioned that his wife experienced a more unrefined anger, because he withheld the progression of the approaching change and she did not have the opportunity to work through this gradually.

Anton never succumbed under the strain of the change, and even as he was losing his job, he produced a video with a friend. This video dealt with changes required to assist this country to manage these changes effectively towards a more successful future. This may have prepared him for the changes he would require to manage his own job loss.

Another support group which carried him through his forced career change, was the Gideons of which he is a member.

Having mentioned human dignity as one of the values being endangered, Anton described a certain built up of academic and career experience which supports certain expectation discourses of what one should be entitled to. The shock then comes when one loses one's job and starts to feel as if no one wants one anymore. Dignity becomes closely linked to standard of living as well, and it is traumatic to realise that one cannot provide one's family with the material means they got used to anymore.

This is one of the sometimes more subdued voices supporting the trauma of losing one's job.

Feeling useful or one's utility value is often linked to dignity, and loss of one's job can then quite easily "knock one down". Spending most of one's time at work can quite easily lead to jobs and careers becoming very powerful in the way that one forms a relationship with one's work. Marriages may even break up if men as breadwinners lose their jobs.

Anton still wants his story of resilience to carry the title of a person who has found mercy, a graced man. This mercy did not disempower him, but empowered his faith. The general theme of his road to resilience he calls OPPORTUNITY, and he considers life to be full of opportunities.

In their reflection on his story, the group remarked on the non-emotional, collected way in which Anton dealt with the process of losing his job. He did not lose any time to sit around moping and feeling sorry for himself. They asked a question about problematic stories informing each other and becoming one consistent problem story and wondered how he avoided being pulled into the problem stories of his colleagues. To this he later responded by saying that exactly this helped him to externalise and achieve a certain distance between self and problem. Instead of blurring his vision, this served to focus him on the problem at hand, without becoming part of the problem. They identified a spiritual support base as critical to managing such change successfully. To this Anton responded by saying that God's grace is not a local or temporary process, but is consistent and complete over time.

Moving from landscapes of action to landscapes of identity, Anton was asked whether Anton as a child managing to live down the effects of rheumatic fever, would be surprised at how adult Anton was dealing with the current change process. He responded by saying that child Anton would be able to identify with the way adult Anton was dealing with the situation. Expanding this, he was asked who else he could place in an audience of people equally un-surprised by the successful change management. Anton placed the Lord in this audience, suggesting that God would know who He placed in such a potentially problematic situation. He would also invite the Lord as a guest of honour to a celebration of the success. Also present at this celebration would be his family and the other people who are close to him.

3. Elise

Elise qualified as a medical technologist, and worked in this field for 8 years. She then decided to make a move to become a conference co-ordinator with another company. The change was interesting and not traumatic at all. This she did for almost 11 years, before she left this job – once again of her own accord. After leaving this position, she moved to another city and took up a job as office manager and marketer for another company. Having worked there for 3 months, she was called in and told that this company was going under and would not be able to afford her any longer.

Suddenly, after so many years of being employed and being used to job security and a salary at the end of every month, she felt herself lost and asking herself where to from here. Her qualification made just a limited field of options available to her, and for the next six weeks she was licking her wounds and feeling very sorry for herself. She felt offended by the company and felt that she was brought under the wrong impression by them. She was angry with them and with herself.

It was only when the people close to her started urging her to do something about the situation, that she moved out of this idle state, and took the first job that came her way. She lasted exactly three weeks in this job – an administrative position with a private college.

This made her realise that she had something behind her and could do more. Without any further doubts, she then started her own business as a conference co-ordinator.

Elise declared that she took the last job, because she was made to feel useless sitting around doing nothing productive. This represented a watershed in her career orientation – until then she was seeing herself as an employee, and it was only then that she started seeing herself as self-employed. This pulled her out of a comfort zone and re-awakened the dream she always had about doing her own thing.

The move that took place in her way of looking at her career story, she considered to be "growing up a little". As a result she was very comfortable with what she was undertaking, she was very positive about it and had a lot of confidence about making a success of it.

This changed the way she was thinking about herself and about work. She now felt more in control - of her life and of her time. Previously she always thought that work was taking up almost 90% of her life. The way that she sees herself and the way she sees work were closely linked. Work has always formed a great part of her day. Not being married or a mother, work is what people use to evaluate her primarily. She also felt that society tends to stereotype people in terms of their jobs.

The six weeks she spent licking her wounds was also a time of introspection. She saw within herself somebody who did not succeed in what she set off to do. She struggled to work through this, but having gone through this she made an inventory assessment and came under the impression of her assets and resources – knowledges and skills she had accumulated through the years.

Another resource available to Elise was a church cell group she was a member of. This group was like "17 crutches" of support.

Elise thought that if she were part of a family group, it would have been easier to work through the process in some respects, but more difficult in more ways. The support of a family would have made it easier, but the responsibility of being provider for a family would have made it much more difficult.

Responding to a question about how she would have dealt with the matter if it were to have happened 8 years ago, say, Elise created a history for her ability to take control and take responsibility for a career change, by saying that it would have been even easier then.

The fact that Elise has never considered money to be the primary reason for working has made it somewhat easier for her to make a career move and become self-employed. Job satisfaction weighed much heavier in her assessment of her work situation. Personal evaluation of the work done and the standard of work produced were much more important to Elise than just being rewarded financially and using that as a measure of job satisfaction. This may be a gender discourse, but it is much rather thought to be a discourse support by her marital status as being a single person.

During her period of introspection, Elise identified a number of characteristics and skills. These included perseverance (sometimes bordering onto stubbornness), being methodical and enterprise and initiative

The strategy she followed involved drawing up a business plan and making calculations to work out how much capital she needed.

Her "partners" in this process consisted of "Elise and the Good Lord and her abilities". Important others were more of an audience, listeners to her "musings".

Elise never "bought into" the social discourse which almost equates one with what work one does. This would have caused her to experience her career moves in a much more traumatic way.

Another reason for Elise's world not collapsing around her after she lost her job, is the fact that she does not see this job as the only job she will ever be happy doing. If something else presented itself, she would consider that on merit.

During the reflecting session, the group discussed how income is involved in a number of discourses. Not only is income used as a measure of goal achievement, but it is also entwined in discourses of providing for one's family. Perceptions about the standard of living they expect one to provide, are involved in powerful discourses which dictate a certain commitment to one's work − a commitment which determines the hours one works, the pressure one puts up with, and the goals one sets for oneself. One tends to adopt these when setting life goals and these become mileposts on one's career path. Deviation or backtracking on this road is then seen as personal defeats or failures.

The reflecting group also suggested that for a business plan to be sound, future goals which would "stretch the dream", should be set. These would anchor one's vision and act as a guiding process. To this they added that a certain freedom resulted from this loss of the job as a safe harbour.

In her retelling, Elise commented on how the group saw her situation as being different.from theirs in that she was not "carrying as much baggage with her" in terms of responsibilities. She remarked on the history of her ability to take the bull by the horns, by explaining that she grew up in a very protective environment. When she

emerged from this cocoon, she made a point of doing everything on her own, taking responsibility for her actions. Creating a landscape of identity, she was asked about what could be said of her story. To this she responded by saying that she was a person who took stock of her abilities and used these to build a new future.

The next two participants have not (at the time of the research conversations) been in situations where they actually lost their jobs. Martin, however, had been on the dealing out side of the process and will be relating his experience of working 1) in an environment where there is the imminent potential of losing one's job and 2) having to manage process of letting people go. This involved telling them that they had lost their jobs and assisting them through the process. Jack, on the other hand, was in a position where the organisation that he was working for, was facing constant changes, and even risking being dissolved.

4. Martin

Working for a major medical aid scheme, Martin was in a position where he had to lay off a number of people as the organisation where he was employed, went through periods of transformation. This transformation came about as a result of client migration and new legislation that was introduced. Thus, his experience of transformation was slightly different from that of some of the other participants, as he was on the other side of the process.

Despite certain management discourses which invest a certain amount of power in this position, he was still just another employee in the final analysis. Thus, he was exposed to the change situation just like all the other employees.

The change situation as experienced by Martin could be divided into four phases:
Firstly, just after he joined the organisation, an organisational culture change had to take place, transforming what was formerly a government or civil service medical aid, to an open scheme competing in the open market. This required a change in the mindset of the employees – from quasi civil servants to employees of a private sector organisation. Client service, market and service levels were addressed in the process.

Then: Soon afterwards, another change came when some of the other medical schemes administered by Martin's organisation started taking their business to other administrators, which politically more acceptable. This resulted in the retrenchment of 350 employees. Being the financial and administrative manager, the responsibility

landed on Martin's desk. Martin experienced conflicting emotions: there were relief and gratefulness that he was not in the position of those who were being retrenched, and then there was sadness or frustration about having to let the people go. No amount of questioning about why they had to leave and what was going to happen to them made any difference to this latter emotion.

Phase three is defined by the next medical aid scheme leaving the fold. And more people will have to go – this time 60 to 80 people. Once again, this process will be facilitated internally. This does not always ensure that the process is managed in the best possible way.

The fourth change came about as a result of a change in the medical aid legislation, which determines that funds may not do risk rating on their members and the definition of beneficiaries will change.

According to his wife, these changes also changed Martin. Where previously he had a lot of time at his disposal and was experiencing little work-related stress, these last few years of changes left their mark. The opportunity to spend a lot of quality time with his wife was one of the things that were lost in the process.

Responding on a question about how he still managed to look relaxed and seemingly in control of the situation, Martin said that he enjoyed nothing better than to go home to his wife and family in the afternoon. Arriving home he has a certain ritual which helps him to externalise the problems and distance himself from them – before going inside, he takes time to walk through his garden first, play with dog and spend about 20 minutes outside. The process is continued inside his house, where his wife will take trouble not to tell him about, for example, domestic appliances that need fixing. For the next hour or so they will just spend time relaxing together. A short history for this could be traced back over the last four years or so. This was partly facilitated by his health suffering from not being able to leave his problems at work. Apart from his health, his marriage was beginning to show the effects of this way of dealing or not dealing with problems.

Martin identified certain characteristics or skills, which enabled him to deal with change situations better. These included the fact that he did not see situations as problems, but rather as challenges. Then, Martin was able to take problematic situations and place them outside himself – thus externalising the problem.

He identified his wife as a person who would not be surprised at how he was able to deal with change situations effectively. His colleagues – both those reporting to him and senior management – were also placed on this list.

A long-term history for this "character trait" could be created by referring to his student years and how, for instance, he was able to exercise discipline and even make some sacrifices to pay his way through university.

A landscape of identity could be developed by using these events as formative of a future perspective. This made future challenges seem manageable in view of his knowledge about being able to deal with such situations, and being a Christian, believing that he could trust in the Lord to provide a solution and opportunities. The Lord would also provide direction for the road ahead. This was also constitutive of a value system which defined a certain ethic for dealing with work problems and demands. This identity could further be mapped out and its significance established.

The reflecting team identified a number of aspects of Martin's story that they could identify with. In their retelling of the story, a group story was established. This was defined in the relatedness of experience. As a result, a certain reification of meaning took place. A switch metaphor was explored by the group: not only could certain reflecting practices like walking in a garden act as switches facilitating a switch-off situation, but certain problems could also act as switch-on's. This would refer to the switch taking place when a problem is being seen as a challenge, and the person taking agency in picking up the gauntlet.

This and the confidence he displayed in his approach to the problem was picked up by the group and reflected upon.

A link between work demands (and the rewards offered as quid pro quo), and family expectations was identified by the reflecting team. The powerful discourse located in this position was unfortunately not explored any further.

Another interesting discourse introduced by the reflecting team was the ability and equipment to deal with challenges provided in our Christianity. They identified a certain lack of exploration and utilisation of these skills and knowledges, perhaps born from fear or lack of faith. They suggested that there could be such a vast potential

that we could still discover and make available – both to ourselves and to those in similar situations – and make a difference in these lives. Martin reflected upon this by saying that the Lord has given us so many good things and beautiful things like the relation with one's spouse and children, and if one spends one's whole life working, one would have no time to appreciate these gifts. Sometimes it requires a traumatic experience to realise this as Jack told the group: once he was bed-ridden for some time and this provided the time he needed to reflect and come to his senses.

Once again, the small group ministry was identified as a support structure which empowered and made dealing with change significantly easier. Not only did the small group provide a safe environment in which a certain reflecting could take place in a non-threatening and non-diagnostic way, but it was also experienced as a forum from which to launch new themes compliant with his existing life narrative. Prayer discourses played a very important role here, much in the same way as described in the case of Harry. Alternative life narratives could also be acted out, starting right there in the small group with the assistance of the rest of the group. Telling and re-telling did not play an insignificant role in this whole process. The continuity provided by the relationships within such a group facilitated this telling, re-telling and even further tellings of the story.

The landscape of identity was built out by a question about how Martin thought the interviewer would describe him to other people. He responded saying that he was a person who in the work situation could think with his head instead of his heart. He also described himself as being a Christian and a strong believer. He was a family person and responsible, able to maintain a balance between work and family life.

5. **Jack**

Jack was the only child of elderly parents – his father was 58 years older and his mother 36 years older than he was. This was problematic to him: at the time that he was 12 years old, his mother was 48 and his father 70 – one person entering puberty, one menopause and one being old. As a result of the dominant discourses in such a situation, Jack learned to hold his own – not in the face of competition from siblings or peers, but in an environment where there were others to consider.

Jack grew up in an "old people household" – he had to consider them in all his career decisions, a case in point being the fact that he was registered at the University of Stellenbosch, had place in a men's residence (Helderberg). But he realised that his

71

parents would not be able to afford his going to university - and he took up a job, working and studying as he went along. Despite this, he still obtained two honours degrees.

Having started at Hansard, the government gazette, he had several jobs before he was appointed as assistant registrar at the University of Zululand, a traditionally "black" university. It was here that he learned to cope with what he called the "new" South Africa.

Jack then took up a job at the Joint Matriculation Board – a statutory body which lay down standards for academic institutions. This body has been undergoing continuous change and impending transformation. In this organisation, he is feeling the brunt of the dynamics within the South African job market. He describes this to include the appointment of people "who are not really competent to do the work they are supposed to do".

As this is a body involved in (higher) education and education being one of the burning issues also from a political perspective, his job is being made very complex. A lot of the complexity is of a political nature.

Upon a question about how he manages to cope with the labyrinth he is traversing, Jack replied that he has the ability to think on his feet. He motivated this by means of an example, thus creating a landscape of action. He manages not to fall into a culture of "entitlement" – being entitled to certain privileges or rights – by reflecting on the situation, sometimes with other people who are important in his life. He acknowledged the role friends and prayer groups play in a situation like that – they carry one through the crisis, helping one to get clarity as they do. In this respect, a friend once helped him to realise that he was blaming God for a failed marriage, that his anger for the failed marriage was directed not at his wife or any other circumstances but at the Lord.

During the reflecting process, the team responded on his complex problem, expanding on the labyrinth metaphor. They identified an above average amount of perseverance in his life narrative. At some stage Jack commented that, despite everything, he was really enjoying his job. This prompted the reflecting team to comment that they could see how he loved a challenge. The very fact that he enjoys his job was a force which facilitated survival. The underlying theme of being a Christian further informed his

story. Discourses of loving support within the Christian community, acceptance and warding off of threats to one's faith made up his "true knowledge" of what Christianity really meant.

An interesting discussion ensued when a member of the reflecting team reflected on whether the way we live out our Christianity does not sometimes turn into "a block around the leg" in considering alternatives. By this he meant that believing or trusting in the Lord to avert misfortune (like losing one's job) might plunge us into a faith crisis if we do not believe that things may improve and work out in our current job situations. He suggested that a strong discourse in our faith may be to persevere and God will make things right or better. And this while the Lord may work in many other ways, which may include our considering plans A, B or C!

His strategies for successfully negotiating the transformation process are in place, based on a personal vision and tested with colleagues and peers.

6.   **Conclusion**

The group of interviewees suggested that extending this process into a church ministry could be one way of giving back, to help others by means of the knowledges to deal with career change, that they have come to have at their disposal. They suggested that as Christians, their peace only became greater once they shared it with other people. Their narratives only started to make sense and became meaningful once they shared them with others. They would have been poorer for keeping these to themselves, basking in the knowledge that they were able to survive and being merely self-satisfied about their own success. Small group ministries can play a major role in this respect, according to the reflecting team.

A number of the study participants identified the security discourses upon which the Afrikaans culture has been founded as becoming part of a problem-ridden narrative, when job loss and resultant loss of security represent contingencies or anomalies in the expectations created in career narratives. These then become challenges to be managed in the resiliation process.

In a number of cases related by the study group, it was the experience of losing one's job and with it quite often some dignity and personal (financial) security, which facilitates reflecting on work and jobs and personal values (which may include spirituality).

The study participants commented on how much they learned from each other, and about ways of dealing with change. This also provided a forum for discussing problems with each other – in that respect, the study group almost assumed the characteristics of a cell group or other small group ministry.

The telling and re-telling processes taking place during the action research process, reinforced the alternative stories of resilience, providing it with an audience. Without actually applauding the "success stories", the reflecting groups picked up on unique outcomes in the resilience narratives. Thus "thicker" versions of these narratives were co-authored, the active listeners in the reflecting groups entering the stage of these career dramas and improvising the scenes by adding their comments and participating in creating a new version of the story.

The reflection having taken place during the research process may have played a very important role in extending the resilience narratives as preferred stories into the rest of the research participants' lives. Otherwise it could well happen that career resilience becomes modernistically confined and restricted to a certain area of life, thus being isolated from a more holistic "life resilience". This would only add to the discourse of "you-are-your-work" as was indicated in Chapter 4. And in these very audiences do these resilience stories – mostly landscape of action stories – become landscapes of identity and are the reflecting groups involved to become partners to the process!

It is also interesting to note how the research participants dealt with the idea of Brown (1996:1), suggesting that career resilience "refers to individual career development developing the knowledge and skills required to make a visible and personally motivated contribution to the organisation and its customers." These participants were all let down by their respective organisations, despite their compliance to the career culture narratives forming the dominant discourses in their career stories. They have actually been exceeding the requirements of the workplace in many cases, but this did not safeguard them from adverse experiences in their careers! These "true knowledges" (to use Foucault's words) about careering did not ensure a story with a happy ending in their cases; but they discovered alternative themes that they could build out into thickly described stories which were aligned with their own life narratives and the ethics spawned by those.

CHAPTER 6. THE STORY HANDED OVER...

In this chapter, the research questions will be revisited and questioned to see whether they have been attended to adequately. The thoughts expressed in the preceding chapters will be distilled into a coherent story with a theme of resiliation development. The chapter will be concluded by investigating action steps which may form the landscape of action that will sustain the alternative story of resiliation developed in this dissertation.

And now the research questions remain:
1. How can narrative pastoral counselling contribute and play a role in building career resilience?
2. How can career resilience improve agency in upholding values in the face of the employee exploitation onslaught?

This study has followed an action research approach. That suggests that the study participants have all been co-authors of the study narrative. As the study participants were all members of the same congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church, this study, as a pastoral initiative, is already a partial response to the first research question.

The study group suggested that the forum created for the study interviews, was already a launch pad for a congregation-wide initiative. The relatedness that was evident in the success stories they were living, is really koinonia in action. This relatedness (or koinonia, if the term is preferred to the social constructionist terminology) is a key characteristic of the resiliation that these success stories shared. And that may be key to the approach followed in a pastoral context - as has been suggested in previous chapters, it seems as if the introduction to the narrative of community involvement in resilience building may be written in the existing infrastructure of small group ministry already in place in a number of congregations of various church denominations.

But linking this onto the next research question dealing with a narrative pastoral approach, we discover that this research may have informed the next step in the process already. The reflecting team commented on the effectiveness of the conversation aspect of the study process. This suggests that the formation of narrative forums may be the approach to take. Possible action steps will be proposed later in this chapter.

The question of agency in upholding values in the face of work demands will be addressed in these narrative groups by means of the deconstruction of work discourses, exploring power

relationships, ethics and organisational cultures. Sensitivity for gender issues will be maintained as a value theme in the process. The text developed in the chapter on resilience, which was later redefined as *resiliation*, will be applied in these narrative groups.

All of this suggests that the strategy for the creation of a congregational or even community forum for resilience development may follow the following steps:

Firstly, exploring what the relationship infrastructure of the congregation consists of. In this respect one will make a study of prayer groups, Bible study groups, cell groups, care groups and other small group ministries. The study will focus on how relationship discourses constitute these groups. The study will take the form of action research, once again.

In the second place, one would have to develop a central narrative skills resource. A parallel training initiative will be associated with the narrative group initiative. While these groups carry on functioning as previously, certain narrative skills will be co-developed. The training will cover externalising skills, deconstruction strategies, reflecting team dynamics and other narrative and social constructionist skills aimed at personal development. Trainees could be recruited from existing structures without disrupting these ministries. Once trained, these trainees will form a central narrative career resilience resource.

The resource will then have to be decentralised. Once and as these trainees have acquired a fair amount of competency in narrative skills, they will be encouraged to practice these skills and these knowledges as and when required in the relationships they share. Because most of the work discourses are functions of relationships, relationships will also be the agent for the deconstruction process, and that is why these narrative artists will be most effective back in the relationship structures they form part of. These relationships will also be constitutive of the role the narrative group will be playing as resiliation facilitators.

The fourth step will have to look at expanding the resource across space. The central resource will co-ordinate continued education for these resilience facilitators. This continued education would also serve to pull all the individual facilitators into a career resilience network. Another way of expanding the resource would be to identify groups outside the community or congregation who may be involved in similar initiatives and establish links with them. This type of co-operation will serve to enhance the dynamics of social constructionism, establishing a culture of resilience in these communities.

This however is not enough: the resource will also have to be expanded in time. The work done by the resource should ideally provide an ongoing support structure for program participants who happen to fall back at some later stage. It can therefore never be a resource becoming involved briefly, only to withdraw after the first positive outcomes.

In the sixth instance, one would look at extending the influence. Members of career resiliation support groups will be supported and encouraged to reclaim there career narratives, restoring agency and becoming resilience agents in their respective work places as they do.

Action steps within the self-development components of this strategy will have to include:
The career transformation problem will have to be externalised (I am a failure, I am not wanted, I am dispensable).

Secondly, attention will have to be paid to deconstructing work discourses (productivity, employee as enterprise, have to stay with one employer to be stable and dependable). Deconstructing change discourses (security and risk, the previous work dispensation was better) is the third important action step. But one will also have to see about deconstructing work/identity discourses (I am what I achieve at work, my value is measured by my income, to lose my job means I am a failure, to move around between jobs = rolling stone [which, as we all know, gathers no moss!]. In these discourses, faith issues will have to be addressed as well: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground"[10] has long been turned into a curse of work enslavement. It came to mean that **hard** work is **honest** work, that productivity and time spent working are equivalent. Smart – opposed to hard - work, and the instruction to **rest**[11] and spend time as a family reflecting on God's will for us[12] are voices silenced by the dominant voice of work, strengthened by employers and slave owners and fuedal landlords through the centuries.).

Deconstructing work/gender discourses (breadwinner discourses, I can't tell my spouse about imminent work transformation [she won't be able to "handle" it], husband is responsible for security) is equally important. Following Foucault we should also be sensitive to deconstructing discourses linked to power relationships in the work place (management is responsible, I have no voice, I have to sacrifice my family/personal life to be a devoted worker / have ambition, I have no say in what the job demands of me). Exploring landscapes of action (unique outcomes, representing anomalies in risk-averse career narratives or life stories) is another action step to be included, linking these to landscapes of identity (creating audiences, allies or partners) as one does. In this way, one will be creating short-term,

---

[10] Gen 3:19a (New International Version)
[11] Deut 5:14 (NIV)
[12] Deut 6:7 (NIV)

medium-term and long-term histories for resilience identities. But it is important that we make sure these identities are preferred identities. Thus we are working towards making these identities the plots of future career narratives (if I look at the future through the lens of these successes, how do I look upon future challenges ...?).

But this also offers the opportunity for the church to shrug off the ball and chains of being institutionalised church – of only being able to render a support service within these confining structures. Once the contextual perspective is applied to theology and more specifically, practical theology can the church become Moltmann's church in the world, can the pastoral function be extended to communities to play an active role to bring about changes. Then can Practical Theology be "**[a] critical and constructive reflection within a living community about human experience and interaction, involving a correlation of the Christian story and other perspectives, leading to an interpretation of meaning and value, and resulting in everyday guidelines and skills for the formation of persons and communities**" (Poling and Miller, 1985:62 quoted by Burger, 1991:28).

To refer back to Burger (1991), then can an approach characterised by different values become the narrative of the (de-institutionalised) church. This approach will be characterised by *the context and situational analysis of praxis being important; there being a world orientation rather than a church orientation; the task of practical theology being to bring about social change and a reconstruction of society; the community of believers taking precedence over individuals; the major concern not being with the training of ministers, but rather with equipping the community of believers (which implies a **church-as-organism** perspective on the equipping of the church – perhaps the departments of practical theology will need to revision their focus away from the church and its office bearers and concentrate on the church and its "lay" members, equipping them to play a pastoral role wherever they are involved); and the approach being ecumenical.*

This will allow the church – or perhaps stated more positively, this will open up the way for the church, and even more so, for practical theologists – to become professional partners in organisations of various descriptions – business, government, even sports! Contributing significantly in the open (de-institutionalised) world together with other professionals like industrial psychologists, psychologists, management consultants and personal coaches. But this then as church-as-organism rather than as church-as-organisation!

This service, no longer extended to fellow church members only, can now be packaged as an organisational / industrial pastorate. And that will be facilitated by the knowledges that the

church brings along – narratives of counselling, support, and guidance – BUT now de-institutionalised, "humanised" in the way that Degenaar suggested (DeKat, June 1999) when he said: "Ons was altyd bekommerd oor hoe om van mense Christene te maak. Die probleem is om van Christene mense te maak (We have always been concerned about making Christians of people, but the problem is to make people out of Christians – own translation)".

But how can this be done? In much the same way as we co-create alternative stories with our clients. We will start by externalising our institutionally-fixed church narrative. It will be imperative to deconstruct discourses setting the role of the church in the structures of the church. It will be important to deconstruct the strategies defined by the role of the church as they exist in the institutionalised church. Then we can identify the unique outcomes in the church narrative – tales of involvement monuments where the church had been invited to play a role in business or non-church organisations (chaplains roles in gaols and the defence force may offer opportunities in this regard; industrial ministries may offer more examples, and examples may even be discovered in "tent maker" ministries). Thus we will be able to create histories for these once they had been identified and validated as preferred church narratives. It is very important to note though, even crucial(!), that this is not to be evangelisation in disguise, but **true pastoral care!**

The church can become the life skills partner in any employee assistance programme (EAP). It can contribute spiritual perspectives in mentoring processes and leadership training programs. In any change management process, the church can play a role as facilitator, offering consultancy services to smoothen the process. Another area in which the church has knowledges which could play an invaluable role, is in managing organisational cultures.

From the paragraphs above, it is evident that the church – perhaps especially in its academic and theological institutions, its opinion organs - has a role to play – on its own or as part of a management consulting team or strategic management process – in getting involved in organisational pastoral service deliveries.

This would be an ideal opportunity for the church to move beyond the limitations that structures may be imposing on it - thus becoming "church in (inter)action" instead of "church of structures". Relationships have the potential to turn structure into *infra*structure.[13] There would be an opportunity to involve more of its members in addressing a dire need, thereby extending its capabilities by utilising its resources - the skills and knowledges already present

---

[13] *Infra* (Latin) - beyond, further

(and available!) among members of its congregations. Unfortunately this will require that the church trust the *laïkos* with a sensitive task!

Then the church will be able to allow relationships of believers to constitute a new preparedness, or resilience. Importantly, the church could make a contribution to break the culture of individualism of the modern(ist) Western world.

There is a role for the church to play in empowering its members to be "church in the world" - even in the daunting business or corporate world! This will also equip members to be church in the (business) world to non-Christians, in the process extending the love of Christ to a non-exclusive community.

The church through its members, could thus introduce a new ethic into the work place, an ethic which would sustain relationships beyond the work place and support a system of family values and human dignity.

Being afforded the opportunity to participate in this masters course in practical theology as a person from a non-theological academic background, is perhaps already an indication of a certain transition taking place in the pastoral narrative of the church. I see this as an opportunity towards being equipped to play an active role in writing the script, the text of pastoral involvement in non-traditional areas – in organisations, in the corporate world, in industry. And this active role will not be limited to the fellow members of the church exclusively! Now can the church, through its members – office bearers and ordinary members – exhibit the love of Christ in caring for those in need around them. Not restricted by form and structure anymore, their strategies of love and care can now seep into crevices and penetrate areas of direst need, previously not accessible to the church.

These stories of resilience shared with me, humbled me to the effect Christian relationships can have. These were accounts of how faith and fellowship can support financial planning and innovative strategies but lowering the perceived risk and facilitating easy transition.

In being allowed to be a co-author of these stories of resilience I became part of a process which created "thickening" plots out of apparent fragmented details, weaving a web strong enough to catch a once seemingly hapless worker dislodged from the trapeze of their career ropes and restore stability in careers which once seemed to tumble earthward with no stopping them.

This study has set out to explore the role the church could play in developing career resilience (or as we prefer to refer to it, resiliation) in a narrative way. It is now given over to the readers to continue the story, interpret it and make practical sense of it in their own career environment narratives.

I close with the following quote:

A Blessing

May the light of your soul guide you.
May the light of your soul bless the work you do with the
secret love and warmth of your heart.
May you see in what you do the beauty of your own soul.
May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light, and
renewal to those who work with you and to those who see
and receive your work.
May your work never weary you.
May it release within you wellsprings of refreshment,
inspiration, and excitement.
May you be present in what you do.
May you never become lost in the bland absences.
May the day never burden
May dawn find you awake and alert, approaching your
new day with dreams, possibilities, and promises.
May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.
May you go into the night blessed, sheltered, and protected.
May your soul calm, console, and renew you.

<div style="text-align: right">Work as a Poetics of Growth from John O'Donohue's book

Anam Cara (Soul Friend).</div>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, H and Goolishian, H. (1988), Human systems as linguistic systems: Preliminary and evolving ideas about the implications for clinical theory. *Family Process*, **27**, 371-393.

Anderson, W.T. (1990), Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World. Harper & Row: San Francisco.

Anderson W T (1991), Postmodern Politics: An Interview with Walter Truett Anderson, by Alan AtKisson, In Context #30, Fall/Winter, Page 32

Barbieri WA Jr (1998), Ethics and the Narrated Life, The Journal of Religion, **78(3)** 361-387, July .

Barry, D (1997), Telling changes: from narrative family therapy to organizational change and development. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, **10(1)**, 30-46.

Boje, DM (1999), http://cbae.nmsu.edu/mgt/handout/boje/decontypes/index.html

Brown BL (1996), Career Resilience. ERIC Digest No. 178. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University. (ED 402 474)

Bruner J (1986) Actual Minds / Possible Worlds, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bruner J (1990) Acts of Meaning. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Burger, C (1991), Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika. HSRC: Pretoria.

Cochran, L (1997), Career counselling: a narrative approach. Sage Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks, California 91320.

Collard, B., Epperheimer, J.W., and Saign, D. (1996), Career resilience in a changing workplace, Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ED 396 191).

Collard   B   (1996),   The   Concept   of   Career   Resilience,
http://www.career.lhh.co.uk/career/events/storyf.htm

Covey SR (1994) The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Powerful Lessons in Personal Change, Simon and Schuster Ltd, West Garden Place, Kendal Street, London W2 2AQ, 358pp.

Diamond I and Quinby L eds. (1988) Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance, Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Du Toit CW (1997), The End of Truth?, Hervormde Teologiese Studies **53(4)**, 939-955.

Efran J and Lukens MD (1985), The world according to Humberto Maturana: Epistemology and the magic kingdom, *Networker* **9(3)**, 23-30, May-June.

Efran JS, Lukens RJ and Lukens MD (1988), Constructivism: what's in it for you? *Networker* **12(5)**, 27-35.

Epston, D and White, M (1990), Narrative means to therapeutic ends, WW Norton & Company; New York, 229 pp.

Eybers IH, König A, Stoop JA (1982), Inleiding in die Teologie (Derde Uitgawe), NG Kerkboekhandel Transvaal, Posbus 245, Pretoria, 385pp.

Fillingham LA (1993) Foucault for beginners, Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., New York, 157pp.

Firet, J. (1987), Spreken als een leerling. Praktisch-theologische opstellen. Kok; Kampen.

Fournier V (1996), Stories of Development and exploitation: Militant voices in an enterprise culture, http://www.agsm.ucla.edu/research/conferences/scos/papers/fournier.htm

Freedman J and Combs G (1996), Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities, WW Norton & Company, New York, 305pp.

Furman B and Ahola T (1988), Seven illusions, *Networker*, **12(5)**, 30-31.

Gergen KJ (1985), The social constructionist movement in modern psychology, *American Psychologist* **40**: 266-275.

Gergen KJ (1994) Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 356pp.

Gergen KJ. and Joseph T (1998), Organizational Science in a Postmodern Context, URL: www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen1/text10.html, 1998 (submitted to Journal of Behavioral Science).

Gerkin, CV. (1993), The Living Human Document - Revisioning Pastoral Counselling in a Hermeneutical Mode, Abingdon Press: Nashville, 219 pp.

Habermas, J (1992), Autonomy and solidarity: Interview with H. Habermas. London, Verso

Haraway D, _Simians, Cyborgs, and Women_, New York: Routledge, 1991. 244-5, n4.

Heitink G (1977) Pastoraat Als Hulpverlening, Kampen: Kok.

Heyns, L.M. and Pieterse, H.J.C. (1994), Eerste treë in die praktiese teologie, Gnosis: Pretoria, 102 pp.

Hoffman L (1990), Constructing realities: an art of lenses, Family Process **29(1)**, 1-12.

Jary D and Jary J, Eds. (1991), The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology, New York: HarperCollins, 375-6.

Johansson U (1997), Organizational transformation as reconstructed sensemaking of the work and the self -- narratives of responsibility and empowerment in a Swedish company, http://www.it.com.pl/scos/johansson.htm.

Jones R, Post Structuralism (1999), http://www.roga.demon.co.uk/poststr.htm

Kearins K (1997), Power in Organisational Analysis: Delineating and Contrasting a Foucauldian Perspective, *EJROT*, **II(2)**.

Küng, H., Van Harskamp, A., Musschenga, B., Drees, W.B. (1990), <u>Godsdienst op een Keerpunt</u>, Kok Agora: Kampen.

Larner, G. (1995) The real as illusion: deconstructing power in family therapy. Journal of Family Therapy, **17:** 191-217.

Lash S (1990), <u>Sociology of Postmodernism</u>, London, Routledge.

Lowe R (1991), Postmodern Themes and Therapeutic Practices: Notes Towards the Definition of "Family Therapy: Part 2', *Dulwich Centre Newsletter,* 3, 41-52.

Madigan S (1996), The politics of identity: considering community discourse in the externalizing of internalized problem conversations, *Journal of Systemic Therapies* **15(1),** 47-61.

Marsden R and Townley B (1996), Power and postmodernity: reflections on the pleasure dome, *EJROT* I**(1).**

McLean, B A. (1997), Co-constructing narratives: a postmodern approach to counselling, Masters dissertation, University of Otago, November.

Müller, J (1996), <u>Om Tot Verhaal te Kom - Pastorale Gesinsterapie,</u> RGN: Pretoria, 228 pp.

O'Sullivan T, Hartley J, Saunders D, Montgomery M and Fisk J, Eds. (1994), Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies. 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge, 234-4.

Parker I in John Shotter and Kenneth J Gergen (editors) (1989), <u>Texts of Identity</u>, Sage Publications, London.

Piercy V (1996), alt.postmodern FAQ, ftp.seas.gwu.edu/pub/rtfm/alt/postmodern/ An_Alt.Postmodern_FAQ

Pieterse, E (1996), Reflections on postmodernism and faith in a South African context, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* **94,** 50-64, March.

Pinkus J (1999), http://www.massey.ac.nz/~ALock/theory/language.htm

Pulley Mary Lynn (1997), <u>Losing your job - reclaiming your soul: Stories of resilience, renewal, and hope</u>, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 239pp.

Rhodes C (1996), Researching organisational change and learning: a narrative approach, *The Qualitative Report* **2(4)**, December, (http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR2-4/rhodes.html)

Rhodes C (1997), Playing With Words: Multiple Representations of Organisational Learning Stories, *EJROT* **III(1)**, 1-12.

Shotter J and Gergen KJ (1989), <u>Texts of Identity</u>, Sage Publications, London.

Smith K and Johnson P (1996), Business Ethics: Contextualising the Field, International Society of Business, Economics and Ethics, Papers Tokyo.

Townley, B (1994), <u>Reframing Human Resource Management - Power, Ethics and the Subject at Work</u>, Sage: London

Tulea G and Krausz E (1997), Postmodernism And The Cunning Of The Reason, http://www.bsos.umd.edu/CSS97/papers/tulepap.html

White M (1992), Men's culture, the men's movement, & the constitution of men's lives, *Dulwich Centre Newsletter* **3&4**, 33-52.

White, M (1995), <u>Re-authoring Lives: Interviews and Essays</u>, Dulwich Centre Publications: Adelaide, Australia, 305 pp.

White M (1998), Narrative Therapy, Dulwich Centre course notes, 1-5, 11 February

White M and Epston D (1990), <u>Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends</u>, WW Norton and Company, London, 229pp., ISBN 0-393-70098-4.

http://www.hausarbeiten.de/data/psychologie/psycho-social-constructionism.htm last modified 21-May-99

INDEX

exploitation · 2, 6, 74, 81

F

faith · 7, 17, 59, 62, 69, 71, 83
Faith · See faith
Foucauldian · See Foucault.
Foucault · 7, 10, 14, 28, 35, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 53, 81
Frankfurt School · 13
Freedman and Combs · 7, 10, 12, 13, 22, 29, 33, 38, 39, 56

G

Gergen · 19, 22, 25, 26, 27, 29, 34, 37, 38, 39, 45, 81, 83
global village · 50

H

Hoffman · 22, 23, 25, 82

I

indeterminacy · 8, 30, 48
informationally-closed · 23

K

knowledge · 7, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20, 21, 25, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, 58, 59, 68, 72, 73

L

landscape of identity · 66, 68, 70
landscapes of action · See landscape of action.

landscapes of consciousness · 33. See landscapes of identity
landscapes of identity · 55, 63, 76
landscapes of meaning · See landscapes of identity
language · 7, 10, 13, 14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 28, 34, 39, 40, 41, 83
late capitalism · 13
lenses · 22, 28, 82
linear · 18, 29, 32
Linear causality · 32

M

Maturana · 23, 81
meaning · 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 40, 51, 53, 55, 56, 69, 76
meaningful · See meaning.
metaphor · 22, 23, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 40, 45, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 69, 71
metaphors · 11, 37
modernism · 7, 16, 17, 18, 20
modernist · See modernism.
Modernist · See modernist
modernistic · See modernist.
Modernity · 14
moral · 5, 7, 8, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40
morality · See ethics.
myth · 20, 28

N

narrative · 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 50, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 71, 72, 74, 75, 78, 80, 83
life narrative · 35
Narrative Approach · See narrative approach
narratives · See narrative.
not-knowing · 11

T

the landscapes of action · 33, 55

the map is not the territory · 27

theme · 12, 29, 35, 38, 43, 50, 55, 56, 63, 71, 74, 75

theology · 8, 10

transformation · 17, 67, 70, 71, 76, 82

truth · 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 31,
    34, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48

Truth · See truth

TRUTH · See truth

truths · See truth.

V

value reference · See values

value systems · See values

values · 2, 6, 8, 17, 18, 22, 28, 33, 38, 39, 55, 62, 72,
    74, 78

Values · See values

W

White · 7, 10, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 43, 44, 45, 55, 81,
    84