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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

How are Counsellors Transformed Through Engaging in Action Research?

A Narrative Analysis.

by

Artem Assoiants

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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Abstract

While many researchers (i.e., inquirers) create knowledge products for potential uptake in practice, others in practical-critical, future-forming communities (e.g., action research [AR]) seek to cocreate social change as an inherent part of their inquiry. Specifically, counsellor-inquirers who enact AR are in an unusual situation because professionally, their work overlaps with AR (i.e., both are a relational process of cocreating social change). However, they have not been asked at length about how *they* are transformed through engaging in AR. I held a semi-structured conversation with eight counsellor-inquirers who had finished a thesis or dissertation using AR or published a manuscript on AR. I transcribed the interviews, using narrative segments of transcripts that were in answer to my research question as narrative data. Through Riessman's (2008) thematic narrative analysis (NA), I created within-transcript (i.e., for individual coinquirers) and across-transcript research narratives (i.e., common findings between coinquirers) as answers to my inquiry. As regards the latter, by engaging in AR, counsellor-inquirers seem to be transformed in terms of *broadening their change efforts, shifting their counselling practice, refining their critical practice, engaging in the process of identity construction, pivoting their relational practice, and augmenting their research practice*. This inquiry holds relevance for neophyte narrative analysts, counsellor education, future-forming research, and action researchers.

Keywords: action research, counselling, future-forming research, narrative analysis.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, A. Assoiants. The inquiry herein was covered by the Ethics Certificate number REB16-1289, issued by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the project “What Are the Stories of How Counsellors Are Transformed by Their Engagement in Action Research? A Narrative Analysis,” on October 27, 2016. Please note the truncated title used in this document.

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I dedicate this piece to my mother and grandmother. They left all they knew behind to travel to a strange land to provide us with a better future. That is social change at its rawest.

Спасибо Вам за Ваш непрерывный вклад в наше развитие [thank you for your continuous investment in our development].

I also dedicate this work to the endless unsung heroes of collaborative social change. Whether you are in service or experience design, non-profits, management consulting, leadership development, community organizing, counselling, or any other field, thank you for your skin in the game of life. I hope this work inspires you to look inward on your collaborative change journeys. For not only do you transform the world; you also transform yourself. And in doing so, you give just that much more back to those around you.

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List of Abbreviations

ACA	American Counseling Association
AR	Action research
CPA	Canadian Psychological Association
NA	Narrative analysis
SC	Social constructionism

Chapter 1 - Introduction

“The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it” (Marx, 1932/2001, p. 170).

Context

Faced with mounting social issues such as psychosocial and physical ill health, inquirers¹ are tasked with solving real-world problems with increasing accountability and decreasing funding (Bornmann, 2012a, 2012b). Many inquirers in practical-critical communities (e.g., discursive psychology, social therapeutics, postmodernism, etc.) share a desire to do more than produce knowledge; they wish to use methodologies that also liberate and empower their coresearchers (and themselves).

Inquirers have many methodological options for science-doing in the diverse field of psychology. They can, for instance, control variables in laboratories, opting to use psychometrically valid measures based on particular constructs (e.g., depression, intelligence quotient, etc.). The outcomes of such inquiry may inform knowledge translation or professional take up. Through this commonly used approach (called *modernist, positivist, post-positivist*, etc.), inquirers create knowledge products (e.g., publications, presentations, etc.) as resources for psychological application. There are, however, alternative ways of science-doing that have different aims. For instance, action research (AR) is a methodology that entails knowledge creation and dissemination, *as well as* social change (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). In AR, inquirers join with coinquirers to construct an environment wherein a social problem is collaboratively addressed. Said differently, the *process* of engaging in the AR inquiry is intentionally change-promoting; an example (Assoiants, 2016) of *practical-critical activity*

¹ I use the term “inquirer” to acknowledge that science (or “inquiry”) is an activity of systematic question-asking (McNamee, 2012).

(Newman & Holzman, 2006) or *future-forming research* (Gergen, 2014). Specifically, in practical-critical, future-forming practices, inquirers collaboratively share in setting and acting on the goals, tasks, and trajectories of the project. In this inquiry, I join counsellor-inquirers who engage in such activities (i.e., AR) to explore how *they* are transformed through that experience.

The activity-oriented stance in AR has been deeply tied to professional practice. From a social justice perspective, counsellors are not solely providers of service (e.g., psychotherapy, counselling, assessments, etc.); they are also creators of social change (Canadian Psychological Association [CPA], 2017). There is an invitation (by some; Chang, Hays, & Milliken, 2009) and proposed mandate (by others; Speight & Vera, 2004) for counsellors to be social change agents, addressing systemic issues of power, privilege, and oppression in participatory and reflexive ways (Kennedy & Arthur, 2014). Some counsellors, interested in the practice of social justice, select methodologies of inquiry that are intentionally change-oriented. Counsellor-inquirers thus join others in using AR to address social injustices and facilitate collaborative change.

Counsellors using AR extend a tradition that goes back to the beginning of the 20th century (Lees, 2001); though, increasingly, more AR inquiries are bringing about change in the world (see the journals: *Action Research* and *The Canadian Journal of Action Research*). Relatedly, the number of coinquirers – influencing and contributing to AR inquiries – is also growing. Unasked or unexplored at length is how counsellor-inquirers *themselves* are transformed by how they carry out AR. Despite AR being frequently cited as change-oriented inquiry, what are *counsellors'* narratives of how they are transformed by engaging in AR?

Research Question and Process

In this study, I asked, “*How are counsellors transformed through their engagement in AR?*” I did so with an ear attuned to narratives. Narratives are how people categorize and make

sense of their lives, relationships, and the world (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). Narratives also structure the social reality of how people “go on” together (Bruner, 1987). By inviting counsellor-inquirers to share their experiences, I give voice to the personal and social transformations their AR-related narratives may carry.

On Relevance

Personal. I have engaged in collaborative social change for many years. This took the shape of counselling, consulting, community organizing, service design, program evaluation, collaborative inquiry, and the like. I noticed that through my journey, I was transformed through these practices (e.g., choosing to engage in inquiry on social change). I am also interested in ideas and methodologies that transcend traditional boundaries. So, learning in the context of a master’s degree, I invited coinquirers² to join me in exploring a form of social change (i.e., AR [Burns, Harvey, & Aragón, 2012]) that is relevant to my professional field (i.e., counsellors). Deeply influenced by people who shaped my life, I feel humbled by potentially contributing to practical-critical, future-forming communities, particularly those of counselling and AR.

Social. Inquiries in the natural sciences have a propensity for quantification, lending themselves well to the context of shrinking research grants (Bornmann, 2012a, 2012b). Inquiries in the *human sciences* (see Polkinghorne, 1983) often seem more difficult to evaluate. Human science inquirers study people, who may change through how they are being studied (Newman & Holzman, 1997; Hacking, 1999). This invites other questions, such as: a) how are participants transformed through being studied? (Newman & Holzman, 1997) b) what problems and opportunities do inquirers experience in the course of their inquiries (Clark & Sousa, 2018)? c) how are inquirers *themselves* transformed through engaging in inquiry? As with scholars in the

² Råheim, Magnussen, Sekse, Lunde, Jacobsen, and Blystad (2016) noted that participants are not passive. Honouring this sentiment, I call participants “coinquirers.”

field of science and technology studies (e.g., Latour, 1987), my concern is with how inquirers' lives are missing from how science is portrayed. In this study, I invited counsellors who have engaged in AR to reflect on *their* involvement in collaborative processes of inquiry, thereby humanizing and publicizing their experiences.

I will also examine possible dualisms between inquiry and practice (Newman & Holzman, 1997), exploring how counsellors develop, hone in on, and enhance awareness of their counselling practice through their learning from being engaged in AR. In particular, joining counsellors who have engaged in AR to reflect on their collaborative work may offer useful insights into counselling skills. Better understanding the relationship between engaging in AR and counsellor practice can help inform andragogies associated with counsellor education.

Conclusion

Methodologies of inquiry, called future-forming or practical-critical (e.g., AR), have been created to attempt to collaboratively change the world. However, little has been done to investigate how inquirers' lives are transformed as they practice AR, let alone how engaging in AR might shape their personal and professional practices. For personal reasons and the potential social contributions this work may hold, I joined with my coinquirers to explore this question.

In the next Chapter, I will provide a literature review for my inquiry. In Chapter 3 – Methodology – I will outline the process I undertook to join others in conducting this study. In Chapter 4 – Analysis – I will showcase my findings. Lastly, I will conclude with Chapter 5 – Discussion – where I connect my findings to the extant literature, offer limitations, and present personal and social implications.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this thesis, I explore how counsellors are transformed through engaging in AR. I will first share my literature review methodology (i.e., *narrative literature review*). Subsequently, and to better understand how I went about this project, I will outline my theoretical framework (i.e., social constructionism [SC]) and its rationale. Next, I will address narrative theory, through which I connect my inquiry, ontological and epistemological decisions, and research methodology (i.e., narrative analysis [NA]). I follow with a description of counselling and AR and how I understand them merging in this project.

Literature Review Methodology

I used a narrative literature review to inform this project. A narrative literature review concerns itself “with the findings and interpretations from published studies and other sources in their terms, without any attempt to transform them into a common metric for analytical purposes” (Mays, Pope, & Popay, 2005, p. 12). My intention with the literature review was to provide a narrative sequence of ideas, arguing why this study is important to carry out. Given the dearth of published research on how counsellors are transformed through engaging in AR, I felt a narrative literature review, being flexible and useful for exploring novel fields (Mays et al., 2005), seemed a good fit. Moreover, this methodology is inherently relational and story-based (Allen, 2018), both of which are features prominent in my study. With the literature review methodology outlined, I would next like to tackle my theoretical framework: SC.

Theoretical Framework

Social constructionism. Social constructionism is a metatheory in which adherents address how meaning is created, sustained, and transformed in sociocultural-historical contexts and interactions (Hibberd, 2005). An interconnected series of historical and cultural events led to

the creation of SC (Burr, 2015), resulting in a proliferation of ideas and activities with theoretical kinship (McNamee, 2012). This approach to human sciences comprises several interrelated tenets (Burr, 2015). First is a critical stance to “taken-for-granted” knowledge and ways of knowing. As such, social constructionists are skeptical of the assumption that we can understand the world objectively, as if through a clear lens (see Gergen, 2014); they instead, “challenge... the notion of a science that gives statements that truly describe an independent reality” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 241). Second, social constructionists are sensitive to history and culture. That is, they cognize that ways of knowing the world are intrinsically tied to historically appropriate and culturally sanctioned epistemologies; truth is considered contextual. Third, knowledge is perceived as an ongoing construction, continuously formed *through relationship* by the very people who uphold it. Lastly, each social construction of knowledge has the potential to dominate, but is always open to being contested and modified. For instance, to say that the world can only be understood through numbers may preclude discursive or performative inquiries.

I connected with SC at the time of this writing because through it, I could attend to the social aspects of change and transformation. I also appreciated the idea that people can and do continuously cocreate change. It seemed a fitting way of framing my inquiry on the transformative influence of collaborative change on the inquirer.

Ontology and epistemology. Social constructionists often advocate a *relational ontology*, wherein our “selves” are thought of as being “a byproduct of processes of [relational] coordination” (McNamee, 2012, p. 153), and our realities are in continuous flux (Gergen, 2011, 2014; Shotter, 1993). Accordingly, all parts of human life are connected to and influenced by their environment, but especially our relational interactions (Slife, 2004). Thus, in a relational ontology, one’s actions are not functions of isolated, individual activity; instead, people *respond*

to one another (and themselves [Vygotsky, 1978]), finding ways together to make more stable the chaotic process of life (Heritage, 1992).

Epistemologically, social constructionists posit that “what we take to be the truth about the world importantly depends on the social relationships of which we are part” (Gergen, 2015, p. 3). Truth-telling is understood as a sociocultural-historical “language game” (Gergen, 2015; Wittgenstein, 1986); communities and traditions (e.g., sport, science, religion, etc.) make sense of and construct the world in mutually beneficial and understandable fashions. The same applies to communities of inquiry (e.g., positivist, discursive, etc.; Gergen, 2014). Social constructionists thus question the idea of dominant “truth” and adopt, instead, a pluralistic frame attuned to sociocultural-historical interactions where situated versions of truth are constructed and maintained (Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). While some communities do make “finalizing” claims, these too are considered features of a particular tradition (e.g., medical diagnoses, court decisions, etc.; Frank, 2005). In this manner, all we know, think, and do finds roots in relationality and context. How does this relate to meaning and knowledge in my project?

To me, meaning is situational and relational (Strong, 2003). People continuously negotiate their meanings together through interpretive encounters. And in the context of inquiry, the inquirer’s (i.e., me in this project) presence and participation is influential in cocreating meaning with coinquirers and in subsequent reports on the process and findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In practice, this looked like coinquirers’ decision to participate in response to my flyers, our ongoing email correspondence, and conversations between me and my coinquirers through my invited questions. Acknowledging my coinquirers and I may have shared a great deal of linguistic and cultural contexts (i.e., counselling, AR, inquiry, etc.), we ongoingly worked to make sense of our relationship and inquiries. More broadly, as relates to this inquiry, I

understood meaning as the findings I constructed through the relational process of engaging with my coinquirers, supervisors, and textual friends.

Relatedly, I understood knowledge as a relationally constructed set of accounts of the ongoing meaning-making activity that I engaged in with my coinquirers. Recognizing that the findings I present are a past tense snapshot, unable to capture the contextual wealth that is my coinquirers' lived experience, I do not relate to the knowledge I created as a static, finalizing claim (Shotter, 2011b). Specifically, I connect to the idea of knowledge-in-action, this being a narrative that is told in a particular time in history, constructed through unique relational encounters, transformed through me in a given historical context, and is influential for me, my coinquirers, and future readers as we go on in life.

Activity.

“What if we replaced the persistent rush to establish ‘what is the case’ and began to ask, ‘what kind of world could we build?’” (Gergen, 2014, p. 8).

Social constructionists posit that human life consists of continuous social activity, whether as physical movements, language, thoughts, or otherwise (Burr, 2015). Even if we are not aware of it, our activity has consequences on the world, and science is not exempt. For example, inquirers may use constructs such as “‘aggression,’ ‘mental illness,’ ‘suicide,’ and the like” (Gergen, 2014, p. 5), which are taken up by people and are acted on vis-à-vis “*curtailing* their aggression, *treating* mental illness, *preventing* suicide” (p. 5). Noting this, I wish to be intentional with my *reflexivity* in this thesis, acknowledging that I play an active role in creating and writing this project (more on this soon; Morawski, 2005).

Two points above are pertinent to my study: a) people cocreate and maintain their lives through action and b) people can engage in methodologies of inquiry that attend to and direct this

action. Such methodologies are broadly called future forming research (Gergen, 2014) or practical-critical activity (Newman & Holzman, 2006), and AR is an example of this (Assoiants, 2016). Altogether, my curiosity in this project is how counsellors who engage in future forming research with others (i.e., AR) are transformed through such inquiries. In other words, how is the activity of engaging in collaborative social change through inquiry consequential to inquirers?

Having covered how SC theory informs my inquiry, I will next outline narrative theory, which complements SC in how I went about conducting this study.

Narrative theory. Social constructionists hold that people create and maintain their realities through social activity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015). Language as activity is thought as particularly relevant, given that people negotiate “meaning through uses of language” (T. Strong, personal communication, July 4, 2018). People *respond* to one another through linguistic activity. Thus, the linguistic milieu into which people are born creates realities that are unique to that context and that are in continuous flux (Burr, 2015). Also, common to all relationships is that people use language in mutually understandable fashions to create new ways of “going on together” (Gergen, 2015). That is, people belong to intersecting communities in which words hold certain meanings that may differ from other communities’ uses (Gergen, 2011). For instance, legalese differs from the language used in a counselling setting (Bruner, 1991; though surely legalese can surface in counselling dialogues regarding divorce).

Still, how do people organize their lives in this ongoing flux of activity? One answer is *narrative*, a form of discourse (Anderson, 2007). *Narrative reality* is the understanding that people collaboratively make coherent sense of their experiences using narratives (Czarniawska, 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). In this view, language use is central to *how* people create

narratives (Anderson, 2007). Conversely, “narratives” themselves are an “organizing metaphor” (Freedman & Combs, 1996) for social processes (Anderson, 2007).

Specifically, narratives aid in comprehending social life in three ways. First, on a micro level, narratives help frame how people continuously make meaning of their lives (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Here “meaning” refers to people’s answers to questions such as: “why do [people] do what they do, what they hope will or won’t happen next, what their actions say about their character, and so on” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 98). People construct narratives about who they are, what life means, who they are to become, and the like (Anderson, 2007). This meaning-making occurs in relationship as people engage one another in activity (linguistic or otherwise; Rosen, 1996).

Second and third, on meso and macro levels, when narratives become ingrained in how people “go on” together (e.g., culture, context, etc.), narratives then refer to how people *structure* social life (Bruner, 1987). Specifically, narratives not only organize sense-making in self and relationships, but also *frame* social experiences. Through cocreating narratives – a social activity – we get to understand ourselves and the world around us (Lax, 1996). Beyond this structuring though, people can also “actively *re-author* [emphasis added]... stories... that [do] not support or sustain problems” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, pp. 11 & 16).

People can actively re-author their lives together through future-forming research (Gergen, 2014) or practical-critical activity (Newman & Holzman, 2006). These are a collaborative inquiry into and practice of how groups of people go about their lives. People openly engage one another in asking questions, responding to concerns, and proposing directions forward. The importance of future-forming research and practical-critical activities lies in understanding that sometimes, people live out their narratives unaware (White & Epston, 1990).

Future-forming research and practical-critical activity allow people to bring up taken for granted meaning and social processes, consciously coproducing meaning and performances that are more fitting for the group's needs and opportunities (Gergen, 2014; Holzman & Mendez, 2003).

Action research can be seen as a practical-critical, future-forming practice (Assoians, 2016).

I think that the capacity to collectively re-author our narratives is the bridge between SC and AR: a world continuously co-constructed in flux. AR inquirers practically and critically cofacilitate change in people's communities *with* them and their peers. And with narratives as a "resource of transformation" (Anderson, 2007, p. 16), AR inquirers employ and co-construct narratives of hope and best wishes. Through this practical-critical, future-forming work, people can emerge with cocreated narratives practically and critically suited for their lives.

Action Research

Action research was developed by Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), a Jewish émigré from Nazi Germany, in the 1930s (Adelman, 1993). Inquirers have created at least two types of AR since then: individual and group (Ferrance, 2000). Individual AR is often associated with educational settings; indeed, journals exist solely for this topic (i.e., *Educational Action Research*, *The Journal of Teacher Action Research*, etc.). This form of AR often involves reflexive activity where one actor creates a change and explores its impact on the environment and people around them (e.g., learning outcomes, student engagement, etc.; Ferrance, 2000), change *without* the collaborative participation of others. It is, however, the group form of AR that provides the focus of this project³.

This latter form of AR is defined as "the study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their

³ In subsequent references to AR, I speak to the group version of it.

understanding” (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2002, p. 8). It incorporates a participatory framework, wherein people are thought to actively shape (i.e., are not separate from) their sociocultural-historical context (Wicks, Reason, & Bradbury, 2008). More importantly, action researchers adopt a collaborative relational stance (De Haene, 2010) where the focus is on non-hierarchical inquiry, with aspects of a project or inquiry understood as a negotiated endeavour (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Thus, in AR, inquirers collaboratively develop meanings, processes, and outcomes, ready to offer, but more often critically set aside, pre-conceived understandings or theories (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). These inquirers reflexively engage their coinquirers from an under-studied meaning-making and activity-oriented relational stance.

Greenwood (2015) concluded that “... AR can be both qualitative and quantitative,... it is not a theory or a method but a strategy for using multiple theories and methods opportunistically for the purpose of promoting democratic social change” (p. 199). It is with this breadth in mind that the connection between ontology and epistemology can be thought of as inherent in AR (Greenwood, 2015). Ontologically, people with lived experiences (including, sometimes, an inquirer) can evolve into knowers. That is, through being in the world, one gets to know it as well; being becomes knowing. In this case, ontology blends with epistemology.

Further, ontologically, AR hinges on the idea that, through practical inquiry, reality changes and is changed, a tenet overlapping with SC’s position that change is omnipresent and can be facilitated by people (Nicholas & Hathcoat, 2014). In terms of epistemology, action researchers understand knowledge as necessarily value-laden and collaboratively created to explore and achieve a particular community goal (Hathcoat & Nicholas, 2014). Knowledge is thought to be socioculturally-historically grounded, with no two communities or circumstances

being the same. Both perspectives are reflections of the philosophical foundations set forth by SC (Gergen, 2015). Thus, to me, AR is the living embodiment of SC thought.

Action researchers have worked in diverse fields: healthcare (e.g., Fieldhouse, 2012), professional development (e.g., Fitzgerald, Moores, Coleman, & Flemin, 2015), management (e.g., Nancarrow, Smith, Ariss, & Enderby, 2015), climate change (e.g., Harvey, Burns, & Oswald, 2012), non-government organizations (e.g., Marquardt Arévalo, Ljung, & Sriskandarajah, 2010), and program evaluation (e.g., Patton, 2011). However, more pertinent to this project is that AR has been done in counselling or by counsellors, which I address next.

Counselling

Members of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association define *counselling* in the following fashion:

Counselling is a relational process based upon the ethical use of specific professional competencies to facilitate human change. Counselling addresses wellness, relationships, personal growth, career develop[ment], mental health, and psychological illness or distress. The counselling process is characterized by the application of recognized cognitive, affective, expressive, somatic, spiritual, developmental, behavioural, learning and systemic principles (Sheppard, n.d., pp. 3-4).

Two points stand out: a) counselling is a relational activity and b) counselling is done in order to perform social change. As noted above, AR, too, is a relational activity (De Haene, 2010), which is done in order to perform social change (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2002). This mirrors my experience of having engaged in collaborative social change and been transformed through the process. Thus, I decided to explore this question with my coinquirers.

Allow me to integrate the preceding arguments. Embracing the metatheory of SC, people continuously co-construct their worlds through activity. People's realities find coherence through and can potentially become entrenched via co-constructed narratives, functioning as "scripts," "rules," or "logics." Next, AR is a methodology of inquiry wherein inquirers seek to collaboratively, relationally perform social change with individuals sharing a community. Comparatively, counselling is a set of activities wherein practitioners relationally perform social change with clients and or patients. As such, both AR and counselling can be understood as forms of practical-critical, future-forming practices, where people (e.g., inquirers, coinquirers, clients/ patients) come together to co-construct narratives of hope, justice, fairness, or whatever else they collaboratively deem to be necessary. In co-constructing said narrative solutions, practitioners and participants create preferred futures, relationally playing out their lives in new ways. The process of co-constructing new narratives and performances continues ongoingly, while retaining preferred narratives.

So, with counselling and AR being intentional, relational situations of social change, *how* do the interactions of AR transform counsellors? Before delving deeper, allow me to demonstrate some examples of AR engaged in by counsellors.

Counselling and Action Research

"Action researchers are united in the aim to change reality."

(Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014, p. 571).

Lees (2001) wrote that AR was used in counselling as far back as Sigmund Freud in the early 20th century. Although Lees referred to individual AR, this means that AR and counselling go back at least 100 years. Later, in the 1930s, Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, formalized AR in the emancipatory, group format (Adelman, 1993) that is of interest in this project. Influenced

by the growth of critical theory (Boog, 2003) and the embrace of qualitative approaches in counselling (Ponterotto, 2005), AR has been taken up more frequently by counsellor-inquirers.

That said, there is a dearth of published work on how engaging in AR is consequential for counsellor-inquirers. From my narrative literature review, I observed that instead, counsellor-inquirers typically write about AR project outcomes (e.g., Becker, Reiser, Lambert, & Covello, 2014), impact on coinquirers (e.g., Conder, Milner, & Mirfin-Veltch, 2011), processual lessons of performing AR (e.g., Smith, Bratini, & Appio, 2012), insights on the content of the project and not on what changed *because* of AR itself (e.g., O'Neill & Rottem, 2012; Smith, Shenk, Tran, Poon, Wahba, & Voegtli, 2017), or project reflections rather than transformations *through* AR (Balk, 2015). This is not a critique; I simply wish to share that many counsellor-inquirers do not write about *their* transformation. And even within publications where authors did indicate having been transformed through their AR engagement, this was typically done adjunctly, as noted above. Next, I present literature where AR-related changes were addressed⁴.

Several authors mentioned being transformed in terms of how they think about and engage in change-making (Borg, Karlsson, Kim, & McCormack, 2012; de Santana & Neto, 2015; Esmiol, Knudson-Martin, & Delgado, 2012; Howton, 2011; Lykes, Hershberg, & Babeck, 2011; Lykes, 2013; Pickering, 2012; Robinson, 1999; Smith & Romero, 2010). For instance, wrote Lykes (2013), “I seek to contribute to transforming entrenched hegemonic and dichotomous discourses and inequitable power structures” (p. 782). Next, perhaps unsurprisingly, several counsellor-inquirers also wrote of their counselling work being transformed (Borg et al., 2012; Chou, 2013; de Santana & Neto, 2015; Esmiol et al., 2012; Howton, 2011; Lykes, 2013; Lykes et al, 2011; Ness & Strong, 2013; Pickering, 2012; Robinson,

⁴ I noticed that most of these authors wrote about their transformation in first person (i.e., I or we) rather than the distancing third person used in positivist research (Gray, 2017).

1999). Ness and Strong (2013) provide us with an example: “We gained in-depth knowledge, as well as practical knowledge, which assisted us in integrating our learning within our practice as therapists” (p. 257).

Continuing, in three publications (Howton, 2011; Johnson & Martínez Guzmán, 2013; Smith & Romero, 2010), counsellor-inquirers shared that their identity underwent transformation. An instance from Howton (2011):

To effectively push the boundaries of our field, my identity as a professional counselor who has struggled with feeling marginalized and outside the field positions me and others who might have experienced these feelings, in a key position to create positive change in the field (p. 75).

And lastly, several authors shared how their research practices shifted following AR engagement (Borg et al., 2012; de Santana & Neto, 2015; Esmiol et al., 2012; Howton, 2011; Robinson, 1999; Sandoval, Jennings, Rataj, & Klein, 2012; Smith & Romero, 2010). Talking about their future projects, Smith and Romero (2010) shared the following: “Our understanding of PAR [*participatory action research*] has developed to the point that we expect our next evaluative undertaking to be entirely collaborative, co-implemented, and co-analyzed” (p. 22).

These 13 studies were AR projects in the context of counselling, where the authors mentioned at least some way in which they were influenced by their AR engagement. While insightful and diverse, none of the publications focused singularly on counsellor-inquirers’ transformation through engaging in AR. What I uniquely bring to the literature is asking several counsellor-inquirers about their AR-related transformations to construct a common research narrative across their accounts. Another limitation of previously published work is that authors did not seem to mention broad areas of transformation. I addressed this by having conversations

with coinquirers about various topics in which AR engagement may have been transformative (e.g., identity, counselling, relationships, etc.). Allow me to bring this Chapter to a close.

Conclusion

Through the metatheory of SC, reality is understood as being in continuous flux, co-constructed by people through relational activity (i.e., language, physical action, etc.). How people make sense of their realities as they ongoingly create them together can be articulated by and captured through narratives. My inquiry focuses on social activities through which people can collaboratively cocreate preferred futures and narratives: AR and counselling. What has not yet been addressed in the literature in depth is: how are counsellors transformed through their engagement in AR? Next, I will address methodology, leading us closer to my analysis.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

“Can science learn to tell good stories?” (Reason, 1981, p. 50).

I am interested in how counsellors are transformed through their engagement in AR. In this section, I will outline my methodological decisions in answering this question. I will begin first by introducing NA and why I chose it for studying changes my coinquirers told me about through engaging in AR. I will then detail how I engaged my recruitment, interviewing, and transcription. Next, I will touch on how I analyzed the data. Lastly, I will address rigour.

Narrative Analysis

“Narrative inquiry is like walking through a garden maze, richly diverse with many twists and turns” (Horan, 2013, p. 179).

Narratives. Addressing narrative theory in Chapter 2, I wish here to delve deeper to facilitate understanding of my choice of methodology. In narrative theory, *narrative* is differentiated from other forms of discourse in terms of “*sequence* and *consequence*: Events are selected, organized, connected and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, p. 430). In this study, I saw *narrative data* as discrete transcript segments of coinquirers’ responses to interview questions. Conversely, I saw *research narratives* as analyzed narrative data that were in the service of answering my research question.

Overview of narrative analysis.

“Narrative [analysis] attempts to describe the stories of people’s lives and how they change over time, according to the spaces and contexts they inhabit.”

(Speedy, 2008, p. 22).

Narrative analysis is a methodology of inquiry that makes use of the tenets of narrative theory. Narratives are a distinctively human way of making sense of our lives (Squire, 2013).

They “represent” our lives, while also making constant understandings which would otherwise be disorganized and chaotic (McLeod, 2011). In addition, they create identity and structure how people understand themselves in the world (Bruner, 1987). Through a narrative lens, people are thought to be active cocreators of their lives, being able to alter and change the direction of their narratives in the context of relational ontology (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Consistent with a postmodern ethic, there are no universal rules for how to carry out NA (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Bold, 2012). Instead, there are philosophical guidelines as well as decisions that the inquirer makes according to their context (Riessman, 2008; I outline my decisions below). Narrative forms of analysis are an interpretative endeavour (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). That is, there is no “correct” interpretation of narratives (Chase, 2011). Instead, narrative inquirers ask whether coinquirers would approve of the research narrative that the inquirer creates. Thus, I recognized that each methodological decision weighs heavily (and politically) on how coinquirers’ voices are made to be heard (Polkinghorne, 2007). But why did I choose Riessman’s (2008) NA for this project?

Rationale. I decided to use Riessman’s (2008) NA for this study because of its ontological overlap with AR. First, AR is an iterative, processual methodology (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2002) that is rooted in relational ontology (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Similarly, narratives, in an NA sense, are processual and incapable of being separated from the people and contexts that create them (e.g., Frank, 2010). Second, AR is flexible (Davison, Martinsons, & Kock, 2004; Lewin, 1947), while NA too is open-ended (Esin, Fathi, & Squire, 2014), allowing for inquirer flexibility in working with the data to best reflect coinquirers’ voices. Riessman’s (2008) NA was described as particularly flexible, inviting me to continuously consider my methodological choices and be explicit about my process and rigour. Thus, my decision to use

NA was because of the overlapping methodological features between AR and NA, as well the open invitation that Riessman (2008) offered in how to engage in NA.

On a practical level, Riessman (1993) argued that NA begins with honouring the inquirers' and coinquirers' agency and imagination. This position made NA suitable for the study of subjectivity and identity, especially in terms of my research question: how are counsellors who have engaged in AR transformed through this experience? To understand this, my methodology needed to give space for people's sense-making of transformative experiences, with NA seeming an apt fit (Riessman, 2008). Additionally, NA has previously been used in counselling inquiry (Riessman & Speedy, 2007), and so has an established historical precedent.

The particular form of NA that I used was thematic NA, which is an exploration of *narrative content* rather than narrative performance (Riessman, 2008). I made this decision because of my position as a neophyte inquirer, with thematic NA being appropriately suited for this developmental stage of my journey (Riessman, 2008). To add, the scope of my project was on the content of a narrative data (i.e., counsellors' transformation through engaging in AR), not on the process of cocreating the narrative data with coinquirers. The latter form of NA (i.e., dialogic/ performative NA) is better suited for exploring processual questions, whereas thematic NA is better suited for questions about content (Riessman, 2008).

In sum, I used Riessman's (2008) NA because of its overlap with AR, its fit with my research question, its relevance to my development as an inquirer, and there being a historical precedent in using NA in counselling inquiry. Having outlined narrative theory, NA, and my rationale for its use, I would like to present the reader with the research protocol for this project.

Protocol

I would like to outline the steps that I took for recruitment, interviews, and transcription.

Recruitment. After receiving approval from the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (see Preface), I began recruitment. My cohort of interest was quite specific: Counsellors whose thesis or dissertation was on AR or who had published on AR in a peer-reviewed journal. Dr. Strong and I agreed that these were likely to be individuals who had had meaningful and influential experiences with AR. While not originally denoted in the recruitment material, I was especially interested in counsellor-inquirers who had done group AR. Fortunately, I did not have to turn anyone away for not meeting this criterion after recruitment. Conversely, I did decline one person's participation because they were in the middle of their AR inquiry, whereas my other coinquirers had already finished theirs.

Importantly, I presupposed that my coinquirers had been influenced by engaging in AR. I did not know before our conversation whether this was the case. That said, those who self-selected to participate were likely to be those who agreed with and fit the curiosity I put forth. I was open to it potentially being the case that no transformation was experienced.

As regards recruitment, I assumed that action researchers tend to know one another, allowing me to be introduced to other study coinquirers who had enacted AR (Squire, 2013). I recruited coinquirers by e-mail (e.g., listservs, etc.), online forums (e.g., AR interest boards, Facebook groups, etc.), and through my and my coinquirers' warm network (i.e., people one knows personally). Other ways of describing these recruitment methods are convenience (Marshall, 1996) and snowball sampling (Noy, 2008). I designed two flyers: one for platforms where images were permitted and another that only had words (see Appendix A).

Coinquirer demographics. Eight coinquirers responded to my recruitment flyer and gave informed consent. Seven coinquirers identified as female, one as male. Their ages at the time of the interview ranged between 31-67 ($M = 43.63$). In terms of experience with counselling,

coinquirers ranged between 1-35 years in the profession ($M = 13.06$). As for experience with AR, the five coinquirers who provided this information indicated starting their first project between 3-13 years before the interviews ($M = 7.1$). I did not ask three coinquirers for this information, simply having forgotten. See Tables 1 (Overall Coinquirer Demographics) and 2 (Average Coinquirer Demographics) for more detail.

Table 1

Overall Coinquirer Demographics

Coinquirer ^a	Age at Interview	Gender	Counselling Experience (years)	AR Experience (years)	Duration of Interview (hrs)
Barbara	58	Female	8	8	1:59
Carmen	67	Female	35	13	1:08
Courtney	31	Female	5	3	1:08
Elsie	31	Female	6.5	n/a	0:49
John	39	Male	15	7	0:49
Lola	45	Female	22	n/a	3:07
Madeline	39	Female	1	4.5	1:24
Megan	39	Female	12	n/a	1:13

^a Coinquirers chose to use their real name or a pseudonym of their liking.

Table 2

Average Coinquirer Demographics

Variable	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>
Coinquirers	8		
Gender			
Female		87.5	
Male		12.5	
Age at Interview			43.63
Counselling Experience (years)			13.06
AR Experience (years)			7.1 ^a
Duration of Interview (hrs)			1.45

^a Data from five out of eight coinquirers.

Interviews. I contacted coinquirers who had emailed me to participate, thanked them for their desire to take part, and sent them a number of potential times during which we could meet

or call. Following Bold (2012), coinquirers chose where they wished to hold the in-person interviews. In the case of having an online meeting, they had the choice of platform (i.e., Skype, Google Hangouts, etc.). Coinquirers also had the choice of using their real name or providing a pseudonym for the transcriptions.

Once we met, I invited coinquirers to read through the consent form (see Appendix B), ask me follow up questions, and sign the document if they agreed. I reminded them that they could leave the study at any time, with no penalty or hard feelings. Then, we held the semi-structured interview (see Appendix C). I recorded our conversation on a digital device, for later transcription and NA. After we spoke, I thanked coinquirers for their time and reminded them of follow-up communication (i.e., member checking; Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I transcribed the recordings for use as narrative data for NA.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews because through them, I could balance the flexibility required by NA while staying focused on answering my research question (Bold, 2012). While adhering to said interview guide (Appendix C), our conversations were fluid and open to emergent directions. The interviews lasted between 49mins and 3hrs 07mins. I met in-person with one coinquirer, spoke on the phone with one more, and used e-teleconferencing with the other six. I “met” with all coinquirers once, save Lola, with whom I spoke on three separate occasions. The interviews took place between February 23, 2017, and August 4, 2017.

Lastly, I saw interviews as a relational, reflexive activity (McNamee, 2012). I was sensitive to and mindful of how my coinquirers and I negotiated our conversations and the directions they took (Bold, 2012). I worked with my coinquirers to create a shared language around the semi-structured questions for this project, a process some have called “wordsmithing” (Strong, 2006). Following Riessman (2008), I did not assume that coinquirers’ language spoke

for itself. Thus, I asked clarifying questions to refine the meanings of what coinquirers told me in our inquiry-oriented dialogues. I also embraced a “not knowing” stance (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992), allowing myself to stay curious about what emerged in conversation. To add, I did not perform as a stoic investigator; instead, I had moments of vulnerability and uncertainty. I made these feelings known to my coinquirers. For example, I told John that I felt like a fraud for carrying out a project on AR that was itself not “true” AR. He normalized my feelings and offered that he too has gone through such experiences.

Transcription. I was the sole transcriber in this project. Narrative inquirers take the transformation of audio recordings into text seriously, given that one can “no longer assume the transparency of language” (Riessman, 1993, p. 12). I transformed the audio recordings into written form by paying close attention to the relational and performative aspects of discourse (i.e., including both me and the coinquirer in the transcript, highlighting paralinguistic details, demonstrating simultaneity, etc.; Riessman, 2008; Speedy, 2008). The intention of focusing on performative aspects of the transformation was for me to remember that the narrative data was created in a defined social context (McNamee, 2012), though I did not attend to this performativity in the analysis. After transcribing, I sent the document over for coinquirers to check, letting me know if anything should be added in or taken out (Birt et al., 2016).

Data Analysis

Through analyzing the narrative data, my hope was to create a research narrative of how counsellors are transformed through their engagement in AR. I engaged in *iterative data analysis*, a cyclical process that included reflecting on my own position of inquiry, interviewing coinquirers, analyzing data, consulting literature and knowledge brokers (e.g., my supervisors, others who had done NA, etc.), writing up results, and learning about NA (Bold, 2012). It felt

messy (Law, 2004), reflecting the open-ended nature of NA (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008) and the relational focus of the project (McNamee, 2012).

I will address the analytic process in more detail in the next Chapter. But briefly, I took Riessman's (2008) recommendation to keep narrative data united in terms of sequence and consequence by not parsing coinquirers' transcriptions into sub-units. I did this by working on the "story-as-a-whole" (McLeod, 2011, p. 189). That is, I first analyzed individual coinquirers' narrative data to create *within-transcript research narratives*. Only then I began exploring potential connections that I saw between coinquirers' narrative data (i.e., *across-transcript research narratives*; Riessman, 2008).

I used a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach when analyzing the narrative data. In regards to the former, I kept in mind the particular sociocultural-historical context of my work and how it may have constrained the stories; after all, "'local contexts,' meaning the immediate context in which the interview takes place (including the interviewer-interviewee relationship) and wider, societal contexts are inextricably linked" (Phoenix, 2013, p. 74). I also continuously read literature (referred to as "textual friends" by Shotter [1993]) to refine my understanding of carrying out NA, making sense of my process of inquiry, and improving my capacity as a writer, acknowledging this all as a relational activity (McNamee, 2012). I carried out the bottom-up approach by attending to the transcript-as-was and allowing myself to be surprised and curious by whatever emerged during analysis. Before sharing the findings, however, I would like first to address rigour.

Rigour

I drew on the criteria of rigour in NA from other narrative inquirers in counselling (Riessman & Quinney, 2005, pp. 397-398), presented below.

Empiricalness: Was the work empirical (i.e., based on systematic observations)? I recorded interviews with eight coinquirers and transcribed them. I considered narrative data to be discrete segments of coinquirers' responses in the transcript that answered my questions, and I created findings from the data. I considered the within-transcript research narrative to be the sum of analysis of individual coinquirers' narrative data in service of my broader research question. Conversely, I considered the across-transcript research narrative to be a summary across coinquirers' narrative data of how counsellors are transformed through their engagement in AR.

Sequence and consequence: Was there attention to sequence and consequence? Riessman (2008) indicated that the hallmark of NA is keeping the *sequence* of a narrative intact. On the other hand, *consequence* refers to how certain events cause or influence others, if not always in a chronological fashion (Riessman, 2008). In terms of attending to the former, I first looked at individual coinquirers' narrative data, then only at what was common between coinquirers' narrative data. As for the latter, I had an a priori assumption that something changed because of my coinquirers' AR engagement. That is, the central sequence of the experience was: something drew coinquirers to AR and something changed through their engagement with it. As mentioned earlier, I had an a priori assumption that coinquirers experienced transformation through having engaged in AR and that they would self-select to participate in a conversation with me around this topic. I was open to it being the case that they did not, in fact, experience any transformation. However, as I found, this was not the case.

Context of production: Did the analysis extend to contexts of production (i.e., research relationships and macro-institutional contexts)? I engaged in this project reflexively, understanding that it may influence me and my coinquirers (i.e., through recruitment, the interviews, member checking, etc.; Riessman, 2008). I assumed I belonged to a shared

community with my coinquirers (e.g., counselling, AR; Assoiants & Strong, 2016), to allow for close understanding of one another, despite them all being more senior than me in their field. And as mentioned in Interviews, I also attended to the relationships in the hopes of deepening them and creating performances of curiosity (McNamee, 2012). More than that, I offered myself as open and vulnerable, sharing with coinquirers some of my own experiences with the project and being consoled through some of the difficulties I faced.

Attention to language: Was there attention to language, and were transcripts created and analyzed? I created transcripts in which I attended to the conversational nature of dialogue (e.g., verbal gestures, repetitions, interruptions, etc.; Riessman, 2008). I did not do this for the purpose of analysis, but as a personal reminder that narratives are always coproduced rather than stories “out there” (Burr, 2015). I conducted the data analysis from transcribed narrative data. I also attended to language in the performance of the interview by continuously asking clarification questions. Additionally, I sent coinquirers their transcripts for member checking to ensure their agreement with the written version of the document, what needed to be excluded, and the like (Birt et al., 2016).

Epistemology and methodology: Was there a critical outline of epistemological and methodological foundations? I believe there is a justified philosophical through-line between the overarching theory (i.e., SC), my topic of interest (i.e., AR), and my methodology (i.e., NA). I assumed that I shared a sociocultural-historical context with my coinquirers (e.g., AR, counselling, etc.) and that this permitted us to construct narratives of mutual intelligibility. I also made explicit (and will outline in more depth in the next Chapter) my methodological steps.

In sum, by addressing Riessman & Quinney's (2005) questions, I feel I have made a compelling case for the methodological rigour with which I engaged with this project. Allow me to summarize the preceding arguments before presenting the analysis.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I outlined the process that led me to create the research narrative in answer to my research question. I described how I went from interviews to transcriptions, narrative data, and research narratives. I explained my choice of methodology (i.e., NA), strongly connected to AR, and its being relevant to my research question and fitting my context as a neophyte inquirer. I then addressed my protocol, homing in on the process of coproducing this project. Lastly, I brought to attention how I tackled rigour in performing NA. Having done so, I wish to move to the next step: Analysis.

Chapter 4 – Analysis

In this Chapter, I will present my analysis to answer the following research question: how are counsellors transformed through engaging in AR? First, I will offer a brief overview of my methodological decisions. Second, I will bring the reader inside “Art’s Laboratory” (T. Strong, personal communication, October 4, 2018) to make explicit how I created research narratives (i.e., themes and subthemes) through my data analysis, first within-transcript and then across-transcript. Each research narrative will include a brief title, definition, and a few quotes for exemplification and elaboration. I discerned six themes and nine subthemes as across-transcript research narratives (see Table 1 below).

As noted in Chapter 3, my decision to use NA was informed by this methodology’s overlap with SC and AR, fit for exploring rich life experiences, appropriateness for my research question, and aptness for a neophyte inquirer. In thematic NA, one explores the content of narratives (Riessman, 2008), attending to both the sociocultural-historical context in which the narratives are cocreated (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and the inquirer’s reflexivity (Gergen, 2014). I considered narrative data to be segments of transcribed interviews that addressed my research question. The research narratives are themes and subthemes which I created out of narrative data across transcripts.

In NA, transcribing the audio interviews into textual data is considered a reflexive activity (Riessman, 2008). Understanding that I was cocreating the interviews with my coinquirers, the resulting transcriptions included my voice and participation. Additionally, I included discursive features such as pauses and simultaneity, as is common in dialogical or

performative NA⁵, though this was not a focus of my analysis. Being the sole transcriber enabled me to be consistent in style and familiarize me with the narrative data, as in the example below.

Excerpt 1. *Demonstration of transcription features.*

1	Art	Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.
2	John	And I'm o-, very interested in, in the ideas of action research. Also how it's, because in, well,
3		in Norway when I, when I started my PhD I, I didn't get a, an approval from the eth-ethical
4		board in Norway because they didn't see this as research [right]. They just, just saw this as
5		professional development project, right [ooh, interesting]. And then I just framed it as
6		qualitative research, and then it was all, all good.
7	Art	[A laughs]. Which it, which it is. I mean.
8	John	And. Yes, yeah. And it, and it took
9		me four seconds to change that, right? So, and after that, we have had this move in Norward, the
10		last five or ten, seven years [yeah, yeah, yeah] towards something su- uh, user-involved research.
11	Art	Okay, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

In line 2, John uttered “o-,” which was the beginning of a word or concept, which he then followed with “very interested in.” One can also “hear” my participation in the transcript (lines 1, 7, 11) and embedded in John’s speech: the “right” in line 4 and “ooh, interesting” in line 5. One can see simultaneity, such as with lines 7 and 8, where John’s “and” overlapped loosely with my “which it, which it is.” Thus, I was intentional in having these discursive elements visible in my transcription. However, I chose not to analyze the data using performative NA because it was not in the service of answering my research question.

In NA, the interview is thought to be collaboratively, relationally produced between inquirer and coinquirers (Riessman, 2008). I asked coinquirers questions in ways that that influenced the flow of dialogue in the service of answering my research question, as follows:

⁵ Performative/ dialogical NA focuses on by whom, when, and for what reason an utterance is offered (Riessman, 2008). Its purpose is on studying *how narrative is produced* versus the content of the narrative.

Excerpt 2. *Demonstration of my reflexivity in the co-construction of dialogue.*

12	Art	Mhm, mhm, mhm. You know, I noticed I've been asking you a lot about how action research
13		has, or th-the process of doing action research, um, doing action research, how that's impacted
14		you, and how you've been thinking about it. But, I don't know if I've asked what it was or is
15		about the process of doing action research, engaging in action research, that's been
16		transformative.
17	Carmen	I guess I feel like that's what we've been talking about the whole time [hm]. Um, it's, it's the
18		ability to um look at what you're doing [hm], see yourself, or see, yeah, see what you're doing.
19	Art	H-how about the involvement of other people in that exploration?
20	Carmen	Oh yeah! I mean it's um, i-i-it's g-, it's, it's not just seeing yourself, but it's being, like you
21		said, vulnerable [hm; C laughs] and um, a-a-and totally opening yourself up to that interactive
22		process. Um, and to, an-and um, sort of accepting what's coming.

I intentionally asked a question (lines 12-16) to invite conversation on how the *process* of doing AR was transformative (lines 14-16), beyond the content of Carmen's AR project.⁶ Carmen affirmed this understanding (i.e., it was the process, not necessarily only the content), noting that "... It's the ability to um look at what you're doing [hm], see yourself, or see, yeah, see what you're doing" (lines 17-18). Then, I introduced another element to our conversation, wondering if her response may have expanded to include other people (line 19). Acknowledging my role in shifting the flow of dialogue, I asked this as an open-ended question, and Carmen responded by saying there is something about AR that invites "... sort of accepting what's coming" (line 22). In this paragraph, I wished to show a) how conversations were cocreated between me and my coinquirer and b) my reflexivity in influencing this process. Next, I will address the topic of *transformation* and how I made sense of the term in relation to my coinquirers' experiences.

Transformation?

Before delving into my process of data analysis and presenting my findings, I would like to bring up the topic of "transformation." Not all coinquirers felt that the term best reflected their experiences and opted, instead, for words like "reinforced," "changed," "informed," and the like. Appreciating their feedback, my thought process around the term "transformation" is inclusive of

⁶ Some participants chose to use their real names, while others chose a pseudonym of their liking.

“gentler” understandings of change (i.e., such as those just mentioned). In other words, I made the pragmatic decision to keep “transformation” as a superset for other forms of change my coinquirers shared with me. Additionally, not all coinquirers felt that it was singularly AR that brought forth a shift; instead, they offered that it was a combination of their values, prior experiences, concurrent experiences while engaging in AR, and other personal and social situations that augmented their change. To that end, all my findings are wrapped with sociocultural-historical context. That is, all my findings are hedged with something akin to me saying, “I found this was the case, with the understanding that there are numerous contextual details that colour coinquirers’ accounts.” With the term “transformation” and the topic of context addressed, I would like to present the research narratives I created from coinquirers’ narrative data.

Data Analysis Process: Within-Transcript Research Narratives

Consistent with SC, there is no prescribed way of engaging in NA (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008). However, one rule of thumb is that research narratives are not understood as “emerging” from the narrative data (Riessman, 2008); instead, the analyst (i.e., me in this project) reflexively constructs the findings (i.e., research narratives) by interpreting the narrative data. For these reasons, I wish to be transparent about my interpretive process, from audio-recorded data to transcription (above), and from narrative data to research narrative (below).

Having transcribed the interviews, I initially read over each coinquirers’ transcribed data to familiarize myself with their interview with me. Next, for each transcription, I wrote out – with pen and paper – segments of narrative data that stood out to me as answering my research question. Beyond these notes, I developed memos for myself to later address and to flag questions about which I was curious (see Appendix D for an example). After this, I coded my

notes and memos with succinct descriptions. I did this step as a practice round in coding, helping me to move closer to the data, though I did not use this step as a formal part of my data analysis. During this process, I also met with a coinquirer (i.e., Courtney) to collaboratively analyze one transcript. I did so because I felt that learning how she and I cocreated codes and themes would bring me closer to honouring the voices of my other coinquirers as I engaged in analysis.

Next, I used QSR International's NVivo 12 Plus software (Version 12.2.0.443, 32-bit) to assist with open coding. As suggested by Riessman (2008), I coded the narrative data *within* an individual coinquirer's transcript that I felt answered my research question, paying attention to words, phrases, and idioms that seemed to come up more than once. I created code names that I thought aptly represented the meaning of the passage, sometimes coding one section of the transcript with more than one code. Allow me to demonstrate this process in more depth using Courtney's transcript as an example.

Courtney. In NVivo, I highlighted a section of narrative data that I felt was in answer to my research question. I gave the code a name that I felt briefly summarized the content of that passage, and NVivo automatically assigned the code colours, as visible to the right in Figure 1 below. In the same figure, one can see that I coded lines 482 through 492 (in the original transcript) with *surprised that enjoys research*. I did this because Courtney said, "My experience in doing the research was... also being *surprised* by kind of enjoying it" (italics for emphasis). Thus, I connected the code name with the passage.

Courtney Numbered			Click to edit
482	Courtney	Yeah. It was very much the things that I was just talking about, in terms of trying to inhabit a	Coding Density Surprised That Enjoys Research
483		space of, of curiosity and collaboration. Um.	
484	Art	That's the what.	
485	Courtney	The what. Oh and so how? Hm, hmm.	
486	Art	Yeah, that's a different kind of question.	
487	Courtney	Yeah. Good catch. Um, so how has it reinforced? Well, as a person who's interested in meta	
488		ideas perhaps, um, my experience in doing the research was kind of being not only surprised in	
489		the context of the interviews and having room for surprises, but also being surprised by kind of	
490		enjoying it. Uh, which is not really a thing that I knew that I would, I didn't know that I would	
491		enjoy it [hm] particularly. I never considered myself a researcher [mhm], and I certainly did not	
492		have very positive ideas about myself as an academic [hm]. Um.	

Figure 1. Demonstration of coding process within transcript.

After going through Courtney's transcript a few times with this process, I began creating a within-transcript research narrative (i.e., themes and subthemes) for her. I created themes by looking through her codes and searching for repeating words, phrases, and idioms as well as shared ideas. If I sensed that there were, indeed, repeating ideas in codes within a coinquirer's narrative data, I would group them into a theme.

In Figure 2 below, I show that, for Courtney, I grouped individual codes (e.g., *able to create space, more curiosity*, etc.) into a theme that I felt summarized their main idea: *shift in relational practice*. I did this because I felt these codes all reflected something to do with a transformation in how Courtney talked about how she engages with others (e.g., creating space, giving people more credit, and being more collaborative). Conversely, if I did not feel that individual codes had commonalities with other codes, then I made that code a stand-alone theme (Figure 2; e.g., *shift in identity* and *surprised that enjoys research*). In sum, I created three themes for Courtney: *shift in identity*, *shift in relational practice*, and *surprised that enjoys research*. I used a similar process for all coinquirers. Allow me to go into more detail about each research narrative for Courtney.

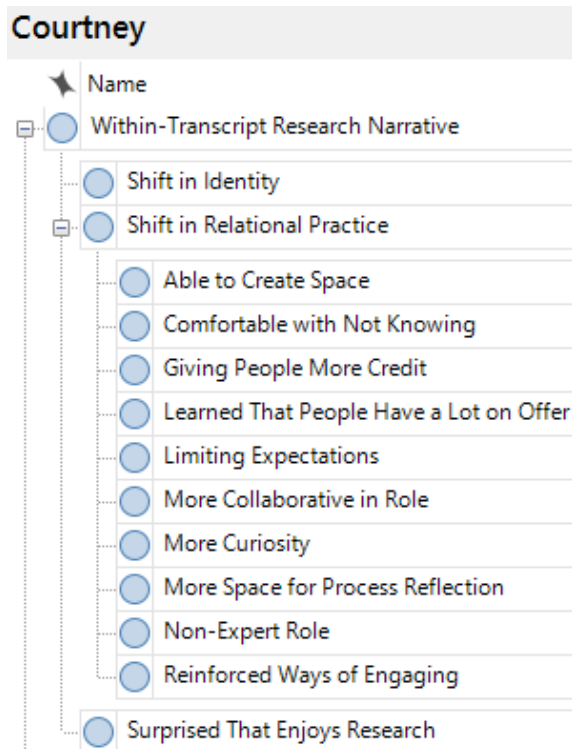


Figure 2. Demonstration of within-transcript research narrative for Courtney.

Shift in identity. *Shift in identity* refers to a change in how Courtney perceives herself following her engagement with AR. For instance, Courtney said she is “becoming increasingly comfortable with all the not knowing.”⁷ She added, “a counsellor who... appreciates that sometimes the people who are consulting with me with the expectation that I’m gonna have some brilliance to offer them already have way better ideas than I do.”

Shift in relational practice. In this theme, I speak to ways Courtney offered she transformed her relational practice. By relational practice, I mean *how* she goes about creating, maintaining, and understanding relationships. Courtney said, “... For me it generates more curiosity... we don’t all have to agree.” Elaborating, she added: “... Sometimes the things [that people] have on offer will defy your expectations of them.”

⁷ Moving forward, I will present a clean version of transcriptions for their semantic, not performative, meanings. Ellipses indicate removal of repeated words, non-verbal utterances, and unrelated phrases.

Surprised that enjoys research. In this last theme for Courtney, I refer to her surprise, following AR, that she enjoys doing research. Said Courtney, “I so much more enjoyed the process of the interviews and the research than I thought I was going to.” And as mentioned earlier, she also noted that AR “reinforced... being surprised by kind of enjoying [research].”

In this section, I explained the process I used to arrive at Courtney’s within-transcript research narrative. By looking for shared ideas and expressions in her transcript, I created codes. Then, I created themes by looking for commonalities between codes within Courtney’s transcript. Next, I will present other coinquirers’ within-transcript research narratives, in alphabetical order, having used the same analytical process as above.

Barbara. I created three themes for Barbara: *critical action*, *shift in identity*, and *understanding of human experience*.

Critical action. In this theme, I refer to ways in which Barbara has become more thoughtful and critical about how she behaves in general. Said Barbara, “I’ve become sometimes more annoying... not as cooperative... I have more critical thinking around what we’re doing.” She added: “If you’re going to be working next to people... who occupy different social points in the strata, if you act like an ass, you’re not one to be very successful at it.”

Shift in identity. As defined with Courtney, this theme refers to a change in how Barbara perceives herself following her engagement with AR.⁸ Barbara offered: “[Action research has] helped me to crystallize my desire to be involved in some sort of social justice endeavour.”

Understanding of human experience. This theme captures what Barbara said about her broadened understanding and view of people and their lives. For example, she indicated: “... [Action research] sort of broadened my perspective on experience, and life, and so on.” To add:

⁸ Moving forward, I will skip defining within-transcript research narratives that are shared between coinquirers.

“It means understanding my own privileged perspective, my own place in the social constellation.” Lastly, “It gives you just another... experience to draw on.” Next, I will present Carmen’s within-transcript research narrative.

Carmen. I built four themes from Carmen’s narrative data: *honing vision*, *shift in counselling practice*, *shift in identity*, and *shift in relational practice*.

Honing vision. This theme captures the idea that engaging in AR helped Carmen refine her vision around her various practices: relational and counselling. Carmen offered,

It’s helped me be much more intentional about what I’m doing, because I have a much better vision of what it is I’m doing... it sharpens my lens, it sharpens my thinking, it sharpens what I see.

Shift in counselling practice. Carmen offered ways in which her practice as a counsellor shifted through engaging in AR. This included how she felt as a counsellor, thought about counselling, and related to her clients. In terms of the former, Carmen said, “The research makes me more confident in what I know..., feeling more like, ‘... I have the ability or... ethical responsibility to put this into... practice.’” As regards the latter: “it’s being... vulnerable and... totally opening yourself up to that interactive process... accepting what’s coming.”

Shift in identity. Carmen offered a few examples of how engaging in AR shifted her identity. For instance: “It... reinforces the part of me that... is not terribly linear... that kind of likes being in the mess of things.” She also said:

Maybe what it’s done is it’s given me a way to legitimize that kind of identity. Like that I can engage in this less controlled, more spur of the moment kind of way, and feel good about myself and feel competent... And like I actually am doing something, and I’m not just all over the place.

Shift in relational practice. When talking about how Carmen’s relational practice shifted through engagement in AR, she offered: “It seems like that’s kind of what’s evolved... is this whole... group of connections that are... not very hierarchical. And... boundaries between the personal and professional are more minimized.” To add, she shared: “... my professional relationships... it’s with my younger colleagues, my former students... It’s made for very close personal, professional connections.”

Elsie. For Elsie’s narrative data, I created three themes: *critical action*, *shift in counselling practice*, and *shift in identity*. Allow me to expound each one of these.

Critical action. Similar to Barbara, Elsie offered that engaging in AR shifted her critical action. Here is a quote that highlights what I mean:

... What it’s done is helped me to feel more, in some ways, empowered in terms of like the stances I take, or in terms of doing advocacy, or in terms of me wanting to challenge other people to also recognize their power or how to use their power in ways that are helpful for people or for clients. So, cuz I think sometimes we can be kind of like, at least some of the people I work with sometimes, it can be hard to see how we can actually use the power that we do have for better or to benefit the people who we’re working with.

Shift in counselling practice. Speaking to how her counselling practice shifted through engagement in AR, Elsie offered the following: “... It made me much more attuned to the systemic influences of all kinds of sociocultural discourses and other things on the therapy process and what’s actually happening between client or therapists in the room.” Speaking to how she now practices, she shared: “I learned a lot about being with different people.” As another example, Elsie noted that she “... is okay to offer expert advice or suggestions coming

from a tentative place... because sometimes that's what people who are feeling very lost of vulnerable... may be wanting.”

Shift in identity. As for how Elsie's identity changed through engaging in AR, she offered that she feels that she can “put many activities into one integrated sense of... way of being.” Elsie said that she no longer has to differentiate between her different selves: academic, researcher, therapist, and the like. She offered that having done AR “helps me to bring everything together.”

John. Through John's narrative data, I created three research narratives: *appreciating nuance*, *broadening view of counselling*, and *shift in relational practice*.

Appreciating nuance. This theme captures the idea that having done AR aided John in becoming more attuned to and appreciative of nuances of information, context, and process. For example: “... That has been useful for me... to learn from action research that counselling can also be a very messy project... and that's okay.” He also pointed to an increased sensitivity to language and language use: “Language is not innocent. I'm... very into the mindfulness of language use.” And to offer the last example of John's growing appreciation of nuance, he said, “... I think it has enhanced my... way of trying to broaden my views of the many ways of being a human being and always challenging my prejudices.”

Broadening view of counselling. *Broadened view of counselling* speaks to an expanded understanding of what comprises the whole of counselling. John said it better:

Counselling for me is not something only happening in conversations in the counselling office. It may also be outside doing community work or social work... Because action research is also doing things outside and in the community. But it also can be all these conversations... I have broadened my idea of counselling after action research.

Shift in relational practice. Similar to Courtney and Carmen, I created a theme for John which captured how his relational practice has shifted through engaging in AR. John offered: “Doing action research has given me hope to see that there’s things to change and do together. I think that’s also in my personal life. It’s the same thing.” Speaking about doing life differently with others, John said, “It has changed my relationships in ways that we are always trying to do things together... Find projects. You’re more actively seeking and partnering up with people.”

Lola. Reading through Lola’s narrative data, I created two research narratives: *shift in change practice* and *shift in counselling practice*.

Shift in change practice. A change practice is any activity through which a person works to transform the world. In this theme, I aggregate ideas where Lola spoke to how her change practice has shifted through her engagement in AR. Talking about a broader social issue – psychotropic medication – Lola said, “What are we doing together, and what will be our action plan? Are we targeting government... to subsidize... medication?... It will involve the clients or potentially their communities where they belong.” She added: “[The counselling conversation] cannot stay here in the private room... What actions are we taking together to impact the community?” As I understand it, Lola began to explore more broadly how she can impact change with others following her engagement with AR.

Shift in counselling practice. In terms of shifts in how Lola counsels, she offered a few examples; for instance, “The impact is of together finding what are the needs and... priorities..., and solution. The democratic intention of... collaborative-participatory intention.” Lola also shared, “It’s not only me who takes the lead,... instead of hierarchies where I am the counsellor... and I have more power.”

Madeline. I created three themes through Madeline’s narrative data: *interest in antistigma work*, *shift in counselling practice*, and *shift in research practice*.

Interest in antistigma work. Madeline offered that engaging in AR augmented her interest in work that decreases social hostility towards marginalized groups (e.g., parents of those who experience mental health concerns). She said, “I now do a lot of presenting... to talk about families and how we can avoid judging... and put [them] in that position of power, that they can be the authority on their experience.” Madeline also offered how she trains new clinicians: “I give this three hour workshops about keeping stigma out of clinical practice.”

Shift in counselling practice. Madeline offered numerous examples of how her counselling practice was changed following her engagement in AR. For example: “... It has made me respect that other people can direct me as the therapist... two people in the driving seat, you know?” She also said that she began to practice “... more respectfully... It comes down to that position of expert versus... learner.”

Shift in research practice. Madeline shared that engaging in AR has made her “... probably more of a stalwart in participatory action research.” Moreover, she offered, “... [Action research] can help [researchers] avoid a lot of the pitfalls that some of my colleagues go through because they didn’t set their projects up this way. They pulled items for a measure out of thin air... They’ve spent three years working on a thesis and nothing will come of it.”

Megan. Finally, here are the two themes that I created out of Megan’s narrative data: *shift in change practice* and *shift in identity*.

Shift in change practice. On the topic of how Megan’s change practice transformed through her engagement in AR, she offered: “I have to back up my participants. When we are exposed to stories [of marginalization], we can’t duck the issue... I have to use my privilege for

the good.” Noteworthy, she added: “Action research has forced me to continue to lay aside my own desires..., wants, and needs and do it because it is for the community.”

Shift in identity. Megan offered that she began to think about herself and her life in new ways. As an example, Megan said, “... I have been forced through action research to admit my wrongs about what I believed about certain communities... to examine what I believed about myself and about my field.” To add: “... being a gay woman of colour, there were certainly needs for me to examine my own internalized homophobia and... racism.”

Having written out the within-transcript research narratives for each coinquirer, I will now share the process that I used to create across-transcript research narratives. Following this, I will expound on the across-transcript research narratives.

Across-Transcript Research Narratives

After having created the within-transcript research narratives, I moved on to developing across-transcript research narratives. That is, I developed a common narrative *between* and *across* the narrative data selectively summarized above. I created, organized, and reorganized themes and subthemes. When creating themes and subthemes, I followed a similar process used for the within-transcript research narratives, giving them a brief name that I felt would succinctly reflect their collective meaning. As I did this, I asked myself whether my coinquirers would approve of my titles and whether they could see themselves in them. I did this out of appreciation of the co-constructive nature of human science knowledge products.

Allow me to use a concrete example to illustrate the analytical process. Returning to Figure 1, Courtney told me that AR reinforced “a space of, of curiosity and collaboration” (line 482 in the original transcript). I coded this statement with *more curiosity* (as well as *surprised that enjoys research*). When analyzing the data within-transcript, I grouped this code into the

theme *shift in relational practice*. I did this because I felt that being more curious and collaborative is a relational activity that was augmented by Courtney's engagement with AR.

When I began analyzing *across* transcripts, I created a theme called *counselling practice*, where I felt this code best sat. I grouped ideas in the theme *counselling practice* that contained instances of narrative data where coinquirers spoke to how they practiced differently following their engagement in AR. This included three subthemes: *models and antimodels*, *process-mindedness*, and *counselling stance*. I felt the code *more curiosity* best fit in the subtheme *counselling stance* because I understand curiosity and collaboration as being elements of how a counsellor does their clinical work. Others (i.e., Elsie, John, Lola, Madeline, and Megan) also offered examples of their relational presentation of themselves shifted in counselling practice following their engagement in AR.

Allow me to tie everything together. I started with creating the code *more curiosity* for Courtney, which I grouped into *shift in relational practice* in her within-transcript research narrative. Comparing and contrasting across coinquirers' narrative data, I grouped the code *more curiosity* in the across-transcript research narrative of *counselling practice*. Specifically, grouping this code with other coinquirers' codes that shared in meaning and words, I created the subtheme *counselling stance* (I provide examples of quotes in the subtheme below).

In the section above, I provided the reader with a transparent account of how I produced across-transcript research narratives. At the end of the analytical process, I created six themes and nine subthemes that I understand as being my broad research narrative in answer to my thesis question: how are counsellors transformed through their engagement in AR? In Table 1, one can find an outline of this broader research narrative.

Table 3

Research Narratives: Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
<i>Broadening change efforts</i>	<i>Beyond counselling</i> <i>Community-mindedness</i> <i>Value-based stances</i>
<i>Counselling practice</i>	<i>Models and antimodels</i> <i>Process-mindedness</i> <i>Counselling stance</i>
<i>Critical practice</i>	<i>Checking assumptions</i> <i>Critical thoughtframes</i> <i>Self in society</i>
<i>Identity construction</i>	
<i>Relational practice</i>	
<i>Research practice</i>	

Broadening change efforts. In this theme, I organized what coinquirers shared in terms of change efforts that extend beyond individual counselling work. Understanding counselling to be a form of change-doing, coinquirers shared how engaging in AR helped them consider or begin to act on other ways of cocreating a difference in the world. This included thinking and doing *beyond counselling*, embracing *community-mindedness*, and taking a *value-based stance*.

Beyond counselling. In this subtheme, I capture the idea that coinquirers thought about change efforts as comprised of more than just counselling. People enter the counselling profession wishing to make a difference. However, counselling is undoubtedly not the only way to cocreate change in the world. It seems that AR has been one way of helping coinquirers come to understand this. John mentioned:

... Counselling for me is not something only happening in conversations... in [the] counselling office. It may also be outside doing community work or social work... because action research is also doing things outside and in the community. But it also can

be the all these conversations... Maybe I have broadened my idea of counselling after doing action research.

Relatedly, coinquirers shared that change is not confined to the counselling room. They wondered and explored other ways they could cocreate change. Lola offered:

... I continue the conversation outside... So, it is not only about what happened in the private room, you know what I mean? Those conversations are not only there. Like, [clients'] struggles continue. But, what I have not done is, in terms of, a major influence of action research is that I do something with my clients outside the private room.

This curiosity around what else one can do as a change agent was a feature arising from having done AR for some coinquirers. Taken together, this subtheme reflects that some coinquirers felt AR provided them with an avenue for exploring change activities beyond counselling.

Community mindedness. This subtheme contains instances where coinquirers talked about considering communities in their change work. For example, as offered earlier, Lola inviting clients to join with others in their community to address issues important to them. However, thinking outside the scope of counselling, Lola said that, in combination with situational analysis, “action research... changed my limited understanding of myself as I am an agent of change with direct with people... The larger impact.” This community-mindedness, seeking and exploring how else one can get involved, is precisely what Megan spoke to as well: “And action research has forced me to continue to... lay aside my own desires and my own wants and needs and do it because it is for the community... It’s not for the accolade or for the award.” *Community mindedness* as a subtheme represents for me one avenue that some coinquirers went to in seeking other methods of impact and change.

Value-based stances. For some coinquirers, AR brought out or refined their desire and action for value-based stances. Value-based stances included using their power for good and in ways to help others. As Megan noted, “I have to use my privilege for the good, for the greater good of all.” Elsie, to add: “It helped me to feel more, in some ways, empowered in terms of the like the stances I take, or in terms of doing advocacy... or wanting to challenge other people.” Lola shared that she became more of an advocate, working with others: “I became more involved with, for example, advocating for women. And then I started with my friends a movement.” Value-based stances also include being more courageous in social justice work (as with Megan) and with antistigma initiatives (as with Madeline). In sum, through AR, some coinquirers were presented with opportunities to explore and embrace value-based stances.

Counselling practice. Coinquirers shared ideas that I grouped into *counselling practice*. In this broad theme, I organize ways in which coinquirers’ counselling work may have been influenced by engaging in AR. I constructed three subthemes that I felt best captured coinquirers’ data. Coinquirers shared *models and antimodels* of the kind of counsellor they wished to continue becoming. They also spoke to becoming aware of or embracing *process-mindedness*, being sensitized to what emerges in the moment in the counselling encounter. Lastly, *counselling stance* is a subtheme in which I captured coinquirers’ narrative data around who they are and how they perform in the counselling seat.

Models and antimodels. This subtheme contains ideas of the kind of counsellor coinquirers wish to or not to continue becoming. Courtney offered a vision of herself in the future in the following passage: “A counsellor who appreciates that sometimes the people who are consulting with me with the expectation that I’m gonna have some brilliance to offer them already have way better ideas than I do.” Conversely, Elsie shared “I also learned how I don’t

wanna be in some ways... like I learned what I want to do, but I also got to see what I don't want to do and how I don't want to interact with people." Together, through AR, Courtney and Elsie imagined the kind of counsellor they wished both to and not to become.

Process-mindedness. This subtheme contains the idea that coinquirers began to attend more deeply to whatever emerged for them in every passing moment. This is especially relevant to the work of counselling, where there are endless avenues of information to which one can direct their attention and to which to respond. Coinquirers shared that through AR, they tended to the process of performing therapy, becoming more conscious of the influences of their words and actions and considering more broadly what is present in the room. Courtney recounted this shift toward process:

There's more room to do that in counselling too. So when people are talking about the process of counselling or my relationship to them, and how it is different or the same as other relationships in their life. It's more zooming out.

Lola offered a similar account, indicating her becoming more sensitive to process:

... One of the things that I learned in the action research piece is to be more mindful, to enjoy more the process. The results will be like great. But the richer part was the process per se, the conversations per se, and of course that will be shared with other people.

With this process-mindedness, Madeline offered that she became more sensitive to her influence on clients: "I need to be more aware of myself and the process between the two of us."

In this subtheme, I also included narrative data that I saw connecting to a deepening of awareness of what was present in the counselling room. Elsie made this point clear, I thought: "I think that it has me be more aware of everything outside of the room that's impacting what's happening in the room."

Counselling stance. In this subtheme, I discuss the counselling position that coinquirers mentioned as being influenced by their engagement in AR. By counselling stance, I mean the counsellor's set of beliefs and practices regarding their counselling work: embracing not-knowing, curiosity, and vulnerability, becoming more person-centred, as well as having more clarity and confidence in their practice. In response to how Courtney saw herself as a counsellor following AR, she replied with, "someone who's becoming increasingly okay with all the not knowing," a reflection John similarly shared. I saw words such as "curiosity, vulnerability, openness, humble," also fitting in this subtheme. Madeline and Megan mentioned becoming more person-centred (i.e., a counselling position that holds clients in high esteem, concerning their story and expertise).

Meanwhile, Elsie noted being better able to connect with diverse groups of people: "... I learned how to be welcomed into people's homes and to not come off as a researcher, to not come off as someone with a lot of power, even though I have it." Connected to the previous two ideas, and tied to the theme of identity construction, is the final piece of this subthematic puzzle: the counsellor's sense of themselves. Carmen recounted: "It's helped me be much more intentional about what I'm doing, because I have a much better vision of what it is I'm doing." So, in this clarity of vision and intentionality perhaps emerges a sense of confidence, which Madeline spoke to: "It builds my self-esteem around what I'm doing here."

Critical practice. In this theme, I grouped narrative data that I thought fit under the title *critical practice*. I included instances where, through AR, coinquirers became more mindful of their realities, deepening their understanding of the world and asking more critical questions. With this term, I include *checking one's assumptions*, taking up *critical thoughtframes*, and noting *self in society*.

Checking assumptions. A few coinquirers shared that AR may have aided in the extent to which they actively reflect on their own worldview. Courtney shared: “I guess as a result [of doing action research]... I check expectations more often.” For her, this meant acknowledging that she may find herself in situations where she has preconceived ideas of what may emerge. Elsie echoed this idea: “I’ve become much more aware of any assumptions I may have going into the room.” John also shared that this was the case for him: “But I think it has enhanced my way of trying to broaden my views of the many ways of being a human being and always challenging my own prejudices.”

Critical thoughtframes. To me, a thoughtframe is a collection of thoughts and actions with which a person responds to the world. A critical thoughtframe, in this case, is taking up a form of living where one asks broader questions about systems, oppression, and social justice. Barbara shared: “[Action research] sensitizes me to marginality, sensitizes me to oppression.” She later shared she has “more critical thinking around what we’re doing. And what we stand for, who we are.” John also shared a similar experience: “But I think action research has, and counselling, in these kinds of way have, is always challenging my values and ideas.” Through engaging in AR, it seems my coinquirers developed a more critical way of responding to the world, asking broader questions, becoming more sensitive to what they understand as fair and deeming intervention.

Self in society. A few coinquirers offered the idea that AR helped them expand their understanding of themselves in society. This also meant a broader array of experiences to draw from in their various practices and a more profound sense of others’ suffering. Barbara said:

It’s broadened my understanding of the human experience in ways that I didn’t know before. So I can open up to suffering in deeper ways. It also helped in a weird thing, is

that it also prepares me for suffering. It prepares me for stories that can be really hard. It makes me a little tougher, I think.

Self in society, as I understood it, also included a recognition of the messiness of life. John shared: “So what I learned from action research is that I learned that I like the chaotic things..., it’s messy,... and it never turns out what you have planned.” Together, this subtheme is broadly asking, “what does it mean to be a person, living with others?” Barbara and John helped show how AR may have played a role in answering this question for them.

Identity construction. AR seems to be a human activity where coinquirers’ identities go through a process of construction. A few of my coinquirers shared their own experiences with this. Some identity construction processes involved integrating, embracing, or legitimizing one’s sense of self. For example, Barbara shared that “It’s helped me to crystallize my desire to be involved in some sort of social justice endeavour.” For Megan, having done AR provided her with an opportunity to be visible with who she was in society:

But from that painful experience and the courage to do the research, it allowed me to grow as a human being, because I either had to come to terms with and embrace who I was and be unafraid to expose that to people who were not gonna accept me, or I was gonna continue to live in a very closeted, uncomfortable life.

For Carmen, having done AR helped her have a better vision about what to focus on and how she wishes to work. Said Carmen: “It sort of reinforces the part of me that... is not terribly linear, that kind of likes being in the mess of things, really likes the process more than having real tight goals.” Taken together, AR seems to be an environment where coinquirers construct identity.

Relational practice. In this theme, I grouped segments of data that I thought reflected my coinquirers’ offer that engaging in AR shifted how they go about their relational practice. By

relational practice, I refer to how they respond to others in society, make and create friendships, and take up personal projects. For instance, Megan shared:

So when I have relationships with people that won't scream obscenities or carry a sign, but will say things that will stifle beliefs that I have or experiences that I've had, it has forced me to have to move away from them.

Having done AR, she became more selective in her personal and professional relationships, needing to "move away" from people with whom she no longer connected. This is in contrast to previously, when she felt uncomfortable challenging others and speaking her mind. On the topic of personal and professional, Carmen offered that the "boundaries between the personal and the professional are more minimized." As the last example, John talked about seeking out new relationships with others:

... I think action research is so fun and so engaging that I think it also have [sic] helped me... to see that there's always a project or always something to do... It has changed my relationships in ways that we always try to do things together. Togeth[er], yeah. Find projects.

In sum, this theme to me signifies how engaging in AR may have shifted coinquirers' relational practice within and outside a professional context. They mentioned being more selective of who not to associate with and whom to seek out for friendship and work.

Research practice. Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not mention that some coinquirers shared they were influenced in terms of research practice (i.e., how they think about and perform inquiry). I brought together narrative data which I thought reflected this shift. For instance, Courtney said that she was surprised that she enjoyed carrying out AR: "I never considered myself a researcher." John spoke to his refined view of participant involvement:

But it's different things at stake and different people. And also, the other things that informed my action research projects are that, for me it's, it's very important that the participants are involved in developing the research questions from the beginning, because within [the] discourse of user involvement, they come in late. So, it's my research questions and they have to apply to my questions. And they, then they instead become consultants for me and advisors for me.

Finally, Madeline shared how she became a "stalwart" for participatory research, teaching incoming students about its importance and mentoring them in the process. So, in this theme, I grouped how coinquirers were influenced in terms of how they go about or engage in their research practice following their engagement in AR.

In the next section, I wrap together this Chapter's ideas to prepare us for the Discussion.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I invited the reader into my analytic process. Namely, I outlined that I was a reflexive, active participant in the creation of the conversations with coinquirers. I also shared aspects of my reflexivity in how I transcribed the data. Additionally, recognizing my influence on the construction of the research narrative, I offered the steps I took to go from narrative data to codes and themes within-transcript. I then made transparent how I went from within-transcript narrative data to my full analysis across-transcripts.

In this project, I asked: how are counsellors transformed through their engagement in AR? To answer this question, I performed thematic NA, through which I constructed six themes and nine subthemes for the across-transcript research narrative. Through AR, my coinquirers *broadened their change efforts*, thinking and acting *beyond counselling*, embracing *community-mindedness*, and taking up *value-based stances*. Additionally, AR was transformative in

coinquirers' *counselling practice*, providing them with *models and antimodels* of how they would like to counsel, deepening their *process-mindedness*, and shifting their *counselling stance*. In the theme of *critical practice*, coinquirers shared *checking their assumptions*, being more *critical in their thoughtframes*, and deepening their understanding and performance of *self in society*. They shared that AR was a means to *construct their identity*, reinforcing of past aspects of their self or creating them anew. Lastly, they noted that AR was a means to shift how they thought about and performed their *personal practice of relationships* and *research endeavours*.

To arrive at these research narratives, I made transparent my decisions about choice of methodology, transcription process, and steps in carrying out the analysis. In the next Chapter, I will speak to these results in light of limitations and implications for theory and practice.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

In this project, I explored how counsellors are transformed through their engagement in AR. I spoke with eight counsellors who had done their thesis or dissertation engaging in AR or had published on an AR project. In this Chapter, I review my theoretical approach and methodology for arriving at an answer to the above research question. Next, I connect my research findings with extant literature. I then present the limitations of this project. Following, I offer the implications this project holds for novice inquirers using NA, the field of counselling, future-forming practices, and further research.

Theoretical and Methodological Overview

I used SC as my theoretical approach. Social constructionism is a metatheory that holds that people co-construct their lives through relational activity (McNamee, 2012). People can perform methodologies of inquiry (i.e., AR [Assoiants, 2016]), to collaboratively change their futures, also called future-forming research (Gergen, 2014) or practical-critical activity (Newman & Holzman, 2006). How people organize their lives can be captured by narratives (Anderson, 2007). Narratives are a way through which individuals make meaning of their lives (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Narratives can also organize how people “go on” together, structuring social processes (Bruner, 1987). While narratives can become “problem-saturated,” people can also collaboratively “re-author” them, co-constructing narratives of hope, best wishes, and desires for change (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Action research is a social activity that facilitates this collective re-authoring (Gergen, 2014). Notably, counselling and AR are both intentional, relational situations of social change. Tying this back to my personal experiences of having been transformed through collaborative social change, I wished to explore how counsellors, in particular, are transformed given their professional overlap in practice with AR.

To answer this question, I used a semi-structured interview format with eight counsellor-inquirers who had done their thesis or dissertation on AR or who had published on an AR project. I transcribed the co-constructed interviews and sent them to coinquirers for member checking. Then, I used thematic NA as my analytical methodology, focusing on the *content* of narrative data rather than on *how* or *for whom* it was constructed (Riessman, 2008). I first created within-transcript research narratives (i.e., themes and subthemes) for each coinquirer by focusing on narrative segments which were in answer to my research question. Next, I built across-transcript research narratives, analyzing them for common ideas, words, and phrases *between* coinquirers' narrative data and research narratives. I arrived at six themes and nine subthemes as the overall answer to my research question.

Understanding this project as a relational activity (McNamee, 2012), I acknowledged my reflexivity in influencing its direction. I attended to the sociocultural-historical context in which this project was performed (i.e., counselling, AR, etc.; Phoenix, 2013), though I did not focus on this as a feature of analysis. I also recognized that the questions I asked and how I asked them shaped the direction of the research interviews (Gergen, 2014). To add, I was sensitive to the ways that coinquirers and I were ongoingly influencing one another through dialogue (Riessman, 2008). An example of my sensitivity is that I experienced and shared moments of vulnerability or uncertainty throughout the conversations. Having outlined my theoretical position and methodology, I would like to present my findings in connection with extant literature.

Findings and Connections to Extant Literature

“The origins of action lie within the realm of relationships” (Gergen, 2014, p. 20).

In this section, I revisit my findings, connecting them to published literature. There is a dearth of work on how counsellors are transformed through their engagement in AR.

Nonetheless, I was able to find 13 articles of counsellor-inquirers transformed through AR, which I connect below with my findings.

First, my coinquirers mentioned that engaging in AR *broadened their change efforts*, exploring and acting on means *beyond counselling* to create social impact. This transformation through AR was also shared by de Santana and Neto (2015). Next, my coinquirers offered that they embraced *community-mindedness*, sensitizing themselves to the needs of those around them. Additionally, they took up *value-based stances*, using their power and privilege for the betterment people in their lives, both within and outside the counselling room (e.g., advocacy, antistigma initiatives, etc.). Other counsellor-inquirers have also written about taking up value-based stances through AR (e.g., Esmiol et al., 2012; Lykes, 2013; Pickering, 2012; Robinson, 1999; Smith & Romero, 2010). For instance, said Pickering (2012),

This research has fuelled in me an even greater desire to work in a social justice context, to bring awareness to injustices that go unnoticed, and help those of us in the counselling profession to work toward alleviating the roots of mental and emotional distress (p. 91).

Second, my coinquirers spoke to transformations of their *counselling practice*. Other counsellor-inquirers have also written about similar impact (e.g., Chou, 2013; de Santana & Neto, 2015; Ness & Strong, 2012; Robinson, 1999). Specifically, my coinquirers mentioned refining their *models and antimodels* of the kind of counsellor they wish and wish not to become. They also shared a refinement of their *process-mindedness*, becoming more aware of the relational dance that is the counselling encounter and noting what else, socially, may impact on their work. Borg and colleagues (2012) wrote on a similar experience: “co-producing knowledge is not an automatic process and requires a sustained and committed cooperative relationship, and it requires insightful and reflexive facilitation that pays attention to the processes and ensures

incorporation of the shared principles of participation” (p. 13). Lastly, and related to the previous quote, my coinquirers offered that their *counselling stance* shifted through engagement in AR. This includes how they comport themselves and relate to their clients in counselling. A shift in counselling stance following AR was written about by other counsellor-inquirers (e.g., Borg et al., 2012; Chou, 2013; de Santana & Neto, 2015; Esmiol et al., 2012; Howton, 2011; Lykes, 2013; Pickering, 2012; Robinson, 1999).

Third, *critical practice* seemed to be transformed following engagement in AR. In this theme, I captured my coinquirers’ deepening mindfulness of their lived experience, where they ask questions and act from a critical and not taken-for-granted stance. This included *checking assumptions* (i.e., curiosities about worldview and openness to changing it), a transformation shared by de Santana and Neto (2015). Included as well in this theme is a refinement of *critical thoughtframes*: a thoughtfulness around social systems, oppression, and social justice. Other counsellor-inquirers shared similar experiences (e.g., Borg et al., 2012; de Santana & Neto, 2015; Esmiol et al., 2012; Lykes et al., 2011; Pickering, 2012; Smith & Romero, 2010). For example, Esmiol and colleagues (2012) wrote: “What resulted was the subjective experience of ‘a light turning on’ and seeing what we had not seen before. The previously invisible societal underpinnings moved from our peripheral vision into the foreground of our awareness” (p. 577). Lastly, this theme included *self in society*, where coinquirers shared an expanded understanding of themselves in society and a broader set of experiences to draw on in their life and practice, a reflection common with Esmiol and colleagues (2012).

Fourth, coinquirers offered that through AR, they engaged in the process of *identity construction*, which included integrating, embracing, or legitimizing their sense of self. This process centred around how they understood themselves, whom they were becoming, and what

future actions make sense for them to perform. Howton (2011), Johnson and Martínez Guzmán (2013), and Smith and Romero (2010) indicated similar experiences through engagement in AR.

Fifth, I learned that my coinquirers' *relational practice* was transformed (i.e., how they respond to others in society, make and create friendships, and take up personal projects). In the literature, I was not able to find others' transformation of relational practice through AR.

Sixth, and lastly, coinquirers shared that their *research practice* shifted, including how they think about research and which projects appeal to them. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many counsellor-inquirers similarly wrote about their research practice having been transformed through engagement in AR (e.g., Borg et al., 2012; de Santana & Neto, 2015; Esmiol et al., 2012; Howton, 2011; Robinson, 1999; Sandoval et al., 2012; Smith & Romero, 2010).

I wish to return to the three articles I mentioned in Chapter 3 and other work in this realm. What I added to the literature that has not been addressed is, first, a conversation with counsellors who have engaged in AR. As I found, the few counsellor-inquirers who have published on AR addressed their own transformations. I wished to move closer to Chou's (2013) piece, exploring *how* a counsellor-inquirer, having engaged in AR, transformed as "a researcher, clinician, and individual" (p. 178). Second, I found a few unique transformative influences of engaging in AR: embracing *community-mindedness*, refining *models and antimodels* in counsellors' *counselling practice*, and shifting *relational practice*. Having connected my findings with extant literature, I would like to offer this project's limitations.

Limitations

As with any inquiry, there are numerous limitations to this "socially-crafted achievement" (Shotter, 2012a). Tracing my inquiry process, I would like to speak to theoretical foundations, recruitment, analysis, and findings.

First, I carried out this project with an understanding of rigour acceptable to members of the NA community (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). I could have chosen to do an observational study or used a psychometrically-validated tool – and I encourage other inquirers to embrace such directions – but the goal was to learn coinquirers’ narratives. In Bruner’s (1991) words, “Just as our experience of the natural world tends to imitate the categories of familiar science, so our experience of human affairs comes to take the form of the narratives we use in telling about them” (p. 5). Thus, I chose a frame of inquiry that I thought suited my research question.

Second, due to time limitations, I did not send either the within- or across-transcript research narratives for my coinquirers to review. Doing this would have been a more authentic performance of relational inquiry (McNamee, 2012) and would have provided further credibility (Riessman, 2008). In further iterations of relational inquiry, I will ensure that I do this as a step in the data analysis and write-up of findings. A further step would also be to collaboratively design the research question and protocol and engage in analysis and write-up together.

Third, I spoke with a particular demographic: counsellor-inquirers. Perhaps there is something unique about counsellors who engage in AR, in that they self-select this methodology *because* they wish for transformation (for those around them as well as themselves). Moreover, I had a presupposition that my coinquirers experienced transformation through AR. While being open to the possibility of conversations about this not being the case, my coinquirers did share a wealth of confirmatory narratives. Given that my coinquirers self-selected to participate, a limitation is that numerous AR counsellor-inquirers did not choose to take part. Thus, the results may not represent the experiences of counsellors-inquirers who did not choose to participate or counsellors who do not identify as inquirers or who have not engaged in AR.

Fourth, I chose to keep the term “transformation,” despite not all coinquirers resonating with it. I did this for pragmatic reasons, considering it a superset of other change terms (e.g., reinforce, change, inform, etc.). In future projects, I would work collaboratively to cocreate a term with which coinquirers would all feel comfortable.

Fifth, I would like to point out once again my reflexivity in shaping this project and the sociocultural-historical context in which it was cocreated, which influenced the findings. Some have considered this subjectivity of the researcher as a limitation of NA (e.g., Greenhalgh, Russell, & Swinglehurst, 2005). Altogether, I recognize the lack of generalizability and replicability (Squire, 2013) of this inquiry, though generalizability was never the aim and typically is not an aim in NA. Instead, I hope that what I learned and shared can “prove useful in other contexts that [have] similarities” (Yardley, 2008, p. 238). That is, this is not a “finalizing document” (Frank, 2005); instead, it is aimed at inviting us to continue asking: how are we transformed through engaging in collaborative social change?

Implications

In this section, I tie the project back to the original hopes outlined in the Introduction: personal and social influence. Allow me to speak to each of these, in turn.

Personal implications. It would be ironic not to share how I was transformed through engaging in relational inquiry. This project has influenced me in numerous ways. First, it reinforced and deepened my interest in practical-critical, future-forming practices. I began understanding that many diverse communities engage in this type of work, with different terminologies, tools, and approaches (e.g., non-profits [S. Vijayan, personal communication, May 21, 2019]). Second, I am grateful to have begun a vocational journey as a practical-critical, future-forming practitioner, and this project has aided in this process. Third, Dr. Strong’s

ongoing invitation to write out *how* I carried out the project (as in Chapters 3 and 4) has helped me refine my processual awareness, which I now find activated in all other facets of life: personal, professional, and relational.

My ultimate worry for this thesis was that it would be just another printed collection of pages, gathering dust on a long-forgotten bookshelf. It pleases me to think that, perhaps, it may have some utility outside of just being a knowledge product; that perhaps it is a practical-critical, future-forming project like those about which I wrote.

Societal implications. I feel this project and its outcomes have social implications for novice researchers using NA, counselling andragogies, future-forming practices and AR, and further research.

Novice researchers using narrative analysis. This project provides a clear overview of how I engaged in NA, a relational analytical methodology that intentionally has no definitive set of instructions (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Bold, 2012; Riessman, 2008). My hope is that it will be of service to other neophytes in making sense of their inquiry.

Counselling. I found that engaging in AR transformed my coinquirers in ways that may prove helpful in educating the next generation of counsellors.

Firstly, engaging in AR seems to influence counsellors' counselling stance, a term I find synonymous with the "therapeutic alliance." The alliance is an agreement between the client and counsellor on goals and tasks, a shared therapeutic bond, and actions taken to resolve strains in the relationship (Bordin, 1994). Over 1000 studies conclude its centrality to the counselling process (Orlinsky, Ronnestad, & Willutzski, 2004). The therapeutic alliance comprises 26-30% of change variance (i.e., how much change happens in clients; Horvath & Symonds, 1991), and client change attributable to the therapeutic alliance is five to seven times that of specific

techniques or therapy schools (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 2010). There has not been a great deal of work on counsellors' professional development on the frontlines (Orlinsky et al., 2004). In the spirit of Ness & Strong (2013), perhaps AR can be performed in counsellor education or frontline setting to improve therapeutic alliance?

Secondly, the counsellors are invited to engage in advocacy, to “address barriers and obstacles that inhibit access and/or the growth and development of clients” (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014, p. 5). Having found that engaging in AR *broadens counsellors' change efforts*, looking *beyond counselling*, embracing *community-mindedness*, and enhancing *value-based stances*, perhaps there is room in counsellor education for AR as part of the curriculum? Chou (2013) similarly argued that AR may improve advocacy competencies.

Lastly, if not for refining skillsets, perhaps counsellors can take up AR as part of their broader toolkit on social change. Smith and Romero (2010) offered that instead of accepting the status quo of how counselling is performed, AR may provide a way of shifting social reality through social healing practices such as collaborative social change.

By inviting AR projects in counsellor education (e.g., Smith et al., 2017), I argue, counsellors may benefit through refining their therapeutic alliance and acting on the ethical requirements of Responsibility to Society (CPA, 2017). Moreover, taking up AR may provide counsellors with a methodology for cocreating change beyond the counselling room.

Future-forming practices and action research. I started this project by mentioning that AR is a form of practical-critical, future-forming research (Assoiants, 2016): a form of inquiry in which alternative narratives are co-constructed (Gergen, 2014; Newman & Holman, 1997). More than simply *described* as world-changing, I have provided and distilled accounts from eight counsellors-inquirers who have engaged in a future-forming practice (i.e., AR) of how they were

influenced by that experience. Their accounts are relevant in opening space for understanding AR as transformative for the practitioner, in textbooks, manuals, and articles.

Second, for researchers accustomed to using AR, some of the questions I used in my semi-structured interview (Appendix C) may prove helpful. They may aid in action researchers' exploration of their transformation through their project, whether as memo or journal prompts (e.g., Kalmbach Phillips & Carr, 2007). I invite action researchers to ongoingly memo about their experiences, thinking not only about insights, but what lasting transformations they underwent because of their engagement with AR.

Additionally, in my narrative literature review, I had trouble finding counsellor-inquirers' transformation through engagement in AR. I applaud AR inquirers (including those in counselling), who tirelessly engage in their practice and write about AR project outcomes, impact on coinquirers, processual lessons of performing AR, insights on the content of the project, and the like. That said, I would like to invite them to take one step further, sharing how *they* are transformed (or not) through their AR experience. Whether through autoethnography, single-author publication, blogs, or otherwise, doing so will allow the community of practical-critical, future-forming practitioners and action researchers to make better sense of their own journeys and more deeply explore the richness that is this field.

Further research. Though this project is but a small, though promising, contribution to the literature, there are still many questions to be asked.

First, I would like to explore the boundaries of AR as transformative. With counselling positioned as a change-oriented profession (ACA, 2014), perhaps my coinquirers were sensitized through their training to their ongoing transformations. Alternatively, perhaps they engaged in AR in a way that would also transform themselves? Would others who perform action research

(i.e., service and experience designers, community organizers, appreciative inquirers, quality improvement specialists, etc.) also experience changes because of this engagement?⁹ Thus, I would wish to ask my research question yet again, opening recruitment to other niches.

Second, I am curious about the temporal boundaries of the transformations my coinquirers experienced. If an inclusion criterion was five years post-engagement with AR, would the narratives hold similarly? Third, what is the cadence of transformation that coinquirers shared? Perhaps doing a longitudinal narrative analysis could provide insight into the *ongoing* change that practical-critical, future-forming practitioners experience during their AR engagement (a psychotherapy example: Georgaca & Avdi, 2019).

Fourth, and lastly, I learned that my coinquirers self-selected to engage AR. Might there be a difference of narrative if, say, AR was a curriculum requirement for counsellor education, as I suggested above? And would counselling students who are obliged to do AR also experience personal transformation the way my coinquirers shared? With the implications of this inquiry outlined, I would like to bring a close to this Chapter.

Conclusion

I feel like [I can] put many activities into one integrated sense of being... So I don't have to be separate, in the way I intervene, or I interact, or when I volunteer with people in a certain way, or a certain area of life. I feel like it's helped me to draw a lot of things together, so I can be an academic and a researcher, while also being a therapist and counsellor, while also intervening or doing good, or... helping people. I don't have to separate myself the researcher, or myself the writer, or whatever else I do. I can kinda

⁹ In my narrative literature review, I found that this was indeed the case. However, I did not find much work like mine, where many action researchers are asked about their transformation (but see Cabaroglu [2014] for a non-counselling example).

draw all the things together... at the point where I may still address or still work against... different sociocultural discourses that impact people (Elsie).

This inquiry was an exploration of how counsellors are transformed through their engagement in AR. I spoke with eight counsellor-inquirers using semi-structured interviews. Focusing on the content of our cocreated dialogue, I analyzed the narrative data to create six themes and nine subthemes of transformation as the across-transcript research narrative.

This inquiry holds personal and social implications. Personally, it deepened my passion for practical-critical, future-forming practices. Socially, this project provides a detailed overview of an intentionally non-manualized methodology (i.e., NA), which may be of service to neophyte narrative analysts. For counsellors, AR may prove helpful in their andragogy to develop their therapeutic alliance as well as skills required for work beyond the counselling room. Counsellors may also consider taking up AR as a way of cocreating social change as part of their broader tool kit. Additionally, this piece is an invitation for action researchers to publish more on *their* experiences of transformation (or lack thereof) through their engagement in AR.

To conclude, I would like to return to the quote with which I opened this inquiry: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it” (Marx, 1932/2001, p. 170). Taking Marx’s invitation a step further, this project is a humble contribution to a conversation on a topic seldom addressed in the literature, and yet vital to so many practical-critical, future-forming endeavours: how are *we* changed through our collaborative social change practices? I will gladly continue asking this question for years to come.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Documents

Image-Based Recruitment Flyer

How are Counsellors Changed Personally and Professionally through their Engagement in Action Research?

Who?

Are you a counsellor who has been involved in an Action Research (AR) project? Was your thesis or dissertation on AR? Or have you published on AR?

What?

If so, I would like to invite you to participate in a study that seeks to explore connections between your work in AR and counselling.

Why?

The purpose of this study is to give counsellors a platform to tell the stories of how they were transformed by their engagement in AR. I hope to learn how enacting AR helps inform professionals' counselling activities.

How?

If you wish to participate, you will be asked to take part in an audio-recorded, in-person or remote interview lasting approximately one hour. This interview will be transcribed for ease of data analysis. You will be asked open-ended questions pertaining to demographics as well as your involvement in AR, your accounts of that experience, and linkages to your practice. Participation is completely voluntary.



Gamayun – Mythical bird in Slavic folklore, all-knowing, sings songs of worldly wisdom and bringing good fortune.

To ensure that your voice is heard throughout this project, you will be contacted via e-mail with a copy of your transcript and final document for you to detail whether these reflect your ideas.

If you wish to learn more, please contact:

<p>Researcher: Art Assoiants BA (Hons.), MSc in Counselling Psychology Student Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary [Contact information removed]</p>	<p>Supervisor: Dr. Tom Strong PhD, Professor Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary [Contact information removed]</p>
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This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

Word-Based Recruitment Document

How are Counsellors Changed Personally and Professionally through their Engagement in Action Research?

Who?

Are you a counsellor who has been involved in an Action Research (AR) project?

- Was your thesis or dissertation on AR?
- Or have you published on AR?

What?

If so, I would like to invite you to participate in a study through which I seek to explore connections between your work in AR and counselling.

Why?

The purpose of this study is to give counsellors a platform to tell the stories of how they were transformed by their engagement in AR. I hope to learn how enacting AR helps inform professionals' counselling activities.

How?

If you wish to participate, you will be asked to take part in an audio-recorded, in-person or remote interview lasting approximately one hour. This interview will be transcribed for ease of data analysis. You will be asked open-ended questions pertaining to demographics as well as your involvement in AR, your accounts of that experience, and linkages to your practice. Participation is completely voluntary.

To ensure that your voice is heard throughout this project, you will be contacted via e-mail with a copy of your transcript and final document for you to detail whether these reflect your ideas.

If you wish to learn more, please contact:

Researcher:

Art Assoiants

BA (Hons.), MSc in Counselling Psychology Student
Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
[Contact information removed]

Supervisor:

Dr. Tom Strong, PhD, Professor
Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
[Contact information removed]

This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

Appendix B

Consent Form



Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Art Assoiants,
BA (Hons.), MSc in Counselling Psychology Student
Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
[Contact information removed]

Supervisor:

Dr. Tom Strong
PhD, Professor
Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
[Contact information removed]

Title of Project:

How are Counsellors Changed Personally and Professionally through their Engagement in Action Research?

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn from counsellors' stories of how they were transformed by their involvement in action research. I wish to learn whether engaging in action research helps inform the ways in which counsellors subsequently enact their counselling endeavours.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded, in-person or remote interview, lasting no longer than an hour. The audiotape will be transcribed into a written format to assist with data

analysis. You will be asked to respond to approximately a dozen open-ended questions related to your demographics, counselling practice, and engagement in action research. Examples include: Describe in detail some of the Action Research (AR) projects you've been involved with. What connections do you make between counselling and AR? How do you identify as a counsellor following your engagement in AR?

You will be asked if you are comfortable with a full release of your transcript. If this is the case, you will be given an opportunity to cut out portions of the transcript that fit with your preferred level of anonymity.

You will be sent a copy of your transcribed interview to review for accuracy. If you do not reply within two weeks, it will be assumed that you accept the transcription.

Once the data has been transformed into a finalized version, you will be contacted via e-mail with a copy of the finalized document and your transcript for you to detail whether they are representative of your ideas. If you do not reply within two weeks, it will be assumed you accept the finalized version.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether, refuse to participate in parts of the study, decline to answer any and all questions, and withdraw from the study at any time.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to detail your current counselling practice, involvement in action research, and gender. You will also be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose any other demographic information you deem pertinent. These will be obtained in order to contextualize the data historically and culturally.

The completed document will not include combinations of data about you that would reveal your personal identity in the final write-up, should you wish this to be the case. You will be asked the following question to reflect your level of comfort with anonymity:

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___
The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

I accept the full release of my transcript: Yes: ___ No: ___

The interview will be audiotaped. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the recordings. The recordings will not be shown in public. Portions of the interview may be used verbatim in the completed document to help demonstrate a link between data and findings.

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. The potential benefits include a greater sense of awareness about the counsellor's involvement in both counselling and action research.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

No one except the researcher and the supervisor will be given access the survey, audio recordings, or transcripts. An exception will be made to the last point, should you wish it to be the case. You will be given an opportunity to cut out portions of the transcript that fit with your preferred level of anonymity.

You will be asked to review the finalized version of the write-up to check for accuracy as well as edits portions pertinent to your preferred level of anonymity.

The data (i.e., audio recordings, transcripts, and demographic information) will be digitally stored as password encrypted computer files for five years, at which time, they will be permanently erased.

You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study without penalty. Should you wish to withdraw, all of your information (i.e., interview and demographic) will be destroyed and not used in the creation of the final document.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Researcher: Art Assoiants, BA (Hons.),
MSc in Counselling Psychology Student
Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
[Contact information removed]

Supervisor: Dr. Tom Strong
PhD, Professor
Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary
[Contact information removed]

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-4283/210-6289; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What interested you to get involved in participating in this study?
2. What is your conceptualization/ definition of action research?
3. Tell me a little bit about your own exposure to AR and how you got involved in it.
4. AR:
 - a. How, why, and when did you initially become involved in using AR?
 - i. How many projects did you undertake using AR? For how long?
 - b. Describe in more detail some of the AR projects you've been involved with.
 - c. What did you connect with and what stood out for you in the process?
5. Counselling:
 - a. Do you currently counsel? How long have you been doing this? In what kind of context? What kinds of clients and client characteristics do you work with?
 - i. What kind of theoretical approaches did and do you draw from?
6. Other:
 - a. What is your gender?
 - b. How old are you?
 - c. What other demographic or contextual details do you consider relevant to my understanding of your involvement in AR and personal and professional change (i.e., cultural, socio-economic, ethnic, etc.)?
7. Counselling:
 - a. What connections do you make between counselling and AR?
 - b. How has engaging in AR enhanced or changed the way you counsel?
 - c. What did you learn from AR that now informs your work?
 - d. What is different about how you approach counselling relationships after having done AR (negotiation and collaboration)?
 - e. How do you identify as a counsellor following your engagement in AR?
8. How has being involved in AR changed or enhanced you as a person?
9. How has having done AR changed your personal or professional relationships and/ or how you do them?
10. What question would you ask yourself about this topic that I have not yet asked? Should one or more come to mind, kindly answer them.

Appendix D

Demonstration of Analogue Analytical Process

Translational:
 Awareness of context - systems influences → awareness of context/systems
 Many voices for change → Change multilogue
 Enhance what's not heard - not narrow perspective
 Know more about therapy. → opening up thoughts
 Not to be over difference. → More awareness
 Aggregate info → I's & O's. → Better questions for better I's.
 Open & vulnerable + P's. → Openness/vulnerability (relationality)
 Perform as a human/not res. ex → Role - more human, not role-based
 Balance power with vulnerability. → Balance (power/vulnerability)
 Enhanced awareness of assumptions → awareness of ass'ts (also expectations?)
 It's okay to be flexible with power → Flexibility in use of power

ID: more personable / equal / real. → ID - humanness
 less "offerings" → equal
 → inclusive.

Person: widened horizons → Openness of thoughts.
 awareness of what's going on → Sensitivity to process.
 deepened awareness re impacts in room → sensitivity to context.
 integrated sense of being. → Integrated self.

Rel's: more empowered re status of advocacy → Advocate
 stronger status in rels → stronger status

Jeha (5) → Democratic
 → Co-crete
 Connect: Democratic way of co-creating knowledge

AR & C: Co-crete ideas, shared knowledge
 Practice before theory
 Practice before research
 Co-crete ~~can~~ local knowledge
 Counsel. come as AR convo. → Co-crete, local
 → Same kinds of convo. 5

(I) Connect to Jeha re coordinated services