

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Gratefulness for kind and loving relationships experienced in the film-viewing brought back memories of our own personal relationships, bringing forth in us our own gratefulness like bells echoing in the still air.

(Lu, 2010)

Background

Although there are reports of the therapeutic use of film as early as the 1920s in the United States (Portadin, 2006; Powell, 2008), the practice of using a film as a technique in counselling and psychotherapy has only recently gathered momentum (Kuriansky, Vallarelli, DelBuono, & Ortman, 2010). It is increasingly being utilised across a range of therapy settings by therapists from all the major theoretical orientations, with a diversity of client populations.

Proponents of the use of film in therapy claim that this approach can have many benefits for a client (Hesley & Hesley, 2001). These range from the validating experience of identifying with a film character whose circumstances are similar to the client's own, to the exploration of a wide range of issues that can be addressed because the number and variety of films which can be accessed are abundant (Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Karlinsky, 2003).

While numerous case studies have been published (e.g., Berg-Cross, Jennings, & Baruch, 1990; Byrd, Forisha, & Ramsdell, 2006; Christie & McGrath, 1987, 1989; Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Heston & Kottman, 1997), and surveys conducted on the use of film by therapists (Lampropoulos, Kazantzis, & Deane, 2004), there is a paucity of both qualitative and quantitative research (Schulenberg, 2003; Sharp, Smith, & Cole, 2002; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). However a significant number of books offering movie guides and presenting the use of film as a self-help tool have been published (Grace, 2005; Peske & West, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004; Sinetar, 1993; Solomon, 1995, 2001, 2005; Ulus, 2003; Wolz, 2004). Websites have been designed for use as both a self-help resource, and for practitioners wanting to access information about film as a therapeutic technique.

Aims of the research

The primary research question that guided this study was, "What is the therapeutic potential of using films as an intervention in counselling and psychotherapy?"

Initially the focus for the research was based on the experience of therapists who used film in their work with clients. However, it soon became apparent that most of the available literature had focused on this aspect, and that there was a lack of research that took into account how the client created meaning from the experience. I therefore sought to address this by including in my research the perspectives of film viewers and clients on the therapeutic potential of film.

The main aim of the research was to understand how counsellors and psychotherapists utilised film in their work, and how clients in therapy might experience that intervention and undergo processes of change with the use of film. Phenomenology and hermeneutics informed my study as I was investigating the lived experiences of therapists working with film and people being affected by film. Under the broad umbrella of interpretivism, I was guided by a constructivist perspective which takes the view that people construct their own reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Because I also wanted to acknowledge the social and cultural context in which the participants created meaning from their experience of film, I drew on social constructionism (McLeod, 2001). Overall I employed narrative inquiry as a methodology, through in-depth interviews (and one focus group), and as I interpreted the narratives.

There were two groups of participants who were invited to tell their stories: those who used film in their work as counsellors or psychotherapists, and those whose lives had been influenced by film in meaningful ways. With regard to the therapists I wanted to understand:

- i) How they decided which clients would benefit with the use of film.
- ii) What issues their clients brought to therapy that were particularly suited to this approach.
- iii) What advantages and disadvantages they had experienced using film in their work with clients.
- iv) Whether there had been an occasion when they realised that using film had made a profound difference.

v) How film had influenced their lives.

With regard to the film-viewing participants, who included individuals who had experienced the use of film in personal therapy, I wanted to understand:

i) How they had created meaning around their experiences of being emotionally affected by film.

ii) What they had learnt from film that they had been able to apply to their lives.

iii) How film had influenced their attitudes and beliefs.

iv) How film had inspired them to make changes.

v) How important film was in terms of their well being.

Definition of terms

Throughout the literature, various terms were used to describe this intervention: “cinematherapy” (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Wolz, 2010), “videoworks” (Hesley & Hesley, 2001), “reel therapy” (Grace, 2005), “movie therapy” (Solomon, 2005). For the purposes of this study I will use the term “cinematherapy” to describe the approach generically.

In discussing the therapeutic use of films, it is relevant to explore distinctions between counselling and psychotherapy because most of the literature was discussed from a “psychotherapy” or “therapy” context (e.g., Schulenberg, 2003; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003; Christie & McGrath, 1987), although some referred specifically to a “counselling” modality (Heston & Kottman, 1997; Tyson, Foster, & Jones, 2000). Unless otherwise indicated, these terms were generally not associated with the theoretical orientation of the therapist, or with the length of time or intensity of the treatment. Currently, the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA, 2010) distinguish between counselling and psychotherapy as follows:

Although Counselling and Psychotherapy overlap considerably, there are also recognised differences in terms of aims, approaches and training. While the work with clients may be of considerable depth in both modalities, the focus of Counselling is more likely to be on specific problems or changes in life adjustment. Psychotherapy is more concerned with the restructuring of the personality or self. At advanced levels of training, Counselling has a greater overlap with Psychotherapy than at foundation levels. (PACFA, 2010, para. 3)

In Australia the terms “counselling” and “psychotherapy” are however, often used interchangeably. As this study is concerned with the therapeutic potential for the use of film across the profession, I use the phrase “counselling and psychotherapy” to indicate the whole field. For the sake of brevity I shall also use the term “therapy” to generically describe all the therapeutic modalities, and the nomenclature “therapists” to refer to practitioners.

It has been helpful to reflect upon both the professional and personal influences that have contributed to my interest and my ability to undertake this particular research, and in the next section I shall provide some of the background details that may explain my interest in this topic of study.

Putting myself in the frame

In a previous career I worked in the film industry, and my undergraduate degree was a Bachelor of Arts in Communication (with majors in social and political theories, and film and video). My subsequent career, with a degree in counselling and post-graduate qualifications in psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy, was driven by a strong desire to expand meaning and purpose in my working life. Initially I was unaware of the connection between these two career paths.

It was not until I attended a professional-development seminar, and most memorably witnessed the presenter using scenes from a movie to explain theory and conceptual themes, that I was struck by the innovative use of film, and it seemed as though a bridge between my two careers had emerged. I was later inspired to use *The Piano Teacher* (Heiduschka & Haneke, 2001) to illustrate the concepts of the Conversational Model and the developmental, attachment and trauma theories which inform that model (Lynch, 2005). In an ensuing publication (Lynch, 2006), my favourite television series, *The Sopranos* (Chase & Van Patten, 1999–2007), provided ideal material to explore the notion of the “difficult” client. When I subsequently discovered the cinematherapy literature, the connection I was making between film and therapy was validated.

The first therapeutic modality in which I trained was based on Carl Rogers’ person-centred theory. This approach did not encourage the use of techniques like film, preferring to emphasise the counsellor’s relationship with the client (Corey, 1996). The therapeutic relationship was also given prominence in my post-graduate training in the Conversational Model, which was based on the concept that it is through the intersubjective experience with a significant other that the self emerges,

particularly through language (Meares, 2001). Although that therapeutic model recognises the value of a client's interest in and use of expressive arts, whether it be writing, poetry, drama, or making pictures for example, its relational perspective and nondirective approach, and interest in maintaining a specific therapeutic frame, generally precludes the practice of the therapist introducing intervention techniques into therapy with clients.

Yet as a practitioner in private practice, I am always interested when clients make references to films they have seen, and the associations they have made to various characters and storylines. I am often intrigued by the psychic material that becomes consciously accessible to clients via symbolic images through film. My response is to explore with them the many possible meanings the film has generated, as I would if they had discussed a dream, or poetry, literature, or art, for example, or work they had produced themselves. It has therefore been of particular interest to me in my study to discover the many and varied ways that practitioners use film in their clinical work.

The cultural contexts of my own and others' experiences of film are also of interest to me, and central to my study. What follows are some personal reflections upon some, albeit early, experiences of film in my life.

Going to the pictures

Going to the "pictures" was a popular cultural activity in the large provincial Australian town in which I grew up. The main theatre in town was The Odeon, a classic example of the grand cinemas that were built in Australia in the early part of the 20th century, modelled on the Hollywood-style "picture palaces" (Collins, 1987). In Australia in the 1950s, for a total cost of two shillings I could catch the tram, buy a bag of "lollies" and an admission ticket to the theatre in which a film serial, newsreel, cartoons and at least one feature film was screened, and catch the tram home again. A typical Saturday at the Odeon with my siblings usually involved watching film serials ending in "cliffhangers", a popular plotline device used in the 20-minute film episodes that culminated with the protagonists in a precarious situation. We would need to return the following Saturday if we wanted to know whether Zorro or the Lone Ranger could escape from what seemed like certain death. Further cliffhangers awaited us in the weeks to come.

When I considered how films may have influenced my life, the first film that came readily to mind was the 1960 film *Pollyanna* (Disney & Swift, 1960). The central

character, played by British actor Hayley Mills, was an 11-year-old girl who had experienced the death of her parents, and gone to live with her wealthy, though unhappy Aunt. Pollyanna's infectious optimism had a positive effect on those around her, and their outlook on life began to change. I saw *Pollyanna* when it was first released in Australia. This was the year after the death of my younger brother, which I distinctly remember as a confusing and bleak period of loss and grief during my early adolescence. Emotional or expressive grieving was not encouraged in my family during those years; it was a matter for silence. This attitude was not unusual in Anglo-Australian culture in the mid-20th century.

I recall being profoundly impressed by Pollyanna's ability to initiate positive change for people, and I have fond memories of imitating that film character's behaviour and emulating her optimistic attitude. What I remember however, about the influential aspects of that film, could ironically be an example of the phenomenon that came to be known as the "Pollyanna Principle"—the propensity to have a "preference for the pleasant" (Matlin & Stang, 1978, pp. 2–3). The term Pollyanna has since entered the popular vernacular to describe cynically a person who has a tendency to be unrealistically positive. My experience of that film however, could also exemplify Matlin and Stang's (1978) secondary principle, that memories of events associated with a positive affect are recalled with more accuracy in the long term than those associated with events that were less intensely affective. The factors associated with the meanings I had made of that experience are obviously complex, and as I will discuss here and in the following chapters, there are numerous considerations involved in the experience of film.

Indeed, if I follow the line that all meaning is contextualised, and that culture is integral to meaning, my experience of the material space of The Odeon was undoubtedly part of the meaning I had constructed. However, as I discuss in the next section, the fantasy environment of that cinematic space had been carefully designed to influence my experience (Collins, 1987).

The politics of the cinematic space

Contrary to common belief, the reason for the construction of the lavish cinemas built in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s was not to achieve an aesthetic effect, or to please the patrons. Evidence given at the NSW Government film industry inquiry in 1934 revealed a less worthy motive (Collins, 1987). According to Collins (1987) the picture palaces were "created at the request and virtually under threats from certain

American film distributors, for the purpose of finding an outlet for their pictures, which, in their opinion, would earn greater revenue ... in larger modern theatres" (p. 116).

In addition, other forces had been at play:

In the 1920s, new and powerful rivals to the cinema emerged in the form of automobiles and radios, and other diversions became more accessible with the spread of affluence. Thus the picture palace, with its inimitable blend of novelty, luxury and exclusiveness, served as powerful propaganda for the special character of film entertainment. (Collins, 1987, p. 120)

Perhaps similar market forces have informed the current provision of a "Gold Class" option at some cinemas. Modelled on the luxurious screening rooms used by film studio executives, the concept was pioneered by Village Roadshow in Melbourne in 1997 and has expanded into the international marketplace (Rentilly 2008). According to Senior (2008), "The quality of the theatre does affect people coming to the movies, particularly an upscale demographic that is more demanding when it comes to service" (quoted in Rentilly, 2008).

It could also have something to do with declining cinema attendance in Australia since the mid-1980s, which has coincided with the introduction of playback technologies that have made it possible for rented movies to be screened at home (George, 2008a). Although the overall attendance rates at Australian cinemas have recovered since that time, patrons are not attending as often each year (Screen Australia, 2010b). Nonetheless, in 2008 Australia was ranked as number four in the world, after Iceland, Ireland, and Singapore, in terms of cinema admissions per capita (Screen Australia, 2010a). Among the data published regularly by Screen Australia (the key Federal Government funding body to the Australian screen production industry), are the cinema attendance figures provided by Roy Morgan Research, which has gathered and analysed information on the demographics, attitudes, activities and media usage of cinema-goers in Australia since 1974 (Screen Australia, 2010b). From a sample size of 32,000 surveys conducted nationally (Screen Australia, 2010b), the cinema attendance figures indicated that since 2000 an average of 69% of the respondents had gone to the movies at least once a year, with an average of approximately eight visits to the cinema per year (Screen Australia, 2010c).

Attending the cinema is undoubtedly a popular activity in Australia when compared to other cultural pursuits. According to George (2008a) in 2006 people in Australia “were nearly three times more likely to go to the movies than to an art gallery or a popular music event” (para. 7). Data sourced from Roy Morgan Research (P. Milthorpe, personal communication, August, 2010) indicated that between April 2009 and March 2010, attending the cinema was most popular among Australians aged 14 to 24, with 84.2% of this age group doing so. By contrast 70.5% of 25 to 34-year-olds, 65.9% of 35 to 49-year-olds and 51.9% of people in Australia aged 50 and over went to the movies.

The reduction in cinema visits however, does not mean that people in Australia are watching fewer films. Ranked by *Screen Digest* as fourth in the world for its household ownership of digital videodisc (DVD) player/recorders, Australia has been quick to embrace the concept of home cinema, with the installation of audio-video entertainment systems in homes increasing (George, 2008b). With such acceptance of new technologies and easier internet access to relatively diverse cultural content in film, it would be reasonable to assume that people in Australia are choosing from a broad selection of internationally made films. However, in 2007 the U.S.-produced “blockbusters” that were the most popular in Australian cinemas, were also the favoured content on DVD format (George, 2008b, para. 13).

With regard to cinematherapy, the international popularity of movies is suggested by the wide range of literature that has been published on the use of film as a self-help technique. In addition to the published case studies, and research on the use of film in therapy, there is a body of literature devoted to the use of film as a self-help intervention; the use of film in training counsellors and psychotherapists; and the film portrayals of mental illness, therapy and therapists. As these subjects are fundamentally related to the use of cinematherapy, I will discuss them briefly in this chapter as part of establishing a context for the literature review in Chapter 2.

Cinematherapy: a self-help approach

The first self-help text on using films for personal development was written by a nonpractitioner, Marsha Sinetar, and published in 1993, titled *Reel Power: Spiritual Growth Through Film*. Subsequently a series of books specifically for girls and women was published by nonpractitioners: *Cinematherapy: The Girls Guide to Movies for Every Mood* (Peske & West 1999); *The Girl's Guide to Finding Happiness One Movie at a Time* (Peske & West 2002); *Cinematherapy for Lovers: The Girl's Guide to Finding True Love*

One Movie at a Time (Peske & West, 2003) and *Cinematherapy for the Soul: The Girl's Guide to Finding Inspiration One Movie at a Time* (Peske & West, 2004).

However the majority of the cinematherapy self-help books (most of which originated in the United States) have been written by practising counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists and social workers (e.g., Grace, 2005; Solomon, 1995, 2001, 2005; Ulus, 2003; Wolz, 2004). *The Motion Picture Prescription* (Solomon, 1995), was described as a self-help resource and a text for therapists (p. 12). *Reel Therapy* (Solomon, 2001) was described as “second in a series of recovery and self-help books about healing and the movies” (p. 3.). As the title of *Cinemaparenting: Using Movies to Teach Life's Most Important Lessons* (Solomon, 2005) suggested, it was a self-help book for parents.

The book *Movie Therapy, Moving Therapy!* by Ulus (2003), a practising psychiatrist, was informed by Transactional Analysis (TA) and based on the author's use of movies in group therapy settings. TA was defined as “a simple, applicable and practical version of classical psychoanalysis” (Ulus, 2003, p. 1954). Various ways were suggested as to how films can have an impact on people by addressing their patterns of behaviour through the ego states of “Parent, Adult and Child”, which is the concept at the core of the TA model (Ulus, 2003). In *Reel Fulfillment: A 12-Step Plan for Transforming Your Life Through Movies* (Grace, 2005), the author, a psychotherapist, outlined a range of therapeutic exercises that could be carried out with the use of films for both individuals, and for those wanting to hold group meetings. *E-Motion Picture Magic: A Movie Lover's Guide to Healing and Transformation* (Wolz, 2004) presented cinematherapy as a self-help technique, but it was recommended that the method be used in counselling or psychotherapy for “serious psychological problems” (p. 14). While all of the above books were presented in the accessible style of self-help literature, several could be employed as a resource for counsellors and psychotherapists who use films in their work. There is however, a body of literature separate from the self-help canon that I shall refer to as the “cinematherapy literature” which will be reviewed in Chapter 2.

The use of film as a pedagogical tool in counselling and psychotherapy training courses was often examined in the cinematherapy literature, and I will select a few examples of this usage to discuss in the following section.

The use of films in the training of counsellors and psychotherapists

Although role-playing was commonly expected from students in counselling training, it could nonetheless be a confronting experience for the neophyte counsellor (Higgins & Dermer, 2001). While case studies were effective for demonstration purposes and for the integration of a student's knowledge, they were a one-dimensional educational approach that denied students the opportunity to develop "observational skills" (Higgins & Dermer, 2001, p. 183). The use of films therefore was considered to have advantages over using role-playing, and case studies for the reinforcement of skills, because students could learn about the complex structures and dynamic interactions of individuals and families through "real life" scenarios (Higgins & Dermer, 2001 p. 183). Because films also offered "live-action" scenarios and were a simulation of real experiences, they presented information in both "verbal and nonverbal ways" (Higgins & Dermer, 2001, p. 183). By watching films students could sharpen their perceptual and observational skills, and develop conceptual skills as they gained understanding about how the forms of communication fitted together. For example, in order to develop the capacity for empathy, students could be invited to experience the issues of the character for themselves as they watched the film, and it was easier to demonstrate difficult concepts such as "counter-transference" using a filmed dramatisation (Higgins & Dermer, 2001, p. 183). In addition, film expanded the learning experience by providing exposure to scenarios that students would be unlikely to encounter, even in a practical internship (Higgins & Dermer, 2001).

The use of film could also be an effective tool for teaching "diagnosis" of mental health conditions (Pearson, 2006, p. 70) and "psychopathology" (Wedding, Boyd, & Niemiec, 2005, p.x). The comparatively low cost of accessing movies, together with their almost universal acceptance and popularity, were persuasive reasons to use them as a teaching resource (Wedding et al., 2005). Utilising film in this way reduced the constraints surrounding confidentiality issues, because a movie depiction of a psychiatric disorder does not require the same ethical considerations as those required for the discussion of actual cases (Wedding et al., 2005). This enthusiasm for the use of film as an educational resource was not totally shared by other mental health professionals, and concerns were voiced that an over-reliance on this approach could circumvent actual experience for students, and that the over-representation of negative portrayals of therapists and therapy in films could be counterproductive (Pirkis, Blood, Francis, & McCallum, 2005).

Cinematic portrayals of mental illness, therapy and therapists

The inaccurate cinematic portrayals of mental illness, and the often negative, depictions of therapists were discussed by several authors in the cinematherapy literature (Karlinsky, 2003; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). It was suggested that negative stereotypes presented a significant barrier to those needing mental health services, and made it harder for therapists to assign films for clients to view (Karlinsky, 2003). Numerous studies have found that cinematic portrayals did have an impact on community attitudes about mental illness, therapy and therapists (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999; Orchowski, Spickard, & McNamara, 2006; Pirkis et al., 2005; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). Four hundred Hollywood films that portrayed a mental health professional were identified by Gabbard and Gabbard (1999) who concluded that the majority of the films misrepresented therapists and portrayed a distorted image of mental illness and the process of therapy.

Eight core themes repeated in film portrayals of therapists, were identified by Wedding and Niemiec (2003) who offered them as additional categories to Schneider's (1985) original list of "Dr. Wonderful, Dr. Evil and Dr. Dippy" (p. 209). The themes included the practitioner as: "Learned and Authoritative; Arrogant and Ineffectual; Seductive and Unethical; Cold-hearted and Authoritarian; Passive and Apathetic; Shrewd and Manipulative; Dangerous and Omniscient; and Motivating and Well-intentioned" (Wedding & Niemiec, 2003, p. 209). Most of those categories were disputed as being "additional" by Pirkis et al. (2005) who described them as variations of Schneider's (1985) original typology, although they did concede that "seductive and unethical" was a valid addition (pp. 10–11).

Research by Schill, Harsch and Ritter (1990), in which research participants watched the film *Lovesick* (Okun & Brickman, 1983), was cited by Wedding and Niemiec (2003) in their discussion of film portrayals of therapists. In the film Dudley Moore plays the part of a psychoanalyst who cannot contain his erotic feelings for a female client (Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). Although not indicating in which direction the views of the research participants shifted, Wedding and Niemiec (2003) noted that beliefs and attitudes about therapists' ethics, and intimacy between clients and mental health professionals, were strongly influenced by viewing the film. The findings by Schill et al. (1990), were reported differently by Pirkis et al. (2005) who noted that the participants in the study were in fact "more accepting of intimacy" (p. 16) between therapists and clients after viewing the film *Lovesick*, and that this

indicates how film can have significant implications for the expectations of those needing mental health services.

Some films and television programs however, have been regarded as demonstrating effective therapist-client interactions and were used as models of successful psychotherapy. Lorraine Bracco's performance as psychotherapist Dr. Jennifer Melfi in the multi award winning television series *The Sopranos*, (Chase & Van Patten, 1999–2007), was voted by the American Psychoanalytical Society as the most realistic portrayal of a psychotherapist in a film or television program (Gabbard, 2002). The American Psychological Association also rewarded this program with a "Golden Psi" award, for the episodes in which Dr. Melfi "set firm boundaries with her gangster patient" (Schultz, 2002). The portrayal of psychotherapy in *Ordinary People* (Schwary & Redford, 1980) was considered to be so authentic that it could be used "like process notes, to illustrate and teach the major principles and techniques of psychodynamic psychotherapy" (Miller, 1999, p. 174). The "boundary transgressions and technical errors" depicted in the therapy sessions in the television series *In Treatment* (Lum & Barclay, 2008–2010) were considered useful for teaching psychiatry residents (Gabbard & Horowitz, 2010, p. 28).

With reference to studies indicating that clients' expectations of therapy are influenced by media depictions, some authors have proposed that practitioners need to keep abreast of the film and television portrayals of therapists and therapy (Hyler, Gabbard, & Schneider, 1991), and become consultants for film and television productions (Orchowski et al., 2006). It was suggested that mental health professionals could collaborate with patient advocacy groups to monitor the depictions of mental illness in dramas and documentaries, and to take advantage of public campaigns, such as Mental Health Week, to raise awareness of the issues (Hyler et al., 1991, p. 1045). Orchowski et al. (2006) specifically suggested that "psychologists" (p. 512) could collaborate with film and television production companies to produce programs and films that could be used for cinematherapy. Such collaboration, it was argued, could provide an opportunity to change the negative stereotypes that prevail in films, and thereby assist in the production of accurate portrayals of therapy and its practitioners (Orchowski et al., 2006).

The present-day discussion about the role of therapists as consultants on films, and concerns regarding the inaccurate depictions of therapy and therapists (Orchowski et al., 2006) are reminiscent of similar issues being discussed in 1925 when Freud rejected an offer of a \$100,000 fee from Samuel Goldwyn to consult on a film

(Sklarew, 1999). Two of his colleagues, Karl Abraham and Hans Sachs, were subsequently contracted as consultants by another film producer (Sklarew, 1999). Contrary to Gabbard's (1997) view that Freud gave his approval, he actually considered his colleagues' collaboration on the film project to be a betrayal of his theories, and correspondence on the matter continued between Freud and Abraham for several months (Sklarew, 1999). According to Sklarew (1999) in a letter to Abraham "on June 7, 1925, Freud expressed doubt that psychoanalytic concepts, such as repression of a wish, could be presented on film, stating that he did not believe pictorial representation of psychoanalytic abstractions was possible" (pp. 1244-1245).

Freud's reluctance to participate in the world of film nonetheless marked a significant moment in the relationship between the fields of film and mental health. In the following section I offer a brief description of the subsequent development of that relationship, which will also establish a context for discussion of the theories related to film spectatorship later in this chapter.

The relationship between film and therapy

The relationship between the fields of film and mental health is considered to have begun when the psychoanalytic community took an interest in film during the early part of the 20th century, at a time when the film industry was referred to as the "Traumfabrik" or "Dream Factory" (Gabbard, 1997, p. 429). Whenever the historical relationship between the two fields has been investigated it has generally led back to the influence of Freud's psychoanalytic concepts (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999; Sklarew, 1999). The birth date of both psychoanalysis and film is often suggested to have been 1895 because it was in that year that Freud and Breuer published *Studies in Hysteria* and the Lumière Brothers invented the first film projector (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999; Sklarew, 1999). Notwithstanding the equivocal beginning to the relationship between the worlds of cinema and psychoanalysis, due in part to Freud's "antipathy" towards the medium of film (Sklarew, 1999, p. 1239; Wedding et al., 2005), the psychoanalytic study of movies became the dominant interpretive approach during the 20th century (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999) and was known as the "Freudian Grid" (Gabbard, 1997, p. 429).

Psychoanalysts also began using feature films to explain their theories (Gabbard, 1997), and this method soon gained popularity with proponents of other theoretical models and modalities for example, family systems (Hudock & Warden, 2001);

counselling theories (Koch & Dollarhide, 2000); group counselling (Tyler & Reynolds, 1998); couples counselling (Shepard & Brew, 2005). The interdisciplinary, and multi-theoretical, relationship is also apparent with a growing body of literature discussing such subjects as, Jungian concepts and film (Beebe, 1992; Hauke & Alister, 2001; Hockley, 2007; Izod, 2000); Winnicottian concepts and film (Konigsberg, 1996; Newman, 1996); cognitive psychology and film (Bordwell, 1989; Plantinga, 2002), and more recently, cognitive neuro-science and film (Hasson, Landesman, Knappmeyer, Vallines, Rubin, & Heeger, 2008).

Paradoxically, while psychoanalytic theory was becoming influential in film studies in the 1960s and 1970s, Freud's theories were considered "obsolete" in the psychology departments of academe (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999, p. 191). The "rediscovery of Freud in the academy" (p. 191) was prompted by the interest of French film theorists in the ideas of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999). Lacan's concepts became influential in film studies in the early 1970s when issues of film spectatorship were first being addressed "theoretically" (Hayward, 2006, p. 369). Lacan's concept of the "gaze", where subjects define themselves through the differences they see between themselves and idealised others, was taken up by feminist filmmakers and theorists who "submitted it to some more rigour" (Hayward, 2006, p. 178).

From film spectatorship to the film-viewing subject

Lacan's theories had been developed from his studies in child psychoanalysis during the 1960s, which had "primarily addressed the psychology of the male child" (Hayward, 2006, p. 404). However it was the "feminist Lacanians, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva who brought the female child's psychosexual development into a central space for consideration" (Hayward, 2006, p. 405). A parallel situation subsequently occurred in film studies when Lacan's theories were initially applied by film theorists who had "blissfully ignored the case for female spectatorship" (Hayward, 2006, p. 405), and it was the feminist film theorists who used Lacan's concepts to redress this situation. During the 1970s film theorists drew on Lacan's concepts to describe the way in which a film spectator, gazing for the first time upon a film image, felt the same "jouissance or jubilation" as does the child in the "mirror phase" (Hayward, 2006, p. 405). In other words, the spectator sees herself or himself as the centre of the universe, secure and complete in the imaginary relationship with the image.

Laura Mulvey's seminal 1975 article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* was notable for the use of psychoanalysis to interpret the appeal of Hollywood cinema (Hayward, 2006; Mayne, 1993; Smelik, 1998, 2007). Mulvey drew on Freud's concepts, including his theory of "voyeuristic-scopophilic" desire (the pleasure of being looked at and looking at another), and Lacan's concepts of the mirror stage for her argument that classical Hollywood cinema was a male construct within which women are objectified (Smelik, 2007, p. 491). Central to Mulvey's argument was that through the "male gaze" female objects of desire in mainstream films are reduced to passive screens for the projection of male fantasies (Smelik, 2007, p. 492).

The central point of Mulvey's argument was that there are three "looks" involved in cinema (Kaplan, 1997; Stacey, 1994). Firstly there is the look of the camera, usually male operated, with direction by a male director; secondly the look from predominantly heterosexual characters, where male characters invariably direct their objectifying gaze towards female characters; and the third look is from the audience (Kaplan, 1997; Stacey, 1994). Describing this third look, Smelik (2007) explained that the spectator "is made to identify with the male look, because the camera films from the phallic point of view of the male character" (p. 491). Mulvey's concept of the "male gaze" helped to explain why "Hollywood cinema is tailor-made for male desire" (Smelik, 1998, p. 11).

Feminist critics of Mulvey's concepts argued that her overarching concept of the male gaze upheld patriarchal views and prevented the possibility of a "female gaze" (Smelik, 2007, p. 494). Mulvey responded in a further essay by drawing on Freudian psychosexual concepts and suggesting that the female spectator, far from being a passive consumer, could enjoy viewing the film from a male point of view (Smelik, 2007). By so doing the female spectator could resolve her anatomic inferiority, and recover the sexual identity she lost in early childhood (Smelik, 2007).

Criticism of Mulvey's article included that it had ignored other spectatorships, and thereby perpetuated the white, heterosexist paradigm (Mayne, 1993). Critics argued that the notion that one gender gazes upon another was not valid when the numerous forms of subject positions, including racial and sexual orientation were considered (Smelik, 2007). Gay and lesbian theorists drew from post-structural and feminist theories to explore positions as spectators within the field of Queer theory (Burston & Richardson, 2005). The "inter-racial look" (p. 4) was discussed in the argument that, rather than the male gaze or female gaze being of concern, it was the imperial gaze that required attention (Kaplan, 1995). For example, Bobo (1995) and

bell hooks (1992) (cited in Kaplan, 1995) argued the increased difficulty experienced by African American female spectators trying to establish a spectatorship as they were doubly excluded because of both race and gender. The notion of the male gaze became further complicated with the appropriation of that gaze by women filmmakers who produced pornography (Sullivan, 2001).

The notion of a passive female spectatorship was disputed by other feminist theorists who claimed that females were active makers of meaning (Stacey, 1994; Mayne, 1993). Stacey (1994) cited Doane's (1982) comment that the female film spectator's experience was irrelevant because she was "a concept, not a person" and suggested that it was typical of the "feminist psychoanalytic film criticism" of that era (p. 23). Psychoanalytic exploration of the female subject was considered to be problematic because, rather than having an empirical basis, it was a theoretical construct (Mayne, 1993, p. 37). Emphasis was placed on the necessity to "acknowledge that real people do exist outside of the categories of theory" (Mayne, 1993, p. 36).

Until the end of the 20th century psychoanalysis had a commanding influence in film studies (Konigsberg, 2007). Despite the overall impression that these two bodies of knowledge had developed a reciprocal relationship, some authors have demurred. It was suggested that the relationship had "moments of mutual attraction, occasions of intercourse and isolation in what has remained a frequently ambivalent and largely undocumented affair" (Sklarew, 1999, p. 1241). Others concurred, stating that although the two grew up together, "the relationship has been complementary and also hostile" (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999, p. xxi).

Dissatisfaction with the dominant psychoanalytic perspective in film studies inspired the development of empirical models, namely the "cognitivist" and "ethnographic" approaches and their respective concepts of spectatorship (Mayne, 1993, p. 42). Others proposed that the shift to the study of "spectator as viewer" had been initiated by cultural studies (Hayward, 2006, p. 374). Cultural studies such as Stacey's (1994) ethnographic research on British women's experiences of attending the cinema during the 1940s and 50s argued for an active spectatorship that was informed by an individual's cultural context and social identity. Stacey's (1994) study signified a departure from psychoanalytic approaches and was considered one of the few exceptions (Kuhn, 2002). The cognitivist approach which had been emerging since the mid-1980s was considered to be "antagonistic" towards the psychoanalytical approach, and was seen to reject the cultural studies approach (Mayne, 1993, p. 42). This was apparent when philosopher and proponent of

cognitivism, Carroll (2008) stated that “intellectually, a vacuum appeared” because of the “cultural turn” in cinema studies at that time (p. 1). He suggested this had since been filled with “a deep and informed philosophical conversation” by the last two generations of philosophers who have grown up “going to the movies” and watching films on television (p. 1).

Indeed, it could be argued, that this also applies to the last two generations of counsellors and psychotherapists and their clients. In the following chapters the implications of growing up with the medium of film are revealed in a myriad of ways, including how film has been harnessed therapeutically.

The significance of my study

This study is considered to fill a gap in the relevant literature as it contributes to an understanding of the complex experience of viewing a film, and how therapists can use that knowledge to inform their approaches of using film with clients. As far as I could ascertain, there had been no previous research based on clients’ experiences of cinematherapy. Due to the paucity of research in cinematherapy, this qualitative study also provides further understanding into how and why counsellors and psychotherapists utilise film as a therapeutic intervention.

Anecdotal evidence among practising counsellors and psychotherapists suggests that in Australia, the clinical use of film is beginning to gather interest. However, to my knowledge, there has been no previous research conducted in Australia on using film as a therapeutic intervention. Due to the limited availability of therapists in Australia who were known to use film in their work, I looked further afield and made contact with international practitioners who were identified as using cinematherapy, six of whom have participated in this study.

A summary and overview of the thesis

This thesis has been informed by an interdisciplinary approach. In addition to theories related to counselling and psychotherapy, and those theories which have informed my methodology, I also draw from communication theory, film and media studies, cultural studies, various branches of psychology, and the relatively new sub-discipline of philosophy of film.

In this chapter I have introduced the main purpose and significance of my study and offered definitions of the terms that I have used. This was followed by discussion of

the professional and personal interests that inspired this research project. It was also relevant to establish a social and cultural context of the experience of film viewing in Australia. Cinematherapy as a self-help technique; the use of film in the training of counsellors and psychotherapists; and the cinematic portrayals of mental illness, therapy and therapists are all related to the therapeutic use of film, and were part of the context established in this chapter. The early history of the relationship between the fields of film and psychoanalysis provided a necessary prelude to my discussion of the historic unfolding of the theories of film spectatorship and the gradual shift to the study of the subjective experience of film viewing.

In Chapter 2 I shall review both the cinematherapy literature and that literature which relates to the various psychological processes that play a role in the act of viewing a film. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and the methods of data collection and analysis used in this research project. Chapter 4 is the first of the findings chapters and introduces all the participants, locating them in their social and cultural contexts. It also includes my reflections on my experience of the data collection stage of the research journey. Chapter 5 is the second findings chapter, and presents the narratives of the film-viewing participants, including those who as clients experienced the use of film in their therapy. Chapter 6, the third findings chapter, focuses on the practitioners' narratives. Chapter 7 provides a discussion of all the findings. Chapter 8 discusses the implications and recommendations for the therapeutic use of film in counselling and psychotherapy, as well as suggesting further areas for research. It also includes discussion on the strengths and limitations of the research methodology used in this study, and my reflections on the overall experience of undertaking this research project.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

When Batman opened, a crowd of 20,000 stood for hours to glimpse celebrities for a few seconds in person. How many of one's neighbours elicit such dedication? It may also be ventured that with the advances in film technology, the movies have become one of the most powerful rhetorical devices in the world. Unlike most of our acquaintances, films can catapult us rapidly and effectively into states of fear, anger, sadness, romance, lust and aesthetic ecstasy—often within the same two-hour period. It is undoubtedly true that for many people film relationships provide the most emotionally wrenching experiences of the average week.

(Gergen, 2000, pp. 56–57)

Introduction

The aim of this literature review was to seek an understanding of how films are utilised by counsellors and psychotherapists, and also to shed light on the complex emotional experience and impact of film viewing on a person's life. It soon became clear that there was a dearth of material in the cinematherapy literature relating to theories of film spectatorship and the role of emotions in the experience of viewing a film. Consequently I have also drawn from such disciplines as communication, film, media and cultural studies, diverse branches of psychology, and the emerging sub-discipline of philosophy of film in which the experiential aspects of film viewing have been receiving increasing scholarly attention.

This literature review is structured under two broad headings that correspond to the categories of participants in this study. In the first section I explore the cinematherapy literature relating to the use of film as a therapeutic intervention in counselling and psychotherapy. In the second section I examine literature relating to the various psychological and meaning-making processes that play a role in the act of viewing a film.

The Cinematherapy Literature

Most of the literature on cinematherapy has been based on the clinical use of film and presented as case studies. There are a small number of empirical studies and theoretical papers. Two recent dissertations on the topic of cinematherapy focused on the need for evidence-based outcomes to support the method of using films in clinical practice (Portadin, 2006; Powell, 2008). In his doctoral dissertation Portadin (2006) asked the research questions: "Does a formal psychotherapy as 'cinematherapy' exist?", and "Is the term 'cinematherapy' a valid term for the use of film in psychotherapy?" (p. vi). Portadin conducted a critical analysis of the literature and reached the following conclusion:

There is a lack of a rationale to support the use of film, a lack of a reasonable independent theory to support the use of film, an absence of outcome research to support the use of film, and an abundance of personal opinion that in and of itself is not enough to support the use of film as a new therapeutic practice. (p. 140)

Portadin (2006), from a psychology orientation, cited the relevant ethical standards of the American Psychological Association as he focused on the "ethical implications" of psychologists using "untested approaches" (p. 147). As a licensed counsellor, Powell (2008) noted the emphasis on evidence-based practice and demonstrable outcomes by the mental health advocacy group, Mental Health America. He also discussed the restrictions on government rebates and payments by health insurance organisations to counsellors when "creative therapeutic tools like cinematherapy are practiced" (p. 2).

Powell (2008) agreed with Portadin's (2006) conclusion that cinematherapy's theoretical and empirical foundation was weak, but disagreed with the latter's assertion that there were no empirically supported data by citing several controlled studies. In addition, as part of his dissertation, Powell conducted a "single-subject quasi-experimental design" study (p. 36) in order to provide additional data to support cinematherapy as a viable therapeutic intervention. The studies will be discussed in this chapter.

Firstly, in order to provide an overview of the evolution of cinematherapy, I briefly introduce most of the key references in the literature in chronological order, all of which will be discussed more fully later in the chapter. I then present both

qualitative and quantitative studies, several of which, as far as I could ascertain, have not been included as references in other studies on this topic. As the therapeutic use of film is multimodal and multitheoretical, rather than present those in strict chronological order, I have grouped them into the relevant clinical contexts in which the studies were conducted, and the specific client population categories within those contexts.

With regard to the literature that has been previously reviewed, it is inevitable that I will have to cover some ground already traversed; however my intention is to draw out and compare material from the literature relating to the theoretical rationales and conceptual bases that have been offered for the clinical use of film. I will then explore similarities and differences in the texts before moving on to the second section of the chapter.

Cinematherapy: an evolving story

In their case study published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, and one of the earliest studies to become a key reference in the literature, Christie and McGrath (1987) described the case of an 11-year-old adopted boy whose behavioural and emotional problems were assessed as symptoms of unresolved grief over the loss of a biological parent who had committed suicide. The authors related how specific aspects of the plot and characters in the film *The NeverEnding Story* (Eichinger & Petersen, 1984) were used to design a series of “action rituals” (p. 198) for the child to carry out, which brought about an effective therapy for him and his adoptive family. A follow-up telephone call six months later convinced the therapists that the child had maintained the progress he had made in therapy. The decision to use a film in this case was based on a “serendipitous” viewing of the film by one of the therapists who recognised the “metaphors” that could be utilised with this client (p. 196). The notion of using metaphor through the medium of film was discussed by several authors in the literature, and I will therefore discuss it in more detail later in this chapter.

In 1990 Berg-Cross et al. introduced the term “cinematherapy” and defined it as “a therapeutic technique that involves having the therapist select commercial films for the client to view alone or with specified others” (p. 135). Of the four steps in their approach, Berg-Cross et al. (1990) described the first and second steps as preparatory and the third and fourth steps as “procedural” (p. 140). Firstly the client must be “cognitively primed” (p. 141). In other words the client needed to be consciously

aware of the issue she or he is working on in therapy, and the related theme in the film. Secondly, the therapist must be interested in facilitating the client to “explore and experience new interpretations and solutions” (p. 141). Berg-Cross et al. cautioned that the use of film was not to be used as a quick solution, therefore the third step involved discussing in detail with the client why and “where, when and with whom” the film would be viewed (p. 141). In the fourth and last step of Berg-Cross et al.’s model, the therapist and client explored the latter’s experience of the film and discussed any insights gained (p. 141). The authors noted several studies to theoretically support the therapeutic use of film, one of which was the controlled study by Adams and McGuire (1986). They presented three of their own clinical case studies, two in which the therapist suggested the use of film, and one in which discussion of film was introduced by the client.

Newton (1995) introduced the intervention of cinematherapy for counsellors and educators to assist gifted students to explore the aspects of their talents or abilities that created emotional difficulties (p. 15). Newton suggested the use of films to supplement the use of bibliotherapy, and offered numerous reasons for this approach including the proposition that gifted students were often poor readers, and that films appeal to “visual learners” (p. 16).

The conceptual basis of Heston and Kottman’s (1997) approach was the notion of using film to provide a therapeutic metaphor. They pointed out the benefits to counsellors of using films as “intervention strategies” (p. 92) and of being able to “recognize the metaphoric possibilities” (p. 92) when a client spontaneously discussed a film. Heston and Kottman presented two case studies, one in which the use of film was introduced by the therapist, and one where the client initiated the discussion. In both examples the “value” of metaphors was emphasised (p. 95).

First published in 1998, with a second edition published in 2001, Hesley and Hesley’s book *Rent two films and call me in the morning: Using popular movies in psychotherapy* was described as a resource for therapists to assist them with using films as “tools” in therapy (p. 7). Although methodologically, Hesley and Hesley’s “Video Work” approach relied primarily on their own case studies and opinion on the effectiveness of the intervention, their book is often recommended by other authors of this topic. For example, Karlinsky (2003) described Hesley and Hesley’s book as having a more advanced approach, and researchers Lampropoulos et al. (2004), and Pirkis et al. (2005) discussed it as a useful resource guide for practitioners.

Tyson et al., (2000) pointed out that because the “cognitive and emotional processes” (p. 36) of film viewing experienced by clients had not previously been comprehensively investigated, they had designed a “theoretical framework” (p. 35). Calisch (2001) cited previous literature on cinematherapy, but appeared to draw heavily from Hesley and Hesley (1998/2001) for the material published in *Reel To Real: Use of Video As A Therapeutic Tool*. However there was no acknowledgement by Calisch (2001) of Hesley and Hesley’s concepts or therapeutic model. Sharp et al. (2002) extrapolated the effectiveness of cinematherapy based on studies of the “related technique of bibliotherapy” (p. 269) and placed emphasis on the notion of using film as a therapeutic metaphor.

From the perspective of educational psychology, Hébert and Speirs Neumeister (2002) built on their own and others’ work to present a theoretical foundation for the use of films with gifted students. The authors considered this approach to be an extension of bibliotherapy, and they provided a detailed explanation of Shrodes’ (1949) original model, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Schulenberg (2003) noted the literature by practitioners who analysed films from various theoretical perspectives, and who used films to explain their theoretical concepts (p. 36). He indicated that the purpose of his discussion was fundamentally to evaluate the use of films in therapy, and to ascertain what needed to be done to validate it. Wedding and Niemiec (2003) covered a broad range of issues related to film and the mental health profession, including the potential influence that portrayals of therapists and depictions of mental illness in films can have on clients.

In *Cinema and Life Development: Healing Lives and Training Therapists* by Peake (2004), E. Erickson’s life stage model was presented, with descriptions of films selected to specifically correspond with the eight stages of that model. Peake also drew on other models of life-span development (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Levinson, 1978, 1995;) and an extensive range of literature on subjects of “change, growth and cross-cultural themes “ (p. 107), to which he provided examples of films.

The most recent publication, *The Cinematic Mirror for Psychology and Life Coaching*, was edited by Gregerson (2010). This volume contained thirteen chapters by various contributors describing the use of film in a variety of settings including therapy, educational, and life/personal coaching. The volume was published in association with Division 46 (Media Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA). Gregerson noted the increasing interest by APA members in the use of film in

the promotion of “health” (p. 8), and considered this volume to be ground breaking, asserting that it was the first to meet the demand for empirical verification of the therapeutic use of film (p. 6). Of the thirteen chapters in this anthology, two focused specifically on the use of cinematherapy, and in both cases the modality of coaching was included.

Although described by Gregerson (2010), the volume’s editor, as an “evidence-based popular psychology oriented guide” (p. 8), the chapter by Kuriansky et al. (2010) was primarily a descriptive account of a broad range of relationship issues which the authors considered suitable for the application of cinematherapy. Several of these issues were discussed with the use of popular vernacular. For example, in the section on “real relationship problems” (p. 97) there was discussion of “commitment-phobes” (p. 97) and “love addiction” (p. 103). The authors provided detailed descriptions of plots and scenes from films they believed would be useful in addressing these issues. Kuriansky et al. also drew on a selection of the available cinematherapy literature to provide an overview of the history and conceptual bases of this approach. They included a case study, and practical guidelines for therapists on how to use the technique. The authors also provided an example of a homework assignment in which a client is asked to write a film script about their current relationship, in order to gain insight into their situation and the opportunity for change.

In Gregerson’s (2010) volume, the chapter *Cinema as Alchemy for Healing and Transformation: Using the Power of Films in Psychotherapy and Coaching*, by Wolz (2010), included a brief historical background of cinematherapy, conceptual frameworks for the therapeutic use of film, film examples, practical guidelines, and limitations of the approach. The author also presented brief summaries of a diverse range of theoretical orientations and clinical modalities from which films could be utilised, which included “coaching” (pp. 215–220). Describing her model as “Cinema Alchemy” (p. 201), Wolz categorised four different approaches from which films could be used therapeutically. Other than the fourth method of “Cinema Coaching”, the three methods of the “Prescriptive Way”, the “Evocative Way” and the “Cathartic Way” (pp. 206–208) had been adapted for clinical use from her self-help publication *E-Motion Picture Magic: A Movie Lover’s Guide to Healing and Transformation*. These will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Film and family therapy

Guerin (1976) first introduced the use of film in family therapy during the 1970s to provide an external stimulus that related to the family, or to a family member's, emotional and relational processes, and as a way to implement the Bowen Family Systems concept of "displacement stories" (cited in Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). This technique was considered effective in elucidating the interactions of the family, providing a medium through which family members might explore their interactions at a safe emotional distance, and so in a less defensive manner (Coombs, 2004, p. 125).

Two years after their first case study Christie and McGrath (1989) described a case in which they used the film *The Karate Kid* (Weintraub & Avildsen, 1984) in family therapy with an 11-year-old boy, who had been discovered drinking alcohol at school. The authors explained that they were influenced by the success of their previous experience with film documented in their 1987 paper, and recommended to the boy's parents that they watch the film together as a family. When the family returned for their next session, the therapy team was "truly astounded" (p. 148) at obvious positive changes that had occurred. The family had watched the film together four times and each member quoted their favourite "proverbs" from one of the film's central characters "Mr. Miyagi" (p. 148). Christie and McGrath related that over a period of three sessions with a 3-month follow up call, "Mr. Miyagi's philosophy of life", which encouraged qualities such as "patience" (p. 149) had been effectively incorporated into creative actions which the family carried out, resulting in positive changes for the boy and his family.

From a family therapy perspective Dermer and Hutchings (2000) considered the use of film to be a "popular culture intervention" (p. 163) that could be used with a diverse client population. Citing Lappin, (1997), the authors noted that films could be used to "evaluate universal family concerns as well as issues specific to culture, class, gender, power and sexual orientation" (p. 164). They considered cinematherapy to be an "adjunct to good therapy" (p. 167, emphasis in original), however they offered no definition of what constituted "good" therapy. The authors drew on the previous literature, and provided a model of guidelines for using film in therapy and a list of recommended films.

Using the term "cinetherapy", Byrd et al. (2006) described the use of films with younger children as a form of "play therapy" (p. 5). Byrd et al. argued that films

were a “reliable narration” (p. 6) that children could repeatedly access. They discussed how the film *The Lion King* (Hahn & Allers, 1994), with its themes of loss and grief and changing family circumstances, could be used with children dealing with similar issues in family therapy. In addition the authors discussed the use of film with a 14-year-old boy who had been arrested for stealing a car. Using the film *Secondhand Lions* (Kirschner & McCanlies, 2003) selected from the client’s list of favourite films (p. 17), Byrd et al. described how it facilitated discussion with the adolescent about desired role models (p. 19).

The use of film in hospitals and other institutional settings

Some of the earliest documented instances of the therapeutic use of film occurred in institutional settings in the United States during the early part of the 20th century. As cited in Portadin (2006) and Powell (2008), a survey by Katz (1947) revealed that the use of films in military psychiatric hospitals during the 1920s was not solely used for entertainment purposes. “Perhaps the most dramatic development along therapeutic lines was the use of motion pictures in connection with group psychotherapy” (Katz, 1947, cited in Powell, 2008, p. 43). Later reports in the mid-20th century described the use of films in group therapy contexts in general psychiatric facilities (Powell, 2008).

In 1986 Adams and McGuire found that viewing humorous film was associated with decreased pain report and decreased use of pain medication in elderly patients with chronic pain who were residents in a long term care facility. As that study was cited by Berg-Cross et al. (1990), and later by Powell (2008), as one of the empirical studies to support the use of cinematherapy, it is relevant to note that subsequent researchers noted its lack of statistical analysis (e.g., Rotton & Shats, 1996; Zweyer, Velker & Ruch, 2004). However the studies conducted by the latter researchers on the effects of humorous films on pain tolerance, were statistically analysed, and both reported beneficial effects.

Several studies that reported on the use of film with adolescents in institutional settings have become key references (Bierman, Krieger, & Liefer, 2003; Duncan, Beck, & Granum, 1986; Turley & Derdeyn, 1990). Duncan et al. (1986) described how a “time-limited topic-oriented counseling group” (p. 50) used the film *Ordinary People* (Schwary & Redford, 1980) to “prepare adolescents in residential treatment for re-entry into their families and communities” (p. 50). The theme of “going home” was introduced in the first session, and the use of the film was described as an “effective” (p. 51) method of preparing the adolescents for moving on. Of the 22 participants, 19

returned to their families or moved to foster homes and stayed in these placements for six months. Duncan et al. stated that their findings were consistent with those of previous studies that found that the use of film in “time limited ... specific group formats” was most effective in producing “vicarious learning” (p. 50). Furthermore they came to believe that the selection of film scenes was the “most critical element for success” (p. 51).

Turley and Derdeyn (1990) presented the case study of a 13-year-old boy, whose destructive behaviour at the home of his aunt and uncle—his legal guardians—had resulted in his involuntary admission to a psychiatric hospital unit. During individual psychotherapy, and the occasional family session, the adolescent disclosed that he particularly resented his guardians’ prohibition of his viewing “horror” films (p. 943). Turley and Derdeyn described sessions in which the therapist and the adolescent watched 15-minute segments of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master* (Shaye & Craven, 1988) followed by a 30-minute discussion of the film. The shared exploration of the film contributed to an enhanced therapeutic alliance, and the authors described how the adolescent’s “identification” with various aspects of the film’s protagonist “Freddy Krueger” (p. 943) helped him to develop several insights into his own life. In subsequent family therapy sessions the adolescent was able to draw on this awareness, and his increased ability to express his emotions resulted in a successful resolution and reunion with his guardians. Turley and Derdeyn drew on Bettelheim’s (1975) observations that frightening fairy tales provide meaning to children for their “developmental tasks” (p. 944), and suggested that horror films could provide this function for adolescents in a similar way.

Bierman et al. (2003) reported the use of films in psychodynamic group therapy in an adolescent girls residential treatment centre, where more than half of the 100 residents had a diagnosed mental illness. The authors explained that at the time the group was being established, “not much” (p. 2) literature was available on the topic of cinematherapy. They subsequently discovered the self-help publication *Cinematherapy: The Girls Guide to Movies for Every Mood* by Peske and West (1999), from which they “borrowed” the term “cinematherapy” (p. 2). They also acknowledged Heston and Kottman (1997) for providing a “schema” (p. 2) for the therapeutic use of film. From a psychodynamic perspective of their experience of facilitating the monthly group for approximately a year, Bierman et al. found the therapeutic use of film to be effective in several ways. One of these was that a film provided an alternative object for “displacement” (p. 12) of anxiety ridden emotions

that an individual was unable to direct to the original object or source. Bierman et al. considered the method of using films to be a “supplemental mode of psychotherapy” (p. 2), and in their concluding remarks emphasised that cinematherapy should not be considered as a “stand alone” treatment modality (p. 14).

Gelkopf, Gonen, Kurs, Melamed, and Bleich (2006) assessed the “effect of humorous movies” in a study involving “29 chronic residual schizophrenia patients” (p. 880) recruited from two separate wards in a psychiatric hospital. The study was conducted concurrently with the experimental group of nine women and six men in one ward, and the control group of nine women and five men in the other. Over a period of three months the “humor” (p. 881) group viewed a total of 60 comedy films, with a different film each day on five days of each week. The same procedure applied to the control group but only 15% of the films were comedies. Through statistical analysis the researchers found that there was a “significant difference” (p. 882) between the two groups, and in comparison with the control group, the participants in the experimental group showed less negative symptoms such as anxiety and depression. Positive changes to mood states were also self-reported by the patients in the experimental group.

Gelkopf et al. (2006) found, that just as negative incidents can have a widespread effect over an entire ward, laughter was prevalent in the humour group ward as the patients discussed their experiences of viewing the films, and that this resulted in enhanced positive interactions. The authors noted that as the findings indicated no changes at “therapeutic levels”, which included “therapeutic insight” and “therapist-patient relationships”, this outcome could support a “balanced” perspective of “positive psychology” (p. 882). Gelkopf et al. explained that it was not simply a case of positive change occurring through laughter; rather it depended on being able to “catch the laughter created momentum” (p. 882) of the many beneficial effects, and then to use them therapeutically to facilitate positive change.

Later studies with adolescents in institutional settings were reported by Garrison (2007) and Robertie, Weidenbenner, Barrett, and Poole (2008). Garrison (2007) described the development in a psychiatric hospital of a “unique exercise” where film was used as an “icebreaker for hospitalized adolescents and their families” (p. 1218). The exercise design was influenced by several studies that found that the involvement of the family was a predictor of a successful outcome in cases of adolescents hospitalised in a psychiatric facility (p. 1218). Garrison provided detailed suggestions. Firstly, the film should be entertaining and correspond as closely as

possible to the particular characteristics of the family. Secondly, the film themes should be similar to the family's predicament, and if that was not possible, either a "comedy" or a "thriller" film should be selected from an "all-purpose" category (p. 1218). Thirdly, the film characters, including any depictions of parents, needed to be "portrayed realistically and sympathetically" (p. 1218). Finally, the film should portray a sense of hope and depict a successful outcome.

According to Garrison (2007) the implementation of the exercise was successful with "about half" (p. 1219) of all the adolescent patients in the psychiatric unit. Of those excluded from the exercise most were adolescents with a psychotic illness, or who had a development disability, or who came from families lacking the resources to attend the extra hospital visits required (p. 1219). Three case studies were presented, and in conclusion Garrison reiterated that with careful consideration when selecting films, and focused discussion on dealing with the family's issues, the "movie intervention" (p. 1220) could be an empowering exercise for the whole family.

The use of film in a residential treatment program with adolescents, aged between 12 and 16 years, with "sexual behavior problems" (p. 99) was described by Robertie et al. (2008). Citing Kahn (2001) the authors noted the difficulties that "traditional outpatient cognitive-behavioral" programs have in treating the "behavioral and social problems" of this client population (p. 100). Robertie et al. developed the "Field of Dreams" program at the specialist facility "The Onarga Academy" (p. 99) and incorporated "experiential/expressive methods including narrative and art therapy" (p. 100). Despite providing a comprehensive account of the therapeutic benefits of using films, Robertie et al. (2008) did not cite any of the literature on cinematherapy. They drew on the "expressive therapy" perspectives of Klorer (2000) and the "creative arts" (p. 101) concepts of Nathan and Mirviss (1998), and described the therapeutic use of films in their program as "most useful and productive" (p. 101).

Fleming and Bohnel (2009) reported on the value of using film as a "clinical assessment technique" (p. 641) with individuals in a psychotic state in the process of being involuntarily admitted to a psychiatric hospital facility. The authors acknowledged that although films were increasingly being used by practitioners from varying theoretical orientations and clinical modalities, there was a paucity of literature on the clinical application of film with "psychiatrically immobilized inpatients or outpatients suffering from severe mental illness" (p. 643). They noted the literature by Garrison (2007) and Gelkopf et al. (2006), and explained that while

these authors had documented the use of film with patients in psychiatric facilities, these were “group interventions using prescriptive cinematherapy” (p. 642). By contrast, Fleming and Bohnel’s approach involved using film as an adjunct at the time of intake assessment, with the choice of film being made by the patient. Conceptually their approach was informed by literature on the clinical use of metaphors, and they considered it essential that the patient generate his or her own metaphors.

For Fleming and Bohnel (2009), the universality of films provided an extensive opportunity for “identification with themes and characters” that helped to create a “level platform” (p. 641) for both the practitioner and patient, and the possibility for patients to express their own “voice” (p. 644). They considered that the use of film provided a safe context for the patient from which “to explore thoughts and feelings”, and that it was also in line with the “strengths-based perspective” or, as they explained, the “recovery/wellness model” from which they worked (p. 643). Fleming and Bohnel emphasised that for this approach to be effective it was necessary for a practitioner to “tone down their position of power” and adopt “the one-under stance” (p. 643). In their description of the use of the Mental Status Exam (MSE) they cited White and Epston’s (1990) perspective that this assessment instrument should also help assess an individual’s skills and strengths (p. 643).

In the detailed description of their proposed technique Fleming and Bohnel (2009) explained that at the first stage of the three-step procedure it was imperative not to ask questions in a way that might be considered “value-laden” (p. 644). In particular, asking about the patient’s preferred film at the beginning of the process was to be avoided as it had the potential to be confronting for the patient. The authors recommended instead that the practitioner commence by asking the patient, “Can you tell me about a film that you think might be important for me to see?” (p. 644). This was followed with asking, “What about this film do you feel makes it so important for me to see?” (p. 644). Thirdly, the patient was asked to tell the practitioner of the important aspects to be aware of while viewing the film. The patient was then requested to name a favourite scene and their memory of the film’s opening scene. Any inaccuracies, no matter how obvious, were not to be questioned by the practitioner as this would subvert the whole point of the approach.

Fleming and Bohnel (2009) gave the examples of two cases in which the use of films had been used effectively during the psychological assessment of patients who had initially presented as evasive and difficult to engage. These included the case of a

man aged 68 who had almost bled to death “after engaging in a successful autocastration” (p. 644). Upon involuntary transfer from the hospital medical unit to the psychiatric unit, he had refused to speak to any of the clinical staff for assessment purposes. However when asked what film he would suggest, he responded by suggesting *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick & Kubrick, 1968). The ensuing discussion about the film between patient and clinician continued for nearly an hour, during which time the patient’s attitude shifted considerably, and he agreed to undertake the more “formal” (p. 644) part of the assessment on the following day.

The second example involved a 22-year-old man who had also been involuntarily transferred to the psychiatric unit from a medical facility after being treated for a life-threatening leg wound. As his elevated mood state bordered on euphoria during the treatment of his wound, and his responses regarding the circumstances of his injury were evasive, he was suspected of self-harm. After evading the assessment process for several days, he was asked what film he would suggest. To the surprise of the staff he suggested *Rear Window* (Hitchcock & Hitchcock, 1954) a film that was made many years before he was born. Fleming and Bohnel (2009) provided a detailed description of how it subsequently became possible for the patient to be assessed through a process of exploring his associations with the film’s narrative and his identification with the leading character. The authors described how the emergent juxtaposition of imagery between the fantasy world of film and the inner and outer realities of the patient revealed not only how the patient made meaning through the film’s metaphorical content, but also how he had descended into the psychosis which led to his “self-evisceration” (p. 645). In conclusion, Fleming and Bohnel noted that an empirical study was about to be undertaken to examine this adjunctive assessment technique, and they expressed hope that it might have potential for use as a technique in individual psychotherapy.

Empirical studies of group cinematherapy with children and young people

Although it is not the purpose of this study to present empirically supported data specifically to support the use of cinematherapy, I have elected to mention all the available quantitative studies, as the research in this area is still very limited. As can be seen from the preceding studies, most qualitative research on cinematherapy with groups had involved adolescent participants. The literature in the following section will show that children and young people were also a prevalent demographic in empirical studies of the therapeutic use of film in group settings.

Acknowledging the significant role that visual media played in the lives of adolescents, and the benefits of using films as an educational resource with young people, Jurich and Collins (1996) assessed the impact of popular teenage-genre films on the level of self-esteem of a group of 40 adolescents participating in a "4-H program" (p. 863). In their description of the primary prevention model of family life education from which the community-based program was delivered, the authors outlined the discussion group format, of which the involvement of adult volunteers, including parents, was an integral factor.

The researchers chose films they considered to contain narrative content and the depiction of issues commonly faced by adolescents. At the pre and post-test stages each adolescent completed The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (p. 869). Jurich and Collins (1996) found that over the course of the program there was a significant increase in the adolescents' "Total Self-Concept ... which was mostly attributable to Self-Satisfaction, Family Self, and Social Self" (p. 871). The authors noted that the participants had viewed the films with their parents, and shared their thoughts and feelings together afterwards in small group sessions. They speculated that this could have contributed to the successful outcome. The findings also indicated that the participants showed no changes in other self-esteem characteristics such as "Identity, Behavior, Physical Self, Moral-Ethical Self, Personal Self and Self-Criticism", which Jurich and Collins suggested "may take more time to evolve" (p. 872).

Describing cinematherapy as a "relatively new cognitive-behavioral therapy" (p. 2) Yang and Lee (2005) employed an "experimental control group design" to investigate the effect of a "cognitive restructuring process" (p. 2) following the viewing of a film. The purpose of Yang and Lee's pilot study was to investigate the effectiveness of using cinematherapy to reduce "aggressive behavioral tendencies among adopted children with special needs" (p. 8). The study involved 14 participants (10 females and 4 males) aged between 7 and 14 years. All of the participants were adopted and had experienced sexual abuse or other forms of abuse from their birth families. At the time of the study the participants were attending an overnight "Respite and Recreation program" (p. 3). Their participation in the study was voluntary, and permission had been provided by the participants' adoptive parents.

Yang and Lee (2005) noted the various benefits of cinematherapy described in the literature, and stated that "one important theoretical rationale behind cinematherapy is that it uses cognitive restructuring through processing, which may help clients

change their behaviors” (p. 3). Therefore, according to the researchers, cognitive-behavioral theory offered a significant theoretical underpinning for cinematherapy. Baseline data were collected from the participants with the use of an Aggression Inventory (AI) prior to the film being screened (p. 4). The researchers were particularly interested in comparing the results of “structured” viewing of a film, which they referred to as cinematherapy, and “non-structured” viewing which did not include any “systematic processing” (p. 2). All of the participants viewed *A Bug’s Life* (Anderson & Lasseter, 1998), which Yang and Lee chose because of its theme of aggressiveness, depicted in the film by the grasshoppers bullying behaviour towards the ants (p. 4).

Yang and Lee (2005) found that the physical aggression level significantly increased in the participants in the control group after viewing the film. For the experimental group, who had attended a debriefing process prior to completing the assessment scale, “the mean score of physical aggression level” decreased (p. 8), although not significantly. In conclusion the researchers noted the possible reinforcing effects of a film depicting aggressive behaviours on the control group and suggested “Bandura’s social learning theory” (p. 8) could provide an explanation. They stated that the findings highlighted the importance of “processing in clinical practice” (p. 8), and the potential negative outcomes of employing a cinematherapy intervention without a “structured process” (p. 9).

In their report of a “brief cinematherapy intervention” (p. 247) involving the therapeutic use of a film with a group of adolescents dealing with self-esteem issues, Powell, Newgent and Lee (2006) acknowledged previous studies by Jurich and Collins (1996) and Duncan et al. (1986). In Powell et al.’s study, the adolescents had each been diagnosed with a “serious emotional disturbance” (p. 247) from a spectrum of diagnosed mental disorders (p. 249). The group consisted of 16 adolescents, 8 female and 8 male, with an “average age 11.29 years”, with 12 participants self-reporting as Caucasian and 4 as non-Caucasian (p. 249). The researchers used the “Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale” (RSE; Rosenberg, 1989), which they described as being specifically designed for use with adolescents (p. 249).

Powell et al. (2006) randomly divided the participants, who were enrolled in a 6-week “coping skills” (p. 249) group, into three groups, with each group provided with the same coping-skills therapy. However, during the first three weeks Group 1 viewed segments of the film *Fat Albert* (Davis and Zwick, 2004). Throughout the final three weeks of this group the experience of the film’s character “Doris” was used as a

“case study example” (p. 249) and referred to often during group discussion. Group 2 did not receive the cinematherapy intervention, and in Group 3 the intervention was used in the final three weeks of the group. Powell et al. statistically analysed the findings and reported that the use of cinematherapy in Group 1 had a “positive” (p. 251) effect on self-esteem of the participants. The findings from Group 2 indicated that the participants experienced a decrease in self-esteem, and in Group 3 there was “no significant difference” (p. 251) in self-esteem. According to the researchers, the delayed use of cinematherapy in Group 3 limited the time available to make use of the “visual aid” (p. 249). Powell et al. noted that while these findings showed that cinematherapy could be effective, it highlighted that the coping skills treatment had little effect, and therefore needed refining (p. 251).

The use of film in brief group therapy with adult clients

In response to growing demands for brief therapy, Sunderland (1997) developed the theme-based “Strategic Group” (p. 127) so named because it was designed to find strategies to aid clients’ coping abilities. Participants were selected from the case loads of several clinicians working in a treatment centre located in a rural farming community. Twelve participants, male and female, described as “heterosexual Caucasians” (p. 129) met twice weekly for 10 weeks for the 70-minute group therapy sessions. The selected themes for the group ranged from communication and self-esteem, to dealing with grief and addiction, and were all identified as issues with which the participants experienced difficulty in their lives. These issues were integral to the preplanned structure of themes that were explored in the group with the use of “metaphorical techniques” such as “activity, story, film clips and pictures” (p. 133). Describing the 5-minute film clips selected from films as a “very powerful metaphorical tool” Sunderland added that “television and films have a role in modern story-telling” (p. 136).

The use of metaphor to assist clients in changing their perspectives was central to the group’s format, and the interventions were selected for their “paradigm shifting potential” (p. 131). Sunderland (1997) provided examples of the use of several films clips, one of which was from the film *Shadowlands* (Attenborough & Attenborough, 1993), chosen because of its relevant depiction of male emotional reactions, and its appropriateness as a model for “alternative behavior” (p. 137).

Although brief therapy groups were usually more structured with direct participation by the therapist (Sunderland, 1997), it was possible according to Powell

(2008), to use films in such groups in a “nondirective” manner (p. 17). In Powell’s nondirective method, instead of drawing attention to any parallels between the client’s life and the film’s narrative, the practitioner explored the meanings the client made. As part of his doctoral dissertation Powell carried out an empirical study by measuring the relative effectiveness of a “structured, nondirective cinematherapy intervention at improving the hope and optimism of an adult diagnosed with Major Depression” (p. 2). His “single-subject time-series” study (p. 36) involved the random selection of one person from a group of eight participants diagnosed with depression who were partaking in a 5-week group therapy utilising film as a therapeutic intervention.

The selected participant in Powell’s (2008) study was a 59-year-old Caucasian female, who had been married for 35 years, and was the mother of an adult son. She had a diagnosis of Major Depression with a recurring history of psychotic features, the severity of which at the commencement of the study was described as “moderate” (p. 39). In order to establish a baseline, the participant completed self-report measurements at the same time on the same day for three weeks at the researcher’s office prior to participating in the group. During the 5-week cinematherapy group, the participant completed the tests after each weekly film viewing, and then for three weeks post-group.

Powell’s (2008) choice of the film *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) to use in his study was based on the film’s depiction of “hope and recovery” themes and its pervasive metaphor of the “difficult journey” (p. 42). Because of the portrayal of his ongoing struggle, and his determination to overcome adversity, the film’s protagonist “Frodo Baggins” was considered by the researcher to be an ideal character from which the participant could “gain hope” (p. 43). Each week during the 5-week course the whole group viewed a different segment from the film, and this was followed by discussion in which they shared their responses. At the completion of the study the findings indicated that “clinically significant differences” (pp. 63–64) occurred in the selected research participant’s levels of optimism and hopelessness. The study was subsequently published (see Powell & Newgent, 2010).

Film and positive psychology

The historical development of the positive psychology movement advanced by Seligman (1998) was described by Finamore (2008) before discussing a case study

based on the principles of that field of psychology and the use of film. Finamore also noted the current statistics on adolescent depression in North America, and the burgeoning literature on the use of “positive-based strategies in working with depressed teens” (pp. 125–126). She provided a detailed account of the effective use of the film *Little Miss Sunshine* (Berger & Dayton, 2006) during the 16-session therapy with a 13-year-old female client who had been refusing to attend school, and was experiencing symptoms related to anxiety and depression (p. 131). According to Finamore, the easy access to films that adolescents now had through “high memory iPods and MP3 devices” (p. 129) was an obvious reason to utilise film therapeutically with that client population.

In the opinion of its editor, Gregerson (2010), what had propelled the text of the volume *The Cinematic Mirror for Psychology and Life Coaching* to the forefront of film and psychology literature, was the integration of the principles of positive psychology and the perspectives of “wellness” (p. 8) and notions of “mindfulness” (p. 12) featured throughout its pages. Highlighting the conceptual thread of positive psychology woven through the chapters, Gregerson (2010) referred to a “second wave” (p. 4) of that branch of psychology which had resulted in a paradigm shift. Noting Held’s (2004) influence, she described the replacement of a “rigidly optimistic” perspective in positive psychology with a “more balanced integrative message of realism” (p. 4). In line with this perspective, Gregerson argued for the therapeutic use of films in which the ubiquitous fairy tale happy ending was not simply replaced by an unacceptably realistic ending. She recommended films that portrayed options beyond the “living happily ever after” conclusions (p. 7) and listed a range of films such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Coatsworth & Zwick, 2002) which she considered to depict the theme of optimistic prospects following the overcoming of adversity.

Gregerson (2010) also introduced the notion of the “filmist” approach to film “appreciation” which drew on the “dramaturgical” concept of a transparent “fourth wall” boundary that separated audience members from performances (p. 1). For Gregerson a film’s imaginary wall had a mirror-like effect in that it reflected “reality” (p. 2) and it was a two-way mirror through which a process of mutual influence between the film and viewer occurred. According to Gregerson when a practitioner used film with a client this boundary disappeared enabling a “reciprocal relationship” (p. 2). For Gregerson being a filmist was different to being a regular film viewer. For filmists, it was the effect of a film that was paramount, and not the

film itself, which Gregerson conceded was conceptually similar to the notion of being entertained. This did not apply to cinematherapy, according to Gregerson, because “healing” not “simple pleasure” was its primary goal (p. 3). This suggested a dichotomous view, with films seen as being used for either therapeutic purposes or for entertainment. These contrasting uses of film will be addressed in later chapters.

Cinematherapy and bibliotherapy

A common feature in the literature on cinematherapy was the association made with bibliotherapy, in terms of its origins and therapeutic impact (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Heston & Kottman, 1997; Karlinsky, 2003; Sharp et al., 2002; Wolz, 2010). Although the use of film, along with poetry and music—“print or non-print material” (Rubin, 1979, p. 242)—had traditionally come under the umbrella of bibliotherapy, the general assumption in the cinematherapy literature was that bibliotherapy referred to printed material.

Despite inconsistent research findings regarding the effects of bibliotherapy (Pardeck, 1998), several of the authors extrapolated the effectiveness of cinematherapy from positive outcomes in bibliotherapy studies, however few cited evaluative evidence. Another factor in the cinematherapy literature was how bibliotherapy was defined. Some authors noted the distinction between the use of fictional literature and non-fictional or self-help literature in therapy, (e.g., Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Lampropoulos & Spengler, 2005; Sharp et al., 2002), while others used the term bibliotherapy to describe the use of any literature.

Berg-Cross et al. (1990) described cinematherapy as an “outgrowth of bibliotherapy” (p. 135). They referred to bibliotherapy as the “parent technique” (p. 135) and traced it back to the recommended use of books by Sir Walter Galt to patients in psychiatric facilities in the United States in 1840. Berg-Cross et al. noted Shrodes’ (1949) pioneer research in the use of bibliotherapy (p. 136), and later studies of this method by numerous researchers including Pardeck and Pardeck (1984, 1987). They pointed out that since the 1970s bibliotherapy had “become synonymous with reading self-help books” (p. 137). Hesley and Hesley (2001), also noted bibliotherapy’s history, and considered their approach to be an “extension” of this tradition (p. 7).

Acknowledging that “nonfiction has become the dominant genre in bibliotherapy” the authors argued that the use of film was different (p. 6). They explained that whereas non-fiction self-help materials provided “ordinary life” examples (p. 7) as

advice to clients, the use of film, although also depicting every-day life, enabled the client to discover their own guiding principles, with the assistance of a therapist.

Newton (1995) drew on Jeon's (1992) description of the principles of bibliotherapy and the four-stage process that a reader needed to move through in order for the intervention to be effective. The stages were: i) "Identification"—by focusing on fictional characters' experiences readers could identify similarities in their own life circumstances; ii) "Catharsis"—feeling connected with characters in such a way evoked a release of emotions; iii) "Insight"—readers gain conscious awareness of their own problems; iv) "Universalization"—by generalising their problems readers understand that their concerns are not uncommon, and that they can develop the ability to cope with their issues and facilitate change (Newton, 1995, p. 15). Newton considered that the same principles and process could be applied to cinematherapy.

Dermer and Hutchings (2000) stated that both literature and film could be used to "educate, normalize, reframe, and expand ideas" (p. 164). For Schulenberg (2003) the use of film was similar to using literature because films had "universal themes", and were also a method for clients to "view their problems from a comfortable distance" (p. 36). Wedding and Niemiec (2003) suggested that even if therapists did not use films as a primary intervention in therapy, there were numerous benefits in assigning them as homework to supplement the "traditional use" of bibliotherapy (p. 214).

Citing Newton (1995), Sharp et al. (2002) defined bibliotherapy as the assignation of "material" that depicted characters coping with circumstances similar to those of the client (p. 270). They, like Berg-Cross et al. (1990), described cinematherapy as an "outgrowth" of bibliotherapy (p. 270). While not defining it as such, Sharp et al.'s description of bibliotherapy involved "fictional" characters (p. 270). From that perspective they suggested the "principles" (p. 270) of bibliotherapy to be well suited to other media, including film and television. Sharp et al. outlined the sequence of three basic stages that clients move through in the process of bibliotherapy (identification, catharsis and insight), which they attributed to Morawski (1997). They cited Jeon (1992) for the fourth stage of "universalization" (p. 270). My review of the literature however, revealed a different history of how the body of knowledge regarding bibliotherapy was documented, and a different sequential development of the theory. For the purposes of my study it is important to clarify this, because the bibliotherapy framework underpins the use of cinematherapy.

As previously noted, Newton (1995) referred to Jeon's (1992) proposal of a four-stage bibliotherapy model. However, in his paper on the use of bibliotherapy with gifted children, Jeon (1992) had acknowledged Halsted (1988) for the four-stage framework (pp. 16–17). Halsted had actually cited educator Caroline Shrodes' (1949) original model developed from her doctoral dissertation, and had pointed out that Shrodes (1949) had studied "the relationship between bibliotherapy and psychotherapy" (p. 66). According to Halsted, Shrodes had identified "three phases of the bibliotherapeutic process", namely identification, catharsis and insight, which "corresponded to phases of psychotherapy" (p. 66). Halsted noted that the fourth stage of "universalization" (p. 66) was a later addition, and was based on a concept of Slavson (1950).

Shrodes' (1949) concepts informed Russell and Shrodes (1950a, 1950b), in which an extensive range of literature on bibliotherapy published since the early part of the 20th century was reviewed, and which the authors believed illustrated "some of the newer possible uses of literature in the clinic or classroom with a group or an individual" (1950, p. 339). Of particular interest for the purposes of my study, were the conceptual bases of bibliotherapy offered in that literature. According to Russell and Shrodes (1950a, 1950b) the benefits of bibliotherapy for a person included: Providing the opportunity for vicarious life experiences without exposing the person to the risk of actual experience; being exposed to a range of attitudes and social behaviours, thereby assisting the person to develop new values and behaviours; assisting the development of empathy; aiding in developing insight; helping the person to verbalise and externalise problems; supporting the person to increase cultural awareness. All of these bear a remarkable similarity to many of the concepts that underpin the current use of cinematherapy in the 21st century.

In Russell and Shrodes (1950a), the authors seemed mindful to place psychoanalytic theory within the historical context of the era:

This summary of a theory of bibliotherapy is put largely in psychoanalytic terms. Although research in psychology and medicine has not yet identified all their implications, they are terms which have been incorporated into the work of many clinics and the writing of many psychologists [Sears, 1943]. At present they seem to give the best theoretical explanation of the process of bibliotherapy. (p. 337)

In 1960 Shrodes suggested in *Bibliotherapy: An application of Psychoanalytic Theory* that the process of bibliotherapy was similar to the techniques used by therapists who were exponents of the “direct analysis” psychiatric treatment (p. 311). According to Shrodes, when a person identified with fictional characters and thereby “shares the same psychological world”, this was not unlike the techniques of “direct analysis” when the therapist “acted out” the client’s fantasies (pp. 311–312). Although Shrodes described the therapeutic interpretations made by John Rosen, the leading exponent of that psychoanalytic method in the 1950s, as “uninhibited” (p. 312), this would later prove to be a significant understatement. Rosen’s method of “entering into the fantasies” of his clients (Shrodes, 1960, p. 311) involved verbal threats, physical assault and sexual abuse, and by 1983, faced with the likelihood of being deregistered, Rosen opted to surrender his medical licence (see Bono, 2006, p. 4).

In his guide to using books in clinical social work practice, Pardeck (1998) noted that the stages in Shrodes’ original three-stage model for using fiction therapeutically, corresponded “closely to the phases of Freudian psychotherapy” (p. 11). In addition Pardeck pointed out that practitioners who used fictional literature in their employment of bibliotherapy tended to be from a psychodynamic orientation, whereas self-help literature was more often the choice of practitioners who used a cognitive-behavioural approach (p. 10). In the cinematherapy literature, with the exception of Berg-Cross et al. (1990), and Hébert and Spiers Neumeister (2002), there appeared to be no reference to Shrodes’ (1949) foundational work. This is salient information to note, as the psychoanalytic framework of Shrodes’ bibliotherapy model seems to have been adopted as a generic template for the method of cinematherapy.

Film as a source of therapeutic metaphor

The notion of metaphor being provided through the medium of film was central to much of the cinematherapy literature. Christie and McGrath (1987) suggested that the use of films allowed clients to choose their own degree of “therapeutic metaphor” (p. 188) and cited Erickson and Rossi (1970) for positing that “metaphor speaks directly to the unconscious” (p. 195). They interpreted the use of metaphor from a family systems perspective drawing on the concepts of White, (1984, 1986); Epston (1986); and Rando (1985).

Heston and Kottman (1997) acknowledged both Bandler and Grinder (1975) and Mills and Crowley (1986) in their description of how therapeutic metaphors were

generated. They ascribed to the latter authors the concept of the “three levels of meaning” (p. 93) that a person moves through in the generation of a metaphor (Heston & Kottman, 1997). However in their original book, Mills and Crowley (1986) clearly attributed this concept to the work of linguists Bandler and Grinder (1975). This distinction is an important one to make because Bandler and Grinder’s concepts had been influenced by having spent time with Milton Erickson and observing his work. Mills and Crowley (1986) applied Bandler and Grinder’s “linguistically-oriented framework” (p. 21) to the film *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* (Kennedy & Spielberg, 1982) to illustrate their “three-stage process of meaning in metaphor” (p. 20), and described the stages through which a viewer moves when making metaphorical meaning from a film. In the first stage the metaphor lies unrecognised in the “surface structure of meaning” of the storyline (p. 21). In the second stage, by a process of implication, an “associated deep structure of meaning” (p. 21) is activated in the mind of the viewer. This is an impersonal or generic recognition of other peoples’ joy or sorrow until a “bridge of personal connection” is crossed (p. 22). In the third stage a “transderivational search” reveals a “recovered deep structure of meaning” (p. 21) of personal relevance enabling the viewer to relate the circumstances of his or her life to the unfolding storyline of the film (Bandler & Grinder, 1975, cited in Mills & Crowley, 1986). Mills and Crowley (1986) emphasised that metaphor depended on implication—a right brain activity—rather than a literal interpretation (p. 21).

Hesley and Hesley (2001) likened the use of film as metaphor, to the general clinical use of metaphor and narrative by therapists (p. 9), and included the use of “myths, jokes, fables” (p. 10). They discussed the benefits of “therapeutically constructed metaphors” (p. 9) noting the emotional distance they provided for clients to “rehearse potential solutions” (p. 10). Sharp et al. (2002) drew on various theories including those of Erickson, Rossi and Rossi (1976) to understand how a film transmitted a metaphor. They applied Erickson’s (1976) concepts of indirect hypnotic techniques and therapeutic metaphors to describe how film made it possible for a therapist to influence a client indirectly through the use of metaphor and narrative. According to Sharp et al., communicating with the client’s unconscious mind in this way circumvented any resistance that direct communication could create, thereby providing a path toward the solution of problems and the facilitation of change.

Schulenberg (2003) suggested that films were “visual metaphors” (p. 37) and that positive change could be promoted through the “imagery, symbol, and metaphor”

conveyed by films (p. 36). Schulenberg cited Moore's (1998) humanistic/existential perspective, which considered that the use of "visible" metaphors in therapy offered the possibility of moving to a "spiritual level" (p. 37). Wolz (2010) suggested that "Films, like myths, tap into patterns of the collective unconsciousness" (p. 203). Powell et al. (2006) described the use of metaphor as a "persuasive apparatus" (p. 247) in counselling, and drew on existing cinematherapy literature to explain the use of metaphor through the medium of film. Fleming and Bohnel (2009) also described film as visual metaphor, and extended this notion by describing the benefits of using metaphor through the medium of film due to the activation of the right brain in the decoding of its meaning. They suggested this was particularly useful for clients who were experiencing "cognitive difficulties" including those in "acute psychosis" (p. 643) who may not be able to access the left brain's capacity to process language logically and literally.

Therapist-generated metaphors

Citing Kopp (1995) and Lankton and Lankton (1989), Heston and Kottman (1997) stated that "either the client or the counselor can generate meaningful metaphors" (p. 93). A common component in the use of cinematherapy however, was the selection of films by the practitioners, and by implication, the provision of metaphors that have been generated by them. Negative implications that this therapist-initiated insight may have for the client—or for the therapeutic relationship—were scarcely discussed in the cinematherapy literature. Hesley and Hesley (2001) stated that although in some cases there was a "mismatch" (p. 63) between the therapist's and client's interpretation of the film, this could expose unacknowledged perspectives that had been restricting the therapy, and bring about beneficial progress.

Fleming and Bohnel (2009) were critical of the prescriptive method of cinematherapy and claimed it had the potential to be "undermining, pathologizing and reductionist" (p. 643). They gave the example of Sharp et al.'s (2002) recommendation of the film *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (Geffen & Jordan, 1994) to clients dealing with substance abuse based on the notion that the film's plot was a metaphor for addiction. According to Fleming and Bohnel, this type of suggestion implied that the therapist had "achieved an omniscient level that allows him or her to make such a clinical selection" (p. 643).

Prescriptive versus serendipitous viewing of film by a client

Despite Fleming and Bohnel's (2009) opinion that cinematherapy was primarily prescriptive, since Berg-Cross et al.'s (1990) article, several authors in the literature have examined client-initiated discussion of films. Heston and Kottman (1997) pointed out the benefits of therapists being receptive to the potential benefits of the metaphorical content in films that clients bring to therapy:

Movie viewing, whether prescribed or serendipitous, can frequently give clients a new perspective for looking at the 'characters' in their own lives and give them added clarity into the fundamental complexity of close interpersonal relationships. (Heston and Kottman, 1997, p. 92)

Wolz's (2010) model included detailed information on practitioner-initiated and client-initiated use of film in therapy. Powell (2008) categorised four different cinematherapy approaches that therapists used, in which he acknowledged the distinction between a film being introduced by the therapist and one introduced by the client. His typology included "directive" and "nondirective" approaches, both of which were used in a "structured" or "unstructured" style, and he provided descriptive details of how these approaches were implemented (Powell, 2008, pp. 16–18).

Wedding and Niemiec (2003) emphasised the importance of clients having a "significant role" in film selection (p. 214). They presented a case study in which the therapist detailed an important turning point in therapy with a client whose country of origin was Sweden. The therapist had initially been reluctant to be "prescriptive" (p. 212) with cinematherapy, however, after a six month period during which little progress had been made, he had introduced discussion about the films of Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman, to which the client responded enthusiastically. From Wedding and Niemiec's description of the ensuing conversations about these films, it seemed apparent that the therapist in this case was well informed on the subject, and the discussion of films became an integral part of the therapeutic relationship.

There were also several case studies in which the topic of film was introduced by the client. Hesley and Hesley (2001) presented a case study in which a client had discussed a film not known to the therapist. They described how the ensuing exploration of this film, with the client as the "expert on the film" (p. 42) had equalised the power base in the relationship between therapist and client. Suarez (2003) presented a case study in which a 57-year-old female client had introduced

discussion of the film *A Little Princess* (Johnson & Cuarón, 1995) as she had strongly “resonated” (p. 260) with the main character, a young girl whose loving father was missing at war and eventually found alive. Working from a Christian approach to counselling, Suarez and the client interpreted the film, linking its narrative as a symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to her longing for love from her own unresponsive father and the eventual realisation that she could “live assured of God’s unfailing love” (p. 260). According to Suarez the experience of viewing this film lead to a “breakthrough” for the client, and suggested that it had been a divine intervention by describing the film as “the catalyst God used to transform” the client’s life (p. 260).

Duffey and Trepal (2008) posited the use of film as a catalyst for the discussion of “hurt, betrayal and a person’s hope for justice” (p. 257). The authors drew from a broad selection of cinematherapy literature to describe the case of a married couple who dealt with the repercussions of infidelity by “metaphorically using” (p. 269) the television series *The Sopranos* (Chase & Van Patten, 1999–2007). The series, which revolved around the life of a modern day mobster, was suggested by the clients in response to a question from the therapist regarding their favourite activity. Duffey and Trepal (2008) described how the clients were able to reach a stage in which they could deal effectively with their issues through exploring with their therapist their engagement with the major characters and the various themes depicted in the television series.

Although only a few authors offered the specific definition of cinematherapy as being a technique involving a practitioner selecting films for clients to view (e.g., Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Schulenberg, 2003; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003), most of the cinematherapy literature discussed the selection and therapeutic use of films from the perspective of practitioner initiation. Sharp et al. (2002) thought it was more likely that the client would “comply with the assignment” (p. 272) if the therapist was prescriptive and clear with the instructions.

Other theoretical issues relating to the therapeutic use of film

In addition to theory surrounding the use of metaphor, and various extrapolations from the bibliotherapy literature, a diverse range of theory and opinion was offered to support the conceptual basis for the therapeutic use of films. Hesley and Hesley (2001) believed film viewing was a universal experience, and suggested it was now more powerful than religion in influencing people’s moral and cultural positions.

Through a social-constructionist lens they described film as a “source of cultural identity” (p. 26) and supported this notion with a reference to Gergen (1991). Hesley and Hesley also suggested that since the emergence of the “managed care” paradigm (p. 10), the use of therapeutic homework assignments was being increasingly relied upon by therapists in order to take advantage of any opportunity they could to “influence positive change” for clients (p. 10).

The notion of film providing a safe emotional distance between a client and her or his issues seemed to be a recurrent theme in the literature (e.g., Bierman et al., 2003; Caron, 2005; Coombs, 2004; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Schulenberg, 2003; Yang & Lee, 2005). Citing Nichols and Schwartz, (1998) Dermer and Hutchings (2000) discussed the “safe distance” provided by film in family therapy, noting that therapists needed to ensure that clients did not “underdistance or overdistance” themselves from a film (p. 165). They claimed that this was to prevent clients from becoming too emotionally involved in a film, thus reducing their ability to reflect on the process, or to remain so detached that the film had no impact. The authors did not describe how a therapist could achieve this, but instead referred to Hesley and Hesley’s (2001) approach of “teaching clients to view movies therapeutically” (p. 165). Caron (2005) also referred to Guerin’s (1976) use of films as a displacement technique and suggested that viewing a film could assist both clients in therapy, and students undertaking counselling studies, to “experience complex therapeutic situations” (p. 179) while managing to maintain a safe emotional distance. That distance, according to Robertie et al. (2008) drawing on Nathan and Mirviss (1998), was a “holding environment in which the client can develop a sense of safety and control” (p. 101).

Portadin (2006) claimed that one of the weaknesses of the literature was that authors did not acknowledge that successful outcomes might well be contributed to by the “attention and relationship with the therapist” (p. 123). My review of the literature has revealed that although this aspect may not have been specifically examined, there were nonetheless several articles in which the authors noted the positive effect that the use of film had on the enhancement of the “therapeutic alliance” (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Hesley & Hesley, 2001, p. 17; Sharp et al., 2002, p. 271; Turley & Derdeyn, 1990; Tyson et al., 2000). Tyson et al. (2000) agreed with Berg-Cross et al. (1990) who stated that, as a potentially significant person in a client’s life, a therapist’s film recommendation was likely to influence how the client responded to the film. For Hesley and Hesley (2001) the “power” of this method was in the “interplay between

therapist and client” (p. 63). They said that the use of film provided a “nearly level ground” (p. 17) upon which a client and therapist could relate. This was echoed by Fleming and Bohnel (2009), while others thought that the use of film strengthened the communication between client and practitioner (e.g., Wedding & Niemiec, 2003).

The use of film from various theoretical orientations

In a study carried out by Lampropoulos et al. (2004) on the extent of the use of films by psychologists, the researchers were interested in how theoretical orientation affected perception of the benefits of cinematherapy. This related particularly to the use of the intervention as homework, which the authors described as commonly identified with short-term therapy from a cognitive-behavioural approach.

Lampropoulos et al. surveyed members from the American Psychological Association (APA) with one of the requirements being that research participants be residents of the United States (p. 537). A survey of 3000 randomly selected APA members, currently licensed and practising psychologists, resulted in a return rate of 28% or 840 responses. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents had recommended that a client view a film, 95% of these had subsequently discussed the film in therapy with the client (p. 537).

One of the aims of Lampropoulos et al.’s (2004) study was to compare practitioners from the major theoretical orientations, and to contrast their attitudes to the use of films with clients. Of these, 65% of cognitive-behavioural practitioners had used films in their clinical practice, 87% of eclectic-integrative therapists, 79% of humanistic-existential, 65% of interpersonal-family systems therapists, and 54% of psychodynamic-analytical therapists reported recommending films to their clients. Eighty-eight per cent of the therapists rated the use of films to be a helpful adjunct in therapy (p. 539).

It comes as no surprise therefore that the major theoretical orientations, and consequently the broad range of perspectives, were represented in the cinematherapy literature. Berg-Cross et al. (1990) discussed the approach from a brief dynamic perspective, and Hesley and Hesley (2001) described its use from a brief therapy outcome-focused approach. Tyson et al. (2000) cited Chapman’s (1999) proposal that theoretically cinematherapy “may originate in Jungian psychology and Social Learning Theory” (p. 36). They noted Chapman’s opinion that cinematherapy was “applicable to Jungian psychology because of constructs such as archetypes, persona, mythology and the occult” (p. 36). Tyson et al. noted Gladding’s (1998)

suggestion that films could affect the “unconscious” and therefore “bring feelings to conscious level of awareness” (p. 35).

By contrast, noting that opinions on the use of films in clinical practice would depend on a mental health professional’s theoretical perspective, Hyler (1999) reported the opinion of a psychoanalytically oriented colleague who expressed concerns that cinematherapy was a “form of counter-transference” (p. 138) and would disrupt the therapy. From a psychoanalytic perspective Quadrio (2004) suggested that discussions about films were a possible example of “non-sexual boundary violations” (p. 30):

Having conversations with the patient that are more of a social than therapeutic nature, such as talking about the theatre or the movies, are also important boundary violations that should alert the therapist. Why the shift into a social relationship? What is being avoided? What is being conveyed to the patient? What is the therapist’s need in doing this? (Quadrio, 2004, p. 30)

From a Jungian perspective, Hauke (2009) acknowledged the diverse range of opinions among psychoanalysts regarding the role of film, and other media, in therapy. He took the view that discussion of movies in therapy “are as useful and important as any communication the client brings” (p. 44). He described the experience of watching a film scene in a therapy session with a client at the latter’s request, and the benefit for the client of being able to watch him “witness” it, and for them both to immediately explore the experience (Hauke, 2009, p. 52). He asked rhetorically if a therapist should recommend a film to a client, and while he did not offer a direct answer, he alluded to the potential risk taken by the therapist of imposing meaning onto the client’s story.

Hesley and Hesley (2001) referred to the work of White and Epstein [*sic*] (1990) and likened the latter’s approach of “externalizing the problem” (p. 44) to the method of using film, as it provided clients with a means to separate themselves from their problems. Schulenberg (2003) suggested that as the therapeutic use of films encouraged clients to convey their “life stories” (p. 40) there was a close association with narrative therapy. Schulenberg cited Rosenthal and Steffeck (1991) and described the clinical use of film as a form of “observational learning” for the client (p. 37), proposing that films offered “overt and/or symbolic models of behavior and attitudinal expression” (p. 37). The principles of Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory were noted by several authors (e.g., Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Yang & Lee, 2005).

Byrd et al. (2006) drew on Erik Erikson's (1968) developmental theories and literature on play therapy in their use of films with children in family therapy (p. 6).

As noted previously in this chapter, the use of film had been applied from a family-systems orientation (Christie & McGrath, 1987, 1989; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000); eclectic-integrative (Robertie et al., 2008) and cognitive-behavioural (Yang & Lee, 2005), and from a positive psychology approach (Finamore, 2008; Gregerson, 2010). However, although various theoretical principles appeared to have a central role in the suggested approaches of using films in therapy, the guiding theory was frequently ill defined or indeed omitted.

Guidelines for the use of film in counselling and psychotherapy

Since the procedural description was outlined by Berg-Cross et al. (1990) several authors have either adapted existing cinematherapy guidelines or suggested new approaches for therapists using films in clinical practice (e.g., Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Karlinsky, 2003; Sharp et al., 2002; Powell, 2008; Wolz, 2010). There has been, however, a wide variety of opinion on the operational detail and theoretical foundation of these approaches.

Hesley and Hesley (2001) described how they introduced the idea of film "assignments" (p. 39) to the client in the first session as part of the assessment process. They asked clients to name some films that were "personally meaningful" (p. 39); they enquired about the clients' film genre preferences, and which film characters had personally affected them; what similarities or dissimilarities they shared with those film characters; and which films their families enjoyed. For Hesley and Hesley, there were numerous benefits to this early introduction of the topic of films. Not only did it ascertain if the use of films would be a suitable adjunct in the therapy, it provided information about the clients' "working models, ideal self-images, internal resources, potential goals, perceived obstacles, degrees of imagination and creativity, and overall philosophy of life" (p. 39). Hesley and Hesley also advised therapists to be receptive to what clients were expressing about films rather than adhering to their own film interpretations or aesthetic predilections (p. 28).

Dermer and Hutchings (2000) offered a triadic model of "assessment, implementation and debriefing" (pp. 165–167), and drew on Christie and McGrath (1989) and Hesley and Hesley (2001) in their suggested guidelines for the assessment stage. Also drawing on Hesley and Hesley's (2001) text, and Solomon's (1995, 2001)

books as resources, Lampropoulos et al. (2004) compiled a comprehensive list of suggestions and cautions for practitioners on how to proceed with care in using films in clinical practice (p. 539). Recommending a careful assessment of the client's functioning and ability to differentiate between "fantasy and reality" (p. 539), the authors noted that, in planning the assignment of a film, it was important to take into consideration the client's preference of films. For Lampropoulos et al. (2004), choosing films with characters and stories that corresponded with the client's characteristics, life situation, cultural and diversity issues, and the need for practitioners to be familiar with the film, were fundamental to the approach (p. 539). They noted the importance of a clear explanation to the client on how to carry out a cinematherapy homework assignment, and emphasised that following up with the client to explore the experience of the exercise, thereby enabling the client to integrate any associations into her or his current situation and therapy, was indispensable (p. 539).

There were concerns in the cinematherapy literature that if a film was recommended for a client to watch as part of therapy, it should not be used as entertainment because, according to Dermer and Hutchings (2000), in that mode it was not effective (p.165). Therapists were advised to actively prepare their clients for viewing the film in order to move the viewing experience out of the passive milieu of entertainment into an active "therapeutic process" (Caron, 2005, p. 180).

In Wolz's (2010) Cinema Alchemy model, the Prescriptive Way involved directing a client to watch a film in a "focused way" to produce a "trance state" similar to a "guided visualisation" (p. 207). This approach was based on Milton Erickson's storytelling approach that conveyed "embedded suggestions" (p. 206) to the clients. By comparison, Wolz's Evocative Way was the process of working therapeutically with a client's spontaneous discussion of her or his emotional responses to film (p. 206). Wolz likened this to the process of exploring a client's discussion of dreams. In describing the Cathartic Way, the author cited Nichols and Bierenbaum's (1978) notion that catharsis speeds up the process of "healing" for a client (p. 207). Therefore according to Wolz, watching sad films can "stimulate the desired emotional release" (p. 207), and she considered laughter to have a similar effect. In "Cinema Coaching", the fourth category of the author's model, practitioners prescribed films that depicted characters successfully achieving their goals to assist the client to realise their "potential" (p. 208). Wolz noted Leonard and Robin's (2004)

assertion that “the viewer tends to identify with the characters” (p. 208) to support this approach.

The client as viewer

In 1998, Wedding and Boyd proposed that viewers experienced a “sort of dissociative state in which ordinary existence is temporarily suspended” with the “best” films (p. 1). They also posited the notion of identification as the process through which people “project” themselves “into the action and identify with its protagonists” while viewing a film (p. 3). They provided no theoretical support for these concepts.

Hesley and Hesley (2001) explained that there were three differences between their “Video Work” model of “therapeutic viewing” (p. 29) and entertainment. Firstly in their approach, clients were directed to focus on the film’s characters, not on the film’s “plot” (p. 29). Secondly, “conscious identification” (p. 29) was emphasised as clients were requested to describe which characters they identified with most, and least, and to notice any similarities or differences between the characters’ and their own circumstances. Thirdly, clients were asked to distinguish the film’s “unique voice” (p. 30), to compare it with their own attitudes, to draw ideas from the differences that emerged, and decide how they could be acted upon.

Tyson et al. (2000) proposed a “developmental stage theory” of four stages which the client moves through as she or he “cognitively and emotionally interprets what is viewed” (p. 38) while watching a film. The four stages were i) “Disassociation”—in which “ordinary existence is temporarily suspended” (p. 38); ii) “Identification”—where the client identifies with a character, scene or other aspect of the film’s narrative (p. 39); iii) “Internalization”—as the client develops a “sense of connectedness” to what they have identified with in the film (p. 39); and iv) “Transference”—as the issues the client has identified with through the external frame of reference provided by film are transferred to thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings subsequently “surface into the client’s reality” (p. 39). Tyson et al. did not cite any previous literature to support their theoretical framework, other than for the fourth stage of transference, for which they referred to Hesley and Hesley’s concept of asking the client to identify a film’s unique voice and to compare it with their own (p. 39).

Sharp et al. (2002) drew on Wedding and Boyd’s (1998) concepts of film spectatorship, particularly their ideas on the processes of “dissociation”, suspension

of reality, and identification, which a viewer was expected to experience (p. 269). Wedding et al. (2005) repeated Wedding and Boyd's (1998) concepts of the psychological processes involved in viewing a film, but as with the original source, did not provide any guiding theory to support these notions. Wolz's (2010) four-stage process of "identification through projection" (p. 204), that a client moves through when emotionally engaging with a film, was similar to Tyson et al.'s (1990) model.

Cautions about the use of cinematherapy

Wedding and Niemiec (2003) warned therapists to be aware of the many negative portrayals of therapists, and the erroneous myths about mental illness that are perpetuated in films, when recommending films to their clients (p. 210). Hesley and Hesley (2001) and Schulenberg (2003) listed a range of cautions, including the need for care in the selection of films in order to avoid the possibility of traumatising a client by recommending an inappropriate film.

Sharp et al. (2002) advised that it could be risky to suggest a film likely to induce "sadness" in a clinically depressed client, and that if a client was "actively psychotic" (p. 270) cinematherapy would be contraindicated. Although they included precautions about assessing the client's therapeutic status, they stated that there were "very few contraindications" for the use of cinematherapy and suggested that even clients functioning at "low" levels could benefit from this intervention (p. 273). By contrast Lampropoulos et al. (2004) said clients should be assessed as functioning at least at a "moderate" level (p. 539). For Wedding and Niemiec (2003) films could be used with clients of "at least average intelligence" (p. 214).

Hesley and Hesley (2001, p. 37) and Wolz (2010, p. 224) cautioned that clients with "serious" mental illness were not to be considered as candidates for viewing films at home, because of the potential ramifications of their emotional reactions. Wolz cited Ulus (2003) and said that "clients who have some kind of psychotic disorder ... might have trouble distinguishing between reality or fantasy" (p. 224). By contrast, as described previously, Fleming and Bohnel (2009) reported on the effective use of films as a clinical assessment technique with individuals in a psychotic state who were being involuntarily admitted to a psychiatric hospital facility.

Hesley and Hesley (2001) and Wolz (2010) advised that "young" children were not suitable candidates for cinematherapy unless they were seen in a family therapy context, or the film viewing was included in the therapy session. Byrd et al. (2006)

informed by their own work with children, disagreed with Hesley and Hesley's and Solomon's (1995) exclusion criteria of using films in individual therapy with children (p. 5). None of these authors provided an age-group definition of a child.

It is apparent in all the above suggested cinematherapy guidelines, that although there are similarities, there are also considerable differences in opinions on the appropriate use of this approach. This indicated a lack of clear guidelines that practitioners could translate into clinical practice to ensure clinical competency in the execution of this technique.

Gaps in the literature

Several authors stated that further research into using films as a therapeutic intervention was needed (Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Karlinsky, 2003; Lampropoulos et al., 2004; Pirkis et al., 2005; Portadin, 2006; Powell, 2008; Schulenberg, 2003; Sharp et al., 2002). Hyler (1999) suggested that the "novelty" factor (p. 139) and the zeal of the proponents of cinematherapy contributed to the reported positive outcomes. In a review of literature regarding fictional film and television portrayals of mental illness, Pirkis et al. (2005) included a small selection of cinematherapy literature. In their key findings they noted that although the effectiveness of cinematherapy had yet to be formally evaluated, the numerous case studies indicated that it showed "promise" (p. 19). Although Portadin (2006) did not consider the published case studies to be "ample enough evidence" (p. 123) for claims to be made about the effective use of films with clients, he did concede that the actual number of case studies and the observations by authors indicated that "something therapeutic is happening when films are used as part of psychotherapy" (p. 124).

Despite the criticism, it would seem from the number of case studies published in the literature, and the experimental research conducted so far, that there is a clear indication this intervention can be effective. Nonetheless my review of the literature on cinematherapy has found that there are several areas in which it was theoretically weak. As I have noted previously, although several authors proposed a conceptual basis for the therapeutic use of film, there was often very little and sometimes no theoretical support offered to underpin the concepts. There were also examples in which it seemed that previous studies had been built upon without any acknowledgement of their use as a theoretical foundation.

A prevalent claim of those who proposed the use of film as an intervention in therapy was that it provided clients with the experience of "identifying" with

somebody else, in this case a fictitious film character who was dealing with similar issues. Through empathising with a film character, and observing how the character reached a solution to their problems and made changes to their life, clients could be helped to bring about change for themselves (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Byrd et al., 2006; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Karlinsky, 2003; Lampropoulos et al., 2004). It was apparent therefore that the therapeutic use of film assumed viewer identification.

There was an intense interest in identification, and other concepts related to film spectatorship among scholars in film, media, communications, philosophy, and diverse branches of psychology (Carroll, 2008; Cohen, 2001; Gaut, 1999; Oatley & Gholamain, 1997; Plantinga & Tan, 2007). By contrast, as previously noted, in the cinematherapy literature there was a paucity of theoretically supported discussion of the concept of identification, or indeed any other psychological processes that might play a role in a person's responses to film.

It was therefore important and necessary for the purposes of this research project to explore beyond the cinematherapy literature in an attempt to gain an understanding of what might happen for the client while engaged in viewing a film. Before doing so in the next section, I will briefly discuss the origins and definitions of the concept of identification in psychological use, and also in relationship to the notions of identity and self. I will expand this discussion on the concepts of self in Chapter 3.

The psychological processes in the experience of film and other media

Identification as a psychological process

Writing from the field of media and communications studies Cohen (2001) pointed out that most theories on media effects and audience reception had been informed not only by the definitions of "identification and identity" (pp. 247–248) developed by Freud (1940/1989), but also Erikson (1968) and Bettelheim (1943, 1976). A recent psychiatric perspective by Nathanson (1992) suggested that although the term identity still conveyed the idea of "absolute or essential sameness" (p. 198), the contemporary definitions of identity referred to a person's external identifying features that are able to be changed. By contrast he considered the concept of self as an "overarching construct" which referred to "all aspects—inner and outer" (p. 198).

From an English Studies orientation, Diamond (1993) noted that although the terms identification and identity shared "the Latin root, *idem*, for same" (p. 86, emphasis in

original), they referred to different concepts. According to Diamond, whether identity was considered to be a construct, and thereby able to be changed, or to be intrinsic, the term identity suggested something that was fixed and permanent, and this was not how she thought of identification:

Identification, on the other hand is pure act—an unconscious doing that only afterwards can be described and understood. Drawing another into the self, projecting the self onto another, identification proposes sameness, making me like you or you like me. (Diamond 1993, p. 86)

In their discussion of identification, psychologists Oatley and Gholamain (1997) quoted Freud from his 1904 *Psychopathic Characters on the Stage*, in which he described being an audience member at the theatre:

[Which] does for adults what play does for children ... The spectator ... is “a poor wretch to whom nothing of importance can happen,” who has long been obliged to damp down, or rather displace, his ambition to stand at the hub of world affairs; he longs to feel and to act and to arrange things according to his own desires—in short, to be a hero. And the playwright and actor enable him to do this by allowing him to *identify himself* with the hero (emphasis in original). (Freud, 1904, p. 122 cited in Oatley and Gholamain, 1997, p. 268)

As noted by Diamond (1993), Freud revised his theory of identification, removing the association with imitation and hysterics, and by the early 1920s he had theorised identification as an unconscious imaginative process that was the result of unresolved tensions during the Oedipal period (Diamond 1993). This was the third stage of Freud’s psychosexual developmental model and considered to be the period in which the child’s parents are “introjected”, the process by which the parents’ identities and values are assimilated into the self (Corey, 1996, p. 96). Referring to Girard’s (1991) query about why Freud removed the notion of mimesis from his later works, Schneider (1996) suggested that Freud did this because “to embrace the relatively simple mechanism of mimetic desire as an interindividual force is to render the unconscious superfluous” (p. 5).

It was in the 1960s that Erikson built on Freud’s psychoanalytic model, and from a psychosocial perspective theorised eight stages that a person moves through during a life span (Corey, 1996, p. 97). For Erikson (1968) the environment in which a child grew up was key to its social and emotional development (Corey, 1996). Cohen (2001) pointed out that in the mid-1970s, philosopher Richard Wollheim (1974)

broadened the Freudian notion of identification, differentiating it from imitation. Wollheim considered identification to have “an internal component, whereas imitation is external and behavioral” (cited in Cohen, 2001, p. 247).

Identification in the psychology of film viewing

Opposition to the long held psychoanalytic views of film theorists had become obvious by the mid-nineties. Proponents of cognitivism particularly objected to the notion of identification employed by psychoanalytically inclined film scholars. Currie’s (1995) statement that, “Psychoanalysis is false. If we use psychology to study film, we should use cognitive science” (p. xiii), typified this attitude.

Plantinga (2002) detailed the emergence of cognitivism in the 1980s with its literature that made a “powerful case for the study of film form and spectator psychology based on the kinds of mental activities described by cognitive psychology” (p. 17). Since then numerous contemporary philosophers and cognitive film theorists have written on the relationship between film and viewers’ emotional responses, and there has been considerable debate among these scholars (Carroll, 2006). Carroll (2006) argued that identification with film characters never occurred, and that a film viewer’s attitude toward a film character was usually sympathy or antipathy. His “naturalistic” concepts were based on the premise that a viewer’s “hard-wired perceptual and emotive dispositions” (Carroll, 2006, p. 164) were activated when watching a film. His concept of films being “criterially prefocused” (Carroll, 2008, p. 159) was based on the notion that filmmakers, through the use of various film-making techniques, create the conditions in films that evoke certain emotions in the viewer, emotions that the filmmaker knows the viewer will be anticipating. Choi (2006) conceded that it was necessary to take into account all the various levels at which viewers were engaged in film, the “perceptual, emotive, and cognitive” (p. 152), and argued that “socio-economic” (p. 150) factors such as market driven production, were also relevant.

From a social psychology perspective Eder (2006) argued that there were at least five different ways of “being close to characters”: “spatiotemporal proximity, understanding and perspective-taking, familiarity and similarity, parasocial interaction, and affective closeness” (p. 78). Eder acknowledged that discussion about identification and other concepts among communication and cognitive film theorists was as yet inconclusive, however to describe a viewer’s meaningful

engagement with a film character as identification was, he suggested, “reductive” (p. 78).

Others defended the concept of identification. Gaut (1999) pointed out that one of the disadvantages of dispensing with the concept of identification was that it had become part of the “folk wisdom” for film viewers to assess their experience of a film by the degree to which they identified with certain characters (p. 260). For Oatley and Gholamain (1997) identification was one of three “ordinary psychological processes” (p. 268) each of which played a particular role in our responses to fiction. The other two were “sympathy” and “autobiographical” memory, and they suggested that identification was connected “closely to the idea of mimesis as simulation” (p. 269). Oatley and Gholamain drew on Tan’s (1994, 1996) notion of film as an “emotion machine” (p. 270) for their proposal of how emotion, particularly sympathy, was aroused in viewers, not for themselves, but for the characters that they witnessed undergoing highly charged, intense events. According to Oatley and Gholamain, autobiographical memory, both conscious and unconscious, could be evoked by particular film scenes or stories, and they noted the beneficial effects of processing difficult emotions by vicariously experiencing those of a fictional character (p. 270). Although Coplan (2006) supported the notion that film viewers could identify or empathise with film characters, she argued that the processes involved in film viewing could also be due to “emotional contagion” (p. 28), which involved “motor mimicry” (p. 29), and she drew on neuroscientific studies of facial imagery to support her argument.

Cohen (2001) considered identification to be “one of the many ways in which audience members react to people in the media” (p. 252). As a psychological concept he defined identification as having derived from psychoanalysis, and he offered comprehensive explanation of the process. According to Cohen identification required media users to lose awareness of themselves (temporarily) and “become the other” (p. 247). Cohen compared identification with three other ways in which media users, including film viewers, respond to media characters. Noting their theoretical roots, he categorised: “Parasocial Interaction (PSI)”, (Psychology); “Liking, Similarity and Affinity”, (Social psychology); and “Imitation”, (Social learning theory) (p. 253). In those conceptual definitions, media users were positioned externally to the text, and retained their self-identity. However, PSI, a one-way relationship usually with a media figure, was often confused with identification (Cohen, 2001).

Parasocial interaction

Several years after television was first introduced, the concept of PSI was posited by Horton and Wohl (1956) to explain the relationship that could develop between television personalities and their viewing audience. The illusion of a face-to-face interaction was created by certain behaviours of the performer that encouraged responses from the viewers. Described as “breaking the fourth wall” (Ballantine & Martin, 2005), a television personality could influence viewers to respond by looking straight into camera and addressing them directly thereby breaking the imaginary line between performer and audience. Various studies have been conducted on the parasocial relations (PSR) viewers have with characters in a diverse range of media formats, ranging from television sit-coms and soap operas (Cole & Leets, 1999) to internet based on-line communities (Ballantine & Martin, 2005). Although the terms Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relations, refer to different aspects of the phenomenon, they were often used interchangeably in the literature.

In their seminal paper Horton and Wohl (1956) clearly defined the difference between parasocial identification and identification. According to them, identification was a process in which viewers imagined themselves as the character, thereby losing their own identity temporarily while they vicariously participated in the character’s experience. Parasocial identification on the other hand, did not involve this process of identification, but rather it was a process that involved the viewer entering into an “illusion of intimacy” (p. 217), and feeling emotionally engaged with the media character (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Parasocial interaction and attachment theory

A number of studies have explored the connection between the attachment styles of individual television viewers and the parasocial relations they established with their favourite television characters (Cohen, 1997; Cole & Leets, 1999). According to attachment theory a person’s attachment style plays a basic role in how she or he experiences a close relationship. A person’s pattern of attachment at 12 months of age becomes organised, operates automatically and is predictive of patterns of interaction five years later, and persists into adulthood (Brandchaft, 2001).

Cohen (1997) drew on attachment theories, citing the foundational work of Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth, Belhar, Waters, and Wall (1978) in his survey study of 209 graduate and undergraduate students. Cohen described the three types of attachment styles—secure, avoidant, and anxious—categorised by Ainsworth et al.

(1978). In his study Cohen utilised the (Collins, 1994) modified Adult Attachment scale with its three categories of “close, depend and anxiety” (p. 5). Cohen’s findings indicated that women who were secure in their current relationship, were more likely to engage in parasocial relations (PSR). By contrast, the men in the study who were anxious about the future of the relationship with their current partner, engaged in more PSR. Cohen suggested that these findings were in line with the literature on gender differences in how men and women experience relationships. Citing Wood (1986) and Hegelson (1994) Cohen claimed that as men tended to be more externally focused and have less social supports than women, it was reasonable to assume they may find comfort in PSR. According to Cohen, when women were anxious about their relationships, they were more inclined to reach out to their social and family support networks, and therefore their engagement in PSR was more likely to be experienced as complementary to their current relationships.

In their survey study of 115 undergraduate students Cole and Leets (1999) addressed the research question: “Are attachment styles related to the formation of parasocial relationships?” (p. 500). In contrast with Cohen (1997) they found no gender differences in terms of PSI (Cole & Leets, 1999). Their findings indicated that people with an anxious-ambivalent style of attachment were the “most likely” (p. 507) to establish a parasocial relationship with their favourite television personalities. People with a secure attachment style engaged in a “moderate level” (p. 507) of parasocial interaction, which increased when they felt insecure in their relationships, while those with an avoidant attachment style were the least likely to participate in this activity. Cole and Leets surmised that “Perhaps Avoidant individuals have concluded that no one can be trusted, including TV characters” (p. 507).

Measuring identification

Drawing on empirical studies of television viewing, Cohen (2001) noted that although there was a scale that was used to measure PSI, there was “no measure for identification with media characters” (p. 254). He proposed a system of measuring identification that was made up of four essential components:

The first is empathy or sharing the feelings of the character (i.e., being happy; sad; or scared, not for the character, but with the character). The second is a cognitive aspect that is manifest in sharing the perspective of the character. Operationally this can be measured by the degree to which an audience member feels he or she understands the character and the motivations for his or

her behavior. The third indicator of identification is motivational, and this addresses the degree to which the audience member internalizes and shares the goals of the character. Finally, the fourth component of identification is absorption or the degree to which self-awareness is lost during exposure to the text. (Cohen, 2001, p. 256)

Cohen (2001) presented an identification inventory of 10 items, which could be adapted for use with either television, film or books to measure the “intensity and frequency” (p. 256) of identification that a media user experiences.

Identification, it seems, is a complex idea, and many scholars are still attempting to define its conceptual boundaries. Although clearly identifying as a proponent of cognitive approaches, Plantinga (in Plantinga & Tan, 2007) contended that it was presently not possible to have one grand theory that explained the “complexity of human interaction with film” (p. 14). Firstly, he said, this is because current psychological theories do not provide an adequate system of ideas to explain film viewers motives. Secondly, because the factors involved in what attracts people to films are so numerous and diverse that it would not be possible, or beneficial, to encompass them in one over-arching theory (Plantinga & Tan, 2007, p. 14). In his conclusion, Plantinga conceded that the one area that has been overlooked by cognitivists is the “unique place” in which the experience of film viewing resides in “human life” (p. 20). Although the actual domain of the film experience was not defined in Plantinga’s comment, several authors have explored a particular psychic realm in which it might dwell, and I discuss this in the following section.

Transitional space, transitional phenomena

From the field of film theory, Konigsberg (1996) suggested Winnicott’s (1971) “potential space” (p. 874) could be what is offered to a person viewing a film. Winnicott’s concepts of “transitional objects”—the subjective object such as the teddy bear or blanket that is the infant’s first use of a symbol—also informed Konigsberg’s views on the psychic space inhabited by a person when watching a film. He described that space as “akin to the transitional world of our infancy because it is indeed a transitional world between representation and reality” (p. 880). Kohut’s (1971) concept of self-object experience, according to Konigsberg (1996), could also explain elements of the experience of viewing a film:

We need characters on the screen to act as objects, as well as our self-objects, with which we can interact ... Since the faces in the film do not directly respond

to us, we find ourselves at times identifying with the objects of the gaze, objects we see on the screen, taking on their feelings or characteristics in the act of being perceived. (Konigsberg, 1996, p. 884)

Also from film studies, Creme (1994) considered the viewer's relationship with film from a Winnicottian perspective and proposed that the experience of film viewing facilitated a possibility "where the film takes on the status of a transitional object" (p. 48). She put forward the notion of the "playing spectator" (p. 4) who engaged with film both consciously and unconsciously and made use of it as a "play object to obtain an experience of the Self" (p. 10). According to Creme, film viewing also enabled a person to psychically shift into "the film space" (p. 49) situated between the inner world and external world. She also drew on the concepts of psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas (1989) whose ideas had built on Winnicott's concepts, in particular the latter's work on the "use" of an object. Creme proposed a model of the film spectator relationship, informed by Bollas' notions on how the client in therapy "uses" the therapist "as a play object" (p. 282) and also his concepts of the sense of "fusion" or "merging of subject and object" (p. 297) that occur in therapy, and can also be experienced when a person is engaged in an aesthetic endeavour. For a film viewer, "the state of merging with a film" (p. 297) evokes memory of the preverbal "pre-subjective" merged state with the primary caregiver—the "transformational object" (Creme, 1994, p. 297).

Winnicott's theories originally emerged in the period considered to be the "third phase of psychoanalysis" (Holland, 1992, p. 86). This was the period during which the "interpsychic model" evolved from the Freudian "intrapsychic" one (Holland, 1992, p. 86, emphases in original). Oatley and Gholamain (1997) explained how Freud's first theory of identification was based on the idea that in the original relationship between infant and parent, each was the central focus of the other. They posited how Winnicott's (1971) concepts of transitional phenomena explained what occurred during the subsequent processes of separation as the child developed, "Art, literature, the theater, films and other cultural phenomena, come to fill the gap" (p. 268).

Holland (1992) described how, in the field of film and literary criticism, Winnicott's concepts were influential and new realisations emerged about the "relations" between "text and reader", the eclectic "readings" and the cultural contexts in which they were considered (p. 86). According to Holland "the day of 'the' reader is over—at least for those of us who have looked at actual readers" (p. 87). With regard to

film, Hayward (2006) noted that when actual viewers were eventually studied, researchers found “eclecticism of viewers, and acknowledged the difference in readings of the film depending on class, age, creed, sexuality, gender and nationality” (p. 374). The interrelations between actual viewers and films, and the sociocultural contexts of the lived experiences of film are aspects of my study, which I shall be exploring in later chapters.

From a cultural psychology perspective, Zittoun (2006) drew on Winnicott’s concepts of the transitional object, and was informed by Vygotsky’s (1934) social development theory in which a major theme was that humans use “cultural tools” (p. 130) to mediate their social environments. She summarised 29 cases, and presented 5 case studies based on interviews with 30 participants aged between 18 and 25, who had mobilised “symbolic elements” such as films, books, artworks, religious beliefs and songs during events or periods in their lives which they had experienced as “ruptures” (p. 130). For Zittoun, when “cultural elements” (p. 130) such as film are used intentionally by an individual, they become a “symbolic resource” (p. 130).

The intentional use of media, including films, to cope with intense emotions has been extensively researched and is the basic premise of mood management theory. This will be discussed in the following section.

Mood management

The notion of selecting media content for the purpose of regulating mood states was proposed by Zillmann and Bryant (1985) and Zillmann (1988), and numerous studies have subsequently reported support for this strategy. Mood management research has involved studies of how people regulate their moods through selective exposure to various types of media, including television, film, music, and video games (e.g., Carpentier, Brown, Bertocci, Silk, Forbes, and Dahl, 2008).

According to Carpentier et al. (2008) while mood management studies have usually found that adults will choose media to increase positive moods and to decrease negative mood states, most of this research had been carried out with adults who were assumed to be “mentally healthy” (p. 143) and who had the ability to select media in order to alter prevailing mood states. Noting a paucity of mood management studies with younger participants, Carpentier et al. conducted a controlled study with children and adolescents diagnosed with a “major depressive disorder” (p. 143). In total there were 51 participants, aged between 7 and 17 years, of which 18 females and 10 males were diagnosed with depression, and 17 females and

6 males in the control group. The participants were contacted by the researchers several times a day on their mobile phones over five weekends during an 8-week period. The researchers were specifically interested in how mood affected the participants' media selection, the experience of moods during the media use, and impact of media on their subsequent moods. The use of media reported by the participants showed that television and film (combined as one medium) was the most used with 59%, followed by radio/CDs at 20%, internet/computer 12%, video games 11%, books 3%, magazines (1%) and newspapers at less than 1% (p. 149).

Carpentier et al. (2008) found that adolescents, with or without depression, who did use media, did not seem to use "fun" media (p. 156) to amplify previous positive moods, but rather it was to maintain those moods. Among the participants in more negative moods, media was also not often used to "improve" their mood (p. 156). There were gender differences however, with males tending to be drawn to fun-quality media when in a negative mood state, whereas females did not seem to have a particular preference. Carpentier et al. noted that a surprising finding in this study was the low level of selective exposure by the adolescents to sad quality media, which was in direct contrast to findings in the "depression" literature (p. 155). The researchers cited literature by Forbes & Dahl (2005) in which it had been suggested that male, and in particular female, adolescents with depression might select "sad media" (p. 155) to maintain negative moods or decrease positive moods. Carpentier et al. concluded that their findings confirmed a previous study by Larson (1995) in which it was found that adolescents' use of media was more to do with resisting boredom than mood management.

The function of films to enable clients to experience "catharsis" was noted in the cinematherapy literature (Lampropoulos & Spengler, 2005), and was supported by reference to Aristotle's original definition of catharsis as being the result of Greek tragedy evoking a purging and purifying effect on the audience (Wolz, 2010). However, according to Oatley and Gholamain (1997), there was no evidence that Aristotle's use of the term "katharsis" (p. 267) was intended to suggest purging and purification, but that due to mistranslation it has become known as such. Citing Nussbaum (1986) they argued that catharsis was a cognitive process and its central meaning "was that of clearing up or clarification, including the cognitive meaning of understanding clearly and without obstacles" (p. 267).

Escapism, entertainment and play

According to Klimmt, Hefner and Vorderer (2007), when a media user adopted a media character's desired features, or experienced him or herself as being the film character, this not only had the effect of changing self-perception by reducing "self-discrepancy" but also fulfilled "an escapism motivation of media use" (p. 16).

Vorderer, Klimmt & Ritterfeld (2004) argued that "escapist desires" applied not only to "specific clusters of society but to all individuals" (p. 399). They discussed the various motives that people have for using media, not the least was for entertainment. The notion of entertainment as "play" was also put forward as an overall construct to explain the fundamental motive for being entertained (Vorderer et al., 2004, p. 401).

Repeat viewing and film quotations

In a study of a "large group of undergraduates" conducted in 2000, Klinger (2008, para. 11) examined the enjoyment the participants gained in re-viewing films in a domestic context. Klinger found that not only was "line memorization" a motivating factor (para. 11), but that most of the films from which the participants' memorised lines, were those produced during or just prior to their own generation, which in this case was the 1980s. Historically this was a period in which it first became possible for viewers to be able to easily rent and own films, and use playback technologies that enabled repeat screenings at home.

Klinger (2008) cited Havelock's (1963, p. 43) concept of the "tribal encyclopedia" to describe the common parlance function of film quotations. In her study she found that the participants desire to impersonate film characters and recite film quotations, served "multiple, overlapping functions" which was "inextricably connected to social considerations, as it furnished a means to achieve self and group identification" (para. 11). Drawing on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, Klinger suggested that the "performance" function of using film quotes could be considered a "technology of the self" (para. 8) and thereby a "part of the theatricality of everyday life" (para. 8). She found in both her and other studies, that although "most demographics" enjoyed viewing films repeatedly, men reported "particular pleasure in re-watching to memorize, quote, and enact dialogue" (para. 9). Klinger found that the males in her study "rarely" quoted from female film characters, and she suggested that "this play involves vicarious identification with a range of

commonplace masculinities that can secure individual and group identities and confirm gender and generational ties” (para. 20).

Creating possible selves

Markus and Nurius (1986) suggested that despite the freedom a person had to create “possible selves”, it did depend on the store of representations upon which to draw, and these included “models, images and symbols provided by the media” (p. 954). More recently Garrels (2006) noted that Girard’s (1967) key theory, that desire is a behaviour we learn through imitation (mimesis) and not an innate drive, was being revisited through empirical research into human imitation by developmental psychologists and cognitive neuroscientists (p. 48).

Mar, Djikic and Oatley (2008) drew on “expertise” (p. 127) theory and used the analogy of how a “cockpit simulator” (p. 129) provided the opportunity for an individual to practise the intricacies of piloting an aircraft, to suggest that reading, or watching simulations in fictional narratives in literature, theatre or film, could lead to increased empathy and bring about personality changes (p. 129). Mar et al., cited numerous studies in their examination of how the “psychological effects” of reading fiction continued beyond the end of the story (p. 127). Among these studies was one conducted by Flerx, Fidler, and Rogers (1976) with 5-year-old children who had either viewed fictional films or had fictional narratives read to them, in which portrayals of “either egalitarian sex roles or more traditional non-egalitarian sex roles” were presented (p. 130). When tested for stereotypes of women’s employment roles, the children who were exposed to “egalitarian material” responded accordingly, and when tested a week later the effect, although reduced, had endured (p. 131).

Conclusion

This literature review was structured to reflect the categories of participants in this study. In the first section the explicit focus was on the available literature related to the use of film in therapy. In the second section a multi-disciplinary exploration identified a body of literature from which I was able to select relevant studies and new conceptual frameworks. These were specifically explored while considering the film-viewing experiences of the participants. The integration of the disparate texts in this review not only provides theoretical support for practitioners and proponents of cinematherapy, it opens the door to a mutually enriching and ongoing relationship with communication, media, film, philosophy, social psychology and cultural

theorists. All of these share an interest in the visual media, the use of which continues to expand in the global cultural milieu.

In the next chapter the theoretical influences that informed the methodological approach to this study will be discussed, and the processes involved during the various stages of the project will be described.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Psychotherapy is one way we bring consciousness to bear on the images psyche is presented with. In this way I reckon the Otherness of the movie image is no less a place to start than the Otherness of the Unconscious. A third image is that which arises 'between' the object and the perception. Or rather, not 'between' but as the result of the negotiation between the viewer and the screen. We do not create the third image; in a way, it creates us.

(Hauke, 2009, p. 57)

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical stance that informed my research, and the methodology I adopted to carry out the research project. I also describe the processes involved in the sampling methods, interviewing, transcriptions, analysis and in the representation of the findings.

When I first undertook this research project, I likened it to the experience of travelling through a maze. Although it would involve following paths that had previously been laid out by others to arrive eventually at the centre, there would be dead ends, delays, confusion and the real possibility of getting lost.

Finding a research approach

From the outset the theoretical congruence between qualitative research and my work as a counsellor and psychotherapist supported the decision to use that mode of inquiry. Using a qualitative approach would enable me to study the research participants' subjective experiences of the use of film in their lives and in their work, and would facilitate the expression of their personal and unique experiences. The collection of the type of data that would reveal the meaning that individuals made from their experiences of using film therapeutically supported a narrative approach.

The way in which I carried out this research ultimately depended on the fundamental ontological and epistemological beliefs that I held as a researcher—what my view of reality was, and how I made sense of the world. The

epistemological vantage point from which I view the world is that reality is socially constructed, depends on being subjectively interpreted, and relies on multiple interpretations. The interpretive paradigmatic assumptions that meaning is made—as opposed to being found—and that relationship is central to knowledge, would therefore guide the manner in which I carried out this research.

Nonetheless, in the area of qualitative research, there were different views of the world and different methods of gathering knowledge. Navigating the maze of methodologies that fell within that field was a challenging experience.

Phenomenology and hermeneutics

Any discussion of qualitative research needs to begin with a look at phenomenology, and this is especially the case with research into counselling and psychotherapy (McLeod, 2001). Noting the stages in some counselling approaches in which clients are encouraged to “bracket” beliefs, and provide detailed descriptions of their experiences in order to discover the “essence” of the presenting issues, McLeod (2001) considered a phenomenological approach “to have an easy affinity with counselling and psychotherapy” (p. 40). I will discuss below whether it is in fact possible for researchers to bracket off their beliefs.

Several authors drew attention to the argument that qualitative research lacked philosophical guidance (McLeod, 2001; Ponterotto, 2005). Referring specifically to qualitative inquiry within counselling and psychotherapy, McLeod (2001) suggested that the fundamental “underlying epistemologies” of both phenomenology and hermeneutics have not been adequately understood (p. 63). This has led to confusion because phenomenology is discussed as a philosophy, a methodology, a method, and an overall perspective that underpins all qualitative research (Wertz, 2005). It is therefore not surprising that there is a broad range of opinions among qualitative researchers using phenomenological approaches, concerning the manner in which the philosophies are applied, the variations in the use of methods and the final reporting.

As a researcher I knew that my epistemological and ontological perspectives would influence how I thought about phenomenology (Wertz, 2005), and my understanding was helped by Van Manen (2002a, 2002b), the key scholar of the “Dutch School”, also known as “the Utrecht School”. He suggested that “from a philosophical point of view there exist many continuities and discontinuities among the various phenomenological orientations or movements” (Van Manen, 2002a, para. 1). The

diverse philosophical perspectives on how human experience was understood and interpreted, ranged from Husserl's belief that essential truths emerge from the "prereflective life world of everyday experience" (Van Manen, 2002b, para. 1) to Derrida's notion that language is never neutral, and constructs experience (Polkinghorne, 2000). Whether it was possible to communicate lived experience without interpreting it, became a central question.

Husserl's "intentionality of consciousness"—the capacity of the mind to direct pre-reflective awareness, and the meanings it applies upon an object—was considered by Creswell (1998, p. 52) to be the starting point of phenomenology. Husserl's notion of transcendental phenomenology reflected his particular interest in philosophy, which had emerged after attending lectures in psychology and philosophy with Franz Brentano (McLeod, 2001). Transcendental phenomenology is concerned with discovering the "essence" and the "essential, invariant" features of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). The goal is to develop a deeper understanding of complex issues that may not be initially apparent, by paying rigorous attention to what shows up in consciousness, using the procedure of "bracketing" or "epoché"—the suspension of the researcher's biases and preconceptions—in order to obtain the perspective to be able to identify the core themes and essences (Creswell, 1998, p. 54).

The Husserlian concept of epoché, and the distinction between being immersed in, and reflecting on experience, was illustrated by Koestenbaum (1998) in his description of viewing a film, and then later, interpreting it:

When I watch and enjoy the film I am "one with it"; I am engaged and involved. When, later I analyse it, I distance myself from the straightforward experience of the film; I observe the film independently of my emotional involvement and identification with it. Criticism depends on the successful exercise of this latter attitude. When I bracket the reality of the film's contents by detaching myself from it, I consider the film as a film and not as a real state of affairs in which I participate. While engaged, I think of the events in the film as real: I view these as happening to me or around me. When distanced, I see the film for what it is, an illusion. Film criticism invariably involves bracketing. (Koestenbaum, 1998, in introduction to Husserl, 1967/98 pp. xxi–xxii)

As suggested earlier in this discussion, approaches to phenomenology range from those, who, like Husserl, claimed that essential truths manifest from prereflective awareness (Van Manen, 2002b), to those who emphasised the role of language in

mediating and communicating experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Since I wanted to explore the lived experiences of people being influenced by film, and also the meanings attached to those experiences, and since I wanted to acknowledge a social-cultural context in the production of those meanings, it became clear that hermeneutics as an interpretive approach would inform my analysis. McLeod (2001) claimed that in all qualitative research for the creation of meaning to be possible, it was necessary to draw from both phenomenology and hermeneutics. Describing Heidegger (1889–1976) as the philosopher who integrated phenomenology and hermeneutics, McLeod (2001) asserted that Heidegger’s understanding of humankind and the development of meaning within a relationship, had not been surpassed, let alone equalled, by modern day researchers. The nature of existence (ontology) was central to Heidegger’s hermeneutics, and in contrast to Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology in which bracketing was used, Heidegger advocated that every interpretation “presupposes historically transmitted preconceptions” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 85). The fundamental tenet of the interpretivist tradition is that the social reality that people construct is the result of their ceaseless engagement in the act of interpreting their eternally changing world. According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) “Reality is *always already* interpreted” (p. 17), (emphasis in original).

McLeod (2001) argued that although the aim of hermeneutics was often described as the interpretation of phenomena to reveal meanings, to describe hermeneutics as “interpretive” (p. 22) was too general and non-specific. He explained that one of the differences between “a true hermeneutic approach” and an “interpretive approach” was that hermeneutics acknowledged culture and history, and that was not necessary when carrying out a study that was simply “interpretive” (McLeod, 2001, p. 22). Anderson (2001) drew on hermeneuticists such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Habermas to suggest the dialogical or dialectic aspect of hermeneutics:

One therefore can never reach a true understanding of an event or a person. Each account is only one version of the truth. Each is influenced by what the interpreter brings to the encounter. The hermeneutic process of understanding is a two way joint activity, a dialogue—being open to the other and trying to understand them. (Anderson, 2001, p. 10)

The meanings of the lived experiences of the participants in my study would therefore be co-produced through the building of a dialogic relationship which acknowledged my potential influence on their stories, and conversely, the influence

their stories had on me (Connelly & Clandinin cited in Gudmundsdóttir, 1996). This circular process (the hermeneutic circle) was described by Gadamer (1975) as a “fusion of horizons”: to understand a meaning held by another person requires us to be aware of our prejudices as we alternate between their and our worlds (cited in Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 84). According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000), Gadamer’s (1975) hermeneutics emphasised language, and that it was never possible to reach a final, conclusive meaning.

Since I wanted to explore the lived experiences of people being influenced by film as well as the meanings attached to those experiences, and since I wanted to acknowledge a social-cultural context in the production of these meanings, it was appropriate that phenomenology and hermeneutics would inform my study. I also decided that social constructionism had much to offer, and in this next section I describe how that methodology gave me a lens through which to consider and reflect upon the ways in which people constructed their notion of self (McLeod, 2001).

Constructivism and social constructionism

Under the broad umbrella of interpretivism, which covers several different paradigms, researchers who use a constructivist framework take the view that people construct their own reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003):

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings) and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35)

Social constructionism as a contemporary articulation of hermeneutics, recognises that all meaning is contextualised and culture is integral to meaning (Anderson, 2001). How people construct meaning in their lives is contingent upon where they are located socially, culturally and historically and this process is largely influenced by language and relationship (Speedy, 2008). Within the field of counselling and psychotherapy however, according to Hoshmand (2005), the assumption that experience is socially constructed can be held by those working within a positivist paradigm. A researcher’s ontological assumptions therefore need to be made clear (Hoshmand, 2005).

Being guided by social constructionism would make it possible for me to consider and reflect upon the ways in which people as “social actors” constructed their

realities together (Blaikie, 2000, p. 115). Anderson (2001) suggested that postmodern theories such as social constructionism placed “both the individual and the relationship” in the foreground (p. 12), and that attending to context prevented the researcher from claiming an all-knowing perspective.

Social constructionism however, has been criticised for lacking a framework in which to talk about the self. Speedy (2008) expressed concern that the social constructionist position that we are fundamentally products of our culture has led to a “certain determinism ... almost as if socio-cultural factors, albeit contextual and contingent, have become the new structuralism or the latest ‘grand narrative’ ” (p. 16). From this stance everything is relative and there is no such thing as choice or personal agency. Nonetheless a hermeneutic social constructionist approach that encourages personal reflexivity within a cultural context is relevant to my research project, and indeed to my experience as a counsellor and psychotherapist.

In the following section I describe why I was drawn to using narrative methods to understand the phenomenon I was researching, and analyse my research findings.

Narrative considerations

As a counsellor and psychotherapist I am interested in Narrative Inquiry, not the least because of the parallel with “relational theories” which inform my work (Hoshmand, 2005, p. 178). In narrative inquiry the inter-subjective relationship, which acknowledges the mutual influence of experience and knowledge between researcher and participant, is a “key theme” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 cited in Creswell, 2007 p. 57). Kramp (2004), citing Bruner (1986), drew attention to its theoretical foundations:

Narrative inquiry changes the question the philosopher Richard Rorty identifies as the epistemological question that has historically pre-occupied Anglo-American philosophy, from “How do we come to know the truth?” to “How do we come to endow experience with meaning?” (Bruner, 1986, p. 12, cited in Kramp, 2004, p. 104)

An exploration of the literature on narrative inquiry revealed a diversity of perspectives among researchers on how narrative was defined, and what methods of analysis should be used. Riessman (2008) described narrative scholars as a “diverse bunch” (p. 13), who drew from numerous traditions, and acknowledged that it was inevitable that there were methodological tensions between them. Describing

narrative as both the “phenomenon and the method”, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) distinguished the differences by using the term “story” for the phenomenon, and “narrative” for the inquiry, and “narratology” as the term to describe the study of narrative discourses across a broad range of disciplines (p. 2). Hoshmand (2005) used the term “narratology” to distinguish between the methodology of narrative research and the narrative form of the data that was collected and analysed (p. 178).

People use narrative to make sense of their worlds, and it is also the form in which the researcher hears it (Wells, 1986 in Gudmundsdóttir, 1996). Narrators go through a process in order to relate their story. To convey their experience through language, people delve into their memory systems, and selectively edit the narration in order to get their story across to another “who has not had the same experience” (Ricoeur cited in Gudmundsdóttir, 1996, p. 296). Riessman and Quinney (2005) suggested that “in everyday use ... narrative has become little more than metaphor—everyone has her ‘story’ “ (p. 393). However narrative is more than just the end result; it makes possible the continuing “construction of social realities, not just post-hoc representations” (Bruner, 1991, cited in Herman, 2001, p. 6).

Locating the disciplines of psychology and sociology in a continuum between “social linguistics” and “social history and anthropology”, Riessman (2008, p. 5) suggested that there were a range of approaches to narrative inquiry which were usually “linked to discipline” (p. 5). Despite the increasing use of narrative approaches across a wide range of disciplines, there was criticism of the “extraordinary absence of social context”, and of researchers frequently privileging “narrative self-revelation” (Atkinson, 1997, p. 333).

For Riessman (2008), how stories were interpreted depended on the underlying epistemological assumptions of the researcher. If the researcher believed that the “self” was dialogical—co-constructed through dialogue—the interactional context would be included in the findings (Riessman, 2008, p. 29). On the other hand if the researcher believed that a person’s self was primarily reflected through their narrative, an analysis that concentrated on the voice of the narrator would be relevant (Riessman, 2008, p. 29).

Creswell (2007) distinguished two approaches to narrative research. The first approach he attributed to Polkinghorne (1995), in particular the latter’s emphasis on story with a traditional narrative plot structure. The second approach, according to Creswell, was to “emphasize the variety of forms found in narrative research

practices for example 'biographical study', 'autobiography', 'life history', 'oral history' " (p. 56).

According to Polkinghorne (1995) there were two types of narrative inquiry, the "analysis of narratives and narrative analysis" (p. 13–15). In the former type researchers use a paradigmatic analysis to examine data in order to identify elements considered to be common to the phenomenon under investigation. By contrast, in the second type of inquiry a researcher draws together relevant information from the data in order to construct a story (Polkinghorne, 1995). Both types require "primarily diachronic data"—in contrast to "synchronic" data—which contains "temporal information about the sequential relationship of events" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). Etherington (2002) drew attention to Polkinghorne's (1995) "clear distinction" (p. 80) between the two types of narrative inquiry and described how she drew on both for a book editing project:

On the one hand the chapters are stories that are knowledge in themselves and require no analysis by me. On the other hand I have attempted thematic analysis, using previously held theory as a tool for understanding some of the themes that have emerged, whilst also allowing themes to emerge from the data itself, in the manner of a grounded theory approach (although by no means in any pure sense). (p. 170)

Etherington's (2004) book of exemplars provided a valuable directional compass for the navigation of that part of my research journey which I shall discuss later in this chapter in the section on my chosen analytic methods.

The challenges of narrative inquiry

Among the challenges of using narrative inquiry were that it was necessary to bring together a wide range of data, and that it required a particular skill to recognise the key elements in a participant's story. Issues regarding ownership of the story were highlighted, in particular any disagreements on outcome (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2006 cited in Creswell, 2007). Both the way a narrative unfolded, and the ability of the storyteller, had a significant effect on how it was heard, and subsequently interpreted, by the researcher. When confronted with an inadequate narrative, researchers could "intuitively and quite spontaneously 're-story' by filling the holes in the narrative with information, and two different narratives emerge, the researcher's and the informant's" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, cited in Gudmundsdóttir, 1996, p. 297).

Bricolage, collage or montage

As I arranged and rearranged these various methodologies, this “theoretical tinkering” (Turkle, 1997, p. 48), led me to consider whether “bricolage” was an apt description of the approach I was developing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, pp. 4–5). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggested that when qualitative researchers used multiple methodologies, they were being creative and resourceful, and could be considered: i) bricoleurs, and the work they do as “bricolage”; ii) a Jack of all trades; iii) a quilt maker; or, iv) “as in filmmaking a person who assembles images into montages” (pp. 4–5). Considering my topic of inquiry, perhaps a more appropriate description of my research approach would be of a person who selects and edits images and constructs a composite whole—a montage maker.

Montage invites viewers to construct interpretations that build on one another as the scene unfolds. The interpretations are built on associations based on the contrasting images that blend into one another. The underlying assumption of montage is that viewers perceive and interpret the shots in a “montage sequence not *sequentially*, or one at a time, but rather *simultaneously* (Cook, 1981, p. 172). The viewer puts the sequence together into a meaningful whole, as if in a glance, all at once. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 7, emphases in original)

To illustrate this concept Denzin and Lincoln (2003) provided the well-known example of the film montage of the Odessa Steps in the movie *Battleship Potemkin* by Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein. Montage was an editing approach that was favoured by Eisenstein and in contemporary cinema studies the concept of montage was referred to as “Soviet Cinema style of editing” (Hayward, 2006, p. 99). Kibbey (2005) argued, that for Eisenstein, montage was not simply a construction of images “immobilised ‘like bricks’ “ (p. 139), but rather it was in the juxtapositions, particularly the dynamic effect of the relationship between the images that created the meaning in a montage. Although I had entered into a relationship with research which fundamentally involved a conversation between researcher, participants, stories and the audience, it took a while to realise that it would be in “the spaces between” each of those that multiple layers of meaning would emerge (Speedy, 2008, p. 32). As Speedy (2008) emphasised, the way in which “reflexive knowledges” and “liminal spaces” have an effect on each other “is surely somewhere in the ball park if not at the heart of all rigorous research” (p. 32).

This intersubjective perspective is central to the concepts of “self” in contemporary theories of counselling and psychotherapy. For the purposes of discussing these concepts it is relevant for me as a researcher, and as a counsellor and psychotherapist, to identify my understanding of self, which I shall do in the following section.

Current concepts of self

Challenging essentialist notions of self such as Descartes’, contemporary theories of counselling and psychotherapy have developed the idea of a fluid, evolving, non-linear, relational self (McLeod, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1988). According to Benjamin (1988) the “intersubjective view” of the self (p. 19) emerged from the clinical work of both Donald Winnicott and Heinz Kohut. One of Winnicott’s (1971/2007) major theoretical contributions was his concept of “transitional space”, the psychic space situated between the inner world (fantasy) and the external world (reality) which, “constitutes the greater part of the infant’s experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work” (p. 19). Although he did not specifically refer to Winnicott, aspects of transitional phenomena were suggested in Kohut’s (1971) concepts. Kohut (1971) proposed that as the process of differentiation takes place in the interaction with its caregiver, the infant replaces this interaction by assigning the previous perfection:

[T]o an archaic, rudimentary (transitional) selfobject, the idealized parent imago. Since all bliss and power now reside in the idealized object, the child feels empty and powerless when he is separated from it and he attempts, therefore, to maintain a continuous union with it. (p. 37)

Winnicott’s concept of a transitional realm in which inner and outer reality interrelate and paradox is tolerated, was described by Ogden (1985) as being the place “between the symbol and the symbolised” (p. 137). This transitional space, is a safe space, similar to the therapy space (Schapiro 1998). Concepts of the therapeutic “play space”—an intersubjective space suitable for the growth of the self—have been influenced by Winnicott’s (1971) ideas of the “potential space” of creativity and play (Ogden, 1985, p. 130). The notion of the “third” space—the space between the therapist and the client—is a fundamental concept in intersubjective theory (Benjamin, 1988). Attributing the origins of the concepts of intersubjectivity to Jurgen Habermas, Benjamin (1988) suggested that “Intersubjective space, if we translate into

Winnicott's terms, begins with the holding environment between mother and baby and expands into the transitional area, the child's area of play, creativity, and fantasy" (p. 19).

Building on Winnicott's (1965) concepts of the "facilitating environment", Bollas (1989) proposed the idea of the "transformational object" (p. 13) which represented, not the caregiver as such, but rather the memory of the processes involved when the caregiver was integral to the transformation of the infant's internal and external environment. This is the period in the infant's life before the caregiver "is mentally represented as an other" (Bollas, 1989, p. 14). As adults throughout their lives, continue to seek "symbolic equivalents to the transformational object" (Bollas, 1989, p. 17) they are repeatedly enacting "a pre-verbal ego memory" (p. 16). Such experience of transformation is sought through a variety of ways for example, relationship changes, job changes, religious or aesthetic experiences (Bollas, 1989). Bollas (1989) posited the term "aesthetic moment" to describe when a person experiences a "deep subjective rapport with an object" such as an artwork, poetry, or musical performance (p. 16). According to Bollas, such aesthetic moments did not evoke specific memories as such, but rather a "psychosomatic sense of fusion that is the subject's recollection of the transformational object" (p. 16).

Winnicott's and Kohut's theories were influential in the development of the Conversational Model of therapy originated by British psychoanalyst Robert Hobson and Australian psychiatrist Russell Meares. In that model of therapy, in which I have trained, self is conceived as developing through interactions with significant others, particularly through language. For Meares' (2001) "symbolic play" (p. 23) was the necessary transitional field for the emergence of self. Citing Bruner (1983) Meares suggested that for the infant this was first experienced with the other in a "proto-conversation" (p. 19). Drawing on Trevarthen's (1974) research into the proto-conversation (the earliest communications between an infant and its caregiver), Meares (2005) pointed out that the caregiver's role in this interaction is often referred to as "*mirroring*, a term that is not quite accurate" (p. 24). He argued that, "[T]he mother is not simply a mirror. In her responsiveness to her infant, she gives back some part of what the baby is doing—but only some part and not all—and also gives him something of her own" (Meares, 2005, p. 24)

According to Meares (2001), the non-linear language that accompanied symbolic play, experienced by the child in sharing and being allowed free expression of pretences of reality, was essential to the child's development of self. Describing this

interchange of conversational play between the caregiver and the infant as a necessary precursor to playing games together, Meares (2001) suggested that it was not the “mere to and fro” but rather “the resonance between the ‘conversing’ partners has a transformational effect” (p. 17). Internalisation of the feeling of resonance in the conversation between the child’s inner and outer worlds leads to, as William James described, a “stream of consciousness”, which initiates reflective awareness (Meares, 2001, p. 23). In the first two months of life, basic expectations of both roles in the dyad of infant and caregiver are already being recognised and remembered by the infant (Beebe, Lachmann & Jaffe, 1997). The infant’s experience of the relationship, rather than simply the caregiver, is an essential antecedent to the emergence of self (Meares, 2001). The ideal therefore in the therapy process, is for the therapist and client to have the “freedom to move associatively between inner and outer worlds and in the ‘third space’ co-created over the course of the therapeutic contact” (Graham & Van Biene, 2007, p. 192).

Although the diverse and ongoing nature of self-experience is increasingly emphasised in contemporary counselling and psychotherapy theories, the self is still mostly considered in western societies, according to McLeod (2001), as an “autonomous, bounded locus of decision-making and intention” (p. 29), with a strong emphasis on personal identity and individual achievement. It is that notion of self argued McLeod, that fundamentally informs most therapy approaches.

From a social constructionist perspective however, as previously discussed in this chapter, self is not a being that has a distinct and independent existence, it is a construction (McLeod, 1997). From a social constructionist point of view, meaning is constructed through story-telling, and narrative is central to our understanding of ourselves (McLeod, 1997). The postmodern notion of “socially storied lives” is replacing the modernist concept of self (Corey, 2009, p. 376). Consequently when therapy is informed by social constructionism, it is not focused on finding inner meanings because there is no meaning until a person constructs it. Meanings are actively created by people, and therapists working from this perspective are interested in clients’ socially created stories, and the co-construction of new meaning.

The value of client-generated metaphor as a linguistic resource is increasingly acknowledged in therapy models, particularly in those which have an emphasis on the therapeutic dialogue (Meares, 2005), and place value on a collaborative stance (McLeod, 1997). As noted in Chapter 1 and discussed in Chapter 2, there is also recognition of the value of “therapist-supplied stories” in order to promote

therapeutic change (McLeod, 1997, p. 81). Both avenues of introducing stories into therapy have been conceptualised in various cinematherapy models, with the notions of the client-introduced and the therapist-introduced stories of film, which are key concepts in this research project.

Emerging research questions

As a practitioner I wanted to know the benefits and limitations of using film as a counselling and psychotherapy intervention, but noted a lack of qualitative research on the topic. I initially enrolled in a Research Master of Counselling, and as I considered the aim of the research, several questions emerged:

- i) Are there common themes in how people are affected by movies?
- ii) What is the potential of films to initiate positive change for people?
- iii) In what areas might films be especially helpful?
- iv) How might counsellors and psychotherapists utilise movies in their work?
- v) How do films construct our meaning-making self-narratives and is this helpful or otherwise?

The overall research question that finally emerged was: “What is the therapeutic potential of using movies as a counselling and psychotherapy intervention?”

Having found my way through the maze of methodologies, the question arose of which methods to apply in order to yield useful results. What follows is a detailed explanation of how the journey through the sampling process unfolded, and how the research project evolved.

Methods

Moving through the sampling process and developing the project

I had initially decided that I needed two groups of participants; practitioners who utilised film, and those whose lives had been impacted by film. I had therefore decided on the following strategies:

- i) Conducting one or possibly two focus groups with people whose lives had been changed or influenced in a significant way by viewing a film, or who used films to develop insight into problems or release emotions. It was my expectation at the time

that the data from these focus groups would be used to help develop further avenues for my research of this topic.

ii) Conducting interviews with counselling and psychotherapy practitioners who were recognised as using movies as an intervention in their clinical work.

In order to recruit participants for the focus groups, I decided to access participants via film societies. An internet search at the time revealed several film clubs and societies and I sent emails to them all, and received one response from the co-ordinator of a university-based film society. I also contacted a friend who was the co-ordinator of a film club located in a regional area that had a membership of approximately 10 retired and semi-retired women and men. Both co-ordinators canvassed their members' interest in participating in a focus group, and subsequently conveyed their permission.

Another internet search identified three counselling and psychotherapy practitioners in Australia who were publicly quoted as using movies in their work with clients. I was interested in exploring with them how they utilised movies, and in what areas of their therapeutic work they experienced movies to be effective as an intervention.

I submitted an application to the Human Research Ethics Committee and received approval to commence the collection of data (HREC No: HEO7/194). As I completed the coursework component of the Research Masters it became apparent that the project had the potential to be developed into a doctoral thesis and I subsequently submitted an upgrade application to the doctoral committee. I proposed additional methods of data collection which included interviews with individuals, who as therapy clients had experienced the use of film in their therapy, and interviews with individuals whose lives had been changed or impacted in a significant way by viewing a film. I received notification in July 2008 that my application to upgrade to a PhD had been successful. In order to locate and interview participants for the additional data that would be required, I applied for and obtained ethics approval for extension of the data collection time frame.

There had also been some changes that required me to make alternative arrangements to recruit participants. For various reasons it became impossible to arrange the focus group with the members of the regional area film group. Their co-ordinator withdrew for health related reasons, and despite her distribution of my information sheet to the members, I received only two responses, one of whom was interested to know if a payment was being made to participants. With the second

focus group there were inevitable delays as we had entered a holiday period and the university was on semester break, and several of the film group members were away on vacation. In due course a focus group was arranged and accomplished with five participants and myself as moderator.

Of the three Australian practitioners I had located, two were interested in being interviewed, and a third did not respond to my messages. I arranged the necessary interstate travel to carry out the interviews, but a couple of days prior to the appointment I received a call from one of the therapists who had decided to withdraw. The reason offered was that this practitioner no longer used movies as a specific clinical intervention. However, my interstate trip to interview the other practitioner was successful. I continued to seek Australian practitioners who met the sampling category and contacted three therapists who were publicly known to use film as a pedagogical tool. I received no reply from one therapist. The second therapist replied that movies were used solely as a teaching tool with professionals and were not used with clients, and no interview took place. The third practitioner, a colleague, who I knew did not prescriptively use film as an intervention in his clinical work, responded that it was not uncommon for clients to introduce discussion of movies into therapy. He said he was willing to be interviewed and would seek permission from a specific client to discuss his experiences, which he did and we arranged an interview.

In order to increase the sample size of practitioners, and to provide the possibility of comparative samples (Devers & Frankel, 2000, p. 264), I decided to include practitioners in various overseas countries who were listed on the internet as using film in their clinical work. I sent introductory emails to a total of twenty-three practitioners throughout North America, Latin America, United Kingdom, Europe, and South-East Asia and I received fifteen replies. Of these, ten respondents were interested in being interviewed by phone; two sent articles they had written on their use of films in therapy, as an alternative to being interviewed; one respondent advised that he did not use movies, but instead used audio-visual programs that were specially produced for health education. Two respondents were concerned that their competence with spoken English might be insufficient for an interview. This highlighted for me that although I had chosen a purposive sampling strategy, it relied to a degree on “convenience sampling” in that it required participants to speak English—my only language (Giacomini & Cook, 2000, p. 478). I replied to all the respondents attaching the consent form and information about my research project.

The final number of practitioners located in overseas countries was six—three females and three males—with three from the United States, one from Denmark and two from Hong Kong.

Participants recruited from various locations

The total number of participants was sixteen and included:

- One focus group consisting of five participants—four males and one female—plus one female moderator (myself).
- Three individuals influenced by films—one female, and two males (both of whom had participated in the focus group).
- Two female participants having experienced the use of films in therapy.
- Eight practitioners—four female and four male.
- Locations: Australia, Denmark, Hong Kong, United States.

In total there were thirteen individual interviews (seven face-to-face and six via Skype internet telephone—supplemented in one case by email) and one focus group interview (five participants and myself as moderator).

Sampling strategies

In summary, “purposive sampling” strategies, the selection of participants who have knowledge or experience of the phenomenon being studied and who could provide insightful understanding to the research (Devers & Frankel, 2000, p. 264; Polkinghorne, 2005, p.140), were employed from the outset of my study. The use of a film group for the recruitment of participants for the focus group; the selection of therapists identified in cinematherapy publications, or publicly listed as using film in their work; and the selection of participants known for their particular use of film in their lives and work, were all relevant. These sampling strategies led to some “snowballing” (Giacomini & Cook, 2000). For example, two of the focus groups participants volunteered to be interviewed individually, and a colleague recommended a friend who had experienced the use of films in therapy.

Friends as participants

Although the topic of this research was inspired in part by my experience of clients discussing movies in therapy sessions, and my previous experience in film, it was also motivated by the experience I had of particular friends and colleagues who used films in their lives in significant ways. When I initially decided on a qualitative research design for my inquiry, with the subjective involvement that this implies, I was under the impression that the use of friends as participants could be considered ethically inappropriate. This viewpoint was influenced by my work as a counsellor and psychotherapist, and my ethical principles regarding professional and therapeutic boundaries. I was also concerned that using friends as participants could be exploitative, and that the research material generated might not be considered credible. However, as noted by Giacomini and Cook (2000), “the exploratory nature of qualitative research typically requires investigators not to prespecify a study population in strict terms, lest an important person, variable, or unit of analysis be overlooked” (p. 478).

While issues of relational ethics, and of the development of friendships with research participants, are increasingly discussed in the literature on research methodologies (e.g., Browne, 2003; Ellis, 2007; England, 1994; Neal & Gordon, 2001; Tillmann-Healy, 2003), the availability of specific texts on the selection of friends as research participants was fairly limited. The notion of “friendship as method” was proposed by Tillmann-Healy (2003, p. 734) to describe the data-gathering procedures as being basically the same as those used to develop a friendship. These included informal chatting, mutual support, and sharing personal information through regular contact. Irrespective of whether or not the researcher and participants were already friends when the research process commenced, this approach involved continued immersion in the lives of participants and a commitment to the relationship which was as strong as the commitment to the project (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 735). Rather than overlooking the inevitability in many research studies of the researcher developing a relationship with participants, and the potential abuse of power that this could lead to, “friendship as method”—with the intentional dual role of researcher/ friend—allowed a transparent process in which these issues were ongoingly discussed (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). Such an approach, according to Tillmann-Healy (2003), “requires that ethics remain at the forefront of our research” (pp. 744–745). Quite apart from the practical issues that this method involves, this approach did not offer an outright solution to the concerns that I had about involving friends as

participants. It did however, contribute to broadening my viewpoint of what constituted appropriate relationships and boundaries in research. Acknowledging the potential “messiness” (Browne, 2003, p. 136) that interpersonal relationships in research can involve, Browne suggested that to be committed to the notion of “research as a process” (p. 134) inevitably required continuous negotiation of power relations between researcher and researched, irrespective of the category of their relationship that previously existed. Examining the “micro-scale relations of power in the field” (p. 142) Browne said that friends may feel obliged to participate for various reasons, one of which was the empathic identification with the process due to their own experiences of conducting research. This was an issue that I needed to consider for one of the participants in my study.

Neal and Gordon (2001), whose research study was based on “relations of friendship” (p. 99), asked if the potential for exploitation could ever be avoided, whether one used friends or non-friends as participants. England (1994) maintained that relationships between researcher and participants may be “reciprocal, asymmetrical or potentially exploitative” (p. 82), and suggested that the feminist-preferred role of “researcher-as-suppliant” (p. 82) offered a solution to the issue of negotiating power relations in research. By taking this position researchers acknowledged participants as experts of their own lives, therefore the power was shifted to them (England, 1994).

Ultimately the decision to ask friends to participate resulted in my conducting interviews with two friends, and one colleague. In Chapter 4 I describe how the personal and professional boundaries were negotiated with these participants.

Data collection

The collection of data occurred across various situations and in different contexts, including in-depth face-to-face interviews, a group interview and Skype phone interviews. Data was also gathered via email. An audio tape recorder was used for the first three face-to-face interviews, but subsequent face-to-face interviews were conducted using a digital audio recorder. This device produced a markedly superior sound quality, and the digital sound file it created could be uploaded directly into the computer. The Skype phone interviews conducted through the computer also generated a digital sound file.

As the locations for the individual face-to-face interviews included urban, rural and interstate areas, the decisions regarding the interview venues required sensitivity to

the needs of the participants and also the practical solutions to the technical requirements of recording the interview. I was mindful that the use of familiar spaces for participants would contribute to diffusing the “power of the researcher” and thereby, diminishing the possibilities of the “otherization” of participants (Madriz, 2003, p. 374). During the arrangements to establish a convenient venue, I offered each participant the opportunity to choose their preferred location, and I suggested venues that I could provide if necessary. One participant chose her own consulting room; one chose her own home; two participants, because of geographical and practical convenience for them, chose to be interviewed in my home; and three participants chose to be interviewed at my work place, located in a central business district easily accessible and convenient for them. I wondered if this room being a therapy space, would have the potential to be discomfiting for interview participants. I mentioned this when making arrangements to meet, and was assured by those participants that it was not an issue. Nonetheless I was conscious of thinking about how it was for two of the young male participants as they appeared to survey the room nervously on entry, and it was possible that the interview space did restrict the ability to relax for one of these participants.

All participants had been previously sent an information package which included the information sheet and consent form. (See Appendices A–D). At the beginning of each interview I read through the information sheet with the participant in order to check if they had any concerns before asking them to sign the statement of informed consent. Some participants had already returned the signed form prior to the interview. I reiterated various points in the information sheet including the right they had to terminate the interview if they so wished; they were not expected to disclose information that could place them at risk with their professional and social relations; and that I could provide information to them about a counselling service if they experienced any emotional difficulty arising from the interview experience. I opened the discussion by explaining that I would ask one overall question and for them to tell their story in whatever way they wished. I had prepared interview guides (Appendices E & F) listing several interview prompts and I referred to these when necessary. Most interviews lasted between an hour to an hour and a half, with two of the Skype interviews lasting about 50 minutes.

In-depth interviewing

Although the in-depth interview is regarded as being one of the fundamental methods of gathering data in the field of qualitative research, there are distinctive

differences in interviewing approaches depending on the ontological position (worldview) of the researcher (Elliott, 2005). Citing Gubrium and Holstein (1997), Elliott (2005) described the differences between the “naturalist” approach and the “constructivist” approach (p. 18). With the naturalist approach, the emphasis is on reality being “transparent” (Ryen, 2003, p. 430) and the interview is considered a potential rich mine of information to be excavated. In contrast to this, the constructivist approach focuses on how meaning making is achieved (Elliott, 2005), and acknowledges “that any empirical material is a construction” (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000, p.261). With this approach the interview is considered a “site for the production of meaning” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 32) in which the interactional context between the interviewer and participant is central.

The interview as a co-construction was discussed by Mishler in 1986 when he questioned the asymmetrical relationship between the interviewer and participant in the interview encounter, and argued for the “empowerment of respondents” (p. 117). Gubrium and Holstein (2003), citing Silverman (1987, 1993) and Atkinson and Silverman (1997), emphasised their agreement with Mishler’s proposal to regard both the interviewer and participant as active contributors. However they disagreed with Mishler’s notion that the interview had the potential to empower the participant, and described that notion as being embedded in a “romanticized discourse” (p. 37). According to Riessman (2008), that notion also relied on the view of the self as a fixed entity, rather than the view of self, as described by Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) citing Denzin (1995), an “ongoing process, being created and re-created in discourse” (p. 73).

Gubrium and Holstein (2003) suggested that the (active) “subject is always making meaning, regardless of whether he or she is actually being interviewed” (p. 33). Nevertheless, said Denzin (2003), we live in an “interview society” (p. 141):

The interview, whether conducted by social researchers, mass-media reporters, television journalists, therapists or counselors, is now a ubiquitous method of self-construction. (Denzin, 2003, p. 141, citing Holstein & Gubrium, 2000)

The interview society, according to Denzin (2003), is inextricably linked with the “postmodern cinematic society” (p. 142). This is a society in which the film and television industry has played a significant role in legitimising the interview as a method of systematically garnering information. Using the technological metaphor of the “interview machine” (p. 146), and describing the mechanics of this apparatus,

Denzin (2003) listed the implicit “rules” of interviewing that are generally accepted, which included: i) questions require answers; ii) people take turns in speaking; and, iii) interviews are created in the form of a narrative, in that they have a start, a finish and a middle section (p. 146).

Other than the basic framework of an interview, according to Denzin (2003), there were four different interview styles that are regularly depicted in the media. Each determined by specific epistemologies, and the position of the interviewer, in particular, differs considerably across these approaches (Denzin, 2003). The “objectively neutral” approach (Denzin, 2003, p. 149) relies on a detached and “hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and participant” (Reinharz & Chase, 2003, p. 79). In the “entertainment and investigative” approach (Denzin, 2003, p. 149) the interviewer, despite appearing to be a strong supporter of the interviewee, asks a combination of very challenging and also congenial questions. In the “collaborative or active style” the interview is a conversational and dynamic interaction (Denzin, 2003, p. 149; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). In the “reflexive, dialogic” style (Denzin, 2003, p. 149), the interview is considered a co-construction, relying upon reciprocity, and acknowledging the “contextually informed moment-by-moment choices of participants” (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999, p. 73). According to Denzin (2003) examples of the various interview styles are regularly reproduced on television in news and current affairs, daytime talk shows, television drama and documentary productions, and in the cinema. If indeed “the everyday is now defined by the cinematic and the televisual” (Denzin, 2003, p. 149), then it would be inevitable that both the participants in my study and I will have been influenced by representations of the various interview formats in the media. When I applied Denzin’s (2003) typology to the approach I used in the individual interviews with participants in my study, both the face-to-face and the Skype phone interviews, it seemed that I generally moved between the collaborative or active style and the reflexive, dialogic style.

All the interviews commenced with an open-ended question in order to invite “story-telling” (Minichiello, Madison, Hays, Parmenter, 2004, p. 415). With all the film-viewing participants, including the focus group, I asked how film influenced their lives, and with those who were counsellors and psychotherapists, I asked how they used film in their work. Although I had a preset list of questions to use as a prompt guide, this was not used sequentially and sometimes not at all. The position I

took as interviewer with the focus group however was different to the individual interviews, as I shall explain.

The focus group

As the moderator of the focus group I was aware that my role was to facilitate the discussion, and that it would help to develop a trusting relationship with the participants. During the early stages of organising the focus group, I suggested to the film group's representative that a suitable venue could be arranged that was easily accessible to the participants. He offered to arrange the use of the room at the university in which the group held its meetings. This proved to be an ideal and familiar venue in which the participants were comfortable, and contributed to the establishment of a relaxed rapport. As with the individual interviews, I commenced with an open-ended question, asking how film influenced their lives. I was aware that my role was not to control the interaction, but rather I should try to keep the participants focused on the topic by prompting when necessary and encouraging participants who were withdrawn. In Chapter 4, I provide a reflexive account of the circumstances regarding the focus group experience.

As a term, focus group is often used as a generic descriptor for a group interview. Madriz (2003) considered the use of focus groups as a "form of collective testimony" (p. 374). Although I have elected to use the term focus group to describe the interview with the members of the film group it was fundamentally a forum for a "multivocal conversation" (Madriz, 2003, p. 374).

Using this interview method offered several benefits one of which was the access it gave me as a researcher to the stories of participants, who may not otherwise have been participating in this study. It was extremely useful to experience the common parlance of younger adults discussing the study topic, and as I observed the nature of their interactions I was able to discover both their collective and individual views, and their values and beliefs about the topic (Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Madriz, 2003).

Technology: Skype phone interviews

I had initially considered arranging the phone calls for the overseas interviews through the recording facility of my telecommunications service provider. However this option was cost prohibitive and I sought a feasible alternative. This search resulted in finding a software package that enabled Skype phone calls to be recorded in the computer. I explained to the overseas participants that I would be recording

their phone interviews and they were all agreeable. I encountered technological difficulties when the Skype connection failed a few times during the first and second interviews. While the participants seemed very understanding each time this breakdown in communication occurred, I experienced it as rather disruptive to the flow of our conversation. There were also other limitations to conducting interviews over the phone, not least being the “naturalness” factor that is more easily achieved with face-to-face interviews (Shuy, 2003, p. 190). The occurrence of technological glitches simply emphasised these limitations. During the third overseas phone interview the recording failed completely, resulting in the loss of a very rich interview. When I realised the error I immediately wrote a summary but as I had already experienced the value of interview transcriptions I decided the summary would not suffice. I subsequently contacted the participant who generously agreed to be interviewed again.

Email as an interview medium

One of the international respondents had expressed concerns about his spoken English, and asked if he might respond to some questions by email as he was more confident about his written English. Although I had provided the overall question that I would be asking participants in the information package, I sent this person via email a copy of the interview guide (Appendix F) that I had prepared which included a list of five questions. He returned his responses by email, which proved to be an effective interview medium and provided a valuable source of information. We subsequently followed up with a phone interview which produced additional rich material.

Transcriptions

Although I had personally transcribed the first four interviews, I became concerned about the time it was taking as I am not a fast and accurate typist. The benefit of immersing myself in the interview material when I was transcribing was offset by my anxiety about the many hours I was spending to complete the transcriptions. A colleague referred me to a reputable transcription service in another state, which was particularly experienced in transcribing for university researchers. I applied to my university’s ethics committee and received approval to use a transcription service. The digital recorder I used produced good quality audio recordings and made it possible to send audio files electronically. The transcriber was dedicated to ethical principles and understood the need for formal university ethics approval. She used

an online file transfer service which provided a safe, secure way to transmit audio files.

Initially I was ambivalent about the use of a transcription service as I was committed to the notion that transcription itself is an interpretive process (Mishler, 1986). Describing transcripts as a “theory laden component of qualitative analysis”, Lapadat and Lindsay (1999, p. 82), argued that it is not just the end product that is ready for analysis, but that the analysis is occurring as the transcription is being assembled. Through the transcriptions I had personally completed I had realised that significant differences resulted from using a “naturalised” rather than a “denaturalised” approach (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005, p. 1273). For example, in the former approach all the “ums” and “ahs”, false starts, pauses, intonations and laughter, are included in the transcription, but in the latter approach, known as “clean” or “sanitised” (Elliott, 2005, p. 52), these are removed. A clean transcription was considered by some researchers to make it easier to concentrate on the content of the interview (Elliott, 2005, p. 52; Oliver et al., 2005). In my experience, this approach seemed to be the preferred option of participants. After sending naturalised transcripts that I had personally completed to the first four participants in my study, asking for their feedback and suggestions on corrections or changes, I received two replies.

The first respondent complained that I had transcribed her as responding with “yeah” throughout the interview and insisted that she did not use that word in her speech. The participant was also dissatisfied with the verbatim representation of her speech which included false starts and word repetitions, as she considered this had rendered some of her comments nonsensical. A check of the recording indicated that the naturalised transcription was accurate, but her concerns highlighted for me the importance of transcription in the research process (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). I offered to send a copy of the audio recording to the participant, and although she did not require me to, I was concerned that she was unhappy with the outcome. We communicated via email in which I described my rationale for producing a detailed “naturalistic” transcript and despite her initial doubts, I was able to clarify her concerns and we reached an amicable stance.

The second respondent was satisfied with the transcript. However, she queried a couple of the comments that were ascribed to her, actually made a few grammatical corrections, and as a researcher herself, questioned the validity of leaving my first name in the transcript. As this participant had indicated that a couple of her

responses seemed to be incorrectly depicted in the naturalised transcription, I checked the recording, and was satisfied that there were no errors. However, as Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) claimed, while acknowledging Denzin's (1995) perspective, "once we discard our faith in the objective, detached observer overhearing talk in a static world, we must also abandon the assumption that a transcript can be a faithful copy of that world" (p. 7). I understood that the naturalised text could evoke concern if it did not match the participant's own perceptions of her speech delivery, or indeed in this case, how she thought speech should be transcribed. The participant's suggestion that I may need to de-identify myself in the transcript—I had not disguised my name when the participant had referred to me in her story, although I had removed her name for anonymity—suggested her preference as a researcher for the exclusion of the personal voice of the interviewer.

As I had not received a response from the other two participants, a colleague and a friend, also senior professionals, I emailed them for their feedback. Both indicated that they had been surprised at their speech delivery represented in the naturalised transcripts, with one admitting that he felt too embarrassed to reply to me as he thought he sounded like an "imbecile" when he read the transcript. I subsequently provided a denaturalised version of these transcripts, requesting feedback about any meaning that may have been lost in this process. Both participants' responses indicated that this version was preferable and portrayed their meaning accurately. I therefore decided to provide each of the subsequent participants with clean transcripts (Elliott, 2005) and I received no further comments other than acknowledgements of receipt.

The benefit of transcribing the interview material in a naturalistic form, however, is that it makes it possible to use the transcript on a "continuum" from highly detailed or "narrow" to minimum detail or "broad" (Gee, 2005, p.106), so that choices can be made by the researcher depending on the interpretation requirements of the study (Poindexter, 2002). It enables the researcher to concentrate on the "voice" of the narrator, and according to Sands (2004), in feminist approaches to narrative inquiry, transcriptions that include "hesitations, pauses and self-interruptions convey the participant's process of finding her own voice" (pp. 50–51). My instruction to the transcriber therefore, was that I needed very detailed transcriptions. Before I sent each audio file, I listened to the entire recording. The concerns I had about assigning the transcriptions were quickly overcome when I received the first one back from the

service within forty-eight hours. I was able to immerse myself in the process of reading and re-reading the transcript several times, as I concurrently listened to the recording and made corrections to the relatively few errors that I discovered. Having these detailed transcriptions completed quickly also freed up time for me to experiment with them, contrasting the different ways in which research data might be represented when various methods were applied.

Process of analysis

As previously discussed, because I recognised that the analytic process was occurring even while the transcription was being assembled (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999), I ensured that all the interviews were initially transcribed in a “naturalised” form (Oliver et al., 2005). Prior to collecting the data I had considered I would use a “dialogic/performance analysis” of the data (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). Such an approach would focus on the co-production of the story (Riessman, 2008). However, fundamentally I had two different kinds of data. With most of the data from the individual interviews the participant’s subjectivity was apparent, and this lent itself to a dialogic narrative presentation. However this was not the case with the few interviews in which the data was produced with less evidence of interactivity. “Thematic narrative analysis” (Riessman, 2008, p. 53) therefore seemed most suitable. With that approach “primary attention is on ‘what’ is said rather than ‘how’, ‘to whom’ or ‘for what purposes’ ” (pp. 53–54). At first I was concerned that by using a thematic analysis I would not focus at all on language, form or interaction, but as Riessman (2008) suggested, while these factors receive minimum focus in that analytic method, researchers can still locate themselves in the interview, and the interpretative context, rather than pretending they were not there.

At this stage of the research journey Etherington’s (2004) examples of drawing on Polkinghorne’s (1995) taxonomy of the “analysis of narrative” and “narrative analysis” approaches (pp. 80–81), provided another level of understanding. From that perspective, by using a thematic analysis I was using an “analysis of narrative” approach. As Polkinghorne (1995) explained:

Narrative inquiry of the analysis of narrative type contrast with other qualitative research studies in that its data are in the form of storied narratives. It is similar to other qualitative research in that it employs a paradigmatic analysis of the data. (p. 12)

From the outset there were two disparate groups of participants in my study—practitioners and non-practitioners—who eventually became categorised as the “practitioners” and the “viewers”. At first my analysis approach involved identifying word repetition and metaphors in all the transcriptions in the two groups and sorting them into lists. Rather than using hardcopies I marked up computer documents with different coloured highlights. Once I had identified “initial codes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87) I found the use of mind-maps useful for the process of identifying themes. I briefly trialled the use of a Leximancer software programme to generate codes and identify themes, and while I appreciate that it could be a useful tool, I am intimidated by technology at the best of times, and so I eventually resorted to manually coding the data. I used a range of techniques including what Bernard (2000) described as the “pawing” technique (p. 445), basically handling the data numerous times. I also employed the technique described by Bernard (2000) as the “interocular percussion test—which is where you wait for patterns to hit you between the eyes” (p. 445).

Braun and Clarke (2006) however disputed the notion that themes just “emerged” or were “discovered” from the data. They cited Taylor and Usher, 2001 as they argued that such descriptions were “a passive account of the process of analysis, and it denies the *active* role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers” (p. 80, emphasis in original). Nonetheless at times I did experience the process as waiting for patterns, and I wondered how that would affect my interpretations. Drawing on Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic methods Anderson (1998) referred to “incubating the data” which involved purposely resting or relaxing to enable the “unexpected insights” to occur (p. 91).

The process of identifying commonalities and differences among the participants’ stories eventually led to descriptions of themes that held across the stories, and to the question of how best to represent the findings. Although in thematic analysis context would be minimal, I would still locate the data in a historical-social context (Riessman, 2008). However I wanted to include other contexts, including my influence, the interview settings, and the circumstances on the production and interpretation of the narratives.

Based on Gee’s (1991) concepts on how “a poetic style of transcription” (Speedy, 2008, p. 89) can provide a close representation of speech, in Chapter 4, the first chapter of findings, I present the selected narrative extracts in stanza form. That

format also serves the purpose of visually differentiating that data from the following findings chapters. Etherington's (2004) exemplars were useful guides in this part of the process as I draw on certain aspects of the "narrative analysis" approach to present the introductory profiles of all the participants. As Polkinghorne (1995) explained, "analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories" (p. 12). By drawing on the latter approach to present Chapter 4, I felt it was possible to incorporate my reflexive account and locate each individual story contextually, as I present snapshots of the participants' narratives. Fundamentally in that chapter I present how each story was told, why it was told, with whom and in what context in brief storied accounts.

By contrast, in chapters 5 and 6 I draw mainly from an analysis of narrative approach to present the findings of the viewers' and the practitioners' narratives thematically. In those chapters there is minimal focus on how the narrative is spoken or the local contexts. While those chapters identify themes and note relationships among the categories, it is in the following Chapter 7, the discussion chapter, in which I present a synthesis of both groups of stories, and subject them to comparison and analysis with respect to the literature.

Documentation style and film referencing

Although I have conformed to the APA (2010) documentation style (6th edition) for this thesis, I have used Australian/English spelling.

For the purpose of obtaining accurate information for the referencing of films I subscribed to an international movie database. Many of the films noted in this study listed numerous producers who were categorised as: producers, executive producers, associate producers and co-producers. APA provides an example for referencing motion pictures (2010, p. 209) which includes a sole producer and a sole director. In order to cause minimal disruption to the participants' direct speech quotations in which the intext citations predominantly occur, I have cited the first producer and director for each film. In the reference list producers and directors are listed alphabetically. APA recommends a different format for referencing an episode from a television series (2010, p. 209). As my participants only referred to a television series as a whole, I have cited the producers and executive producers from the relevant listing on the database, in the order that reflects the number of episodes in which they have been involved.

Ethics

Participation in the study was voluntary, and all participants were required to be over the age of 18 years. Participants were advised at the initial contact, and prior to being interviewed, that they had the option to withdraw at any time. As previously mentioned, subsequent to the original ethics approval being granted, applications for variations were approved in order to include an external transcription service, and to extend the period of collecting data.

As I started to analyse the findings in relation to the literature, it became apparent that two of the participants were identifiable through their published work, and their respective development of a cinematherapy model and a typology. Their names and conceptual material were in the public domain, and it would create confusion if I continued to use pseudonyms for them. Therefore I contacted both participants, and they gave their permission for me to use their real names. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Criteria for evaluating inquiry

Several theorists have argued that traditional quantitatively oriented notions of “validity” and “reliability” are not relevant criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research, and alternative criteria such as “credibility” and “dependability” have been suggested (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 11). Others resisted the idea of fixed criteria for the assessment of qualitative studies because of the complexity of the issues relating to validation and ethics (Riessman, 2008; Speedy, 2008). Narrative researchers were urged to think in terms of “verisimilitude” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 176) or “trustworthiness” rather than “truth” (Riessman, 2008, p. 184; Lincoln & Guba (1989) cited in McLeod, 2003 p. 93). Their investigations needed to contain sufficient cultural, social and personal detail to convey their sense of the world, and a broad enough range of voices to represent the variety of lived experiences (Etherington, 2004; Speedy, 2008; McLeod, 2003). McLeod (2003) emphasised the importance for qualitative researchers to provide enough “procedural detail” (p. 94) of how the research project was carried out, including the sampling strategies, the interview contexts and the analysis procedures, in order for the research to be considered plausible.

Although reluctant to establish any definite criteria, Speedy (2008) proposed a range from which narrative researchers could select to assess their research. While several of these criteria were similar to those mentioned above, some provided another

perspective: Researchers should be seen to be accountable to the participants in their study, and clear about which community's interests were represented in their text. They should describe how they negotiated the space between themselves and those they researched, and discuss any issues of collaboration, participation and ethics that might have arisen. An important criterion was whether the text succeeded aesthetically. Did it have creative structures which would engage its audience? Perhaps the most important criterion was whether the study brought something new to "our understanding of social / cultural life and what it means to be a human being" (Speedy, 2008, p. 56), and would also prove to be a valuable contribution to its field. Finally, useful criteria by which to assess narrative research could be found in its transformative or impactful effect on its audience. Did the study ask new questions of the readers, challenge their assumptions, stir them to action, change them intellectually, emotionally, politically or spiritually? Did the reader resonate with the study? (Speedy, 2008, p. 56).

Conclusion

The metaphor of a journey through a maze seemed relevant as I initially explored the theoretical approaches that informed this research project. Although developing a theoretical and methodological stance was a challenging adventure, once I became familiar with the pathways, I was able to discover a direction. My appreciation for the role of narrative in people's lives (including my own), and in therapeutic practice, influenced the ultimate decision to adopt narrative inquiry as the approach to this research. This involved investigating the experience and meaning that practitioners and clients (or potential clients) attributed to the impact of film. Social constructionism also informed my analysis and the writing up of my findings. A further account of my reflexive process is included in the following chapter. Chapter 4 will introduce all the participants in this study, and is the first of three chapters in which the findings will be presented.

Chapter 4

SETTING THE SCENE

When you are in the middle of a story, it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion, a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It's only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself, or to someone else.

(Atwood, 1997, p. 298)

Introduction

In this chapter the curtain rises, and the 16 participants in this study make their entrances and exits. It is a heterogenous cast, and my task is to introduce each one and then allow them to speak for themselves. Some of these are solo acts or dialogues, and one is a group presentation.

However, before I could do this there was much work to be done. The epigraph at the head of this chapter reflects some of the confusion I experienced, not only in the process of collecting the data but also in deciding how to present it. I began by presenting the narratives in the order in which they were gathered, but subsequently decided to arrange them in two groups in order to facilitate easier differentiation of the contexts from which participants related their stories. The first group which I came to refer to as the “viewers”, was comprised of those whose lives had been influenced by films in meaningful ways. Secondly, I selected the group of “practitioners” who had spoken of using films in their work with clients.

The viewers included a focus group of five individuals, two of whom were also interviewed individually, and three individuals who had undertaken training and were experienced in counselling. Two of these latter three had explored film in their own therapeutic process, one was currently practising as a therapist, and two were working in educational roles.

Two of my interviews with the eight practitioners were conducted face-to-face, and the other six by Skype phone. One of those six also answered questions by email.

The real names of the participants have been replaced by pseudonyms, with the exception of two of the practitioners, as was explained in Chapter 3. In this chapter, within each narrative, including that of the focus group, the selected dialogue is represented in the sequence in which it occurred in our dialogical interaction. Throughout the stories I have commented intermittently, either to summarise the text, or to express my own reflexive process. At times I describe elements of the content and composition of particular scenes—“the *mise-en-scène*”, to use a cinematic term—in order to provide images of where and how the conversation took place.

I have elected to format the selected extracts from the participants’ narratives into stanzas, in order that they unfold with ease in these introductory vignettes. Not only did this format provide a more faithful representation of the rhythm and emphasis of the spoken words, but visually, the contrasting structure enabled a “threshold or crossover space” (Speedy, 2008, p. 87) between the stories in this chapter and the group narratives that follow in prose form.

Viewers: Focus group

The five participants of the focus group were members of a university based film group located in an Australian city, comprised of four males and one female aged between 18 and 20 years of age. Four were Anglo-Australian and one male was Chinese-Australian. All appeared to be from middle-class backgrounds, and were studying in a range of disciplines including law, digital technology, media, communication and film studies.

Although they were of a similar age, there seemed to be a diverse enough range of characteristics to provide different opinions and experiences. The structure of their film group was based on a traditional hierarchy of President, Secretary and Treasurer, although it was not obvious to me that this had any particular bearing on the dynamics that were subsequently played out in the group discussion.

The focus group story

I first met Joshua, the member of the film group with whom I had the original contact, some weeks before the focus group took place. We had an individual interview during which he and I established a good rapport. After he met me at the front of the university, we chatted easily together as we walked to the meeting room he had arranged for the gathering of the members of the group. Joshua briefly

mentioned that the other group members were not aware that he previously had an individual interview with me, but it was not possible to explore this further with him as we had arrived at the meeting room and found that James was already there.

While we waited for the other participants Joshua and James engaged in friendly banter about the new *Batman* movie (*The Dark Knight*, Nolan & Nolan, 2008), and before long were joined by Luke. Joshua actively included me in the conversation, and soon we were joined by the group's only female member, Alex. After ten minutes of informal chat while waiting for the final participant, somebody indicated that there were time constraints with the room. As the others were unsure whether Ben would arrive, I suggested we start without him.

Prior to turning on the recorder I described the process of a focus group. I told them that I would ask a general question and then open up the discussion, explaining that I had an unstructured interview guide to use, but that the objective of the group was for them to participate in discussion amongst themselves rather than direct their responses to me. I emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers, and that it was fine for them to disagree with each other.

From their friendly exchanges regarding the organisation of the next film association event, before the session started, it seemed to me that they were a cohesive group with a common frame of reference. This was confirmed in the first response from Joshua immediately after I opened the discussion with my question, "Can you tell me how films influence your lives?"

*I guess just
it's a way we can relate to people
I mean we
all of us
we don't have a great deal in common

I mean we are from different areas and stuff
but we have films in common
and it's very important. (Joshua, 10, ¶1)*

Joshua's response to my open-ended question opened an exchange about films, providing a basis for relating. Luke immediately went on to describe how he was able to relate to a friend he had in high school:

[He] got depression and he

*he and I were probably the only
I'm probably the only person from high school
who actually stays in contact with him*

*that's because we have this shared interest in films
and we're always talking about films and
that we've seen and if they were good
if they were bad and*

*we're just generally discussing film and sometimes planning making films and stuff
so it was*

it's a good thing to relate to someone with. (Luke, 10, ¶2)

Luke then described a film that had been “quite a confirmation” (Luke, 10, ¶2) for him, and when he finished speaking Alex joined in with, “Yeah I guess it gives you a sense of a support network really” (Alex, 10, ¶3). She also suggested that film could be enjoyed in solitude to overcome loneliness, and described how she had moved several thousand kilometres from home to attend university:

*I didn't know anyone down here
I moved into a share-house
knew no one
I didn't have a partner or anything
so it's kind of like*

*when your one evening at home and you've got no one to talk to
or nothing to do
you use*

*I tend to use films as
as sort of a friend almost. (Alex, 10, ¶3)*

James went further by introducing the topic of film being a way of escape. This topic was to be developed in the exchange that followed about whether film was just about escaping or did it have a more serious purpose:

*It's just a good way to escape from all your problems
like for about two or three hours maybe at least
you know*

it's a small escape that's still escapism for me

that's the point. (James, 10, ¶5)

Luke disagreed about film being a way of escape:

For me, I don't think films are ever really just escapist. (Luke, 10, ¶6)

Although James had seemed initially confident about his view of films as an escape, this confidence seemed to wane when Luke disagreed with him.

Oh yeah. (James, 10, ¶7)

As Luke continued it seemed that some disagreement may indeed be happening:

I saw Before The Devil Knows You're Dead [Cerenzie & Lumet, 2007]

and if I ever had to escape to that sort of a way,

I would

my life would be pretty horrible

that film's so bleak (Luke, 10, ¶8).

(laughter from group— except James)

Yeah. (Group chorus—except James)

That was possibly one of the bleakest films I've ever seen (Luke, 10, ¶9).

I want to see it. (James, 10, ¶10)

For me it's always been ... (Joshua, 10, ¶11)

Although I was conscious of a momentum building in the discussion I interrupted Joshua to welcome Ben to the group who had entered the room and sat down just prior to the last three comments. I briefly described the group procedure to Ben and when he indicated he knew the details, I shifted my attention to Joshua and he continued his comment with ease:

What I was saying

basically

it's a way of relating to the characters

and making sense of some of the challenges and issues in my own life

and in a way it's

it's not all about escapism

but if you want to escape into certain realities

*in particularly bleak films or films that challenge the characters
I find that helpful sometimes just
yeah
just to work through things. (Joshua, 10, ¶13-14)*

I asked if that meant there could be degrees of escapism, and Joshua responded “*To a degree, yeah, to a degree*”. (Joshua, 10, ¶15)

Alex immediately added her point of view:

*They’re also very inspiring like
and motivational*

*I think you watch a film and afterwards you’re like
‘yeah, I’m going to change
I’m going to do that’ and
you know*

*like it makes you feel more motivated about what you’re going to do in the world and
with your life. (Alex, 10, ¶16)*

There was a lull in the discussion so I asked if any examples of being inspired by movies came to mind. This evoked a response from Luke:

*I’m not so much inspired
but this film always motivates me
it’s quite
it’s quite embarrassing but
Mighty Ducks 2. [D2: *The Mighty Ducks*, Avnet & Weisman, 1994] (Luke, 10,
¶17)*

Luke added, “*You can’t be in a bad mood after seeing that film*” (Luke, 10, ¶18). The other participants, except Ben, responded with several comments and laughter. When the laughter subsided I actively engaged Ben in the discussion by asking him directly if “any come to mind?” Until now he had been silent, and he responded in the sombre, thoughtful manner which was to be his style throughout the session, and which was in stark contrast to the light-hearted banter which had gone before:

*Um yeah
there are films that I’ll draw perspectives on
and to give me a wider understanding*

*because they're like miniature life experiences
or it'd be like reading a really meaningful book*

*films like Life Out of Balance [Koyanishqatsi: Life Out of Balance, Reggio & Reggio,
1982]*

I think it's called Koyaani

I can't pronounce its correct other title

but it's just a whole lot of images to Philip Glass music

but there's a whole lot of

you can draw out a whole lot of dimensions from the film

and give your own reading

and it's I guess

a pretty bleak film

and you kind of think about things a lot more deeply and politically

after watching that. (Ben, 10, ¶22)

As the session progressed, I became aware of the dynamics within the group. I noticed that Joshua was quite reserved, and I wondered if he may have been allowing the rest of the group to have the opportunity to convey their stories as he had already done so in our one-to-one interview. Although he seemed to be self-assured throughout the session, compared to the rest of the group he commented the least. James was more talkative than Joshua, but often seemed a little hesitant to comment, and when he did, would lose the momentum to continue. Whenever I engaged him directly by asking him a question, he responded with enthusiasm, and provided much longer responses. Despite Alex being the only female film group member in attendance, there did not appear to be any obvious gender-based inequality. She offered more comments than three of the males and her views and opinions seemed to carry equal weight. Ben showed a studious consideration of the topic throughout the discussion, and although he would build on other comments, he maintained a relatively single-minded focus. Of the five participants, Luke was the most loquacious contributing almost twice as many lines of transcript as other members of the group. Although his remarks were often delivered in a light-hearted manner—evoking laughter from the other participants—his input was nonetheless meaningful. Three of the participants either apologised if they interrupted, or stopped mid-sentence if the previous speaker had not completed their turn. Two members however, seemed less inclined, or perhaps less able to follow this group protocol.

In general, the group interacted easily, although there were times early in the session when I needed either to initiate discussion by inviting responses to the comments that had been made, or to re-focus the group by asking questions from the interview guide. As the moderator I was aware that I should not attempt to control the interaction but rather try to keep the participants focused on the topic. The room was a familiar setting for the group thereby possibly diffusing the power I held as the researcher. Nonetheless I experienced a respectful regard from the group members, and I wondered if this could have been in part due to the fact that I had advised them that I had been a film student many years before, in fact before they were born. It was not obvious from their reaction whether that information was of particular interest to them.

Apart from the themes that emerged during the session, it was valuable to experience the participants' everyday use of language, their inside jokes and catchphrases derived from films. It was also interesting to obtain their youthful outlook, in both their individual and shared perspectives, and to listen as they acknowledged and built upon each other's ideas.

Viewers: Individuals

Two of the focus group participants Joshua and James, volunteered to tell their stories in individual interviews:

Joshua

Joshua was in his late teens, in the second year of an undergraduate degree. His parents divorced when he was in primary school, and he grew up with his mother and one sibling.

My initial contact with Joshua was to discuss the possibility of inviting members of the film group to be part of the focus group. As the film group were on semester break, he explained that this would not be possible until university resumed. When I explained that my study included interviewing individuals who were influenced by movies, Joshua suggested that he would be an "ideal person" to interview. He was going overseas during the summer break and we arranged to have the interview on his return. The most convenient place for us to meet was in my consulting room in the city.

I wondered how it might be for Joshua to have the interview in a therapy space. Although the room is furnished quite informally, it is located in a professional

building in the central business district, and my name is one of several therapists listed on the door. After Joshua arrived we chatted for several minutes during which time he seemed to visibly relax while I set up the recorder.

Okay well um

*I started watching films when I was
When I was young and I watched a few
I had like maybe twenty films I watched
over and over again*

*and when I was um
I think it was year five or six
I really started getting into films*

*It was actually when my parents started getting y'know divorced
and er yeah it was very much an escape I found*

*and um I mean I've actually thought about
I know I'm being kind of analytical
self analytical here and reflexive
but I've thought about this
a lot. (Joshua, 8, ¶3)*

Joshua sighed and he said he wasn't sure where to start:

Can I mention

*I know it's not a film
but*

The West Wing? (Joshua, 8, ¶4)

I recognised the award winning television drama series *The West Wing* (Harms & Graves, 1999–2006) immediately, as it had been a favourite of mine, and I indicated to Joshua that it was okay to discuss a television program.

Okay The West Wing

I use it to make sense

*when there is a parallel type story or
I can use it to make sense and understand and
just say "What would
what would Leo do"? (Joshua, 8, ¶5)*

I recalled the image of the fatherly character, Leo McGarry, who was the U.S. President's highly respected Chief of Staff in the television series, and the emotional scene in which after Leo's death a note was handed to his protégé inscribed with the acronym *WWLD?*— What would Leo do? My immediate thought was that perhaps this was a joke, and so when Joshua then asked if I had seen the series and I indicated that I had, I was a little surprised when he immediately moved on to discuss movies that had been influential in his life:

*Okay yes
well I think the first movies that really got me going were
James Bond
I used to love
I still love James Bond
I watched Casino Royale [Broccoli & Campbell, 2006] yesterday
and I guess

there's something about the character
he was so detached
this cold war warrior
I loved that. (Joshua, 8, ¶6)*

Being detached was to become a leitmotif in Joshua's narrative, but at this point in the interview, he seemed hesitant to discuss it further. He remembered being "very affected" (Joshua, 8, ¶9) as a child by the movie *Hook* (Kennedy & Spielberg, 1991) and had seen that film "more than any other" (Joshua, 8, ¶9). He recalled first watching that film around the time his parents were getting divorced, and although he hadn't seen it for several years, Joshua figured that he had viewed it prior to that about "fifty times" (Joshua, 8, ¶10):

*When I was young I think one of the first films I ever saw was Peter Pan [Hemion & Hemion, 1976]
and I wore out the tape

and then Hook
again the same
the same story when I think of it. (Joshua, 8, ¶18)*

Joshua admitted that he "never really understood *Hook*" (Joshua, 8, ¶18) and said that he still tried "to make sense of it" (Joshua, 8, ¶18).

The sort of films that resonated with him were those in which characters were able to overcome adversity, and refused to allow circumstances to wear them down:

Yeah

*I think that is a strong theme in most films
and I think it is an important theme in my life
and that is something ...*

*but it depends whether they actually overcome it positively
or just shove it aside
as a lot of the characters do. (Joshua, 8, ¶50)*

Despite being part of a film group with colleagues and friends of a similar age, Joshua did not talk to them “about the personal effect film has on me” (Joshua, 8, ¶98). For him the group was more of a social event than an “emotional thing” (Joshua, 8, ¶99).

James

A few days after the focus group was held, I sent each participant an email to thank them for their contribution and extended an invitation to any of them who might be interested in being interviewed individually. I was initially surprised when I received a response from James, as he seemed to be rather shy in the group. James was in his late teens and was in his second year at university. He was born in Hong Kong and came to Australia with his family when he was three years old.

We arranged to meet in my therapy room as this was close to his college. I knew that James was aware of the nature of my profession, as I had provided those details to the focus group. When he arrived, he seemed a little nervous. After several minutes settling in I suggested we start and he seemed keen to do so. I explained that the opening question was the same as for the focus group, “Can you tell me how film influences your life”?

*Oh, it's just massive the influence in my life
it's just like*

*I might sound a little over exaggerated
but sort of like a religion for me
it's just one of those things that like
I just really wanted to dedicate my life to it and
like an art and craft*

*but it's just more than an art and craft
it's just one of those things that just makes my life like
it's
like it makes it really like
you know*

*I just couldn't imagine
without film like
what the world would be like without films
for me.*

(James, 12, ¶3-4)

James had gone straight to the core of what film meant to him, but as he finished his response, his enthusiasm seemed to evaporate, and he appeared to disengage. I remembered his interpersonal style of communication from the focus group. My next question about his first memory of being emotionally affected by movies was poorly timed, but perhaps within the context of the dynamics of our communication so far, was not so discordant. After some verbal reflection James said that *"in recent years ... I guess maybe my tastes in movies sort of matured, and this had led to being "more like, like emotional ... towards what I watch"* (James, 12, ¶5).

I asked James if there were any movies that came to mind:

*One of them in particular is Schindler's List [Lustig & Spielberg, 1993]
particularly the ending of the movie
it's just one of those really moving moments where you
no matter how many times you watch it
you will*

*you just can't help but be attached to characters
and go through what they go through like
as you watch
as you watch the events unfold it's just*

*and by the end like
you have just like totally wept
like all the way and you just felt like they felt
all the pains and suffering and like
the farewell moments just really gets to me every time*

and in fact

I actually did my own list of top ten tear-jerkers. (James, 12, ¶8)

My attempt to explore what meaning James had made of his tear-jerkers list was clumsy at first, but eventually evoked a response from him that indicated that his list had been a meaningful symbolic exercise, his hesitations reflecting that he was still processing their meaning for him:

*In fact I think most of these moments deal with life and death
all of these*

*and on reflection and sort of like
of the individual characters*

on what they've done over the course of the film

So yeah

it really gives me a really

yeah

sort of my own contemplation of what I have achieved with my life

and

or what I would plan to do for the rest of my life. (James, 12, ¶21)

Films seemed to occupy an almost sacred space in James' life. When he spoke about films he became enlivened. His affect would change significantly towards the end of each answer however, and he would appear to disconnect emotionally. I was aware of his shyness, and admired his decision to be interviewed individually. I wondered what impact I was having on James from within his subjective frame of reference, and whether his tendency to disengage was a protective strategy.

There were several times during the interview (and in the focus group) that James described specific scenes, quoted film lines, and alluded to particular themes in films which seemed to have an implicit connection to meaningful life experiences of his. However I avoided encouraging him beyond what I thought was his capacity to self-reflect as I thought he might be troubled by the evocation of unsettling memories. I asked too many questions, and at times I appeared to be mining for answers. I was aware of several disjunctions in our conversation that as a therapist I might well have sought to repair. However, as a researcher I wanted James to keep focused on the topic, and my increasing hope during our discussion was that I could help provide the opportunity for him to communicate any insights he had on the subject about which he was so obviously passionate. Although I had sufficient information to

obtain a real sense of how he was influenced by films, by the end of the interview I was conscious of a level of concern for him. I reminded him at this point that if any confusing thoughts or feelings emerged from our discussion, that I could provide him with details of a counsellor. James seemed nonplussed that I would suggest this and remarked that he thought the interview *“was really interesting”*.

As I drove on my one and half hour journey home, I listened to the recording, and was reminded of the difficulty I had experienced in my attempts to enter into James’s subjective world, and the often constricted form of conversation that had ensued.

When the transcription was completed, I sent a copy to James but there was no reply. Many weeks passed during which I listened to the interview and read the transcript several times, each time feeling more unsettled about the outcome. I finally decided to contact him to request another interview and explained that there were a couple of areas that I would like to have the opportunity to explore further. James responded immediately to my email saying that he was really pleased to hear from me as he had some information he really wanted to convey. I asked if there was a meeting place he preferred and offered my therapy space again, and he replied that was convenient for him.

When James arrived he seemed very relaxed and commenced with telling me that it was such a coincidence that I had contacted him as he had been thinking about me and my study project. He had gone to Hong Kong for semester break and while he was there had noticed a bus poster advertising a film seminar being held in an art gallery. He attended the event and had been excited to find that it was being facilitated by both a filmmaker and a psychiatrist, and he thought I would be interested to know this. I felt moved by his enthusiasm and again admired his commitment to offer his time as a participant.

Although there were awkward moments of disengagement throughout our second interview, and I “mined” for answers, on the whole we managed to stay connected and create a dialogic space in which several important interactional moments were shared. James made a couple of key associations to significant issues in his life and I was particularly aware of the sense of aliveness he portrayed when discussing film and movie characters and storylines and I imagined that he would probably really enjoy cinematherapy.

Viewer: Professional Background in Mental Health

Sarah

Sarah was a health-care professional, the mother of adult children, and a close friend of mine. As discussed in Chapter 3, I had given considerable thought to the issue of using friends as research participants. For many years Sarah and I had enjoyed a strong and supportive friendship and I had often been intrigued by her responses to films and in particular her insightful descriptions of those experiences. She was curious to explore the topic in a discussion for this research, and wondered if she might reach a deeper level of understanding of a particular film. We conducted the interview at my home, as it was geographically more convenient for her at the time.

Sarah commenced by explaining that up until her late teens books had been more influential because “*we didn’t go to movies*” (Sarah, 1, ¶1):

*When I started going
when I made the transition from reading to
you know
seeing films
I had an immediate affinity
with that medium
it just was
the world of cinema
just took me into different dimensions.* (Sarah, 1, ¶1)

At the first film festival she attended, Sarah saw a film that affected her profoundly. Although she could not recall the title of the film, she had a clear memory of the impression it made on her both personally and professionally. She remembered the film was situated in Germany and was about a homeless young woman who suffered from schizophrenia:

*It was the most powerful exposé of a woman’s life on the streets in a madness
and how men particularly they

she was raped
she was homeless

it was really the first time I think I saw
structural factors actually impinge on an area of my expertise
which was mental health*

*and I remember thinking
'My gosh there are bigger things working here
than just the illness'*

and it was so vivid. (Sarah, 1, ¶4)

Sarah had recognised the connection between the challenging films she sought out, and the influence they had on her life:

*I have actually sought out
over all these thirty years
stories that are harrowing
I will go and see them*

*because of I think the important elements they bring
out of what seems a cosy life at times
you know*

*I've often used them as a form of
reality check. (Sarah, 1, ¶6)*

As the unfolding of her narrative progressed, Sarah broached the subject of her experience of the film we had previously discussed. She was unsure exactly how long ago it was “*but maybe six or seven years ago*” (Sarah, 1, ¶9):

*In terms of the
more sort of personal experiences about being affected by films
that have touched me myself
have been films like*

Dancer in the Dark [Windeløv & Von Trier, 2000]. (Sarah, 1, ¶9)

I felt uneasy as Sarah moved into this story. She had mentioned prior to the interview that she was interested in reaching another level of understanding of her experience of this film, and I was still feeling slightly ambivalent about my role in this exploration. How was I to maintain my role as a researcher and resist slipping into the role of her friend, or indeed into being a therapist?

*I saw it in the company of just a few people because it was
Sunday afternoon or something
and by the end of the film
I was just hysterical with absolute*

I can't remember the emotions. (Sarah, 1, ¶10)

Although Sarah said that she could not remember the emotions, she immediately offered compelling metaphors to describe her experience:

*I remember feeling totally trapped in my life
totally confined in all the responsibilities I had
I felt done over like the woman in the film
I felt
totally abused emotionally. (Sarah, 1, ¶10)*

As Sarah continued to describe her experience of that film and the effect it had, I felt increasingly confident that she could after all make further meaning of this experience, and that together we had created the conditions for her to do so. As we continued our conversation Sarah admitted that although the use of film was a valuable educational tool in her professional life, she was feeling increasingly disenamoured with film, both drama and documentary:

*In the seventies, eighties and nineties you could find those
there were always those critiques
John Pilger has done the same thing for decades
and now I look at them and I think
'Oh if we haven't heard it now we're pissing in the wind'. (Sarah, 1, ¶74)*

She acknowledged that nonetheless film played a significant role in her life:

*I do think I know a lot about humanity and about
people's responses to grief
and peoples' responses to abuse
and how abuse occurs
and the different levels of structural inequality
I haven't experienced half of them
but I do have
I think
some sort of understanding of how it could
and does affect a whole lot of people
through my exposure
to documentary and film narratives. (Sarah, 1, ¶116)*

Viewers: Professional background in mental health, and experience of film in personal therapy

Gwyneth

Gwyneth was a woman I befriended when we worked together in a counselling team in the early 1990s. Since that time we have had infrequent contact, but whenever we do meet, we reconnect easily even though several years may have passed. On one occasion in the early stages of my study I had mentioned the topic of my thesis to Gwyneth and she had responded that I should interview her as she had a very interesting experience while discussing film in her therapy nearly 20 years ago. When I was selecting participants for my research I often thought about Gwyneth but had not followed through with my plan to contact her. I was unsure about intruding into Gwyneth's private therapy experience, and more generally about the ethical issues of interviewing friends or colleagues.

As my research developed I continued to wonder about Gwyneth and the experience she mentioned, and finally when I decided that my data would be enhanced by her story, and I was confident that it was not inappropriate, I phoned her. Gwyneth remembered our conversation and I suggested that if she was no longer interested that I would understand. To my delight, Gwyneth was keen to tell her story. We arranged to meet for a coffee just prior to the interview, and it was a good opportunity to reconnect. Although I had heard via a mutual friend that Gwyneth and her partner had separated, I had known scant details. As she told me her story I was feeling concerned for her, and wondered aloud about the appropriateness of interviewing her for my study. Gwyneth reassured me that she was keen to talk about films as it was a subject that she loved to discuss. As Gwyneth had shared certain aspects of her current situation before the actual interview commenced, she had provided some background details for parts of her narrative, and had agreed for these to be included.

In her opening response Gwyneth said that films “*influence my life because they provide a way of seeing things, and they provide sort of symbols*” (Gwyneth, 13, ¶1):

*Recently I've seen
recently because of changing circl[umstances]
because of getting older as well*

I saw a film very recently that didn't directly deal with the theme of getting old

*but it dealt with the theme of the circle of life
as I saw it anyway*

*so I think I can put meaning into films you know
to help me interpret or help me experience my own feelings
in a different way
a more constructive way. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶1)*

Gwyneth had also seen the film *Revolutionary Road* (Cohen & Mendes, 2008) and although she said, “There was nothing that I related to in that” (Gwyneth, 13, ¶7), she immediately described an insightful analysis:

*But there was something about the female character
who had to come to grips with the fact that she wasn't special
that we are all kind of not special
we are all sort of ordinary
maybe*

*life is not going to be some kind of special adventure necessarily
and her disappointment about that and
that is something that's been a theme in my life
for a long time*

*And only the last few years
I've probably started feeling that an ordinary life
is already a special life*

*But this idea that somehow you were supposed to
be leading some kind of special
special sort of existence
and that I was never doing that
I was letting myself and the world down*

*so it was interesting to see that too
I thought*

'No she's got to come to grips with that'

*it was a feeling that I had experienced in the past
and recognised. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶7)*

Gwyneth recalled that she became aware of the influence of films for the first time when she was a client in therapy. She described the intense reaction she had to a particular film that had evoked painful memories of her childhood, and how powerful it was to explore this with her therapist. A significant aspect of the experience was that her therapist had recognised the symbolic relevance of the film for her:

*These were really sad things
that I was dealing with in therapy
and the film really
really did embody that

and gave me a tool as well
something to
yeah it was a tool I think

and she was a very clever therapist
so she was able to see that
and sort of use it as well
and yeah
that was a really big one. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶12)*

Later in our discussion Gwyneth made it clear that she valued films highly in her life:

*There are different ways of analysing the world
you can do it through therapy
you can do it through literature
you do it through painting
you can do it by making films

since I don't do any of those things
but I see other people's efforts of making films
Then I see them as people expressing the world
as they see it

and so if there's something in there for me
which often there
not always
but often there is
then I want it as well*

*I want to see what other people say
so I can then find some words to say it myself. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶53)*

Cordelia

Cordelia, who had experienced the use of film in her personal therapy, had been suggested to me as a possible participant for my research by one of her colleagues. The colleague subsequently advised me that Cordelia had given her permission for me to contact her.

Cordelia was a psychotherapist, working in private practice and she also worked as a counsellor for a non-government agency. A percentage of her clientele were people with chronic and terminal illness. She was divorced, lived in the suburbs in an Australian city, and had adult children. Cordelia suggested her apartment as a convenient location for the interview. We established a quick rapport within the first few minutes of my arrival, in no small part due to Cordelia's engaging style of communication.

Several years ago Cordelia had completed "four or five years" of therapy (Cordelia, 5, ¶4) with a therapist whom she described as "a psychotherapist who worked with parts of self" (Cordelia, 5, ¶4). Before I started to record the interview, Cordelia mentioned that a significant issue for her in her therapy was that she was a survivor of child abuse and therefore she might mention that in the interview if she thought it was relevant and also if she felt comfortable to do so. Within the first few minutes of the interview she disclosed that she had been in long term psychotherapy "because of profound childhood abuse" (Cordelia, 5, ¶6), and provided brief details. I admired her courage in bringing this issue to the opening of her narrative, and I felt that her disclosure had signalled her comfort and trust in the interview space.

In discussing how the use of movies had first been introduced into her therapy, Cordelia recalled that it was her therapist who had initially referred to a couple of the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001):

*And so we would use these characters as sort of a metaphor I suppose
as a way of
because he was into Lord of the Rings
and so he would just sometimes throw it in
and of course I liked the movie

and so sometimes it would expand my experience*

*sometimes it would legitimise my experience
sometimes it would challenge me. (Cordelia, 5, ¶5)*

The next movie *The Mission* (Ghia & Joffé, 1986) was also introduced by her therapist, and Cordelia explained that this was within the context of exploring what “*sort of gesture might be appropriate*” (Cordelia, 5, ¶5) to symbolise “*doing penance*” (Cordelia, 5, ¶5):

*I mean it sort of came up through the process of therapy
it wasn't just suggested
and then in that process he said, 'Oh, you know, like The Mission'
and I thought What's the mission?'
because we both had church backgrounds
I was thinking he's gone back
and he goes, 'No, no it's a movie'
and so he said 'I would like you to go and borrow it and watch it'
so that was actually a situation where he actually said. (Cordelia, 5, ¶5)*

However it was a film she had introduced into therapy herself that she was able to use the most effectively:

*The movie that's had the most profound impact
in terms of this working with parts business is
I actually bought it because I absolutely have to own it
it's up there [points to the bookshelf]
it's called Master and Commander
and it's got Russell Crowe in it
and I call him good old Russ. (Cordelia, 5, ¶6)*

Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World (Goldwyn & Weir, 2003) was a film which Cordelia had seen “*at least six months before, like a long time before*” (Cordelia, 5, ¶6) she had suggested it in therapy. Early in her therapy she had identified associated themes and metaphors:

*I talked about being in a boat that was taken,
like a big ship,
that was taken into dry dock and had to have all the stuff scraped off it*

and we were

*the therapist would use that metaphor,
you know 'Where was I at? Was I ready to sail yet?'
'No I needed to be in a safe harbour'.*

*So somewhere in the middle of that I saw the movie and so
you know
just straight in. (Cordelia, 5, ¶21)*

Other than her experience of using film in therapy, Cordelia had also found films to be effective in her social world.

*Last weekend
three girlfriends and I
we went to see the French film The Secret of the Grain [Berri & Kechiche, 2007]
Oh it was just so intense
and yeah

so films have a way of either
consolidating what you've already done
or opening up new vistas. (Cordelia, 5, ¶52)*

Practitioners: Face-to-face interviews

Patrick

Patrick was a psychotherapist trained in a psychoanalytically-oriented model of therapy. He had an established practice in an Australian city, and I had known him professionally for several years, maintaining an easy association.

I had initially decided that it would be fruitless to seek to interview any of my colleagues for my research as the use of interventions was incongruent with their therapeutic approach. However, my interest was piqued when during a conversation at a seminar, Patrick mentioned that several of his clients had described profound experiences of film, the exploration of which had been very effective in therapy. He agreed to be interviewed, and indicated that he understood that there was an ethical requirement to seek the permission of his clients if there was any possibility of their being identified through what he disclosed.

I was slightly apprehensive about this interview, not the least because of the mixed responses I had already experienced when explaining the topic of my study to my

psychotherapy colleagues. When Patrick responded to my first question about his experience of working with films with his clients, my concern increased. He explained that prior to undertaking his “*formal training*” he had “*done some of the Jungian professional development*” (Patrick, 2, ¶2). During that period, he had occasionally recommended a film to a client but:

*Since then I sometimes do actually think of a particular film
in a particular situation
that might be interesting for someone to have a look at
but probably as a rule I don't
I don't recommend people to see films.* (Patrick, 2, ¶2)

I wondered if this clear declaration signalled the possibility of the interview being redundant and was somewhat relieved when Patrick immediately went on to say that:

*People do bring films to me
and there's one person in particular I've been seeing
for probably about ten years
who has brought a number of films over the years
that have been very significant.* (Patrick, 2, ¶2)

After recounting his experience of discussing films with this client Patrick explained that his original therapeutic approach had been influenced, not only by his initial training, but also “*two Jungian therapies*” he had personally undergone more than 20 years ago (Patrick, 2, ¶53).

*One person said specifically, 'I do not work with the transference'
and the other person didn't
and didn't say it
but they just didn't
that's very clear now
and so it was about the image
you know
sand play
'What are the images?
what do they say?'* (Patrick, 2, ¶54)

Patrick described these therapy experiences as:

*Literally all the time looking
out at the screen
dream
the fantasy
for day dreams
whatever they are about
what they are saying about what is happening psychically*

*But in terms of what was happening in the relationship
nup
no. (Patrick, 2, ¶55)*

He subsequently trained in a contemporary relational and intersubjective model of psychotherapy which he described as, “*Oh the relationship! Oh the transference!*” (Patrick, 2, ¶58). Patrick added that many of his Jungian colleagues had also since undertaken similar training “*so I think there is now much more of an emphasis on the relationship*” (Patrick, 2, ¶61).

Although Patrick had personally and professionally, and in his own therapy, experienced films advantageously, including some “*that have had an enormous impact on me that have stayed with me for perhaps, for the rest of my life*” (Patrick, 2, ¶74), he expressed doubt about the interventionist use of movies by a therapist with clients, and we explored his reservations throughout the interview.

Virginia

Several years ago, when I was exploring the idea of doing this research I had discovered Virginia on the internet, where she was described as using film in her work as a clinical psychologist. She responded positively to my introductory phone call and we arranged to conduct the interview in her consulting room which was situated in a suburban clinic in an Australian city. It had been many years since I had travelled by train in this particular city and I was filled with a sense of excitement and a little apprehension as I journeyed towards my destination. This would be the third interview for this study, but the first participant whom I had not previously met.

Within moments Virginia put me at ease with her warm and empathic conversation. I had already sent her the information package with a consent form and after completing this paperwork, Virginia was ready to start and I asked my first question about her use of film with clients, to which she responded, “*Ah I’m probably not a movie therapist, which is probably what I ought to start off by saying*” (Virginia, 3, ¶1).

She proceeded to make it clear that when she did use film it was an “*adjunct*” to the therapy (Virginia, 3, ¶9):

*I see a lot of people for instance with Autism spectrum problems
and I find movies and videos
and copies of TV programs
very helpful for training in social skills and social awareness.* (Virginia, 3, ¶3)

Virginia qualified as a psychologist more than 20 years ago and had trained in cognitive-behavioural therapy. Although she usually saw clients for between six to ten sessions, she had worked with clients over longer periods. She said she was “*not a film buff*” (Virginia, 3, ¶49), although she enjoyed film “*tremendously*” and had “*a huge collection of DVDs*” (Virginia, 3, ¶49). When I asked Virginia what it was that attracted her to using films, she laughed and responded, “*I knew you were going to ask me that question*” (Virginia, 3, ¶66):

*Thinking back it’s probably about ten years
but I can’t remember the first time

and it would be interesting to actually go back and ah
try and figure that out

I don’t think I came to it consciously with thinking
‘Okay I’m going to use this
this is a new technique
or a tool in my tool box’.* (Virginia, 3, ¶66)

Virginia had been interviewed twice on radio and once for a newspaper article about her use of movies with clients (Virginia, 3, ¶154). She subsequently decided that she did not want to promote herself as a therapist who used films in her clinical practice as she was concerned it might become a “*label or an expectation that people would see that I would work in that way and that way only*” (Virginia, 3, ¶158).

After we finished the interview, and I had turned off the recorder, Virginia mentioned that she had just thought about her early experience of being a psychology tutor two decades ago when she was a new graduate. She recalled often having free time between classes so she would discreetly attend the film studies lectures at the university, becoming fascinated with film theory and other aspects of media studies. I asked if she could record that in writing and forward it to me, which she did in an email on that same day, with an addendum:

Your questions made me reflect on the increased awareness observing the sessions has given me for appreciating media at various levels and from different angles. I can allow a film to 'wash over me' purely for zoning out, but more often than not I observe well beyond the story line. Some of the most powerful emotive responses are elicited from non-plot aspects of film and I do talk about these with clients. (Virginia, 3, email, 18/3/08)

Virginia's recollection had struck a chord with me as I was increasingly aware of how much my own background in film may have influenced me, and indeed may have played a part in inspiring me to explore this research topic.

Practitioners: Skype phone interviews

Birgit

Birgit, in the United States, was the first practitioner from overseas whom I contacted to request an interview. I discovered her website several years previously, and had subscribed to her free internet newsletter which provided information on the use of movies in therapy and as a self-help technique. Birgit had published articles and books on the topic and was also involved in the production of online courses to train therapists in the use of films in their clinical work. As previously explained in Chapter 3, because Birgit's work was in the public domain, it was not practical to use a pseudonym for her in this study and she generously gave permission for her real name to be used.

I had arranged a time to Skype phone Birgit and obtained her permission to record the interview through my computer. She had previously emailed comprehensive literature she had written on the model that she had developed for using film in therapy. Although I had previously sent her details of my research methodology, I commenced the interview by explaining that the format was unstructured and that I would start with one open-ended question, basically to ask how she used movies in

her work with clients. At first Birgit was unsure why I would need to ask that question, as she had already provided me with written information about her work.

*Because it's very
it's not very simple
it's very complex*

*but maybe a simple answer could be
I use it with individual clients
I use it with couples
I use it in groups and workshops*

*so within these contexts I have these different approaches which I call
Cinema Alchemy. (Birgit, 4, ¶16)*

I was relieved when Birgit then continued to describe her approaches in detail.

Cinematherapy was just one method that Birgit used with clients, and there were various criteria she used to assess the suitability of the approach.

*For example where I start talking about movies
and there is a spark in their eyes
or when I feel like they would be willing to do the homework
and watch the movie at home*

*that would be an indicator
(Birgit, 4, ¶24)*

Birgit was well known in the cinematherapy field and I knew from her newsletters that she was often sought after for media interviews, and also to provide information and interviews to students.

*I get enquiries every day
because my website is so popular*

*I get enquiries about
what it is
what does the research say? (Birgit, 4, ¶49)*

This was the first Skype phone interview recorded for my study, and I had approached the technological requirements with a degree of apprehension. During our conversation the Skype phone transmission was irregular, with delays and

distortion. Although I was subsequently to discover and rectify the problem that I was having with the recording software, at the time of this interview I had little experience with the technology. The technical disruptions during the phone call impeded the development of a smooth conversational interaction and the sense of a narrative being co-constructed. Nonetheless, Birgit's story provided me with a valuable account of how her professional and personal experiences informed the model that she had developed.

Donna

I also obtained Donna's name and contact details from an internet website. In my first Skype interview with Donna, the recording failed, resulting in the loss of a very rich dialogue. When I realised the error I immediately wrote a summary but I soon realised this would not adequately represent the stories that Donna had related. Donna generously agreed to another interview, which was recorded successfully. When I read the transcript I discovered some information that was additional to the previous interview, and some that she had not repeated. I have merged the narratives selected from both my summary and the transcript into one single story.

Donna was a marriage and family therapist based in the United States. She worked with individuals, couples, and families both in public settings, including a hospital, and in private practice. She conducted group therapy in the hospital, and the use of movies was an integral element of the group process. The groups met for eight weeks and ran for two hours each session with a break after one hour. In the groups Donna asked the participants to name which movies had been important in their lives, and to select a scene. Each person had the opportunity to choose a movie and so far she had not had any participant who had not done so.

I asked Donna if cinematherapy was commonly used by family therapists.

It's not commonly used

I think it's

it's kind of like

'Well that sounds interesting and fascinating

but how do I do it?'

You know

'How does this work exactly'? (Donna, 6, ¶62)

In the unrecorded interview Donna had explained that she held an undergraduate degree in film studies and had a previous career as a screenwriter, story editor and producer in the film industry, but that she had also studied “*the narrative approach*” in her training to become a family therapist.

As our discussion began to move into particular aspects of her experience I felt concerned that she may not mention details of her previous career, which she had discussed in our first interview, and which I considered to be significant influences. I would either have to wait and allow Donna’s narrative to unfold—accepting that she might not discuss them—or I would have to prompt her to provide this information. I eventually resolved my impasse, choosing to ask her if she thought that her career in the film industry, and her therapeutic training had influenced her:

*Yes I think without even realising it
I think it has
I think of all these
I think all of this has kind of engaged itself together you know
from my background in film

I feel that that’s probably
little did I know at the time
but it was really a cultivation for understanding people. (Donna, 6, ¶68)*

Michael

Michael was one of the three U.S.-based practitioners, and I also discovered him via an internet website. When he agreed to my request to be interviewed he informed me that he was just completing a dissertation on cinematherapy. As I had previously experienced a technology glitch while recording the Skype interviews, I told Michael at the beginning of the interview that I may need to phone him back if the transmission malfunctioned. He responded cheerfully that he had set aside the entire evening for the interview “*so don’t worry about it*” (Michael, 7, ¶6). His relaxed response was very encouraging as I focused on the technical requirements of recording our discussion.

As previously explained in Chapter 3, because Michael was recognisable in the public domain through his published work, using a pseudonym for him could have created confusion, and subsequently he readily gave permission for his real name to be used in this thesis.

Michael was a psychotherapist and worked with children and adults in a community-based counselling service and was also an experienced school-based counsellor. He was initially encouraged to use movies by his “advisor” (Michael, 7, ¶11) at university when he was a Masters Counselling student. Describing his advisor as, “really big into cinematherapy” (Michael, 7, ¶11), he considered her a “directive therapist” (Michael, 7, ¶11) as she would assign particular movies to clients to view and subsequently follow up in a therapy session when they would “process” specific issues that she “asked them to have looked for” (Michael, 7, ¶11). Michael decided to adapt his advisor’s approach when he used cinematherapy with his clients, because he “didn’t like having them do it as a homework assignment (Michael, 7, ¶12).

Michael now used films across a broad client base, and also in an educational context in his role as a lecturer with undergraduate and masters-level counselling students. He had built on the knowledge he had gained at university, and in his subsequent research on cinematherapy he had identified various approaches that therapists applied when using films with clients.

I was curious to find out if there had been anyone else either in his country or internationally who had influenced Michael’s decision to develop and work from this approach. Michael told me that his “personal experience probably has been more influential than anyone else, and my personal love for the movies” (Michael, 7, ¶37), but also mentioned his interest in media: “My Bachelor degree is in Communications ... I used to work in radio” (Michael, 7, ¶36).

In answer to my question about what he perceived to be the level of acceptance of cinematherapy in his country, Michael thought it was “becoming more popular” (Michael, 7, ¶80) and he repeated his definition:

*But again it’s still just an intervention
and most people don’t get taught cinematherapy

you know
it’s part of a chapter in a book
it might be in a chapter on creative interventions. (Michael, 7, ¶103)*

For Michael it had been important to justify his therapeutic work with films empirically and he had accomplished this in a recent study. He often experienced an initial level of cynicism from senior experienced practitioners when he mentioned

working with films, but after explaining how he used them, they often respond with, “*Oh, that’s really neat*” (Michael, 7, ¶103). Michael said it was not unusual in his country to find cinematherapy being presented as a “*technique*” in courses on counselling children and young people. Although it may only be covered in “*one three-hour class*” (Michael, 7, ¶105), he nonetheless had observed that it is increasingly the recent graduates and current students who are familiar with the use of this approach:

*So we’re still at a place where a lot of people
who’ve been in the field
don’t know anything about cinematherapy

it’s the students
it’s the people who have been
who have gone to school probably since 2000
no, no, not even then
probably 2004 is when cinematherapy finally started taking off
and started becoming popular

so all these new therapists are the ones using it
not any of the people that have been in the field for a long time

we’re kind of like
a new generation. (Michael, 7, ¶104)*

Emily

I discovered Emily, a Chinese psychologist who lived and worked in Hong Kong, via a website listing. She had studied for her undergraduate and graduate qualifications in the United States, and worked primarily with individuals, although she also provided couple and family counselling. Most of her clients were short-term clients and the duration of their treatment was normally “*six to eight [sessions], but we have some clients come in for more than a year*” (Emily 9, ¶16). She had used films in her clinical work for about “*three, four years*” (Emily 9, ¶27).

Emily explained that when she used cinematherapy with families she would select a film that related to a presenting issue of one of the family members, and recommend to the whole family to watch the film together and intentionally look for any conflicts or similarities to their own situation. Alternatively she would suggest to her clients

that if there was any aspect of the film that reminded them of their own experiences, to discuss it in therapy:

[B]ecause it will make it more interesting for them and more for them to be able to express more for Chinese they sometimes will talk for other people than for themselves they are less personal. (Emily, 9, ¶3)

I was interested in Emily's cultural perspective and asked if therefore it may be easier for her Chinese clients if she used films. Emily answered by explaining the logistical problems this posed. Most of the movies she considered applicable for therapy were "Western" (Emily, 9, ¶5) and therefore of questionable relevance for her clientele:

We have to make sure that they could kind of have a basic understanding of the language and also for some kind of their culture. (Emily, 9, ¶5)

Emily's client base consisted of both Chinese and non-Chinese clients. She estimated that in terms of proportion "the Chinese is more than foreigner" (Emily 9, ¶82). I was curious to know if she noticed any difference between these client groups when using movies. Emily responded:

In terms of using movies I think if I found that they are motivated to use movies they are quite similar. (Emily 9, ¶84)

Emily was inspired to use this intervention in her clinical practice after her positive experiences of the use of films in her psychology training. Since then she had read a book about this approach, but it was her "personal experience" (Emily 9, ¶103) that had influenced her the most:

Not because I read something and I find out that it's more like I experienced it. (Emily 9, ¶104)

When I was arranging the time to phone Emily for the interview she suggested that it would be easier if I phoned her during business hours and she would schedule a time between clients. As our interview was coming to an end I asked Emily if she would like to ask me any questions. I could hear some voices in the background and she hurriedly responded, “*Not at this moment because I have a client coming in*” (Emily, 9, ¶166). When I subsequently listened to the recording of the interview we had just completed, I thought about Emily with her client more than seven thousand kilometres from where I was sitting in my study in Australia, and wondered if they were talking about movies.

Charles

Charles was suggested to me as a participant by one of his colleagues. He had used films in both his academic teaching and his therapy practice over many years in the United States. After ascertaining that he was willing to be interviewed for this study, I was provided with his contact details, and he responded quickly to my email. We arranged a time for a Skype phone interview and I was very pleased and relieved to hear a clear audio transmission when he answered the call:

*I've been using film now for oh
probably about twenty years*

*using it in class
the film becomes my anchor point
for what I'm going to be teaching*

*For example over the last fifteen years
I've taught a large number of marital and family therapy courses
So consequently I would choose films that would bring out the themes
that I would be covering in the class. (Charles, 15, ¶11)*

From his successful use of film with students, it seemed an easy transition to using film as a creative technique with his therapy clients. Charles, however, considered it necessary to be mindful of his clients' suitability for the use of film, taking into account not only their “*level of mental illness*” (Charles, 15, ¶16), but also what he judged to be their perceptive ability.

Although the use of films was integral to his teaching, it was considerably less so in his therapy practice. When I asked what prevented him from using film with a

higher percentage of clients, Charles said it rather depended on whether he had a relevant film to recommend:

*If I didn't really have anything solid to recommend
for an individual or couple or a family
then I just stayed away from that*

*there are a number of adjuncts to the therapeutic process
that I think will serve the same purpose*

I don't think you have to use one as opposed to others. (Charles, 15, ¶223)

Charles had recently taken an academic position at a university in Hong Kong. Although he anticipated that he would eventually use films in his classes there, at the time of the interview he described himself as “*immersing myself in a brand new culture ... right now I'm not even sure what film to be able to choose over here*” (Charles, 15, ¶46).

He thought he might be “*a film buff from long standing*” (Charles, 15, ¶56) and as he recalled first going to the movies as a very young child he asked rhetorically, “*Have I been impacted over the years? Absolutely!*” (Charles, 15, ¶56) and continued to say:

*And I think therapeutically as well
you know I've never met an individual that got safely out of childhood
without scars
so we all have our family of origin issues
that we have to work through*

*so I think I have experienced films enabling that process
maybe a little faster or maybe a little more efficient
than I probably would have done on my own
or perhaps even in therapy. (Charles, 15, ¶57)*

Charles' earliest recollection of viewing a movie was back in the period when movies were “*almost entirely black and white*” (Charles, 15, ¶60) when as a young child he attended the cinema with his mother:

*Interestingly enough the one that I remember
my earliest experience
was one that absolutely scared me to death
I mean I was really disturbed by this movie*

*and I had on occasion
believe it or not
saw it on re-runs on television

I recognised a scene
so I know it was the same movie

And to be honest with you
there was absolutely nothing in that movie that was frightening at all. (Charles, 15,
¶59)*

Charles offered a theoretical explanation for his reaction as a child:

*So it was just the fact that I was a young child
and apparently
you know
it was kind of an action thing,
and apparently I wasn't able to process it fast enough

and it must have really scared me
I mean the movie itself was nothing. (Charles, 15, ¶59)*

I asked Charles if he had recently seen any films that “stood out” for him personally:

*Let me think about that for just a minute
what has really impacted me recently?

you know I'm drawing an absolute blank

Oh I know one
and this is a goofy movie
you know most people would see it as just one of these
'Oh yeah that was fun to watch kind of movie'
It was a movie called The Holiday. [Block & Meyers, 2006] (Charles, 15, ¶76)*

Charles explained that the narrative of the film was about two women who swapped houses for a period of time and the effect that this had on their lives: “*The English woman went to the States, the woman in the States went to England*” (Charles, 15, ¶78):

*I really did enjoy that movie
and I felt that I got something personally out of it
it was very uplifting. (Charles, 15, ¶80)*

When Charles then added, “*It made me uplifted at that time. I don’t know*” (Charles, 15, ¶81), I could not resist saying, “*Yes well here you are in a different country*”. We both laughed as he said:

Too right

yeah funny how that worked out

I didn’t even make the connection. (Charles, 15, ¶82)

Practitioner: Skype and email interview

Lars

Lars was one of the international therapists I had sourced via the internet, in this case from Denmark. In his emailed response to my invitation to be interviewed, he expressed concerns about his spoken English, and asked if he might respond to some questions by email as he was more confident about his written English. I had initially provided Lars with the main question in the information package, and so I emailed him a copy of the interview guide including the five question “prompts”. He emailed his answers, which proved to be an effective interview medium and provided a valuable source of information. He subsequently agreed to a follow-up Skype phone interview which produced additional rich material. In the following I have selected sections of the written narrative he sent and sections of his spoken narrative, and I differentiate these in this merged narrative.

Lars was employed as a psychologist in the counselling department of a government-funded private organisation that provided a range of cancer-related services. He also maintained a small private practice. In an email to Lars before our interview, I mentioned that I was interested in the client group breakdown of the services he provided, to which he responded during our audio discussion:

*I would say that forty per cent of my clients are clients with a cancer disease
with a good or a bad or a very bad prognosis*

and forty per cent are relatives

or the surviving relatives

and twenty per cent professionals

it could be nurses, doctors

or others which I teach or supervise. (Lars, 11, ¶81)

In his employed position as a psychologist he worked “mostly ... short-term and that means that we often only talk to people about one to five to seven times” (Lars, 11, ¶37). Lars explained that due to the waiting lists of clients, there were limits placed on the length of therapy he could provide. However there were exceptions to this:

*Sometimes we are allowed to talk much more with a client
I have talked to clients for one year
and even two years I remember.* (Lars, 11, ¶37)

He recalled when he first used films with clients dealing with loss and grief around cancer:

*I can remember that I used Bleu
the French movie
that's the first movie I ever used in movie therapy.* (Lars, 11, ¶19)

I was immediately transported to the early 1990s when I saw *Bleu* (*Three Colors: Blue*, Karmitz & Kieslowski, 1993). I thought about the confusing mix of anger and skepticism about that film, which I had experienced at the time, and for many months thereafter. It was during a period of my life in which I was struggling to work through an accumulation of loss and grief, and I envied the female protagonist's ability to surrender to the experience. I did not disclose these thoughts to Lars, but instead shifted my attention to his choice of film that indicated a European selection, and I asked if he used mainly Danish films:

*Yes some
but in fact not that much

I have some Danish film
but I'm looking right now at the movies here in my office
about forty to sixty movies

I would say that only five or seven of them are Danish.* (Lars, 11, ¶40)

Mostly these films were “American” or “English” (Lars, 11, ¶49) films. Partly, this was because “the selection is much bigger” and the Danish people “see English or American movies just as much as Danish movies” (Lars, 11, ¶49):

*Actually I haven't thought about why I use Danish movies not that often
first I would say that I haven't found the good movies*

*and with good I mean therapeutic good movies
but that's a part of the answer ...*

perhaps I should study that even more. (Lars, 11, ¶48)

In his written answer to my question about any disadvantages he had experienced with using films in his practice, Lars revealed a concern that resonated with me:

Perhaps this is not a disadvantage but related to: I have to have great awareness and discipline to avoid that the client watch a movie because I like movies and because I like to use it in my work as psychologist and therapist. In other words: I have to avoid giving clients movies to watch, only because I like movies and like to use them in my work. (Lars, email, 14/07/2008):

In his answer to the question on how films had influenced his life, Lars wrote: *"I once studied movies at university; however I didn't finish this degree"*. (Lars, email, 14/07/08).

His was one of several of the practitioners' narratives which revealed undergraduate training in film related studies. At first this seemed serendipitous, but I now had a sense that this somehow belonged to a larger story that linked these narratives.

Conclusion

Just as a screenwriter employs the literary device of a "backstory", that painting in of the characters' background details that informs the main narrative, the purpose of this chapter was to introduce the characters in this drama, and shed light on the story behind the scenes. I also wanted to present these narratives "as knowledge in themselves" (Etherington, 2002, p.170), and although this may imply they were not being analysed, I realise that interpretation was occurring as I selected extracts of text and pieced them together to form a narrative. I have also tried to convey the subtext of my own narrative as I have done this. Although the intention was not to identify themes in this chapter, a number of interesting themes became apparent.

These themes will become evident in Chapter 5 where I present the themes from the narratives of the eight viewer participants (both the focus group and the individuals) and in Chapter 6 where I present the themes from the eight practitioners.

Chapter 5

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS:

The film viewer narratives

Film shows us ourselves and is a mirror, both of our achievements and of our strivings; we make meaning in all we do, whether this is done in order to illuminate our path or to search for the infinite. In learning to read a film, we become fluent in interpreting the language of life.

(Browne, 1997, p. 19)

Introduction

In this chapter I present the group storylines around the viewers' experience of film and its impact on their lives. The first part of the chapter presents an overview of their evolving relationship with film, and will then delve deeper to explore how and why film has been such a formative influence for them. The participants were not asked these questions directly, but they were implicit in my research questions or they arose in the process of analysis.

As I reflected on their narratives and while constructing this chapter, I was reminded of the approach of editing film to produce a montage (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). In a montage many different images, and different aspects of images, are combined to form a composite whole, and it is specifically through the juxtapositions—the dynamic effect of the relationship between the images—that the meaning is created. “Montage invites viewers to construct interpretations that build on one another as the scene unfolds” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 7). Writing this chapter has been a process of piecing together extracts from different participants, sometimes splicing and rearranging to do justice to the whole group, with an occasional editorial comment from the researcher.

Evolving relationship with film

Although the participants were not asked specifically, several spoke of their age or the point in their life when they first engaged with film, and when they became aware of its influence in their lives. James recalled being five years of age, two years

after he and his family migrated to Australia, when his uncle, on one of his regular visits from Hong Kong, had first introduced him to the movies of filmmaker James Cameron. His family *“were more into films of their own language”* (James, 14, ¶25), but his uncle *“was really into Hollywood films”* (James, 14, ¶25). For James, all the films made by James Cameron were *“a boy’s own fantasy”* (James, 14, ¶4). *“A lot of them are just so fantastic visually, but also story wise, they’re just so ... you can just click ... if you’re a male maybe say ten or earlier, eight, to say thirty to fifty, you would just love his films”* (James, 14, ¶4).

Joshua recalled that the period in which he really developed an enthusiasm for film was in his latter years in primary school, and as previously noted, this was when his parents were getting divorced (Joshua, 8, ¶13). Sarah said she became aware that films were *“influential”* (Sarah, 1, ¶1) when she began attending film festivals about 25 years ago. Since that time she had seen *“hundreds”* (Sarah, 1, ¶1) of films *“and every one of them took me into different domains and different dimensions of culture and storytelling”* (Sarah, 1, ¶1).

Alex had been in her mid-teens, but her *“... real interest in movies ... hasn’t been like a constant thing, like it’s only come in the last few years sort of ... the groundbreaker was, to go along the main line, but it was Lord of the Rings”* [Jackson & Jackson, 2001] (Alex, 10, ¶62). Alex’s parents were both from New Zealand where the film was shot *“so it was kind of an emotional attachment to what was being shown in those films”* (Alex, 10, ¶62).

As Gwyneth conveyed her story she realised, for the first time, that her experience of exploring a particular film in therapy, almost 20 years before, may have been the springboard for her ongoing and developing relationship with this medium: *“Maybe therapy deepened my, actually I hadn’t thought about that before, but maybe that experience deepened my experience of movies, you know, since then”* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶53).

The age or stage of life that participants recalled was almost without exception related to the memory of viewing a particular film, and for several of these participants it was during their early childhood. When I asked the focus group participants what had been their most memorable moment in a film, Luke and Ben both recalled being four years of age when they had their experience:

The hyenas in Lion King [Hahn & Allers, 1994], because the first time I saw that, when they were putting Zazu in that little sort of lava hot boiling water pit, I cried my eyes out. And still, every time I see that I kind of flinch, because it’s just, because of how I felt the first time I saw that. I had to sit on my Mum’s lap. (Luke, 10, ¶53)

When I was four, my traumatic experience was seeing Batman Returns [Burton & Burton, 1992] with Danny DeVito, and there was some scene which stuck with me where he was eating a fish or something ... and that terrified me when I was like a little kid. (Ben, 10, ¶64-66)

The group influence on Luke and Ben's responses inevitably contributed to one response building on another. However, in our earlier one-to-one interview, Joshua recalled the first time he was emotionally affected by a film:

I think the first piece of violence I ever saw on film, and it shocked me because I'd never actually ever seen anything violent ... I think it was when I was three or four, it was an episode of Thomas the Tank Engine [Allcroft & Asquith, 1984–2004]. It was when a train crashed into the house and it was destroyed and it was like, 'Oh my God, the house was destroyed'. I couldn't believe it. (Joshua, 8, ¶9)

As children, Luke, Ben and Joshua believed those film scenes to be real, and as young adults those memories endured. For most of the viewer participants, their relationship with film was linked both to their early memories of films, and to various developmental stages of their lives.

Formative influence of film

James conveyed how influential several filmmakers had been for him throughout his life:

I mean, Sergio Leone, Quentin Tarantino, James Cameron ... they form like, probably different phases of my life. Like James Cameron particularly dominated my earlier childhood, sort of became like, you know, he really showed the thrills of cinema for me. As an action director I think he's just brilliant; but also as a storyteller, I think he's just equally great. So he really formed my childhood love for like, probably the action genre in particular and science fiction genre. And then maybe as I'm like, matured throughout my teen to late-teen years, I started to become like, to go into probably I say deeper arthouse movies, and just some classics, sort of like, Sergio Leone like I said, and Tarantino. Both men are just great storytellers. And yeah ... I think these are the three filmmakers I would say that shaped my love for movies in particular. (James, 12, ¶27)

As Sarah considered her association with film during her life she explained that, although she had seen numerous films "how I would differentiate each film in terms of my development I don't know but, my life has been in partnership with movie telling, story telling" (Sarah, 1, ¶6). In particular, it was the "socially informed films" (Sarah, 1, ¶22),

which she had intentionally sought out for many years, that had been *“really part of the formative part of my personal and professional self”* (Sarah, 1, ¶27).

The theme of ageing was currently to the fore in Gwyneth’s life, and there were several films to which she had recently been able to *“relate”* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶6). She was presently interested in films directed by Clint Eastwood *“because he’s a mature man as well, and with age he seems to have become more, insightful somehow it seems to me. And so his films have got this element of empathy* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶38).

Joshua explained that throughout his life *“there’s always been one significant cultural creative thing to which I have anchored myself ... which I have enjoyed, which I’ve sucked dry in a sense”* (Joshua, 8, ¶149). Commencing with *“James Bond”* Joshua listed *“Freud, the Hannibal Lecter films, Da Vinci ... and finally it’s been The West Wing [Harms & Graves, 1999–2006] for a couple of years”* (Joshua, 8, ¶149).

For these participants film was an important cultural experience and it could be intentionally used as a developmental resource, both as a support and as a means to define an identity, or sense of self (Zittoun, 2004).

Film as a way of promoting social connection

Film could also help create a dialogical process or shared space as it influenced people to interact. James described how his ability to memorise the *“trivias”* (James, 12, ¶152) about movies served an important purpose for him as it was a way to be of interest to his peers: *“I would just quote, sometimes maybe just quote lines to make myself sound witty”* (James, 12, ¶158). This had benefited James particularly among the students in his class at college, and he seemed pleased to describe himself as, *“I’m sort of the biggest geek right now, yeah. Like saying, ‘You want to know who directed this last movie?’”* (James, 12, ¶151).

Being able to quote a line from a movie easily in an *“appropriate moment”* (James, 12, ¶160) was also of value to James because *“it’s really good to connect with people that way”* (James, 12, ¶160). It was also *“... a really good way just to socialise with people you already know or sometimes even people you just met”* (James, 12, ¶162). Another of the merits of *The West Wing* [Harms & Graves, 1999–2006] for Joshua was the opportunity it provided him to relate to other fans of this series:

You know, there are people who have seen every episode a few times and just love it and think it is the greatest thing ever and when I meet them I go, ‘Oh my God you’re a

West Wing fan'. I can relate to them. I don't have to explain the characters, they just know it. (Joshua, 8, ¶142-144)

Being a member of the film group involved sharing the experience of films with others, and this was relatively new for Joshua and he was thoroughly enjoying it:

It used to be a private thing ... I always used to go to the cinema by myself. I thought it was a personal experience ... I didn't want anyone with me ... That's changed now ... I really like to go see films with people. (Joshua, 8, ¶137-138)

As noted in the previous chapter Alex had described using film "as sort of a friend almost" (Alex, 10, ¶3):

By watching films and by engaging in like the lives of people in films and the visuals of films and just the sound and everything and ... it makes me feel kind of less alone. (Alex, 10, ¶4)

There were some interesting gender differences in the ways film promoted connection. Both Cordelia and Sarah described experiences of not only watching films with their children, which had enhanced their relationships, but also purposely viewing a film in order to facilitate communication with them. Cordelia said, "I sometimes watch films so that I can connect with my kids" (Cordelia, 5, ¶52). Sarah recalled watching *The Joy Luck Club* (Bass & Wang, 1993) at the cinema with her daughter:

I remember sitting and holding my daughter's hand the whole time and we cried and we bonded. It was a film that we bonded, because we were women watching this film. Joyous women and all the tragedies of women's lives were played out in those four or five generations of women discovering themselves. It was a real women's narrative, a real powerful experience for us both. (Sarah, 1, ¶51)

She had hoped to recreate that experience with her sons watching *Lord of the Rings* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001), "but it didn't work as well ... because they were boys films and were speaking to them. They loved it. But I only loved it because I loved watching them love it" (Sarah, 1, ¶62).

Film could also provide a way to transmit cultural values to others. For Gwyneth, suggesting films to her nieces was a way to "influence them. I recommend films ... like therapeutically, in a sense" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶43). Sarah found that the diversity in her film-viewing experiences enhanced her work in professional contexts: "It does

heighten my awareness around social issues ... and I can talk to students about the issues" (Sarah, 1, ¶111).

Film could also serve as a means of expression. As well as providing a way to communicate with others, for some participants film offered an alternative and often beneficial way to articulate and express thoughts and emotions. By sourcing particular films that offered her a way of expressing and exploring her nonconformist feelings, Sarah found a critical voice:

I would always be looking for ways that spoke against the status quo, whatever the status quo was ... I would seek out films that spoke against it, so it could help me articulate a gut feeling that I'd have, of wanting to be outside of the status quo. (Sarah, 1, ¶104)

For Gwyneth, films served many purposes:

I read books and I read newspapers and all that, but films, films give me, well I don't know, a well-made film, a good film, an interesting film that deals with things that are interesting, gives me a lot in terms of my education, in terms of my understanding of the world. And also it expresses something, that maybe I can't find a lot of words to express ... it's a different kind of voice, a movie, a film. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶22)

It seemed that film could be mobilised to serve numerous functions, not the least of which was to guide these participants as they explored the new horizons of their inner and outer worlds.

Film: an educational tool

For some participants knowledge was enhanced as they viewed the films. When she first attended the cinema in her late teens, Sarah found films to be "*sources of knowledge, they opened up the world beyond my own experience*" (Sarah, 1, ¶3). Film could also challenge preconceptions and make it possible to develop new insights into a diversity of cultures. Ben described how that occurred for him when he had seen *The Decline of Western Civilization* (Prettyman & Spheeris, 1981): "*It's about early punk, like American punk music ... I hadn't really listened to that music much but I thought it'd be interesting to watch, and it really opened my eyes to how legitimate this music was*" (Ben, 10, ¶135).

Describing how she purposely used films Gwyneth said, "[B]ecause for me, films slot into everything else, you know" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶21), which "*in the cultural sense, well*

because they're part of my education, they're part of my seeking (Gwyneth, 13, ¶22).

Gwyneth had recently intentionally seen *Slum Dog Millionaire* (Colson & Boyle, 2008) before travelling to India: *"I purposely saw it before I went. It was part of my research"* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶20). While acknowledging that it was a *"fantasy"* she said, *"Yeah I thought, 'That just deepens my understanding of some things a little bit'"* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶18).

Alex described how she actively used films to increase her knowledge of the world:

I find it's quite an educational tool too ... A lot of people think, you know, it's just kind of, you just go to the movies and that's that. But for me it's like, I don't know about you guys, but ... say you watch a movie set in Eastern Europe during the second world war, and afterwards you're like, 'I didn't know about that, what were they talking about?' You go and you read up on communism and more about that kind of stuff and then you watch it again and ... you've learnt history from it. (Alex, 10, ¶137)

When films had a profound effect on her, Cordelia would often buy the DVD. She gave the example of the film *As It Is In Heaven* (Birkeland & Pollak, 2004) that she was intending to purchase *"because of the profoundness"*, so she could *"revisit some of the themes and integrate them"* (Cordelia, 5, ¶50).

Film could bring the outer world to the participants' inner world, and offer an expanded inner world.

Film: entertainment, escape or reflective space?

The question of whether film was entertainment or served a more serious purpose was raised by several participants. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Joshua suggested that certain films offered a way *"to escape into certain realities ... just to work things through"* (Joshua, 10, ¶13). In the following narratives, it seems that films could provide such a realm.

The use of film while studying for their Higher School Certificate (HSC) was mentioned by several of the focus group members: *"HSC was like a major movie binge for me ... They probably relaxed me a lot during the HSC"* (Luke, 10, ¶33). Alex found the structured time frame of a film to be beneficial when she needed to take a break from her studies: *"Film's a really good way to kind of use that time because it's got a set, designated beginning and end and, yeah you kind of escape"* (Alex, 10, ¶35). Alex also described film as providing a form of respite:

And it's kind of a relax ... without having to think too much to yourself because sometimes, if you are over thinking your own situation, then it just makes it worse ... So film, for me, is a way to deal with something without having to totally over think where I'm at and what I'm doing with my life. (Alex, 10, ¶4)

During the year that Joshua studied for his HSC he came across the Australian Film Industry (AFI) list of 100 greatest films (Joshua, 8, ¶119). He had already seen 42 of the films and decided that by the end of the year he would view the rest on the list. He told his English teacher what his goal was: “[A]nd I finished. I watched Bonnie and Clyde [Beatty & Penn, 1967]. It was number twenty-seven, on December thirty-first that year. I still have the list. And to go through them just, it was that ideal. A huge distraction from the HSC “ (Joshua, 8, ¶119).

In the one-to-one interview with Joshua, he referred to escapism 15 times in different contexts. Commencing with a description of his repetitive viewing of films in his childhood, he then described how, when his parents were divorcing, he found it to be “*very much an escape*” (Joshua, 8, ¶2). Later in the discussion he explored the notion of escapism through films and film characters: “*There's something about escapism, that fantasy of just, like in The Chronicles of Narnia [The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Johnson & Adamson, 2005], being able to escape into another world, that sort of thing*” (Joshua, 8, ¶25). Another example Joshua gave was the eponymous hero of the film “Batman” (*The Dark Knight*, Nolan, 2008). He reflected on the theme of escapism through the context of the fictional character’s “*secret identity ... Bruce Wayne who escapes into, becomes Batman and escapes, and yeah there's something about that*” (Joshua, 8, ¶26). As he considered that aspect of Batman that appealed to him, Joshua proposed, “*It's something about an ordinary man escaping his ordinary bounds and becoming this thing greater than himself, that people will fear and people will be horrified by ... and he can do amazing things*” (Joshua, 8, ¶29-30). For example, “[W]ith Batman ... he just has to move on when someone dies who is close to him, and he does that by becoming this monster really. I think that's important” (Joshua, 8, ¶36). Joshua explained what he meant by that: “*Well, when something like that happens to me I can say, 'No I have to move on'. So by saying that, to an extent it doesn't affect me* (Joshua, 8, ¶37).

James admitted, “*I still love the science fiction sort of escapism, of some of the probably, yeah the escapist movies, or fantasy films. I particularly love those films*” (James, 12, ¶102). Although he was usually discerning about his choices and either read film reviews or checked people’s opinions rather than indiscriminately going to the cinema, “*if I tend*

to hear a film that is escapist, but is also a really well made, well written, well directed movie, I would go see it. No matter what, I would go, yeah, see what they're raving about" (James, 12, ¶105).

Other participants argued that for them films were not about escapism: *"I never use film and still to this day never use film as an escape"* (Sarah, 1, ¶113). Television was *"legitimate to be an escape"* (Sarah, 1, ¶125), but her expectation of film was in distinct contrast: *"I don't have any time for these escapist films and stuff. I don't even go and see them ... I can't give you examples of them"* (Sarah, 1, ¶125).

At first Gwyneth appeared a little unsure about the escapist function of films for her, but as she continued to convey her story she seemed to become more certain:

I think I use cinema as a little bit of escape, but not really. I'm more interested in seeing a film that gives me something. I don't really want to escape. People say, 'I just want to go to films to escape'. I don't. I want something out of it. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶38)

Gwyneth then summed up her point of view:

So I don't want pure escapism. I want to get something. I want to understand something. I want to see something. I want to learn something. I want to see the world. I want someone to show me the world through their eyes, and, 'How do you see the world and what's happening in this world that we all share?' (Gwyneth, 13, ¶38)

Gwyneth's views on escapism suggested that she wanted some nurturing of self while being entertained. For several participants in this study their spectatorial experience was determined, not only by a sensory connection to the film, but also the material space of the cinema.

The cinematic space

Not only did films generate many possible meanings for the participants, it also seemed that the lived experience of the cinematic space could be part of the meaning making that was constructed:

There is one moment, one sublime moment ... many years ago when I was living in England I went to the cinema, and I don't know what it was, anyway I went to the cinema and I saw Blade Runner [Deeley & Scott, 1982]. And I was alone, I think I was alone, I was almost alone, I wasn't aware of anybody else. I was sitting in a spot and it was like, I had this whole screen to myself, the whole place to myself. That for me

is the ideal situation, to have no one in the cinema except me and have this amazing world right in front of me. And that's what happened. That was the most sublime cinematic experience I've had. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶56)

After briefly discussing *Blade Runner* (Deeley & Scott, 1982) describing it as a "beautiful sad film" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶56), Gwyneth concluded, "[B]ut it was just this whole visual experience that I had all to myself and it was just bliss. And I was just sitting in the perfect seat. It was just perfect" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶56).

For Sarah, both the physical and mental spaces involved in the experience of film seemed to be factors:

I think the comfort or the enjoyment of going somewhere where you could go on your own, and close off to the world and go on a journey. And the sensual experience of it and the intellectual experiences of the emotional experience, I don't think can be recreated anywhere in such a short period of time. Only moments of relationships can capture that maybe. But with a film you can guarantee at least for a certain period of time you will have a whole lot of things happen to you that speeds life up. (Sarah, 1, ¶99)

Joshua's description of his attendance at the movie *Get Smart* (Ewing & Segal, 2008) directly after he had been to a "training seminar and had a bad meeting" (Joshua, 8, ¶153) illustrated how he experienced a particular cinematic space:

It was just two hours of wonderful escapism. Actually I can't believe I've never done this before. I went there, apparently the session was at 2:10 but it was Gold Class, and I thought, 'What the hell'. And it was Gold Class and it was wonderful. You get wedges. (Joshua, 8, ¶155)

Despite the extra cost for the ticket, Joshua enjoyed the experience: "It wasn't a great film. It was forgettable. I forgot about it the moment I left the cinema, and haven't thought about it since. But it was fun. For almost two hours I had fun" (Joshua, 8, ¶159).

Joshua had linked escapism with entertainment, and like escapism, there were differing opinions in the participants' stories as to whether watching films should or should not be considered entertainment.

Film: just entertainment?

For James it seemed very clear: "Since I was really little, I always loved movies and it's one of my main forms of entertainment" (James, 12, ¶56). As he discussed "escapist

movies" (James, 12, ¶102) James made a link with entertainment: "I tend to jump between sort of the arthouse and the mainstream entertainments, providing they're good, mainstream entertainments, not the rubbish some of these people make these days" (James, 1, ¶102).

Sarah differentiated films that she described as "the entertainment films" (Sarah, 1, ¶77) from those that were "more discerning" (Sarah, 1, ¶77). To consider films a form of entertainment though was really not an option for her: "I would see that as a betrayal to however I've set up myself in relation to film. It would be a complete opting out of how film has been important to me" (Sarah, 1, ¶114). Television however was different for Sarah. She could "watch a mindless show" on television and not be concerned if she had "wasted an hour" (Sarah, 1, ¶115). Sarah explained, "My life as I'm living it takes precedent over watching television. But it includes being aware of what films are coming out and making a point of going to see them (Sarah, 1, ¶127).

Initially Joshua seemed unequivocal about the criteria he used to assess a film: "I always judge a film from two aspects. Number one, quality of the screenplay. Number two, the evolution, the quality of the evolution of the characters" (Joshua, 8, ¶105). Towards the end of our discussion Joshua's comments about the entertainment value of film seemed somewhat paradoxical:

I think the whole point of films is entertainment, And I think ... sometimes yes you need films like A Beautiful Mind [Grazer & Howard, 2001], or Lord of the Rings [Jackson & Jackson, 2001] because that's a really deep film, but mostly films should be just about fun (Joshua, 8, ¶163).

I like a film where there is a theme, but when they shove it in your face it's not entertaining. You shouldn't have to think about it. (Joshua, 8, ¶166)

While most of the participants spoke about how they actively made use of films in their outer world, several focused on their inner experiences of film. These narratives suggest that both conscious and unconscious processes may have been involved in their film experiences.

The reflective space

Film created space for reflection for some participants. It had been during an onerous period in Sarah's life—juggling the demands of sole parenting her teenage children, maintaining a full-time high-level career, and dealing with the disappointments of an

unsupportive relationship—that she had attended the cinema to see *Dancer in the Dark* (Windeløv & Von Trier, 2000):

It was the most recently powerful film that I have seen in terms of just unsettling me, without a conscious reason of why. And I had such an adverse reaction that I was almost out of myself in terms of what it touched on. (Sarah, 1, ¶9)

Sarah described the intense emotions she experienced, and said she “really identified” (Sarah, 1, ¶10), with the leading character.

When she was standing up on that scaffold, when she was, I wanted to jump out and rescue her, it just seemed the most unfair the most unjust, and I felt like, you know, I was in that situation. (Sarah, 1, ¶11)

She returned home after seeing the film to a domestic situation that felt overwhelming: “I just exploded in terms of the injustice of it all” (Sarah, 1, ¶11), and felt anger towards her partner “who was unavailable to debrief” (Sarah, 1, ¶11):

The whole huge little world of my own just, you know, seemed to be threatened somehow, because of my over-identification with the film. And films do that, they ask you to go with them. And I went with that film every step of the way, the fragility, the trauma that she was just on. And I think my life was like that, at the time. I was on the edge of just, you know, it brought into consciousness how I was feeling. That the path I was travelling, I was walking along blindly on a train track, and the train could come any minute. And I never knew when. (Sarah, 1, ¶12)

Sarah’s description of the many levels in which her experience of the film had shaped her emotional response implied knowledge from her professional background in mental health.

It was such a metaphor for the unconsciousness of my own turmoil and the way it was so skillfully projected and acted and the drama of it, you know. I couldn’t escape it even if I wanted to. It was, ‘Come with me, and if you go with me, I’m going to take you down this journey’. (Sarah, 1, ¶12)

She recalled what happened after that experience:

Well I think, I think what it did, was set in train a series of things that subsequently did happen. But I don’t know that I, I don’t know that it actually informed myself immediately because I think the job at hand was to reorganise myself. Because my life, it wasn’t, it didn’t seem readily able to be changed then. But it signalled I think, the sorts of things I needed, I might to do, in order to address the turmoil that I was thinking.

(Sarah, 1, ¶14)

By opening herself to particular psychological processes that film viewing provided, it seemed that Sarah had been able to explore complex feelings and assimilate the experience. For two of the participants, Cordelia and Gwyneth, that process had occurred within the therapy space.

Who brings the film into the therapeutic space?

As outlined in Chapter 4, Cordelia's experience in therapy involved the introduction of several films by her therapist, but it had been the film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (Goldwyn & Weir, 2003), which she had seen several months previously and had herself introduced into therapy, that had the greatest impact. After cautiously providing background details of profound abuse that she had suffered as an infant, Cordelia described the therapy session in which the film's protagonist, "The Captain", emerged:

I was highly dissociative obviously, it would be very rare if I wasn't. And so we were in the process of exploring disowned parts and somehow I remember the therapist saying something like, 'So who were you reporting to when you were writing this in the journal?' He had this sense that I was reporting to somebody, 'Like I get this sense that there's an audience inside'. And I'm like, and suddenly the world changed and I thought, 'Interesting, something's a bit different' ... and I realised I was being another part and I was fully in it. And I experienced this dissociated part as being like a metaphor. So it's real and it's not real. And so there's this sense of being the part wholly and completely as if it's a personality, and yet being aware that this is just a metaphor to explain my internal world ... and he said something, and I said 'Oh', and we both realised I was being other. And he said 'And this part is a he, she, it?' And obviously I thought, 'You're fishing to see if this is masculine energy' and I went 'Okay, male' and I just dropped into shame, just dropped into shame, feeling like I'm a male. And I got up and gestured, you know, and thrust forward my pelvis and said, 'It's like that'. And he said, 'I thought it might be' and I said, 'Oh, so that's how guys feel'. [Laughs] So I had this laugh and then we were exploring it and he said, 'Oh okay does this part have a name?' And I said, 'It's the captain', and, 'Oh the captain, that's a good name' and you know, we're playing and you could see I'm right on the brink of dropping into complete shame and shutting down on him. And I said, 'It's the captain like on the ship in Master and Commander' [Goldwyn & Weir, 2003]. So I had internalised this character. I mean obviously I'd internalised my therapist. (Cordelia, 5, ¶6)

Cordelia's description revealed a complex experience of shifting emotions and states of consciousness. Her experience as a counsellor was apparent in her depiction of the various ambivalences and psychological processes she moved through in the therapy session, and of an embodied experience as the image of the film's protagonist was evoked as a metaphor for her idealisation of her therapist.

Gwyneth had previously worked as a counsellor, and during that time had experienced the use of film in her own personal therapy. It was also a film she had introduced:

When I was in therapy, I was in intensive, six years, three days a week therapy where everything, everything that I experienced, everything that I did in the outside world came into this room with the therapist. And so with the therapist I grew up in a sense. I had six years with her so I almost felt like I started from the age of zero to the age of six at that time. And so during that time there were various things that occurred with children or various people around at different ages that I was then able to relate to myself. And one of the things that I remember was this particular film.

For some reason I watched this B movie on television from the 1950s called [The] Invasion of the Body Snatchers [Walter & Siegal, 1956]. And it was seen through the eyes of a small boy and his parents. Basically the aliens came and took over, but they didn't take over in any visible way. They just took over, they entered into the bodies of these people, their minds or something. And so the people who you thought were your parents were still your parents and still behaving like parents, but were um, something missing. There was some affect that changed. The affect was gone. So the only person who knew that, was the child who hadn't been taken over, who was looking at these parents and saying, 'They are my parents but they don't feel right'. This was extremely powerful and really significant for me in terms of the therapy because I took this back, because I took everything to the therapist and she was very clever and she helped me use that. Because I was dealing with my feelings and my parents, how I'd lost my parents when I was very young. Because well, they had abandoned me in a sense, they put us into a home ... for a short period of time.

And so I was experiencing these really powerful feelings in the therapy, of this sense of my parents. I lost my parents. So somehow this film seemed to represent for me and through her, her help as well, the therapist, seemed to represent the, seemed to be yeah a sort of metaphor or symbol for this feeling of loss of your parents. They are there, but they're not really there. So they're there, but they're not really who they say they are ... So it was, it was a really, it was a really really powerful sort of image in therapy. I've

never forgotten it. I've never forgotten it. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶11)

There can be no doubt that the experience of exploring a particular film in therapy left an indelible imprint in Gwyneth's mind. Both Cordelia and Gwyneth's stories are powerful indications that for a client, introducing a film into therapy could indeed be a worthwhile undertaking. These extracts also highlighted the symbolic function of films, which was a theme to emerge in several narratives.

The symbolic and metaphoric possibilities of film

The experience of symbolically "playing" (Cordelia, 5, ¶6) with a film character was described by Cordelia in her extract cited earlier as "being aware that this is just a metaphor to explain my internal world" (Cordelia, 5, ¶6). When Cordelia conveyed her story of using a film in her own therapy, she made the link between a pre-existing symbol in her life, and wondered if this had contributed to the influence of the film:

Water is incredibly powerful for me, even as a three-year-old, my spirituality was deeply shaped by being at the beach a lot, and the ocean. So I think somehow the movie captivated me because it was this, being on the water and on the ocean, and had control of the water and the beauty of it. So I think I was primed at that level, so it kind of went in more because it was a metaphor that had always been powerful. (Cordelia, 5, ¶21)

Joshua was straightforward about how he consciously made use of films: "When I talk to people I usually use analogies in films a lot. I sometimes make sense of it through the characters" (Joshua, 8, ¶4). Describing why films were influential in her life Gwyneth also emphasised the importance of symbol and metaphor:

Because I tend to work in, I think I do anyway, I tend to work in symbols and metaphors ... I see something in a film in particular and I think 'Oh that's interesting, that reminds me, that makes me feel ... that this particular thing that I'm going through or thing that I've been through before, makes sense in a certain kind of way'. Or it provides a sort of symbolic interpretation of it. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶1)

Gwyneth said that she got "a lot out of films because I think ... I relate to films very strongly, I do" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶6). She had been moving through some major changes in her life with the breakup of her relationship and during this period had seen several movies which depicted particular themes with which she had related, and had made conscious connections with her lived experience. One of these films was *The Remains of the Day* (Calley & Ivory, 1993):

The film was about not feeling things, not allowing yourself to feel things, and that's been a bit of a theme for me lately too. That for me, in this year of trauma that I've had, is that it's been really important to experience the feelings. So when I've needed to cry and break down and not be able to work, this is an important part of the process, and talking about it all the time too. I know it might drive friends mad, but on the other hand it doesn't. People are actually much more understanding than you think they are going to be. You think you are going to, you know, bore them. But in actual fact people like to help you, and like to hear your story. So the idea of experiencing things by talking to people, by shedding tears, by going out into the world, this was kind of the theme of this film. This man didn't do that, he wasn't able to do that. He was totally locked up inside himself, and as a result life passed him by. At the end of the film the woman that he had been interested in, vaguely, in his repressed way, had moved on completely. And that was gone. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶23)

As they told their stories other participants became more aware of how useful the symbolism of films was for making meaning in their lives. Ben described the feelings of nostalgia that were evoked for him when he watched films such as *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes & Hughes, 1985) and *Sixteen Candles* (Green & Hughes, 1984):

I don't know if that's intentional but it's like having an image, like encountering something in your own day which will remind you of a place in time, to draw upon that film in the same way you might have an experience of bumping into an old friend, or something like that. (Ben, 10, ¶24)

During James' description of the movie *Cinema Paradiso* (Cristaldi & Tornatore, 1988) I was struck by the symbolism and I imagined he was making associations to his own life:

Recently, there's this film I saw called Cinema Paradiso which is just, I think, I just connected to it instantly because it's about a boy's love of film and how it just affects him throughout his entire life to when he becomes a great filmmaker, when he's probably middle aged and so. And the ending, it's just one of those endings where this mentor of his, gives him a reel of films that has a really ... it's really significant to him. And the moment he's watching the reels, just another of those tear-jerking moments for me, yeah, so, (James, 12, ¶92)

When James thought about why this film affected him he said, "It's just so emotional" (James, 12, ¶93).

The reel of film that he acquired is from his mentor that used to be a film projectionist

when he was only a child, back in the Sicilian village where he grew up in. And the cinema that he works at, its also a daytime church, and the priest would not allow certain scenes to be shown because like, if it's nudity or kissing scenes like, the projectionist would have to edit it out, cut it. But he wouldn't want to destroy these films because he just loves them and he just, he just attaches it into one big montage. And I think it's just a symbol of his love for film, and he's giving it to his sort of surrogate son in the end. And it's, when he's watching it in the end, it's just the love of a lifetime, like, you know, watching the love of a lifetime for him. So it's just really moving for me, I guess, in a way. (James, 12, ¶93)

Later in our discussion when I asked James if he had an understanding of why he was drawn to films with sad endings, he seemed surprised that, although he tended to “analyse the meanings of films” (James, 12, ¶120), he had not previously reflected upon the personal meanings of his film experiences: “I guess it's just one of those things that I've never really thought about, until you asked me” (James, 12, ¶126). Film was serving a function for James, of carrying his emotional life, without him making the explicit connection. It seemed that telling his story had provided him with an opportunity to reflect.

Alongside the allegorical and symbolic relevance, for many participants films provided opportunities for new and different contexts for self-exploration.

Identification with film

For Ben it seemed possible to make use of films in the ongoing process of defining a sense of self “so long as there's things you can identify with” (Ben, 10, ¶135). This had been his experience when he had seen *The Decline of Western Civilization* (Prettyman & Spheeris, 1981), because he was having similar feelings in his life at the time and he recognised “the alienation and the disillusionment ... because I identified with that, because I was disillusioned with social services, and there was nothing for them to do” (Ben, 10, ¶135).

Films could extend or expand one's sense of self, as Sarah found when she first experienced films in her late teens:

I was quite sheltered you know, relatively sheltered. It inspired me to think beyond my local experiences. The first time I saw Asian films it was quite an eye opener. European films, social issues, you know, back twenty-five years ago, films, particularly avant-garde films were really avant-garde in terms of the, bringing social issues ... a whole lot of experiences into the public arena that weren't available in any other form. And for

those who were wanting to go on that journey it was an amazing immediacy about informing yourself, but also opening yourself up to identifications around certain possibilities you could do yourself in your own life. (Sarah, 1, ¶3)

The films could be fictional:

Even in a fantasy, didn't even have to be real, just have a moment of fantasy of being a hippy or being outside of the status quo, just so I could shift a bit and not be stuck in what I saw as a conservative bubble. I would seek those ones out, or I would seek out ones that depicted a change of life style. (Sarah, 1, ¶105)

Fictional films could also be re-affirming. In the focus-group discussion on teen films, Luke referred to the film *Superbad* (Apatow & Mottola, 2007) that Ben had admired because of its honest depiction of teenage life. Luke explained how he could “connect” (Luke, 10, ¶162) with that film when he just finished high school, because it was an authentic representation of what his social life was like at that time:

And you watch Superbad and it's exactly the kind of high school piss-ups that you always went to and everything. It was like, it was really, I don't know what it was about watching it, but you just connect with it, and so much. Because it's just, yeah, they've gone to this person's house, they have to get the alcohol, they've promised they'll get alcohol and it's ... I'd been through that, like I can actually, you know, I've actually done that (Luke, 10, ¶162).

Ben agreed with Luke's interpretation of *Superbad*: “It's something you can identify with, rather than like normal teen films, where they're suddenly at the party and there's free alcohol everywhere and everything's just catered to and there's nothing to worry about” (Ben, 10, ¶163). For James it was the films with themes of “growing up” and “coming of age” (James, 12, ¶111) that resonated with him: “One of those stories that I'm a sucker for” (James, 12, ¶111).

Just seeing a character growing up before your eyes, it's just bittersweet in a way and, and also the trials and tribulations, you'll want to go through it with them I guess. Like Cinema Paradiso [Cristaldi & Tornatore, 1988] is one of them and another one is Once Upon A Time In America [Milchan & Leone, 1984], made by Sergio Leone which explores a darker side of growing up I guess. Yeah, dealing with violence and gangsters, but also like, it also reflects probably the positive side of growing up, with friends and all and how this friendship affects them and changes over the years to their old age. (James, 12, ¶112)

Film had offered these participants opportunities to play with shifting identities and contrasting perspectives as they journeyed through different stages of life and periods of change.

Film as emotional release

Several participants described how film had also assisted in unlocking and releasing emotions. When Sarah contemplated the films that had been “*the most challenging in my own intra-psychic instability*”, she thought it was “*interesting*” that the films were “*around grief*” (Sarah, 1, ¶22). Admitting, “[B]ecause you know I’ve carried a lot of grief around a lot of different things” (Sarah, 1, ¶23-24), she listed films such as *Truly, Madly Deeply* (Cooper & Minghella, 1990) and *Three Colours: Blue* (Karmitz & Kieslowski, 1993), and recalled seeing *Ladybird* (Hibbin & Loach, 1994) which had her “*sobbing at the end of it*” (Sarah, 1, ¶23-24).

Ladybird Ladybird was a really powerful film because the pathos of this woman’s pain and then the empathy of her partner saying ‘Can’t you see her pain?’ And then you know, I was a woman in pain, I hadn’t given up children and I don’t remember when it was in terms of my own reproductive history, but I remember, I could identify with the potential loss of children and the pain associated with women’s loss. (Sarah, 1, ¶23-24)

Joshua’s most recent experience of being powerfully affected by a film had occurred during his end-of-year holidays from university and he described all the circumstances surrounding this experience:

*The most emotional I ever felt during a film was when I went to Poland over the summer, and well basically I, I’ve lost a lot of family in Auschwitz and camps, and I went to, I had a very emotional experience. I’ve just had a very emotional experience where a friend passed away tragically while I was in Poland, and I got back, I don’t know if you know about the Yad Vashem? It’s a Holocaust museum in Jerusalem and I went to this TV room and I watched *Life is Beautiful* [Braschi & Benigni, 1997]. And at the end, this movie always affects me, at the end I just broke down. After six or eight days of just coping with it and walking through it, I just broke down. It was the most emotional I’ve ever felt during a film. (Joshua, 8, ¶12-14)*

As previously noted, “*farewell moments*” (James, 12, ¶7) were a particular theme which James had identified in movies, and he had recently compiled a list of them. One of these moments was the ending of the film *Schindler’s List* (Lustig & Spielberg, 1993), and it was the second time that James had described a scene from this film:

So, yeah. I would say probably the strong moments for me yeah, I mean just for anybody dealing with life and death, it's just really, really emotional. But not only about life and death, because I mean the ending of Schindler's List is more about the value of life than about why people die and so it's just like; because the scene where he, Schindler, is breaking down because yeah, he just reflects on the madness, like humanity has done to people. Like how he could have saved more people, like he saved 1,000 Jewish people from being killed in the Holocaust, but he's also regretting that he hasn't, he didn't do more. 'I could have traded my car for maybe about ten more people, this gold pen I have in my hand, just at least two more, at least one, but I didn't'. And he's just breaking down. That is just, it's just one of those moments for me. (James, 12, ¶127)

It was during our second discussion that James recognised how watching sad film endings evoked memories of loss for him, in particular the death of his much loved dog two years ago:

One of the most difficult moments for me, was when my dog died. And yeah, I guess those sort of goodbyes are the worst possible, you know, moments for me, I guess. And yeah, sometimes seeing, you know, a character that you really, you really care about in the film, and he or she is going to die in the end. You just really, you know, it's really tough to go through it, dealing with death. (James, 14, ¶26)

Several participants described some sort of catharsis of emotions associated with a range of life experiences. When I asked Cordelia if she had intentionally used films outside of her therapy context, and in particular if she repeatedly viewed films, she immediately recalled an example:

Sure, yeah lots of films. What's it called?, A Beautiful Mind [Grazer & Howard, 2001] I was married to a man who was very disturbed and I went with some friends to this film ... and it still knocks me around. I've seen it two or three times now. I just cry, cry and cry and cry. (Cordelia, 5, ¶49)

As a child the "saddest" that Joshua "had ever felt" (Joshua, 8, ¶9) while viewing a film was at nine years of age. It was during a period of uncertainty in his family life that he saw the *The Little Princess* (Johnson & Cuarón, 1995), "that was really quite heartbreaking" (Joshua, 8, ¶9):

The story was, the girl thought her father had died in the war and he came back and he was blind and he was in the house next door. And she actually saw him and ran after him. And I just thought, I just thought it was so sad. I mean, I thought it was wonderful when, she thought she would be in this house, this orphanage, for her whole

life with this horrible woman who was controlling her. And eventually her father rescued her, and I thought that was wonderful. That was like, you know, she was free. (Joshua, 8, ¶17)

For several viewers film had served as a means to release deep emotions, and for some it had offered an escape during unpredictable times. In the following extracts participants describe the various ways that film had made an impression and influenced lasting change in their lives.

Through a different lens

Although evoking painful emotions about her relationship break-up, Gwyneth's recent experience of viewing *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, (Chafin & Fincher, 2008) had ultimately provided "*a more positive perspective*" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶6). She had drawn several meanings from the film that were of significant value to her. One of these was the realisation that "*there are different ways of loving and caring for people, and as you get older these are the other kinds of loving that you have ... there was a lot in there for me and I got right into it*" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶5).

Joshua was unrestrained about the impact that his discovery of a television series had upon him: "*In the last two years I found The West Wing [Harms & Graves, 1999–2006], in January 2006, and it's changed my life ... and it's changed the way I think. It's changed the way I talk*" (Joshua, 8, ¶142-144). When he reflected upon the type of films that had influenced his general attitudes or beliefs, Joshua immediately thought of the characters in that television series who had been positive role models for him:

The characters, they face these incredible, they meet these incredible challenges, these huge challenges bigger than I've faced in my life and I say, 'If they can do that and cope'. And even through whether there is humiliation, or defeat in certain circumstances, which would harm normal people, they have. They move on, and can continue to do amazing things, and so I can say to myself 'I can do this'. And it helps because what they do is on such a great scale, and such higher stakes, and it usually has such impact on other people's lives. And it is kind of a bit of a moral compass, something like I can say, 'Ok this is how they did this and I can do this too. If they did it, if they were able to achieve it, why can't I?' (Joshua, 8, ¶45)

Describing the movie *The Producers* (Glazier & Brooks, 1968) as his "*favourite film*" Joshua considered the movie's protagonist "*Leo Bloom*" to be his "*favourite character*" (Joshua, 8, ¶48).

He is an accountant, he has a horrible life and he says, 'Screw this I'm not going to worry about this anymore. I'm gunna do what I want to do ... the CPA [Certified Public Accountant] is a bastard' and moves on and become a producer ... I think that's great. Yeah I think that is a great example. (Joshua, 8, ¶48-49)

Not only had James' admiration for particular filmmakers influenced his interest in film, it had also been a source of inspiration for a direction in life:

Just getting this cinema-going experience throughout my childhood to my, maybe late teen years, are really those formative years for me, because, yeah I just learned so much about the backgrounds of these different filmmakers that I've admired all my, throughout all these years and I just like, it just inspired me to just be part of that history; I wanted to become part of their legacy as well, I hope to achieve the same level as them some time in the future ... Yeah, just like pretty much formed my lifelong dream. (James 1, ¶24)

In the focus group when Ben described the particular films that had been inspirational to him, he referred to them as the "80s teen films that put me in a nostalgic mood for some reason" (Ben, 10, ¶23). Luke's response challenged this notion: "Often times films give you this false nostalgia; because I wasn't even alive in the '80s, but I watch Ferris Bueller and I'm like, I miss being in the '80s" (Luke, 10, ¶26). Luke was referring to the movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (Chinich & Hughes, 1986), and in response Ben explained how this genre of teen film evoked particular feelings for him:

I think it's, with those films, it's the themes in the films about, especially that, that it's set in high school and things like that which means you feel nostalgic for that kind of freedom and optimism. I guess because all the characters are pretty optimistic about post high school life, and not really inhibited by the things that I am now, and that's how I felt in high school, pretty free. So that's where I get my inspiration. (Ben, 10, ¶27)

Both drama and documentary films had provided a source of inspiration for Ben. His decision to study music had been influenced by seeing the documentary film *Dig* (Timoner & Timoner, 2004). The film compared the development of two bands, *The Dandy Warhols* and *The Brian Jonestown Massacre*, "over about seven years, and their rise and fall, and it was pretty gritty and didn't really glamorise it too much" (Ben, 10, ¶126).

And the fact that they were kind of amateur at the same time, and how they conducted themselves kind of inspired me to do more with myself, because it made it seem so easy and accessible. So I drew a lot of inspiration from that. (Ben, 10, ¶126)

Ben added that the film “*kind of broke down a lot of myths and things like that*” (Ben, 10, ¶127). He had felt freed up by this, and it had provided him with information that he would not normally have been privy to “*unless you were part of that scene*” (Ben, 10, ¶128).

The role of film in mediating social and cultural change was raised by some participants. Sarah recalled the “*feminist films*” (Sarah, 1, ¶49) that she had seen in the 1980s and early 1990s that she considered significant in not only shaping her personally and politically, but also the shaping of a social and cultural movement.

I remember the film Thelma and Louise [Polk & Scott, 1991]. I remember standing up almost and cheering at that because it was, I think for me, it was one of the two or three films at the time that repositioned women as real actors of their lives. When one of them shot the tyres of the man, and stood up to that level of abuse, it was ‘Hoorah Hoorah’, significant personal transformation. And it really did impact on me in taking control of my life, and seeing you could reframe it. (Sarah, 1, ¶49)

And there was another film when these vigilantes, there was a group of women vigilantes, it was a Dutch film I think. And there had never been any films where women had been protagonists. And I was mixing with a group of lesbian women at the time and it was kind of like, they were the films, you know. They really moved us on just in terms of the joys of being able to have some defense, and some alternative role models for women. And they were sustaining in that feminist argument, even though the books were important, and lifestyle choices and networking, but films said it so powerfully. You know, in an hour and a half you saw Thelma and Louise, two women transformed from dependent women into their own agents who chose a destiny that was so dangerous, that you celebrated a new, a new image, and I took that on, big time. Because that was in the eighties I think. And that Dutch film about vigilantes, that was really good. I think she shoots an attacker or something, and I think it was the first time I’d seen a woman defend and use aggression in ways to protect themselves and it was, it was, ‘Yes we don’t have to be passive here’. And then there are a lot of other films too that have come out about redefining women’s roles. But those were pivotal films at the time. (Sarah, 1, ¶50)

There was general agreement among the participants in the focus group that films had influenced their attitudes and contributed to a change of beliefs in several issues:

Whenever like we’d learn about the Vietnam War in high school, we often learnt about how, how horrible an experience it was for the Vietnamese because of like, it was. But

then you see Apocalypse Now [Coppola & Coppola, 1979] and you also realise like, these men and boys that are thrown into this war and they have these psychologically, like absolutely destructive experiences. (Luke, 10, ¶171)

Films also served to contribute to participants' understanding of the complexity of these issues. Ben thought the movie *Platoon* (Kopelson & Stone, 1986) communicated a similar message to *Apocalypse Now* [Coppola & Coppola, 1979], "but even better because Oliver Stone the director was actually in Vietnam" (Ben, 10, ¶172):

You can still be opposed to like war, but then you feel for the soldiers that have to fight it and really don't have any choice. And so it kind of changes your, you see the whole problem situation, from a much wider perspective, rather than just seeing everyone who participates in it as some kind of evil person, you kind of like see that it's very complex, there's a lot of factors involved. (Ben, 10, ¶192)

Luke spoke about a film that had challenged his views on an issue that was currently creating news headlines:

Yeah, I think Little Children (Berger & Field, 2006) made me sort of question the whole idea of like identifying previous sex offenders in a community. One of the characters is a, was a convicted paedophile and then he enters this community and everyone is told about it and everyone just harasses him and everything and, at the same time it's not, it doesn't say, you know, this guy's all right, because this guy does have, you know, a psychosexual disorder. But he also has a horrible experience in this town and ends up like, he was already emotionally and psychologically damaged and then he ends up castrating himself which was quite horrific. That made me think twice about the whole idea of, of like putting someone out there when they've just returned from jail or whatever, and telling everyone in the community. (Luke, 10, ¶223)

Although films could motivate Alex to change her behaviour and provide goals for her to emulate, a film's narrative could also provide an example of "what you don't want to happen to you" (Alex, 10, ¶16).

While the above extracts reflect how films have served to broaden and challenge their perspectives, Gwyneth also saw films as validating qualities she already had:

Films give me things sometimes because they're already there. There's a little seed in there already. So the film will then reinforce that and add fuel to that or, add water to the seed and grow. Yeah, but whether they directly influence me to change is something that I'm not sure about. I don't think I'm that easily led. I think it would take more than just a film to do that. The film might be part of a whole process of

things. Film seems to work more as a reinforcement or something. Yeah, rather than the initiator of something, it might be a closure of something, or it might be a further example of something. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶53)

The need for new stories

While for most of the participants films remained a fundamental experience in their lives, two of the participants had now either just entered or were going through a stage where their relationship with film was changing. Sarah was feeling disillusioned about recently released films having the capacity to offer an alternative reality:

I think they say there are only five stories or something, or seven stories or whatever. Well we need an eighth. There are so many different ways you can tell the same story and we are limited by only our imagination. And at the moment if we are going to use film as I like to do it and sort of take it into a new discourse of a future, I haven't come across anything that has given me an enthusiasm for a new landscape or a new vision (Sarah, 1, ¶85).

Occasionally Sarah experienced exceptions, such as *The Family Stone* (London & Bezucha, 2005) which she described as “*a beautiful film about dealing with the death of a mother and how the children responded to it. A very powerful film*” (Sarah, 1, ¶77). Later in her narrative Sarah described what had been so evocative for her: “*It was a lovely script to identify with ... so it has given me some ideas if you have the chance to define your own death*”. (Sarah, 1, ¶90)

Joshua's priorities were beginning to change as he was taking on more responsibilities in a political group he had joined. When describing the disparate roles he held on various committees, Joshua described each as “*an escape from the other*” and that he could “*be a different person in each of them*” (Joshua, 8, ¶134). He explained, “*I've got everything I can out of The West Wing [Harms & Graves, 1999–2006]. And now I really need to find something else really, and I think I have, it's a little different*” (Joshua, 8, ¶152). He was thinking of nominating for a position on another committee. Nonetheless he would “*just have to keep watching films*” (Joshua, 8, ¶153).

Conclusion

When Lewis Carroll's Alice stepped through the drawing-room mirror she discovered a fantasy world filled with a vast array of unusual characters and strange adventures that confronted her view of reality. The use of the looking-glass analogy

at the head of this chapter to introduce the viewers' experience of film therefore seemed most appropriate. It described an entry point to a realm of creative metaphoric imagination and additionally suggested a reflective medium in which images of different realities could be viewed and entered, and different identities tried on for size.

This chapter has sought to present the narrative themes of the eight film-viewer participants from both the focus group and the individual viewers' perspectives. I have played more of a role in drawing out the themes than I did in Chapter 4. The themes show how the participants' engagement with films suggested both conscious and unconscious processes, the direct and indirect influence of film, and their literal and symbolic use of this medium. These examples reveal a dynamic relationship between life and film, and the many ways this was expressed in each participant's evolving narrative of self. Certainly film seemed to expand their sense of self, offering resources for helping them deal with life's challenges and different ways of looking at events.

In the next chapter I present the narrative themes of the eight practitioners.

Chapter 6

CINEMATHERAPY IN PRACTICE

The practitioners' narratives

This is what films are like: they attract that sort of projection and involvement and offer a safe place to experience such stuff. As C. G. Jung said, "The cinema, like the detective story, enables us to experience without danger to ourselves all the excitements, passions and fantasies which have to be repressed in a humanistic age".

(Hauke, 2009, p. 52)

Introduction

This chapter presents the narratives of the eight participants, four females and four males who used films in various ways in their clinical work as counselling and psychotherapy practitioners. As previously noted two of the practitioners were located in Australia, two in Hong Kong, one in Denmark, and four in the United States. The interviews in Australia were held face-to-face, and all the overseas interviews were conducted via Skype phone, with one participant electing to submit written responses to the interview guide prior to our phone discussion.

As the opening question for each interview was, "Can you tell me how you use films in your work with clients", most of the participants commenced with a contextualised description of the practical aspects of how they used films with their clients, and in some cases with teaching counselling students. Although what followed was not straightforward, or in any sense linear, the participants generally moved on to discuss their theoretical orientation, how they arrived at the decision to use films in therapy, and why they were interested in this method. This interest related, to a greater or lesser degree, to their previous personal or professional influences.

The various themes that emerged from the practitioners' narratives fell within two broad storylines of practice and theory, although themes inevitably overlapped and distinctions were often blurred. I have nevertheless grouped these into two sections titled Practice narratives and Theory narratives.

Practice narratives

The practitioners used film in a variety of ways with different clients. In Virginia's opening remarks she explained, *"I use movies where I feel the client has an interest in media and where some particular issue may leap out from a film that may be relevant to them"* (Virginia, 3, ¶1). Whenever clients asked to use films in therapy she usually told them, *"Yes I can but it may not be the only way we work"* (Virginia, 3, ¶9), and made it clear to them that she considered the use of film *"as an adjunct to therapy"* (Virginia, 3, ¶9).

As Virginia described her method of using films, I mentioned the term "prescribing the film" to which she responded, *"Prescribing a film. That's an interesting one"* (Virginia, 3, ¶12). She then suggested two approaches she used, *"One is I guess literally prescribing it saying, 'Here this movie I think would be of interest to you or may be valuable to talk about, and I'd like you to watch this' "* (Virginia, 3, ¶13). Her other method was: *"[T]o actually bring something in; either a segment of a movie or part of a TV program and actually play it with the client there"* (Virginia, 3, ¶14). As she conveyed her story, Virginia realised that she also employed a third approach:

Actually it's an inverse, or a different way, where I actually ask the client to prescribe it for themselves, and I'll say something like, if they enjoy movies and they enjoy media I might say, 'Well tell me the sort of media that you enjoy and give me an example of the sort of film that has had some meaning for you'. (Virginia, 3, ¶15).

If the client mentioned a film that Virginia had not seen, she said, *"Quite frankly I go away and I borrow it and I watch it"* (Virginia, 3, ¶15): *"So the prescription can actually come the other way, getting the client to prescribe to me"* (Virginia, 3, ¶16).

Birgit had developed the approaches she used into a model she called *"Cinema Alchemy"* (Birgit, 4, ¶16), in which there were three categories: *"The evocative way, the prescriptive way and the cathartic way"* (Birgit, 4, ¶12). Working with a broad client population of individuals, couples, groups and workshops, Birgit drew from her three approaches:

The evocative way, where people come into my sessions and they bring up a movie experience like they would bring a dream, and I work with them as I would work with a dream, which is the psychodynamic approach. In psychoanalysis they say that dreams

are our windows to the soul. (Birgit, 4, ¶17)

When Birgit used her “prescriptive way” (Birgit, 4, ¶18) she would suggest a particular film that she considered applicable to the client’s issues:

I might prescribe a movie in a certain situation, like for example, somebody struggles with addiction and is in denial, I might prescribe a movie like 28 Days [Topping & Thomas, 2000] ... Different movies help them break through their denial of the alcoholic or drug addiction. (Birgit, 4, ¶18)

To assist a client to release emotions, Birgit used the “cathartic way” (Birgit, 4, ¶18):

The third way is the cathartic way, where especially with, like depression or grief, it can be helpful to actually watch a movie that brings out tears, and that people have a catharsis that they wouldn’t have otherwise ... or laughter can also be cathartic. (Birgit, 4, ¶18)

Although Donna used films in her therapy practice with a diverse client population and in various settings, she preferred to employ this method in the groups she ran:

I work with clients by asking them to first of all provide a film clip that they relate to, something that they’re working on, that they can relate to within a film, and I create a group process with that. (Donna, 6, ¶8)

Charles, as a university professor, had been using films for about 20 years, commencing with his relationship and family therapy lectures. Initially he did not know that this approach was being utilised by other therapists:

Well I wasn’t aware of anyone, in fact, that seems to be a much more recent phenomenon, I’d say maybe the last ten, maybe fifteen years. But there were isolated people, I’ve since found out, that were doing this, and then a couple of presentations at professional conferences. But at the time I began doing this I wasn’t aware of anyone. It just seemed like it was a good way to bring out what I was teaching. And then it was an actual step from there to take it into the therapy sessions as well. (Charles, 15, ¶13)

In Charles’ clinical work it was a practice that had gradually evolved:

I didn’t go into a particular session thinking, ‘Okay now I’m going to introduce them to this film and ask them to watch it’. It’s something you know, that happened within the session. It would come up and I would say, ‘You know what, there’s a film I think I would like for you to watch, and then, when you have a chance over the course of the

week, watch it and bring back what you experience next week, and we'll discuss it. Or if you see something that really disturbs you, give me a call'. (Charles, 15, ¶14)

Charles' experience was reflected in Birgit's story of teaching her model of cinematherapy to therapists:

When I teach cinematherapy to therapists they come up to me and say, 'Well I've done this kind of work for twenty years and never called it cinematherapy, never formalised it' ... and so people like me are just putting it into a formal context. (Birgit, 4, ¶48)

Lars also provided written answers for my study, in which he detailed the sequence of steps he took when working with films with his clients. One step was to provide the client with a printed list of questions related to the film he recommended:

"Sometimes I tell them to look at the questions before the movie; sometimes after the movie" (Lars, email, 2008). These instructions depended on the severity of the client's psychological symptoms, which informed not only Lars' choice of therapeutic approach, but also his method of using films:

For instance if I will have the client to be aware of his body sensations during certain scenes I will then ask him to see my paper first in order to notice at what time he (especially/at least) should focus on these sensations. It is very difficult for most of my clients to remember body sensations an hour or two after the event. (Lars, email, 2008)

Emily described how she would utilise a film in family therapy:

Like say in the situation that the family, one of the family members is experiencing some issue that is similar to what a movie will tell, I will just suggest them to go look at the movie and then we can come back and talk about it and see what kind of struggle and challenging thing that is in common. (Emily, 9, ¶9)

Central to Patrick's story was the experience of exploring a specific film with a particular client. About six years ago the client had mentioned in therapy that he had recently seen the movie *Billy Elliott* (Brennan & Daldry, 2000) and that *"it had an enormous impact on him"* (Patrick, 2, ¶4). Discussion of that film still evoked strong emotions for the client, and Patrick described the most recent occurrence was when he gave Patrick permission to discuss his experience for this study:

He actually started crying again and almost every time he thinks about it he cries. And it's specifically, it's about that Billy had this passion which he'd found, this talent and passion, and that there was ... very little support, especially from his father. (Patrick, 2,

¶4)

Patrick recalled that the father character in the movie was “*pretty negative*” (Patrick, 2, ¶4) and that an important theme for his client was “*that Billy had to hold onto something and had to fight for the right to be able to express this passion in dance*” (Patrick, 2, ¶4). However it was the pivotal moment in the film when the father finally recognised his son Billy’s talent and passion that was particularly significant for Patrick’s client:

When his father turns and sees this is something that, you know, is very very deep inside his son and something that, he actually needs to get behind him and does, so that the fighting can stop and ... he can actually start to go forward ... and that is just something that is very profoundly central to my patient’s life. (Patrick, 2, ¶4)

His client would introduce discussion of the film “*probably every few months I would think, he would just refer to it and we would know what it meant*” (Patrick, 2, ¶ 4). By comparison with the other practitioners Patrick was the exception in that he did not introduce discussion of film with clients. When the other practitioners did introduce the use of film with their clients, there were various reasons to do so, one of which was in response to what they perceived as the client’s need for emotional distance from their problems.

A safe emotional distance

The notion of film providing a safe emotional distance for clients to work with their issues was a theme that emerged in several practitioners’ narratives.

[T]hat’s one of the benefits of film ... if you are talking about a very sensitive area or something that evokes a lot of emotion, people can find that quite difficult. So if it is one step removed, then that’s easier for them; and certainly film, drawings, art, anything, music, is one step removed. (Virginia, 4, ¶64)

Donna had become interested to use films in her work after noticing how some clients seemed to find it easier to explore their own thoughts and feelings by discussing a film character.

And I thought, ‘Well this is interesting, it’s funny how we can talk about this individual struggling with marital discord or depression or addiction or self-esteem, but we find it difficult to talk about ourselves’. (Donna, 6, ¶29)

To assist communication in the consulting room was another reason Virginia would use film with clients: *“If an issue comes up that’s perhaps is difficult for them to discuss, perhaps a movie might stimulate discussion”* (Virginia, 3, ¶2).

A catalyst for discussion

Several practitioners described how film provided a catalyst for enhanced communication between couples undertaking relationship counselling. Michael thought the use of film with couples was beneficial because it could *“stimulate some discussion”* (Michael, 7, ¶61). Although Virginia did not usually assign a film to couples for relationship counselling, she had recently done so with a couple who were *“just very, very angry”* (Virginia, 3, ¶63). She had suggested that they watch a movie together:

No talking, ‘Just look at the movie’. And then they came in with their thoughts, and they were talking about it later, and it was a way of them learning to communicate again about a common core topic. (Virginia, 3, ¶63)

Birgit described how she would use film with couples as a way to model behavior and attitudinal expression:

I can say, ‘Look at the characters, how they communicate, and how would you do it differently?’ or, ‘How is it being done that is actually helpful for you too?’ So it’s really a wonderful way for couples to ... improve their relationship. (Birgit, 4, ¶18)

Despite the range of approaches and contrasting ways that the practitioners in this study utilised films, several commonalities had emerged between their stories.

Just an intervention

While several practitioners used the term *“cinematherapy”* or *“movie therapy”* to describe the general use of the method, several emphasised that it was *“just an intervention”* (Michael, 7, ¶103); an *“adjunct to the therapeutic process”* (Charles, 15, ¶23); or an *“adjunct to therapy, not a therapy in itself”* (Virginia, 3, ¶9). Birgit stated unequivocally, *“There is no cinematherapy separately from therapy itself, or other therapeutic methods, it’s always adjunct”* (Birgit, 4, ¶41). According to Michael, *“Cinematherapy is just a, the therapy part’s just a catchy name, just a cute name, but it’s really just a tool* (Michael, 7, ¶14).

Most of the practitioners, except Patrick, used films with a diverse client population including individuals, couples, family therapy and groups. For Donna, “*the group process experience*” was “*more effective*” (Donna, 6, ¶9). As with Donna, Michael’s “*favourite*” was to utilise films in “*group therapy*” (Michael, 7, ¶17):

You just get so many different opinions, and people will see a movie and see it so differently. Because everybody has their own lifestyles, their own experiences, their own perceptions and philosophies about life, and just being in a group setting, it’s really nice to kind of capture all of that. (Michael, 7, ¶17)

Although most were publicly known for their clinical application of films, it was not a method that dominated the practitioners’ work. Virginia explained that she did not utilise films with all her clients, “*in fact probably only a smallish proportion, maybe twenty per cent, less than that*” (Virginia, 3, ¶1). In Donna’s private practice working with individual clients, she used films about “*forty per cent of the time*” (Donna, 6, ¶53). For Emily it was with approximately “*twenty to twenty five per cent*” of her case load (Emily, 9, ¶132), and Charles said it was “*probably no more than ten per cent*” (Charles, 15, ¶22):

I use the movies consistently as a teacher. You know, as a college professor teaching a master’s degree programme, every one of my classes would have been introduced with a movie. But with clients, I’m going to guess at around about ten per cent. (Charles, 15, ¶22)

While not quantifying the percentage of clients with whom she used films, Birgit said it depended on certain factors. These included whether it was a short or long term therapy and the theoretical approach from which she was working. Michael also did not quantify the percentage of his practice in which he employed films, but explained when he would not use the approach:

You have to consider their cognitive level, their ability. If they’re not going to be able to understand the metaphor in the movie and they won’t be able to make that connection between the fantasy and the reality ... you wouldn’t use it. (Michael, 7, ¶44)

Despite those concerns, Michael had accepted cinematherapy’s potential:

All the disorders that you would read in the DSM [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual] or the ICD [International Classification of Diseases], so many of them share the same symptoms anyway, and so every client that comes into your office more likely will have certain symptoms that you could find a use for cinematherapy if you

wanted to use it. (Michael, 7, ¶45)

Michael's reference to the "connection between fantasy and the reality" (Michael, 7, ¶44) related to possible contraindications for the clinical use of film, a theme which had emerged in other narratives.

Contraindications and cautionary tales

At first Birgit had seemed unequivocal in her opinion of possible exclusion criteria:

I don't believe that there is a limit to it. I think almost every issue can be worked with, depression, anxiety, couples work, almost any issue can be worked with. Movies fit into almost everything, I don't think anything can be excluded in that regard. (Birgit, 4, ¶25)

Although Birgit qualified those statements by adding "especially with the evocative way" (Birgit, 4, ¶25), she seemed to have a firm stance on when she would not "assign a movie" (Birgit, 4, ¶27):

I would never work with a schizophrenic person and assign a movie for them to watch at home because you don't have control how they go into a fantasy world ... or I wouldn't assign movies to small children because they forget about the movie when they come back into the session. (Birgit, 4, ¶27)

Birgit did not watch films with her clients in session, and she was concerned that if a client with a serious mental illness viewed a film at home she would "not be there to monitor what their reactions are to an intense movie, or I wouldn't want them to be retraumatized" (Birgit, 4, ¶27).

Charles said that he had to be "very selective" (Charles, 15, ¶14) when he chose movies for clients:

[B]ecause many of the clients, you know, a term that's no longer popular, but still as far as I'm concerned very accurate, a lot of the clients I dealt with were neurotic. Yeah, using the old meaning of the term; so I had to be very careful in what I selected for them to watch, but generally it came out of whatever we were dealing with in the therapy session. (Charles, 15, ¶14)

Charles based his decision to use films with clients on two factors:

Both the level of the mental illness ... its severity, but also on the degree of insight they had at that point in time. If they have good insight, then I think you're in a better

position to have them benefit from it, but if they don't have insight into their own dynamics, then I'm not sure they're going to get that much out of it. (Charles, 15, ¶16)

For Lars another element in deciding his approach was his assessment of the client's psychological state, and he explained his reasons for using films that contained "metaphorical" or "indirect" themes, as opposed to films that had content that was directly related to the client's issues (Lars, 11, ¶70):

I can be at least a little more sure that I won't go too far ahead to provoke the traumatic, especially when the client is alone at home and I'm not there. So there are, I can benefit a lot of use in the more indirectly metaphorical movies, unless I am very sure, I think I wrote about it, that the client can integrate, or sort of be in the more direct form. (Lars, 11, ¶70)

There were times, however, when the intervention was not successful, and Birgit admitted that recommending films to clients did not always work:

It's usually not harmful, but it's also not helpful. That's why the prescriptive way is a bit more tricky. I sometimes I cannot see all the aspects of the human psyche that the client brings in there, and I may overlook something. I may misjudge the situation. So then it is one intervention that didn't work, like many other interventions sometimes don't work. We have the trial and error process. With the evocative way it is never a problem because they bring into the session what they are responding to, and you work with that. That's much easier. (Birgit, 4, ¶32)

For Charles there were times that his film recommendations to clients had not worked either:

Oh yes, oh absolutely, and you have to be ready to pick up the pieces, which means that if they're watching the film at 8 o'clock and they ... become very disturbed over seeing this film ... I give them permission to call me. So you have to be willing to take that phone call. (Charles, 15, ¶18)

It seemed that a considered approach was needed for the clinical application of film, and it raises the question of how the use of film could impact on the therapeutic relationship.

Therapeutic relationship

Patrick was concerned about the incongruity that could develop in the therapeutic relationship if the therapist did not like a film that a client had experienced as

powerful. Although he had not experienced the film *Billy Elliott* (Brennan & Daldry, 2000) at the same level of intensity that his client had “*there was enough I think in it for me to actually feel congruent talking about it with him*” (Patrick, 2, ¶24). This was in contrast however, to when that same client had been emotionally affected by the film *As It is in Heaven* (Birkeland & Pollak, 2004):

What I knew was we had a different reaction to it, but that I needed to stay with him in terms of what his experience was ... I did feel a bit uncomfortable about the fact that I wasn't so keen on it. (Patrick, 2, ¶19)

When his client had asked him if he had seen the film and what he thought of it, Patrick had felt ambivalent about offering his opinion, because it “*wasn't an easy line to tread; to explore what it was that had impacted on him so powerfully, but not, you know, we were not critiquing the film*” (Patrick, 2, ¶19).

Occasionally clients suggested their favourite movie for Virginia to view, and she had not enjoyed the film:

He was young man in his twenties and he has Asperger's [Syndrome], which is a high functioning autism disorder and he wanted me to watch a movie that I would never have picked for myself, and it was a movie about a prize fighter, an old movie. And his reasons for that were quite different to what I then saw in the movie that I thought could be of value to him ... He came back with an agenda of talking about this man on one level which I thought was quite superficial. And in fact the movie, I then used that over a number of weeks, the one movie with him, to pick out scenes, to talk about it in far more depth, and to take different levels of awareness through to him, through the character, the protagonist in that movie. (Virginia, 3, ¶22)

What seemed at first to be a mismatch, had resulted in an efficient means of working with a client who may have been difficult to engage emotionally using other methods.

While there were other examples from the practitioners' narratives regarding the impact of film on the therapeutic relationship, these surfaced while they were discussing their theoretical perspectives, and they will be presented later in the chapter. In the next section I present examples of other practice related factors taken into consideration by the practitioners when using this intervention.

Processing the film experience

As all the practitioners referred to, or gave examples of, clients coming back after completing a film homework assignment in order to process the experience, it was implied that this was an integral part of cinematherapy. Charles, however, emphasised the importance of this stage:

[E]very adjunct that you use, obviously you want them bringing their experience back into the session. I will never send someone out to do something, whether it's watch a movie ... or read a book, that I don't have them come back in and talk to me about their experience. Because you really don't know ... how they are processing or what they are going through in the processing if you just send them out ... and leave them. (Charles, 15, ¶27)

Assessment criteria

For Emily, a restriction to using films in her practice was the “*language barrier*” (Emily, 9, ¶5), and she felt limited by the choice of films:

In Hong Kong or in Chinese culture, we are not able to find a lot of movies that could, you know, could be used in therapy, because most of the time we'd be using the Western, the U.S. movie (Emily, 9, ¶5).

Emily could offer the use of film to just a few of her Chinese clients, and these would of necessity be “*middle class, unless I could find a movie that is local made and is good for those who have lower level of education like you know, the blue collar*” (Emily, 9, ¶8).

For Michael there were also “*socio-economic*” (Michael, 7, ¶73) considerations. He needed to consider his clients' ability to afford the rental of a film:

Especially with the way the economy is here in America right now and gas prices, and a lot of the families that I deal with, you know that's just one more expense I don't want for them to have, so that would be one reason (Michael, 7, ¶73).

He would therefore “*more than likely*” (Michael, 7, ¶73) ask the client to stay in the group therapy where he supplied the film, rather than move into individual therapy where the client usually accessed the film.

Although the clinical application of film had certain limitations, beyond the confines of the consulting room further possibilities emerged.

A pedagogical tool

Several of the practitioners had presented at conferences or seminars on the use of films as a creative adjunct to therapy, or lectured in counselling or psychotherapy programs and used films as an educational resource. When Charles taught the “Introduction to marital and family therapy” (Charles, 15, ¶11), he showed a movie called *The Lion in Winter* (Poll & Harvey, 1968): “It was about the relationship between Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and it was a brutal relationship ... almost every family dynamic that I wanted to cover, was being brought out in that film” (Charles, 15, ¶11). Charles explained that the use of film in his classes provided him with “a very good anchor point. I can refer back to, ‘Well do you remember when we saw’ and, ‘This is the kind of thing that I’m talking about here’” (Charles, 15, ¶12).

When Donna presented her approach of using film to counsellors and psychotherapists, she usually commenced with screening the opening scene of *The Player* (Brown & Altman, 1992), which portrayed a “film development executive receiving ideas from writers” (Donna, 6, ¶103). She would subsequently use an example of the film character’s development process as a metaphor to illustrate her approach:

The client is the writer of the film, the star of the film. We serve as perhaps editors, you know, maybe we can kind of walk along with them and go, ‘Tell me more about this character. How does this character work in supporting your goal of wanting to be free from depression? Well they don’t help very much? Okay, well how is it they have earned this role in your life, of more of a star player versus a bit part?’ You know, these kinds of questions. (Donna, 6, ¶104)

Film as a source of metaphor

Several practitioners considered film to be a source of metaphor. Michael had utilised the symbol of the ring from the film *Lord of the Rings* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) as a metaphor for addiction with a client who was drug addicted. He had also conducted research using the film with a client with a major depressive disorder, and the intervention had been successful on both occasions:

They just got it, it just made sense to them and they felt Frodo’s experience when he’s on that journey, you know he’s on that journey to destroy that ring, to overcome that ring, and he never does, he never overcomes it. Even though he’s able to get away from it, it still tempts him, it’s still there. It’s like a ghost in the room, it’s still there; and they just ... they just relate to that. (Michael, 7, ¶70)

In her work with child clients of “primary age” (Virginia, 3, ¶79), Virginia sometimes suggested they bring into therapy any video games or cartoons that portrayed figures “that might mean something to them” (Virginia, 3, ¶81):

Often the image of a hero is an important one for kids who perhaps need to have an external driving force or identification figure, and talking about whether they be Superman or any one of the hero type figures can be a good way to use that with children too. (Virginia, 3, ¶79)

Emily described the issues of her adult clients which might be addressed by the clinical application of films: “I would say like relationship anger, anger management, relationship issues and also for some aspirational personal change and, you know, looking for meaning” (Emily, 9, ¶42). Although she also used some Cantonese films, Emily gave examples of several “American” films (Emily, 9, ¶42) she had suggested recently. To assist clients with their “aspirational” issues (Emily, 9, ¶42) she had recommended *Cast Away* (Hanks & Zemeckis, 2000), *Girl Interrupted* (Konrad & Mangold, 1999) and *Chocolat* (Brown & Hallström, 2000). She had suggested *Edward Scissorhands* (Burton & Burton, 1990) to clients who were dealing with issues of “identity, for the client to see who they are, you know, what they can do, that kind of thing” (Emily, 9, ¶54).

While the examples provided in the above extracts related to the use of particular symbols in film, or strongly symbolic films that provided metaphors to influence a client, several of the practitioners were more literal in their selection of films. Birgit, as has already been noted, prescribed the film *28 Days* [Topping & Thomas, 2000] to a client who was addicted to alcohol:

[F]ollowing that character in that movie helped her in an immense way to first of all break through the denial and then also helped her to let go of her fear of joining a group, a 12-step recovery group. She was completely fearful and concerned that it wasn't the right thing; she wouldn't get anything out of it. And in the movie, even though its very simplified in the movie, it's not the best movie in terms of how movies go, but that movie really helped her to see what things might happen in a recovery group ... how people respond to each other ... then it wasn't so scary to join there and to get support ... Without that support the therapy alone wouldn't have helped her. And she really cut down on the alcohol and, eventually let go of her addiction. It was a very profound transformation that she went through. (Birgit, 4, ¶46)

Charles had experienced favourable outcomes with clients who were diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder, with the use of the film *As Good As it Gets* (Brooks & Brooks, 1997):

[It was a film] with Jack Nicholson in it. And he's an obsessive-compulsive individual. He kind of settled into a life that was comfortable for him, until he met someone and then that ceased to be true. So that, the film goes all the way, to his basically somewhat of a cure, so you know you could set your client up by thinking that, 'Okay, I may be able to overcome all of this'. And this particular client might not be able to. So they're going to have to learn to live with their condition and function around it, like he did in the early part of the movie. But movies tend to have these happy endings if you're not careful, not all clients do. (Charles, 15, ¶19)

Charles' caution about "happy endings" (Charles, 15, ¶19) resonated with concerns that Virginia had expressed about the need for careful selection of movies. A percentage of her clientele were individuals "with Autism spectrum problems" (Virginia, 3, ¶3), and she had noticed that some of the recommended lists of films for use in therapy included the film *Rain Man* (Johnson & Levinson, 1988) in the category for autism disorders. One of the lead actors in that film played the role of a "savant" (Virginia, 3, ¶52), which Virginia explained, "[I]s actually a person with autism that has a very specialised skill. And he's got this ability to calculate and to use numbers and so forth, and that's actually quite rare" (Virginia, 3, ¶52).

While the use of that film could be "a springboard to talking about 'How are you different? How do you experience life differently?' It also can be I guess, a message to people saying 'This is how you should be' (Virginia, 3, ¶52). Virginia had experienced clients being "quite upset about the fact that they haven't got that sort of skill" (Virginia, 3, ¶53). She was therefore mindful in her instructions when she recommended it, and other films:

I don't do it in a way that says, 'This is you, therefore you should watch it'. I do it in a way of saying, 'Have a look at this and see what things might be like your life, or might be like your experience, or might be different'. And then those likes and differences are talked about, rather than saying, 'This is you. This is just you. You must go and see it, as it is just your life'. (Virginia, 3, ¶59)

Donna was often "surprised" (Donna, 6, ¶13) at some of the films her clients chose: "It might not be something that I would choose, and that's pretty significant information because I would ... come up with some assumptions and interpretation" (Donna, 6, ¶13). She gave

the example of clients choosing films as part of their “homework” (Donna, 6, ¶41) in dealing with loss and grief: “I couldn’t believe somebody was equating something about grief and loss about their dog, to a film clip about Juno” [Halfon & Reitman, 2007]. (Donna, 6, ¶41)

For Lars, just as his method of using films had evolved, so had his choice of films. He had given considerable thought to this issue in his work with clients with cancer:

I think I’m developing that more now than earlier, finding movies [that are] just not only metaphor, but movies made directly or indirectly comes around a theme. For instance I mentioned that I used very often the movies Alive [Kennedy & Marshall, 1993] or Chocolat [Brown & Hallström, 2000] and these movies are perhaps not that obvious to use; but for instance Alive ... the sports team from Uruguay are falling down in the mountains, Andes mountain in South America, and they’re fighting for surviving and the problems afterwards ... I have a great success using that with clients with cancer, which survive their cancer. (Lars, 11, ¶88-89)

While there were numerous examples in the practitioners’ narratives of successful client outcomes from using film as an intervention, several practitioners’ expressed concern about the method being considered entertainment.

Entertainment or therapy?

Virginia was reluctant to be known as a therapist who used films in case “people saw film as entertainment, that they’d think that therapy would be similar” (Virginia, 3, ¶72). Although she did not consider the therapeutic use of film “as entertainment” (Virginia, 3, ¶72), there were times she made an exception: “[P]erhaps for depressed people. I recommend they see some humour just to get a little bit of levity in their life” (Virginia, 3, ¶72).

On the other hand, Michael offered a couple of perspectives:

[T]he movie being very entertaining for the client is not a bad thing because it works in your favour. The only thing you have to be careful of when it is entertaining, you have to keep reminding them that you’re watching it for therapeutic reasons, and sometimes to do that with kids, you have to pause the movie. (Michael, 7, ¶51)

Although Birgit would recommend humorous films to clients “to lift their spirits” (Birgit, 4, ¶30), she held the position that the use of film in therapy needed to be clearly considered as a therapeutic intervention: “I mean you can just let people watch movies, and that’s not therapy” (Birgit, 4, ¶42).

Donna was interested in the client's own story about the experience of film, and worked with that:

I think films can be entertaining and then I would enjoy talking about the client's experience of it being entertaining ... 'Why was it entertaining, how was it entertaining? What pieces were entertaining to you? What did you enjoy about this film? What did you enjoy about the character? Were there times when it wasn't entertaining?' So, I like to remain fluid when it come to movies. (Donna, 6, ¶43-44)

For the practitioner participants there were a variety of factors which influenced how they applied the use of film in their work with clients, not the least their therapeutic modality and theoretical orientation.

Theory narratives

The influence of prior experience

Prior to speaking with the practitioners, I had anticipated there would have been certain influences in their lives that preceded their decision to incorporate the use of films in their work. While most of the participants had a clear awareness of previous influences, for a few this awareness emerged as they told their story. As outlined in the vignettes of the participants in Chapter 4, several of the practitioners described having qualifications and/or a previous career or training in film or communications. Overall, there was a variation in how much significance was given to this by the participants. In Donna's narrative she initially placed little emphasis on her previous experiences, and although this gradually increased as she told her story, the reason became clear when she talked about what had inspired her to use films in her clinical practice:

I was a story editor and was able to, you know, flesh out characters and study people and study behaviours and watch people and, and to be honest with you, at the time I had no clue that I'd be going into the field of psychology. But what I did know was that I was fascinated with people and behaviours and it wasn't until I changed careers, that people started to ask, you know, what is my background, so on and so forth. And reluctantly I did tell them that I worked in cinema and film. And people really hooked into that because everyone loves movies and, you know, I was hoping to kind of ... put that career to rest and it still, it never did go to rest actually. (Donna, 6, ¶28)

As previously mentioned a key influence in Michael's decision to work with films was his "advisor" (Michael, 7, ¶11) at university. Although she was "a really great

advisor for me" (Michael, 7, ¶35), he thought what had "attracted me to it the most was, just my love for the movies to be honest with you" (Michael, 7, ¶35). He acknowledged that his undergraduate degree in Communications and experience working in radio were also factors:

I've always loved mass communication and the media and so when I chose a career in counselling, and I found out from my advisor that people were using movies as a persuasive tool to get people to gain insight into making changes in their lives, it just hooked me and I was, I was sold from the moment I heard about it. (Michael, 7, ¶36)

A personal experience of the power of film had also been significant for Michael:

My favourite movie to show when I go to a conference, or a movie that I use with beginning counsellors is the movie Patch Adams [Farrell & Shadyac, 1998] because it helped, it actually helped me decide to be a counsellor. Just because of the way that he was. He was inspiring and people just loved him and wanted to be with him, and he made a difference in people's lives. (Michael, 7, ¶93)

Not only had this film influenced Michael's career change, it seemed that it had also shaped his theoretical orientation:

He was a medical doctor, but he was doing very creative things, he was very humanistic, he was getting to people on their level, getting them to see that they were wonderful and beautiful people and that even though they had problems, they could still be functional and they could still be important and they could still be happy in their lives ... And I watched this movie and I'm like, 'Oh my gosh, why did I not think about the fact that I should be in the human service field, helping other people'. So that was a very inspiring film for me. (Michael, 7, ¶93)

Virginia had initially recollected while we were talking that it was probably "by chance" (Virginia, 3, ¶67), that she had first used films, "probably something along the line of a client saying, 'Have you seen this movie?' " (Virginia, 3, ¶67):

That actually often occurs, so it may have been something like that. It wasn't a conscious choice. Once I'd used it a few times then it became, it actually is a semiconscious thought sometimes when I'm with people. I'll think, 'Oh, okay this might be one of my tools I can bring out at some point'. So it's perhaps more in my conscious mind now more than when I started, but it's not something I force on people at all. (Virginia, 3, ¶68)

As discussed in Chapter 4, it was after the interview was completed that Virginia

wondered about the influence of the film studies lectures she had attended when she was a psychology tutor more than two decades before. For the other practitioners, there were various influences. Birgit had originally gained the idea of using movies with clients from literature on “*dream work*” (Birgit, 4, ¶68):

Jeremy Taylor wrote a book and he said, ‘Look at the dream and see what guiding message is in that dream for you, that may lead you to some kind of deeper understanding of who you are at this point in your life, what kind of issues you struggle with right now, and helps you understand these issues on a deeper level’. And so you can do the same thing with certain scenes or certain characters you see in a movie and understand more about yourself that way. (Birgit, 4, ¶68)

Emily, like Michael, had been inspired to use films in her clinical practice following her positive experience of films in her psychology training in North America. Despite gaining their qualifications in different parts of the same country, these two participants were both influenced by the film *Patch Adams* (Farrell & Shadyac, 1998). In her undergraduate training Emily attended a class in which the film was screened as part of the discussion on the importance of the doctor patient relationship. A positive outcome of the viewing was that the film provided a catalyst for enhanced communication between her class-mates:

We felt excited about it and laughed way after the movie and it, you know, facilitated a lot of conversation, discussion at the beginning when everyone was so, was quite quiet, not so, not too many participation. And then right after we watched the movie together, then the conversation was getting more in depth and ... everyone was participating and talked more because they could refer to something in the movie and bring it back to the present and relate themselves into what the people in the movie were experiencing and what they had been, also been experiencing as well. (Emily 9, ¶34)

Although several practitioners had been influenced by previous film related experiences, many portrayed an obvious interest in creative approaches.

Creative interventions

Throughout the narratives, practitioners described a range of creative approaches they had utilised in their clinical work. One of the reasons that the clinical application of films appealed to Michael was, “*I would say that another attraction to me is, I really like creative therapies*” (Michael, 7, ¶60):

I like to do a lot of creativity, especially with my kids and my teenagers, and they’re less

resistant and less defensive sometimes because of the creativity. That's why art therapy and play therapy are so important with those ages. (Michael, 7, ¶60)

Although Virginia did not describe her approach as “creative” her viewpoint was not unlike Michael's:

I think any technique or tool that you can use effectively you ought to use. Like with kids I bring games in, toys, you know some therapists would not do that. They'd work in only an oral or verbal way, and yet I find that terribly powerful. I bring drawing materials in and clients, even adults will do drawings with me or for me. And I find that very powerful too. (Virginia, 3, ¶98)

Virginia sometimes suggested to couples or families who were in conflict to bring in “old home videos” (Virginia, 3, ¶117), particularly any that showed them “on holidays together” (Virginia, 3, ¶118). She and the clients would together view the video and discuss their observations of how the clients were depicted interacting during “good times” (Virginia, 3, ¶117).

Virginia had used a range of approaches using visual media several years ago when she worked in a clinical space that “had access to cameras and one way screens” (Virginia, 3, ¶98). Such therapeutic use of visual technology could “open up a lot for the person to see their own family dynamics or their own interpersonal style with a partner on film” (Virginia, 3, ¶99). Virginia described how she had used one approach with young people in groups:

[T]hey write a script, direct a script, film the whole thing ... It could be a fantasy type plot, not necessarily filming what the kids are doing themselves. Then looking at the whole media use and how they work together and how they got this production being done. So that's quite powerful too. (Virginia, 3, ¶100)

Although Lars wrote in his emailed responses that he had previously trained in film studies, we did not explore this further during our subsequent phone interview. It was, however, a different therapeutic intervention that inspired his clinical use of films:

First of all it was some time earlier I used books or articles about cancer, or how to deal with loss and so on, and then I thought, 'Why not use a movie with the topic or theme very similar to the themes with my clients? Why not? Why haven't I thought about that?' And it was when I had some clients with, who had lost, and I thought, 'Yes why not see a movie where a person lost a person?' And then that lead me into that. (Lars,

11, ¶19)

Sometimes Lars used “*music and painting*” (Lars, 11, ¶51) with clients but he seemed reluctant to describe his use of art-related methods as “*art therapy*” (Lars, 11, ¶51): “*I wouldn’t call it that. It’s more spontaneously, or when I sense that this could be a good approach for this specific client*” (Lars, 11, ¶52).

Charles had used a variety of approaches, both in his academic and clinical work: “*I’ve used bibliotherapy ... films, whatever I think might work with a particular client*” (Charles, 15, ¶25). As he recalled his use of those methods, Charles identified the early stages of his interest in using visual media in his therapy practice. He described how he had been working with a “*recovering addict*” and during a discussion on “*family of origin*” (Charles, 15, ¶94) had suggested that the client bring in his family photographs:

[W]e began to analyse those pictures from his early childhood through teenage years and there was generally not a single picture in there of the family, that he was actually part of the family. Every single picture he was over to the side. The rest of the family would be grouped together, and here’s my client always over to the side (Charles, 15, ¶94) ... When he realised what was going on in these pictures he said, ‘Oh my God, no wonder I am so angry, I was never a part of that family’. (Charles, 15, ¶96)

The successful use of that intervention led to Charles suggesting to other clients to photograph “*their world*” (Charles, 15, ¶99):

People taking pictures of other people; people taking pictures of animals because they relate better to animals than they do to other people; people taking pictures of nature, so they started beginning to get in touch with those themes in their life. (Charles, 15, ¶99)

While Emily had been motivated by her psychology training to use films in her work, she also enjoyed the opportunities that films provided for her to interact with friends in her personal life:

If I can get someone who is also interested, maybe we’ll have a discussion about the movie ... let’s say Cast Away [Hanks & Zemeckis, 2000]. We’ll say, ‘Okay, if I’m Tom Hanks, what would I do if I’m in the movie? Would I die or would I survive?’ or you know, ‘Go crazy?’ ... that kind of thing ... And sometimes you get to know the people even better because ... you get them to talk about their feelings and the thinking of something or the solution, how would they solve the problems, like that kind of thing.

(Emily, 9, ¶91-92)

Not only was the practitioners' use of creative interventions related to certain professional and personal influences, it invariably involved their theoretical orientation.

Theoretical perspectives

When Michael first learned about cinematherapy at university in 2001, it was a "directive" approach (Michael, 7, ¶19):

It was a homework assignment ... it was directed, where a therapist says 'Okay you're a client who has a particular problem, and I have a particular movie that portrays this problem, so why don't you watch this movie and look for, you know, certain things, number one, number two, number three and then come back and we'll talk about those three things and how they relate to you'. (Michael, 7, ¶18)

Through his research and clinical experience Michael had since developed a preference to be "nondirective" (Michael, 7, ¶19):

You provide a person with a movie to view, and you can do that as a homework assignment or as in vivo or in the moment, you watch it with them ... it's nondirective in the sense that you don't tell them what meanings to look for. (Michael, 7, ¶19)

Michael also used "movie clips" (Michael, 7, ¶20) with his clients:

It doesn't have to be the whole film, and you let their own personal experience, it's kind of a constructivist approach, a postmodern approach where they tell you what was most meaningful, because it's whatever sparks an interest inside of them. And you allow them to take charge of the therapy ... you only go where they go ... the metaphors in the movie basically lead the therapy. (Michael, 7, ¶20)

Lars described his theoretical approach as, "[A] combination of what I call the Somatic Experiencing ... I use that very much and combine it with some narrative and you could also say some existential approach" (Lars, 11, ¶55). When he first used films in his work Lars was directive in his instructions to the client, but had since been inspired to use the less directive approach suggested in the cinematherapy literature. Rather than selecting particular scenes or characters for the client, the client was encouraged to discover any metaphorical meanings in the film. Lars quickly noticed the difference using this approach:

Very much. You could say it's in the spirit of Somatic Experiencing and by that I mean, when I work through Somatic Experiencing, I use what you could call, what's that called in English? I'll go a little to the traumatic experience and I'll then sense is it okay for the client or is it too much. Then I go back again, I go from and to, from and to. In order to watch it, is it okay for the client? (Lars, 11, ¶70)

Emily used films with her “EAP [Employee Assisted Program] clients”, whom she described as “solution focused” (Emily, 9, ¶18). She said she worked from a “psychodynamics” approach (Emily, 9, ¶24). Birgit selected an approach which was appropriate for the circumstances: “Cognitive therapy is usually short, more short term work, and I can use movies in conjunction with cognitive therapy, as well as the psychodynamic work which is more long term work ... both is possible” (Birgit, 4, ¶35).

Despite her initial reluctance, Donna had developed a way of working with films that incorporated her knowledge of the film industry and her training in Narrative Therapy. She described how depression could be treated by using film from that approach:

‘What does depression mean to you? How is this character demonstrating depression in the way that you can relate to? Has this character ever demonstrated times when they didn't have depression influencing their lives?’ (Donna, 6, ¶74)

Donna had also been influenced by the work of Raymond Moody about near-death experiences (Donna, 6, ¶111). She often used a film clip taken from the movie *American Beauty* (Cohen & Mendes, 1999) in which the protagonist delivered a monologue on how certain experiences during a person's life will be recalled at the end of that person's life. Donna used this scene to illustrate that if a person could take the opportunity to direct or edit how her or his life story would be remembered, it would be possible to create an “alternative story” (Donna, 6, ¶112).

Charles exhibited an appreciation of the role of narrative in counselling and psychotherapy in the lectures he gave to students in the courses that he taught:

One of the things that I like to teach in my classes is an analysis of life via mythology, because I think we're all living our own personal myth if you will; so one of the things that I do is use Star Wars [Kurtz & Lucas, 1977], Lord of the Rings [Jackson & Jackson, 2001] and Indiana Jones [Kazanjan & Spielberg, 1981] as modern day myth. And you can analyse those movies and they truly break down into classic mythology ... with protagonist and the antagonist and the support casts, and the whole

bit. And then I get them to apply that to life. (Charles, 15, ¶61)

Donna particularly liked using a narrative therapy approach when she used films with clients “because of the non-assuming role it holds you accountable to, and the appreciation of language” (Donna, 6, ¶73). She preferred to be nondirective and involve the clients in selection of movie scenes:

They choose the film. I try to take a step back with influencing their ... ideas of what kind of film relates to them. I’m finding it’s much more effective to let them explore the film because I don’t want to come from an assuming place. (Donna, 6, ¶13)

If she did “assign it as homework” (Donna, 6, ¶11), Donna would offer specific guidelines:

The goal is to not have the conscious awareness while you’re watching the movie because that’s not the intention of the movie in my opinion. The goal is for them to surrender to that experience, and should they wish to reflect about it later ... we use that. So I really like to not influence this magical experience of watching film. (Donna, 6, ¶41)

The issue of whether or not to be directive was not a concern conveyed by all the practitioners. In Emily’s description of how she utilised film in her work with clients she said, “Well I use it when I find it’s kind of necessary for them to understand their situation and get them to think, really to think about how that related to their personal issue” (Emily, 9, ¶1).

For Patrick, as a psychoanalytically oriented therapist, being directive or not was not the issue. He was concerned about suggesting a film to a client in the first place. He was not only bothered about how it would affect the therapeutic relationship, but also wondered how it would affect the clients “in terms of how they see the film” (Patrick, 2, ¶38). This was in part due to his not wanting to project his own interest in film on to his client “because I can get quite excited and think this is fantastic ... which is fine with a friend” (Patrick, 2, ¶41).

Lars too was concerned about boundaries, and he described his realisation that care should be exercised when using films in therapy:

It was something that I sometimes felt I’m perhaps stepping a little with a limit or how should I put it in English? I could feel, I could sense that, ‘Oh now it’s my project, it’s not on behalf of the client’. (Lars, 11, ¶74)

With the exception of Lars and Patrick, the issue of extending the therapeutic frame—the accepted framework of a particular therapy—with the use of interventions, was seldom mentioned by the practitioners.

According to Michael the advantage of cinematherapy being considered an intervention, as opposed to a model of therapy, was that it could be used from any theoretical orientation:

And so that's the neat thing about ... cinematherapy being an intervention, is anyone can use it. It doesn't matter what your theory is. Your theory will just decide in what way you will use it. (Michael, 7, ¶30)

Michael went on to say that a “rational emotive behaviour therapist ... might give it a directive approach” (Michael, 7, ¶31) when working with films. He described how a therapist who was a “little bit more humanistic” (Michael, 7, ¶31) would apply the use of film in therapy:

'I want you to watch this movie because it portrays some things that I think you might relate to. When you come back, let's talk about it.' But there's no real directive agenda ... you just wait for the client to tell you what was meaningful and you go with that. (Michael, 7, ¶31)

Describing his therapeutic approach as “brief interpersonal”, Michael added, “[B]rief because kind of where the field is going” (Michael, 7, ¶27). Because he was informed by a “foundational theory” when he used a variety of interventions, he could therefore be considered “technically eclectic”. (Michael, 7, ¶28)

Eclectic-integrative approaches

Throughout most of the years that Charles was in private practice he had used “much more of an eclectic approach. I never found one that I rested comfortably with, that was going to be my answer to therapy”. (Charles, 15, ¶21):

There's a large measure of cognitive behavioural in my approach, there's no doubt about that. But I still have the underpinnings of client-centred therapy, so that's why I typically call myself eclectic. The feelings are very important to me. I just happen to think that there are many different ways of bringing those out. (Charles, 15, ¶69)

When Charles had presented at conferences on using films in therapy “it's been fairly well received. I think probably professionals have more difficulty with my eclecticism than

they do with particular tools that I use" (Charles, 15, ¶32). Later in our discussion he offered this viewpoint:

Several people have done some research and have looked at actual practitioners. And what this research has pointed out, is even though these people claimed a theoretical orientation, like client-centred, cognitive behavioural or psychoanalytic, that in actual practice they were all pretty much eclectic. (Charles, 15, ¶70)

Charles added, "So the only difference between myself and them is I clearly admit I'm eclectic" (Charles, 15, ¶71). Charles was clear about being eclectic, and he had drawn attention to an issue which others, apart from Michael, had only touched on. Michael however, had highlighted certain issues about eclecticism that were topical in his country:

Basically there's two terms, one is called theoretical integration ... and the other one is technical eclecticism, and here in the United States, people do not like to use the word eclectic because it assumes that if you say you're eclectic, then that means you know everything about every theory and everything about every ... technique and philosophy within that theory ... So what they've come up with is technical eclecticism which is, I can pull any technique I want to from any theory, and that's fine because all techniques are just interventions. (Michael, 7, ¶27-28)

Both Birgit's model and Michael's typology seemed related to the question of eclecticism. Michael had categorised four approaches of using film therapeutically that he had identified from his research, and he summarised them as follows:

You can actually be nondirective structured; nondirective unstructured; directive structured and directive unstructured, based on your own personal way of doing therapy, and it can tailor to any orientation. That's the cool thing about it being an intervention as opposed to a therapy. (Michael, 7, ¶23)

While concerns about eclecticism were not named as such by Birgit she emphasised that she always used "the movie watching experience in context with some kind of traditional method" (Birgit, 4, ¶20). She added, "It has to be built into some kind of methodology that already exists, a therapeutic methodology" (Birgit, 4, ¶43). She had designed an online course for therapists in which she described how films could be used within the different theoretical orientations and modalities of counselling and psychotherapy (Birgit, 4, ¶63).

Virginia was a clinical psychologist, trained in the cognitive-behavioural model, and although she used film within a defined theoretical orientation, she found that her approach was not always accepted by her peers. She added that “*a lot of people regard it as pop psychology*” (Virginia, 3, ¶85):

When I've talked about it there's a sense of 'Oh you use film. Well that's a bit weird, a bit way out and a bit non-mainstream'. And so I get that negative response quite a lot. But some people are generally enquiring and when I talk about the way I use it, which is actually not a lot and it's used I think judiciously in situations where I think it will be appropriate, they can actually see it has got some relevance. (Virginia, 3, ¶85)

Virginia would sometimes respond to the detractors by asking them if they used “*writing or literature*” (Virginia, 3, ¶89) with their clients. Often they admitted doing so and “*when they see the parallel they can say, 'Oh well, okay it's got some place in therapy'*” (Virginia, 3, ¶91).

So it's really using what's available, and media is so available. It's part of our life. It's very unusual for people not to have a TV or not to have gone to a film and I think it is something in our culture and our lifestyle that can be accessed. (Virginia, 3, ¶98)

Virginia's comment about the use of cultural resources highlighted other conceptual themes that were emerging in this study.

Play and potential space

Although the practitioners' use of creative techniques with clients, including their use of film, could be described as play-based interventions, with the exceptions of Virginia and Michael, none mentioned the notion of “play”. However, it was implied in some of the stories that the use of film provided a particular type of play or creative space in therapy. Because the Winnicottian concept of “transitional space” was mostly about “creativity and play, about fantasy and reality” (Benjamin, 1988, p. 44), it seemed possible that reference to those theories might emerge in the practitioners' narratives. Although Patrick did not posit them as such, his comments suggested such notions during the account of his exploration of the film *Billy Elliott* (Brennan & Daldry, 2000) with his client:

Even though it's the meaning that he's putting on it, we're kind of both in the same space. Like he says, 'You know where the father' and I say, 'Yes' and he says, 'When this happens' — 'Yes I do'. (Patrick, 2, ¶7)

Patrick had also seen that film when it was released, and was aware of its central narrative. Although he held strong reservations about the idea of prescriptively using a film with a client in therapy, he tentatively described how he would enter the imaginal space of film with his client:

It's sort of like ... perhaps that ... there's kind of a third thing ... maybe that ... holds a very deep intrinsic meaning for his life which I'm ... like I've said to him ... I can enter into that with him so that we've got kind of like a story and an image and a whole thing that just, is there. (Patrick, 2, ¶7)

Later in the discussion Patrick elaborated on the idea of entering a client's symbolic world by referring to a concept from his therapeutic approach:

What you are actually trying to do is to kind of, to foster in the room, is the experience that yourself and the patient are looking at the screen. (Patrick, 2, ¶80)

In my eagerness to clarify whether Patrick's comment about the "screen" was linked to his previous reference to the "third thing" (Patrick, 2, ¶7), I interrupted him and asked, "The third space?":

The third space yes ... so you are both looking at their developing self. So you can go, 'Gee that's interesting look at that'. So there is that reflective space and you know I guess, even just the use of the word the 'screen'. So there is something that is being projected out there. (Patrick, 2, ¶81)

And one could add, something being reflected.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the flexibility of film in providing a creative intervention within a range of theoretical perspectives. One of its key advantages was that film, like other projective techniques, allowed some safe emotional distance in dealing with challenging issues. The practitioners also raised some interesting questions around how directive the therapist should be and who should choose the film.

As with the viewers' narratives it was interesting to reflect on the practitioners' narratives in terms of how and why film should be used. Broadly speaking, the practice narratives correspond to the how, and the theory narratives to the why.

In terms of the how, several practitioners described film being used as a source of metaphor, and some acknowledged film's potential as a pedagogical tool. In addition

film can provide a third space within the counselling relationship where counsellor and client can meet on a creative and playful level. On the other hand, several practitioners expressed ethical considerations, for example the potentially untherapeutic impact the film might have on the therapeutic relationship. Other ethical questions included who should choose the film, and where and when it should be viewed.

In terms of the why, most of the practitioners reflected on how film fitted in with their preferred theoretical approach, and several argued the need for an eclectic or integrated approach to using film as one therapeutic intervention, rather than seeing it as a complete modality in itself.

Already in this chapter commonalities between the viewers' and practitioners' stories have emerged. In the following two chapters, I shall bring together the stories of the two groups, and in the spirit of a montage maker, construct a composite whole. The findings will then be analysed in relation to the literature, and implications and recommendations derived from this research will be proposed.

Chapter 7

DISCUSSION

I think that we are ready now to examine what takes place in the act of spectatorship. The screen creates an illusion of reality that is between objective and subjective reality, between what is out there and inside of us, that relates to our own intermediary state between wakefulness and sleep, between an attachment to objective reality and subjective reverie.

(Konigsberg, 1996, p. 880)

Introduction

Chapter 4 introduced all the participants by presenting their stories and providing background details. In Chapters 5 and 6 the stories from the viewers and practitioners were presented, illustrating the themes which had emerged. In this discussion chapter I reflect on those themes in the light of the primary research aim of this study, which was to explore the therapeutic potential of using film as an intervention in counselling and psychotherapy.

In keeping with a narrative approach, I had invited the participants to tell their stories by asking one open-ended question. I asked the viewers how film had influenced their lives, and the practitioners how they used film in their work. Throughout the interviews I referred to a guide of prompt questions when necessary. In this chapter, as I bring the stories of all the participants together to be analysed in relation to the literature, I am guided by the overall research questions I outlined in Chapter 3: What potential do films have to initiate positive change for people, and in what areas might they be especially helpful? How do films affect the construction of a person's meaning-making self-narrative, and how might counsellors and psychotherapists use this knowledge in their work? Were there situations in which the use of film might be contraindicated because it could jeopardise client safety? The analytical questions that arose as I reflected on the participants' stories are also integral to the following discussion, and are included in the relevant sections.

The formative influence of film

Most of the viewers identified their earliest memory of being affected by a film and were able to describe the emotional intensity of that experience. Certainly both viewers and practitioners were able to identify the impact of film on their personal, and in the case of practitioners, on their professional development. An interesting theme to emerge from the practitioners' narratives was the degree of importance they attached to previous training, employment or association with film or media studies. For Michael and Donna there seemed to be a clear awareness that their previous experience had influenced their clinical use of films. Lars however, had mentioned his unfinished film studies almost as an aside, while for Virginia the significance of her earlier association with film studies emerged as she told her story. It was difficult to discern any difference in the ability to use film in a clinical situation between those who had previous film-related training or experience, and those who had none. Rather, it was apparent from the practitioners' narratives that a broad range of influences had contributed to their use of film in their professional work.

Charles had a longstanding interest in film that originated in early childhood when he began to attend the cinema regularly with his mother. Familiarity with film seemed to inform his approach in both consulting room and classroom. Emily had found films to be effective in facilitating communication in her undergraduate training in the United States. Now living and working as a psychologist in Hong Kong, she found the use of film to be helpful in her clinical work. Michael's decision to study counselling had evolved from his feeling inspired by a film. Birgit had developed her passion for film into an area of specialty, and had gained international recognition for her use of film as an intervention in therapy.

Although Patrick did not use film with his clients prescriptively, he was responsive to their discussion of films. He described how valuable he found his own therapist's responses when he discussed film in his own personal therapy:

If my therapist has seen the film, that's good ... because then she knows exactly what I'm talking about ... because then I'll say, as my patient said, 'So you know when this happens' and she'll say, 'Yes' . And I'll say, 'It's like that for me ... that gets it. That particular scene or this particular character' ... as a patient myself ... I find it really useful to do that. I find it very useful. (Patrick, 2, ¶64–65)

While film played many roles in the personal and professional lives of the participants in this study, it was clear that it provided an important frame of reference for most of them in the construction of their self narratives.

The role of film in a person's meaning-making narrative was acknowledged by practitioners like Hesley and Hesley (2001) who used film as part of the assessment stage of therapy, asking clients about the role of films in their lives, their preferred film genre and the characters that had personally affected them. They claimed that a counsellor or psychotherapist could gather valuable information about the client's world view and meaning-making processes in this way, and that it could also assist the therapist in deciding whether the use of films was relevant as an adjunct to the therapy (Hesley & Hesley, 2001).

The widespread agreement among the participants that film had been an important influence on their developing self-narratives inspired me to reflect on the dynamics of this phenomenon, and ask how and why film has this potential to transform people. In what follows I will explore the participants' understanding of film and the meanings they have constructed from their experiences with this medium. I will also compare their perceptions with perspectives from the literature.

A communication tool

Both viewers and practitioners drew attention to the positive function that film provided in facilitating communication, and there were several ways that this was illustrated. For example, film supports communication because it provides words to name and express experience. Two of the viewers (Alex and Sarah) described how film helped them to find the words to voice their thoughts and feelings. Gwyneth said that prior to her therapy nearly 20 years ago, she lacked the ability to recognise and verbalise her emotions. An important part of her healing had been the process of immersing herself in the exploration of the effects of viewing a particular film with her therapist: *"There are significant images in my mind, from that therapeutic experience. And there are about three or four very significant dreams, and this film. It really was quite powerful, very powerful. I've never forgotten it"* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶14). Since then films had continued to suggest ways of communicating which she valued. They had been a container for her self-expression: *"They're one way that I analyse the world, that I find words to express the world"* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶22).

Gwyneth also described using films as a means to convey particular information to her nieces, and Cordelia and Sarah had utilised film as a way to communicate with

their adult children. As Cordelia said, “[F]ilms had a way of ... opening up conversations about important things (Cordelia, 5, ¶52).

Most of the practitioners spoke about how films could assist clients to gain new awareness of feelings and the ability to voice those feelings. As Donna said, “[S]ometimes the movie can speak more about the issue than the patients themselves” (Donna, 6, ¶32). Film provided a catalyst for enhanced communication with their clients, and in addition provided clients with other ways to think about communicating in relationships. It was repeatedly suggested throughout the cinematherapy literature that film facilitated discussion with clients, helping people to formulate the words to describe their experiences (e.g., Byrd et al., 2006; Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Garrison, 2007; Jurich & Collins, 1996; Robertie et al., 2008; Turley & Derdeyn, 1990).

Film provided a way to communicate with people that otherwise may have been difficult. As an educator, Sarah experienced the use of film to be effective with students, both as a pedagogical tool, and as a means of engaging them. Virginia and Michael described using films with their clients to assist communication and “stimulate discussion” (Virginia, 3, ¶2; Michael, 7, ¶61). Both used film and other creative techniques with children and young people in their clinical practices. According to Michael, the clients were then sometimes “less resistant and less defensive” (Michael, 7, ¶60). Virginia said, “I find it very useful with adolescents. It’s very powerful, because a lot of adolescents don’t like talking type therapy” (Virginia, 3, ¶26). A similar rationale was noted by Robertie et al. (2008) for their use of film in a residential treatment program with adolescents diagnosed with sexual behaviour disorders. The notion that communicating with clients through film could circumvent resistance that direct communication might engender was repeated in one form or another throughout the cinematherapy literature.

Current perspectives in psychodynamic therapy however, do not consider resistance to be an impediment that must be eliminated by the therapist. Although this was how the notion of resistance was originally conceptualised in psychoanalytic theory, it is increasingly considered to be valuable information on how the client’s past experiences are influencing the therapeutic relationship (Gabbard, 2007).

Arguably, using film is a way of managing the resistance by providing a space where client and therapist can meet. Certainly the notion that film provided a safe context and an emotional distance from which individuals felt safe to explore their thoughts

and feelings was a key theme, both in the stories of the participants in this study, and in the literature (e.g., Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Bierman et al., 2003; Caron, 2005; Coombs, 2004; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Hauke, 2009; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Robertie et al., 2008; Schulenberg, 2003; Sharp et al., 2002; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003; Yang & Lee, 2005).

Maintaining emotional distance with film

Film can be used to respect cultural difference. As noted in Chapter 4, Emily often used film with her Chinese clients to provide an easier space where she hoped they could discuss their personal issues. This seemed to enable any cultural concerns about collective or individual identity to be respected. In Emily's general client population, if couples were dealing with relationship issues, she would usually suggest they watch the film *When Harry Met Sally* (Reiner & Reiner, 1989). If her Chinese clients were dealing with issues around infidelity she would consider their need for a more familiar, and perhaps safer, context: "*For the affair I use some Chinese, Cantonese movie because it's more like, you know, a friendlier situation to talk about*" (Emily, 9, ¶80).

Several of the practitioners regarded film as providing an opportunity for clients to explore and interpret an emotionally laden situation while simultaneously maintaining an emotional distance from their own issues. When Lars utilised film as an adjunct to the Somatic Experiencing approach, which he used with his clients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, one of the factors he considered was the benefit of "*watching a movie to face their traumatic experience with distance and outside themselves without too high arousal. It is a way to integrate and contain the traumatic experience little by little*" (Lars, email, 2008). Donna referred to this emotional distance as "*a step away*" (Donna, 6, ¶31), and for Virginia it was "*one step removed*" Virginia, 4, ¶64). As a psychologist working from a cognitive-behavioural approach, Virginia considered the use of film to be helpful for clients because "*it's got that distance that people can then feel more comfortable relating to*" (Virginia, 4, ¶64). Working from a narrative approach, Donna held a similar perspective. She explained how she initially decided to use films in her work:

Movies became a way of, kind of a distance between confronting maybe their own issues, and we ... slowly used the characters in the film to start to talk about their own experiences, and people were much more open with that. (Donna, 6, ¶32)

Externalising, normalising or displacing the problem

Several authors in the cinematherapy literature discussed the implementation of narrative therapy practices through the use of film (Schulenberg, 2003; Wolz, 2010), and some authors specifically acknowledged the concepts of White and Epston (1986), particularly the practice of “externalizing the problem” (Christie & McGrath, 1987; Hesley & Hesley, 2001).

In a narrative therapy approach film can be used to help externalise the problem. For example, as described in Chapter 6, Donna gave the example of using a narrative approach with clients in group therapy in which she focused on the effects of depression on a particular film character. According to Donna, the use of film from a narrative therapy perspective provided clients extra room to move in relation to their problems, and the opportunity for them to construct a preferred “*alternative story*” (Donna, 6, ¶112). Film could be used to co-investigate the influence of problems, and for her clients, film was an accessible safe domain.

Rather than labelling her client as a depressed person, Donna asked, “*What do you think this character would say to you about depression?*” (Donna, 6, ¶74). It seemed that film could offer a narrative therapist a ready tool to implement the practice of “externalising conversations” (Carey & Russell, 2002, p. 77). This practice was used to provide emotional distance for clients to objectify and evaluate the influence of their problems, and was central to the narrative therapy model developed by White and Epston (Carey & Russell, 2002). The linguistic method of converting adjectives into nouns when formulating questions was the distinguishing practice of that model (Carey & Russell, 2002), and Donna’s approach seemed to be an adaptation of that technique.

Film has also been used to normalise a client’s experience by providing “displacement stories” or allegorical stories to provide emotional distance, for example, Guerin’s use of film in Bowen’s Family systems therapy in the 1970s (cited in Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). Gwyneth’s story was reminiscent of that approach:

I think now films actually provide me with a way to see, to normalise things in my life because I always had great difficulty in thinking what’s normal and what’s not normal and what’s okay, what’s not okay, what do I feel, what don’t I feel. So I think that gives me that view, ‘Oh okay, so that kind of thing is okay then’. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶38)

Joshua's emotionally detached "cold war warrior" (Joshua, 8, ¶6) could be considered an object upon which he was able to reassign his difficult emotions. James' collection of "tear-jerker" film endings perhaps supplied an effective displacement strategy (James, 12, ¶8). From a traditional psychodynamic perspective, displacement is conceptualised as a defense mechanism, a way to redirect emotion to a safer target. As previously noted in Chapter 2, focusing on film was described as a safe way to "displace" strong emotions for adolescent girls who were undergoing psychodynamic group therapy while in residential treatment (Bierman et al., 2003). For Caron (2005), the use of movies in counselling programs to replace role play was a way to provide neophyte counsellors with an object for the displacement of anxiety, and enable vicarious experience in the process of learning.

Throughout the participants' narratives, and the cinematherapy literature, it was apparent that film was flexible enough to function as a safe intervention by providing an external stimulus, or space, for a broad client population including individuals, couples, families or groups, in a variety of therapeutic settings.

Vicarious experience of film

Film provides an opportunity for vicarious experience and vicarious learning. In the above examples of film being used to externalise a problem, whether allegorically, or as a displacement story, vicariousness was a common factor. In the participants' stories there were several examples that indicated that the vicarious experience of relating to film characters was a core factor: "Looking at a screen, the cinema screen, being in a dark room, experiencing something through other people's actions, is very exciting, it really is" (Gwyneth, 13, ¶38). Sarah conveyed a clear awareness of the process involved in her vicarious engagement with the medium of film:

Without having to live the experience yourself, or wait for the time to come, you can equip yourself ahead of time, just by storing knowledge. I mean, you can do it in other ways as well, but I love doing it through film because it is immediate. You know, there's a lot of good stories out there, and there's a lot of good interpretations of the scripts of life and different takes on it. (Sarah, 1, ¶100-101)

The vicarious exploration of emotional issues and different realities was a key theme in this study. There were, however, a number of ways in which this was depicted, and one of the core ideas was the notion of vicarious learning. Participants described learning by observing the behaviour of others in films in various ways, ranging from the countercultural influences described by Luke, Benjamin, and Sarah, to Gwyneth's

intentional film viewing before undertaking travel. The visual representations of lived experience in film often enabled the participants to think beyond their local experience, and gain exposure to cultural domains they may otherwise never have encountered. As Sarah said, *“I do think I’ve learned an awful lot about life through ... taking on the stories and somehow filtering them through and using them as blocks of wisdom”* (Sarah, 1, ¶116).

For Cordelia and Sarah, film also seemed to provide a vicarious way to reinforce behavioural changes. Cordelia had purposely viewed *A Beautiful Mind* (Grazer & Howard, 2001) several times as a reminder not to reconsider her divorce decision. Sarah sought out disturbing films to avoid becoming complacent. The viewers in the focus group revealed their vicarious relations with film characters in particular ways, Joshua and James, by their repertoire of movie quotations.

One of my favourite quotes in pretty much film history is, ‘I could have been a, I could have had class, I could have been a contender, I could have been somebody’. Yeah, I mean, yeah, that’s pretty much my favourite scene ever like in movie history. (James, 10, ¶112)

James’ ability to memorise film quotes, and recall minutiae of films, had been invaluable for him as a way of being interesting to his peers. Joshua’s in-depth knowledge of *The West Wing* (Harms & Graves, 1999–2006) provided him with a source of mutual entertainment and connection with other fans of the series. Quite apart from the opportunity to connect with others, for Joshua and James these “micro-processes” of the film experience (Klinger, 2008, para. 35) seemed to relieve identity concerns and support an ongoing construction of self. It was as if they could try on other identities for size, and borrow their personas. As Markus & Nurius (1986) suggested, being exposed to the behaviours, intentions and aspirations of other selves through the use of cultural products, provided a person with the possibility of rehearsing a variety of possible selves.

Virginia had described a client in his 20s, with Asperger’s syndrome, who had wanted to explore an old movie about a prize fighter with her. Despite her initial reluctance to use the film with him in therapy because she was unsure of its relevance, it had been an effective tool to use over a period of several sessions. Of particular interest to Virginia was her client’s knowledge of the film:

He actually knew the script of this movie, absolutely word for word. And I think part of his comfort with it was that he seen it a number of times, and he could literally run the

whole film through with all the voice intonations and ... at one level he wasn't really looking at the movie. He was looking at the fact that he knew the script and it was comforting for him to actually go over. (Virginia, 3, ¶23)

As previously noted in Chapter 2, film dialogue memorisation through repeat viewing of films, and the recitation of favourite film lines, was conceptualised in film and media studies as both, a demonstration of a means of exploring and constructing self-identity and gaining group identification, and also to be typical “fan behavior” (Klinger, 2008, para. 34). The notion of fandom however was not discussed in the cinematherapy literature. Any consideration of a client role modelling or practising desired, or indeed undesirable, behaviours of a film character, was usually associated with behavioural and learning theories, in particular the principles of Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory (e.g., Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Yang & Lee, 2005; Wolz, 2010). In that context cinematherapy was described as a form of “observational learning” for the client (Schulenberg, 2003, p. 37), and also of “vicarious learning” (Duncan et al., 1986, p. 50).

However, as I have previously discussed, one of the fundamental concepts that underpinned cinematherapy was that film provided the opportunity for a person to identify with another individual, a film character, who was dealing with similar issues. It was suggested that by identifying in this way, and achieving an understanding of how the character was able to solve problems and effect desired life changes, a person could experience cognitive, emotional and behavioural change (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Byrd et al., 2006; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Karlinsky, 2003; Lampropoulos et al., 2004). This implied that cinematherapy relied on the process of identification.

Throughout the participants’ stories there was a diverse range of descriptions of forms of engagement with film, of which identification was one, and in the next section I discuss some variations in the participants’ portrayals of their experiences.

Forms of engagement with film

Cordelia offered a vivid interpretation of the reaction she had to the main protagonist in the film *Master and Commander* (Goldwyn & Weir, 2003), played by the actor Russell Crowe:

It's like I got in Russell Crowe's skin or he got in mine. I projected on to him my own whatever, I suppose, but then I could own it. It was like, it was out there, and then

somehow, there became a moment. It was like in a movie where, you know, the person goes into the skin, there's a word for it, when they metamorph. (Cordelia, 5, ¶32)

Sarah's identification with the female protagonist in *Dancer in the Dark* (Windeløv & Von Trier, 2000) was apparent: *"I felt done over like the woman in the film, I felt totally abused emotionally, I really identified with her"* (Sarah, 1, ¶10). Luke said that he could *"connect"* with the characters in the teen film *Superbad* (Apatow & Mottola, 2007) because he had experienced similar circumstances to those experienced by the characters (Luke, 10, ¶162).

While the above extracts are specific descriptions of film viewers' experiences of identifying with, or recognising themselves in a film character, there were a variety of ways in which the participants engaged with, or responded to film. For example, when Patrick described his experience of seeing *Russian Ark* (Damian & Sokurov, 2002) he said it was a *"very profound experience ... I've seen it three times and I never see films three times, and certainly the first two times I was certainly in an altered state for hours and hours afterwards"* (Patrick, 2, ¶15).

There were also examples that indicated that a film's capacity to provide the experience of identification could be variously perceived. Patrick spoke about a client who had seen *As It Is In Heaven* (Birkeland & Pollack, 2004), and had been *"very affected"* by it (Patrick, 2, ¶7). By contrast, when Patrick went to see that film, inspired by his client's, and others', experience of it, he said that *"it was painted in a way that, you know, 'If there is a film you should see in your whole life, this is the film'. And I didn't have that experience"* (Patrick, 2, ¶7).

Responses to films were not only varied, they were also unpredictable. Virginia spoke about an adolescent male client *"quite an aggressive, a delinquent type of young person"*, (Virginia, 3, ¶37) whom she had encouraged to make a list of a few films he would like to explore in therapy. He proposed films with like-minded characters, which initially Virginia thought could be useful: *"[B]ut the ones he brought up, he couldn't get beyond the identification with what he saw as the positive things, you know, the bravado. What I saw as—what I didn't want him to identify with"* (Virginia, 3, ¶37).

As Cordelia described in Chapter 4, the first film her therapist had assigned as homework was *The Mission* (Ghia & Joffé 1986):

I did get things out of it, but maybe not in quite the way that he expected. When I think about that movie, there's one, just one thing that stands out and it's just him climbing

this mountain to kind of make up for the bad things he'd done ... but that's all, it wasn't like it moved me deeply. I didn't find it a profound movie in that sense. But it was helpful, like it helped me to see, but that's about all (Cordelia, 5, ¶5)

Although Donna's clients often selected a film that she would not expect, she accepted that *"they're selecting the film that they identify with"* (Donna, 6, ¶23). Sarah had taken her sons to see the *The Lord of the Rings* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) hoping to recreate the transformative experience she had had watching *The Joy Luck Club* (Bass & Wang, 1993) with her daughter but it was not the same:

I've taken my sons to see those ... you know those movies with the trilogies and stuff...and they're right into it. And I'm there because I want to be there for their experience but...I didn't like them, I didn't enjoy any of them. (Sarah, 1, ¶57-59)

In Chapter 5 it was seen that for most of the viewers, film had influenced attitudes and contributed to a change of beliefs in various issues, ranging from feminism to punk bands. In those stories film was depicted as providing alternative role models to emulate as opposed to characters to identify with. For James it was the filmmakers. He described being greatly influenced by the work of several film directors, linking their formative influence to specific developmental stages of his life. Gwyneth was aware that she often related to the perspective of the film director: *"I'll follow a director and I'll follow themes"* (Gwyneth, 13, ¶38).

The film spectator's position

The disparate descriptions given by the participants of their experience of film viewing suggests that people take more than one position as film spectators. This raises the question: what does it mean to be a film spectator?

Having employed film as a resource to draw from in addressing the complex issues in their own lives, Gwyneth, Cordelia and Sarah subsequently made use of films to influence and inspire others indirectly. This was evident in their accounts of communicating vicariously with their children and younger relatives through film. However, the viewers also used film in direct ways. Sarah, Gwyneth, Cordelia, Joshua, Ben, Luke, and Alex each described how they had interpreted a film's narrative and various aspects related to film characters, and had been able intentionally to draw forth themes and strategies to apply to their own circumstances. In many of those stories the viewers had initially identified with a film character in some way, and there were numerous ways in which this was

described. Of the eight “viewers” in this study, five used the actual terms “identification”, or referred to “identifying” with a film character. However four of these participants used that terminology after I had introduced it in a previous comment.

Although it appeared obvious when I compared the narratives, that my choice of words may have influenced the subsequent vocabulary used by the participants to describe their experience of film, it seemed there was also a common parlance, or as previously noted in Chapter 2, what Gaut (1999) described as the “folk wisdom” (p. 260) of describing reactions to films that could be interpreted as forms of identification. For example, the participants described being “*attached*” or being able to “*relate*” or “*connect*” to characters or film narratives.

There were, however, participants whose descriptions of their experience of film were quite singular. Joshua twice referred to his specific use of film characters as “*analogies*” in order to be able to “*make sense*” of his life, and while Sarah related several instances where she strongly identified with film characters, she said, “*I like to see it as more as an intellectual exercise and debate it intellectually* (Sarah, 1, ¶107). Their descriptions could also reflect their way of responding to the world: either relationally/emotionally or cognitively.

It would be reductionist to place all the viewers’ experiences under the rubric of identification (Eder, 2006). Later in the chapter I will discuss how the process of identification was conceptualised in the literature, but in the meantime I will explore a variety of other ways in which participants interacted with film.

Sarah, Gwyneth, and Cordelia also referred to finding metaphors, analogies or symbols in films that helped them work through and understand significant life experiences. The ability of most of the viewers to take the symbolism in films and make meaning relevant to their lives was evident from the beginnings of their stories. All the viewers gave at least one example where their motive for choosing a particular film was linked to the opportunity it provided for self-reflection, and its perceived use as a source of knowledge. Some of the participants viewed films repeatedly, and this suggested a range of motivations.

Escapism, entertainment or therapy

As discussed in Chapter 4, there were a number of comments in the focus group on the subject of escapism. For James, films provided a few hours “*to escape*” from

problems (James, 10, ¶5). Luke said that the notion of escaping through films was not desirable for him especially if faced with a “bleak film” (Luke, 10, ¶8). For Joshua, escapism and bleak films were not mutually exclusive. As described in Chapter 5, in his individual interview, Joshua referred to the notion of film and escapism 15 times. He was aware of using film as an escape, and described certain intense times in his life when he had repeatedly viewed the same film. Fundamentally, Joshua considered films to be escapism if he intentionally used a movie to change his mood, or as a form of entertainment with friends.

The question of whether film viewing was merely entertainment or whether it was something more, came up several times in the viewers’ narratives. This raises the interesting question of whether the intention of a film viewer limits the therapeutic impact of a film. Is it possible to go to a film to be entertained or take a break from everyday responsibilities, to find oneself challenged or even changed? Sarah’s strong association to the fate of the leading character in *Dancer in the Dark* (Windeløv & Von Trier, 2000) had taken her completely by surprise, but it had compelled her to reflect upon her current circumstances and initiate change. As she explained, “*I would seek out ones that depicted a change of life style, but every now and again quite unexpectedly I found myself in a different subjective space*” (Sarah, 1, ¶107).

The viewers had strong opinions on whether one defined escapism as simply watching a film, or as watching movies thought to be escapist, and even whether escapism was desirable or even possible. Curiously, the subject of escapism raised barely a mention in the practitioners’ narratives, although it was implied in several of their comments on the entertainment aspect of film. Virginia was concerned that if her clients misinterpreted her use of films as entertainment they could acquire a distorted view of therapy. Patrick and Birgit conveyed a similar concern about film being misconstrued as entertainment by their clients, although they differed significantly in the way in which they incorporated film into their clinical work.

By contrast, Michael could see the value in films being entertaining for his clients: “*My approach is to use a movie the client more than likely will watch*” (Michael, 7, ¶96). However he sometimes reminded his clients to keep a therapeutic perspective when viewing. If Donna’s clients experienced the film as entertaining, she took the opportunity to explore the meaning of that with them.

Concerns were conveyed in the literature that cinematherapy could not be effective if clients were passive viewers of film, and by implication being entertained (Dermer &

Hutchings, 2000). The differences between “therapeutic viewing” and entertainment were distinguished (Hesley & Hesley, 2001), and it was suggested that clients be active participants and consciously aware of the therapeutic issues to explore when viewing a film, in order to prevent a film-homework assignment becoming entertainment (Caron, 2005).

As noted in Chapter 2, the benefit of humorous films in a psychiatric unit was acknowledged in a controlled study by Gelkopf et al. (2006). Some interesting findings emerged from Rotton and Shats’ (1996) study on using humorous movies with postoperative patients, which could be relevant for cinematherapy. In that study although the participants’ use of self-administered analgesics decreased by those who watched a humorous film, compared to those who watched a serious film, it increased when they had no choice of the movie to be watched and had not been informed by the researchers that watching the movie might lessen the amount of pain relief they required (Rotton & Shats, 1996).

In some cases films were deliberately chosen by the viewers for mood management, as the examples below illustrate:

And you watch the films that suit the mood that you’re in, so it helps you express what you’re feeling inside. (Alex, 10, ¶4)

*Of course using girlie films to have a good cry when I need to and I can’t seem to cry otherwise, that’s been a really good tool. So *Beaches* [Abdo & Marshall, 1988] and *Stepmom* [Barnathan & Columbus, 1998] are the two that I use. Sort of like, ‘Time to have a cry. I better find a chick flick’. As a way of managing myself I suppose. (Cordelia, 5, ¶49)*

Cordelia’s reason for choosing a “chick flick” is supported by findings in mood management studies by Oliver, Weaver, and Sargent (2000) in which the film *Beaches* (Abdo & Marshall, 1988) was actually used. One of the findings in those studies indicated that female participants enjoyed sad films. That finding differed from other studies that have contributed to mood management theory, which have found that people are hedonically motivated to maximise pleasure and alleviate pain in their lives, although they may not necessarily be cognisant of their motivation (Oliver et al., 2000). As discussed in Chapter 2, although the study of mood management through media use, including film, is a recognised field of study (e.g., Carpentier et al., 2008; Zillmann & Bryant, 1985; Zillmann, 1988), there was little evidence that it had been a source of theory for the cinematherapy literature.

In the viewers' narratives, the therapeutic value of film was acknowledged in various ways. The awareness of film's ability to have a significant effect on emotions and feelings, and moreover to help modify or even transform a relationship, was illustrated in Sarah's story of watching *The Joy Luck Club* (Bass & Wang, 1993) with her daughter:

I had a sense that she and I had moved in ways that were never really articulated in the conscious. But we nonverbally communicated with each other ... we moved closer together somehow because we shared that experience, and that couldn't have happened in any other medium. (Sarah, 1, ¶54)

Throughout the stories in this study, whether they were those of individuals experiencing the influence of films in their lives, or therapists using films in their work with clients, it seemed that film could provide a space to share experience, and a "spatial freedom that does not exist for us in the world within which we live" (Konigsberg, 1996, p. 882). If, as Konigsberg (1996) thought, "Film suggests for the spectator, just as the child's transitional phenomena, an interplay of magical thinking and reality" (p. 882), then it was not surprising that Winnicott's (1971/2007), concepts were implied in some of the stories when participants spoke about the experience of film.

Transitional phenomena and transitional space

When Cordelia described the therapy session in which the film character the "Captain" emerged, she said, "*I experienced this dissociated part as being like a metaphor, so it's real and it's not real*" (Cordelia, 5, ¶6). She related that she and her therapist "*could leapfrog through the films ... we could skip steps ... it was seamless, and we could play with it, another way of playing. I think playing is so important*" (Cordelia, 5, ¶42). These extracts could suggest the Winnicottian (1971/2007) concept of "potential space" and the "play" that took place there (p. 55), when film had opened up a playful, creative space in the relationship.

This seemed apparent in Patrick's narrative as he described the experience of sharing that space with his client:

So we can actually enter in, I think this is right, into the same space of, almost like a shared experience. So the kind of language that we use in relation to the film, he doesn't have to explain it or talk, it's there. (Patrick, 2, ¶7)

Other Winnicottian concepts were discernible in Cordelia's narrative. Her purchased DVD of *Master and Commander* (Goldwyn & Weir, 2003), possibly served as a "transitional object" (Winnicott, 1971/2007, p. 2) when she completed her therapy. Her decision to watch *The Lord of the Rings* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) when her therapist was away on vacation, was not only motivated by her desire to respond to his previous references to that particular film, but was also "*probably another way of holding myself while he was on leave*" (Cordelia, 5, ¶16). Although as a counsellor Cordelia could draw on her professional lexicon to describe these aspects of her personal experiences of therapy, she did not formally name them as Winnicottian concepts.

At times it seemed that the film was in the background acting as a "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1960 cited in Schapiro, 1998). This was implied in Patrick's comment as he described the way in which the shared exploration of the film with his client had contributed to creating a positive therapeutic alliance, and provided a container for intensity of affect: "*I think in some ways that it actually holds something there. It's sort of like a short cut in the language ... 'Yes the Billy Elliot ... Okay that's where we are'*" (Patrick, 2, ¶6).

From a client's perspective, Cordelia described a similar experience in her therapy:

We had this ongoing joke. 'Good old Russ', as he'd come into the room again, 'Good old Russ' you know, sort of became a line ... like code, 'Oh here we are again'. And I'd be surprised, I'd say, 'Oh lord, we're back at that film again'. (Cordelia, 5, ¶32)

If the ideal in the therapy process is for the therapist and client to "create a transitional space, in which the line between fantasy and reality blurs" (Benjamin 1988, p.127), could film be used to provide such a space where something new could emerge? As I have noted previously, although Winnicott's concepts were not discussed in the cinematherapy literature, they did inform studies involving film in cultural theory (Creme, 1994); cultural psychology (Zittoun, 2005) and writings in film theory (Kongisberg, 1996).

Based on the notion that film viewing involved both conscious and unconscious processes and movement between inner and outer realities, film was considered to offer a particular type of space, a space between reality and fantasy, an intermediate field through which the spectator could acquire an experience of self (Creme, 1994, Konigsberg, 1996; Zittoun, 2005). Creme (1994) also drew on Bollas' (1989) concepts of a person's unintegrated memories of the original caregiver as the source of

transformation—“the transformational object” (p. 297). Film was considered to be such an object; an object that is based on Bollas’ notion that throughout life adults search for experience and engagement with symbolically equivalent objects that represent that original intersubjective experience, and have the capacity to evoke self-experience (Creme, 1994). Film could be a source of transformation by enabling film viewers the possibility of paradoxically losing themselves in the film and finding their “Self” (Creme, 1994). Although the language might suggest an understanding that self is a coherent separate entity, it could also apply to an emerging narrative view of self.

As illustrated in Chapter 6, Patrick linked the notion of the “*third space*”, the intersubjective space in therapy, to the notion of the “*screen*” (Patrick, 2, ¶82).

You are both having a look at it to see ... what it might mean, so that the person themselves in that space isn't swamped by the ... overwhelming feelings they're actually observing out there. (Patrick, 2, ¶82)

In the above extract Patrick was referring to the concept of the “metaphorical screen” posited by Meares (1983, p. 76). Meares (1983) had distinguished the early psychoanalytic concept of the “empty screen” onto which clients could project their fantasies, from later concepts of the “blank screen” and “dream screen”, and had extended the idea so that both the client and the therapist “gaze toward it” (p. 76). Although Patrick was not actually referring to film in the above extract, his description of looking at the screen with his client suggested the metaphorical setting that film could offer both a client and therapist as a means for co-constructing meaning.

Patrick’s story was an example of a client’s fantasy world becoming accessible to a therapist through understanding and mutual trust. While there were several examples in Patrick’s narrative which indicated that both he and his client had seamlessly shifted into the “film screen-space” (Creme, 1994, p. 49), his client had initiated the move on each occasion.

For counsellors and psychotherapists to gain access to this world through the use of film inevitably depended on their therapeutic approach. As indicated in the practitioners’ narratives and the cinematherapy literature, there were a variety of approaches.

Variations in the application of film

Although each practitioner in this study used film quite differently in their clinical work, one aspect of cinematherapy upon which most of them were quite vigorously agreed (see Chapter 6), was that the use of film was an adjunct, not a separate therapy, and capable of being used within any theoretical model. There were, nonetheless, differences between the practitioners in how this intervention was conceptualised and applied.

For example the amount of use of film as an adjunct in the practitioners' clinical practice, the percentage of time, or numbers of clients, varied considerably. Of those who quantified their use of film, Donna indicated the most use, with 40% of her clientele. The variations in the practitioners' application of the method included whether they watched film scenes with their clients individually, with couples, in family therapy, or in groups; whether those film scenes were chosen by the clients or the therapist; whether they assigned a specific film as a homework assignment, or a list (or library) of films from which the client chose a film; and whether they provided specific instructions such as how to watch the film and what to note while doing so.

Among the themes identified in the practitioners' narratives were whether to be directive or nondirective when using film with clients, and whether films were to be specifically chosen by the therapist or the client. Moreover, how much direction might a therapist offer in shaping a client's experience of viewing a film? In Birgit's model, clients were encouraged to maintain "*conscious awareness*" (Birgit, 4, ¶69) while film viewing. Birgit's choice of being prescriptive or nondirective was dependent upon whether she was working from a cognitive-behavioural or psychodynamic approach, with short-term or long-term clients.

An active viewing position was implied in one of the four categories in Michael's typology, in the "directive-structured approach" (Michael, 7, ¶23), in which the client was provided with homework and instructions. However Michael preferred to use a nondirective approach. As he described in Chapter 6, "*It's kind of a constructivist approach, a post-modern approach where they tell you what was most meaningful*" (Michael, 7, ¶20). Although his approach respected the client's frame of reference, there was an essential difference in his method:

The therapist as the expert would still choose the tape because ... you would know what the movie's about obviously; because one of the guidelines is you always have to know

the film and have watched the film, so that you can protect yourself and the client in case there was something you weren't aware of. (Michael, 7, ¶21)

It was clear that Virginia was using an active learning approach when she described viewing scenes from movies or television programmes together with her clients as a “*training tool*” to foster social skills awareness (Virginia, 3, ¶2). However, as indicated previously, she also worked with films that her clients suggested, even though at times the film’s content had not been congruent with her perspective. While Charles and Emily appeared to favour the use of a prescriptive method, it seemed nonetheless to be specifically attuned to the issues of their clients.

Lars provided a printed viewing guide to his clients, and when he used a directive approach he requested that they record their “*body sensations during certain scenes*” at the time of viewing the film (Lars, email, 2008). Alternatively, if he wanted the client “*to experience and sense the movie in a more spontaneous way, I will ask him to see the questions afterwards*” (Lars, email, 2008). Lars was aware that his approach was changing as he became more familiar with using the technique, and he was developing a preference for being nondirective. Donna’s narrative-based approach implied a constructionist point of view as she worked with film scenes chosen by her clients, whom she encouraged not to think during the viewing, but instead to “*surrender to that experience*” (Donna, 6, ¶41).

In the literature, discussion of the various approaches to cinematherapy, including those discussed by practitioners Birgit and Michael, included the description of both directive and nondirective methods for the therapeutic use of film. These methods generally fell into the following categories: i) the therapist being prescriptive in suggesting a film with content specifically related to the client’s presenting issues; ii) the therapist working with whatever meaning the client derived (or constructed) from a film that was chosen by the client, albeit from a therapist-supplied list of films; and iii) the therapist acknowledging and working with client-introduced discussion of film.

A nondirective attitude in a postmodern counselling and psychotherapy context has become associated with working from a social constructionist perspective that meaning is made, not discovered, and clients are considered as the experts in their own lives (Corey, 2009; McLeod, 1997). That point of view was clearly differentiated by two of the practitioners in my study. Not all of the practitioners, however, made it clear whether their approaches posited their clients as passive or active spectators of

film, finding meanings in a film, as opposed to constructing their own meanings (Plantinga, 2002). Although there were some indications in the cinematherapy literature that the use of film was thought to enable clients to “construct” their own meanings (e.g., Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Hesley & Hesley, 2001, p. 9), it was generally far from clear whether film was conceptualised as providing metaphors for clients to discover, or as a stimulus to the clients’ making meaning for themselves.

What was obvious in many viewers’ stories, including those viewers who did not have previous counselling or psychotherapy training, was that they understood the metaphorical language of film to be powerful, and often used it strategically in the creation of new meaning and new realities. In the following section I explore various aspects related to metaphor in the therapeutic use of film.

Metaphor in the movies

In Chapter 6 I presented examples of the practitioners’ use of explicit, and implied, metaphors from within a film, and discussed whether they were literal in their selection or used their own interpretation of a symbol depicted in the film. For example, Birgit used *28 Days* (Topping & Thomas, 2000), a film based on a woman’s rehabilitation treatment, for issues regarding alcohol dependence; while Michael used *The Lord of the Rings* (Jackson & Jackson, 2001) to symbolise a journey to overcome addiction. Both of these examples depicted the use of films which practitioners had specifically chosen for their clients, although there were several instances in which the clients had selected the film.

While Virginia’s use of superhero cartoons to discuss bullying with children clients may seem to be an explicit use of metaphor, the films were chosen and brought to the session by the clients. Donna’s example of a 20-year-old male client’s selection of a scene from *Fight Club* (Grayson Bell & Fincher, 1999) to depict his battle with addiction, illustrated how she worked with metaphor from a client’s subjective framework:

There was a scene with Brad Pitt and Ed Norton where there is acid poured on ... Ed Norton character’s hand and he had to go through the pain of using his mind over his body. And, you know, he equated that to his struggles with addiction. (Donna, 6, ¶19)

Lars explained how he would decide what approach to take when working with clients with post-trauma related issues:

I decide whether the client will benefit from a more direct or a more

indirect/metaphorical approach. I will always choose the metaphorical way if the client's arousal is very high and I sense that it will be even higher with direct exposure to the traumatic material. Examples of this approach are when I use Robert Redford's The Horse Whisperer [Markey & Redford, 1998] with a client with PTSD-related symptoms, or Alive [Kennedy & Marshall, 1993] or The Shawshank Redemption [Marvin & Darabont, 1994] where focus is on the survival aspects and the resources that help to overcome and survive a threat ... For example we can talk very indirectly about the client's experience of threat, anxiety, fear etc. by talking about another person and his experience with these things and only very little try to relate it more directly to the client's life—depending on the arousal. (Lars, email, 2008)

Lars' view that an indirect approach was "metaphorical" because it involved the client exploring their issues through film vicariously, was a common perspective held in the field of cinematherapy. As I noted in Chapter 2, concepts in the cinematherapy literature were frequently drawn from Milton Erickson's (1976) use of therapeutic metaphors and indirect hypnotic techniques to explain how film made it possible for a therapist to communicate with a client indirectly (e.g., Christie & McGrath, 1987; Sharp et al., 2002; Wolz, 2010).

The theoretical perspectives of the practitioners in this study often influenced whether their approach to using film in therapy, was directive or nondirective. These factors resonate with those in a survey of 1142 Dutch psychotherapists which found that, "Therapists with a primary cognitive or behavioral orientation use more directive interventions than those with a primary client-centred, experiential, psychoanalytic or psychodynamic orientation, whereas the latter use more nondirective interventions" (cited in Trijsburg, Colijn & Holmes, 2007, p. 96). I will explore the exceptions in my study to this typological generalisation in the following section.

The impact of theoretical perspectives

In the practitioners' stories the clinical use of film was discussed from a range of perspectives by therapists working from all the major theoretical orientations. There were obvious contrasts however in the approaches of those practitioners who described themselves as working from a psychodynamic/psychoanalytic perspective. One of these never recommended film, one used film with nearly 25% of her clientele and used a directive approach, and one used a nondirective approach

with film when she worked psychodynamically, and a directive method when she worked from a cognitive-behavioural approach.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the study conducted by Lampropoulos et al. (2004) on the extent of the use of films as an intervention by psychologists, 25% of the 840 participants identified as psychodynamic–analytic therapists, and 54% of those had recommended a film to a client (p. 537). Although those therapists were clearly in the minority compared to the other theoretical orientations, they had all used film in a similar way. Although there were exceptions, in the stories of most of the practitioners in my study there were indications that their theoretical orientation had an impact on, both how they used film in therapy, and how they perceived the client's position as a film spectator. With some practitioners it seemed that film was simply the mechanism, not the object. It was the means to an end. With others, it seemed that the film held a central position.

How then do therapists explain their use of film as a clinical technique if such an intervention is incongruent with their theoretical worldview? In the previously mentioned study by Lampropoulos et al., (2004) no explanation was offered as to how therapists reconciled the differences between their theories and their therapeutic practice. What they did find however, was that across all the orientations male therapists were slightly more likely than female therapists to recommend a film, as were therapists who were more experienced, and in private practice (Lampropoulos et al., 2004). Most of the practitioners in my study were in private practice, and while I accept the limitations of my study, having only four female and four male practitioners, I found nothing to support the above findings.

As indicated in Chapter 6, several practitioners made suggestions with regard to the importance of theoretically consistent practice.

Eclecticism

Several practitioners alluded to the notion of eclecticism in their overall therapeutic approach, describing the various creative interventions they utilised in their clinical practice. Some practitioners seemed committed to the advancement of cinematherapy as a therapeutic technique, which was evidenced by Birgit's model, and Michael's typology and his research on the topic. Birgit emphasised that it was always necessary to use film from within a specific theoretical paradigm. Michael indicated that in his country, the United States, it was considered preferable for therapists who use adjunctive techniques to use a framework such as "*technical*

eclecticism" (Michael, 7, ¶28) as opposed to an unsystematic eclecticism. For Michael the advantage of technical eclecticism was that practitioners could use the intervention of cinematherapy from within their own theoretical orientation without needing to subscribe to any theory related to the technique. Charles said that the current terminology to describe his approach was "*transtheoretical*", but he preferred the term "*eclectic*" (Charles, 15, ¶70). Michael also referred to "*theoretical integration*" (Michael, 7, ¶27). All of those approaches were involved in the debate related to the counselling and psychotherapy "integration movement" (Hawkins & Nestoros, 1997, p. 1).

Technical eclecticism is "empirically oriented" (Trijsburg et al., 2007, p. 97) and its major proponents have emphasised a "systematic" framework in which "technical eclectics" adhere to their own theoretical perspective and choose methods that are empirically supported (Lazarus & Beutler, 1993, p. 384). The theoretical integrationists, on the other hand, are interested in a synthesis of concepts and theories, rather than techniques (Hawkins & Nestoros, 1997). Claims that technical eclecticism was atheoretical have been rejected by its proponents, who argued that they were committed to provide a model that would enable the prediction of change when certain factors related to the client, presenting issues, therapist and the therapeutic milieu were taken into account (Lazarus & Beutler, 1993).

Regardless of whether such frameworks were adopted, from the comments made by the practitioners in this study the implications were that if counsellors and psychotherapists employed a clear set of their own theoretical principles, they could rely on a predictable set of technical procedures to use cinematherapy as an intervention. However this is not necessarily so.

As discussed in Chapter 2, cinematherapy was conceptualised from the outset as an extension of, or as having its origins in bibliotherapy (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Hesley & Hesley, 2001), and this conceptualisation has continued (e.g., Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Kuriansky et al., 2010; Wolz, 2010). In the following section I discuss the ramifications of that relationship, but firstly I present examples of how the viewers discussed their experience of literature.

Cinematherapy and bibliotherapy

Despite not having been asked, several viewers commented on the function of literature in their lives, and made comparisons with their use of films. When a film provided Ben with a new perspective, it was similar to reading a personally

significant book. Joshua recognised that there were periods in his life that he had totally immersed himself in certain activities, of which reading was one. By contrast, Sarah placed books and television in the same category—both were “*light entertainment*” (Sarah, 1, ¶122). Gwyneth said, “*Books do it for me in a different way ... I relate to a book in a completely different way*” (Gwyneth, 13, ¶38).

For practitioners Charles and Lars, the successful use of literature with their clients had been an influential factor in their decision to use films. For those practitioners, moving from the use of bibliotherapy to using cinematherapy with their clients seemed to be a natural progression.

It is relevant to note that bibliotherapy was originally associated with the use of fictional literature, and used as a projective technique, from a psychodynamic frame of reference (Shrodes, 1949). However, it has increasingly become associated with the assignment of instruction manuals or non-fiction self-help literature for homework (McLeod, 1997), and the didactic presentation to their clients of the principles and methods of their approach (Dattilio, 2007) by therapists from a cognitive-behavioural orientation. Although when used as an intervention in therapy, self-help material was most often the literature recommended by therapists from a cognitive-behavioural orientation, and fictional literature was chosen by therapists from a psychodynamic orientation (Pardeck, 1998), that differentiation was often not acknowledged in the bibliotherapy literature.

It was therefore interesting to find that as cinematherapy continues to be posited as an extension of bibliotherapy, it has similarly evolved into being used either as a projective technique, implying a psychodynamic frame of reference, or as a means of psycho-education for clients, thereby suggesting an approach that is cognitive-behavioural. While this dichotomy was suggested in a couple of the practitioners’ narratives, and in some cinematherapy models, it was not always clearly defined as such.

The practitioners’ narratives illustrated a diversity in how they applied the use of film in their work, and apart from a couple of exceptions, there was also little evidence to suggest that they subscribed to a specific film-viewing process, or adhered to one with a particular theoretical basis. However, in several published cinematherapy guidelines therapists were advised that clients should be consciously aware while viewing a film, and to concentrate on film characters, rather than on the story line, in order to make a comparison with their circumstances (e.g. Hesley &

Hesley, 2001; Lampropoulos et al., 2004). This guideline, however, presents a paradox, which I explain in the following section.

The film-viewing process

All of the participants told of the powerful influence film had on their lives, and the practitioners also included the significant experiences of their clients. The diversity of these perspectives suggests that for therapists to advise clients not to focus on a film's narrative would be a narrow and restrictive use of cinematherapy.

It also seems paradoxical to advise a client to be consciously aware while viewing a film if the cinematherapy procedure depends on the process of identification, a process which involves a loss of self-awareness as the viewer becomes absorbed in the film. In Chapter 2, I discussed the acknowledgement in the early cinematherapy literature of the original three-stage linear bibliotherapy framework of "identification, catharsis and insight" that Shrodes' (1949) had developed for the use of that technique in educational settings (e.g., in Berg-Cross et al., 1990). Shrodes' framework had been based on the Freudian intrapsychic model of psychotherapy, and related theory that had defined the development of personality via sequential stages. Several cinematherapy approaches have since been based on that bibliotherapy framework, (e.g., Newton, 1995; Sharp et al., 2002), while others have adapted its linear developmental-stage process (e.g., Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Tyson et al., 2000; Wedding & Boyd, 1997; Wedding, et al., 2005; Wolz, 2010), although Shrodes' foundational model, with its roots in psychoanalysis, was not usually acknowledged.

Despite its psychoanalytic underpinning, the bibliotherapy framework has been adapted by therapists from all theoretical orientations to propose models of film viewing. As described in Chapter 2, several adaptations have proposed a sequential process of film viewing, which included the initial stage described as "disassociation" (Tyson et al., 2000, p. 38) or "dissociation" (Sharp et al., 2002, p. 269; Wedding & Boyd, 1997, p. 1). The common usage of these terms is fundamentally interchangeable and usually indicates some form of separation or disconnection, for example between people or organisations and so forth. However, the term dissociation in the field of mental health usually has a particular meaning, as it suggests a phenomenon which involves "disruptions of the ongoing sense of personal being by traumatic memory systems" (Meares, 2001, p. 54). Although contemporarily, as noted by Meares (2001), the state of dissociation is understood by

some to be equal to “day-dreaming or absorption in a creative activity” (p. 44), in the field of traumatology theories of dissociation “tend to centre around the idea of a self-protective process that takes place when the events of life are beyond tolerance” (Stern, 2006, p. 83). It would seem inappropriate therefore, for the field of cinematherapy to continue to use dissociation or disassociation as terms to denote the stage in film viewing in which a person becomes “one with it” (Koestenbaum, 1998), by becoming engaged and involved in a film.

Although the therapeutic use of film, based on the linear film-viewing framework, was shown in the literature to provide a suitable guide for therapists, from what emerged in the viewer narratives in my study, and as discussed previously in this chapter, such a film-viewing process did not always occur when a person watched a film. People have powerful and meaningful experiences of film without moving through the psychological processes outlined in that linear approach.

Apart from the examples drawn from the cinematherapy literature, my review of other literature discussing film viewing found no evidence of the terms dissociation or disassociation to denote this aspect of the film-viewing process. Instead terms with more positive connotations were used, such as: “merging with a film” (Creme, 1994, p. 297); “become absorbed” (Cohen, 2001, p. 245); “immersion” (Eder, 2006, p. 70; Klinger, 2008). Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) theoretical concept of “flow”, which described the optimal experience of being absorbed in an activity, was noted in Finamore’s (2008) discussion of using film from a “Positive Psychology” therapeutic approach (p. 127).

In the cinematherapy literature, the film-viewing framework, which also included identification and catharsis, was usually presented as a one-size-fits-all approach. As I have discussed previously in Chapter 2, there was a strong interest in the concept of identification as part of the process of film viewing by scholars of film, media, communication, philosophy, cultural studies and social psychology. Some of these authors offered definitions and descriptions of types of identification (e.g., Cohen, 2001; Eder, 2006; Gaut, 1999; Oatley & Gholamain, 1997), and others argued that the process of identification while film viewing rarely, or never, occurred (e.g., Carroll, 2008; Currie, 1995; Plantinga & Tan, 2007).

In the following I provide details of Cohen’s (2001) theoretical overview as it provides a comprehensive framework for the purpose of understanding what might happen when a client is engaged in the act of viewing a film.

Identification

In communication theorist Cohen's (2001) typology, identification was conceptualised as having a distinct process involving the following elements: i) The film viewers' empathy with the character; ii) their understanding of what motivated the character's behaviour; iii) the extent to which they shared the character's aims and viewpoints, and; iv) the extent to which they lost self-awareness and were transported into the character's story. From a communication theory perspective the concept of identification was deemed to have stemmed from "psychoanalysis, film studies and social psychology" (Cohen, 2001, p. 253). Cohen (2001) designed an identification measurement tool for the purpose of evaluating media users' levels of identification with media characters (see Chapter 2).

However, Cohen's (2001) approach to theorising the response of an audience to media characters made clear that there were more aspects to film viewing than the process of identification. He drew on social psychology for his category of "Liking, Similarity and Affinity" (p. 253), the conceptual basis of fandom, when media users made comparisons with, and felt close to, media characters. As this phenomenon required judgements to be made, a person was positioned externally to a film as an observer (Cohen, 2001). Therefore, because identification involved a viewer temporarily losing awareness of "self" and imaginatively becoming the character, it was not part of the experience of fandom (Cohen, 2001, p. 253).

By comparison, Cohen's (2001) category of Parasocial Interaction (PSI), described a concept that had its origin in mass communications. PSI also did not involve the process of identification, but was rather a process that involved the media user entering into an illusory face-to-face relationship with a media character (Cohen, 2001).

The process of "imitation", in Cohen's (2001) fourth category, involved media users positioning themselves as learners and therefore as "other" (p. 253). When a film viewer imitated film characters, as opposed to empathising or identifying with them, it was behavioural. The viewer was therefore an active participant and external to the film, and accordingly did not engage in the process of identification (Cohen, 2001). Imitation was informed by "experimental psychology and social learning theory" (Cohen, 2001, p. 253).

As reviewed in Chapter 2, several informative studies provided a range of concepts that would be useful to draw upon to inform the theory and practice of using

cinematherapy. The writings of Oatley and Gholamain (1997) and their proposals of the psychological processes involved in film viewing; Eder's (2006) exploration of what was involved when film viewers engaged with film characters; previous research carried out by Cohen (1997) and by Cole and Leets (1999) on the attachment styles of people who form parasocial relationships with media characters, are just a limited selection from the literature.

Film spectatorship however is "not just a psychic phenomenon" (Hayward, 2006, p. 374). From a social constructionist perspective film viewing is inevitably informed by socio-cultural contexts and there are a vast range of factors that play a part (Gergen, 2000; Hesley & Hesley, 2001).

Contextualising the stories

Although some practitioners raised issues related to socio-economic factors such as the client's ability to afford rental movies, and therapists selecting film to suit their client's class and ethnic background, issues related to gender or sexual orientation were not discussed. However these categories were noted in the cinematherapy literature in guidelines for therapists to consider when using film in their work (Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Lampropoulos et al., 2004).

As numerous participants, both viewers and practitioners, spoke about the same films, it was apparent that film provided universally shared stories. Michael and Emily had both been influenced in their undergraduate training by the same film *Patch Adams* (Farrell & Shadyac, 1998). Now working in Hong Kong, Emily said she mainly used "Western" films with her Chinese clients (Emily, 9, ¶5). Lars realised during the interview that he automatically selected U.S. or U.K. films, rather than Danish films (Lars, 11, ¶49), and said he might give that further consideration. Although film was described in the literature as being more influential than organised religion (Hesley & Hesley, 2001), it seemed that other influences have a bearing. For example, out of the 87 films described in the participants' narratives in this study, and in the literature, 70 were produced by U.S. film corporations. Although it is beyond the scope and intention of this study to enter into a discussion on issues such as corporate or cultural hegemony, it was interesting to note that in all the narratives, only one participant, Sarah, mentioned an Australian film. She described using the film *Rabbit Proof Fence* (Noyce & Noyce, 2002) in her lectures, as an effective vehicle to create an awareness with students of "the impact of the Stolen Generation ... They can then think about it in terms of ... how they are going to deal with

situations regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in their practice” (Sarah, 1, ¶81). In Chapter 8 I note the implications and make recommendations for the use of film in therapy with a culturally diverse population.

Despite the numerous socio-cultural factors associated with film, from a social-constructionist perspective the fundamental goal of therapy is to “enable clients to participate in the continuous process of creating and transforming meaning” (Gergen, 1996, p. 215 cited in McLeod, 1997, p. 104). In the following section I examine two narratives which confirm that film has the potential to impact on clients in transformative ways. In both, the client introduced film into therapy, and the therapist’s responsiveness helped to create the necessary conditions for transformation to be possible.

Transforming the self-narrative

In the viewers’ narratives there were indications that if the conditions were right, a client’s unintegrated traumatic experience could be safely transformed into comprehensible symbols through the use of film. As described in Chapter 5, Cordelia suggested that for her the processes involved in relating to film seemed to accord with the complex experience of moving through altered states of consciousness (Cordelia, 5, ¶6). Her shifting awareness of different realities when she dissociated in therapy, came to be symbolically represented in images as she and her therapist entered the metaphorical space of the film. Her identification with the film character helped her to find the groundedness, or embodiment, that she needed:

[A]nd I think the thing that stands out for me is ... when I embodied him in the room, in that moment if you like. Even though it was more than him, it was that sense of, he was, it’s in the title, Master and Commander [Goldwyn & Weir, 2003]. So he was in charge ... he was sure of himself and he was not going to deviate from the path he’d set himself. There was something about that, that was quite embodied, I guess it was about finding a part of myself that was sure, finding a ... grounded part with a sense of purpose and vision. (Cordelia, 5, 21)

For Gwyneth, the ability of her therapist to recognise the significance of her reaction to the film at that stage of her therapy was invaluable:

It was seen through the eyes of the child; and that was what I related to. Because I was being a child at that time. I was a child at that time in therapy, so I was actually, I could see ... ‘Oh my God I know what this child is going through. The parents are there in

physical form but they're not emotionally there'. (Gwyneth, 13, ¶11)

The extracts above, and others in Chapters 4 and 5, reveal valuable insights into how the exploration of film in their personal therapies played an important role for both Cordelia and Gwyneth in developing the ability to identify and express their affective and somatic experiences. The inability to determine and express emotions (alexithymia) has been associated with the effects of psychological trauma (Mearns, 2001). The results of traumatic experience being symbolically “unformulated” (Stern, 2006, p. 83) can contribute to dissociation, and somatisation of memories (Van der Kolk, 1996). Bringing film into the therapeutic space can help address these issues.

For Cordelia and Gwyneth film seemed to have triggered “implicit memory”. Implicit memory is unconscious, and when “evoked by contextual cues, it is experienced in the present, without awareness of its origins in the past” (Mearns, 2001, p. 102). Although Cordelia and Gwyneth had introduced the discussion of film into their own respective therapies, their therapists had responded and the subsequent co-exploration of the films had provided these participants with an effective framework through which they could contextualize traumatic experience and make new meaning.

Gwyneth’s and Cordelia’s stories were also examples of a client conveying significant information to a therapist through the metaphorical language of film. As Gwyneth explained, the age of the protagonist in the film that had evoked a strong affective response from her, had corresponded with the developmental stage that she was going through in therapy. As Cordelia realised, in her narrative in Chapter 5, she had “*internalised*” her therapist (Cordelia, 5, ¶6), and while overcome with shame in a dissociated state, the metaphor of the “Captain” had conveyed an intense transference reaction. It seemed that film had provided Cordelia a space which made it possible for the idealising of her therapist to be worked through, without subjecting her to being further shamed. She said she “*had found a concrete visible character that I could identify with, and kind of put all my eggs in one basket*” (Cordelia, 5, ¶6). It seemed as though the film had provided a concretised object which made it possible for her to cope with the powerful affects she experienced in therapy. It had provided the possibility of contextualising the traumatic experience. “When trauma becomes part of metaphor, we become able to sense it as a figure against a ground” (Stern, 2009, p. 83).

It is important to note that in both of the above examples the films had been introduced by the client. The client-introduced stories of films, in the categories in the cinematherapy models and in the case studies, were often conceptualised within the context of “client-generated metaphor” (Heston & Kottman, 1997, p. 93). This was also considered to be similar to a client introducing a dream, and theoretically based on the conception of dreaming from a psychodynamic approach (e.g., Wolz, 2010). The therapist’s role in both cases was to help deepen and process the experience.

The client’s experience of film, and the principles of strength-based practice which acknowledged the client’s strengths and self-determination, was emphasised by Fleming and Bohnel (2009). They argued that the use of film as an assessment tool with clients who were psychotic was effective if it was applied through those assumptions (Fleming and Bohnel, 2009). Although those authors claimed that cinematherapy was generally discussed as a prescriptive technique, there were however several examples in the cinematherapy literature, presented in Chapter 2, in which client-initiated film discussion was described (e.g., Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Duffey & Trepal, 2008; Heston & Kottman, 1997; Powell, 2008; Suarez, 2003; Wolz, 2010).

Nonetheless cinematherapy was usually considered to be the selection and therapeutic use of films from the perspective of being practitioner-initiated. Only a few authors however, as noted by Portadin (2006), actually provided a specific definition of cinematherapy as being a technique involving a counsellor or psychotherapist selecting films for clients to view (e.g., Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Schulenberg, 2003; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). A therapist-recommended film however suggests a therapist-generated metaphor, and this stimulated contrasting opinions in the practitioners’ narratives, and evoked interesting perspectives in a viewer’s narrative.

Therapist-supplied stories

Patrick thought that the concept of a therapist introducing a film was totally different to that of a client bringing up the subject of a film in therapy, as indeed he had in his own personal therapy: “*When my patients bring it to me, or when I take it to my therapist, it’s me, I own it, or they own it. And it stays that way*” (Patrick, 2, ¶119). From a client’s perspective Cordelia described how she experienced the difference:

Much more internalised and deep, the one that I brought to the therapy. The ones that he suggested or mandated or whatever, they were sort of like soy sauce in a stir-fry,

more than the protein. They were like adding flavour and enriching the experience, deepening it at times, but obviously it's not even as vivid for me now. (Cordelia, 5, ¶14)

However when Cordelia considered a particular film that her therapist had suggested, she gave it further thought:

I don't think I've ever finished that bit of work and I might go and watch it again. So I think there was some resistance in me, like there's a bit of left-over stuff. So I'm curious enough to think that I might just watch it again. I might be in a different place, because it was years ago. (Cordelia, 5, ¶6)

As noted in previous chapters the use of “therapist supplied stories” is an established practice in counselling and psychotherapy which has traditionally taken the form of techniques such as bibliotherapy (McLeod, 1997, p. 80). For McLeod (1997) using such techniques could be an effective approach because it recognised “the role of narrative in therapy” (p. 76) and assisted a client to use an alternative narrative as a framework in order build a preferred story.

Charles' use of film as a pedagogical tool was related to the idea of cultural or universal stories. As described in Chapter 6, Charles introduced his counselling students to the ideas of “*classic mythology*” through the use of films when he presented “*analysis of life via mythology*” (Charles, 15, ¶61). In his current position teaching in a Hong Kong university, he was considering using films made by “*Jackie Chan*” because “*there's a lot of classic mythology in his movies*” (Charles, 15, ¶64). By choosing a popular film, Charles' approach could deflect censure by some narrative therapists concerned about the use of “*mythic stories*” in therapy (McLeod, 1997, p. 80). As discussed in Chapter 2, that criticism centred on the assumption that clients would know the “*classical*” texts, texts that are usually available to “*middle class members of the dominant white anglo-saxon cultural group, but are less relevant to other people*” (McLeod, 1997, p. 60).

However, there was some criticism in the literature about the use of therapist-introduced metaphor through the prescriptive use of film (e.g., Fleming & Bohnel, 2009). As discussed in Chapter 2, this was also an issue noted by psychoanalytically oriented therapists who considered it countertransferential (Hyler, 1999), and discussion of films with a client was provided as an example of a boundary violation (Quadrio, 2004). While the latter example was suggested within the context of advising therapists to monitor their motivations for social conversation in the

therapy session, it nonetheless implied that the clinical use of movies, at least for a psychoanalytically oriented therapist, may well be inappropriate. While there was contrasting psychoanalytic opinion from a Jungian perspective (e.g., Hauke (2009), the notion of a therapist recommending a film to a client was nonetheless presented with a caveat. Fundamentally it relied on timing—the therapist needed to be mindful of not prematurely offering an image of the client’s issue before the client had time to make his or her own meaning (Hauke, 2009). While the above examples specifically represent psychoanalytic viewpoints, they do raise more general questions about the role of film in therapy and the therapeutic relationship. In the practitioners’ narratives there were comments on this issue.

The therapeutic relationship

Prior to our interview Patrick had not heard of cinematherapy, and did not contextualise his responses to a client’s discussion of film from that framework. As illustrated in Chapter 6 and earlier in this chapter, he valued the shared experience that film could provide in therapy, and throughout his narrative there were examples of his empathic interpretations of his clients’ experiences of film.

However, Patrick was concerned about the potential for therapists to disrupt the therapeutic relationship by recommending a film, particularly if a film was suggested in the first phase of therapy while the client could be establishing an “*idealising*” transference towards the therapist (Patrick, 2, ¶65). As Patrick worked with his clients in long-term psychotherapy from a contemporary psychoanalytical approach, his comment suggested that he was referring to one of Kohut’s (1971) self psychology concepts. Kohut (1971) considered the initial stage of therapy to be a critical one, and that it was important for the “*idealizing transference*” to be allowed to develop without any active intervention from the therapist (p. 164-165).

Although Birgit provided both brief, time-limited therapy and long-term therapy, she did not recommend film in the early stage of working with a client. However her decision had a different basis: “*Well I wouldn’t start with it right away ... I need to get to know the person for a while to get a sense of whether they are open to that kind of work*” (Birgit, 4, ¶36).

As noted earlier, Hauke (2009) from a Jungian perspective, emphasised the importance of timing with regard to therapist-introduced film. However he offered an alternative viewpoint of the potential disjunction that could occur in the therapeutic relationship: “*The therapist will have their own personal associations*

which may be useful or a hindrance, but the therapist's subjective reaction to a patient's dream can be equally interrupting" (Hauke, 2009, p. 53).

It was interesting to find in this study that practitioners from different orientations considered it important to see the films that their clients had discussed. This was mentioned by Virginia, and despite his reservations about the prescriptive use of film and the potential disruptions this could create in the therapeutic relationship, Patrick considered it important to see the films that had affected his client: *I needed to have seen the film so I could just ... I could be in the story with him* (Patrick, 2, ¶19). As described in Chapter 2, for clients to be able to experience the therapist "witness" (Hauke, 2009, p. 52) the film or film scene that has significant relevance to them, could have beneficial effects. By following the line that "without a witness, no experience can be 'heard' " (Stern, 2009, p. 83), for therapists to view the films that are meaningful to their clients could assist the latter to make emotional sense of experience.

The need to maintain ethical boundaries was also raised in the practitioners' stories. Patrick and Lars were both aware of the powerful impact that some films had upon them, and the potential countertransference this could create in their work with clients. As illustrated in the practitioners' narratives in Chapter 6, there were also times that they had not enjoyed films their clients had recommended. While Patrick was concerned about the negative effect this could have on the therapeutic relationship, Virginia had discovered that an incongruent response to a film could provide new information about a client, and enhance the therapeutic alliance. A similar perspective was found in the cinematherapy literature where Hesley and Hesley (2001) noted the potential for positive outcomes when a therapist and client explored their different perspectives of a film.

Patrick was also concerned whether there was an obvious power differential between therapist and client, and the latter was rendered compliant. An alternative perspective was offered in the literature, where some authors suggested that it could have an equalising effect when a client discussed film with a therapist, as it equalised the power differential by shifting the focus from the therapist-as-expert (Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Hesley & Hesley, 2001).

Charles emphasised the importance of a follow-up session with the client after assigning a film homework assignment, to enable processing of the client's

experience of the film. As discussed in Chapter 2, this was also highlighted in the literature by Lampropoulos et al. (2004), and Yang & Lee (2005).

Several recommendations and cautions were suggested in the literature to therapists wanting to use film with clients (e.g., Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Lampropoulos et al., 2004). Many of these were similar to issues raised by the practitioners in my study, which I shall discuss in the following section.

When cinematherapy is contraindicated

In the practitioners' stories there were very few instances described where the use of film was contraindicated. As previously noted in Chapter 6, Birgit expressed duty of care concerns about assigning a film as homework for clients who had an acute mental illness, because she would not be present when they viewed the film. Lars voiced a similar concern. Charles also had a cautious approach to using film with such clients, but would accept after-hour calls if clients became distressed while watching a film.

Charles probably would not recommend a film if he thought his client lacked the capacity for insight. Michael would not use film if he thought the client did not have the cognitive ability to comprehend metaphor. Birgit did not assign film homework to children, unless they would be carrying it out with family members, because she had concerns about their ability to recall the film's narrative. All of these concerns were supported by the cinematherapy literature (e.g., Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Lampropoulos et al., 2004).

However, as indicated in the literature in Chapter 2, and in the findings of this study, many of those caveats have been challenged. For example, although the age definition of a child was generally not provided, there were numerous examples in the practitioners' narratives, and case studies in the literature, in which film was effectively used with clients described as "younger children" (Byrd et. al., 2006, p. 3). Findings from published case studies also disputed the notion that films could not be used with people with an acute mental illness (e.g., Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Gelkopf et al., 2006), although those studies were conducted in hospital settings.

Despite the differences between the practitioners' use of film in therapy, and whether or not an eclectic framework provided a way to negotiate differences, it seemed that there was a potential for a tentative relationship between the theories and practices involved in cinematherapy. Whether the practitioners adhered to a particular model

of using film or not, what emerged from their narratives (see Chapter 6) was a concern for the lack of empirical credibility in this intervention.

The credibility of cinematherapy

As a clinical psychologist, working from a cognitive-behavioural approach, Virginia sometimes found herself needing to defend the theory behind her use of films in her work as it was regarded dismissively by some colleagues as popular psychology. They were persuaded however, when she likened cinematherapy to other intervention tools such as bibliotherapy with its attendant body of research.

As discussed in Chapter 2, throughout the cinematherapy literature the effectiveness of using film in therapy was often extrapolated from positive outcomes in empirical studies in bibliotherapy (e.g., Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Dermer & Hutchings, 2000; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Heston & Kottman, 1997; Karlinsky, 2003; Sharp et al., 2002; Wolz, 2010). Nonetheless concerns about the lack of research studies in cinematherapy were being expressed since the early literature (Berg-Cross et al., 1990; Fleming & Bohnel, 2009; Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Karlinsky, 2003; Lampropoulos et al., 2004; Pirkis et al., 2005; Portadin, 2006; Powell, 2008; Schulenberg, 2003; Sharp et al., 2002; Wedding & Niemiec, 2003). More recently claims and counter-claims were made about the empirical credibility of cinematherapy (Portadin, 2006; Powell, 2008).

As revealed in the literature review in Chapter 2, there is nonetheless a considerable body of work in the cinematherapy literature. Most of the literature is descriptive, drawing on case studies and clinical vignettes, and there have been several systematic outcome studies conducted specifically on the therapeutic use of film. While the latter are limited in number, each have presented positive findings (e.g., Gelkopf et al., 2006; Jurich & Collins, 1996; Powell et al., 2006; Powell, 2008; Powell & Newgent, 2010; Yang & Lee, 2005).

While several authors proposed a conceptual basis for cinematherapy, they were informed to varying degrees by a range of guiding theories, and sometimes no theoretical support was offered to underpin the concepts. As previously discussed, this was particularly apparent with regard to the psychological processes involved in film viewing, and the types of reactions that film users can have to film characters. In many cases cinematherapy writers are overlooking a relevant body of literature from a range of disciplines (discussed in this study) in which people's responses to film have been researched.

Other considerations in the therapeutic use of film

Two of the practitioners spoke about being inspired to use films in their work after experiencing the effective use of films in their counselling training. Several of the practitioners had presented at conferences or seminars on the use of films as a creative adjunct to therapy, or lectured in counselling or psychotherapy programs and used films as an educational resource. Charles had used film for about 20 years, and *“as a college professor, teaching a master’s degree programme, every one of my classes would have been introduced with a movie”* (Charles, 15, ¶22). Michael made the point that it was inevitable that cinematherapy would become more popular, because it was increasingly being taught in counselling training courses in the United States as an intervention *“technique”* (Michael, 7, ¶105).

Irrespective of previous experience, or training in film and related studies undergone by several of the practitioners in my study, and some of the viewers, what was clearly apparent with most of the participants was their passionate interest in film. It was clear, however, that more than just a love of film was required for a practitioner to use film therapeutically with clients. Apart from any theoretical or therapeutic concerns, there were practical concerns. Virginia spoke about the time-intensive aspect of previewing films, selecting film scenes, and the logistics of arranging the equipment to view movies with her clients.

In order to match films appropriately with clients, it was considered necessary for therapists to view any film before recommending it (Hesley & Hesley, 2001; Lampropoulos et al., 2004). Moreover there were times, as indicated in the practitioners’ narratives in Chapter 6, that a recommended film had the opposite effect to what was intended. While this did not seem to have caused any undue concern in those instances, the need for therapists to preview films was presented in the literature as an ethical issue, and they were advised to protect themselves against the potential risk of complaints made by disgruntled clients (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998).

Therapists were also encouraged to develop the particular skills and knowledge needed for the therapeutic use of film. As outlined in Chapter 2, details were provided on how to become proficient in viewing films *“therapeutically”* (Hesley & Hesley, 2001, p. 29). It was recommended that therapists study the cinematherapy literature, access the relevant internet resources, and undertake continuing

professional development training specifically designed to instruct them in the clinical use of films (Portadin, 2006).

Conclusion

In this chapter I was mindful of my original research questions as I examined the key themes in the diverse range of experiences involving film described in the narratives of the viewers and practitioners. To this end I explored the formative influence of film in all the participants' lives and the impact this had on their being drawn to using this medium in their personal lives, and in a professional context. I have brought together the different ways that the viewers used film as they re-authored their life stories, and shown how practitioners employed film as both a clinical and a pedagogical tool. I have discussed the impact of the theoretical perspectives from which the practitioners used film as an adjunct to their work. I have explored how the use of film in therapy has implications for the therapeutic relationship. I have also examined how the practical application of cinematherapy involved procedures which needed to take into consideration the psychological processes that are involved when a person views a film.

In the next chapter I shall discuss the implications of these findings for counsellors and psychotherapists who wish to use film as a therapeutic tool, and I shall suggest some recommendations for future research in this field.

Chapter 8

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Crying at the movies, I have come to understand, was a way for me to begin to feel the pain of my father's death. The loss I could not acknowledge in my own life I could recognize and react to onscreen. It was as though the sadness I had buried when I was nine years old lay deep within my psyche, waiting for its shadow image to appear in the dreamlike space of the movie theater. Each time this occurred, I felt seized by an emotion I could not control. I cried helplessly and shamelessly, as if I were an actor in the drama unfolding before my eyes.

(Sprenghether, 2002, p. 11)

Introduction

The diverse range of experiences involving film described in the narratives of both the practitioners and the viewers in this study have contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which film might be used as a therapeutic technique by counsellors and psychotherapists, and how clients create meaning from that experience. Additionally, the narratives have exposed the complex emotional experience of film viewing.

By extending the range of participation in this research project to include therapists, clients and others who use film meaningfully in their lives, it was possible to achieve a wider and a more inclusive view of the potential that film has as an intervention in therapy.

The narratives of both viewers and practitioners have implications for the theory and practice of the therapeutic use of film. I shall now discuss the implications of this study, drawn from the findings that support existing evidence, and the new knowledge that has been identified, particularly for counselling and psychotherapy practitioners. I will also make some recommendations for future research.

Implications for a contribution to knowledge

All of the viewers' narratives reflected people who were invested in creating meaning and understanding in their lives through film. Film played a significant role

in their lives. Film had provided these participants with constructive opportunities to explore shifting identities and alternative perspectives as they transitioned through the stages of life and periods of challenge and change. Film viewing had been beneficial in many ways, serving as a source of information, inspiration, support and motivation. Several viewers described how film had helped them to create positive change, providing them with new language and alternative ways of understanding life. Some viewers told of how they felt validated when they had aligned themselves with the film protagonist's circumstances, and of how film had contributed to normalising their situation. For others film had offered a form of escapism which gave them the opportunity to be away from self-focus while they moved through challenging and/or unpredictable times.

All of the viewers spoke of having powerful emotional responses to film, and several described film as an effective mechanism for emotional release. It was a means through which a variety of emotions could be discharged, and a safe space in which intolerable feelings could be explored. A key theme in the viewers' narratives was the processing of difficult emotions through connecting with the emotional experience of a fictional character. The occurrence of this experience in their personal therapy had been invaluable for two viewers, and had created one of the most memorable experiences of their therapy.

These findings from the viewers' narratives add to, and accord with the descriptions of the various therapeutic uses of film described in the practice-oriented case studies and empirical research in the cinematherapy literature. While these findings may support existing knowledge, they also provide new knowledge from the perspectives of film viewers and clients. The viewers' narratives offer a broad range of perspectives that are useful for understanding responses and behaviour specifically related to the experience of film viewing. They also raise questions about current approaches to the theory and practice of cinematherapy found in the literature.

For example several viewers' narratives challenge the criteria favoured by some proponents of cinematherapy, suggesting that clients need to identify with or recognise themselves in a film character or some aspect of the film's narrative, in order to undergo processes of change. While there were numerous examples where viewers had engaged in a process of identification, there were also many examples in which viewers seemed to position themselves externally to the film as conscious observers or learners, using film intentionally for a wide range of purposes. Film had been used as a tool for communication with others; a space in which to observe the

behaviours of others for the purposes of imitation or simulation; and as a means to gain exposure to new cultural stories.

It was evident from the viewers' stories that the processes involved in viewing a film were complex, and that a single explanation of how change occurred would not fit. In several examples it seemed that when the participants experienced identification with film characters it did involve a (temporary) loss of awareness of self and the external world. While that response seems consistent with the notion of "dissociation" put forward by some proponents of cinematherapy, it does highlight the apparent paradox in the requirement, noted in the literature, for the client to be consciously aware while viewing a film for the experience to be beneficial. The viewers' different forms of engagement with film indicated that they were both active and passive in their relationship with film, and when they approached film viewing with conscious awareness, it was usually when they were using film strategically as a means to an end. Nonetheless, when they experienced strong emotional responses to a film by aligning (or identifying) with film characters, this was often followed by entering a reflective space in which this experience was consciously processed, and new meaning was made. This suggests that the paradox can be resolved, and confirms the value of processing the experience after viewing a film. This will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Some viewers' narratives revealed reactions to film that contrasted with the recommendations in the literature that clients need to be matched as closely as possible to a film character and the film's narrative. For example when viewers described being immersed, absorbed, or emotionally transported by film through a process of identification, they did not always align themselves with a film character of the same gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, values, or lifestyle. Practitioners also suggested that one could not predict which films would appeal or resonate with clients.

Several viewers' narratives challenged the notion that film would not be therapeutically effective for a client if it were perceived as entertainment. While seeing a particular film with the primary intention of being entertained, those participants had nonetheless been emotionally transported into the film's narrative involuntarily, and this had led to changes in beliefs and attitudes.

Both viewers and practitioners described an appreciation for metaphor and narrative. Film facilitated the use of metaphor as a device to create new possibilities,

and its capacity to contribute to the creation of new meaning was evident in all the narratives. Throughout the practitioner's narratives there were examples of both directive and nondirective approaches that involved explicit and implicit use of metaphor via film. These findings support the emphasis on metaphor in the cinematherapy literature.

Several examples in the viewers' narratives made clear how important it was for counsellors and psychotherapists not to underestimate the power of the metaphorical content of their clients' film stories. As discussed in Chapter 7, these stories can be significant indicators of transference reactions, and other valuable information that can be conveyed to the therapist by the client through the metaphorical language of film.

The narratives also provided examples of the usefulness of several of Winnicott's (1971) concepts in coming to understand the particular space that can be provided by film. References to the notions of play and transitional space described in Cordelia's and Patrick's narratives suggested the playful, creative space that film could make available to both client and therapist. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, the Winnicottian concepts of the transitional object and the holding environment were also suggested. Not only did film offer an intermediate zone in which a client could define a sense of self, it provided a third space in the therapeutic relationship in which the client and therapist could co-produce meaning often in playful ways. This seemed particularly apparent when the therapist had also seen the film and had joined the client in an intersubjective process, the experience of which contained the possibility of transformation of self. As noted in Chapter 7, Bollas' (1989) notion of the transformational object, elaborated from Winnicott's concepts, offered a relevant perspective for understanding this space (Creme, 1994). Being absorbed in a film and experiencing loss of self in its fantasy world called forth the feelings of the preverbal, presymbolic experience, before separation from the original care-giving parent and entry into a symbolic world (Creme, 1994).

The practitioners' narratives in this study also contribute to new understanding of the core assumptions that underpin the theoretical perspectives of therapists who apply film as an intervention. The examination of the technique of cinematherapy in this study within a broader context, and with a deeper focus, has brought clarity to the fundamental principles underlying the clinical use of film.

Implications and recommendations for practice

The wide range of experiences described by both the viewers and the practitioners in this study, indicate that the use of film as an adjunct in counselling and psychotherapy can be beneficial. Nevertheless, the use of any method of intervention in counselling and psychotherapy is inevitably determined by the frame of reference, approach or model from which a therapist is working. Apart from their own knowledge, skills and preferences, counsellors and psychotherapists draw on theories pertaining to the area in which they practise and the kind of issues they encounter in that setting. In order for counsellors and psychotherapists to be able to use interventions with confidence however, the theoretical, ethical and practical implications need to be considered. These include the needs of the client, the context, stage of therapy, client safety and the potential impact on the therapeutic relationship. With regard to film, the therapist's prior knowledge of a film's content, through personally viewing the film, is considered necessary before considering recommending it to a client.

Most of the practitioners in this study used film in both a spontaneous manner and as an intentional therapeutic technique. An exception was Patrick who only discussed film when clients brought up the subject in therapy. For the other practitioners, film was considered to be one of many intervention tools to use with clients in individual therapy, couples counselling, family and group therapy, and it was also used as a specific intervention method in structured approaches. These practitioners employed film as a projective technique, an indirect way to assist clients to access thoughts and feelings, thereby conceptually a psychodynamic approach. Film viewing was also used as a cognitive-behavioural technique for the purposes of cognitive restructuring, which usually involved overt or covert role modelling. However, the difference in approaches was not always clearly recognised. A parallel can be drawn to the cinematherapy literature in which these different theoretical orientations were frequently brought together into one approach without discussion of the theoretical rationale, or recognition of their difference.

Nonetheless, this study has highlighted that the value of using film is that it can hold different perspectives. (This is similar to narrative, when used in either research or therapy, and similar to metaphor.) Rather than emphasising any dichotomy therefore, it is perhaps more appropriate to point out that, like the ideal in therapy, juxtaposing different perspectives can enable a dialogical, transitional space for

something new to emerge, and assist in opening up a conversation between the different theoretical positions.

It was apparent in the guidelines suggested by the practitioners, and in the cinematherapy literature, that there was both agreement and difference of opinion as to the appropriate use of film. While this emphasises the flexibility of film for a range of client issues and practitioner approaches, the challenge is to have guidelines that ensure ethical practice and clinical competence. The findings from this study can contribute to the development of further criteria for the therapeutic use of film, as well as suggesting the limitations of the approach. This will assist counsellors and psychotherapists in determining the suitability and potential effect of using film as a therapeutic approach with particular clients.

Clear identification of the key principles and theories from which cinematherapy has evolved, the provision of recent knowledge related to the processes involved in film viewing, and the contribution of new knowledge that has emerged from this study, (especially that relating to the client's experience of film) have provided a creative synthesis that can be drawn upon by therapists to address the theoretical, ethical and practical implications of using film as a therapeutic intervention.

It was obvious from the body of literature regarding film spectatorship discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 7, that emotional engagement with a film is an intricate process. Although the film-viewing processes suggested in the cinematherapy approaches, described in both the practitioners' narratives and the literature, are designed to assist therapists in using film in therapy, they have fundamentally relied on an outdated template adapted from bibliotherapy to explain the process of film viewing.

While it is beyond the scope or intention of this study to provide a definitive picture of the theories being developed by philosophy, film, media, communication and social psychology theorists to explain film viewers' cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to film, it has suggested useful insights that counsellors and psychotherapists could employ to inform the practice of using films in their clinical work. From the findings in this study it seems that it could be important to have a relevant approach that is comprehensive, and includes the process of identification, although it is necessary to define what is meant by this term. However it is also necessary to recognise the different psychological processes that people undergo, and the forms of engagement that they have with film. These are all pertinent concepts, and practitioners of counselling and psychotherapy would be wise to have

some understanding of them if they wish to use film in their work with clients. These concepts also have relevance for practitioners who are not interested in the use of film, considering the popularity of film viewing among the general population, as noted in Chapter 1 (George, 2008). Being unaware of them might well result in missed opportunities for deepening the therapeutic relationship or addressing difficult issues.

The findings from this study contribute new knowledge about how and why cinematherapy may help clients, and some understanding of the complex processes involved in film viewing, especially from the perspective of clients, all of which can contribute to clearer guidelines for the use of film in therapy. It confirmed the importance of processing the film experience in the therapy session, whether it was a film story introduced by the client, or a discussion following the completion of a client's film homework assignment. The study also revealed that the impact of film is not always what might be expected, from either the practitioner's or the viewer's perspective; all of which suggests that it could be useful to have professional development in the area and the inclusion of information in training courses. However, this is not a new idea as evidenced in both the practitioners' narratives and the cinematherapy literature.

While it is not necessary for therapists to be thoroughly cognisant of the theories of film spectatorship, cinematherapy's generic framework, originally based on psychoanalytic concepts, may not be compatible with some theoretical orientations. Therapists working with film from cognitive or behavioural approaches, for instance, may be more interested in what the cognitivist film theorists have to say about film viewing. They could be more interested to know how a film incites a stimulus-response pattern in spectators, than to consider the implications of a film's symbolic representations. Those who work from constructivist perspectives may be interested in the shift from spectatorship to subjectivity. With the focus on self-narratives in this study, this has certainly been of interest.

In this study, the references to film providing a third space, a transitional or play space between therapist and client, suggested that an approach to cinematherapy using Winnicottian concepts could be of interest to therapists with a psychoanalytical frame of reference. Winnicott's (1971) concepts have not previously been drawn upon to inform the clinical use of film, but have been of increasing interest to scholars from other disciplines in the examination of film as a cultural phenomenon,

and there is an existing, albeit limited, source of available literature. The findings from this study suggest the value of further research in this area.

Despite the, limited, cultural diversity represented by the group of participants in this study, the majority of films discussed by the viewers and the practitioners were mainstream, U.S.-produced movies, and this predominance was mirrored in the cinematherapy literature. This highlights the need for therapists to consider local cultural and other diversity issues when selecting films for clients. Gender and sexual orientation, the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic and racial groups are frequently stereotyped in films, and therapists need to ask what these representations could convey to a client. From a local perspective there is a resource of Australian films from which therapists could choose, that have cultural relevance and depict a diversity of issues.

As discussed in previous chapters, there were several examples in the cinematherapy literature of initiatives taken, or suggestions made, regarding the involvement of practitioners as consultants to film and television producers and peak professional bodies monitoring negative and positive media portrayals of therapists, therapy and mental illness. While these were located particularly in the United States, similar initiatives could be applied locally in Australia. For example the national peak counselling and psychotherapy bodies could establish a specific committee or role for members who are interested in collaborating with media producers, with the object of raising awareness of the profession, and ensuring that it is portrayed accurately and positively in the media.

Such committees could be involved in activities such as surveying members' responses to media depictions of the profession and its issues. Related activities could be conducted during Mental Health Week, which is conducted annually in October in Australia. As in the United States, awards could be conveyed to those members of the film and television industry considered to have produced works showing mental illness, therapy and therapists, in a positive and accurate way.

My research journey: from maze to montage

When this research project began, it felt like a unique opportunity to draw together the knowledge and experience that I had gained in earlier years of studying and working in film, and to integrate it with my years of training and experience working as a counsellor and psychotherapist. Part of my original attraction to the research subject I had chosen was that I thought I would be exploring familiar territory. It felt

rather ironic therefore, to be contemplating the use of the metaphor of the maze to capture the initial difficulty I encountered in my attempts to find a direction in the world of my inquiry. However, it soon became important to find a more powerful and creative image, and the storytelling device in filmmaking known as montage presented itself as the most appropriate metaphor for my plan to create a single composition that illustrated a relationship of many ideas.

This study has raised my awareness of the importance of the film stories that clients bring to therapy, and the layers of meaning from a film that can be drawn upon to co-construct a new story. I am more appreciative of the role that film can play in the intersubjective space in therapy. I have gained a greater appreciation of the positive change that can be effected with film, and how it is possible to harness this therapeutically. I now recognise that recommending a film to clients who experience difficulties with separation from the therapist could be a useful way of providing a holding environment for the client, and how a film could be used as a transitional object by a client in the therapist's absence.

Conducting this research has presented me with numerous challenges, not the least being that of reconsidering the boundaries of the therapeutic "frame" in which I work as a practitioner of counselling and psychotherapy. In the early stages of my study I felt ambiguous about the prescriptive use of film in therapy, and wondered how practitioners negotiated therapeutic boundaries when using this intervention method. During the few years I have been working on my study, I have observed a radical change in the location of boundaries in therapy with an increasing number of therapists providing online therapy and supervision, and communicating with clients via social networking sites. These changes have been driven by the requirement to integrate contemporary values and worldviews, and as a result of this study I have a greater awareness of the value of film and other media in peoples' lives and I have been inspired to reconsider my therapeutic paradigm.

Reflections on the research methodology

As this is a qualitative study, it relies on specific discourses about validity and reliability, and I have been mindful of meeting the suggested criteria for evaluating a narrative inquiry, as described in Chapter 3. I have therefore provided transparency in the background details of the various contexts in which the texts were located, and the choices that were made in designing and carrying out the study. This study also meets the narrative research criteria by producing multi-perspectival information

from a broad enough range of participants to represent a variety of lived experiences of the research topic.

Certain ethical considerations were intensified in this study by my involvement of two friends and one colleague as participants. Although a certain level of transparency is expected when using a narrative methodology, quite another level of awareness was needed while negotiating how to protect their confidentiality, and preserving our relationships. Another potential ethical dilemma arose when two of the practitioners' were clearly recognisable in the public domain, and it became no longer plausible to continue describing them with pseudonyms. This situation was resolved when both participants gave permission to use their real names.

Although it is not to be expected that generalisations can be drawn from the stories of the limited numbers of participants in this qualitative study, it is argued that the stories illustrate both a complex and meaningful understanding of the therapeutic potential for using film as an intervention in therapy, and that this was made possible through the use of narrative inquiry as a research methodology. One strength of this methodology was the opportunity to co-produce meaning through unstructured conversation with the participants. A limitation has been the amount of time required for the analysis of the stories and the close attention needed for examination of the meaning-making process, and construction of the final representations.

A possible limitation in the findings in this study is due to limited availability of clients to act as participants. There were only two clients who had experienced the use of film in therapy, and both of these were success stories. However, because of the limited numbers I expanded my sampling strategy by opening it up to include people who had used film meaningfully throughout their lives. This provided a broad and rich source of wider life narratives of people's experiences with film. Even though they were not therapy clients, they were engaging therapeutically with film and their insights were helpful.

Implications for future research

All of the viewers in this study were avid film viewers, and this may have influenced the findings. They were also well educated, either currently attending university or having completed post graduate studies. Future research could be undertaken using less educated film viewers with a more conventional knowledge of film.

The viewers were invited to be participants in this study because they were film viewers whose lives had been influenced by film in meaningful, though not necessarily therapeutic ways. Research projects could be designed to study film viewers who intentionally engage in therapeutic film viewing as a self-help technique, or have experienced the benefits of viewing film specifically when dealing with adverse life circumstances. Such research could focus on specific areas such as Loss and Grief, Anxiety and/or Depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Relationship Issues.

All of the viewers were over the age of 18 years. Some of the research and case studies cited in the cinematherapy literature reported on the effects of using film therapeutically with children and young people. Future research could be designed to discover how a younger demographic group experiences film and makes meaning from the experience.

There were examples in the practitioners' narratives, and studies cited in the cinematherapy literature that described the use of film with clients both in individual therapy, and in group settings. Subsequent research could aim to compare the differences between the use of film in these two therapy formats, to determine which of them is more effective.

To my knowledge there have been no surveys conducted in Australia of counsellors' and psychotherapists' use of film in therapy, or in training courses. A survey could therefore be conducted in Australia, also designed to collect data from the participants as to their use of Australian films in those contexts, and to canvass their recommendations of particular films for particular issues.

Conclusion

In this study a diverse variety of participants including therapists, clients and others who used film meaningfully in their lives, have been interviewed in order to gain knowledge of, and understand, the potential that film has to be used as an intervention in counselling and psychotherapy.

Due to the limited availability of therapists in Australia who are known to use film in their work, I also sought international therapists who provided a wealth of information and a rich source of knowledge that has informed this study. Clients shared stories of their transformational experiences with film in their therapy, and

other participants conveyed a diversity of experiences with film, all of which have been a valuable contribution, and made this study possible.

In addition to theories related to counselling and psychotherapy, and those theories that have informed my methodology, it was valuable to bring together literature from the field of cinematherapy with relevant literature from communication theory, film and media studies, cultural studies, various branches of psychology, and the sub-discipline of philosophy of film. Not only did this approach provide a valuable source of texts, it has created an expanded space in which researchers and therapists can consider the therapeutic use of film.

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A p p e n d i c e s

Appendix A:(2 pages)
Information sheet for individual participants.

Appendix B:(2 pages)
Information sheet for focus group participants.

Appendix C:(2 pages)
Information sheet for counselling and psychotherapy practitioners

Appendix D:(1 page)
Consent form.

Appendix E:(1 page)
Interview guide for individuals and the focus group

Appendix F:(1 page)
Interview guide for counsellors and psychotherapists

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Supervisors: Dr. Frances Mackay
Dr. Ann Moir-Bussy
Researcher: Jillian Lynch

The following information is regarding research I am undertaking in the potential usefulness of films as a counselling and psychotherapy intervention.

This research has three aspects:

1. Focus Group – to explore how people are influenced by films.
2. Interviews with individuals to explore how they are influenced by films.
3. Interviews with clinical practitioners to explore their use of films as a therapeutic tool, in their counselling and psychotherapy practices.

The following information is directed to individual participants:

In order to obtain information related to this topic I will be conducting interviews with people whose lives have been impacted in some way by films, or who use films to develop insight into problems or release emotions, including those who have experienced the use of films in personal therapy.

The interview will be approximately 60 minutes, and will be audio taped and transcribed. I will provide a copy of the typed transcript of the interviews to the participants, should you wish to make alterations or additions.

As I will ask participants to describe experiences of the impact of films on their lives, this may be experienced as emotionally evocative, and could create varying levels of discomfort. You will not be expected to disclose any information that you feel could put you at risk in your professional or social relations. Contact details and a list of area Community Health Centre counsellors, and telephone counselling services, will be provided to you, so you can contact a counsellor, should you experience any emotional difficulty arising from this group participation.

- Participation in this research is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, either temporarily or permanently.

Open to change - Open to challenges - Open to our Communities



THE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW ENGLAND

School of Health
Armidale, NSW 2351 Australia

Head of School: Dr Jeanne Madison

- All identifying information will be removed from the research report prior to any publications. Each participant will be identified with the use of pseudonyms. If direct quotations from the interviews are used, the source will be identified as female or male of an approximate age.
- Any location will be identified generically e.g. "a large coastal area" or "capital city".
- Transcriptions of interviews will be identified using a numeric code system.
- Audio tape recordings will be erased once they have been transcribed, and all documents pertaining to the study will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location at my home office for 5 years and then destroyed.
- You must be 18 years or older to participate
- The research is expected to be completed by July, 2010 . Should participants wish to obtain a copy, I will forward one at their request.

This project originally approved by the Human Research Ethics committee of the University of New England (Approval No: HE07/194 Valid to 19/11/2008) and an extension to this date was approved (Approval No: HE07/194 Valid to 19/2/2009)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Service,
University of New England
Armidale N.S.W. 2351
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: Ethics@pobox.une.edu.au

Should you wish to participate in this study, please sign the consent form below and return to me at the following address.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Jillian Lynch
P.O. Box 7312,
Leura NSW.
Ph: 0414 881010 or email: jlynch5@une.edu.au

Open to change - Open to challenges - Open to our Communities

INFORMATION SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Supervisors: Dr. Frances Mackay
Dr. Ann Moir-Bussy
Researcher: Jillian Lynch

The Use of Movies as a Counselling and Psychotherapy Intervention

Thank you for your interest in this research I am undertaking on the potential usefulness of movies as a counselling and psychotherapy intervention.

This research has two aspects:

1. Focus Groups to explore how people are influenced by films, and
2. Individual interviews with clinical practitioners to explore their use of films as a therapeutic tool in their counselling and psychotherapy practices.

The following information is for those who may be interested in participating in the focus groups.

To obtain information related to this topic I will be conducting focus groups with people whose lives have been impacted in some way by movies. These sessions will be audio taped and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. I will provide a copy of the typed transcript of the focus group for the participants, should you wish to make alterations or additions.

The group session will last approximately 90 minutes, and there will be a maximum of 10 people. As the participants are being invited from your film group, you will more than likely know each other.

You will not be expected to disclose any information that you feel could put you at risk in your professional or social relations. As I will be asking participants to describe experiences of the impact of films on their lives, however, this may be experienced as emotionally evocative, and could create varying levels of discomfort. Contact details and a list of area Community Health Centre counsellors, and telephone counselling services, will be provided, so you can contact a counsellor, should you experience any emotional difficulty arising from this group participation.

Participation in this research is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, either temporarily or permanently. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

In the interest of confidentiality, the following procedures will be followed:

- All identifying information will be removed from the research report prior to any publication. Each participant will be identified with the use of pseudonyms.
- If direct quotations from the interviews are used, the source will be identified only as female or male of an approximate age.
- Any location will be identified generically e.g. “a large coastal area” or “capital city”.
- Transcriptions of interviews will be identified using a numeric code system.
- Audio tape recordings will be erased once they have been transcribed, and all documents pertaining to the study will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location at my home office for 5 years and then destroyed.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics committee of the University of New England (Approval No: HE07/194 Valid to 19/11/2008)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Service,
University of New England
Armidale N.S.W. 2351
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: Ethics@pobox.une.edu.au

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Leura NSW.
Ph: 0414 881010 or email: jlynch5@une.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,
Jillian.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR THERAPIST PARTICIPANTS

Supervisors: Dr. Frances Mackay
Dr. Ann Moir-Bussy
Researcher: Jillian Lynch

The Use of Movies as a Counselling and Psychotherapy Intervention

Thank you for your interest in this research I am undertaking on the potential usefulness of movies as a counselling and psychotherapy intervention. Let me introduce myself. I hold a Bachelor of Counselling (UNE), a graduate Diploma of Adult Psychotherapy (ANZAP), and a Bachelor of Communications (UTS), and am currently enrolled in a Research Masters in Counselling (Hons) at the University of New England.

This research has two aspects:

1. Focus Groups to explore how people are influenced by films, and
2. Individual interviews with clinical practitioners to explore their use of films as a therapeutic tool in their counselling and psychotherapy practices.

The aims of the research are to explore:

- The potential of films to initiate positive change for people;
- The areas of therapeutic work in which films might be particularly helpful;
- How counsellors and psychotherapists might utilise movies in their work.

The interviews with therapists will last approximately 60 minutes. These will be audio taped and transcribed, and I will provide a copy of the typed transcript of the interviews to the participants, should you wish to make alterations or additions.

In considering whether you wish to be involved in this research, please note the following:

- Participation in this research is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, either temporarily or permanently.
- All identifying information will be removed from the research report prior to any publication. Each participant will be identified with the use of pseudonyms.
- If direct quotations from the interviews are used, the source will be identified only as female or male of an approximate age.
- Any location will be identified generically e.g. “a large coastal area” or “capital city”.
- Transcriptions of interviews will be identified using a numeric code system.
- Audio tape recordings will be erased once they have been transcribed, and all documents pertaining to the study will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location at my home office for 5 years and then destroyed.

- Participants must be 18 years or older.
- The research is expected to be completed by February 2009.
- This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics committee of the University of New England (Approval No: HE07/194 Valid to 19/11/2008)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

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Yours sincerely,
Jillian.



THE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW ENGLAND

School of Health
Armidale, NSW 2351 Australia

Head of School: Dr Jeanne Madison

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information contained in the above Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published, provided my name is not used.

- I agree to be audio taped, and have been advised that all audio tape recordings will be erased once they have been transcribed.*
- I am 18 years of age or older*

.....
Participant	Date
.....
Investigator	Date

A p p e n d i x E

I n t e r v i e w G u i d e f o r I n d i v i d u a l s a n d t h e F o c u s G r o u p

Opening question:

- Can you tell me how film influences your life?

Prompts could include:

- Can you recall the first time you felt emotionally affected by watching a film?
- What did you think about this experience?
- How do films inspire you to make changes in your life?
- What have you learnt from films that you have been able to apply to your life?
- In what ways have films influenced your attitudes or beliefs?
- How important are films in terms of your well being?
- What moment in a film has stayed with you above all others, and why?

A p p e n d i x F

I n t e r v i e w G u i d e f o r C o u n s e l l o r s a n d P s y c h o t h e r a p i s t s

Opening question:

- Can you tell me how you utilise film in your work with clients?

Prompts could include:

- If you utilise this approach as an adjunctive technique, how do you decide which clients would benefit?
- What are the issues that clients bring to therapy that seem to be particularly suited to this approach?
- What advantages have you experienced using films in your work with clients?
- What disadvantages have you experienced using films in your work with clients?
- Has there been an occasion when you realised that this approach made a profound difference?
- How have films influenced your life?