A Qualitative Exploration of Facilitators' Experiences of Using the Tree of Life Methodology within Global Community Contexts.

Kirsty Stubbs

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who so humbly yet courageously facilitate the Tree of Life methodology, touching uncountable numbers of lives around the globe.

To the nineteen participants who joined and contributed so much to this thesis, you have simultaneously invigorated, moved and transformed me. Thank you for trusting me, for sharing yourselves alongside your work and for being part of a community of ongoing connection. This is but only the start!

Figure 1

A Cartoon Sketch of Tree of Life Facilitators and Dedication
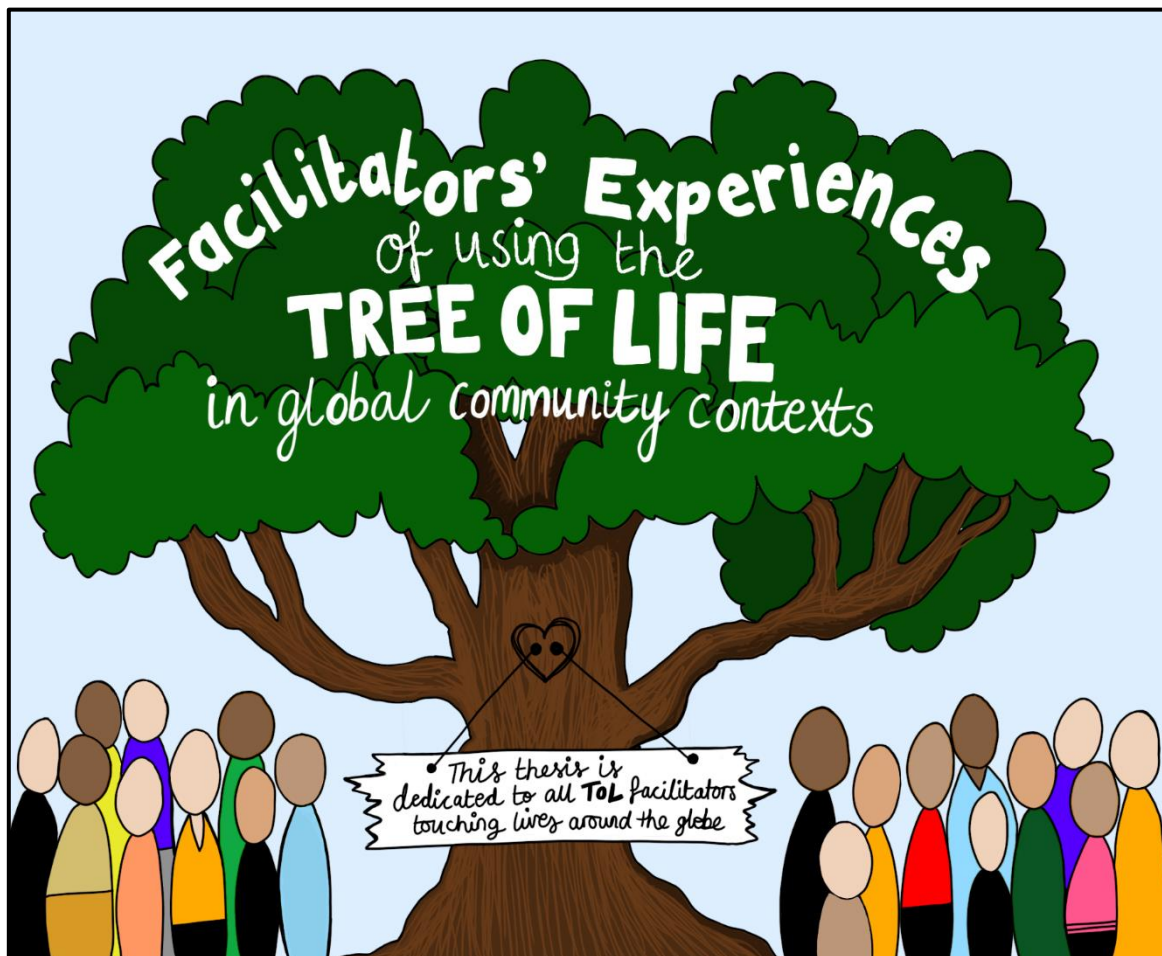
Acknowledgements

The realisation of this thesis has depended on a multitude of wonderful people. The leaves and the fruits of my 'Tree of Life' will be permanently adorned with you all and the array of gifts you have offered.

To my research team, I could not have asked for a stronger, more inspiring group of women to be guided by. Thank you for helping me keep my values firmly at the forefront of this inquiry ('on my sleeves', where I hope they'll stay). Specifically, to Ncazelo, it has been beyond a privilege to work alongside you. Thank you for shining a light on the important histories that came before and alongside this research, for your enduring wisdom and gentle encouragement. To Maria, thank you for joining alongside me as an 'ideas' person, full of honesty and led by justice, always reminding me that my uniqueness can be my power. To Chancy, thank you for supporting me to remain balanced and human, whilst never shying away from saying it how it is. I will carry some of your vivacious spirit with me from here. To Becky, thank you for your compassion towards my quirks and for providing a containing anchor in the stormy sea; it can't have been easy to have entered the 'party' a little later than the rest of us, but your reliable presence has been invaluable.

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To those who have been witness to this journey…

To my family, the hardships you have encountered and grown through with courage have forged a road for me to walk upon. The possibilities you dreamt up for me have always felt infinite, and for that I am profoundly grateful. I hope to have made you proud becoming the first 'Dr' in the family. A notable thank you to my Mommabear for the extra special hugs, 'magic' cups of tea and a place of nurture to retreat to when I lost hope.

To my friends, thank you for taking my disappearance in your stride and without (too much) judgement. I promise to return back to 'real life' pronto! To a few in particular, who have truly been alongside me in this journey: Rose, Ladan & Sylvia, your solidarity through the struggle has meant the world to me and you have each held me up at times I lost strength. Thank you for your endless belief in me.

My old school motto *'E Glandibus Quercus'* (meaning 'out of an acorn, an oak tree grows') inspires me daily to move with small steps towards bigger change. However, it is only in connection with others that we remain sustained and can move mountains. So to those who surround me, I am forever thankful for our togetherness… Onwards we travel!

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Abstract

The Tree of Life methodology (ToL) is a Collective Narrative Practice developed to support communities to respond to collective hardships and trauma from a place of strength. In seeking more culturally-appropriate, localised, community-centred approaches towards global mental health provision, ToL has great potential. However, whilst there is a growing knowledge base regarding ToL, there is a sparsity of empirical literature. In particular, little is known about what leads practitioners to use ToL and how they experience the possibilities of its use in community contexts, both important knowledge(s) to support the understanding, deconstruction, improvement and future uptake of the methodology. Using semi-structured interviews, this inquiry sought the experiences of 19 practitioners, who work(ed) across 16 different countries using ToL in community contexts. The inquiry aimed, specifically, to understand the personal and professional impact of this work, the opportunities and challenges afforded by ToL, whether the practice differs from other practices, and what leads people to use ToL within community contexts. A Reflexive Thematic Analysis of the conversations with practitioners constructed three main themes: 'Encountering Possibility', 'A Contrasting Way of Being and Doing', and 'Shared Humanity'. Eleven respective sub-themes were constructed, and together the analysis told a story that practitioners experience the methodology as one of 'possibility', different to other approaches in the way practitioners are able to work and be alongside others, sharing their stories in an authentic way and contributing to a joint humanity that leads to both connection and action. Implications for practitioners, the continued use of ToL, clinical psychology and the wider context were outlined. A critical appraisal and several possibilities for future inquiry were presented.

nce upon a time…

A beginning of sorts.

This thesis, like most stories, could have many beginnings. Perhaps it began in an infant school library with a young girl, proud as punch, feeling connected as she took on her first voluntary position of a lunch time 'library monitor'. Possibly it was dreamt up whilst a teenager danced around the wheelchair of a much-loved family member, witnessing only love and joy despite no possibility to exchange words. Maybe it started in a tin roofed hut in a 'garbage slum' in Kenya, as a young woman heard generous stories and songs of hope, strength and triumph amongst hardship.

That girl, teenager, young woman are all one person, the researcher, surrounded by a rich web of interweaving interpersonal connections, experiences and values that have each influenced the conception and writing of this text.

It is without question that, similarly, the tapestry of connections, experiences and values linked to each reader of this text will also play a part in how it is read, the meanings constructed from the words within or the potential influence of the inquiry documented. One can only hope, as with any worthwhile read, this text opens up new possibilities, creating ripples that travel beyond it's words.

1. Introduction

1.1. Chapter Overview

This first chapter 'sets the scene' for the research inquiry that follows, an exploration of facilitators' experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology (ToL)[1] within global community contexts. I begin by outlining the 'roots' of the research, reflexively positioning myself and detailing the research's philosophical stance. Relevant key terms referenced within this text are outlined, followed by pertinent theory, literature and policy in relation to global mental health, community work, Narrative Therapy (NT)[2] and ToL. The role of practitioners and the impact that particular ways of working may have, are discussed throughout. This chapter aims to help situate the research within its broader contexts as well as to orientate the reader to this under-researched area of study.

1.2. The Roots: Tracing the Values & Philosophical Assumptions of This Research

"The wind doesn't blow to make trees dance but to test their roots" – Imam Ali

Without doubt the roots of this research – the underpinning histories and values, my own positionality and philosophical stance – were fundamental to the inception of this inquiry and are woven throughout each stage of the research journey. These roots have enabled and influenced the completion of this thesis despite the 'blowing winds'. Thus, it is here I begin.

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[1] The Tree of Life methodology will be abbreviated to ToL throughout for brevity, from this point onwards.
[2] Narrative Therapy will be abbreviated to NT throughout for brevity, from this point onwards.

1.2.1. Positionality

To use Cromby and Nightingale's (1999) words: "*what follows is a story, and alternative stories could be told*" (p. 2). "*Where, when and how*" I am socially located (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019, p. 1) - my positionality - will have impacted the story of this inquiry. Being a white-British, UK-born and based, working class female is a position that affords me several privileges. Without a doubt, these identities have influenced how I have interacted with knowledge and how I have perceived and been perceived by participants. Rather than attempting to eliminate potential bias, as a result of my own influence, I have attempted to embrace and share my reflexive thoughts (Gough & Madill, 2012). Jacobson and Mustafa's (2019) Social Identity Map enabled me to reflect more fully on the impact of my intersecting identities. My map and further reflexive discussion surrounding my positionality and my journey to this topic are documented in Appendix A (part 1 and 2).

1.2.1.1. In the Middle of an 'Insider' and 'Outsider' Researcher.

My identities and experiences construct my position as an 'insider' or 'outsider' to this inquiry (Subreenduth & Rhee, 2010). Many of my experiences have afforded me "a tangible link to the context" of my participants (Naidu & Sliep, 2011, pg. 433). Community work has shaped my personal and professional identities and my connections with others from a young age; in it I have found belonging, acceptance and the hope of a more just world. Furthermore, I have had the opportunity to learn, in some depth, about narrative practice and ToL through my DClinPsy, additional trainings[3] and my own clinical practice. These experiences essentially position me as an 'insider' researcher. However, I am not experienced in applying narrative practice or ToL within community contexts. Similarly, I am

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[3] including undertaking the Advanced ToL Practitioner training, a 5 day comprehensive training on ToL offered by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo.

different in many ways to most participants, least of all in relation to the societies and cultures that influence us. These aspects position me as an 'outsider' researcher. Breen (2007) helpfully conceptualises this as being 'in the middle', neither an 'insider' or 'outsider', a position she states as having the maximum advantage, minimal disadvantage. Being transparent about my positionality and reflexive about its influence has enabled me to navigate this 'middle' position.

1.2.2. Philosophical Assumptions

Understanding and stipulating the philosophical assumptions underpinning an inquiry helps both the researcher and reader to ascertain how certain they can be about the nature and existence of what is being researched (ontology) and how the research is framed in its attempts to discover knowledge (epistemology) (Moon & Blackman, 2014). This research adopts a social constructionist philosophical stance. In contrast with positivist assumptions, which seek a singular, measurable reality where meaning exists independent of context (Moon & Blackman, 2014), a social constructionist stance affords a questioning approach towards taken for granted knowledge (Gergen, 1985). Gergen (1985) suggested that meaning and knowledge are intersubjectively shared and shaped. It is therefore in the dialectic, collaborative relationship between myself and participants where I believe knowledge has been co-constructed (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998).

A social constructionist stance was considered appropriate for this research, as it is in keeping with the philosophy of post-modern NT. Michael White (1992) proposed that "*an objective knowledge of the world is not possible; that knowledges are actually generated in particular discursive fields in specific cultures at specific times*" (p.40). As such, this inquiry aimed to explore and describe local knowledge(s) as opposed to striving to uncover an

'objective reality' (Tootell, 2004). Social constructionism also supports an understanding of the intricacies and complexities of a globalized world, allowing for research to be *"…grounded in historically specific and culturally relevant knowledge…"* (Karnilowicz et al., 2014, p. 6). This is pertinent given the histories of ToL and the global nature of this research.

1.2.3. A Combination of Rigour and Creative Storytelling

I see this inquiry as both an academic endeavour, influenced by the expectations and boundaries of an academic text, and as work bound up in the richly political, ethics-driven practice(s) enacted in the narrative world. Throughout, I have attempted to interweave traditional, rigorous research practices with storytelling and creative documentation to combine the two worlds of NT and academia for the reader. Following Wisker's (2016) invitation, I have attempted for this contribution to be "*recognisable enough, acceptable to the academy and the discipline, and also flexible, responsive, creative enough to enable… [my] knowledge construction to make a genuinely original contribution*" (pg.3).

1.3. Language as an Anchor

Within a social constructionist framework, language is considered a principal tool in the construction of the 'truths' that guide everyday life (Gergen, 2001). The words within this thesis have the power to narrate meaning. As such, I have attended closely to the use of language throughout. Below I outline the key terms that act as an anchor during this inquiry; each are defined or explored in relation to their use.

1.3.1. Facilitator and Practitioner

This inquiry sought the perspectives of ToL facilitators. A 'facilitator' should be understood as "*someone…that facilitates something, especially someone who helps to bring about an outcome (such as learning, productivity, or communication) by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision*" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). This definition felt pertinent to a facilitator's role within ToL, as one that is decentred rather than direct. Within this thesis the term 'facilitator' is used interchangeably with 'practitioner', as both terms are used commonly within NT to refer to the person carrying out the practice. Terms such as 'therapist', 'professional', 'worker' or specific job titles have been avoided as these labels were not applicable to all participants.

1.3.2. NT, Narrative Practice, Narrative Approaches

This inquiry centred around ToL which is strongly influenced by NT. Whilst there are many psychological approaches that make use of narrative (Kahle & Robbins, 1998), NT, within this research, refers specifically to the theoretical approach developed by Michael White and David Epston (M. White & Epston, 1990). This is discussed further in section 1.4.5. The terms NT, narrative practice and narrative approach(es) are used interchangeably and refer to the same ways of working and theoretical underpinnings.

1.3.3. Community Context

This inquiry focused specifically on facilitators who have worked/are working within a 'community context'. Whilst it is hard to put a distinct framework around this, for the purposes of this research it is used as a term to locate those who work within or alongside communities in ways aligned to community work. The Community Work and Social Change Report (Younghusband & Gulbenkian, 1968) details a relevant definition of community

work, as *"helping local people to decide, plan and take action to meet their own needs with the help of available outside resources; helping local services to become more effective, usable and accessible to those whose needs they are trying to meet"* (pg.149). Within this thesis, the term 'community context' was operationalised to seek those working in grassroots, bottom-up ways, meeting people in their local context as opposed to expecting them to journey to the facilitator (e.g. at a clinic base). It also, more broadly refers to the ways in which power is considered within the work, with the placing of expertise within communities as opposed to within a professional 'expert'. Denborough (personal communication, 3rd December 2020) shared that it is perhaps more appropriate to define what a community context is not, as opposed to an exhaustive attempt to contain what it can be. As such, throughout recruitment (detailed further in Chapter 3, section 3.5.3) I relied on participants self-identifying as working within these ways, only excluding those who were working in ways or settings clearly opposed to the conceptualisation above.

1.4. The Ground: Situating the Research in Context

The remainder of this chapter outlines relevant research, policy and conceptual ideas that help to construct the current context or 'the ground' of the inquiry that follows.

1.4.1. Global Mental Health & The 'Treatment Gap'

Understanding mental health provision internationally has been the primary task of the 'global mental health' (GMH) movement for several decades (Chisholm et al., 2007; Patel & Prince, 2010). With over 90% of the world's mental health resources located in high-income countries, despite 80% of the world's population living in low to middle-income countries (Saxena et al., 2007), the GMH movement have focused on closing a so-called

'treatment gap' (Kohn et al., 2004; Patel et al., 2010). This gap measures 'unmet need'

(Pathare et al., 2018). It refers to those who require mental health 'treatment' but do not

receive it, due to shortages in human resource (e.g. a lack of adequately trained 'experts') or

research capacity, stigma and disjointed service delivery models (Wainberg et al., 2017) .

The WHO remain committed to building capacity, scaling up interventions, advocating for

human rights and ensuring universal health coverage worldwide (World Health

Organization, 2019)[4]. However, whilst the GMH movement has put mental health firmly on

the international agenda, their endeavours have received substantial critique and the global

distribution of mental health resource became a contentious issue (Campbell & Burgess,

2012)

1.4.2. A Global But 'Western-Centric' Approach to Distress

Concerns have been raised that the 'evidence-base' for mental health interventions

is not globally valid (Jansen et al., 2015) and disproportionately represents Western,

educated, industrialised, democratic populations (Henrich et al., 2010) which make up only

5% of the global population (Arnett, 2008). GMH has consequently been critiqued for a

focus on the roll-out of 'Western-centric' methodologies. These ways of working

conceptualise distress predominantly through a bio-medical lens and use discourses

surrounding 'disease' and 'disorder' that place 'problems' within an individual (Fernando,

2012). This leads to the reliance on 'experts' and interventions aiming to 'cure' pathology

(Pathare et al., 2018), perpetuating the discourse of a global 'disease burden' and 'unmet

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[4] For more information regarding the WHO's efforts to close the 'treatment gap' globally, see their World Mental Health Atlas (https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241514019) and their work on their Mental Health Gap Action Programme (http://www.emro.who.int/mnh/mental-health-gap-action-programme/index.html). They also launched a Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020, which has now been extended to run until 2030 (http://www.emro.who.int/mnh/mental-health-action-plan/index.html).

need' in GMH (Campbell & Burgess, 2012). This 'one-sit-fits-all' approach negates the

unique and diverse cultures, societies and contextual needs that change globally (Patel &

Saxena, 2014). This imposition of Western knowledge also poses threats to traditional and

indigenous forms of care and healing (Fernando, 2012) and unintentionally devalues local

voices (Campbell & Burgess, 2012). The marginalisation of local knowledge also impacts

practitioners, centring the 'culture of professional disciplines' that relies on specialised

knowledge and limits the possibilities of practice (M. White, 1997). To more effectively

address the gaps in mental health care globally, many have called for a paradigm shift

(Chapman et al., 2020; Cosgrove et al., 2020).

1.4.3. The Beginnings of a Paradigm Shift

In recent years, responses to distress globally have started to shift (Bemme &

Kirmayer, 2020). With a call to reposition the global unmet need from a 'treatment gap' to a

'care gap' (Jansen et al., 2015; Pathare et al., 2018), psychosocial interventions using

transdiagnostic approaches are starting to be considered (Bemme & Kirmayer, 2020).

Similarly, despite positivist, medicalised notions of distress and 'evidence-based practice'

remaining influential, a move towards trauma-informed care has been proposed. This

approach asks, 'what has happened to you?' (eliciting a story) rather than 'what is wrong with

you?' (eliciting a problem) (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018; Longden et al., 2016). By gathering

stories rather than giving labels, the structural violence, power, and forces of oppression and

marginalisation that lead to distress can be acknowledged (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). This

stance also requires a shift in the positioning of the practitioner, from someone who is

'expert' to a 'resource collaborator', opening up possibilities of how and who can undertake

this work (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

1.4.4. Working Within and Alongside Communities

Part of the paradigm shift in mental health globally has been a call to utilise the strength and resource within communities to help promote mental wellbeing and collective healing (Afuape & Hughes, 2015; Jansen et al., 2015). Campbell and Burgess (2012) advocate for engagement with local communities, claiming this uncovers the impact of social injustice and power inequities as influencers of wellbeing, as well as privileging community knowledge(s), agency and resilience. Psychosocial interventions for communities impacted by adversity worldwide became a key agenda of the WHO (Saxena et al., 2007). Recent guidance published by WHO (2021) highlighted a need to learn from positive practice in community mental health care globally, which is person-centred, recovery-oriented, sensitive to local need and promotes a human rights-based approach. Support needs to be 'community-centred' rather than simply 'community-based' (Baskin et al., 2021; Power to Change, 2017; South et al., 2019). With a more community-centred approach and deeper consideration of who facilitates support and how, perhaps the mental health needs of a global population can be more fully met.

1.4.5. Narrative Therapy – An Alternative Approach

One model that is positioned in a way that may attend to the paradigm shift needed within GMH, and which can be used in a community-centred way, is NT. Grounded in post-structuralism, NT seeks to actively resist dominant, medicalised views of distress (M. White, 1997). NT believes problems are manufactured and maintained in social, cultural and political contexts (M. White & Epston, 1990). It places emphasis on the multiple stories of people's lives and supposes that the stories people tell about themselves and the world give meaning to experiences and shape self-identities (C. White & Denborough, 1998; M. White & Epston, 1990). When the dominant stories we believe are problem-saturated, this can

lead to distress and difficulty (Carr, 1998; Morgan, 2000). NT suggests that understanding

these stories and reconnecting with the parts of life not dominated by the problem

(Morgan, 2000) can and has led to transformational work (M. White, 1995). This is part of

're-authoring' an alternative story (M. White & Epston, 1990). 'Unique outcomes', such as

preferred goals, identities and values (Butera-Prinzi et al., 2014) are created through the

telling and re-telling of these alternative stories (M. White & Epston, 1990). NT has been

promoted as a mode of therapy which is empowering, socially and culturally sensitive, and

able to free people from the subjugating and oppressive narratives in their lives (Kaptain,

2004).

1.4.5.1. Practitioners Within NT.

Since NT is framed as an 'alternative' approach, different to other therapeutic

modalities, many have become interested to explore and document more about the

practitioners' role, practitioners' perspectives and the impact of working in these ways.

1.4.5.1.1. The Practitioners' Stance.

Béres (2014) suggests that it is the underlying philosophy and politics of NT that

make it different to other approaches; the 'decentred yet influential'[5] collaborative position

which the practitioner adopts is part of this. Roberts (2000) describes NT practitioners as

"*postmodern deconstructionists*" (p. 434), aligned with Michael White's (2007) ideas of

practitioners as a 'consultant' working with people to deconstruct stories and identify rich

meaningful alternatives. As a postmodern approach, NT practitioners uphold a plurality of

'truths' and these are subjective to the clients' understandings of reality (M. White &

---

[5] 'Decentred yet influential' can be understood as a stance that centres and privileges the knowledges, views and opinions of the person seeking support, whilst also recognising a practitioner is not 'neutral' and has responsibility for the therapeutic process, asking questions that may create new possibilities (Béres, 2014)

Epston, 1990). How normative expectations and power operate in people's lives are key

considerations of an NT approach. Practitioners that adopt this way of working are likely to

orient towards 'how things might be' rather than 'how things are' alongside explorations

'becoming' rather than 'being' (Walther & Carey, 2009).

1.4.5.1.2. NT as a Practitioner's Chosen Orientation.

Research suggests that the majority of practitioners adopt a therapeutic orientation

that is congruent with their personality, personal values, professional and life experiences,

and philosophical beliefs (Arthur, 2001; Buckman, 2006; Salter & Rhodes, 2018; Vasco et al.,

1993). Combs and Freedman (2012) describe NT as more than a way of conducting therapy,

but that practitioners *"have decided that they align with a philosophical perspective, and*

they are open to this difficult to define, complex, and empowering work". Michael White

(1995) himself describes how NT is perhaps better defined as "*a world-view…but even this is*

not enough. Perhaps it's an epistemology, a philosophy, a personal commitment, a politics,

an ethics, a practice, a life, and so on" (pg. 37)*.* Whilst this has not been extensively

researched, several practitioners have written descriptively about their perspectives

regarding working in these ways, which may help us to understand the all-encompassing

nature of embracing this orientation:

> "*When I wear my narrative therapy hat, I am starting to feel very comfortable, and it*
>
> *increasingly matches my way of being, my other clothes and accessories, like my*
>
> *values, my aspirations and my dreams*" (Thorne, 2016, p.9)

1.4.5.1.3. NT and its Impact on the Practitioner.

Other therapeutic modalities rely on a practitioner that holds and applies

therapeutic knowledge to the life of the person consulting them, to facilitate change in that

person's life. NT, however, does not shy away from the likelihood that the work will impact

the practitioner just as much as the person who is consulting them (M. White, 1997). This is

seen as *"the life-shaping nature of this work"* (M. White, 1997, pg. 130) and is termed 'two

way therapy' within NT. Michael White (1997) writes extensively about the impact of

aligning to narrative ways of working, for a practitioner, including the potential for decrease

in despair, fatigue and burnout commonly experienced within 'the culture of

psychotherapy'; the contribution to a practitioner's personal and professional identity; and

the creation of a rich description of the work. Some speak about this experience as one of

'katharsis', referring to an emotional movement and personal transformation when

witnessing a significant event or moment in another's life (M. White, 2007). Two-way

therapy is closely linked with the importance of ethics and power within NT, where the

impact on the practitioner is seen as something to be shared with those consulting them (M.

White, 1997). This further contributes to the re-authoring of peoples' lives.

1.4.6. Collective Narrative Practice – Building Strength Through Community

Whilst NT can be used in one-to-one therapy it has a strong history within

community work (M. White, 2003). In an interview Michael White spoke about refusing to

put *"the sort of distinctions that put what is commonly referred to as clinical practice in one

realm and community development and social action in the other"* (Hoyt & Combs, 2000, pg.

24). Historically, key practitioners were invited into communities to consult, build

partnerships, and lead community gatherings to develop new knowledges and possibilities

through hardship (M. White, 2003). As these ways of working grew, 'Collective Narrative

Practices' (CNPs) were born. Underpinned by the theoretical principles of NT, CNPs assume

that no one is a passive recipient of trauma (M. White & Morgan, 2006) and that people

take individual or collective action to try and address the effects of problem(s). Through

CNPs, strengths, skills, efforts and knowledges are made more visible and histories are considered, linking lives of families, cultures and societies. Skills are then strengthened to allow further community action (Denborough et al., 2006). CNPs were originally designed to be used in situations where one-to-one work or traditional 'therapy' was not possible, appropriate (e.g. 'not culturally resonant') or accessible. They were intended to be engaged with and adapted beyond the professional world (Denborough, 2008). This means they potentially lend themselves to the work of a community worker, peer facilitator and leaders within local communities, rather than being solely facilitated by trained 'experts'.

1.4.6.1. Practitioners Within CNPs.

CNPs place practitioners as the "*cultural receivers of stories of suffering*" believing it is inevitable, as community workers or therapists, that we are met with stories of hardship (Denborough, 2008, p.192). With this comes a responsibility not only to alleviate individual suffering, but to engage with the stories in ways that enable "*local, meaningful, resonant, sustainable, social action or social contributions*" and address injustice. Practitioners within CNPs are trained to focus on the resilience of the collective: the notion that the difficulties people are facing will not be theirs alone and each person therefore collectively contributes to supporting others as well as themselves. A key CNP concept is built around 'Communitas': "*the experience of unity that preserves and honours individual distinctiveness*" (Denborough, 2018, pg. 96). Essentially, practitioners within CNPs 'facilitate' the process of togetherness, collaboration and *"play a part in transforming anguish to art, and then to contribution."* (Denborough, 2008, p.175). Many practice-based articles, written by practitioners, have begun to document what has been achieved using CNPs. However, there is a scarcity of empirical research surrounding CNPs, in particular regarding the practitioner's role, their perspectives or the impact of this work, despite this emerging in NT literature.

1.4.7. The Tree of Life Methodology (ToL)

As one of the original CNPs, ToL was developed by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo, in collaboration with David Denborough and The Dulwich Centre (Ncube, 2006). The 'roots' of ToL are embedded in community work and the cultural practices of Southern Africa. The development of the methodology was born out of the 'struggle' faced by camp counsellors when supporting children who had lost parents to HIV. The counsellors found that when the children shared their stories of loss and hardship, with the aim of catharsis (as per the 'Western' approach to grief), they experienced distress. Ncazelo and colleagues found themselves stuck, leading them to seek a way of working that would better fit with local cultural, community approaches to hardship, hoping to create conversations that would not re-traumatise (Ncube, 2006).

Using the metaphor of a tree as a framework for conversation[6], ToL helps individuals and communities to recognise and speak about different elements of their lives in a way that makes them stronger, despite trauma and hardship. As with all CNPs and NT more broadly, ToL supports the re-authoring of preferred individual and collective stories. In the words of a Trailblazer participant (Byrne et al., 2011), ToL "*asks the kinds of questions people in mental health services would like to be asked but rarely are*".

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[6] The metaphor of the tree originated from Hope and Timmel (1984); this is used in various ways across the world, for different purposes. It is the combination of the metaphor with NT theory and practice that developed it into the four-part ToL methodology referred to in this inquiry (Ncube, 2006).

1.4.7.1. The Four-Part Methodology.

ToL follows a four-part process. The methodology begins with all participants

completing the drawing of a tree, with different elements of the tree representing different

parts of their lives. The metaphor is represented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

The Different Elements of the ToL Metaphor for the 'Drawing of The Tree'
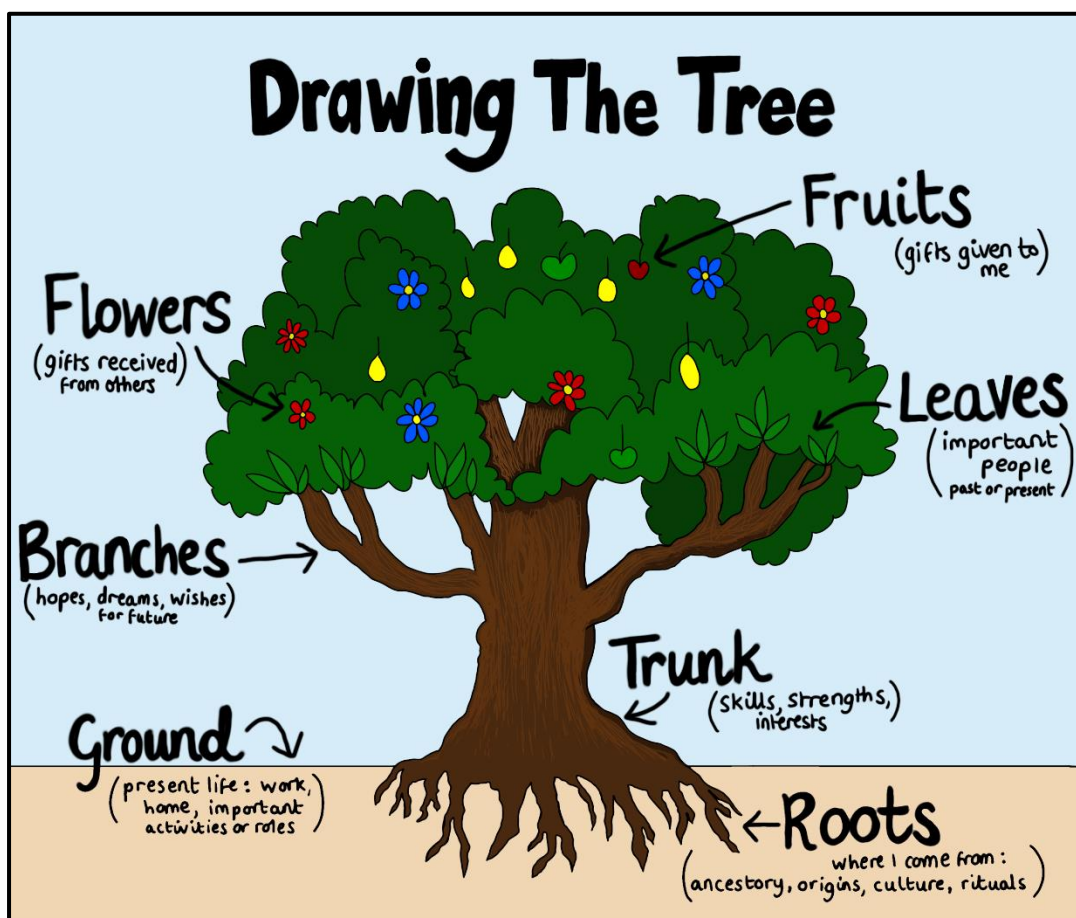
Each part of the methodology is informed by different narrative intentions and

theoretical underpinnings, in order to facilitate change (Ncube, 2006). The different parts

and their links to broader NT intentions and theory are represented in Table 1 overleaf.

Table 1

ToL's Four Part Methodology and Their Narrative Intentions

Part of the Methodology	What Happens During This Part of ToL	Narrative Intentions / Links to Narrative Theory
1.) Drawing of the Tree	Each participant draws their tree using the framework above in Figure 2, to represent different elements of their lives and identities. Alongside the drawing of the tree, facilitators' employ narrative questioning to enquire about different elements of the story being unearthed, seeking opportunities to 'thicken' preferred stories.	• Deconstruction of a dominant problem narrative • Thickening 'thin' narratives through drawing, and through engaging with questioning • Reconnecting with their identities outside of the 'problem story' helps offer a 'safe place to stand' (the riverbank position) • Katharsis – the possibility of transformative or meaningful moments (Ncube, 2006)
2.) The 'Forest of Life'	Participants drawings are then shared or presented to one another, where the person presented has the opportunity to be heard but also further questioned by the facilitator. Participants bring their trees together to form a collective forest, where they can think about their similarities, differences, connect and stand stronger together.	• Stories can be heard by 'outsider witnesses'[7] • The witnesses' responses 'thicken' preferred stories • Enabling contribution (Denborough, 2008) by contributing to the lives of others through witnessing/ responding
3.) The 'Storms of Life'	This offers space for people to think about collective suffering, trauma, loss, hardship and share collective responsibility for possibilities of how to respond, building knowledge(s) for the future when storms inevitably pass by again.	• Everyone responds to hardship and trauma in some way • Participants are helped to understand the context that may bring about difficulties; that the 'problem' is not a fault or pathology in them but a collective struggle born out of a difficult context • Linking lives (Denborough, 2018)
4.) Celebrations and Certificates	Participants are awarded certificates to represent their discoveries from ToL and the group celebrate together, often with dance, song or poem.	• Documentation (e.g. certificates, collective documents), recognise and honour the steps people take to tackle problems • Definitional ceremony[8] allows for further outsider witnessing

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[7] Outsider witnessing is a key NT technique that refers to the process of a group witnessing a preferred story and later re-telling in order to strengthen a re-authored narrative (Morgan, 2000)

[8] Definitional ceremony is a key NT technique that refers to the gathering of others to witness preferred stories and celebrate what has been gained from the process of therapy (White, 2005)

1.4.7.2. Breadth of Application.

ToL has now been used widely around the world since its inception. Practitioners from diverse cultures, religions and backgrounds have been adapting and transforming this way of working, embedding it in local traditions (Denborough, 2018). Many practice-based accounts of ToL, largely housed outside of empirical sources[9], indicate this breadth of application. For instance, ToL has been used with rape victims in Hong Kong (Hung, 2011); Indigenous Samoan communities post-Tsunami (Tamasese et al., 2020); orphaned children in Burundi (Moxley-Haegert et al., 2018); parents going through 'high-conflict' divorce (Geurts & Gutterswijk, 2020) and older adults (Esther, 2020), to name but a few. It has also more recently been applied outside of therapeutic contexts, for example with professionals to consider roles, team dynamics and 'self-in-context' (Gkika & Swift, 2018; Mustafa et al., 2021; Senehi, 2015). Since a comprehensive review of ToL's applications is outside of the scope of this thesis, I recommend that readers consult Denborough (2008; 2018), which detail the developments of ToL over time.

1.5. Summary

This chapter has presented the wider context pertinent to the use of ToL, community-centred working and understandings of practitioners' roles and perspectives, across relevant fields such as GMH, NT and CNPs. The following chapter builds on the introduction to ToL presented above, striving to detail the landscape of knowledge(s) related to practitioners within ToL from both descriptive and empirical sources.

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[9] Non-empirical sources refers mainly to descriptive accounts of ToL, housed across 'collective documents' or anecdotal writings (located mainly from The Dulwich Centre: https://dulwichcentre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/). Many journal articles are also descriptive as opposed to empirical.

2. Surveying the Landscape(s) of Knowledge(s) about ToL and ToL Facilitators

2.1. Chapter Overview

To expand the wider context(s) presented in the previous chapter, I will move on to detail the landscape of knowledge(s) specific to practitioners within ToL, aiming to address the question 'what knowledge(s) do we already have about practitioners' perspectives or experiences of ToL?'. Since most of the literature surrounding ToL sits outside of empirical literature, this chapter first outlines knowledge(s) obtained from descriptive sources. The chapter then progresses to present a systematic literature review, offering a summary, critical appraisal and thematic synthesis of a small body of empirical literature surrounding ToL. Due to the scarcity of empirical literature pertaining ToL practitioners, literature included covers the use of ToL globally, which may offer relevant insights related to practitioners' perspectives or experiences. I conclude the chapter by outlining the gaps in the knowledge base regarding ToL and ToL practitioners, leading to a detailed rationale for the current research inquiry.

2.2. Descriptive Knowledge(s)

To understand and represent a 'thick' description of the knowledge base surrounding ToL and its facilitators, I have bought together knowledge(s) from a broad array of sources. An extensive search uncovered many descriptive accounts of ToL, located across non-empirical articles, essays or accounts of practice, collective narrative documents, videos and websites. These sources were examined for content relevant to ToL practitioners and their experiences or perspectives and below I have outlined the knowledge(s) uncovered.

2.2.1. Diversity of Facilitators

Several of the ToL initiatives described were peer-led, facilitated by 'lay' community counsellors, or co-led through partnerships between trained facilitators and community members (Casdagli et al., 2020; Fraser et al., 2018; Gardner-Elahi & Zamiri, 2015; Tamasese et al., 2020). This substantiates the idea that facilitators need not be trained 'experts'. Hughes (2014) refers to her work in partnership with an Afghani Link Worker as "*essential for bringing people together, because she was someone the mothers trusted*" (pg. 143) and "*where there was a gulf between our western ideas…community leaders provide a crucial bridge*" (pg. 150), demonstrating the potential benefits of partnerships with community 'gate-keepers'. Casdagli et al (2020) refer to "*seizing this opportunity to build community*" training up the young people who had been part of ToL groups to then facilitate as 'peer trainers' so they could "*act as a guide with whom [participants] could identify*" (pg.5). They note how this has "*transformed the project*" (pg. 11). Denborough (2018) suggests these practices represent a 'sparkling' example of empowering communities.

2.2.2. Practitioners' Perspectives and Experiences

Many of the descriptive papers are authored by practitioners and offer anecdotal glimpses into their experiences of using ToL. Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo's original paper (2006) outlining ToL describes how from developing and using the methodology, Ncazelo gained a "*major sense of being transported significantly as a counsellor and trainer*" (pg. 15). The same paper also documents the words of other practitioners who had the chance to complete the methodology. One of them said "*it's not often that we get the opportunity to appreciate our skills and competencies and to openly speak of them within a group*" (Ncube, 2006, pg. 15). This demonstrates how, from the "*experiences of defeat and incompetence*"

that had encouraged Ncazelo and colleagues to explore alternative ways of working, the development of ToL had provided something different.

Others talk about sharing this same experience of seeking alternative ways, for instance Iliopoulou et al (2009) states *"I never stopped thinking that there must be ways that these people's stories could be honoured and heard by a bigger audience of people than me alone".* Several papers give the practitioner's rationale or intention for using the methodology, for example to better match the cultural context of affected communities (Tamasese et al., 2020); to improve accessibility to psychological support (Byrne et al., 2011; Hughes, 2014) to move away from oppressive or harmful discourses about particular populations (Elhassan & Yassine, 2017; Gardner-Elahi & Zamiri, 2015). These intentions appeared largely consistent with the wider objectives of CNPs, as outlined in Chapter 1 (see section 1.4.6). Most accounts offer 'stories' of the set-up and running of ToL groups and attend more to the outcomes and experiences of those attending the groups, rather than practitioners' personal perspectives. However, practitioners' views are noted across a small number of papers. For example, Byrne et al (2011) noted that ToL had a "*profound impact on facilitators as well as participants*" including perspectives such as "*it had a strong influence on my thinking about my therapeutic work*", *"it gave voice to the way we were working already – not starting with the problem but valuing the individual…"* (pg.44). Hung (2011) stated *"the contributions of the women in this group will certainly influence my future work and the ways I understand my life as a Chinese woman".* Selvik and Larsen (2010) shared reflections on completing their own tree:

> *"…the Tree provides us with ample opportunities to talk about our lives in more playful explorative ways than we are accustomed to. It's like embarking on an*

explorer's expedition with your own life, or maybe even going on a treasure hunt…I

observe myself while I tell my story. By doing so, I might come up with some new

thoughts about what significance this could have had for me"

Several accounts that detail the involvement of peer-facilitators offered some of

their perspectives (Hughes, 2014; Iliopoulou, 2009). A number of websites also offered

short quotes from peer-facilitators, for instance:

"It is a privilege to help people identify their skills and abilities for which they can be

proud…When I leave the workshop I feel good…I like to feel I help inspire patients to

be true to their roots and to have faith in recovery. I enjoy learning from every

participant that attends…That is the real beauty of the Tree of Life, it is reminding us

we're all the same as each other." (Maudsley Charity, n.d.)

"For us, the Tree of Life also helps to break down the barriers that can exist between

'professionals' and 'clients'…Instead of separateness it promotes a real sense of

'working together' from a position of a shared humanity" (Mental Health Today,

2018)

These accounts, though often only one individual's anecdotal description, provide a

snapshot into how practitioners may experience using this methodology and the impact it

may have on their personal and professional lives. Since these are accounts of practitioners

who have chosen to write up their experiences, and they are documented in ways that are

descriptive, non-empirical and not peer-reviewed, there are limitations to how

representative of a wider sample of practitioners these may be. Similarly, none of these

accounts attempt to bring together the experiences or perspectives of multiple practitioners

using ToL across different contexts.

2.3. Empirical Knowledge(s): Systematic Literature Review

According to Cochrane (Chandler et al., 2021), a systematic literature review (SLR) endeavours to 'identify, appraise and synthesise all the empirical evidence that meets pre-specified eligibility criteria to answer a given research question'. By integrating findings and knowledge from multiple empirical papers, a literature review holds more power than any single study, offering an imperative 'building block' for any further research activity (Snyder, 2019) and a firm foundation for advancing knowledge (Webster & Watson, 2002).

2.3.1. Rationale for the Current SLR

The SLR initially aimed to answer the question "what knowledge(s) does the empirical literature tell us about practitioners' perspectives of ToL?". Unfortunately, when relevant search terms pertaining practitioners (see Appendix B) were employed, alongside those relevant to the use of ToL (as listed below in section 2.3.2.2), no relevant papers were uncovered. For this reason, the review was broadened out to seek all empirical literature regarding the use of ToL globally, answering the broader question "what knowledge(s) does the empirical literature tell us about the use of ToL?". Since the role of a practitioner within ToL is a unique partnership with communities, different from a traditional therapeutic role, and much of the literature is authored by practitioners themselves, it was hoped that the outcome of this review may still offer some insights relevant to this research inquiry, despite being broader than initially intended.

To my knowledge, only one other SLR pertaining to ToL has been published (Parham et al., 2019). Whilst this SLR was completed relatively recently, it was still felt relevant to complete a similar SLR for two reasons: Parham et al's (2019) review can be critiqued and therefore improved upon in a number of ways; and it was focused upon UK mental health contexts,

thus a broader review was more relevant to this thesis. Within Parham et al's (2019) SLR it was difficult to ascertain how the author reached her final literature selection. The paper did not include information regarding how papers were screened and excluded. It appears some papers were included that are published in non-peer-reviewed journals (e.g. 'Context' magazine, Clinical Psychology Forum), despite the inclusion criteria stating that all papers were peer-reviewed. Further to this, the search terms used were simplistic – 'tree of life' AND 'group' – without alternative terms, leading to a limited selection of literature, given the author was also aiming to include descriptive sources. The author also included non-UK based studies despite her research question centring around a UK context, which may have meant findings from the synthesis were generalised more than was warranted. The synthesis presented by Parham et al (2019) certainly makes a valuable contribution to a field where few researchers have attempted this; nevertheless, a more rigorous SLR with a broader scope and question may more accurately and fairly begin to map the landscape of empirical literature surrounding ToL. This review, therefore, aims to provide an updated search with broader search terms and greater transparency surrounding the review methodology.

2.3.2. SLR Methodology

2.3.2.1. Search Strategy.

A systematic literature search was carried out between November 2020 and February 2021. Initially the following databases were searched: Scopus, PsychInfo, EMCARE, EMBASE, CINAHL, MedLine, PubMed, Wiley Online Library, AMED, BNI, Psych Articles, SAGE, Education Research Complete and Social Care Online. The final search was then limited to a combination of databases that resulted in the most unique articles (with the least

duplicates) in conjunction with one another; these are documented on the PRISMA diagram

(see Figure 3). The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work was

also searched separately, as this is a significant journal in the field, housing a large body of

narrative practice literature. All searches were limited to bring up only papers from 2006

onwards, as this is when the original article regarding ToL was published (Ncube, 2006).

2.3.2.2. Search Terms.

The final search terms used are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Literature Search Terms

Concept 1		Concept 2		Concept 3
"Tree of Life"	**AND**	"methodolog*"	**OR**	"narrative"
		OR "therap*"		
		OR "project"		
		OR "workshop"		

These search terms were established using the library's search planning form (see

Appendix B). The terms were kept as broad as possible to maximise the potential number of

relevant papers found. Alternative terms for relevant concepts were explored and added

from reviewing key articles related to ToL. Terms were refined through a preliminary search

of the above databases. Using the term "Tree of Life" alone brought up thousands of

irrelevant papers, particularly related to the fields of Biology and Theology amongst other

non-related fields. Additional concepts were added using the Boolean operator 'AND', to

narrow down the search. The term "narrative" was used to encompass terms relevant to NT

such as "narrative therapy", "narrative practice(s)", and "collective narrative practice(s)";

adding each of these separately across the different databases bought up no new papers

that were not sourced using "narrative". The truncation symbol (*) was used to account for

the plurals (e.g. methodologies). The terms "group", "approach", "exercise" and "tool"

were also attempted, however no new papers were identified using these terms, and

instead several hundred additional irrelevant papers were brought up, so these terms were

removed from the search. An example of the final search terms used in a string on Scopus

can be found in Appendix C.

2.3.2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the SLR is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for SLR

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
• Written in English, so that the reviewer could understand them fully.	• Did not meet the inclusion criteria
• Were included in a peer-reviewed publication.	• Detailed other collective narrative practices <u>or</u> a different Tree of Life (see below).
• Were empirical[10], not descriptive in nature.	• Descriptive in nature
• ToL as described by Ncube (2006)	• Only documented/used part of the methodology (e.g. drawing a tree)
• Used the full four-part ToL methodology	
• Referred to ToL as used in a therapeutic way.	• Referred to ToL as a data collection method
• Referred to ToL used as in a group format	• Referred to ToL as used in individual work

More specifically, literature was excluded if it referred mainly to other CNPs (e.g.

Beads of Life, Team of Life); these papers often mentioned ToL as inspiration which meant

they understandably came up in the systematic search. Papers were also excluded if they

mentioned other versions of the 'Tree of Life' that were similar but clearly different to that

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[10] Empirical literature pertain papers that report original research findings, and include a methodology for how the research was undertaken (Southern Adventist University, 2021)

developed by Ncube (2006). This was quite nuanced, as there are seemingly other

therapeutic methodologies aimed at working with trauma that refer to the 'Tree of Life'.

Reeler et al (2009) and Mpande et al (2013), for example, refer to using the 'Tree of Life' in

their work with torture survivors, however, the methodology in both papers refer to a

different intervention, comprising of a progression through eight guided conversations held

in "circles". These papers also do not refer to NT or CNPs.

 The PRISMA Flow Diagram (adapted from Moher et al, 2009) overleaf (see Figure 3)

demonstrates the process of identifying, screening and checking eligibility of the papers that

were generated through this search.

Figure 3

PRISMA Diagram
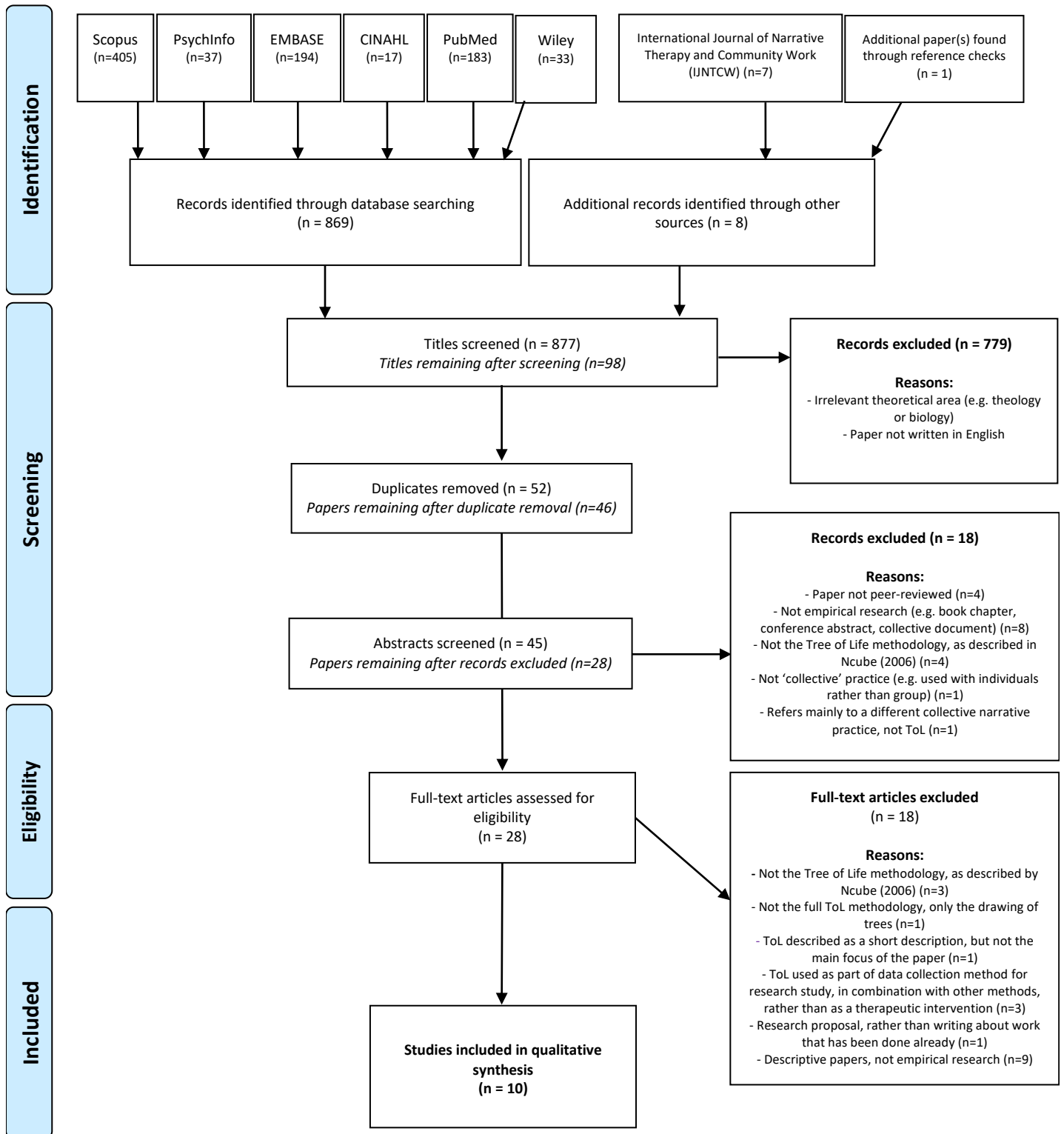
2.3.2.4. Synthesis Method.

To synthesise the information found in the final ten papers, I employed a method of

Thematic Synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). This meant that the individual papers were

read twice for familiarity and relevant or interesting information was then coded. These

codes were then pulled together in descriptive themes, which were consolidated into the

analytical themes presented in the review findings below. The progression from descriptive

themes to analytical themes is included in Appendix D.

2.3.3. SLR Findings

2.3.3.1. Final Papers for Review.

The ten empirical papers selected for inclusion in this SLR have been summarised in

Table 4 below. All papers selected are evaluations of ToL, used across different populations

and contexts. They all present qualitative findings. Two papers used a mixed methods

design, but neither present quantitative data analysis; one deemed analysis unnecessary

because the pre and post scores on chosen outcome measures remained similar (Randle-

Phillips et al., 2016), the other did not report any analysis because it had not been

completed at the point of publication (Schilling et al., 2015). It was felt important to include

these papers in the review, regardless of their lack of quantitative analysis, since they both

offer unique contributions to the evidence base: one, due to its focus on those with

intellectual disability, the other due coming from a Chilean context . Eight of the ten papers

were written regarding an intervention taking place in a UK context; the other two papers

note work in Australia (Schweitzer et al, 2014) and Chile (Schilling et al., 2015) respectively.

Table 4

Summary of Final Papers for SLR

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations

Casdagli, Christie, Girling, Ali & Fredman (2017)
 	
Title: Evaluating the Tree of Life project: An innovative way of engaging children and young people with type 1 diabetes
	UK - London	Children (10-12yrs) and adolescents (13-19yrs) with a diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes, receiving treatment through UCLH.	Two different events offered – one for Year 6 ('children') and the other for Year 7/8 ('adolescents'). Both were 1 day 'workshops'.
			
			No clear adaptations were made from the original methodology. Peer Trainers were involved in the facilitation of the workshops.
				Aim: Service evaluation of multiple workshops (17), run from July 2010-Sept 2016.
				
				Design: Qualitative
				
				Methodology: Group feedback interviews, integrated into the workshop prior to celebrations; telephone interviews 2-4weeks after attending the group
					93	Thematic Analysis	**From group feedback- 2 subordinate themes, and associated subthemes:**
							• Connecting with others
							  ○ *From isolation to inclusion: A feeling of togetherness*
							  ○ *An open space to share experiences*
							  ○ *Learning from each other about living with diabetes*
							• Building a positive view of the self
							  ○ *Focusing on my qualities*
							  ○ *Separating myself from diabetes*
							  ○ *Empowerment*
							
							From telephone feedback- 2 further themes:
							• Responding to negative attitudes about diabetes
							• Improving diabetes management
							
							Discussion: Impact of peer trainers is 'pivotal' and development of this will continue; delivering ToL workshops requires training
							
							Conclusion: ToL had a positive impact on these children and young people, impacting engagement with wider service and impacting identity and influence of medical condition.
								Strengths: Large sample in comparison to other ToL evaluations. Two stage evaluation process which is helpful to see additional themes from 2-4 weeks post-event. Comprehensive descriptive of the workshop.
								
								Limitations: The group interviews taking place during the workshop may mean there is a selection bias as to who felt they could take part, and what they could say. The paper does not note ethical considerations or engage reflexively regarding the researcher's role.

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations
Haselhurst, Moss, Rust, Oliver, Hughes, McGrath, Reed, Ferguson & Murray (2020) **Title:** A narrative-informed evaluation of tree of life for parents of children with physical health conditions	UK - Manchester	Parents of children (aged 9-13) with a health condition, receiving treatment through Manchester Children's Hospital.	1 day session, which ran parallel to an intervention for the parents' children. No clear adaptations were made from the original methodology, though this is not thoroughly detailed and the paper above (Casdagli et al, 2017) is cited as the source for the group framework followed.	**Aim:** Service evaluation **Design:** Qualitative **Methodology:** Narrative-informed group interview, using the Concept Map and Three Act Play Conversational Map (Duvall & Beres, 2011) to generate stories. This was run immediately following the last group session.	7	Thematic Analysis	**5 identified themes:** • 'finding a safe place to stand' • 'a different view' • 'connecting with confidence' • 'giving the gift of independence' • 'togetherness in the storms' **Discussion:** Emotional safety created by methodology was valued; 'backstory' (context) and power imbalances important to consider; highlights importance of 'shouldering up' and giving authorship of story. **Conclusion:** Integrating narrative ideas into evaluation is valuable; ToL was impactful for these parents.	**Strengths:** Thorough, well justified discussion of adaptation to evaluation process, with strong emphasis on values and ethics; clear presentation of aims, methods, results. **Limitations:** Small sample, unlikely to be representative. Adapted evaluation method may rely on high-level of NT skill. It is unclear which of the authors were involved in which parts of the evaluation or analysis, so it is hard to ascertain potential subjectivity.

Ibrahim & Allen (2018)
 	
Title: The Highs and Lows Through Recovery: An Integrative Group Combining Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, and The Tree of Life
	UK - London	People with a diagnosis of 'Bipolar Disorder' (BD), all accessing a local mental health service for people with psychosis	8 x 1hr weekly sessions.
			
			Adaptations included integrating CBT 'for identifying symptoms', psychoeducation, writing a letter to self
				Aim: Service evaluation
				
				Design: Qualitative
				
				Methodology: Focus group conducted following the final group session
					6	Thematic Analysis	**4 identified themes, alongside subthemes:**
							
							• Social Support and Hope
							  o *I'm not on my own*
							  o *Light at the end of the tunnel*
							• The Tree of Life
							• Understanding and Coping for All
							• Group Processes
							
							Conclusions: A combination of CBT and NT, specifically ToL, for BD has potential to contribute to recovery, reduce relapse and is more cost effective.
								Strengths: Innovative approach, combining different models.
								
								Limitations: Small sample size, and participants did not attend sessions consistently so it hard to fully interpret results. Unlikely to be representative. No mention of ethics or reflexivity of researcher

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations
Ibrahim & Tchanturia (2018) **Title:** Patients' Experience of a Narrative Group Therapy Approach informed by the 'Tree of Life' Model for Individuals with Anorexia Nervosa	UK - London	Day Patients at a Specialist Eating Disorder Service, Females 18-30yrs with a diagnosis of Anorexia Nervosa (AN)	8 x 1hr sessions with two facilitators (Psychologist & OT); Adaptations include additional content centred around externalisation of the AN, witnessing, and a session on 'our optimal self'	**Aim:** Service evaluation **Design:** Qualitative **Methodology:** Focus group conducted following the final group session.	4	Thematic Analysis	**4 identified themes:** • 'an image to remember, share and change' • 'constructing an alternative perspective' • 'hope' • 'creating a sense of community' **Informal feedback:** Others inquired about ToL due to hearing positive feedback; one participant shared that the impact of ToL continued 6 months later. **Discussion:** Creative, visual element of ToL seen as helpful in this population, and could be further utilised. **Conclusion:** ToL has valuable implications for this population	**Strengths:** Thoughtful adaptation of ToL, well described throughout. Clear, meaningful implications for the population researched. **Limitations:** Small sample size, all females; would be valuable to complete further research with bigger, more diverse sample. Focus group facilitators being the same as ToL facilitators and analysis completed by the developer of the group; both introduce potential bias. Paper lacked detail and 'thick' description, so it was hard to access rigor, sincerity, credibility. No explicit mention of ethical considerations.

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations
Randle-Phillips, Farquhar & Thomas (2016) **Title:** Adapting and evaluating a tree of life group for women with learning disabilities.	UK- Bristol	Adult women with a Learning Disability	5 x 2hr weekly sessions facilitated by two Clinical Psychologists. Adaptations included offering more support to draw/write trees, including templates of leaves, fruits, flowers, support to remember parts of the tree, assistance writing.	**Aim:** Service evaluation: 'is the Tree of Life a helpful narrative approach to adapt for people with LD?' **Design:** Mixed methods **Methodology:** Pre/post group measures including: CORE-LD; Adapted Rosenburg Self-esteem Inventory; Tree of Life questionnaire designed specifically for this group; and a qualitative semi-structured interview conducted post-group with each participant.	4	No quants analysis presented due to small changes in scores Qual - Thematic Analysis	**Quantitative outcomes** No statistical analysis performed, so no indication of significance, but data indicates: • CORE-LD: 1 participant (P)'s scores increased, 1Ps stayed the same, 2Ps scores decreased. • Rosenburg: 3Ps scores decreased, 1Ps score remained the same • ToL measure: 1Ps remained the same, 2Ps increased, 1Ps decreased. **Qualitative outcomes** Two identified themes: • Positive emotional response • Social interaction **Discussion:** Outcome measures can be challenging with regards to 'measuring' what is expected to change; adaptations could be extended to improve accessibility of the group, alongside increasing intervention length. ToL perhaps particularly valuable in the context of loss/change. **Conclusion:** Further research needed, but ToL is a promising approach for those with LD.	**Strengths:** In depth participant information and consideration of individual needs; post group data collection facilitated by Assistant Psychologists not involved in the group, reducing potential bias. **Limitations:** Lack of quantitative analysis, query regarding appropriate choice of methodology (helpful measures?). Small sample size, and even from those who took part, multiple participants did not attend the whole intervention, meaning their scores or feedback may not be representative. Further research with a larger sample with consistent attendance would be valuable.

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations

Rowley, Rajbans & Markland (2020)
 	
Title: Supporting parents through a narrative therapeutic group approach: a participatory research project.
	UK - London	'Ethic minority' parents of primary school children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND)	4 session group
			
			No clear adaptations aside from splitting it across multiple sessions.
				Aim: Service Evaluation
				
				Design: Qualitative, participatory design with parent co-researcher
				
				Methodology: Focus group conducted by Assistant Educational Psychologist, who created a 'graphic illustration' of the conversations which was then analysed.
					6	Thematic analysis	**Three themes identified, alongside subthemes:**
							• Sharing
							  o *Others feel the same; comforting*
							  o *Shared activity; visual structure*
							• Self-awareness
							  o *Being listened to; hearing yourself; hearing someone else talk about you*
							  o *Positive; strengths*
							• Change
							  o *Acceptance, self-esteem, confidence*
							  o *Feelings and reactions*
							  o *Practical changes; ongoing change*
							
							Discussion: Parents became agents for change; need for adaptations due to language skills; participatory design offered opportunities.
							
							Conclusion: Impact of ToL noted for this group; would benefit from further research and practice.
								Strengths: Adaptations made to the design and analysis in order to meaningfully use participation from co-researcher. Helpful inclusion of participatory research procedure in Appendix. Member checking was carried out, ensuring results were representative of participants' experiences. The researcher engaged reflexively.
								
								Limitations: Sample size was small. Analysis of graphic illustration means that the original data may have been subject to bias from the illustrator even prior to analysis. This mode of analysis also reduces richness of data and is less rigorous than formal TA. The facilitator of the ToL sessions led on the research, leading to possible bias.

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations
Schilling, et al. (2015) **Title:** Development of an Intervention to Reduce Self-Stigma in Outpatient Mental Health Service Users in Chile	Chile	"Mental health service users with severe mental disorders, who attend outpatient community mental health centres (COS-AMs)" (pg.285) across two regions	10 session group, facilitated by two mental health professionals ToL is covered in 5-6 of the sessions, integrated with constructivist group psychoeducation, Van Gennep's Rite of Passage, and creation of collective documents	**Aim:** To evaluate feasibility and acceptability of pilot intervention **Design:** Part of an ongoing mixed-methods RCT, however only qualitative data is presented in this paper **Methodology:** Collection of verbal feedback; the exact method of data collection is unclear.	Unknown	No clear analysis method has been employed	68% consistent attendance, tracked to measure feasibility. No formal analysis is presented, however the authors present feedback from facilitators and attendees: • Spoke positively of the Tree of Life activity • No barriers to implementation • At one month follow up: Increased confidence, improved communication, strengthened connections Participants also devised a list of anti-stigma and self-stigma strategies which is disseminated in a figure in this paper.	**Strengths:** An innovative attempt at combining several interventions **Limitations:** It is unclear exactly how feedback data was collected, and no analytic tools seem to have been employed. This is likely because this is an initial paper of a larger RCT. Participant numbers unknown. It is unclear the level of robustness and rigour, at this early stage. No ethical considerations made explicit, or researcher reflexivity.

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations
Schweitzer, Vromans, Ranke & Griffin (2014) **Title:** Narratives of healing: A case study of a young Liberian refugee settled in Australia	Australia - Brisbane	Adolescent (12-17yrs) Liberian Refugees, resettled in Australia, attending a 'special school for newly arrived refugees'. This study focused on one 14yr old female, Miriam, in the context of a group inclusive of seven other males and females, all from Liberia.	7 group sessions, manualised* by Vromans, Ranke and Schweitzer (unpublished) Adapted specifically for use with trauma and with refugee / displaced communities. *the manual was requested from first author and checked and assured for fidelity to original methodology (Ncube, 2006), alongside adaptations	**Aim:** Exploring the therapeutic processes underpinning changes observed in the participant under focus **Design:** Case Study **Methodology:** Individual and group observations were noted for each weekly session, regarding the participant under focus. Therapist's reflections were also documented.	1	Synthesis of observational data	Observations and detailed comments explored Mariam's experiences of the group. Therapeutic factors contributing to change, for both Miriam and other members, were discussed under themes: exploring alternative stories of self, group cohesion, corrective emotional experiences, outsider witnesses and instillation of hope. **Conclusion:** ToL programme may be beneficial in assisting YP from refugee backgrounds to heal post-trauma, through a process of exploring and integrating preferred self-narratives in a group format.	**Strengths:** Offers a detailed account of one participant's weekly experience, inclusive of several perspectives. Relationship between the researcher and participant is clear. **Limitations:** Observer bias due to the subjective nature of the data collection; no certain conclusions can be drawn, only hypotheses. All participants were from Liberia, and sample size is small, so results must be interpreted with caution. No explicit consideration of ethics.

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations
Vitale, Khawaja & Ryde (2019) **Title:** Exploring the effectiveness of the Tree of Life in promoting the therapeutic growth for refugee women living with HIV	UK - South West	Five African women, living with HIV, all receiving practical and emotional support from a non-profit organisation	7 x 2hr weekly sessions; the overview of these sessions appears similar to Vromans, Ranke and Schweitzer's manual (as above) thus adaptations remain the same. This study also added 'presenting keys to key workers' within the celebration session.	**Aim:** Service Evaluation – to understand experiences of the group and benefits of ToL for this population. **Design:** Multiple Case Study Design **Methodology:** Data collection from in depth individual interviews, individual feedback forms, visual material produced during the sessions and researcher's observational notes.	5	Synthesis of interview, observational and visual data	Detailed results were presented for each participant. Results suggest this type of intervention met the needs of each of this cohort. ToL allowed for a safe exploration of past hardships, including contracting HIV, forced migration and overcoming isolation. With a recognition of strengths and connection, hope and improved self-esteem was found. ToL emerged as a safe, culturally appropriate way to explore experiences of loss, grief and trauma.	**Strengths:** Highly detailed, rigorous account of experiences, using multiple data collection methods. Clear aims, design, results. Explicit about researcher/participant relationship and ethical considerations. **Limitations:** Small sample size, all women and all of African origin; a larger, more diverse sample may be valuable. The paper recommends further analysis into understanding the processes that produce change.

Author(s), Year Published, Paper Title	Location	Context & Population	ToL Group Setup / Adaptations	Aim, Design, Methodology	N	Data Analysis	Results & Conclusions	Strengths & Limitations

Wellman, Lepori & Szlachcic (2016)
 	
Title: Exploring the utility of a pilot tree of life group in an inpatient setting
	UK - London	Adult male and females admitted onto an NHS inpatient mental health ward at the time of taking part.	7 weekly sessions, with each session focusing on one aspect of the ToL metaphor.	**Aim:** Service evaluation
				
				Design: Qualitative
				
				Methodology: 8 people completed Bloch et al's (1979) 'most important event questionnaire' (MIEQ), used to collect open-ended qualitative feedback from all groups run on the ward. 5 eligible 'completers' were invited to a 30 minute focus group, and 2 chose to attend.
					9
					
					(2)
						Thematic Analysis	**Three subordinate themes, and associated subthemes identified:**
							
							• A sense of community
							  o *Building relationships*
							  o *Sharing*
							• Personal reflection
							  o *Rediscovering identity*
							  o *Reflection on strengths*
							  o *Reflections on approach*
							• Usefulness of metaphor
							  o *Challenging the dominant discourse*
							  o *Group development*
							Conclusion: ToL groups are beneficial and fit with 'recovery focused' agenda on the inpatient wards.
								Strengths: Clear description of context, methods, and results. Helpful consideration of researcher influence, and service user input, including the role of peer worker.
								
								Limitations: Themes were generated from a small dataset, given only two people attended the focus group; unlikely to be representative. Researcher was also the group facilitator, leading to potential bias. Use of MIEQ seen as potentially unhelpful

2.3.3.2. Quality Check & Critical Appraisal of Literature.

The final SLR papers have been subject to a quality check. Tracy's eight "Big Tent" criteria (Tracy, 2010) were used to assess the quality of the review papers, meaning I have appraised each paper based on the following criteria: worthy topic; rich rigor; sincerity; credibility; resonance; significant contribution; ethics; and meaningful coherence. These criteria were chosen as they were felt to be less prescriptive, and thus more appropriate for social constructionist research (Research Design Review, 2015). A summary table of the quality check, based on these criteria, can be found in Table 5 below.

Whilst more specific appraisal of individual papers is interwoven throughout the synthesis, it is important to lend critical attention to the overall body of empirical literature identified. As shown in the summary table (Table 5), each of the papers included was deemed to offer a 'worthy contribution' to a small but growing body of empirical 'evidence'. For the most part, the included papers offered descriptions of aims, methods, design, recruitment and data analysis, though this was not always as detailed or rigorous as one would hope. Missing from most papers, presumably due to limited word limits in respective journals, was explicit discussion of ethical issues.

Interestingly, most papers used Thematic Analysis as a way of synthesising qualitative feedback regarding how participants experienced ToL. While results were richly described, it is important to note that most sample sizes were small. It is not necessarily legitimate to apply traditional criteria such as objectivity, generalisability and reliability to qualitative analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Nevertheless, larger sample sizes may have provided more representative, trustworthy results with wider implications and more

meaningful impact (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016). Most papers recommended, understandably, that further research was needed.

Furthermore, several papers raised issues with potential bias; as is often the case with 'practice-based research', the researchers in most of the included studies were those piloting the intervention. In these instances, not only is researcher subjectivity a consideration with regards the analysis and representation of the outcome of the evaluation, but their role in the collection of data may have influenced what was said or left unsaid. It was striking that most of the papers noted that no negative feedback or points of challenge or improvement were given by participants. As can be seen from the synthesis below, there were great similarities between themes across studies, and while this may be a fair representation of the impact of ToL, I was also left wondering what the outcomes may have been if the data was collected, analysed and reported by someone not associated with the original intervention, or unfamiliar with NT and the intentions of ToL.

The majority of included papers were similar in nature, offering a small-scale service evaluation of a pilot intervention using ToL. It is noteworthy that while there appears to be little else published in the empirical literature regarding ToL, the lack of diversity in approach and methods will have influenced the outcome of the following synthesis.

Table 5

Quality Check of the SLR Papers

Quality Criteria (Tracy, 2010)
√√= High Quality   √= Criteria met   ?=Unclear if criteria met   ✗= Criteria not met (Poor quality)

Author & Year Published	Worthy Topic	Rich Rigor	Sincerity	Credibility	Resonance	Significant Contribution	Ethical	Meaningful Coherence
Casdagli et al (2017)	√√	√	√	√	√√	√√	?	√√
Haselhurst et al (2020)	√√	√	√√	√	√√	√√	√√	√√
Ibrahim & Allen (2018)	√√	√	√	√	√	√√	?	√√
Ibrahim & Tchanturia (2018)	√√	?	?	?	√	√√	?	√
Randle-Phillips et al (2016)	√√	√	√	√	√	√√	√	√
Rowley et al (2020)	√√	√	√√	√	√√	√√	√√	√√
Schilling et al (2015)	√√	?	?	✗	√	?	?	?
Schweitzer et al (2014)	√√	√	√	√	√	√√	?	√√
Vitale et al (2019)	√√	√	√	√√	√√	√√	√	√√
Wellman et al (2016)	√√	√	√	√	√√	√√	√	√√

2.3.3.3. Thematic Synthesis.

Through the thematic synthesis process outlined above, three analytic themes and related subthemes were constructed. These are outlined in table 6 below and will now be discussed in further detail.

Table 6

SLR Thematic Synthesis: Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Different Yet Connected	Shared Context(s) of Injustice
	Different People, Similar Outcomes
Accessible and Adaptable	Adaptations to ToL
	Improving Access to Care
	Needing Time
Capturing the Work	Evidence vs. Values of NT

2.3.3.3.1. Theme: Different Yet Connected.

A theme present across all the included papers was the connectedness between and across seemingly different people and communities with different 'problems'. To use the words of a participant from Casdagli et al's (2017) paper, they realised "*how we are all similar but different in our own way*" (pg. 12). There were clear similarities in the context(s) influencing hardships and in the ways each group experienced the impact of ToL.

Subtheme: shared context(s) of injustice.

The labels given and 'problems' presented regarding each population researched were diverse, for instance 'refugees' (Schweitzer et al., 2014; Vitale et al., 2019), 'parents' of children with physical health conditions (Haselhurst et al., 2020) or special educational

needs (Rowley et al., 2020), 'inpatients' (Wellman et al., 2016), 'women with learning disabilities' (Randle-Phillips et al., 2016), or those with diagnoses such as 'Anorexia Nervosa' (Ibrahim & Tchanturia, 2017) or 'Bipolar Disorder' (Ibrahim & Allen, 2018). Despite these differences, clear parallels in the context(s) and experiences of injustice shared across communities was noticeable. Nine of the ten papers make explicit references to matters of injustice, such as 'exclusion' and 'isolation' (Haselhurst et al., 2020; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020), 'stigma' and 'discrimination' (Ibrahim & Allen, 2018; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020; Schilling et al., 2015), 'displacement', 'deprivation of basic needs' and 'exploitation' (Schweitzer et al., 2014; Vitale et al., 2019), or the totalising, binary narratives surrounding health (Casdagli et al., 2017; Haselhurst et al., 2020; Wellman et al., 2016).

In each of these nine papers, these landscapes of injustice were set out as a context for the use of ToL – that, because of participant experiences, the use of a methodology which attempts to move people towards an 'alternative story' was deemed valuable. This also fits with a wider agenda, noted only by Rowley et al (2020) but implicit in other papers that practitioners aiming to work in a way congruent to the values of social justice should consider alternative ways of making sense of problems and their effects on people's lives, including the influence of power, diversity and inclusion.

Subtheme: different people, similar outcomes.

Despite the breadth of different communities researched across the final papers, there appeared to be a strong connection in the way participants' spoke about their experiences and impact of ToL. Many of the themes reported across each paper overlapped. For instance, the benefits of the collective nature of the ToL group format and the

connection it provided were widely spoken about. Schweitzer et al (2014) reported that "*a strong sense of cohesion*" formed within three weeks and relational support was noticeable. Participants in Casdagli et al's (2017) paper reported the importance of 'connection to others', resulting in feeling less alone. Ibrahim and Tchanturia (2017) and Wellman et al (2016) both described a theme 'sense of community', where participants felt that being connected meant they were able to share. Others had learnt from one another's sharing; participants valued "*seeing different people's views on it*" (Casdagli et al., 2017) or gained "*comfort in knowing other people are coping and that it's doable*" (Ibrahim & Allen, 2018).

A notable outcome of ToL across all ten papers was the impact on participants' changing sense of self and identity narrative. As helpfully described by Randle-Phillips et al (2016) "*although a number of identified benefits of the Tree of Life group appear interactional in nature, the core of the approach is people identifying stories and aspects of themselves that they find most salient and meaningful.*" Different papers spoke about this differently. Casdagli et al (2017) talked about young people generating a more positive sense of self, with increased confidence and self-esteem. A participant in Ibrahim and Tchanturia (2017)'s study shared "*it helped me challenge the misconceptions I had about myself*". Six papers also began to consider the process that allowed for this shift (Casdagli et al., 2017; Haselhurst et al., 2020; Rowley et al., 2020; Schweitzer et al., 2014; Vitale et al., 2019; Wellman et al., 2016). For instance that emotional safety, or providing a 'safe place to stand' within ToL was important (Haselhurst et al., 2020) or that people could "*share problems in ways that make them stronger by connecting with their strengths, abilities, hopes and dreams, as opposed to just giving accounts of illness*" (Casdagli et al., 2017).

Several other overlaps were noticeable, including how ToL instilled hope (Ibrahim &

Allen, 2018; Schweitzer et al., 2014); that it led to a different way of responding to hardship

(Casdagli et al., 2017; Rowley et al., 2020); and that the creative, metaphorical and visual

elements of ToL were helpful, powerful or supportive of change (Ibrahim & Tchanturia,

2017; Rowley et al., 2020; Schweitzer et al., 2014; Vitale et al., 2019; Wellman et al., 2016).

The themes that ran through the papers not only largely overlap with one another,

but also mirror what one may hope for from any NT intervention (see Chapter 1, section

1.4.5). Whilst this presents an interesting connection between how people respond

regardless of their differences, it is also important to explore any less intended or even

negative outcomes, which appear to be missing from this body of literature.

2.3.3.3.2. Theme: Accessibility & Adaptation.

Across the papers, ToL was seen to be implemented to support the accessibility of

services. Furthermore, nine of the papers made explicit reference to adapting the original

ToL methodology to meet the needs of respective communities, ensuring its accessibility.

Subtheme: adaptations to ToL.

Only two papers referred to running a one-day workshop, similar to the original ToL

methodology. Otherwise, the methodology had been adapted, added to and combined with

others in multiple creative ways. This included splitting the different parts of ToL across

different sessions. Wellman et al (2016) for example split the group into seven weekly

sessions, with the intent to be "*containing for people with cognitive difficulties, or found the

session content to be emotive*" (pg.174). To increase accessibility of the group content,

Randle-Phillips et al (2016) provided pictorial templates of leaves, flowers, fruits and more

support to draw the trees. She also made additional recommendations (i.e. using

photographs and including carers) to increasing accessibility for those with a Learning

Disability. Although Casdagli et al (2017) used the original methodology, they have

introduced peer facilitators who had attended ToL groups previously to support with

facilitation, yielding a powerful impact, according to participant feedback. In a similar vein,

Rowley et al (2020) detailed the adaptation of the methodology to allow for a co-researcher

to be involved, initiating participatory research. Two papers describe ToL innovatively

combined with other intervention methods such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (Ibrahim

& Allen, 2018), Psychoeducation (Ibrahim & Allen, 2018; Schilling et al., 2015) and additional

Narrative Practices (Schilling et al., 2015), while one paper reported additional sessions

added to the methodology to extend the metaphor (e.g. an 'our optimal self' session,

thinking about what a tree needs to flourish (Ibrahim & Tchanturia, 2017)).

Interestingly, while some write about the flexibility of ToL as a strength (Randle-

Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020) and being able to adapt the methodology as

"containing" for facilitators (Wellman et al., 2016), others used a manualised version of the

methodology but no views from practitioners regarding using the manual were reported

(Schweitzer et al., 2014). Furthermore, whilst the adaptations shared seemingly resulted in

similar outcomes and impact, it is hard to know which parts of the adapted methodology

were having what effect, therefore it would be valuable to explore this further.

Subtheme: improving access to care.

Eight papers discussed the accessibility of care or support (Casdagli et al., 2017;

Haselhurst et al., 2020; Ibrahim & Allen, 2018; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al.,

2020; Schilling et al., 2016; Schweitzer et al., 2014; Vitale et al., 2019). Ibrahim and Allen

(2018) report the usefulness of ToL for people from a diverse range of backgrounds and

educational contexts. Similarly, Rowley et al (2020) shares how ToL works effectively across diverse populations, and argues that, for practitioners with a commitment to social justice, an understanding of cultural contexts is imperative and ToL lends itself to this work. ToL is often used in services or with populations that do not typically access 'traditional' services. For instance, Casdagli et al (2017) suggested young people with diabetes type 1 often reject *"traditional psychological approaches…[which are] seen as implying that problems are located within the young person rather than a legitimate expression of distress associated with a chronic condition"* (pg.9). Haselhurst et al (2020) wrote that parents had found they had *"not always felt safe"* accessing psychology but their responses to ToL were different. Ibrahim and Allen (2018) reported reduced waiting times, which would also improve accessibility to care for others as well as those taking part in ToL.

Subtheme: needing time.

Five papers commented on the need for time when planning and undertaking ToL. Many of the adaptations noted earlier extended the amount of time ToL took (Ibrahim & Allen, 2018; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Wellman et al., 2016). Randle-Phillips et al (2016) shared that by adapting the methodology, it allowed more time for familiarisation and development of relationships. One paper explicitly commented on how the allocated time still wasn't enough (Schweitzer et al., 2014), highlighting that 'the exploration of self-narratives' needs adequate space and time. Casdagli et al (2017) also talked about the additional resources needed to plan and organise workshops, as well as the necessity of training for facilitators involved and considerations regarding funding.

2.3.3.3.3. Theme: Capturing the Work.

Seven papers reported the challenge of capturing the impact, outcomes or effectiveness of ToL (Casdagli et al., 2017; Haselhurst et al., 2020; Ibrahim & Allen, 2018; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020; Schweitzer et al., 2014; Wellman et al., 2016) . Whilst two papers attempted to use a mixed-methods design (Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Schilling et al., 2015) neither reported the results of quantitative analysis and both shared the challenge of finding the 'correct' measure to capture intended outcomes. Several of the papers spoke about attempting to promote a variety of responses in capturing the work (e.g. through focus groups, (Ibrahim & Allen, 2018; Ibrahim & Tchanturia, 2018)) however it is unclear whether this was achieved as the similarities reported in participant responses are striking.

Subtheme: evidence vs. values of NT

Haselhurst et al (2020) offered the most detailed discussion regarding capturing the work, suggesting the importance of "*a thorough evaluation… to protect its sustainability*". They also name the dilemma between wanting to "*be accountable to the need to evidence our practice whilst remaining ethical and respectful of the narrative principles ingrained in the group*" (pg.3). Whilst this was not explicitly named across other papers, authors did report methodological decisions they made that implied their ethical and philosophical stance. For instance, Casdagli et al (2017) reported not attempting to collect "objective" information via quantitative methods. Haselhurst et al (2020) referred to how pre/post measures may offer a 'thin description' of what they were looking to understand and instead they hoped to "*respect, honour and rescue the words of parents who were telling us about their experiences".* Whilst only three of the papers (Haselhurst et al., 2020; Rowley et al., 2020; Wellman et al., 2016) refer explicitly to their epistemological stance or

philosophical position, this feels fundamentally relevant. To improve quality, more of the papers could have engaged reflexively about the underpinning values and epistemology of the research as well as the researchers' positionality.

2.3.3.4. Conclusion of the SLR.

Ten peer-reviewed empirical papers were included in this review, which aimed to answer the question 'what knowledge(s) does the empirical literature tell us about the use of ToL?'. From the three main themes constructed, this review captures the following knowledge(s): The communities engaging with ToL were diverse but connected through contexts of injustice and shared experiences of the impact of ToL; ToL appeared flexible, with most facilitators choosing to adapt the methodology, often to improve accessibility or appropriateness for specific communities; ToL may also improve access to care for those who experience barriers to 'traditional' psychological therapies; time, space and resources were needed for ToL to be most effective; and there were challenges in capturing the outcomes of ToL, with certain ways of 'measuring' impact seeming at odds with the values-driven ethics of practitioners, or NT more generally. The papers largely centred participant outcomes and experiences of ToL and do not include direct mention of practitioners' perspectives. That being said, many of the themes constructed may be relevant to practitioners' experiences or perspectives. While the knowledge(s) outlined contribute towards a better understanding of what ToL has offered, this thin body of empirical literature can only take us so far. Considering the breadth of contexts ToL has been used in historically, these papers offer a limited representation of the work, and particularly negate the application across community contexts.

2.4. Conclusions and Gaps Identified From Surveying the Landscape of Knowledge(s)

From surveying the knowledge(s) surrounding ToL practitioners and, in the empirical literature, the use of ToL more broadly, it became clear that despite a growing knowledge base, there remains many unknowns. This presents enormous potential for this and future inquiry. Although SLRs have come to be known as the 'gold standard' way of presenting evidence (Haddaway et al., 2017; Smith & Noble, 2016), especially within healthcare research where they are seen as the 'pillar of evidence-based healthcare' (Munn et al., 2018), the idea that they always present a *full* and *accurate* picture of the existing 'evidence' can be challenged. This chapter and review illustrate this. With a minimal amount of the ToL literature sitting within empirical sources, the SLR synthesis, if presented alone, would not give a comprehensive summary regarding what is currently understood about practitioners' perspectives of ToL. This fit's with Speedy's (2004) view that "*particularities of therapy outcomes, the local stories, cultural belonging and personal voices*" (p.44) maybe lost within evidence-based practice.

The descriptive accounts of ToL reviewed offer anecdotal insights into practitioner perspectives that begin to reveal the potential value of ToL and its possible impact on practitioners. However, since these accounts encompass experiences of individual pieces of work, where practitioners have chosen to write about their practice, they may not be fully representative. Furthermore, the body of empirical literature remains limited, and whilst it goes some way to helping us understand the impact of ToL, as reported by participants, the papers only represent small-scale service-based evaluations. The current knowledge base makes no attempt to understand, in rigorous, methodologically considered ways, the practice of ToL within local community contexts, or practitioner views or experiences of ToL.

2.5. Rationale for Current Research Project

2.5.1. Why Practitioners?

This research aimed to seek practitioner experiences to expand the limited knowledge(s) documented in relation to their use of ToL, a methodology many choose to use repeatedly across a multitude of contexts globally. No inquiry has, as yet brought the perspectives of practitioners together. Since ToL, itself, was born out of questions "*about how practitioners…should respond…*" (Ncube, 2006), it is somewhat surprising that the views of those using the methodology are thinly documented. Denborough (2018) himself speaks about how little is known as to why ToL has come to be "embraced" by so many practitioners worldwide. Practitioners ultimately hold a great deal of power as to the ways of working that are chosen, implemented or privileged (Cosgrove et al., 2020). It is therefore important that practitioners "*contribute to an international narrative therapy research conversation*" (Speedy, 2004). Stillman (n.d.) also prompts the need to deconstruct practice(s), which one can do by talking to practitioners, in order to "*continue to develop the ideas both on a philosophical level as well as a practice level. If the developments only occur on a practice level, there is a hazard that narrative will become a set of truth statements, which people will try and replicate.*" (pg. 1). Lastly, it is interesting and important to understand how those that do this work sustain themselves, how the work impacts them, and how they perceive the 'self-in-context', all of which have implications on the possibilities for practice (M. White, 1997; Reynolds, 2019b).

2.5.2. Why Community Contexts?

This research focused specifically on those working within community contexts for reasons that are three-fold: a.) since this is largely missing from the empirical literature, it

was felt that a rigorous, empirically sound exploration would add value to the current

knowledge base; b.) this way of working is closer to the roots, histories and intentions of the

original ToL methodology and this felt an important place to begin forming knowledge; c.) to

more fully understand the practices of community-based working, and the advantages that

working closer to communities can bring in order to inform future clinical practice.

2.5.3. Why Global?

Participants were sought from global contexts, rather than a particular country or

culture, with the view to appropriately capturing some of the breadth of ToL practice(s).

With interviews able to move to a virtual platform, due to the impact of Covid-19, this was

also felt to be a unique opportunity within the current climate and changing use of

technology across community contexts.

2.6. Aims of This Inquiry

This inquiry aimed to marry the rigour of empirical research with narrative practice

intentions and ethics to explore the experiences of facilitators using ToL across community

contexts globally. More specifically, an under-explored element of facilitators' experience is

the impact that using ToL may have on them personally and professionally, thus this

research hoped to pay close attention to this. It was hoped, also, that through this

exploration, a greater understanding could be gained surrounding the perceived value,

opportunities and challenges brought about by this way of working are, how it differs from

other approaches and what leads people use and re-use ToL.

2.7. Research Questions

To meet the aims of this inquiry, the following research questions and associated extension questions were developed:

- What are the experiences of facilitators using the ToL within community contexts?

    o   What impact does ToL have on the facilitators, personally and professionally?

- What value or opportunities does the ToL offer to working within community contexts, and what are the challenges of this approach?

    o   Does ToL offer something different to any already existing practice(s)?

    o   What leads facilitators to use (and re-use) the approach?

3. Methodology

3.1. Chapter Overview

In this chapter I outline the 'whats' and 'hows' of this research inquiry (Disney, 2011), navigating the reader through the territories of my methodological decision making. I have attempted, throughout, to specify in detail how and why the research was designed and executed as it was, to allow for the study to be appraised, scrutinised and/or built upon. The chapter considers the rationale for the use of a qualitative design and reflexive thematic analysis. It later progresses to detail the research particulars including expert by experience involvement, participant recruitment and information, ethical considerations, and the process of data collection and analysis.

3.2. A Social Constructionist Philosophical Stance

Alise and Teddlie (2010) note that a researcher's philosophical stance and methodology are inextricably intertwined. For research to be meaningful, Darlaston-Jones (2007) argue that the ability to identify the relationship between the philosophical foundations of the research and the methods employed is critical. A detailed account of the social constructionist approach to this inquiry and the reason for this choice is documented in the introduction (see 1.2.2) however throughout this chapter I have included considerations regarding philosophical coherence and how my methodological decisions were linked to the philosophical underpinnings of this research.

3.3. Design

3.3.1. Choosing A Qualitative Research Design

For this inquiry, I adopted a qualitative design. Qualitative research encompasses a range of methodologies that allow for an exploration of meaning making, perspective and experience, offering a varied and rich approach to inquiry (Lincoln, 2010). Using language as it's 'raw material', qualitative research allows for the study of experiences that avoids the risk of simplifications imposed by quantitative methodology (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 2016). Since the primary research question in this inquiry aimed to explore in detail the perspectives and experiences of ToL facilitators, in a way that may not have been captured using quantitative methodology, a qualitative design was deemed favourable. This allowed for 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) to be uncovered to contribute to a growing knowledge base around ToL. Furthermore, whilst a quantitative methodology is largely based on a positivist philosophy and may have lent itself to providing research that speaks to the 'legitimacy' of ToL to an audience seeking an 'evidence base' (Sexton, Kinser & Hanes, 2008), collating quantitative data would not be congruent with either the social constructionist stance of this research, or the socio-political leanings of a post-modern NT.

3.3.2. Choosing Reflexive Thematic Analysis

This exploration used thematic analysis (TA). Initially, this decision was based on the 'theoretical flexibility' of the method and its ability to explore the individual realities of participants' experiences whilst acknowledging the potential for collective meaning-making (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Also, given the limited empirical knowledge base for ToL and specifically the sparsity of research regarding facilitators' perspectives, I felt that TA would allow for the exploration to remain broad, with wider implications for practice. As I began to

learn more about TA, my conceptualisation of the method and its application in this inquiry became more nuanced and sophisticated, leading me towards Braun and Clarke's (2019; 2021b) reflexive TA. Kristina Lainson writes about the challenges and points of "difference and discomfort" between narrative practice and academic research (Lainson, Braun & Clarke, 2019), which is a struggle I aligned with in choosing an appropriate method. Reflexive TA, however, felt fitting for similar reasons Lainson suggests: it allows for space to consider the researcher as "active" in the process, taking responsibility and acknowledging the power in rescuing and interpreting others' words; the conceptualisation of themes are constructions as opposed to "essential truths"; and there is an encouragement of an exploration of the implicit and underlying meanings derived from context (Lainson, Braun & Clarke, 2019).

3.3.2.1. Considering Other Approaches.

Alongside TA, I gave some consideration to both Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Narrative Analysis (NA) as alternative approaches to this inquiry. IPA would have fit well with my attempts to capture experience, potentially providing an in depth account of facilitators' experiences of using ToL (Braun & Clarke, 2019; McLeod, 2011). Similarly, NA was considered potentially well-suited towards the storytelling nature of NT and would have been philosophically coherent, allowing for the analysis of wider contextual factors. However, since I was interested in capturing the patterns across the breadth of ToL work globally as opposed to an in depth idiographic analysis of each experience (Braun & Clarke, 2019), I decided TA would better suit the potential heterogeneity of the sample and the hoped for outcome.

3.3.3. Choosing Interviews

This inquiry used semi-structured interviews, which allowed for the conversations to be "*guided…rather than dictated*" (Walton, 2021). Since I hoped to gain direct and rich perspectives from a range of facilitators, I found myself choosing between one-to-one interviews or focus groups. Interviews were chosen for reasons that are two-fold. Firstly, focus groups may have provided a logistical challenge due to the global sample (e.g. convening across time zones). Secondly, interviews were deemed to allow for greater opportunity to seek depth in individual experiences, whilst also being able to construct collective patterns. I could also probe further on interesting points that may have been harder to seek in a focus group (Adams, 2015). A semi-structured approach was seen to be more fitting with the social constructionist stance of the research, prioritising the interactional, intersubjective exchange with participants (McLachlan & Garcia, 2015).

3.3.3.1. Interview Schedule Development.

The interview schedule (see Appendix E) was developed to be grounded in the ToL methodology. The questions were designed to take participants through a similar process, allowing them to share the story that led them to using ToL in community contexts, alongside considering their own experiences of facilitation, their strengths, skills and hopes for the methodology. It was hoped that by designing the interview schedule in this way, the research would remain authentic to the methodology, the language would feel familiar to participants, and that this would enable a positive and reflective interview process and encourage rich data. Feedback on the interview schedule was gained from the research team and Ncazelo, as consultant, prior to its use with participants, and tweaks to the language were made to ensure closeness to the methodology. Following the first three interviews, where participants were asked for their reflections on the interview process, a

question was added to the end of the schedule: "how might my thesis best honour your work, or the work of ToL in community contexts worldwide?". This was added to capture participants' hopes for this text and the dissemination work.

3.3.3.2. Virtual Interviews.

Virtual, video-based interviews held over Zoom allowed for global participation. Whilst this method increased accessibility to a more diverse participant cohort, compared with face-to-face UK based interviews, it was not failproof. Of course, some facilitators using ToL in international community contexts may not have consistent, reliable, affordable internet access to take part. Similarly, technological issues may have influenced the information gathered (Walton, 2021). The global pandemic had allowed some participants to become more familiar with online videocall software prior to joining the interviews. However, I was cautious to check out how comfortable facilitators were with the software ahead of all scheduled interviews, in line with considerations suggested by Wilkerson et al (2014) regarding online research.

3.4. Experts by Experience Involvement

Consultation and the involvement of experts by experience (EbE) has been a strong value and priority throughout this research. However, it is important to note that changes to the research due Covid-19 altered some of the original plans for EbE involvement.

Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo, the founder of the ToL methodology, has played an active role throughout, consulting to the project and shaping its growth and development since the outset. Ncazelo has attended many of the research team meetings, reviewed ideas and written work through from the research proposal to the final draft of this text. Her input and

feedback have been invaluable. Ncazelo's contributions allowed me to more deeply understand the histories and underpinnings of ToL and consider carefully the language used throughout. Her involvement was also instrumental in recruiting trained facilitators globally. Furthermore, her review of the analysis allowed me to understand points of connection and distance in line with wider global ToL conversations, which helped give context to my final analysis and discussion.

Alongside Ncazelo, prior to the pandemic, two further EbEs with lived experience of mental health difficulties and of attending a UK-based ToL group, had agreed to act as consultants. They had been heavily involved in the development of the original research proposal. Upon the pivot of the project, due to the pandemic, one EbE had agreed to continue in a consultative role and reviewed the new proposal for the inquiry documented, however his availability later altered and he was unable to remain involved. Regardless, their involvement(s) has without a doubt shaped the lenses I see this research through, the language I have used and my hopes for dissemination of this work.

3.5. Participants

3.5.1. Inclusion Criteria

Stringent inclusion criteria were set prior to participant recruitment, to ensure relevant participants with meaningful contributions, appropriate for the research inquiry were able to participate in the research. Reflexive thoughts regarding these are documented in Appendix A (part 3). To be included in this inquiry, participants had to fulfil the following criteria:

3.5.1.1. A Good Grasp of the English Language.

Participants had to be comfortable to communicate via the English language to ensure I was able to administer the interview appropriately and for the questions/responses to be fully understood. The potential limitations of this are noted in the discussion (see Chapter 5), however because ToL training is delivered in English, this was not thought to significantly limit the pool of possible participants.

3.5.1.2. Identify as a 'Facilitator' of ToL.

All participants self-identified as a 'facilitator' of ToL. They could participate if they had facilitated at least two workshops or groups independently or as a co-facilitator alongside others. This could have been historical facilitation (within the last 5yrs) or current and ongoing. Facilitators did not need to be a professionally trained mental health practitioner (e.g. as a Clinical Psychologist or Narrative Therapist, for instance); recruitment of community leaders, peer or 'lay' Counsellors, Psychosocial workers, and EbE co-facilitators was also of interest and encouraged (see blurbs in Appendices G, I & J).

3.5.1.3. ToL Facilitated Within Community Contexts.

Participants must have facilitated ToL within a community context. This was largely left to participants to self-define, prior to their enquiry to take part, though examples of these contexts were explicitly given in recruitment blurbs and emails (e.g. carrying out work within a grassroots, community or charitable organisation, or local community). Further discussion on the definition of 'community context' can be found in Chapter 1, section 1.3.3.

3.5.1.4. Trained in ToL.

Initially, the inclusion criteria detailed that all participants should have received at least the 'Introduction to the Tree of Life Methodology' training from Ncazelo Ncube-

Mlilo[11]. The primary reason for this was to ensure fidelity to the methodology: that participants understood the roots and histories of ToL, its NT theoretical underpinnings and the four-part process. This meant the inquiry could be constructed from a place which understood the consistencies and coherence across the global practice(s), irrespective of adaptations that may be implemented in local communities. Due to slow recruitment, this inclusion criterion was later amended and expanded to allow for those who had trained through David Denborough (Co-Founder of ToL) at The Dulwich Centre. Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo was able to share that the training standard would be equal across both opportunities.

3.5.1.5. Worldwide Practice.

Participants could participate regardless of where in the world they facilitated ToL. There was an active attempt to recruit from a breadth of different countries/regions where known ToL community work was taking place.

3.5.2. Exclusion Criteria

There were no explicit exclusion criteria named, though participants were excluded if they did not meet the inclusion criteria. The most relevant of these became the context that the facilitator used ToL and the only participants explicitly excluded from the study after reaching out to me were those using ToL as part of their clinic based work in large establishments or statutory services (e.g. inpatient NHS services) rather than community contexts. Where participants did not meet the inclusion criteria, they were told that they could not participate and were given the reason why.

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[11] This training is run through Phola, a South African based non-government organisation (NGO), directed by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo, who deliver psychosocial interventions and are the main training provider for ToL. More information can be found here: https://phola.org/

3.5.3. Participant Recruitment

A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit participants, initially. This was deemed appropriate, as it enabled participants with suitable qualities, made clear through transparent inclusion criteria (as above), to make a choice to participate (Etikan, Alkassim & Abubakar, 2016). This sampling method also ensured that participants willing to take part were likely to hold experiences, beliefs and understandings that were relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2002). In the initial stages of recruitment, the study was advertised on social media, using the recruitment poster (see Appendix F) alongside a blurb explaining the study (for example, see Appendix G). The study was shared via Twitter and several public Facebook groups[12] relevant to the research topic area.

Alongside posting on social media, a key part of the recruitment strategy was the use of the Phola mailing list. Having access to recruit through this mailing list (see Appendix H) allowed direct contact with those who had completed ToL training with Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo and therefore recipients of the email were deemed more likely to be relevant, interested and to meet the inclusion criteria for the research. An email provided by myself (see Appendix I) was sent by Ncazelo to those on the mailing list.

Following the ethical approval of the adaptation to the inclusion criterion noted above, I was also able to recruit directly through David Denborough (see information sent via David in Appendix J), who kindly shared details of the study with facilitators potentially relevant to this inquiry. A snowball sampling approach was also employed, which meant that those who had participated in the study were asked to share the details of the research

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[12] These included 'Tree of Life: Narrative Approach' and 'Narrative Therapy Practice and Discussion Group'

with anyone relevant they knew. Further information as to the procedure followed once participants responded to the above recruitment efforts can be found in section 3.6.

3.5.4. Participant Information

Nineteen ToL facilitators were interviewed as part of this research. A summary of their demographic information and the context(s) where they facilitate(d) ToL, gained from the 'information gathering form' administered prior to interview (see Appendix K) can be found in Table 7 overleaf. Given that the community of international facilitators remains relatively small, specific details (e.g. age, country of practice) have been generalised or removed from the table to ensure participants' anonymity is maintained.

Participants ranged from ages 27-70. They were recruited from nine different countries but their work, collectively, spanned communities across sixteen different countries. Participants work across a broad range of roles including Clinical Psychologist, Community Development Practitioner, Narrative Therapist/Practitioner, Peer Tutor, Participation Lead, Community Organiser, Psychosocial Community Worker, Expert By Experience Facilitator and Lecturer.

Table 7

Participant Information

Alias	Age Group	Gender	Ethnicity	Continent where ToL is facilitated	Community Context & Focus of the Work
Saul	25-35	Female	Black British	Europe	Local communities impacted by poverty, racism, poor mental health
Saoirse	45-55	Female	White Irish	Europe	Local community & faith groups, improving access to mental health
Sparky	55-65	Female	White	Africa	Humanitarian NGO, community-based programme for families
Phoenix	45-55	Female	White British	Europe	Local communities; mental health/wellbeing education
Riverbank	45-55	Female	White Mediterranean	Europe	Community-based work with those impacted by long-term health conditions
Kashi	55-65	Female	Australian	Australia & Asia	Marginalised communities, young people, women and refugees
Red Dirt Chai	55-65	Female	Australian Indian	Australia	Indigenous communities, community development and mental health support
Sisa	55-65	Female	Norwegian	Europe & Africa	Slum communities; orphanage
Dk	35-45	Female	Hong Kong, Chinese	Asia	School community with pupils
Betty	35-45	Female	Rwandan	Africa	Humanitarian NGO, community-based programme for families
Amadi	65-75	Male	Black Caribbean	Europe	Local communities; mental health/wellbeing education
Sarah	45-55	Undisclosed	Australian	Australia	Local communities, indigenous, LGBTQI+; mental health support
Willow	35-45	Female	White Irish	Europe	Local community and faith groups, improving access to mental health
Meehcop	35-45	Male	Ugandan	Africa	Community and economic development across many communities.
Ralph	25-35	Male	White British	Europe	Local communities; mental health/wellbeing education
Nkosazana	18-25	Female	African (Black)	Africa	Rural or marginalised communities; psychosocial intervention
Safieh	35-45	Female	Palestinian Arab	Asia	Community-based psychosocial support, responding to trauma and torture
Maria	55-65	Female	Brazilian White	South America	Local communities; poverty, teenagers, teachers, wellbeing-focused
Jeff	25-35	Male	Not disclosed	Africa	Local communities; young people and mental health

3.6. Ethical Considerations

3.6.1. Formal Ethical Approval

This study was reviewed and granted full ethical approval from the Health, Science,

Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee (known as HSET ECDA) at the University of

Hertfordshire. This was initially granted on 4th August 2020 with protocol number:

LMS/PGT/UH/04247. Two amendments to the original application were later granted

approval on 14th October 2020 (protocol number: aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(1)) and 19th

February 2021 (aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(2)), respectively (see Appendix L for approval notices).

The first amendment was made to widen the inclusion criteria for participation in the study

to recruit from a larger 'target population' (as detailed in section 3.5.1.4), and allow the use

of professional transcription which was not included in the original ethics application. A

second amendment was requested to contact the first six participants interviewed, who had

completed their interviews prior to the first amendment, to seek additional consent to use

professional transcription services.

Specific ethical considerations were made in line with British Psychological Society's

Ethical Guidelines (BPS, 2014), which were detailed as part of the process of gaining ethical

approval and held in high importance throughout the research process; these are detailed

below.

3.6.2. Gaining Informed Consent

All participants were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix M) that

provided necessary information about the research aims, the use and safe storage of their

data, and their right to withdraw. The information sheet was distributed via email to

participants prior to the interview and was discussed at the beginning of all interviews, to

ensure the opportunity to ask questions. This information allowed participants to be fully

informed and to provide adequate consent, which was then documented via a signed

consent form (see Appendix N). Additional consent was gained from the first six participants

to gain approval to have their data professionally transcribed (see email and consent form in

Appendix O).

3.6.3. Ensuring Confidentiality

All participants were informed that their data would remain confidential, stored and

later reported using only an alias that each participant chose. All identifiable information

has been omitted or changed as part of reporting participant details or data in this

document. Reflexive thoughts about confidentiality are documented in Appendix A (part 3).

3.6.4. Protecting Collected Data

All sensitive data was stored securely on an encrypted USB stick, in line with the

University of Hertfordshire data management policy, and GDPR regulations. Only I, as the

principal researcher, had access to any identifiable participant data; any data shared with

the research supervision team or with professional transcribers was shared under

participants' chosen alias with all identifiable information removed. The interview

recordings were only accessed by myself and one professional transcriber, who signed a

non-disclosure agreement (see Appendix P). All confidential data will be safely destroyed at

the point of completion of this research.

3.6.5. Responding to Potential Distress

The procedure and interview process were not expected to cause harm or distress,

due to the nature of the inquiry. Nevertheless, I considered how distress would be managed

using skills from therapeutic training and offering options to break, resume on another

occasion or withdraw from the interview. All options were explained to participants prior to the interview. No participant showed or reported distress.

3.6.6. A Responsibility to Maintain 'Ethics in Practice'

In thinking about my ethical responsibilities as a researcher, I aligned with Naidu and Sliep (2011) who remark on their attempts "*to maintain a constantly reflexive ethical position rather than to accept that our ethical responsibility was fulfilled once ethical clearance had been approved by the institution*". This stance calls for a focus not only on 'procedural ethics' such as those listed above, but a close attention to 'ethics in practice'. These are the situational, relational and contextual ethics that are dynamic and at times, unpredictable (Ellis, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Hopner and Liu (2021) argued that relationships in psychological research are often hierarchical and transactional, failing to account for power and privilege. Responding to this critique, I attempted to hold the values of relational ethics, for example mutual respect, collaboration and connectedness between researcher and researched (Brooks, 2006) at the heart of this inquiry. I aimed to stay "*true to one's character and responsible for one's actions and their consequences on others*" (Slattery & Rapp, 2003, p. 55) alongside allowing for relationships to "*become the basis for how psychological knowledge is produced, disseminated, and acted upon*" (Hopner & Liu, 2021). This relates back to my positionality, detailed in Chapter 1 (see section 1.2.1).

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

Participants were recruited between August-December 2020. Interested participants contacted me via email or social media in response to the recruitment efforts described in section 3.5.3. Dependant on how much detail the respondent had provided about the

nature of their ToL work, I typically engaged in a short email exchange to ensure participants

met relevant inclusion criteria (see section 3.5.1). Participants were then sent the

aforementioned information sheet, information gathering form and consent form to read,

complete and return at their convenience if they wished to take part. A mutually convenient

time to engage in the research interview was then identified. Participants were also given

the opportunity to ask any questions ahead of time; two participants arranged an informal

conversation prior to agreeing their involvement in the study.

I setup a scheduled Zoom appointment ahead of the interview and on the day

participants were emailed to remind them of the details. This was also an opportunity to

remind them to return relevant paperwork if they had not already done so. Upon

commencement of the video conversations, participants were reminded of the context and

aims of the research, information about data collection, storage and confidentiality, and

were given the opportunity to ask questions and continue following verbal consent.

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes (shortest) and 120 minutes (longest, split into two

sessions due to poor internet connection). At the end, participants were asked again if they

would be happy for me to keep in touch regarding the study; all participants verbally

consented to this.

3.7.1. Reflexivity During and Alongside Interviewing

Finlay (2008) refers to the dance a researcher engages in between both the research

process and the participants, describing multiple tensions of what to focus on during an

interview. To remain aware of the assumptions, prejudices and biases that would inevitably

impact my interviews, I engaged in a series of critical conversations with a fellow Trainee

Clinical Psychologist, based on the format of a 'bracketing' interview (Ahern, 1999; Rolls &

Relf, 2006). Instead of intending that any new awareness would allow me to put my assumptions aside, as one may hope for when 'bracketing', I instead consciously held them in the forefront of my mind during interviews. My reflexive thoughts from these critical conversations are located in Appendix A (part 4). I also kept a reflective diary and made notes during and after each interview, documenting content that stood out during dialogue, but also emotional responses and continued curiosities. These are documented in Appendix A (part 5).

3.7.2. Further Involvement of Participants

All participants that took part gave consent to be contacted following their interviews, meaning they were able to help shape the ongoing nature of this thesis. They were sent an email 'newsletter' in March 2021 with updates on the research process and opportunities for their further contribution (see Appendix Q). In June 2021 all participants were sent a summary of the initial analysis and visual map (see Appendix R). I saw this as part of a formal 'member checking' process, where I was ensuring I had captured participants' experiences with some accuracy and in a way that resonated (Birt et al., 2016). However, more than that I saw it as an obligation of the deconstructive nature of this inquiry, where I was guided by Crocket et al (2004)'s words, in thinking about the role of participants as more than just knowledge-givers:

> *"If this principle [deconstructive practice] is held in mind then our research practice would not treat those who participate with us… as providers of data who have no voice worth hearing in making sense of the data. Rather we accord research participants' agentive status in the research conversation as commentators, or even theorisers, through inviting them to make comment on the meaning of the data."*

Nine participants responded, sharing their views in relation to the initial analysis. A range of responses were expressed, which enabled me to further shape my analysis, the language used and the nuance captured. These responses will be covered in more detail through the analysis chapter (see Chapter 4).

3.8. Data Analysis

Reflexive TA was employed as the main analytic method. The process of analysing the data followed the six phases mapped out by Braun and Clarke (2019; 2021a). I have described below how I followed these six phases. As Maxwell (2005) suggests, I found that the linear model of research does not accurately represent the circular process of analysis, so I have also attempted to document my reflections through the *"…up and down, the twists and turns"* (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.16).

3.8.1. Phase 1: Data Familiarisation

Having conducted the interviews, I came to the analysis with some knowledge of the data. However, since all nineteen interviews were professionally transcribed, I intentionally spent more time in this phase to aid with the immersion process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), moving through several iterations of data familiarisation. Initially, I listened back to each interview, once with audio only whilst awaiting the transcriptions and then again reading alongside the audio to check and make corrections to the transcriptions. I then read each participants' transcript once more in an 'active way' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Here I noted down initial thoughts regarding the patterns and potential codes coming up, following the advice of Braun and Clarke (2021a) to "*start engaging analytically*" (pg. 133) during this phase. See Appendix S for pictures of some of my notes from this phase.

3.8.2. Phase 2: Data Coding

Following familiarisation, I coded each transcript in turn. As Braun and Clarke (2021a) note, this marked a move to a more 'systematic' process. I used NVivo to code all transcripts, line-by-line, coding dialogue that was of interest and pertinent to the research questions. I took an inductive stance, choosing to be led by the data as opposed to prior knowledge or literature (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I sought out both latent (explicit) and semantic (interpretative) codes, choosing to code broadly and to include some surrounding data so as to not lose context (Bryman, 1998). Furthermore, I sought to capture "*both the diversity of perspectives…and the patterning of meaning*" so coded inclusively to capture potential nuance (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). Excerpts from several coded transcripts can be found in Appendix T. With rich data, I found that a large proportion of my interviews were coded, resulting in a substantial number of codes at the end of this stage (897 nodes from 19 interviews). To try to make this manageable throughout, I attempted to pause after every 4 interviews to sort through, combine and delete duplicate codes by reviewing the list on NVivo. Furthermore, to aid reflexivity throughout the coding process, one of my research supervisors and one of my colleagues, a fellow Trainee Clinical Psychologist, cross-coded subsections of anonymised transcripts (as suggested by Braun & Clarke, 2019). This enabled me to think about how I was coding, what I was drawn to code and how my assumptions may feed into the language of the coding labels. An excerpt of my research diary from a supervisory conversation (see Appendix A, part 6) details this thinking.

3.8.3. Phase 3: Initial Theme Generation

To 'step back' from the line-by-line immersion coding brings and to think about the broader patterns of shared meaning across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021a), I printed the codes from NVivo, cut them into strips, and began to cluster them together (see photos in

Appendix U). I formed initial clusters (see list in Appendix V) and then constructed initial

themes, subthemes and sub-subthemes which were an initial representation of the patterns

I saw in the dataset (see Thematic Map 1, Appendix W). Some of these themes remained

the same as the clusters, others combined clusters together, others bought data initially

clustered under multiple clusters together into new themes. As Braun and Clarke (2021a)

state, this stage relied on my "*in-depth knowledge of the data, developed through*

familiarisation and coding, and the data codes themselves" which left me one step-removed

from the data, and in need of returning.

3.8.4. Phase 4: Developing and Reviewing Themes

This stage encompassed several processes, documented in Table 8 below, that ran

alongside one another during this phase. All of these processes helped me to move through

several iterations from the initial themes generated towards the final themes (these shifts

are documented in a series of thematic maps, see Appendix W).

Table 8

Processes for Developing and Reviewing Themes

Process	Description of Actions Taken
Returning to the main dataset	I reviewed the themes against the initial interview transcripts, as well as the original list of codes, and ensured the themes told "*a compelling story about the data in relation to the research question*" (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). It also allowed me to develop several of the themes in line with member checking feedback, as I was able to return to certain transcripts and remind myself of nuances I may have originally failed to capture. During this stage I pulled together the quotes from relevant themes ahead of the write-up, which enabled me to check my analysis for 'drift', holding these questions posed by Braun and Clarke (2021a) in mind: "*Does the central organising concept of each theme capture the data set content? Does the scope and focus of the theme capture diversity of meaning? Are there some important meanings left out?*" (pg. 138).
Critical conversations	Conversations with my research team, Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo and two 'critical research buddies' enabled me to discuss my themes, subthemes and quotes from the data and develop new or stronger thinking in relation to the 'central organising concepts' of each theme, helping me reflect on the connectedness across themes, which subthemes were related to which themes and the language used to label the themes.
Feedback from participants	The email dialogue created through the member-checking process with participants (see section 3.5.5 for more detail), was instrumental in the development of my final themes. Responses that led to shifts are documented in the analysis chapter. This process straddled across Phase 4 and 5, since much of the feedback allowed me to refine the language I had used to term and describe particular themes and subthemes.

3.8.5. Phase 5: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

The above processes, in particular gaining feedback from participants, also extended into the 'refining, defining and naming' phase, where the story of each theme and subtheme was refined and appropriate data excerpts were chosen to support each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). The language used to name each theme and subtheme changed in response to feedback and revisiting relevant quotes. This phase resulted in the final analysis represented on the thematic map in Appendix X, and in the following chapter.

3.8.6. Phase 6: Writing Up Reflexive TA

The final stage of reflexive TA is writing up the rich descriptions of each theme. In this stage, I had to remind myself that "*there is always far more that can be said about data than any one analysis can capture*" (Braun & Clarke, 2021a) which comforted me through my attempts to do justice to the rich, detailed data I had collected. My write-up of the analysis is detailed in Chapter 4, to follow.

4. Analysis

4.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter details the themes and subthemes I have generated through the reflexive TA of the conversations shared with nineteen ToL facilitators. The analysis endeavoured to respond to the research questions outlined in Chapter 2, exploring facilitators' experiences of using ToL within community contexts and the opportunities and challenges ToL brings to their practice(s), including consideration of the personal and professional impact of using ToL and how it may differ from other practices. Three main themes were constructed: 'Encountering Possibility', 'A Contrasting Way of Being and Doing' and 'Shared Humanity'. These are detailed below, with their eleven respective subthemes. Verbatim quotes from participants are used to 'bring to life' the themes and subthemes. Feedback from the member checking process is also interspersed throughout.

4.2. Visual Representation of Themes and Subthemes

Figure 4 visually maps the themes and subthemes constructed through the analysis. I chose to represent this using hand-drawn art rather than a formal 'thematic map' (documented in Appendix X), to align with the ethics of creativity and innovation seen within NT. My hope also, is that this will form an engaging way to begin to disseminate and share conversations about the outcomes of this research.

Figure 4

A Visual Map of the Themes and Subthemes of the Analysis
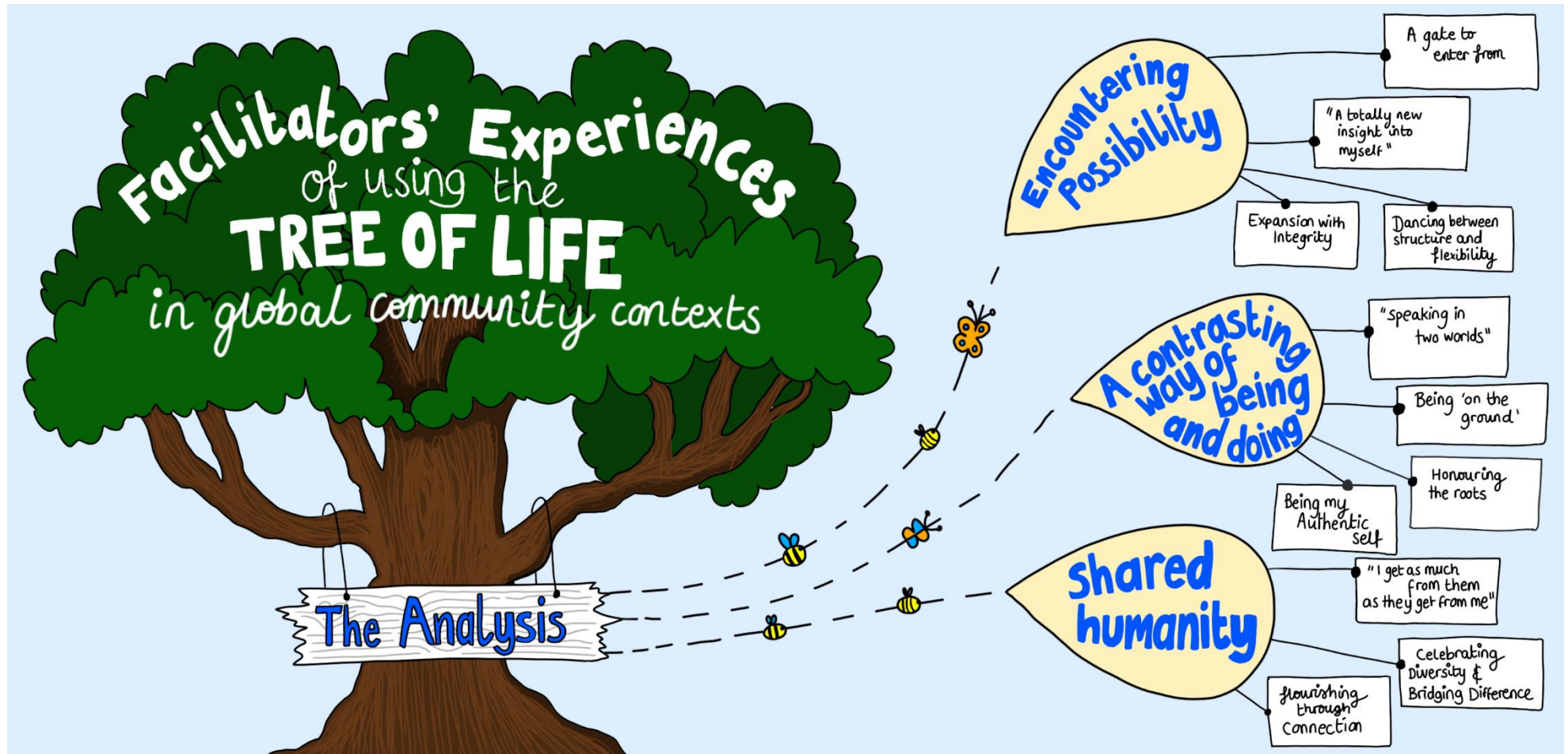
4.3. Theme 1: Encountering Possibility

This first theme captures how the majority of the facilitators shared their experience of using ToL as one of 'possibility'. Specifically, ToL was described as a methodology that allows for new or different opportunities for *what is* (within current practice) and *what could be* (in the future). This theme encompasses four subthemes, representing firstly how ToL was considered a useful starting point for facilitators' narrative-informed community work. Secondly, that completing ToL had led to new personal insights and been transformative for some facilitators. Further, that ToL seemed to make possible the coexistence of both structure and flexibility. Lastly, that facilitators' hoped for ToL to be more widely accessible across different contexts, but only if there remains integrity to the original methodology and ToLs ethical use can be ensured.

4.3.1. Subtheme: A Gate to Enter From

Most facilitators described that ToL, for them, offers a helpful place or 'gate' to enter from, to build new relationships, using narrative practice, within a community context *"Tree of Life is like the gate for narrative practitioners to enter from to find their space for creativity and narrative practice."* (Safieh). Several participants spoke about feeling confident in meeting people for the first time because of knowing they can use ToL:

> *"I think it brings out the confidence whenever I'm going to meet people because first, I have a tool- I have something to use and which I have found very useful personally"* (Jeff)

Several facilitators shared that ToL offers them a *"point of entry"* to the different conversational maps used within narrative practice, allowing for a range of possibilities within their interactions:

"the Tree of Life is full of possibilities, of creativity and for me is always points of

entry to use the different maps that I know from narrative therapy in the

conversation" (Riverbank)

Further to this, ToL seemed to be experienced as an opportunity to introduce

narrative ideas to communities who are not familiar with this way of working. Some spoke

about ToL as a way to simplify or 'translate' narrative practice to be more understandable

and applicable to local communities; the power of the metaphor to support this process was

also something that came up across multiple interviews:

"I had to sort of learn narrative and then translate it into local language… and I think

the Tree of Life or using those kind of metaphors allow that translation to happen." -

(Sarah)

Some expressed caution that it is important to "*prepare the ground*" before using

ToL because of its potential power:

"I always say to people, if you're going to use this tool in a community setting, please

don't do it on the first day…you need to prepare the ground almost. You need to build

up trust, to know that people are willing to feel, they feel safe enough to be able to

be vulnerable." (Sparky)

The same facilitator, Sparky, further expanded on this during member checking,

emphasising the need to build trust prior to using ToL:

"Although it's a good place to start, ToL should only be used once trust has been built

within a group. Often a lot of pain comes out in a ToL process, and I have found that

it's not advisable to use this tool too early in a relationship with a new community."

(Sparky)

Facilitators spoke about what the communities they work alongside had gained from ToL, for example "*it makes cracks that bring light into people's lives* (Jeff), which appeared to be one reason why many continue to choose to use the methodology when forming new community relationships:

"So, we start everything through Tree of Life because Tree of Life is to me is a narrative metaphor that thinks about, invites the person to think about herself or himself" (Maria)

Others refer to the methodology as one that communities tend to "love" making it a positive place to begin:

"in terms of my work with communities, I think it's a really great way of beginning community work with organizations because people just love it. They love talking about the ideas connected to it, they love taking part in it...they bring their own things to it." (Saoirse)

Whilst it can be a good place to begin, several facilitators also emphasised that this does not diminish its ability to stand-alone as a powerful intervention:

"I know at times it gets positioned as like a pre... but it's an intervention in itself; not something you do before you kind of go on to a proper intervention or something. But it feels like a really nice starting intervention when you're beginning to work with a new group" (Willow)

Further to this, another participant during member checking offered critique that, being a positive place to begin or enter from should not mean ToL is framed as an intervention to be used prior to different interventions:

> *"I'm always wary when I hear it being described as a way of introducing other (subtext is often 'proper') approaches"* (Saoirse)

Overall, through the majority of conversations, ToL appeared to be framed as a useful methodology to hold, affording the possibilities of forging positive relationships and introducing narrative ideas within new communities. Alongside this, practitioners shared a need to be cautious to warm the context first and that ToL should be recognised as having impact as a stand-alone intervention as well as the starting point for ongoing community work.

4.3.2. Subtheme: "A Totally New Insight into Myself"

All facilitators shared that taking part in the ToL methodology themselves, and drawing their own tree, meant ToL not only had an impact on those they had worked with, but also on them, leading to new personal insights and for some, transformation:

> *"I've noticed really how Tree of Life has worked on me…it's had a big impact on my own life"* (Saul)

Facilitators described how completing their personal ToL had helped them to learn more about themselves, their histories or to reconnect with what was important to them. One participant, for example, shared that ToL had given him the gifts of "*I am. I have. I can*" (Meehcop). He described how he had gained a better idea of "*who I am, where I am coming from*" (I am), "*who are my people in my circle of support*" and what skills and connections he

had around him (I have) and what his competences and accomplishments were (I can). He

spoke about this influencing his life, but also his ability to "*empower others*":

> "*…the time I started exploring the Tree of Life… I could say I am able to do one two*
>
> *three or four things and that was where my full stop would be…but now… I can be*
>
> *able confidently to say I am able to do over 30 things. So, I can be able to provide the*
>
> *light when I find a place in darkness. I can be able to empower other people… the*
>
> *Tree of Life actually helped me so much to explore personally and this*
>
> *really…enriched my life, in terms of the friends, in terms of competences, in terms of*
>
> *the accomplishments*" (Meehcop)

The above seemed to capture how wide-reaching many participants described the impact of

ToL to be. Some participants commented on how completing ToL had given them insight

into their relational position in the world:

> "*It helped me understand my own position in the world and the ways that I work, you*
>
> *know the ways that I was responding because of the how I was positioned… but also*
>
> *helpful to me to give me some framework around, yeah, my kind of own way that I*
>
> *viewed the world*" (Kashi)

ToL was reported to have supported several facilitators with their own hardships or distress:

> "*…tree of life allowed me to reframe my experiences enough to…get out of the*
>
> *emotional stuckness that can happen and again, allow for the possibility of change in*
>
> *myself*" (Phoenix)

Many participants shared powerful sentiments about how the methodology had been

personally and professionally "transformative" for them:

"Well, it's been transformative. I mean, I can't put it more succinctly than that… quite life-changing, both personally and professionally" (Saoirse)

"Actually, the Tree of Life was the genesis of my life, it was the genesis of my own current work…" (Meehcop)

One thing that felt particularly pertinent was that many facilitators noted how their personal trees had changed over time, each time they completed one. These changes had helped them notice, learn, or understand differently:

"…each time my tree is different. So it's the opportunity for me to look again, and that's really interesting, you know, because if we think our stories are immutable, but then each time I do my tree is different and clearly our stories are changing all of the time…" (Phoenix)

For some facilitators, the impact ToL had had on them appears to be part the reason they continue to use the methodology. Their own experiences of ToL had offered validation and provided 'evidence' that enabled them to understand the power and potential ToL could have for others. It seemed that perhaps this helped facilitators to trust the methodology.

"I've definitely then felt a lot of the- the benefits and insights which in a way mean that when that is kind of more validating that you know what you're doing with everybody is useful and- and you can kind of get more of a feedback loop of what's working um because you can actually feel it for yourself." (Ralph)

What participants seemed to be saying was that joining and completing the process themselves, alongside the communities, made the methodology different to other

approaches and allowed it to have impact in a more personal way. Participants spoke

emphatically about this, and it seemed that this had been both a surprise and a large part of

the value of using ToL. In member checking, one participant described how this subtheme

made them think of ToL as a "*facilitators' reflective mirror*" (Jeff), one that impacts their

own self-reflections which in turn also impacts the way they engage with others.

4.3.3. Subtheme: The Dance Between Structure & Flexibility

The coexistence of structure and flexibility stood out throughout all interviews. It

appeared, to me, as though they were in a dance with one another – both seemingly

integral to how people speak about the opportunities afforded by the methodology, but

perhaps sometimes one takes the lead and other times the other. Most participants shared

that the structure of ToL had been helpful in some way, for example it was described as

"*such a gift*" (Sisa). Alongside this, however, participants also shared the importance of the

methodology offering flexibility, meaning they had been able to adapt ToL and be creative,

by trusting the process and the power of the collective, found within the group.

Amadi described ToL as offering "*a frame to hang your thoughts*" which felt like it

captured what others also said about how the structure of ToL can act as a useful guide or

scaffold, offering containment and at times reassurance to facilitators. It was described as

something to go back to during times of stuckness:

> "*…it's nice having that kind of guideline questions and framework where if you know*
>
> *something does come up that's quite tricky and difficult…that it has been able to be*
>
> *kind of contained.*" (Ralph)

Some participants shared how the structure enabled the people they work alongside to be

vulnerable, perhaps because it created safety:

"…you have structure, which gives you which says, Oh we could talk about this

now…and so it makes it safe for you to open up." (Amadi)

Some facilitators spoke about how the structure allowed them to grow familiar enough with

the methodology, to feel confident to then adapt it and be more creative:

" if you've got a map like the Tree of Life and a process to be able to use and notice

the impact that it has on other people, then…this way of questioning and inquiring

becomes second nature and then you can become more creative and do what you

want with it" (Kashi)

This was also reportedly encouraged through the training, which had helped some

participants to feel empowered and to become more flexible and creative:

"…[the] way of teaching gave me a…sense of creativity… it devoted me to develop my

own skillset as a narrative practitioner. Not just to what is said in the papers and

what I heard from the training. No, it also invite me to… develop my skills…how do I

achieve the aim?" (Safieh)

In terms of adaptations, most facilitators spoke about how ToL does not always work

in its "original form" so they had found it necessary to be responsive, flexible and to make

changes to ToL. An example of this is adapting the language and questioning style:

"I think one of the things I have found important is to make it a little bit more

accessible and more friendly in use in terms of language…sometimes the way they

are saying their questions are phrased you have to change, to adapt to the

culture…or to the beliefs of the person" (Jeff)

Communities were also described as having readily adapted ideas themselves:

"the women wanted to add wind to the Tree of Life and the wind were the ancestors who had been before and who sort of swirl around and can shuffle the leaves and kind of provide comfort but also can let us know when we may have transgressed things and they'll blow harder…. So, it's just really beautiful to yeah kind of see people also wanting to make it richer for them" (Red Dirt Chai)

Facilitators trusting the process appeared to be a mediator of the dance between structure and flexibility and trust seemingly allowed facilitators to move between the two. For instance, Willow reflected how having some structure facilitated trust:

"provided you've got all the other containers around something and the space and all of everything set up in an okay way then you can just be- you can just sit back and allow that something to be created…trust the process that something will emerge" (Willow)

Some participants reflected on how trusting the process or managing uncertainty had been challenging, leading to anxiety about facilitating ToL for the first time:

"I was a bit nervous at the beginning... I wasn't sure what I was doing in the right way or in the wrong way…but for the people I share with, they kind of trust me somehow…that it will be all right" (Riverbank)

Others shared that, because of the uncertainty, the methodology may not be for everyone. It perhaps better suits practitioners more able to be flexible:

"…maybe why some people don't um like the methodology or feel as comfortable with [it] is because there's an uncertainty; because you don't know what's going to

be created... I think if you need to control things in a particular way, then that's going

to be quite difficult." (Willow)

Related to this, several facilitators noted that when ToL is used in a group format, powerful things had happened in the process of people being together, witnessing one another's stories and building connections. For some facilitators it seemed that perhaps their ability to trust the process was inextricably linked with trust in the power of the collective:

"...the key thing for me anyway it's just allowing things to evolve and unfold in their

own way and something always gets created. The group or whoever you're working

with... they find a connection um and I think yeah that's a strength because you don't

know at the start what's going to happen. But over time it allows you to just kind of

rest in you know just trust the group, trust the process." (Sarah)

In member checking, several participants shared that, for them, structure and flexibility exist in a 'both-and' position or as one participant shared, they "*are woven together for me*" (Saoirse). Ultimately, the 'dance' appeared to be a representation of how both structure and flexibility were seen as integral to the methodology; their coexistence and the ebb and flow between the two is seemingly a valuable element of ToL.

4.3.4. Subtheme: Expansion with Integrity

All facilitators talked about the positive impact they had seen ToL have and a hope for it to expand, to be offered more broadly across different contexts and made accessible to more people. However, with this, there was also a strong sense that facilitators believed it is important that any expansion of ToL should be done with integrity to the methodology and with careful consideration regarding the ethics of the practice: *"I mean the hopes are that it will grow, but in a way that is with integrity."* (Willow)

Several participants shared an importance that the methodology remains

"*both recognised and…equally respected*" (Riverbank) and that it "*…continues to be used in*

rich ways." (Red Dirt Chai) as intended. Multiple facilitators spoke about ToL needing to be

delivered "*in ways that are really faithful to its origins, intentions, ethics and theoretical*

ideas…" (Saoirse). Many participants shared concerns about a 'rollout' of ToL which, in their

view, would have the potential to do harm or be unethical if not done so thoughtfully:

> "*My nightmare scenario for [ToL] is that it becomes rolled out in a sort of dumbed-*
>
> *down way that is detached from its principles or used in ways that actually reinforce*
>
> *oppressive practice.*" (Saoirse)

Facilitators described how more people accessing ToL would be a good thing, however that

this shouldn't mean it is used everywhere and anywhere without thought:

> "*I'd love to see it being used I suppose as it is, but…championed in more contextual*
>
> *use. So, not necessarily that it's gonna take over all kind of ways of doing therapy*
>
> *and um you know wipe out other ways of doing therapy. But more I'd love for it to be*
>
> *in everywhere that it makes sense to be*" (Ralph)

Participants shared their worries about the methodology being co-opted by the dominant

ways of being within statutory healthcare systems. For instance Phoenix hoped "*that not*

everything is processed and structured and measured up the wazoo". Similarly, Saul shared

their hope that "*people would have access to it…but it doesn't get forced into a professional*

service-user model".

Several participants shared the belief that these challenges might be avoided

through training, which may ensure fidelity to the methodology, an understanding of the

origins of ToL and how it is best used in environments where it is most fitting, for instance within communities:

> *"I think my hope for it is that it continues to grow from its roots by people and through people that value it and have been trained and use it in community spaces"* (Willow)

It seemed that what was represented through this subtheme is a conflict between facilitators wanting the methodology to be accessible and for its value to have further reach, whilst fearing the potential consequences of this, given the power of dominant ways of working.

4.4. Theme 2: A Contrasting Way of Being and Doing

This theme captures how facilitators describe their experience of ToL as "*a way of being able to do it differently*" (Sarah) a contrast to other ways of working with a different feel and a different way of being with people. An example of this is:

> *"…there are some people who have nice lives that give up their nice lives to try and like help the people with shit lives have slightly better lives, and I just think that's like it's not a solidarity approach, it's not humanizing anyone, it's not healthy. So, I think Tree of Life offers me a different way of looking at that and a language to talk about."* (Saul)

This theme contains four subthemes. First, it captures facilitators' sense of needing to speak across two worlds, navigating the dominant discourse alongside the world of narrative practice. Secondly, it describes the opportunities and challenges brought about by

'being on the ground' in community contexts, including consideration of what it meant to facilitators to be *insiders* or *outsiders* to the communities they work alongside. A third subtheme speaks to the importance that facilitators placed on origins and roots of ToL and the need to honour these in their practice(s). A final subtheme captures how facilitators felt they were able to embody the kind of practitioner they would like to be, sharing their authentic selves in joining with others to complete ToL.

4.4.1. Subtheme: Speaking in Two Worlds

Red Dirt Chai shared that they felt they must "*be able to speak in two worlds*", the world of the dominant discourse and the world of narrative practice. This seemed to capture the experiences of many facilitators, who talked about needing to navigate the dominant systems, structures and discourses to be able to do the work they do, whilst also attempting to work in an alternative way. This includes joining with people in a decentred way that places community members as the experts in their own lives, whilst advocating for alternative ways to understand the value of an intervention. This way of working places less emphasis on pathologising, medicalised discourse and 'outcome measurement' and 'evidence-based practice' in comparison to the dominant positivist, empirical science led system(s). Participants spoke about how these structures and systems are "*not serving anyone well*" (Saul) and how other ways of working make more sense, in comparison:

> "*…it made sense to me to be doing this with communities because that's where you get your normalizing from rather than normalizing through you know research or evidence from you know bell curves.*" (Kashi)

They acknowledged that sometimes they needed to speak in a particular discourse to help management or funders "*make sense*" of or approve the methodology, which also speaks to navigating power whilst doing this work:

> *"At times I also need to speak the dominant medical model world or you know to be able to put it in language that kind of you know makes sense to people who are funding."* (Red Dirt Chai)

Some facilitators felt that ToL allowed them to bring two worlds together:

> *"we're based in the hospital, so it is a community intervention but with kind of the selling point... It's given me the opportunity to… bring the narrative ideas in the [medical]*[13] *world"* (Riverbank)

Participants also spoke about gaining confidence over time in the way they talk about the methodology, to share it with others using less of the dominant discourse:

> *"as I've got more clear and confident about being able to talk the value of it, it kind of reaps benefits because people, you know we've got enough rings under our belt now that you know we can show enough work to sort of say this is what we do and I suppose that is the way of skinning this cat."* (Red Dirt Chai)

Similarly, some shared the need to advocate for ToL using examples from outside of what is traditionally deemed 'evidence' to demonstrate its value:

> *"We started doing narrative practice in the absence of much of an evidence-base…but there are ways…of doing it and the way we did it was really to elevate the*

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[13] Context altered to protect participant anonymity

voices of the participants and we got great word of mouth and all that kind of stuff…I

feel very strongly that we need to advocate for it in and of its own right" (Saoirse)

Overall, this subtheme felt like a representation perhaps of a tightrope practitioners

sometimes feel they need to walk, wishing to use the discourses of narrative practice but

knowing that, in some instances, this is not what those in power understand or accept.

There feels to me a real conflict here, also shared in the member checking feedback where

some participants reiterated the idea of "*playing with different discourses*" (Riverbank) or

sometimes *"being at a crossroads"* (Jeff) but others speaking about the need to advocate for

less dominant discourses, and not to be co-opted so easily into a dominant system.

Interestingly Riverbank spoke about feeling like a "*rebel in disguise*" whereas Dk shared "*I*

guess only those with power on the dominant side would find it [narrative discourse]

radical."

4.4.2. Subtheme: Being 'On the Ground'

Facilitators shared in detail their perspectives on working differently, within

communities 'on the ground', and the opportunities and challenges that had offered them:

"…for me being on the ground has been exceptional, it's been breath-taking. It's

always an experience…" (Nkosazana)

Many shared how completing ToL in this way enabled them to gain a new perspective about

the communities they work alongside:

"I came to somehow believe that most of our communities are so vulnerable in

nature that they cannot actually be able to do anything… But communities remain

communities and what defines the communities it's not about what has actually

happened to them, it's about the values that they really cherish. It's about the values

that they stand to defend even when they have lost so many things" (Meehcop)

Several participants spoke about how this way of working allowed for "*much deeper*"

(Sparky) engagement and how "*it's kind of richer in its exploration*" (Red Dirt Chai).

Moreover, many seemed to strongly believe that this was how practitioners should be

working, due to the opportunities it provided:

> *"I feel that opens up a mindset or a perspective... I think we should have more people*
>
> *out there... that are in the community because...Its working and creating partnerships*
>
> *with people that you're working with."* (Nkosazana)

Several facilitators acknowledged that ToL could improve access to support, which

otherwise may be limited within particular communities:

> *"when you have one city with everybody depressed what do you...You don't*
>
> *have...Psychologists enough to assist everybody and you can make some exercise*
>
> *that can...offer opportunity to people to access their stories, their dreams and their*
>
> *hopes"* (Maria)

Participants also noted that using narrative practice within community contexts helped

improve accessibility of provision for those who were marginalised or would be deemed

'*hard to reach'*:

> *"...these are people that are considered too hard to work with or there's no progress*
>
> *made or no engagement and using narrative practices all of a sudden, they're*
>
> *engaging...they're making huge progress and you know loving therapy and wanting*
>
> *to come all the time..."* (Sarah)

Alongside the opportunities, facilitators also shared the challenges of working in these ways. In particular it requires practitioners to be incredibly flexible; one participant, for instance, spoke about needing to "catch" people when you can (Red Dirt Chai). Many participants also referred to doing ToL within communities needing time to set up intentionally:

> *"It does it takes a while to set up in a way that doesn't actually look like we're going in there as experts… we have to wait until we're invited and build the relationship with the significant people to find out what they want and then let them know what we can offer them and so there's a big process behind it."* (Kashi)

Several facilitators spoke about another challenge being a difficulty articulating what ToL is, or what their role is to a community:

> *"I think the main challenge for me is like communicating what it is in a way that makes people want to do it."* (Saul)

Betty spoke of the challenge of working within remote communities with limited resource, and how "*the only challenge that I had is that meeting people who can't write*". She talked about adapting the methodology so that everyone she worked alongside contributed to a large 'collective' ToL and some people therefore could be scribes without everyone needing writing skills.

Of particular note, within this subtheme, was that many participants shared challenges and opportunities that appeared to come about from being part of the community they work within (an *insider*) or working with communities they are not

normally a part of, for instance travelling to particular communities to do ToL (an *outsider*).

Some participants shared their motivations for working within their own communities:

> *"Growing in such a community… I was looking to how can I contribute to the*
>
> *communities…in any way possible"* (Jeff)

Commenting on working within their own community, one participant, Sarah joked about being like a local celebrity and shared how it enables them to "*work more locally*" and remain accountable because the community "*talk to each other…I don't get away with much here".* However, whilst they note that this supports the building of trust, the same participant also shared the challenges of "*not a very separated kind of practice":*

> *"I think the downside is juggling those dual relationships…every queer person I work*
>
> *with reduces my social support exponentially…that's really problematic for me, even*
>
> *though I'm so like located in community I feel isolated…"* (Sarah)

Those who identified as different to, or outside of the communities they work alongside shared how being noticeably different could help open up conversations:

> *"I bring difference with a different accent that I have so I easily talk about culture and*
>
> *this is easily rewrite in a way that is an advantage"* (Riverbank)

Similarly, some commented on how difference allows for curiosity and an opening of a genuine inquiry:

> *"…I come from a different cultural background… so it's lovely to be able to sit in that*
>
> *space and actually genuinely inquire for someone and be able to acknowledge the*
>
> *expertise that someone else brings into the room"* (Red Dirt Chai)

One participant spoke of navigating others views on the work they do, undertaking ToL within a different country to which they live:

> *"…people will question and say, "What are you doing going over there doing this?... I like that people ask the question…when they stay and they learn about the ideas before we go and they understand the intent and they understand the relationship that we have it's taken us you know four years to build before we've actually gone into these communities, they understand, they get it."* (Kashi)

Others that do similar work, where they do not remain 'on the ground' in the same communities spoke about the complexities of ensuring the work is safe:

> *"I'm very careful for them to share stories. I don't want anything to be too much for them because I don't know them. Oh, I know them a little bit. I'm leaving, so I don't want to open up anything that's. We talk in general terms"* (Sisa)

Overall this subtheme represented participants' views, whether opportunities or challenges, of working within community contexts. It was interesting to see the difference in the way people spoke about being 'inside' or 'outside' communities and the opportunities or challenges they raised. However overall, the general sense was that working in a community oriented way resulted in opportunities that would not arise in another setting.

4.4.3. Subtheme: Honouring the Roots

Many facilitators spoke about the meaning and importance of the roots and origins of ToL, and a desire to "honour" them through their practices, but also a wish for them to continue to be known and honoured as ToL is used by others. Participants spoke of the need to respect and honour the founders:

"…this is the first step for me, really, I respect, I honour Ncazelo and Denborough because they came up with a very, very wonderful tool." (Betty)

By honouring the founders, some participants felt they are honouring the methodology:

"We honour the Tree of Life by honouring the work done by Ncazelo and Michael White, because they're the ones who had the vision" (Amadi)

Facilitators shared the gratitude they had for those that had played a role in developing ToL:

"I'm very grateful to Ncazelo and David also and Paulo Freire in Brazil because they present to me the way of thinking about Tree of Life that the stories don't stop with us, the story continues" (Maria)

Facilitators shared their appreciation for the methodology as a largely non-western approach that honours culture, local knowledge(s) and people's histories and ancestry. Part of ToL's origins being rooted in psychosocial work in South Africa, and ToL being co-developed by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo as a Black Zimbabwean woman, were significant for some facilitators:

"…an opportunity to learn from someone I really respect as in Ncazelo that isn't just some next posh white guy from…the UK. I think that is a big thing, someone who I feel like understands… the model comes from the perspective of my own experiences and the experiences of the people that I generally work with…I love to use a black woman's approach with black women" (Saul)

Multiple participants shared the importance of honouring the histories of ToL, acknowledging that this is not always done well with other methodologies and in removing a methodology from its roots risks it becoming "*another technique*":

"in the world of Psychology…we train people in different methodologies and sometimes I don't think they think about the story of the methodologies… we're not very good at teaching history of things…and so, people think, 'oh this is a technique' and that's it… that's my hope that [ToL is] not another technique." (Riverbank)

Several participants shared similar concerns and anger at the idea that the roots and origins of the approach may not be acknowledged or honoured:

"the roots of it, this is really important….it really enrages me the way sometimes it gets detached from its roots. That group…I worked with… they said afterwards… that it was very important to them that it should never be detached from its roots, from Ncazelo's work and for them, this was an issue about racism. That knowledge gets taken from black people all the time and not acknowledged and whatever…When you talk about the process that [Ncazelo] went through in developing this it makes so much sense to people…it's obviously paying respect to the roots." (Saoirse)

Ultimately, it felt that participants were sharing that the methodology was unique, because of its roots, and they felt that those were important and should be honoured. Whilst this is similar, in some ways, to the theme 'expansion with integrity', this felt imperative to include because it felt that participants were talking about how imperative their knowledge of the roots and histories of the methodology is to their practice and to the continued use of the methodology.

4.4.4. Subtheme: Being My Authentic Self

Facilitators' spoke about appreciating ToL as they were able to work in line with their intentions, values and ethics as a person and practitioner. They discussed the importance of sharing their own story and being able to show vulnerability and authenticity in being with

others. Some also acknowledged the challenges of how to go about this, or whether it is even possible in some contexts.

Many facilitators spoke about how ToL allowed them to be with others in a particular way that aligned to how they wished to work. One participant shared "*I think it constantly, it gives me an opportunity to practice intentionally*" (Kashi). Facilitators shared how ToL felt congruent to who they felt they were, both personally and professionally, which appeared to link to being able to work in an authentic way:

> "*it fits into very much of who I am as a therapist… it's a prolonging of myself or an extension of myself*" (Sisa)

> "*I think it's so congruent for me with my own sort of ethics and ways of working that I suppose it enables me to feel like I'm working in a really authentic way and with integrity*" (Saoirse)

Participants described how ToL allowed them the "*right to be your own self*" (Safieh) and to "*step into yourself as an emerging practitioner*" (Kashi). This ability to be oneself seemed to mean people feel they are being genuine in their interactions and can "*walk the talk*" (Sparky) or practice what they preach:

> "*I am a kind of person that could now speak from my heart...a person who is practicing what he preaches*" (Meehcop)

Similarly, some described the 'ease' of practicing in their preferred ways:

> "*it's just a really peaceful and gentle and lovely kind of creative quiet way of working where you know… it's like having night vision goggles on you know [laughter] I can see what's underfoot you know and just follow my preferred trails like this*" (Sarah)

Participants spoke about valuing the ability to share their story. This was almost framed as an ethical obligation by some; if they were to expect others to share, then sharing something of themselves was important to them too:

> *"I need to tell my story as well. So I think it's like it's being that role model, being a good example of saying this is a good tool and I'll actually share it with you in the most personal way… so I think there's an authenticity that comes through with that…"* (Sparky)

Practitioners' sharing of their stories appeared to have multiple functions including building trust. Participants also spoke about how it "*kind of creates a common ground*" (Nkosazana) and demonstrates, also, that facilitators are human:

> *"the powers offered are based on the fact that clients are hearing you that you also are human and you can undergo problems or pain and you are willing to help them as well uh like resolve it or deal with it or heal from it*" (Nkosazana)

Some facilitators spoke about an "*ambivalence about how to present my own story*" (Sisa), including how to do so in a de-centred way "*without it being all about me*" (Sisa). Similarly, others spoke about challenges or obstacles they have faced in other ways of working, where working in this authentic way is less possible:

> *"I'm aware that other practices…they can come up against some walls about sharing…their own personal story and what's appropriate and what's a professional boundary in those contexts."* (Ralph)

Overall, the majority of participants shared positive outcomes from them being able to be authentic, bringing their whole selves to the work. This appeared to have broad

impacts on how they related to the work, personally and professionally, and how they build relationships with participants.

4.5. Theme 3: Shared Humanity

This theme captures the sense of a shared humanity, or "*the realisation that we're actually so much more similar than we are different*" (Sparky) that all participants conveyed clearly:

> *"that sense of being of a community, of joint humanity, I mean and that's the thing that I get from the tree of life, it's very human."* (Phoenix)

The theme is split into three subthemes that capture how facilitators were moved and gained something themselves from joining with others, listening to their stories and watching their growth. The latter two subthemes encapsulate both the process participants spoke about as ToL's ability to celebrate people's uniqueness, whilst also building a bridge between differences, leaving people more connected, and how these connections could lead to action and 'flourishing'.

4.5.1. Subtheme: "I Get as Much from Them as They Get from Me"

The subtheme title is a direct quote from Phoenix and seemed to capture well what many of the facilitators shared about how they noticed the power of witnessing other peoples' stories for themselves. They told me that facilitating the groups had a mutual benefit and that sharing particular conversations with those they have worked alongside, or hearing peoples' stories had moved them and influenced their own lives.

Some participants shared pivotal moments or conversations that had influenced them:

"We started talking about freedom and cage and at that very moment we were talking to that it was like having an epiphany. I realized the cages that we live within, a lot of those cages are the cages we impose on ourselves, we put ourselves in, there are bigger cages which society puts us in. And that I must say did change me…"
(Amadi)

Others spoke of a two-way process; that they are influenced in equal measures as the participants of ToL, by the nature of hearing the stories shared:

"As they were sharing their stories, I personally was getting more impacted even, in those particular processes. The process was more of a two-way. When you listen… you make more let me say new realizations and solutions about who you are."
(Meehcop)

Participants shared gratitude for being able to hear peoples' stories and witness changes in them:

"it's so moving and you just see people…shifting in front of your eyes like stepping into their lives and themselves and, it's just stunning, it's just the most beautiful thing... I'm really lucky." (Sarah)

Similarly, several participants noted ToL as a "gift" because of the way it leads to one's own transformation from being with others:

"I feel like that's an incredible gift and often I walk away with uh- my own kind of uh transformation from having heard those stories or um you know hearing what people are sharing" (Red Dirt Chai)

Many facilitators talked about learning from those they facilitate ToL alongside:

"They invite me into their inner hearts, to their dreams, to their…I mean they teach me so much about humankind, and about what it really means to be there for your neighbour, what it really means to get up in the morning and hope that there is a meal for my child today" (Sisa)

One participant talked about the responsibility placed on a facilitator to work on oneself alongside others – a purposeful rescuing, digging and healing of one's own story:

"you need to rescue yourself during the conversation, not just rescue the people issues. So, while you are digging in people's stories you are digging in your own life stories also. You are developing the people and that helps them to be healed and you hold yourself with them at the same time." (Safieh)

Overall, this subtheme was one that felt that it stood out from the beginning of interviews; that participants were sharing frequently the impact that being with others and hearing their stories had on them. This dual relationship is interesting, and with the acknowledgement of such clear impact, the implications of this are broad.

4.5.2. Subtheme: Celebrating Diversity and Bridging Difference

Facilitators shared how ToL seemed to be able to simultaneously highlight and celebrate someone's uniqueness and the diversity amongst everyone, whilst also acting as a bridge to bring together people, despite differences. Facilitators spoke about their own

identities in relation to those they were working with, and how despite any differences that may exist or be perceived, a sense of connection or similarity was able to come from taking part in ToL. Facilitator's also noted that this same process appeared to happen for people taking part in the methodology, that ToL had an ability to connect communities together regardless of existing or perceived differences.

> *"it's that fabulous sense that there is as many ways to be in the world as there are people. And that there is a commonality of human experience, but within that, there is such a rich breadth of experience and knowledge."* (Phoenix)

Many of the participants shared that bringing conversations about culture to the forefront was something they had found helpful in considering similarities, differences and celebrating diversity:

> *"I think just bringing culture and traditions and asking these questions opens up such a beauty in people's stories… In asking these you know people who look quite the same… let's imagine I see them and they all look white middle class English you ask these questions and then the Pandora box opens and diversity is there as a celebration"* (Riverbank)

> *"what I find is that shared humanity… I feel like I have become one of them, and the cultural borders just disappear"* (Sisa)

Facilitators spoke about the power of bringing aspects of themselves, and what this enabled or opened up for others:

"by being who you are, you give other people permission to be who they are. And so even in the room…there is a greater understanding of our interconnectedness of our humanness of our similarities." (Phoenix)

Whilst also being able to have conversations surrounding the beauty of the uniqueness that everyone brings, all participants shared that bridging differences to find points of shared value, experience or interest enabled for a sense of connection to begin to flourish:

"Tree of Life helped to shift something and bring them together perhaps or connect them in ways that meant that they you know shared something rather than the difference." (Maria)

Facilitators spoke of the power of the trees and the coming to together of the 'forest' where visually everyone is then able to see points of uniqueness but also points of similarity, due to shared vulnerability:

"…I always say to people, have a careful look and see, is there anybody in this room who's drawn exactly the same tree as you? And then of course people say, no, they haven't, all the trees are different…that's the celebration of that individuality of each person… but you can also then see similarities… So in that sense, that is again, that kind of connection that all of us are vulnerable, all of us have been through stuff….people just realize how much richness there is in the room around them and amongst their fellow community members…" (Sparky)

In particular, many shared that ToL also seemed to bridge the gap between 'facilitator' and 'group participant', the societal 'us' and 'them' discourses were moved aside because regardless of role there were shared dreams:

> *"…how similar our dreams are. You know, we don't dream about chandeliers and silverware. We dream about security, we dream about family, we dream about connections, we dream about education and work, we dream about everyday life all around the world…you should think that I am so different from them, but I feel such a sense of connection with these people"* (Sisa)

Similarly, many participants spoke about the positioning as 'different' and the contexts that led to this, for instance political or cultural differences; there was a sense that people walked into the room with those discourses influencing their perceptions and that there was change over time:

> *"we forget, we need to embrace diversity. We shouldn't put our political stance on that high priority"* (Dk)

Some spoke enthusiastically about this, and how powerful it can be to feel and observe this shift:

> *"there's that kind of positioning as different when actually there was a lot more that connected them in their stories and their experiences than they realized …and to create spaces to talk like that in ways that kind of unites and collects you into a collective, is very-very powerful"* (Willow)

One participant spoke about how the stories shared helps to "*strip ourselves of prejudices and discrimination that we have about different kinds of people*" (Sparky).

Overall, it was evident from the start of interviews that difference, diversity, and connection would be amongst the themes; it was clear that the methodology allows for explicit identification and celebration of the ways we maybe unique, but at the same time, ultimately brings together people through shared experience and togetherness.

4.5.3. Subtheme: Flourishing Through Connection

Facilitators shared many experiences regarding the impact of people becoming connected, and these connections cultivating action. It felt that what people were saying was that the changes that are able to happen as a result of new connections allows for 'flourishing', where conflict is minimised, traditional hierarchies shift and changes in power can be established. This reportedly leaves communities mobilised to begin to think about collective action. Participants spoke about how ToL encourages communities to take action against injustice:

> *"...stimulates us to do something different to change the unfair situations the injustice situations."* (Maria)

That sharing with one another in a particular way helps people move towards action "*like kind of ways to tell stories that- that move towards taking action in the community*" (Saul). Some participants shared specific actions happening in their neighbourhoods because of now being connected:

> *"We call it here, we call it Umuganda, is a community word and the neighbours can commit to give like support to their...the person in their neighbourhood in the conclusion to build a house for that family."* (Betty)

ToL was described as an effective way to mobilise communities. Because of the connection that develops between the facilitator and community, seeds may be planted which enable growth:

"…I think what it allows is for you…to connect with that group in a way that's kind of therapeutic and it also kind of helps to grow things… It's almost that's the seed for the work that kind of continues to grow from that." (Willow)

These seeds of growth described by Willow seem to take different forms; ToL is also described as a tool that helps build understanding within communities, bringing them together so they can then use their skills in the future:

"…it kind of you know brings communities together, it raises awareness about the challenges that they have, but also it raises more of the…opportunities…the skills that are available that they can actually use" (Meehcop)

Many also spoke about how using ToL enables the sharing of power, which enables acceptance and perhaps a different opinion of psychological intervention:

"…it gave a space of acceptance to psychological intervention because it's not a tool of controlling or feeling you are under the control of the power of…whoever is the practitioner" (Safieh)

Most practitioners spoke about changes they could see happening in the room then having lasting impacts, for example hierarchies or shifting power dynamics:

"it's actually like a leveller. I remember one of the sessions…where we had the director of the program…usually…they would come at the beginning…but then they'd go and you could almost feel in the room the director's gone now, we can open up a

little bit. With this group, she stayed for the whole day… when we came to the Tree

of Life, she shared her story so openly and in such a beautiful but vulnerable way…it

just changed the atmosphere and the team… she said the team was totally different

after that. They had this new kind of bond, I guess it was between them where they

realize that she's part of our team, and they could go to her with issues, and it had

changed the way they worked. It was so lovely to see that." (Sparky)

Related to the sharing of power, facilitators also described how at times ToL enables them

to 'get out the way' and for the community to hold the community knowledges themselves:

"…having those conversations in a group, means that all of that information stays the

property of the community…it's around building kind of critical connections between

people so that they can make change in society" (Saul)

This allows communities to take ownership of change and for facilitators to ultimately

become redundant:

"I think that's exactly what you want in community work. You want to be redundant,

you know. You want people to take ownership of things." (Saoirse)

It seemed to me that perhaps what facilitators were describing was that when power

shifts and when communities can take the lead and facilitators become redundant, this is

the essence of 'flourishing'.

4.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the three main themes and the associated subthemes

that have been constructed through reflexive TA regarding practitioners' experiences of

using ToL within global community contexts. The analysis will be summarised and examined

in relation to relevant literature in the discussion chapter to follow.

5. Discussion

5.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter begins by revisiting the aims of this inquiry. I then offer a summary of the analysis and respond to each research question in turn, discussing the significance of related themes and subthemes and their relationship to pertinent literature. Following this, potential clinical implications are considered. A critical appraisal of this inquiry is then presented, considering the quality of the research and the strengths and limitations of my methodological and analytic choices and outcomes. Lastly, plans for dissemination and several suggestions for future inquiry are detailed. Reflections on the research process and a conclusion draw this thesis to a close.

5.2. Revisiting the Inquiry's Aims

This inquiry aimed to explore ToL facilitators' experiences of using the methodology within community contexts worldwide. In doing so, it hoped to further understand any impact the approach may have on facilitators personally and professionally; the opportunities and challenges of using the methodology in community contexts; whether the approach may differ from facilitators' existing practice(s) and what leads facilitators to choose to use (and re-use) ToL. The specific research questions are addressed in the following sections.

5.3. Summary of Analysis

Through reflexive TA, three themes with eleven associated subthemes were constructed. The main themes were 'Encountering Possibility', 'A Contrasting Way of Being and Doing' and 'Shared Humanity'. These themes together capture facilitators' *telling* of their experiences of using ToL within community contexts. Facilitators described how ToL offers an array of possibilities for current and future practice. This includes how it can be a valuable way to commence community work, how it provides both containment and creativity through a combination of structure and flexibility, and how it embraces peoples' uniqueness whilst building connections and cultivating action. ToL was spoken about as a methodology that offers a different way of working and being with people, allowing facilitators to share parts of themselves and 'show up' authentically. This, together with witnessing others' stories and completing their own ToL, means the methodology has the potential to transform both participants and practitioners alike. Facilitators described the wealth of opportunities gained and rich stories shared through working 'on the ground' in a community-centred way. They also shared the dilemmas of this work; navigating dominant discourses or structures provided challenges for funding and approval, and working as 'insiders' or 'outsiders' within communities brought about additional considerations. Lastly, facilitators spoke passionately about ToL, it's origins and roots. They felt that such a valuable methodology should be widely accessible, but in a way that preserves its integrity. Similarly, that it's roots should always be acknowledged, understood and honoured throughout the work, as a matter of justice-doing.

5.4. Making Sense of the Outcomes of This Inquiry

Whilst this inquiry did not seek to find or understand one objective 'reality' or 'truth' with regards facilitators' experiences, the themes and subthemes constructed from the analysis provide a window into the practice of ToL and the opportunities and challenges it presents for facilitators working within community. In striving to make sense of the outcomes of this inquiry, I revisit each research question below and discuss relevant parts of the analysis, intertwined with links to pertinent literature. It is important to note that, while many of the themes are relevant to multiple research questions, for brevity I discuss each in detail only once, where it felt most applicable.

5.4.1. What Are the Experiences of Facilitators Using ToL Within Community Contexts?

The experiences that facilitators shared through this inquiry were rich yet broad, substantiating previous anecdotal accounts of ToL and offering multiple novel outcomes. Several experiences captured overlap with those reported in the themes from the SLR. For instance, facilitators' experiences of valuing the flexibility of ToL is supported by several SLR papers that also share the value of creativity and adaptation in ToL (Casdagli et al., 2017; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020; Wellman et al., 2016). This suggests that what ToL participants (the focus of the SLR evaluation papers) and ToL facilitators find valuable, overlap. Further discussion of these overlaps with the SLR is also thread through later research questions.

Facilitators' experiences, reported through this inquiry, also echoed some of the wider intentions and experiences of NT and CNPs. For example, facilitators' shared how they experienced ToL as a methodology of 'possibility'. This fits with Michael White's (2007) view of NT as "*journeys…not about the confirmation of what is already known, but about*

expeditions into what is possible for people to know" (pg.4). It also aligns with the broad

therapeutic endeavours of NT as "*interested in notions that are supportive of new*

possibilities" (Walther & Carey, 2009, pg.4). Furthermore, participants described their

experience of ToL as a 'contrasting way of being and doing'. This is perhaps unsurprising,

given that NT is often framed as an 'alternative' approach due to its postmodern stance

(Morgan, 2000; M. White, 2007). Lastly, all facilitators reported experiencing connection

and similarity, despite differences. This speaks to what Denborough (2019) referred to

regarding the building of 'Communitas' (see Introduction, section 1.4.6.1.) and connects

with wider intentions of NT to link lives and build a sense of community (Fredman, 2013). It

also supports the intentions of CNPs, which hope to offer "*a way to counter invitations to*

division of all kinds" (Denborough, 2018, p. 96). Fundamentally, facilitators' experiences

potentially demonstrate that CNPs are being practiced and experienced as intended.

5.4.2. What Impact Does the Approach Have on the Facilitators, Personally and Professionally?

ToL was reported, through this inquiry, to have several impacts on facilitators. For

most facilitators, undertaking the methodology personally was reported to provide insights

into their identities, past experiences and relationships. For some, they named this as

'transformative'. In a previous descriptive account of ToL, Gardner-Elahi and Zamiri (2015)

also share positive outcomes from facilitators taking part in rather than 'just witnessing' the

methodology alongside the group. This included altered dynamics around pathologising

discourses and a personal impact on ward staff. Selvik and Larsen (n.d.), in their anecdotal

account (as quoted in section 2.2.2), shared how ToL impacted them: *"…working with the*

tree concept can help us to get a grip on our lives…" (pg.11). Similarly, peer trainers report a

thickening of preferred identity stories gained from sharing their own trees (Casdagli et al,

2020). Claims that ToL impacts personal development are further substantiated by previous accounts of the 'professional' ToL which has reportedly led to greater insight into 'self-in-context', professional relationships and team dynamics (Mustafa, 2021; Senehi, 2015; Wonders & Lee, 2019). Facilitators gaining new insights from completing the methodology, appears to be a relatively novel finding within the wider literature. Previous research refers to therapists experiencing growth from the work they do (Rabu et al., 2016). However, most studies attribute this impact to therapeutically working with others and not to taking part in the methodologies themselves.

Within this inquiry, practitioners spoke about being moved and impacted from working alongside the ToL participants, from hearing their stories and witnessing resilience and change. This further supports Michael White's (1997) notion of 'two-way therapy', where the work has potential to impact the practitioner in the same way as the person seeking support. This is a novel outcome, with regards to ToL, though a small number of previous anecdotal accounts note similar, for instance "*the contributions of the women in this group will certainly influence my future work and the ways I understand my life as a Chinese woman*" (Hung, 2011, p.30). The idea of an intervention having impact on the practitioner is well-documented in psychotherapy. In a large study of 11,000 therapists, for instance, Orlinsky and Rønnestad (2005) reported that 97% of therapists shared that learning from clients had influenced their development. Timulak (2014) suggested that this learning can impact maturation, connection to personal vulnerabilities, courage in sharing their own feelings and a greater kindness towards themselves and others. Ultimately, whilst the impact on facilitators is not inherently unsurprising given the wider literature, this outcome appears to put words to knowledge(s) that were previously undocumented regarding ToL.

5.4.3. What Value or Opportunities does ToL Offer to Working Within Community Contexts, and What are the Challenges of the Approach?

5.4.3.1. Opportunities.

ToL was reported to be valuable for facilitators working within community contexts for several reasons. Facilitators shared how ToL provided a helpful place to begin new community relationships with confidence and helped them simplify the introduction of narrative ideas to new communities. This supports a previous anecdotal account of ToL, where one facilitator described how: "*the tree provided a good entry point and has now put down roots in just about all of our [community] project sites*" (Woods, 2010, pg.1). Similarly, ToL offering confidence perhaps fills a need within NT. Indeed, Morgan (2002) highlights the challenges of beginning NT, writing: "*I found it tricky to know where to begin, how to make a start and then what to do next*" (pg.85). Furthermore, it is perhaps unsurprising that ToL supporting relationship building within communities was reported as valuable. There has been an importance historically placed on 'common factors' including the therapeutic relationship within traditional therapy (Lambert, & Barley, 2001), alongside a growing impetus on attending to relationships as contexts for both trauma and healing (Birrell & Freyd, 2006; Freyd, 1996).

Facilitators, within this inquiry, spoke of opportunities brought about by working 'on the ground' within communities. They noted hearing richer stories and building deeper connections. They also acknowledged how working in community contexts improves accessibility of care, consistent with CNP intentions to support those where 'traditional' therapy is not appropriate or resonant (Denborough, 2008). This outcome echoes the similar theme of 'improving access to care' constructed through the SLR (Ibrahim & Allen,

2018; Janet Rowley et al., 2020). Parham's (2019) SLR also generated a related theme 'inclusivity of the ToL model' which refers to the cultural applicability of ToL, how it supports access to psychological support and reduces stigma.

Practitioners, during this inquiry, shared how they see movement throughout the ToL work towards collective action – or *flourishing* - where they can then step back and the community remains connected and able to cultivate change. This supports the hopes and intentions of CNPs to find ways for knowledges to "*ripple out into the wider community to spark local social action*" (Denborough, 2008). This potential for social action has also been documented in several anecdotal accounts of ToL, for instance Wakungu and Denborough, (2010) report ToL's impact on connecting communities and inspiring action in local economic development projects in Uganda. The theme from this inquiry, 'flourishing through connection', potentially links to broader ideas from community development - how supporting communities to understand points of connection, assets and strengths can help build active, powerful, mobilised communities (Tiratelli, 2020).

5.4.3.2. Challenges.

Several challenges and dilemmas regarding the use of ToL were reported by facilitators. In particular, concerns involving the time, flexibility and resource needed to do justice to implementing ToL within communities. The work 'needing time' is an outcome supported by the majority of the papers in the SLR (Casdagli et al., 2017; Ibrahim & Allen, 2018; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Schweitzer et al., 2014; Wellman et al., 2016). This is also maintained by wider community development literature, for instance Russell (2020) shares "*community will never be built faster than the speed of trust*" (p. 167).

Facilitators discussed specific considerations related to them being an 'insider' or 'outsider' to their communities of work. As 'outsiders' they suggested additional regard needed to be given towards building safety and trust, avoiding colonisation, and ensuring their work's sustainability. As an 'insider', one participant shared challenges with boundaries and this work limiting her social networks; this was a novel finding with interesting implications. Although insider-outsider positionality is well-documented from a researcher standpoint (Breen, 2007; Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2018), there is limited literature documenting the implications of these roles in clinical practice (Staples, 2001).

Most participants, within this inquiry, shared challenges related to the future use of ToL and a wish to ensure ToL is used with integrity. Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo has shared similar concerns regarding what is lost if integrity is not ensured:

"…there are so many processes that you need to engage with to really benefit fully from the methodology and along the way I think from what I have listened to and observed some of those things are lost" – Ncube (2018)

The idea of 'treatment integrity' is a common goal in mainstream ('Western') therapies, defined as the degree to which an intervention is "*delivered as intended*" (Perepletchikova, Treat & Kazdin, 2008). NT, however, has typically been resistant to the idea of there being one "correct" way of practicing (M. White, 2007, pg.5), meaning implementing 'fidelity' or 'integrity' may be challenging (Chan et al., 2020). Whilst ToL has been adopted and adapted widely, globally, practitioners' concern for the fidelity of the methodology appears to be a relatively novel outcome.

Facilitators shared dilemmas navigating between dominant discourses and systems and the 'world' of narrative practice. They reported facing challenges in describing or

evidencing their work to managers and funders, needing to *speak* in particular ways for the work to be accepted or understood. This supports the subtheme in the SLR where several papers documented the challenges of capturing the work (Casdagli et al., 2017; Haselhurst et al., 2020; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020). Further substantiating this dilemma, Epston et al (2012) referred to a similar idea of 'speaking two languages'. They referred to the conversation needed between NT and Science and advocated for NT (a different *language* to science) to have "*a voice at the table*" (pg.77) rather than being placed in a 'fringe' role due to a lack of empirical support.

5.4.4. Does ToL Offer Something Different to Any Already Existing Practice(s)? and What Leads Facilitators to Use (and Re-Use) ToL?

ToL was reported to offer something different to other practices, in multiple ways. I have combined the discussion of the above two research questions, since it felt that the different *stance* taken within ToL, in comparison to dominant ways of working, may also potentially be what leads facilitators to use (and re-use) the methodology. The theme 'A Contrasting Way of Being and Doing' is particularly pertinent to these research questions. Within this, facilitators shared how ToL offers a different way of working and being with people, relative to other practices. This links to Denborough's (2012) hopes for CNPs as a resolution to the dilemma that "*something quite different is required*" (p. 58). Some of what facilitators shared as different has been discussed elsewhere, relevant also to previous research questions. I will not detail them again here for brevity.

Facilitators shared that, in using ToL, they were able to be their authentic selves, showing up in their preferred ways in accordance with their values, ethics and commitments. This was seen as a contrast to how they had worked otherwise; similarly, it

seems to be a draw towards using ToL. 'Showing up' in this way involved sharing parts of

their stories, through facilitating ToL. Sharing is common within ToL, since the methodology

"*radically challenge[s] traditional views of therapist self-disclosure*", encouraging

practitioners to share their life stories and values (Ruddle & Dilks, 2015, p.459) This speaks

largely to the stance of practitioners in NT more broadly, which emphasises the equal

relationship between therapist and client, meaning the use of 'self-of-the-therapist' is more

supported (Cheon & Murphy, 2007). Therapist's authenticity has been of interest in fields

such as person-centred counselling for many years (Rogers, 1951). However, the literature

predominantly focused on the impact of this as a therapeutic process from the clients'

perspective (Schnellbacher & Leijssen, 2009). Michael White (1997; 2006) highlighted the

potential impact of working in these preferred ways for practitioners, including feeling

protected from vicarious trauma. This is discussed further in the clinical implications section

below.

Facilitators, within this inquiry, spoke about the importance and connection they and

those they had worked alongside felt to the roots and histories of ToL. Facilitators shared

how essential it felt that ToL's roots were acknowledged and honoured throughout the

work, as a matter of justice-doing. Denborough (2018) shares similar intentions, writing:

"*transparently documenting the histories of any concept or method is a factor in seeking to*

avoid psychological colonisation or the imposition of any methodology from one context to

another without adaptation and/or transformation" (p. 59). Facilitators acknowledged how

psychological disciplines have been notoriously bad at acknowledging or teaching the

histories and roots of methodologies; this, and the implications of removing interventions

from their history is backed up by previous literature (Marks, 2017). The honouring of ToL's

roots also felt pertinent as a methodology developed in a non-Western context; some

particularly noted the importance of it being founded by a Black woman and how ToL being removed from its roots would be an act of racism. This potentially links to the wider debate surrounding the marginalisation of non-Western approaches to healing (Akomolafe, 2012), as discussed in the Introduction (section 1.4.2.). Wider implications for GMH and the development are further discussed below.

Facilitators' experienced the celebration of diversity and bridging of difference through ToL; this was part of what was described as a 'different' approach but may also help us to understand why facilitators re-use the methodology. Participants shared how dominant discourses and power dynamics, such as the ordinary 'us' and 'them' divide were able to be altered through the process of ToL. Stockell (n.d.) calls this a move to "us and us and us" (where the third 'us' represents contexts shaping relationships). Perhaps what ToL allows for is *"the invention of unity in diversity" (*Freire, 1994, p.157*).* This supports the intentions of CNPs, which hope to offer "*a way to counter invitations to division of all kinds"* (Denborough, 2018, p. 96). This also makes sense and is consistent with the SLR theme which details how ToL participants, despite differences, all faced a shared context of injustice (see section 2.3.1.3.3.1.). In summary, the consideration of power and the move towards a shared humanity potentially leads practitioners to consider this a helpful methodology to use and re-use.

5.5. Clinical Implications

This inquiry has constructed both novel and expanded understandings regarding the experiences of ToL practitioners working within community contexts globally, building on mostly anecdotal 'evidence' and strengthening the current knowledge base. From the

outcomes of this inquiry, several implications can be drawn, relevant to practitioners, those looking to use ToL in the future, Clinical Psychology and the wider contexts of evidence-based practice and GMH.

5.5.1. Implications for Practitioners

5.5.1.1. Resisting Burnout: Practitioner Wellbeing.

The outcome of this inquiry suggests that practitioners using ToL are able to work in their preferred ways, with authenticity and practicing according to their values. This has implications for practitioner wellbeing. The risk of burnout as a therapist is well documented (Simionato & Simpson, 2018). Michael White (1997) suggests 'the culture of psychotherapy' is often linked with experiences of demoralisation, fatigue and exhaustion. This has been linked to the demands of the role and the emotional 'burden' of working with trauma (e.g. vicarious trauma, Kadambi & Ennis, 2008). Reynolds (2019a) refers to the harms in our work as often resulting from oppressive structures that inhibit resources and practices needed to reduce human suffering with dignity. She likens this to producing spiritual or ethical pain, brought about by not being able to "do justice" in our work. With this in mind, ToL's ability to enable the use of the authentic self, reflexivity and new possibilities for ways of being alongside others may reduce the likelihood of burnout (Béres, 2014). Moreover, it may promote vicarious resilience from witnessing and reflecting on humans' capacity to heal (Hernandez et al, 2007). Linked to this, Reynolds (2019b) refers to how working in line with our values and ethics supports practitioners to resist burnout, enact collective care and "*shoulder one another up*" (pg. 38).

5.5.1.2. Striving for New Insights: Practitioner Development.

This inquiry highlighted how facilitators were impacted, personally and professionally, by completing the methodology themselves, and by working alongside others, hearing their stories and witnessing their growth. Understanding this indicates the use of the methodology as a potential means for personal and professional reflexivity and development. This may be pertinent to practitioners' changing personal and professional identities, which is a subject which receives significant attention across mental health professionals (Higson & Allan, 2020). ToL could be potentially implemented as part of therapists supervision, to enhance reflexivity in practice (Senehi, 2015) or to integrate re-authoring practices, thus extending the possibilities of someone's practice (M. White, 1997).

Acknowledging ToL's potential impact on practitioner wellbeing and personal and professional development, healthcare organisations globally could implement ToL as part of staff wellbeing initiatives. For instance, within a UK context, the National Health Service's (NHS) 'People Plan' (NHS, 2020), the workforce strategy for implementing the Long Term Plan (NHS, 2019), outlines wellbeing support for staff as a priority. 'Wellbeing Champions' recruited across services, as part of this plan, could be trained to facilitate ToL to allow staff to connect to their strengths and the possibilities of their work.

5.5.2. Implications for the Continued Use of ToL

5.5.2.1. Understanding What is Possible: The Justification Needed?

As noted in this inquiry's rationale, deconstructing practice is important for the development of new understandings (Stillman, n.d.). This inquiry demonstrated the possibilities and value facilitators' experienced from using ToL within community contexts. Understanding this may allow future practitioners to be informed prior to choosing ToL.

Similarly, facilitators within this inquiry and the SLR spoke about the challenge of providing evidence or justification (Casdagli et al., 2017; Haselhurst et al., 2020; Randle-Phillips et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020). However, knowing what other facilitators experience may provide some justification to support ToL's use, demonstrating potential value to management, funders, or new communities.

5.5.2.2. Expansion with Integrity: Training, Supervision & Partnership Working.

All participants, within this inquiry, shared a hope that the use of ToL increases, globally, but emphasised the importance of integrity. To ensure ToL is not adapted beyond or away from its roots or narrative intentions, co-opted into dominant systems or discourses, or diluted from its four-part structure, ongoing training and supervision would be valuable. A cost-effective and scalable training programme would support the fidelity of the approach (Fairburn & Cooper, 2011). This could involve a global 'train the trainers' approach, to ensure quality training is globally accessible and knowledge is distributed. These trainers could also provide ongoing supervision which would ensure practitioners build mastery over time (Adamson, Beddoe, & Davys, 2014). The 'ethic of accessibility' within CNPs is an important concern with regards how the training is provided, and to whom, considering the democratisation of narrative practices, where ideas should be accessible so they can be engaged with by those not professionally trained with the privilege of extensive education (Denborough, 2018). The continued use of partnership working, where those who are trained can work alongside those who hold other, perhaps community expertise, should be encouraged.

5.5.3. Implications for Clinical Psychology: Learning from 'Alternative' Ways of Working

Although clinical psychology (CP), particularly in the UK, gives weight to 'evidence-based practice' and clinic-based 1:1 interventions, this research demonstrates the potential value of 'alternative' ways of working that CP could learn from. Both partnership work with local communities and approaching the work with an alternative 'stance' may engender possibilities for traditional CP's 'expert' led work. The decentred yet influential stance of NT and ToL allows practitioners to work in preferred ways, but also alleviates the responsibility of 'expertise' (M. White, 1997). This not only impacts facilitator wellbeing, as above, but has the potential to shape practice(s) towards a dialogical, politically engaged, sharing of power which may move people closer to liberation (Afuape & Hughes, 2016). The outcomes of this inquiry also demonstrate the benefits of community-centred working, which CP could explore further. Using ToL, for instance, appears to build mobilised communities who are able to continue cultivating action once the practitioner steps away. Within a UK context, this falls in line with Public Health England's (2018) guidance advocating for community-centred approaches to health and wellbeing, which suggests that NHS workers' have an important role in building confident and connected communities, to reduce health inequity in line with the NHS Long Term Plan (NHS, 2019). This also aligns with Russell's (2020) call for decentring the 'professional' to allow for citizen-led wellbeing and an increase in collective, community power. Less directive working that centres communities has greater potential to meet the needs of diverse populations (Russell, 2020).

5.5.4. Implications for Broader Context: Countering Dominant Discourses, Recognising the Evidence Paradox & Applications to GMH

A nuanced debate surrounding the countering of dominant discourses was raised through this inquiry: should we play to the power of the dominant discourse and speak in

the language of dominant structures when needed, whilst 'rebelling' by practicing in alternative ways but perhaps behind closed doors? Or do we have a responsibility to resist and find ways to evidence, advocate for and speak back to powerful structures and discourses in a different way which helps dominant systems listen? Denborough's (2018) invitation to resist 'neoliberal fatalism' suggests that we do the latter, asking "*how can we look for solutions in the right places?*" (pg. 'x'), rather than feel despair and apathy when faced with dominant power. Frizelle (2021) suggests holding 'critical hope' – an analysis of power that enables us to imaginatively construct a different worldview, to aid resistance. Extending this critical hope, it is imperative that we pay attention to what Pollard, Studdert and Tiratelli (2021) term the 'evidence paradox', where local, community-driven change is expected to demonstrate value according to measures that do not recognise their value. This is the very challenge of evidence-based practice in relation to ToL and community-centred work. For GMH to learn from the powerful work happening globally in community contexts, such as that demonstrated through this thesis, a shift in what policy makers, political leaders, and mental health services deem 'valuable' will be necessary.

5.6. Critical Appraisal

5.6.1. Quality Evaluation

As a qualitative inquiry, traditional 'quality' criteria such as generalisability, objectivity and validity are less relevant (Guba & Lincoln, 2005); nevertheless, the robustness and integrity of all research is important to evaluate (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Tracy's (2010) "Big-Tent" criteria, as applied to my SLR papers, has been used to appraise my attempt to carry out a high-quality inquiry, that balances academic rigour with the

creativity and ethics of narrative practice. Whilst the appraisal is presented as a static table

below (see Table 9), it is helpful to understand that quality assessment has been a dynamic,

continual process of interrogation throughout, as recommended in social constructionist

research (Aguinaldo, 2015).

Table 9

Quality Appraisal of this Inquiry

Quality Criteria	Appraisal of This Inquiry: Strengths & Limitations
Worthy Topic	Considerations were given towards what would be a "*relevant, timely, significant, interesting or evocative*" topic (Tracy, 2010, pg. 840), within the ToL field. This became more pertinent when adapting the research due to Covid-19. One of the participants shared the relevance of this topic: *"For the Tree of Life…a lot has been written… but I am loving things like this sort of research documenting how it's the success stories that people have been understanding. So, that doesn't remain yeah knowledge. I think it's our common, it's in our culture, but also other cultural knowledge needs to be transferred, transmitted and shared."* (Jeff) Similarly, the focus on documenting knowledges surrounding work from community contexts was deemed unique and evocative. Since this has not been documented in the empirical literature, it could be argued this research raises "*educative awareness*" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). One participant shared an appreciation for the focus on community-based work: *"… it shows that you still are thinking with the people that are connected with the communities down there doing the groundwork... it shows more or much appreciation to us to be, to know that at least somebody out there is thinking of how we work or how we are doing out there."* (Nkosazana)
Rich Rigor	Tracy (2010) shares that in rigorous research descriptions and explanations are rich. I have attempted to operationalise this throughout the text with detail and transparency. With a relatively large sample of 19, this inquiry also presents rich rigor through the care and practice in my data collection and analysis. I have shared many rich, verbatim quotes and detailed a rigorous analysis, with line-by-line coding, additional coding from the research team and 'bracketing' interviews to ensure reflexively and rich interpretation was upheld. Examples are given of these processes throughout the appendices. Tracy (2010) also notes how rigorous researchers "*push themselves beyond convenience…and the easy way out*" (p. 841) which I hope is demonstrated by my inclusion of consultation, member checking and additional artwork throughout.
Sincerity	This inquiry meets the criterion of sincerity through a strong emphasis on transparency and reflexivity. I have ensured my voice is present with the use of the first person where appropriate and a reflexive account including excerpts from my research diary, documented in Appendix A. Keeping a diary, alongside holding tightly to my own values has aided my vulnerability and transparency throughout the research journey. Throughout, I have documented my decision making, for the reader to be able to examine, understand and scrutinise both my influence on this research and my authenticity and personal integrity (McLeod, 1999).

Credibility	This criterion requires trustworthiness and dependability (Tracy, 2010), demonstrated by thick descriptions of data. Through my analysis, I employed a 'show rather than tell' approach to data reporting with many supporting quotes, so that readers can arrive at their own meanings. Similarly, the credibility concepts of 'multivocality' and 'member reflections' were employed by collating and reporting member checking feedback, increasing the collaboration and participation of those researched. Several participants reported their views on the analysis, including: *"I loved the way you recorded our ideas, and they totally represent me…Thank you so much for had invited me to be part of this so wonderful and valuable work! It is very, very meaningful!"* (Maria) *"I really think the language was even more representative than I was hoping for, you articulated well the themes and rescued the phrases spoken during the interview. So honouring."* (Jeff) Multiple lenses on my work, including having Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo as a consultant, was also found to be incredibly valuable. This deepened my own understandings and thus, the credibility of the research.
Resonance	Though it is difficult to ascertain how this text is received by the reader, and thus the 'affect' on the audience, I have aimed for a text presented in a *"beautiful, evocative and artistic way"* (Tracy, 2010, p. 845). I have aimed for this thesis to be engaging, both for the readers of this document, but also in ways that can be disseminated at a later date outside of this text (e.g. artwork, examples of slides). Transferability and generalisability are also noted under this criterion (Tracy, 2010), and whilst these are somewhat at odds with social constructionist research, this inquiry certainly has implications for broader ways of working outside of ToL, or NT, which can have impact within CP and Global Mental Health.
Significant Contribution	This inquiry offers a significant contribution to a field that is under-researched, where empirical, rigorous literature is sparse and no views of practitioners, or ToL work within community contexts had been included. This work makes *"visible what is hidden"* (Tracy, 1995, p. 209). Tracy (2010) also encourages researchers to consider the *"politics of practice"* (p. 845) which I have attempted to remain close to throughout this inquiry, and the work has heuristic and practical significance, creating implications for both practice and future research.
Ethical	Ethical practice has been central to this inquiry and I have paid attention throughout to both procedural and relational ethics, maintaining respect and connectedness with my participants through their continued involvement and a newsletter of communication. Additional ethical considerations, alongside procedural ethics are outlined in the methods chapter (see section 3.6.6). Similarly, ethics will continue to be considered during the wide dissemination of this research, part of what I see as my own ethical and moral obligation to ensure participants' contributions are honoured.
Meaningful Coherence	This research has explored what it set out to explore, ensuring coherence. The use of questions, similar to ToL, throughout my interview schedule also added to this coherence. The findings and recommendations of this inquiry are meaningful to ongoing practice and I have been thoughtful about my style of reporting, matching the area of study.

5.6.2. Appraisal of Methodological Choices

Alongside appraising the quality of the research more broadly, I will now pay additional critical attention to the strengths and weaknesses of some of my methodological decisions. One of the methodological strengths of this research was the coherence of the interview process to the ToL methodology being researched. This allowed me to build meaningful, ongoing relationships with participants and to gain incredibly rich data. The process earned praise from participants:

> *"…it's been very powerful. It's like going through doing your own Tree of Life in a very different way…"* (Riverbank)

> *"I think the questions that you asked really, as true form of the Tree of Life, it just gives people an opportunity to be acknowledged and to share things in ways that they may not have ever shared before and link their values to all of these…I think that's because of the process that you've offered, and the way that you offer it."* (Kashi)

Further strengths of this research include it's relatively large sample size, of nineteen participants, and the breadth of the sample, given that the facilitators practice(d) across sixteen different countries, globally. Nevertheless, the inclusion criteria of this study could be appraised in several ways; ensuring fidelity to the methodology, by only including those with relevant training, allows for the inquiry's underpinnings and therefore outcome to be transparent, consistent and reliable. However, it is interesting to consider the conversations missed with such stringent inclusion criteria, and it is important that *"…researchers… develop more humility about the limits of application of their findings"* (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 2016).

Since the inquiry only included those who were comfortable to converse in English, and who had completed specific training, it is likely the outcome of this inquiry is not fully representative of the wider ToL facilitator population, particularly globally. The same inquiry may have collated different data had I used interpreters, to widen the scope of who could have been interviewed. Similarly, there may have been different ways, other than taking part in training, to ensure practitioners have a reasonable understanding of ToL prior to being recruited (e.g. a questionnaire to seek levels of knowledge). This may have widened the accessibility of the research to those who perhaps could not access paid training. Furthermore, whilst it has been a privilege to work alongside Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo and David Denborough, using them both as gatekeepers to my participant sample may also infer some limitations in how representative the sample is of ToL's wide, global applications.

5.6.3. Appraisal of Analysis

The analysis meets many definitions of a quality reflexive thematic analysis, in accordance with the criteria outlined by Braun and Clarke (2020). This includes, for instance, how I have been specific about the type of TA and my reasons for its choice, named it's theoretical and conceptual underpinnings explicitly and outlined my procedures transparently. The same criteria also highlight *"the importance of the researcher's subjectivity as an analytic resource, and their reflexive engagement with theory, data and interpretation."* (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 330) which I have attempted to represent through transparent documenting my process and reflexivity in the Appendices (see A, T-X). Whilst the analysis was carried out to the best of my knowledge(s) and abilities, the outcome can be scrutinised critically. The analysis was overwhelmingly positive, and whilst this felt an accurate representation of the dataset, it is useful to consider why this might be. One of the participants during member checking shared:

"*I think* [the themes] *do speak to my experience to an extent but they also speak to a certain unease I have about the way in which I see NT being viewed very uncritically. The themes are overwhelmingly positive and it's described with a sense of reverence and devotion.*" (Saoirse)

This is not the first time ToL literature or NT has been critiqued for it's largely optimistic and 'evangelical' stance towards its own practices. Parham et al's (2019) SLR highlighted that the included papers focused largely on positive experiences. More broadly, Doan (1998) questioned whether narrative practice has been able to scrutinise its own intentions and concluded that it has "*perhaps unwittingly fallen prey to the human tendency to reify metaphors and make gurus of leaders*" (p. 379). Winslade (n.d.) invites NT to be more critical and expansive, stating: "*it needs to look back on Michael White's contributions with enormous gratitude but without reverting to a deadening orthodoxy*" (p. 1). I wondered whether, within this inquiry, the positive outcomes could be a result of multiple possibilities: (a.) practitioners are genuinely not finding consistently negative elements of this practice, (b.) interviewing 'elites' (those who carry out specific practices, often professionals), who are relatively understudied and potentially protected from intrusion and criticism, may have meant that there was a bias toward sharing only the highlights of their work (Mikecz, 2012), (c.) using ToL as a basis for the interview schedule meant that questions were weighted towards positive, preferred stories of the practice, as opposed to the difficulties, or (d.) the context in which people practice ToL has left them needing the advocate for its use, meaning they are keen to share the value of this work more than critique.

5.7. The Journey from Here: Sharing the Outcomes Widely

Schwandt (2012) writes "*the process of inquiry 'ends' with some kind of product…* *Yet, such destinations are merely temporary stopping points*". Whilst this document forms a punctuation, I do not intend for it to be the 'end' of this research journey. Dissemination will now become a key priority. Some of the dissemination efforts have begun already, as the research was presented at the PsyPAG Conference 2021 in July (see Appendix Y for slides), receiving a commendation. Furthermore, I have recently presented the outcomes of this inquiry alongside Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo at a 'masterclass' for training Narrative Practitioners in Rio de Janeiro (August 2021).

I hope to both write this research up for publication in an academic journal, to contribute towards ToL's thin but growing empirical knowledge-base, and to disseminate widely in ways and places more accessible and engaging for community workers, 'lay' counsellors, and similar. This may be through blog articles, forum posts, or an accessible summary shared through relevant networks. Furthermore, the use of drawing (as exemplified through my thematic map) and animation may be further employed to increase the reach and likely audience of the dissemination efforts. Through my interview process I asked participants "if I could honour your work through my thesis process, what might that look like?" and many have already shared creative and engaging ways we could join together in dissemination efforts, for instance creating a collective tree together. I will be contacting all participants again to ask for further ideas, continued connections or hopes for dissemination. Finally (although, there will no doubt be many growing ideas not documented in this text), my hope is to bring together both the participants of this research and other facilitators' of ToL internationally; whilst this will entail some further ethical

considerations, I am hopeful that a global ToL celebration, jamboree, anti-conference, or similar event may be a beautiful fruit from this labour of love.

5.8. The Journey from Here: Building Blocks for Future Research

In addition to the implications for clinical practice identified through this research, the process of undertaking the inquiry and the subsequent outcomes have identified several possibilities for future research.

5.8.1. Scoping Review

While the SLR presented in Chapter 2 goes some way at pulling together the knowledge(s) surrounding the use of ToL globally, the rich stories and local knowledge captured in non-empirical, descriptive sources are ever-expanding. The field would benefit from a rigorous synthesis which includes non-empirical sources to offer a broader overview and 'thick description' of current knowledge base surrounding ToL. Scoping reviews are a relatively new approach to evidence synthesis (Munn, Peters, et al., 2018), though are being increasingly used in health-related contexts (Pham et al., 2014). They typically aim to map the landscape of existing literature in a field of interest in terms of the volume, nature, and characteristics (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) and may be a useful approach.

5.8.2. Evaluating the Professional 'Tree of Life'

Increasingly, facilitators are using ToL with professionals, teams and as a resource for personal development (Mustafa et al., 2020; Senehi, 2015). Given the indications from this research regarding the impact of ToL on facilitators themselves, it would be valuable and interesting to identify further outcomes of using ToL with professionals. Since there is a small but growing bank of descriptive papers, evaluating one-off groups where ToL is

applied to professionals, already, the knowledge base would benefit from this inquiry being across a range of professional groups.

5.8.3. Understanding Adaptations

The ToL knowledge base would benefit from a greater understanding of the intricate ways people are adapting and applying the methodology to meet the needs of local communities. Some accounts of this are documented well, for instance Elhassan and Yassine (2017) outline clearly the additions and changes they make to adapt to a local Muslim population. However there has not yet been an attempt to compare, contrast or bring this information together in a way that would be meaningful to training and clinical practice. This may also support further thinking about 'fidelity' to the model and at what point adaptation of ToL stops and another methodology begins.

5.9. A Reflexive Look Back on the Research Journey

Reflecting on where I started this journey, where it has taken me and the lessons it has taught me, and to think about what has enabled me to reach this point is quite surreal. I find myself wishing I had the knowledge(s) Michael White (2007) conveys in this quote at the beginning of this research endeavour:

> *"I know that we are embarking on a journey to a destination that cannot be precisely specified and via routes that cannot be predetermined. I know that we will probably take some extraordinary scenic routes to those unknown destinations. I know that as we approach these destinations we will be stepping into other worlds of experience."*
> *(M. White, 2007, pg.4)*

Whilst this research journey has been, at times, fraught with twists, turns and unexpected sticking points – thanks to Covid, mostly, but also my lifelong plight of being overly enthusiastic and interested in too many things! – it has simultaneously been a privilege, a connecting experience and an immense learning opportunity for me. To have had the opportunity to share conversations with those working in ways I aspire to has been both nourishing and inspiring. To critically engage with what it means to balance between academic rigour and the politics of post-modern, social constructionist practice has been engaging. I think this presents an ongoing challenge and I hope to remain curious and playful in my research practice, continuing to explore where the boundaries truly lie. For me, this was an endeavour closely linked to my values as a soon-to-be clinical psychologist, but also as a person, and I believe the dissemination of this work will continue to connect me to interesting learning opportunities and a beautiful community of practice. In Freire's words, one of the biggest lessons I hold onto thanks to this inquiry: "*it is imperative that we maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite*" (cited in Hooks, 2003).

6. Conclusion

This inquiry explored practitioners' experiences of using ToL within community contexts, something not yet covered through empirical research. Nineteen practitioners using ToL across 16 countries, globally, were interviewed as part of this inquiry. A reflexive thematic analysis constructed three main themes: 'Encountering Possibility', 'A Contrasting Way of Being and Doing' and 'Shared Humanity'. The outcomes substantiate previous anecdotal accounts of ToL and offer new knowledges in relation to practitioners' perspectives. Implications for practice are wide, with the potential for ToL to influence practitioner wellbeing, a move towards an alternative stance, and a change in the way we see evidence. Overall, the practice of ToL was reported to offer significant value in working alongside communities and the potential for additional inquiry to extend this research is expansive.

"Stories create community, enable us to see through the eyes of other people and open us

to the claims of others…" – Peter Forbes

And much like all stories, this must come to an end.

The End

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8. Appendices

Appendix A

Reflexivity Within and Beyond

Reflexivity was interwoven throughout, integral to all parts of this inquiry. It has been hard, therefore, to limit and, at the same time, accurately document my various attempts to engage in understanding myself as a researcher, my journey to this topic, and my impact on or my reflections of the different elements of the research. As such I have written this reflexive Appendix, with interspersed segments from my reflective research diary alongside some additional typed reflections.

1. The Journey to Where We Land, Here.

Given this research has taken many twists and turns, where the journey diverted it away from its original path, I felt it was important to document how I arrived here, at the documented topic of inquiry.

The beginnings of my journey to this topic were not without detours, through the lands of other passions such as Community Psychology and Intellectual Disability. However, it is unsurprising to me now that I have ended up in the vast, rich, open fields of narrative practice with its longstanding connection with community work. Landing specifically with an inquiry surrounding ToL was influenced by a number of connections. My interest in all things 'community' had led me to the opportunity to connect with Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo and to learn more about the ToL methodology several years ago, planting seeds of inspiration which felt exciting to revisit. More recently, I undertook a service evaluation of a ToL intervention in a UK NHS mental health service. Several avenues to extend the evaluation

became clear and one of those initially flourished into a topic for this thesis. I had originally

proposed a narrative analysis, looking at documenting how those with a diagnosis of

Personality Disorder storied their identity throughout a newly setup NHS ToL group.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the original plan for this inquiry was not

able to be realised. My knowledge of the ToL literature gained from both completing the

service-evaluation and planning the initial project, however, formed a strong foundation

crucial in developing this current research. As Morgan (2000) states "at the beginning of the

journey we are not sure where it will end, nor what will be discovered" (pg.3).

2. My Positionality and The Social Identity Map

Reflecting on the influences of my own social identities has been important, revealing

and influential during this research. Doing so felt pertinent since this research was carried

out globally, extending the potential differences between my own context(s) and those of

participants. The Social Identity Map documented in the figure below allowed me to take the

time to think in depth about my intersecting identities and the influence they may have on

my understandings, my perceptions of participants and their views, and how participants

view me. I have chosen to 'zoom in' on a number of the identities that feel pertinent to this

inquiry, and have expanded here.

As a white, British researcher, I thought a lot about what my identities may mean for

some participants, particularly as my whiteness is a visible identity that clearly marks

perceived sameness, or difference. The idea of a 'researcher' also comes with particular

connotations; often, the assumption of knowledge, education and what that might mean

(e.g. expertise), which leaves me with some discomfort, in comparison to how I would

perhaps prefer to be seen (e.g. a collaborator). I cannot, however, shy away from the power

and privilege I gain from these positions. Although this has the potential to do good, I also hold onto a strong ethical responsibility to be aware of my inherent power, knowing that I enter into research relationships with a colonising ancestral history, white privilege and the potential to silence or do harm as a researcher. I found Smith's (1991) words helpful in considering how I may be received, and my responsibility not to 'extract' knowledge but instead to co-construct meaningful understandings through conversation: "it appals us that the West can desire, extract, and claim ownership of our [indigenous] ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations." (p.1). In order to navigate this, I opened myself up to participants, transparently sharing myself, my motivations, values, ethics and intentions in the building of relationships.

The other social identity I have thought a lot about both during this research is class, particularly the move from my working class roots to the social capital and middle class status gained from entering paid clinical training. I feel my working class roots impact my approach to all that I do, and I have noticed how my class history has impacted my sense of 'striving' during this research; my push to 'do justice' to the work has been constantly at odds with what 'good enough' might look like. I also believe my roots form a large part of how I relate to others, which I believe has supported me in building relationships through the interviewing process. Sometimes I find a conflict between how I believe I may be perceived, and the life experiences that have shaped me; this has certainly been interesting to think more about during this research process.

My Social Identity Map
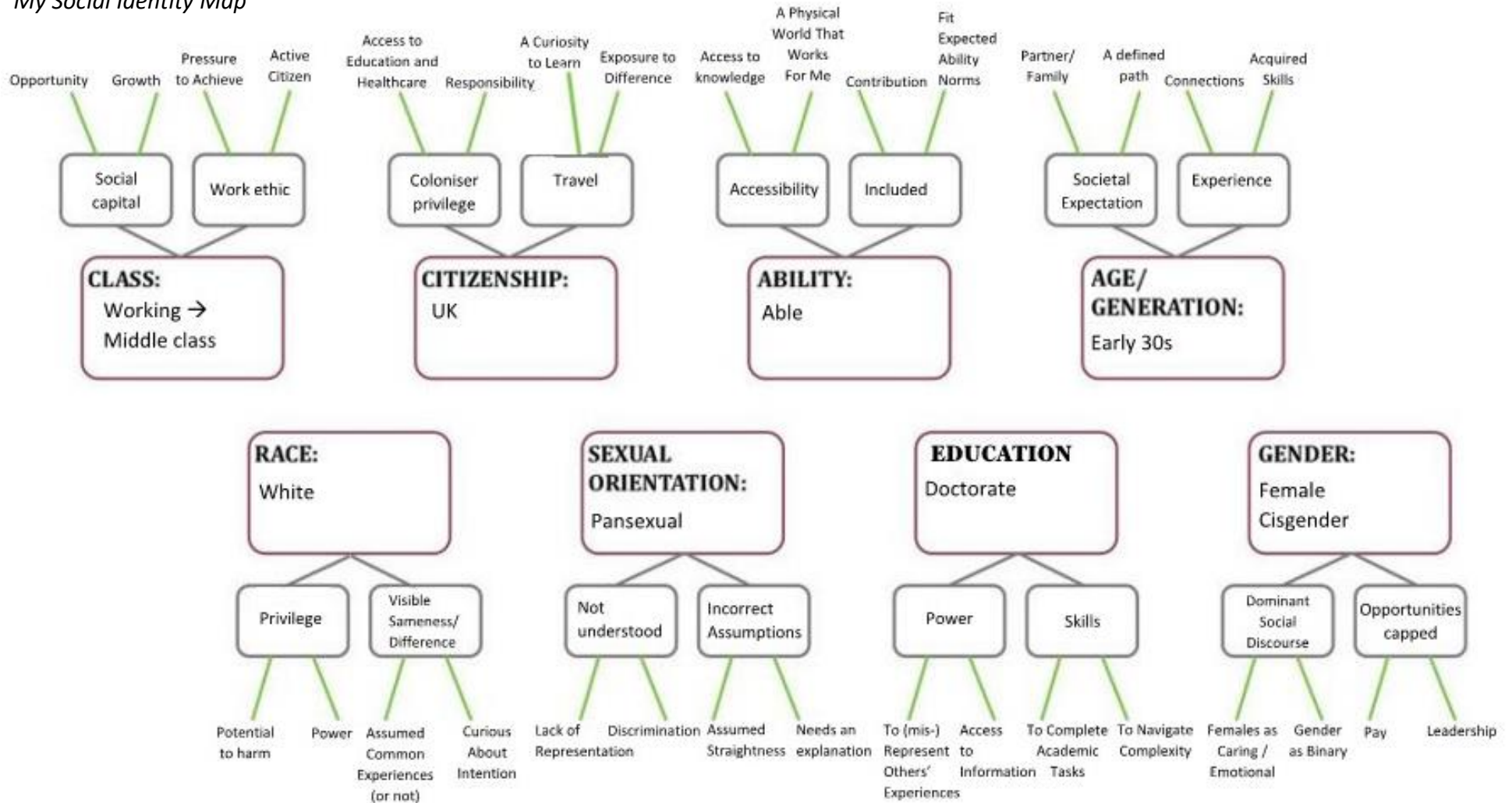
Note: Adapted from Jacobson and Mustafa (2019)

*3. Reflexivity Regarding Methodological Decisions*

   Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: *The beginning of recruitment led to many reflections*

regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria I had decided upon. Though I was confident in

my justification of these choices and firmly set on the ethics behind the stringent criteria,

hearing feedback (particularly from well-known practitioners in the field who did not meet

the criteria and thus, questioned its restrictiveness) - gave me an opportunity reflect on

questions such as 'whose voice was I not going to hear?' 'Were those voices potentially just

as rich, important and may have added a greater breadth to my sample?' 'What does

respect of and fidelity to the methodology fully mean, and what are the boundaries of this?

   Self-Disclosure in Research Blurbs & Emails: *Similarly to the above, beginning*

recruitment meant initial interactions with those curious about my study. Several moments

invited deeper engagement, exploration and consideration from me regarding the language

I chose during the recruitment and how much of myself was important to share in the

process.

To the right is an image from my reflexive diary on the day of my first Facebook post, where

someone had responded questioning me about how I had chosen to name my role in the way I did. Connecting with David Denborough, who invited me to share a little about myself in my email to potential participants was another point that allowed me to think more about who I am to those I am hoping to meet, and what do they need to know?
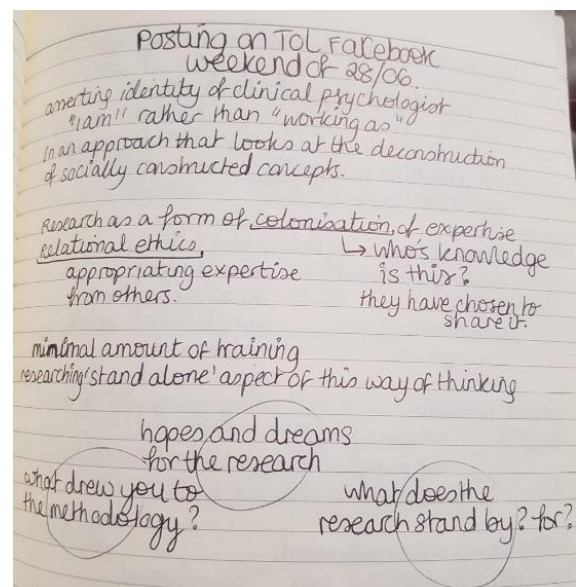
Participant Anonymity: Several participants shared the conflict they felt in remaining anonymous, as they cannot be linked to or fully acknowledged for their impactful work. In responding, I found myself sat between the expectations of formal research and a moral obligation and wish to honour and respect the participants. This is a place that has felt relatively familiar, during this research project, as I have attempted to tread carefully along the boundaries of 'traditional' empirical research. Unfortunately, since not all participants wished to be named, it was felt that naming some may impede an ability to keep others anonymous. I will, however, be thinking further about anonymity (or the possibility of otherwise) in relation to the dissemination of this research. Below are extracts from my reflexive diary during the research interviews where participants raised this issue:
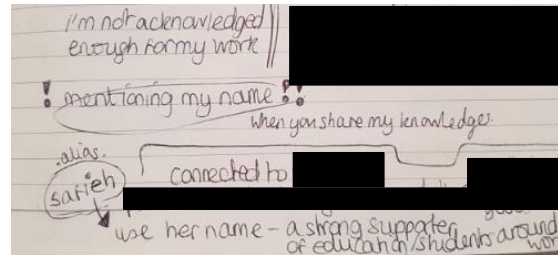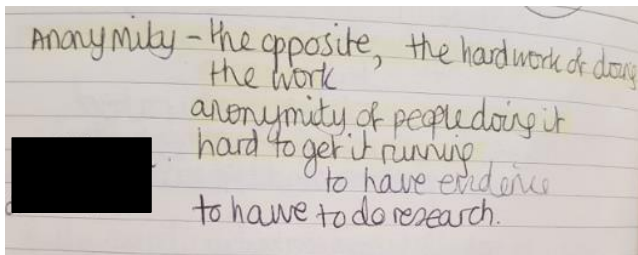
4. Reflexive Interview(s) with my Critical Research Buddy

As is documented below in the notes from my reflexive 'bracketing' type interviews with my critical research buddy, we held conversations together at different points during the research journey. I found it incredibly helpful to have space to think about what I was being drawn into, or away from, how I was perceiving the possibilities for this inquiry, my participants' reactions, and how I was responding to dilemmas along the process.
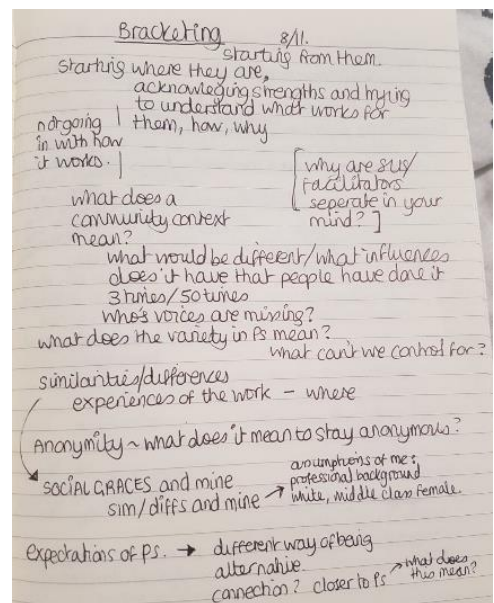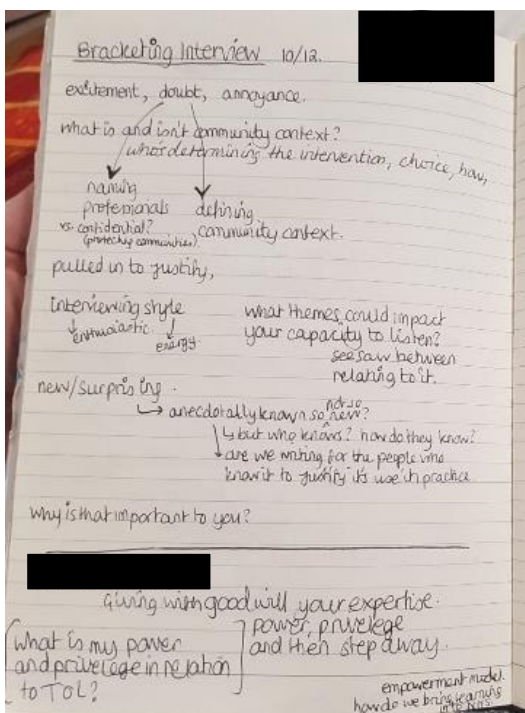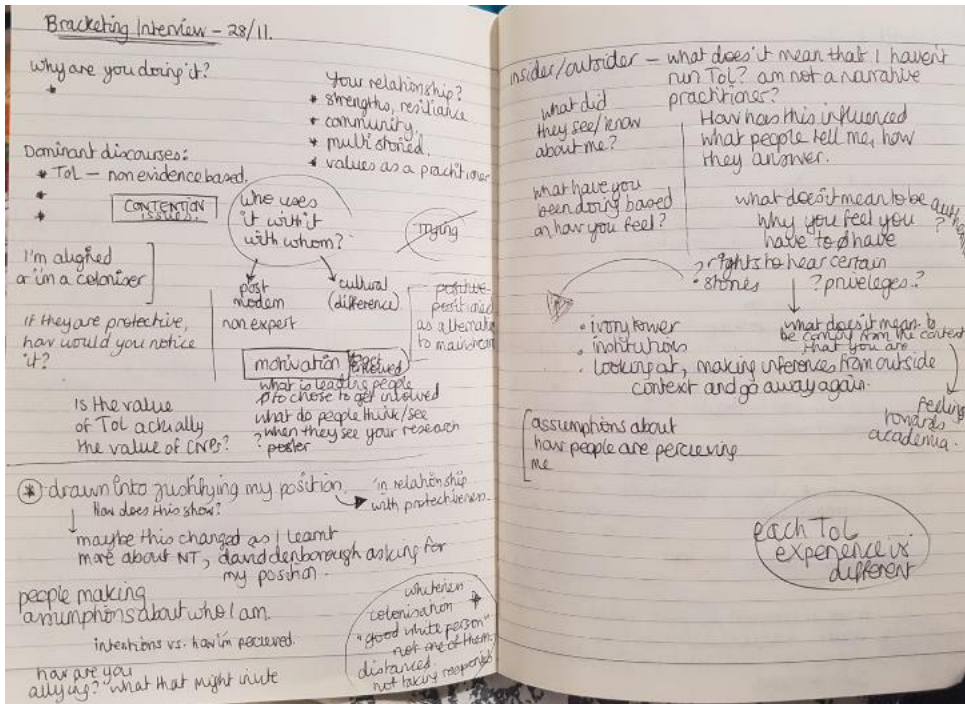
5. Pertinent Points and Emotional Responses from Interviewing:

Below are several examples of my notes during or following interviews from my reflexive

research diary, where I had written points that resonated or noted emotion, from either

myself or the participant. Reviewing these notes at the end of the interview helped me form

an initial picture of the overall data, but also helped me understand what I was perhaps

paying more attention or less attention to. I referenced back to these notes during the

'familiarisation of the data' phase of the analysis to remind myself what I am likely to be

drawn towards in the listenings.
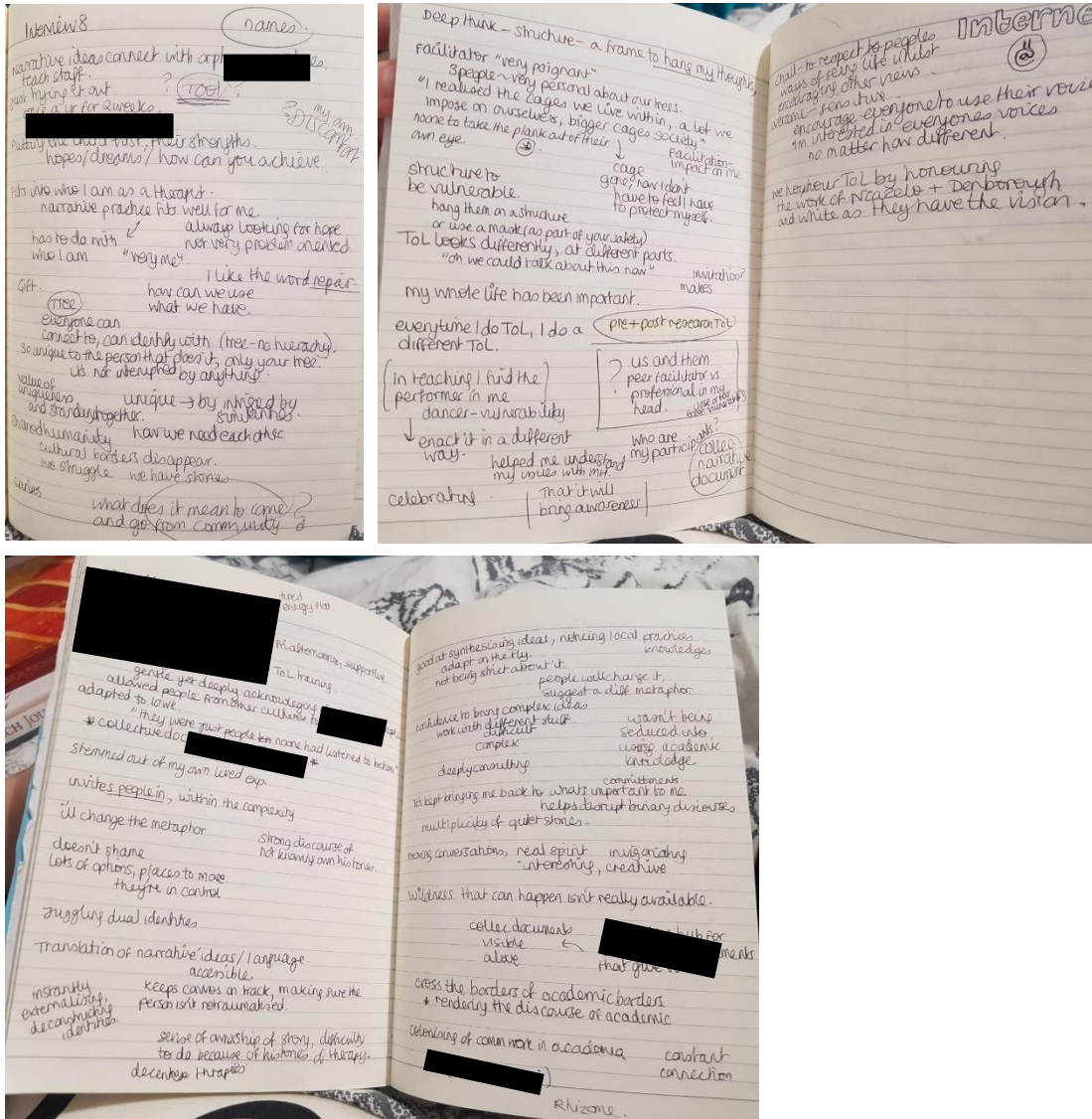
6. Analysis – Reflexive Conversation with Principal Supervisor re: Coding

Punctuating the coding of transcripts with time to reflect with my principal supervision was

immensely helpful in allowing me to see where my previous experiences, knowledge(s) and

assumptions were influencing my coding. A particularly vivid example was the idea of an

indigenous 'mob', where I had not realised I was familiar with this term from my time living

in Australia so it has meant something different to me and had different connotations to

Becky's interpretation.
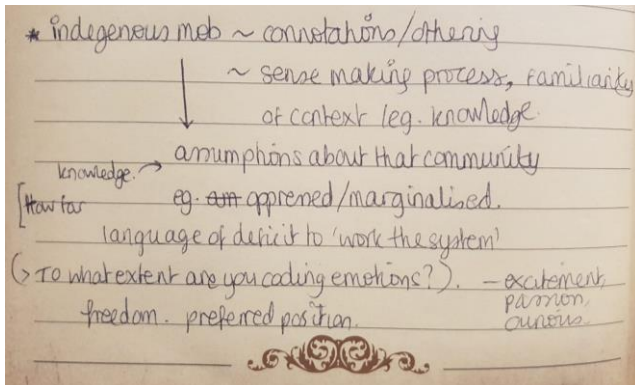
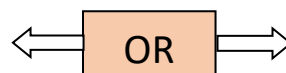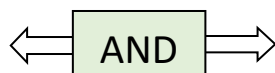**Appendix B**

Search Planning Form

Question : What does the empirical literature tell us about practitioners' experiences of using ToL?

Identify the main concepts of the question (use as many as you need)

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4 – DELETED
Tree of Life	Narrative (Therapy)	Methodology	Practitioner

List alternatives keywords, terms and phrases below

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4
Tree of Life	Narrative Therapy	Methodology	Practitioner
OR	OR "Narrative"	OR Workshop	OR Facilitator
OR	OR Narrative Practice(s)	OR Tool	OR Professional
OR	OR Collective Narrative Practice(s)	OR Group	OR Counsellor
OR	OR	OR Project	OR Clinician
OR	OR	OR Therapy/ies	OR Therapist
OR	OR	OR Approach	OR Community Worker
OR	OR	OR Exercise	OR

⟵ **AND** ⟶   ⟵ **OR** ⟶

Concept 1 AND Concept 2   OR   Concept 1 AND Concept 3

Appendix C

Final Scopus Search - Screenshot

Scopus

Search   Sources   Lists   SciVal ↗

405 document results

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("tree of life" AND ["narrative" OR ["methodolog*" OR "therap*" OR "project" OR "workshop"]]) AND PUBYEAR > 2005

✎ Edit   💾 Save   🔔 Set alert

Appendix D

SLR – Descriptive and Analytic Themes

Descriptive	Analytic
Evaluation is important but hard to capture	**Different Yet Connected**
Hardships influence ability to cope	*Shared Context(s) of Injustice*
Deconstructing a dominant discourse	*Different People, Similar Outcomes*
Power	
Considering ethics	**Accessible and Adaptable**
Experiences of Injustice	*Adaptations to the Tree of Life*
A safe place to stand / emotional safety	*Improving Access to Care*
Needs time	*Needing Time*
Responds to cultural diversity	
ToL being adapted for specific community	**Capturing the Work**
Togetherness / sense of community	*Evidence vs. Values for NT*
Connection, Re-connection to self/others	
A different/alternative view	
A changing identity	
Useful with those 'hard to engage'	
Sameness and Difference	
Bias	
An altered emotional state	
Quantitative vs. Qualitative	

Appendix E

Interview Schedule

Introduce self, context of researcher

We're here today to share in conversation about your use of the Tree of Life methodology within the community…

Roots   Tell me the story of how you came to do this work…

and Ground: How and where does Tree of Life fit in your practice currently?

Prompt (Pr): Explore kinds of work, population, community, context if it doesn't come up naturally

Pr: Explore histories, underpinnings, values of their work – when or how did you first learn about the tree of life? who or what influenced you to work in this way?

Pr: Explore more anything that comes up about 'doing something differently' 'seeking an alternative approach'

Trunk: What value does Tree of Life bring to your practice/work?

Pr: Explore more about sameness/difference to other approaches – what does Tree of Life allow for that other ways of working do/might not? How does this allow you to work differently to other ways of working?

What role do you play in making the Tree of Life groups/workshops a success? Do you have skills, assets, things you are good at that lend itself to this work?

What strengths does the work of the Tree of Life pull out in you?

Leaves: Who or what has been important to you in doing this work?

Fruits   What opportunities/gifts are afforded to you because of Tree of Life?

and Flowers: What opportunities/gifts does your use of the Tree of Life offer others?

Any learnings/re-learnings that have been influenced by this work?

Branches: What do you hope for this work to become?

What else would you like to do with this work?

Storms: What challenges have you faced or overcome whilst doing this work?

What fears or resistance(s) have you faced in trying to do this work?

How have you overcome

Celebrations: In celebrating the work that you do within local communities and the value Tree of Life brings to your practice,

What is the importance or significance of the work to you?
Pr: what have you heard from participants that has been significant to you?

Appendix F

Recruitment Poster

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Research participants needed!

Do you facilitate the
Tree of Life
within a local community?

We are seeking participants to join the researcher in a 60-90min virtual interview exploring your experience of facilitating the Tree of Life methodology within local communities. We will explore how you came to use the Tree of Life and the value it has added to your practice.

In order to take part you must have attended the 'Introduction to Tree of Life' training run by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo (Phola), OR Narrative Therapy training inclusive of the Tree of Life through The Dulwich Centre, Adelaide. Practitioners should have facilitated the Tree of Life methodology within local communities, and be comfortable conversing in English.

For more information about taking part, please contact Kirsty Stubbs (Principal Researcher) on ▬▬▬▬▬
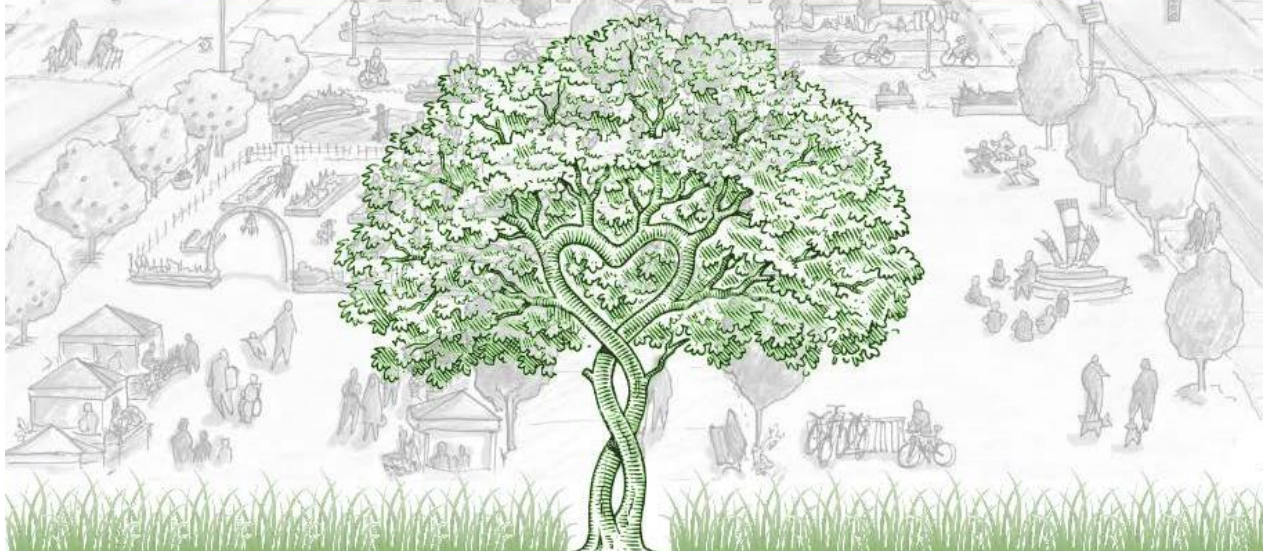
University of HERTFORDSHIRE UH

This study has been approved by the University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA , protocol number: aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(1)

PHOLA
Equipped to Overcome

Appendix G

Social Media Blurb

Tree of Life: Narrative Approach

Hi Everyone,

Still seeking research participants...

I am looking to connect with those of you who facilitate/or have previously facilitated the Tree of Life methodology within communities and grassroots settings around the world. If you would be willing to join me in a 60-90 minute conversation ('interview') about the work you do, the story of how you came to use the methodology, and the value it adds to your practice, please get in touch to take part in this research.

This research is supervised by Dr Maria Qureshi, Dr Chancy Marsh & Ncazelo Ncube Mlilo. The study has received ethical approval from the University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA, protocol number: LMS/PGT/UH/04247.

In order to take part, participants must:
- Practice the methodology within a local community, or a grassroots organisation/setting.
- Have completed the 'Introduction to Tree of Life' training run by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo. [*please also get in touch if you have received ToL training through The Dulwich Centre/David Denborough*]
- Be able to communicate comfortably using the English language.
- You do not need to be professionally trained; we are also seeking to interview experts by experience, lay counsellors and community leaders who have been trained in the methodology.

Thank you for your kind consideration. If you are interested in participating, please comment below or email me at ███████████ for more information. I look forward to hearing about your wonderful work.

Kind wishes,
Kirsty Stubbs (Principal Research & Trainee Clinical Psychologist, University of Hertfordshire, UK)

Appendix H

Approval to Use Phola's Mailing List

PHOLA
Equipped to Overcome

Association incorporated as NPC
Registration number 2019/553733/08
167-131 NPO

2/683 Ostrich Road
Bromhof
Boskruin
2188

Date: 30/07/2020

Re: Permission for use of Phola emailing list for research purposes

To whom it may concern

This letter indicates my permission for Kirsty Stubbs (Trainee Clinical Psychologist, University of Hertfordshire) to disseminate information about her research project 'A qualitative exploration of facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within communities?' via the mailing list we hold of previous participants that have taken part in the Tree of Life methodology training. This will allow her to access potential participants interested in taking part in the research, that meet the inclusion criteria of the research study.

Yours Sincerely,

Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo

Directors: Mtsubi Ngwenya (Chairman); Miso Dhliwayo (Treasurer- Finance Lead); Dr Sasha Frade; Megan Ribbens; Immaculate Shembe; Thembi Mapholisa; Tamsanqa Ngwenya

Appendix I

Email sent via the Phola Mailing List, via Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo

Dear All,

I am getting in touch to let you know about a doctoral research project I am supervising which I believe may be of interest to you and your networks working with the Tree of Life methodology.

The principal researcher, Kirsty Stubbs (Trainee Clinical Psychologist, University of Hertfordshire), is looking to interview people using the Tree of Life methodology within local communities and grassroots organisations worldwide. The research will explore the stories that bring people to this practice, and the value that the methodology may bring to someone's work within and alongside communities. It is hoped that the outcome of this research will help speak to the unique value of the Tree of Life methodology from a practitioner's perspective.

This study has received ethical approval from the UH Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA, protocol number: LMS/PGT/UH/04247.

I have attached a poster which you can circulate, seeking participants for this study. In order to participate someone must:

- Practice using the Tree of Life methodology within local communities or grassroots organisations
- Have attended the 'Introduction to Tree of Life' training run by myself, Ncazelo Ncube Mlilo
- Be able to converse comfortably using the English Language

I would be grateful if you could kindly pass this onto any relevant practitioners in your network. Should you, or others you are connected to, wish to take part please email Kirsty directly on **EMAIL** to express your interest.

Kind wishes,

Kirsty

Appendix J

Information Sent to David Denborough for Circulation

An invitation to take part in research exploring practitioners' experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within communities.

As a Trainee Clinical Psychologist with a background in and passion for community work, I have I found myself drawn to narrative practices as a way to honour the strengths and resilience in the people and communities I work alongside. I feel strongly that, although positivist notions of empirical research and evidence-based practice are held in high regard within Clinical Psychology, practice-based evidence and the value of indigenous, collective methodologies should also be more deeply understood and celebrated. Little is written about the view or experience of practitioners who use and re-use collective narrative practices such as the Tree of Life methodology across contexts and communities, worldwide, and it is for these reason I am curious to invite and explore these perspectives and experiences through my doctoral research. I am interested in exploring what it is that means practitioners choose to use (and re-use) this methodology within community contexts, the value it adds to ongoing practice(s) and a practitioners personal and professional experiences of this work.

With the above in mind, I would like to invite you to join me in a 60-90min dialogue, exploring your experience of using the Tree of Life. In order to take part in the research, you must:

- *Have facilitated the Tree of Life methodology within a community context*
- *Have received training in the Tree of Life from either Ncazelo Ncube & Phola OR David Denborough & The Dulwich Centre*
- *Be comfortable conversing in English*

*I would be more than happy to hear from anyone interested by email on **EMAIL**. Do not hesitate to reach out with any curiosities or questions you may have, as well as expressions of interest.*

Appendix K

General Information Form

GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

Chosen Pseudonym: _____

Demographics

Please state how you identify:-

Your gender: _____

Your age: _____

Your ethnicity: _____

Nature of Community Work

How would you describe your job role, relevant to your Tree of Life work?

_____

_____

_____

With your work within communities, what is the main focus? e.g. youth, refugees, mental health

_____

_____

_____

Tree of Life Training

How were you introduced to the Tree of Life (ToL)? What/who encouraged you to attend the training?

_____

_____

_____

When was your Tree of Life training completed? _____

Have you completed further training, on top of the Introduction to Tree of Life? (e.g. Advanced ToL with Ncazelo, or further training with other organisations)

_____

_____

Had you used ToL before attending Ncazelo's training?

_____

_____

Have you used ToL consistently since undertaking the training? Yes / No

If no, what do you think has gotten in the way?

_____

_____

Appendix L

Ethical Approval – Initial

University of Hertfordshire UH

HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO	Kirsty Stubbs
CC	Dr Maria Qureshi
FROM	Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair
DATE	04/08/2020

Protocol number: **LMS/PGT/UH/04247**

Title of study: A qualitative exploration of facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within communities.

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

no additional workers named

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 04/08/2020

To: 30/09/2021

Ethical Approval Notification 2 – Following first amendment

University of Hertfordshire UH

HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO	Kirsty Stubbs
CC	Dr Helen Ellis-Caird
FROM	Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair
DATE	14/10/2020

Protocol number: **aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(1)**

Title of study: A qualitative exploration of facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within communities

Your application to modify and extend the existing protocol as detailed below has been accepted and approved by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

no additional workers named

Modification: Detailed in EC2

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Original protocol: Any conditions relating to the original protocol approval remain and must be complied with.

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 14/10/2020

Ethical Approval Notification 3 (following second amendment)

University of Hertfordshire **UH**

HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO   Kirsty Stubbs

CC   Dr Rebecca Adlington

FROM   Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair

DATE   09/02/2021

Protocol number: **aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(2)**

Title of study: A qualitative exploration of facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within communities.

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

no additional workers named

Modification: Detailed in EC2

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Original protocol: Any conditions relating to the original protocol approval remain and must be complied with.

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 09/02/2021

To: 30/09/2021

Appendix M

Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

<u>PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET</u>

1 **Title of study**

A qualitative exploration of facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within communities

2 **Introduction**

You are being invited to take part in a study. Before you decide whether to do so, it is important that you understand the study that is being undertaken and what your involvement will include. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do not hesitate to ask us anything that is not clear or for any further information you would like to help you make your decision. Please do take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. The University's regulations governing the conduct of studies involving human participants can be accessed via this link: http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/secreg/upr/RE01.htm

Thank you for reading this.

3 **What is the purpose of this study?**

The Tree of Life methodology is used extensively around the world, yet little is known or written about the perspectives of people who choose to use it. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of facilitator's who use the Tree of Life methodology within communities, hoping to gain a greater understanding of what leads people to use the Tree of Life and the value it adds to work within local communities worldwide.

4 **Do I have to take part?**

It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. Agreeing to join the study does not mean that you have to complete it. You are free to withdraw at any stage up until the data analysis in December 2020, without giving a reason.

5 **Are there any restrictions that may prevent me from participating?**

In order to take part, you must speak fluent English, identify as a facilitator of the Tree of Life methodology and you must have specifically used the methodology within a local community. Further to this, you must have joined the 'Introduction to the Tree of Life methodology' training, run by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo OR be trained in the Tree of Life methodology by The Dulwich Centre/David Denborough.

6 **How long will my part in the study take?**

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be involved in it for the duration of your interview, which should take approximately 60-90 minutes.

7   **What will happen to me if I take part?**

Once you have read this information form, signed the consent form and have agreed to take part in the study, you will be emailed detailed instructions as to how to setup and join the video call where the interview will take place. You and the principal researcher will arrange a mutually convenient time (via a contact medium that is preferential for you) for the interview to be held and you will join the video call at this time. Following introductions and another opportunity to ask any questions you have, you will take part in an 60-90 minute interview; the researcher will ask you some set questions and may also enquire further about topics or experiences you raise. Following the interview, you will be reminded of what will happen to your data and how the researcher plans to proceed. You will be given the option to be contacted to review the results of the study and to give your feedback; you can choose whether you would like to do this, and even if you say yes at the end of your interview, you can change your mind at any time. Outside of this review process, the researcher will be writing up the research as part of their doctoral thesis. They will contact you when the research is complete.

8   **What are the possible disadvantages, risks or side effects of taking part?**

We do not envisage any risks or side effects to you taking part in this study, however there is always a possibility when sharing your personal experiences that you may become emotional. If this is to happen, it will be absolutely fine to pause the interview, to resume at another time, or you can withdraw your participation at any time.

9   **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Despite a limited evidence-base, the Tree of Life methodology is adopted widely around the world. Little is known or written, particularly from the perspective of a facilitator, about what it is that leads people to choose to use the Tree of Life methodology or the value of the methodology in people's practice(s). By specifically focusing on those using the methodology within local communities, we hope to learn more and later advocate further for the value of approaches embedded within community. By sharing your story, you are contributing to a growing body of work that can help community members, practitioners and clinicians alike understand the challenges and possibilities of using the Tree of Life methodology.

10   **What will happen to the data collected within this study and how will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All data will be anonymised using your chosen pseudonym prior to storage. All personal data, including forms such as your consent form and the general information form as well as your audio-recording, and later your interview transcript will be stored securely on an encrypted USB that only the principal researcher will have access to. All written files will be password-protected. Your audio data from the interview may be provided to a professional transcription service, who will be bound by a non-disclosure agreement in order to ensure your confidentiality and data protection. Anonymised transcripts may be shared with the research team involved in the study, as part of data analysis. All your data will be deleted when the research project is submitted in June 2021.

11   **Audio-visual material**

The interview you undertake will be audio recorded using an encrypted audio-recorder. The recording, following the interview, will be stored on an encrypted USB. Using the audio-recording, your interview will be transcribed word-for-word and this will be stored anonymously with password-protection; this transcription may be done by the Primary Researcher, or by a professional transcription service who will

be bound by a non-disclosure agreement to maintain your confidentiality. This audio recording will not be used for anything other than transcription.

13   **Will the data be required for use in further studies?**

The data will not be used in any further studies; all data will be kept until the completion and submission of this study in June 2021 and then securely destroyed.

14   **Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has been reviewed by:

- The University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority

The UH Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA protocol number is LMS/PGT/UH/04247

15   **Factors that might put others at risk**

Please note that if, during the study, any medical conditions or non-medical circumstances such as unlawful activity become apparent that might or had put others at risk, the University may refer the matter to the appropriate authorities.

16   **Who can I contact if I have any questions?**

If you would like further information or would like to discuss any details personally, please get in touch with the principal researcher, Kirsty Stubbs, by email: ks18acd@herts.ac.uk

Although we hope it is not the case, if you have any complaints or concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please write to the University's Secretary and Registrar at the following address:

Secretary and Registrar
University of Hertfordshire
College Lane
Hatfield
Herts
AL10 9AB

Thank you very much for reading this information and giving consideration to taking part in this study.

Appendix N

Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

Your full name: _____

Chosen pseudonym: _____

Best way to contact you? ☐ Email   ☐ Post   ☐ Other

Please state appropriate contact details (e.g. email address, postal address) for the principal investigator to get in touch with you:

_____

_____

_____

By signing this consent form, I hereby freely agree to take part in the study entitled "a qualitative exploration of facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within communities" (UH Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA protocol number aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(1))

Please tick to confirm

I confirm that I have been given a Participant Information Sheet (a copy of which is attached to this email) outlining the details of the study, including its aim(s), methods and design, the names and contact details of key people and, as appropriate, the risks and potential benefits, how the information collected will be stored and for how long. ☐

I have been given details of my involvement in the study. I have been told that in the event of any significant change to the aim(s) or design of the study I will be informed, and asked to renew my consent to participate in it. ☐

I have been assured that I may withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage or having to give a reason. ☐

In giving my consent to participate in this study, I understand that an audio recording of my interview will take place and I have been informed of how this recording will happen. I have been informed of how the recording will be stored, and that it will later be transcribed under my chosen pseudonym. I understand that parts of my transcription may be used in the write up of the researcher's doctoral thesis, and later for publication. ☐

I have been told how information relating to me (data obtained in the course of the study, and data provided by me about myself) will be handled: how it will be kept secure, who will have access to it, and how it will or may be used. ☐

I understand that if there is any revelation of unlawful activity or any indication of circumstances that would or has put others at risk, the University may refer the matter to the appropriate authorities. ☐

I have been told that I may at some time in the future be contacted again in connection with this study. ☐

Signature of participant: _____   Date: ____/____/_____

Signature of principal investigator: _____   Date: ____/____/_____
Name of principal investigator: KIRSTY STUBBS

Appendix O

Additional Consent for Professional Transcription

---------------------- EMAIL --------------------

Dear [NAME],

I'm reaching out to you again today, in relation to your participation in the Tree of Life research you took part in in [MONTH] 2020.

I would like to ask for your additional consent to use a professional transcriber, in order to transcribe your data. I have attached a consent form, which I would be grateful if you could complete, sign and send back to me if you are happy for me to use a professional transcriber.

The particulars:

- When sharing your data with the professional transcriber, I will use your chosen pseudonym associated with your interview.

- The professional transcriber will sign a non-disclosure agreement which means that they are bound by confidentiality, will not share your data with any other party and following returning the transcription to the researcher, they will destroy the record of both the audio recording and their transcription.

- You are welcome to let the researcher know if this is not something you are comfortable with; this will not impact your original participation in the study and your data will still be used. This would mean your data will be transcribed by the principal researcher and would not be shared with a professional transcriber.

- The request has had additional ethical approval, UH protocol number: aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(2)

Please, of course, let me know if you have any queries or questions about the above. I look forward to hearing back from you at your earliest convenience.

Kind wishes,

Attached: Additional Consent Form

Attached Additional Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

<u>FURTHER CONSENT FORM</u>

Your full name: _____

Chosen pseudonym (as per previous consent): _____

By signing this consent form, you are giving additional consent alongside your original consent form, related to your participation in the study entitled "a qualitative exploration of facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within community contexts" (UH Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA protocol number aLMS/PGT/UH/04247(2))

Please tick to confirm

I confirm that I had completed a consent form at the time of participation in the study, and I understand that the information I was provided and the consent I gave remains relevant.

☐

I have been given additional information about the nature of the sharing of my data with professional transcription services, and I understand how my data will be handled and protected.

☐

I understand that I can let the researcher know if I am not comfortable with my interview being professionally transcribed and this will not impact my original participation in the study; instead, this will mean that the principal researcher will transcribe your data and will not share the data with a professional transcriber.

☐

I give additional permission, on top of my original consent, in order for the researcher to share my data with a professional transcriber to be professionally transcribed.

☐

Signature of participant: _____   Date: ____/____/_____

Signature of principal investigator: _____

Name of principal investigator: KIRSTY STUBBS

Appendix P

Non-Disclosure Agreement, Signed by Professional Transcriber

University of Hertfordshire

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

University of Hertfordshire

Transcription confidentiality/ non-disclosure agreement

This non-disclosure agreement is in reference to the following parties:

Kirsty Stubbs (Trainee Clinical Psychologist)

And

Sonia Wilson (Recipient / Transcriber)

The recipient agrees to not divulge any information to a third party with regards to the transcription of audio recordings, as recorded by the discloser. The information shared will therefore remain confidential.

The recipient agrees to stop transcription immediately if they recognise any parties mentioned on the audio recording, and to return the recording to the discloser.

The recipient also agrees to destroy the transcripts as soon as they have been provided to the discloser.

The recipient agrees to return and or destroy any copies of the recordings they were able to access provided by the discloser.

Name: Sonia Wilson   Signed: *S. R. Wilson*

Date: January 1, 2021

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Major Research Project   Student No: ▮▮▮▮▮

1.

Appendix Q

Email Newsletter to Participants

------------EMAIL---------------

Hi All,

 Lovely to re-connect again, I hope this finds you well while navigating this strange world we find ourselves in at present.

As promised I am reaching out with <u>an update on my doctoral research</u> exploring facilitator's experiences of using the Tree of Life methodology within community contexts, which you took part in towards the end of last year; thank you again for your generosity and the time you gave to be interviewed. It has been lovely that several of you have been in touch to ask for updates and thank you for your patience and passion.

Where am I at in my journey with 'Research'?

The pandemic has thrown a few bumps in the road on my journey with 'Research', and so I am now due to hand in my doctoral thesis in August of this year, as opposed to the original plan of June. What this means is that I have been somewhat delayed in reaching the analysis of all the beautiful data from your interviews, but I am pleased to let you know I am now about half way through this, and look forward to sharing my initial thoughts with you all in a few weeks' time. Once I have submitted and made it through Viva (the process where I defend my thesis; due to happen in mid-September), the fun can really begin. As I have shared with you, I am incredibly passionate about sharing these ideas widely (so they do not live only within a giant academic thesis), and am definitely keen to think with any of you who are interested about ways to do this creatively, effectively, and with the widest impact. Thank you all for the ideas you have already shared, I am working hard to integrate some of your creative thoughts about how to honour your work into my final thesis.

How can you get involved from here?

- **Checking and shaping final results:** I will be offering the opportunity for you all, if you're interested, to check and help co-construct my final themes. This process is called 'member checking' in research. What this means is that, in a few weeks (likely end-May), when I have completed the initial analysis and have an idea of possible themes from the data, I would

like to share these with you to hear your thoughts, see if they represent your experience(s) and what you had shared with me at interview, and think with you about the language used to talk about these within the final write up. A reminder that you do <u>not</u> have to get involved in this process, but if you would like to, please let me know. I will be in touch further about this closer to the time, where I will explain more about the different options for contributing.

- **Dissemination:** As above, once the 'academic formalities' of handing in/defending the thesis are done, my priority will be to share widely the findings of the research – I am of course happy to send you all a final copy of the thesis (though, a pre-warning that this will be VERY long and wordy!) but I am also interested in translating the findings into visuals, artworks, short blog pieces, writing up for publication, and am open to all your ideas too! What do you think to a virtual Tree of Life event – a giant celebration of all the wonderful work going on around the world, and an opportunity to share work and ideas with one another and a wider audience? Perhaps there are words for such as event, within your culture? In the UK we might call a celebratory gathering of shared ideas a "Jamboree".

Please do get in touch if you have any thoughts, feedback or further perspectives to share, and for now please let me thank you again for your involvement in this exciting project.

I will be back in touch with regards the results in a few weeks' time.

Kind wishes,

Appendix R

Sharing Initial Analysis & Visual Map for Member Checking

-------------EMAIL-------------

Hi again everyone,

It's lovely to connect with you all again. I do hope that as this lands in your inbox, you are all doing okay given all that may be going on in your respective contexts. The sun has been shining here in London and has definitely been a welcome companion joining the thesis write up!

As I promised in my last hello to you all, **I am now connecting with you again to hear your views on the tentative analysis of the Tree of Life research inquiry** you took part in. I have now reached the exciting stage of my research journey where I can share my initial data analysis with you; it's "tentative" and "initial" because I would love to hear how it fits for you, and will adapt the analysis based on your collective feedback. It's been quite a windy road to reach this point, but this is definitely the best 'checkpoint' yet and I am really keen to hear your thoughts. *While it would be fabulous to hear from you all, please know that this is an* <u>*entirely voluntary*</u> *process, and you can opt out of this process - you do not need to respond.*

I have attached three documents. One is what is known as a 'thematic map', which essentially visually tables the themes and subthemes that I have constructed through the process of Thematic Analysis on the set of 19 conversations I shared with each of you. Alongside this, I have attached a summary document which describes what the themes/subthemes represent, with the aim to give a (brief) overview of the beautiful, rich experiences you all shared with me. Lastly, you will find attached (and below dependant on your settings) my attempt to create a drawing of the analysis outcome – I am hoping to do a range of drawings to support the dissemination of the research and to liven up an otherwise academic document.

I'm curious to hear any open responses you wish to share with me; you are welcome to share your thoughts broadly or to use the following questions (and the specific questions I have included in the summary document) to guide you as you read the analysis, should these be helpful:

- Do these themes and subthemes speak to your experience(s) as a Tree of Life facilitator, and the value you feel the methodology brings to your practice?

- Where did this analysis take you? What did the themes/subthemes make you think of, connect you to, or leave you with?
- How might what you read be improved, altered or presented differently, in order to better represent your experiences?

All of your feedback is absolutely welcome. I am happy to receive your thoughts via email, or to arrange a conversation over Zoom to discuss your views. I do, however, need to set a tight deadline to receive replies, as my main thesis deadline is looming. **I will need to receive your thoughts before or on Monday 14th June for them to be included**. I realise that I'm asking for a tight turnaround, but please do get in touch if this will majorly inhibit your ability to share your views but you would have liked to.

Thank you all in advance. For those of you who choose to take part in this process, I really appreciate it and your thoughts are absolutely vital to this inquiry; I very much see the outcome of this research as constructed and shaped between us all and I have no doubt that, together with your feedback, this research will continue to grow and flourish.

Kind wishes,

Attached documents:
- Summary Document
- Thematic Map

Summary Document Sent to Participants

To participants,

Here I have attempted to summarise a description of each theme and subtheme, to give you more of a sense of what they attempt to capture and how they may be spoken about. It might be that what is written feels fitting to your experience of the Tree of Life; it might be that you find you experience it's use, or its value different to how I have described – I absolutely welcome both points of view and the wide spectrum between. Feel free to annotate, add comments, edit this document and/or send me back your thoughts over email. Similarly, if it would be easier to discuss your views with me, I am happy to try and arrange a time.

You will see that I have included some questions in green below particular subthemes; these are questions I have been particularly curious about and would love to hear your views on but answering these is not a necessary part of member checking if you would rather send me open feedback.

Thank you in advance & happy reading!

Kind wishes,

Theme: Encountering Possibility

Description: The facilitators' describe their experiences of Tree of Life as one of possibility. ToL allows for, and opens up new or different opportunities for what is and what could be.

Subtheme: A Place to Flourish From

Tree of Life is described as offering a "good place to start", both as a facilitator who is perhaps new to this kind of work or new to a particular community. It is also an opportunity to introduce narrative ideas to communities who are not familiar with this way of working, in order to build ongoing relationships, connect members of the community and engage them in taking action.

ToL is described as integrating most of the key tenants of narrative practice and therefore as a good way of introducing narrative practice to communities, other facilitators through training, and as a first way of engaging as a new practitioner to narrative practice. Facilitators spoke about it as laying a good foundation to then use other narrative practice(s) in future work. It is also described as an effective way to engage and mobilise communities, by many of the facilitators; that it allows the building of community relationships between the facilitator and community but also between community members, that empowers people to engage in action, to understand one another more, and at times, allows for the opportunity for facilitators to 'get out the way' and for the community to own the projects/wisdom themselves and adapt it as they see fit.

Does 'flourishing' feel like what's happening, or is there another term more fitting?

Subtheme: "A Totally New Insight into Myself"

The majority of participants spoke of the impact the Tree of Life had had on them personally and professionally. That completing their trees had multiple influences, notably it had allowed for new insights to be revealed about themselves, their lives and those around them. It had helped them learn more about themselves, their histories or reconnect with what was important to them; face fears, confront storms; it connected them with strengths; cemented life changes or career goals or as one participant said, 'it was the genesis of my life, of the work I do now'. Many participants named the methodology as being "transformative" both for those who they deliver the groups to, but also for themselves (e.g. "It's the window into great stories that are kind of transformative, I think for people, but also for me so that's kind of lovely"). One thing particularly pertinent is that many of the facilitators noted how their tree, which they had completed multiple times (as it is completed each time they facilitate a group) had changed over time, and how often it was these changes that helped them notice, learn, or understand differently something about themselves.

How strong is the sense of 'transformation' for you? I have shifted between using 'new insights' as the central organising concept, and ToL being transformative.

Subtheme: The Dance Between Structure & Flexibility

The majority of participants shared that the structure of ToL can be helpful, but that it is also important that the methodology offers flexibility and can be adapted and used creatively if facilitators' are able to trust the process and the power of the collective. This feels like a dance between the two, since structure and flexibility/creativity feel equally as important and purposeful within the use of the methodology.

ToL is also described as "a frame to hang your thoughts"; the structure of ToL is spoken about as a good guide, useful for containment and to reassure facilitators, offering them something to go back to in any stuckness. This structure also gives people a good place to start, and as their confidence grows they can then adapt and become creative…

Facilitators' shared a multitude of ways that the methodology had and could be adapted to meet the needs of specific communities. Some spoke about the training empowering them to be creative and that it is almost expected that they adapt to local contexts. Communities were also described as readily 'bringing their own' to the methodology and adapting ideas themselves. Facilitators' spoke about the creative/visual elements of ToL offering greater possibility because it 'grabs' people and enables people to 'get it' instantly.

Mediating the dance between flexibility and structure, facilitators' spoke about the necessity to trust the process, that even with the structure and narrative questions on hand, it was important to allow for conversations to develop in ways that felt helpful. Similarly, within this, facilitators' noted that when ToL is used in a group format in the way it was originally developed, powerful things can happen in the process of people being together, witnessing one another's stories and building connections.

Does it feel to you that dancing is an appropriate frame for the co-existence of both structure and creativity/flexibility, and does trust mediate or stand in the middle of the two sometimes (hoping to pull you more in one direction or another)?

Subtheme: Expansion With Integrity

All facilitators talked about the positive impact they see ToL having and a hope for it to expand or to be offered more broadly, however there was a strong suggestion across facilitators that it is important this is done with integrity to the methodology. ToL should be offered more widely, to more people, and other communities worldwide, however staying true to the full methodology, acknowledging it's roots and histories and having some knowledge of narrative practice is deemed important to overcome challenges (e.g. it been deemed simplistic). Facilitators' also spoke about the hope that, even if ToL expands as they wish, it is not co-opted into the dominant ways of working (e.g. the medical model, with 'professional-service user' dynamics).

Everyone told me how they hoped for ToL to be used more: in more contexts, with more people, over time. How important does integrity feel to you, and do you align with this idea that it should not be "rolled out" if it was to be rolled out without integrity to the methodology? Does expanding the methodology out to broader contexts, communities, more people feel fitting under this main theme of 'encountering possibility'?

Theme: A Contrasting Way of Being and Doing

Description: Facilitators' described their experience of ToL as "different to other ways of working" (a contrast), with a "different feel" and a different way of being with people

Subtheme: Embodying My Values

Facilitator's spoke about appreciating ToL as they were able to work in line with their intentions, values and ethics as a practitioner, share their story and to be themselves in their relationships with people as opposed to needing to be guided by professionalism. One facilitator described "the Tree of Life fits into very much of who I am as a therapist" and others spoke about how it allows them to practice with genuineness and authenticity "The right to be yourself, to practice in your own way".

Am I right in centring values based practice here; I wondered whether it could also be a process of embodying your intentions, your ethics? How important might it be to represent authenticity/genuineness within the subtheme title?

Subtheme: "Speaking in Two Worlds"

Participants shared their experiences of the dominant mental health systems and societal discourses: the pressure to provide evidence-based practice, the challenges of medicalised and pathologising discourse. They spoke about actively attempting to 'be' and 'do' things differently to the dominant ways, however a need to have one foot in the door, so to speak – that they almost needed to be able to speak in two worlds, one of the

dominant discourse and one of narrative practice, in order to do the work they are doing. Some participants spoke about the influence on funding, on management allowing them to use ToL, on needing to provide 'evidence' of ToL's efficacy in order to satisfy particular agendas, which may be different from their own.

This feels to me linked to the idea of 'playing a game with the dominant discourse', that you have one foot in one world and one foot in the other to "survive" and "thrive" under systems and structures that hold rigid expectations – I wondered how political and/or radical this feels to you?

Subtheme: Being 'On The Ground'

Facilitators spoke about the opportunities and challenges that come from working differently, within communities 'on the ground': needing to catch people when they are free, it taking time to build relationships and to do this work, and it being potentially hard to describe one's role, and the use of ToL. They also, however described the importance of doing the work on the ground – how this improves accessibility, allows for deeper engagement and richer exploration. The intent of the work is different also: 'to make ourselves redundant'.

Of particular note was the many participants that shared the challenges and opportunities that come from either being part of the community you work within – how boundary setting can be hard, you may become trusted and this requires the ultimate accountability – or when you work with communities that you are not part of, where some of the participants for example were travelling to work with a community once, or at regular intervals (e.g. yearly) but were not 'on the ground' all the time – this can have implications for keeping conversations safe.

Subtheme: Solidarity with The Origin

Many facilitators spoke about meaning and importance to them of the roots and origins of the Tree of Life. That it originating from South Africa, and it being developed by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo as a Black woman, was significant for them: they appreciated how the methodology is a non-western approach, that honours culture, local knowledges and people's histories and ancestry, They spoke about the importance of it being born outside of whiteness and patriarchy; that using the methodology felt like standing in solidarity with those who have been oppressed, because of what is viewed as credible knowledge or 'science'. Some also spoke about trusting that the methodology with be impactful for marginalised populations, because of these roots, and how it was born out of community work.

Again, I would be curious to understand more about whether you would align with what feels to me quite a radical, political stance – I did not want to use those words out of turn as they are not explicitly in the data, however my choice of the word solidarity was in part to represent this and stay closer to what you, as research participants were explicitly naming. Is there an absent but implicit theme around being radical here?

Theme: Shared Humanity

Description: "the realisation that we're actually so much more similar than we are different"

There are so many beautiful quotes that will form the majority of the analysis for these subthemes

Subtheme: "I Get as Much From Them as They Get From Me"

Facilitators spoke about how they noticed the power of witnessing peoples' stories for themselves; that facilitating the groups has a two-way impact or mutual benefit and hearing peoples' stories moved them and influenced their own transformation.

Subtheme: Bridging Difference

Facilitators spoke about their own identities in relation to those they were working with, and how despite any differences that may exist or be perceived, a sense of connection or similarity was able to come from taking part in ToL. Facilitator's also noted that this same process appeared to happen for participants taking part in the methodology, that it had an ability to connect communities together

Subtheme: Cultivating Action Through Connection

Facilitators shared the impact of people becoming newly connected and the action this may provoke; that this appeared to minimise conflict, to remove traditional hierarchies within teams, change unequal power divides and that stories help to "strip ourselves of prejudices and discrimination that we have about different kinds of people".

I would be interested to hear your views on the language used through the theme/subtheme titles, whether it is representative of your experience, or other ways of describing maybe more fitting.

Broad questions from my email:

- *Do these themes and subthemes speak to your experience(s) as a Tree of Life facilitator, and the value you feel the methodology brings to your practice?*
- *Where did this analysis take you? What did the themes/subthemes make you think of, connect you to, or leave you with?*
- *How might what you read be improved, altered or presented differently, in order to better represent your experiences?*

Thematic Map Shared with Participants

Experiences of ToL facilitators within international community contexts

ENCOUNTERING POSSIBILITY

A CONTRASTING WAY OF BEING & DOING

SHARED HUMANITY

A PLACE TO FLOURISH FROM

"A TOTALLY NEW INSIGHT INTO MYSELF"

DANCING BETWEEN STRUCTURE & FLEXIBILITY

EXPANSION WITH INTEGRITY

EMBODYING MY VALUES

"SPEAKING IN TWO WORLDS"

BEING 'ON THE GROUND'

SOLIDARITY WITH THE ORIGIN

"I GET AS MUCH FROM THEM AS THEY GET FROM ME"

BRIDGING DIFFERENCE

CULTIVATING ACTION THROUGH CONNECTION

Appendix S

Photographs of Example Notes from Analysis: Data Familiarisation Stage

Excerpt from my reflexive research diary, following the final research interview
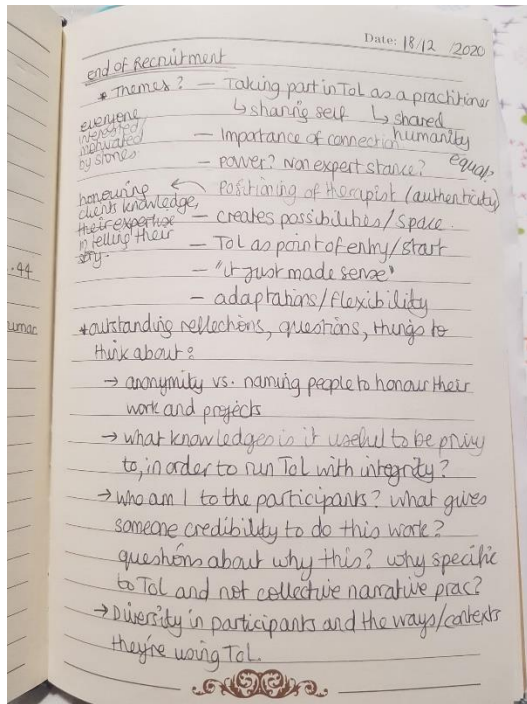
Excerpts from my reflexive research diary, following listening back to Interview 7
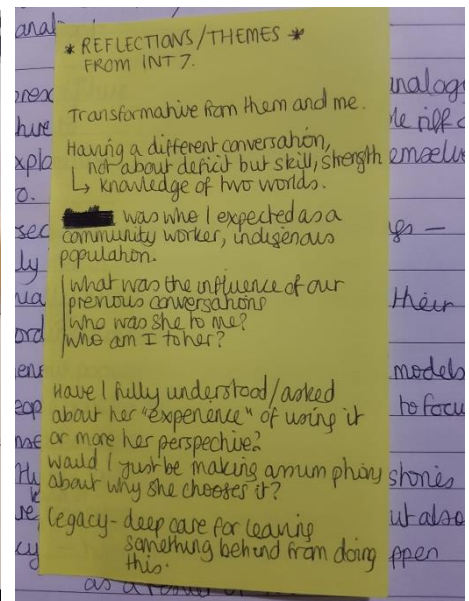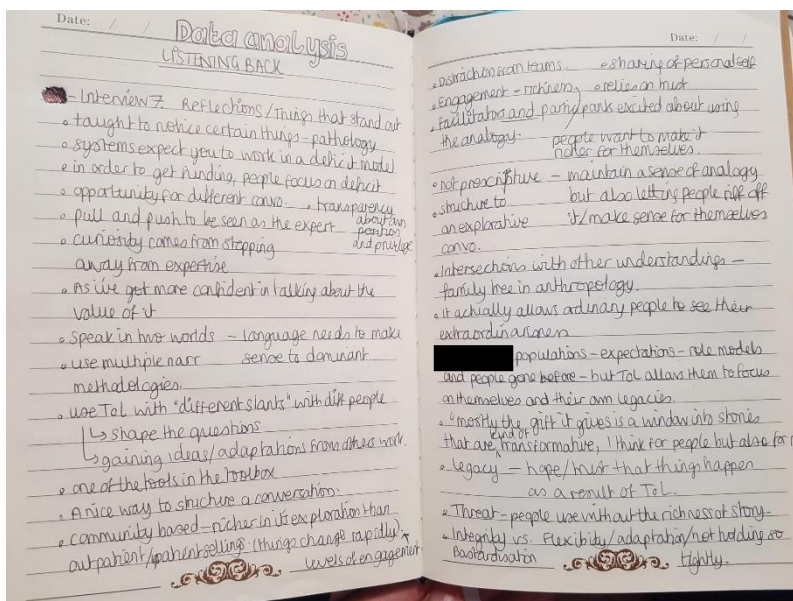
Appendix T

Excerpts of Coded Transcripts from NVivo

From Interview 2:

whole page, but they all drew trees in the landscape and the landscape was their home. Y'know and I think many of the women were refugees, or they hadn't chosen to migrate. And there was something very poignant about how they drew it in the landscape and so when they presented their trees, they talked about the places they were from. So, people just bring the things that work for them.

Interviewer

I really liked how you articulated this idea of a wide-open space for culture and heritage. Yeah, I think that really speaks to some of what other people have been saying about the Tree of Life, but also, I guess, this idea of it having some value in the way that we work and the way that we practice. I wonder XXX if you could speak a little bit more about what values a Tree of Life brings to your own practice and your work with communities?

Interviewee

Yeah. Absolutely. Well, it's been transformative. I mean, I can't put it more succinctly than that. And I think one of the things that really pains me is the way it is continuously diminished in its power. I think, I feel so strongly about this. So things I particularly hate, that seem to be done here in XXX (country) and I don't know if this is in other places. It gets used in training courses as a kind of icebreaker. It gets used or taken up by services very often as a means of engaging people with a service as if it's not a proper therapeutic approach but it's a way of getting people in, especially people who are black or from ethnic minorities, getting them through the door, and then you can give them real therapy, like proper.

These are some of the things that just enrage me, really, because I think that it's such a diminishment of the approach, and it's so, it's such a false narrative to me. I think if we can trust in the actual power of the approach it is transformative. I have literally seen this do that for people, and I just feel like if they've had a really good experience, and particularly if it's been quite in-depth, like over a number of sessions, that very often people don't want or need like to go on to other kinds of therapies. So I think it can be properly transformative if we allow it to be.

Interviewer

Yeah, yeah, there's something about the way that it's used is what you're saying, I suppose.

Interviewee

I think it's also like, in terms of my work with communities, I think it's a really great way of beginning community work with organizations because people just love it. They love talking about the ideas connected to it, they love taking part in it, again you know they bring their own things to it. I did a lovely project here in XXX with a group of Somali women and when I first went to talk to the women

Coding Density

ADAPTATIONS
ToL fit well with what the community wanted, asked for
Communities add, adapt the metaphor themselves
Roots, histories of Tree of Life
Introduced to ToL by a colleague
Population had difficulties accessing psychological intervention
Self-disclosure
Interested or inspired by others work
People may perceive ToL's intentions wrongly
Particular communities - Oppressed, Marginalised, High Levels of Trauma
Holding hope
Improved access to therapy
Power of (my) narrative questioning
Challenge - people simplify the methodology
Align to social constructionist ideas, values, beliefs
All of us are telling a story, constructed relationally
Ethical practice
Conflict in priorities between practitioner and systems, organisations

ToL not fulfilling it's potential

We have to assert a place for it
ToL helped me realise things about my life
Hope ToL is used more in community work

Teaching Narrative Practice Concepts before ToL
Whiteness
Colonisation
To see, understand the intentions behind ToL
Leaving a legacy from the work
VIEWS ABOUT OTHER WAYS OF WORKING
It fits for me (culturally, to my ethos, my values), feels comfortable
Consideration of Power
Respecting community, cultural rituals, values, hierarchies

Impact on practitioner - my own transformation

I HEARD, SAW, NOTICED ITS IMPACT

that perhaps have not come from you certainly and have come from the community themselves and just...

Interviewee

Yeah. Yeah. Definitely, and I think that's exactly what you want in community work. You want to be redundant, you know. You want people to take ownership of things. Just in terms of that, also I would say, just in terms of working with it as a method, I find it a lot less tiring than other methods. I think there's something invigorating about it. And it's a term you often hear in narrative practice about invigorating that kind of sense of yourself. For instance, here at the moment, I do a two-day version of it in ▮▮▮▮▮▮ And the way we do it is we do it two days, one after the other two whole days. And usually, in my work, if I was doing a two-day workshop, by the end of day two, I'd be completely, exhausted, banging headache and stuff. But I don't usually feel like that when we finish it. There's something about it just as a facilitator, as a person using it, and then, I guess, the impact it has on you yourself because I always take part in it myself, so yeah.

Interviewer

I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about that, XXX, about the impact it has on you. And perhaps this idea that it is different as a facilitator, doing this methodology in comparison to other things. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

Interviewee

Well, yeah, I guess everybody does this in different ways, it's interesting. It's one of the questions people always have about it, about self-disclosure. I think a lot of psychologists really balk at that and that taking part in it. And again, if you don't really know narrative practice, I think it's important to know narrative practice in order to really do it well. Actually having said that I think sometimes community workers seem to take to the spirit of it and the intentions and principles more readily than professional therapists and psychologists who've been trained in different approaches. So, for me, it's an issue about power, it's how you position yourself in the group.

So I always join in with it, I do my own tree, I present my own tree at the forest, all of that. And I know there are people who don't do that, and I can't imagine not doing it in a way because I think you miss out on something. I think people get very hung up on this idea of self-disclosure, which I think is interesting because they're expecting participants to do that and don't want to do it themselves. I used to do quite a bit of training in it and I think, particularly people who come from a more psychodynamic and psychoanalytic tradition, sometimes they really struggle with it because it's so at odds with their kind of training. I think that you know, one of the things that I feel is quite important is that, there's always this idea somehow that, psychologists we think that okay we get people to do their trees right and they're going to reveal something very key and important about themselves.

Coding Density

Coding:
- ToL fit well with what the community wanted, asked for
- ADAPTATIONS
- Communities add, adapt the metaphor themselves
- Roots, histories of Tree of Life
- Introduced to ToL by a colleague
- Population had difficulties accessing psychological intervention
- Interested or inspired by others work
- People may perceive ToL's intentions wrongly
- ToL not fulfilling it's potential
- Particular communities - Oppressed, Marginalised, High Levels of Trauma
- Improved access to therapy
- Holding hope
- Power of (my) narrative questioning
- Challenge - people simplify the methodology
- Align to social constructionist ideas, values, beliefs
- All of us are telling a story, constructed relationally
- Ethical practice
- Conflict in priorities between practitioner and systems, organisations
- Impact on practitioner - my own transformation
- We here to assert a place for it
- ToL helped me realise things about my life
- I hope ToL is used more in community work
- I HEARD, SAW, NOTICED IT'S IMPACT
- Wilderness
- Colonisation
- To see, understand the intentions behind ToL
- Leaving a legacy from the work
- VIEWS ABOUT OTHER WAYS OF WORKING
- It fits for me (culturally, to my ethos, my values), feels comfortable
- Respecting community, cultural rituals, values, hierarchies

Self-disclosure

Consideration of Power

Teaching Narrative Practice Concepts before ToL

But if we have to join in we'll do it sort of inauthentically, we'll share some things we, kind of, feel okay about sharing just because we have to for the sake of it. And to me, that's not only an issue of power and ethics, it's also something about not understanding the theoretical ideas as well. The kind of social constructionist idea that, all of us are telling a story, in this approach, every single person is the author of their own story in that. And so the particular story that service user or community worker or whoever tells in their workshop today or me as a facilitator, if we reconvene next week, we might tell it in a different way. You know, it's not a truth about us. It's part of something that gets constructed relationally and through language in a particular context. You can see, I'm not really in favor of people just sitting.

Interviewer

XXX, I wonder what you would say about your role in making the Tree of Life methodology when you're facilitating it a success. What do you feel your role is in that and what your skills and assets and things that lend itself to the work?

Interviewee

Yeah. I suppose I see my role as being to set a context to create a space in which this can happen, and that should be safe and negotiated and to set the context for people. So I don't really do it much differently if I'm doing it with service users or staff or whoever because I feel it's important for everyone to understand the theoretical background, the roots of it, this is really important. This is another thing that I feel so strongly about, and it really enrages me the way sometimes it gets detached from its roots. That original group of ████████████ that I worked with, one of the things that they said afterwards, and many of them went on to become Tree of Life facilitators as well, they said that it was very important to them that it should never be detached from its roots from Ncazelo's work. And for them, this was an issue about racism that knowledge gets taken from black people all the time and not acknowledged and whatever. And it absolutely drives me into this sort of rage when I see people presenting it without acknowledging her and her work, and the story of how it came to be. Because I think that story is so important about the Messiah Camp and the process she went through. Because I think when you talk about the process that she went through in developing this it makes so much sense to people, they really understand it. It's, obviously, paying respect to the roots. So I think part of my role is also to embody the ethics and intentions of the approach and part of that is about faithfully describing how it came to be in Ncazelo's work. I think that, and what other skills?

I always tell people who are trainees who are going to co-facilitate and, whatever, with me you have to be paying attention to three different dimensions. You have to be paying attention to the individuals, the group process, and the time. Which is quite, um, it can be a complex task to make sure

Coding Density

Communities add, adapt the metaphor themselves
ADAPTATIONS
ToL fit well with what the community wanted, asked for

Population had difficulties accessing psychological intervention
Introduced to ToL by a colleague
Self-disclosure
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People may perceive ToL's intentions wrongly
ToL not fulfilling it's potential
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We have to assert a place for it
ToL helped me realise things about my life
I hope ToL is used more in community work
I HEARD, SAW, NOTICED IT'S IMPACT

Wilderness
Colonisation
To see, understand the intentions behind ToL
Leaving a legacy from the work
VIEWS ABOUT OTHER WAYS OF WORKING
It fits for me (culturally, to my ethos, my values), feels comfortable
Consideration of Power
Respecting community, cultural rituals, values, heirarchies

Roots, histories of Tree of Life

Teaching Narrative Practice Concepts before ToL

From Interview 14:

a living [laughs] [**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm-mm-hmm] It had nothing to do with you know this counseling impacting you know- in your life personally. [**Interviewer:** Mm] So, from the school and- and the ████████████████████ what was working or doing was a job. [**Interviewer:** Mm-mm] At the end of the month it is bringing a salary that you'll be able to take care of your needs. [**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm] And this message is that we do you really could say nice things to the clients, "Yeah you look nice." Nice- nice- nice messages that you can actually talk to them to get to understand that this is a very nice guy talking to me and the very- in his heart if he wants me to go back and then you know reunite with my parents, it's good to be in your home, it's good to be with your parents, it's good to support your parents at home, it's good to listen to them you know- all these nice words. Now this is where [laughs] the words that were actually coming from the lips [laughs] [**Interviewer:** Mm] But the Tree of Life transformation that is brought about in my career and me my understanding and my sense of social work, was more of uh transforming my life- my own life [**Interviewer:** Mm] into a kind of person that could now speak from my heart. [**Interviewer:** Mm] Speaking from my heart meant that this messaging much as it- it is impacting the life of these street children, but was also coming really from this per- person who is preaching what he practices [**Interviewer:** Mm-mm]. The word- the word that is coming from his lips.

So, The Tree of Life was more of a tool that led me deeper into you know personal reflection. You get to understand that if I did want to be a counselor, a very good counselor that can actually speak from an exemplary point of view, now what does this mean. And when I say what does this mean is now why I went into the deeper reflections using all these metaphors of the Tree of Life into now personal a life... It could actually change the lives of others. And when this impacted my life even in my work there was a lot actually that changed. ████████████████████
after the Tree of Life sess█████████████████████
homes. And by the time I was leaving the organization to go back home to start doing my own personal you know initiative in supporting those other children closer to my home- yeah it was more of a battle- a battle with they didn't want to lose me. But I honestly begged that- yeah much as I was- I- I still could stay back and then support them. Even up to date I still go back and support them simply because...

Interviewer: It sounds like-

Interviewee: That was the response.

Coding Density

Ncazelo, David Denborough, Michael White - narrative founders
Growth
I'm now a 'true' counsellor
A contribution of therapy, community and development
Narrative practice drives all of our community projects
Empowerment
People respond to hardship
Gained understandings of myself and my histories
Inspired, encouraged by witnessing one another's stories
Tree of Life used in teams, organisations
Resources - space, funding

ToL meant I could now speak from my heart
practice what I preach

Refer back to ToL in later community work
ToL helped me realise things about my life
Aware of boundaries of practice
Celebrate accomplishments
It helped broaden out my work, think and practice wider
Practitioner - learning, discovering things about myself through Tree of Life
Use ToL across lots of different contexts and groups as part of my community work
You can define a self of self
ToL is empowering
ToL helps redefine community

Family Tree of Life
Can be in conjuction with other ways of working
I am, I can, I have
Understanding communities needs, hopes, wishes
Use ToL as a tool of engagement, mobilisation - a good place to start
Working within communities can blur boundaries

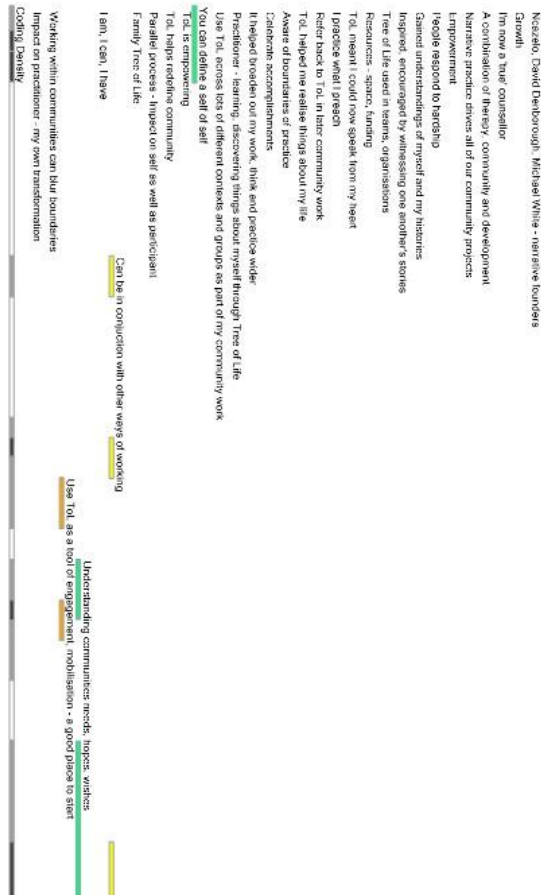Parallel process - impact on self as well as participant

Impact on practitioner - my own transformation

individual- give me personally a sense of you know redefining- newly redefining who I am and the kind of world that I want to see you know painting the world into the colors that you really want to see is- is it it's very beautiful I would say gift to that to you very many people would really be yeah [laughs].

Interviewer: [Mm-mm] That's a really beautiful um idea. [Interviewee: Yeah.] Yeah, I really have a really beautiful kind of image in my head of you of you painting the world in the colors that you went to see I think that's a really beautiful use of language. [laughs] Um CW I wanted to ask you um if you could share a little bit about what the Tree of Life allows for that other ways of working might not or...or you know can- can you speak a little bit more about how the Tree of Life compares to other ways of working?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think um I'll just say that the- the Tree of Life uh that's when you actually apply doesn't really take away uh other ways uh maybe that of working within the organizational setting. You really find that it's only bringing this idea in- in a particular context; a context that is actually depicting- say when in within our own community we are working with people who are familiar with the trees. It becomes much more easier to be able to use the Tree of Life to be able to explain some of these particular very important concepts that could allow an individual to be able to tell their story. Could be allow- an individual to have a celebration in their own life or to allowing- to explore how to spark a conversation around issues of you know our community, you know their resources, so their achievements and so on. So, it is- it kind of- it is kind of uh- I would say uh a very symbolic um it is very symbolic uh and that it is everywhere within every community. So, you can use it in the combination with other- other- other with other tools for example depending on what you really want to achieve. Taking an example like in within our own context when we are starting with the community it's very good to start our interventions with the Tree of Life.

Now the Tree of Life really you know fuse us with the community we enable us to understand, who this community is where are they coming from and so on and so on what is the achievements within the uh- that they have actually done within a particular range of time. [Interviewer: Mm] So, when you are starting an activity within a group a community or in a group, a Tree of Life is very good to start with. And then later you can introduce other- other tools depending on the intervention that you're actually having with them. [Interviewer: Mm] I want to give an example and this is how we do it within our own context when we knew we were getting into a new group we work with the groups of people who are- I mean supportive groups who are either doing servings or informal groups, who have come together for purposes of you know talking about learning something. So, when we engage with the group for the very first time, yeah our introduction in most times like within one month we explore the Tree of Life. Now the Tree of Life we explore all those prompts, say every now week one we do like three or four- I mean two with week two we can do the roots, and then the ground we can do the trunk we can do the branches we can you know go to the leaves and then the fruits. So, this- this can take us one month so members come like say for three hours, we explore one or two you know prompts and then they will actually go and think about that. And then later after a month we will have understood the community very well and then the community will also have understood us in terms of what is our expectations from our end, and then what this community that we are getting into uh they are all- all about. So, after

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Coding Density

Impact on practitioner - my own transformation

Working within communities can blur boundaries

I am, I can, I have

Family Tree of Life

Parallel process - Impact on self as well as participant

ToL helps redefine community

ToL is empowering

You can define a self of self

Use ToL across lots of different contexts and groups as part of my community work

Practitioner - learning, discovering things about myself through Tree of Life

It helped broaden out my work, think and practice wider

Celebrate accomplishments

Aware of boundaries of practice

ToL helped me realise things about my life

Refer back to ToL in later community work

I practice what I preach

ToL meant I could now speak from my heart

Resources - space, funding

Tree of Life used in teams, organisations

Inspired, encouraged by witnessing one another's stories

Gained understandings of myself and my histories

People respond to hardship

Empowerment

Narrative practice drives all of our community projects

A combination of therapy, community and development

I'm now a 'true' counsellor

Growth

Ncazelo, David Denborough, Michael White - narrative founders

Can be in conjunction with other ways of working

Use ToL as a tool of engagement, mobilisation - a good place to start

Understanding communities needs, hopes, wishes

From Interview 7

would be enough peaked interest for people to come. So, usually it's like a women's group or a men's group or the rangers or you know like it's- it's sort of has kind of a- an already group of people that sort of starts. You know that I kind of go look I'd really love to you know have this conversation with you in this particular way um.

I think what it is that kind of creates um a level of engagement once people get a taste of it is that I think for many of the people that I'm working with um- and alongside that they have rarely be put in positions where they come to a workshop and they're not being told something. It's rare for them to be in a workshop where they're actually- that there is some honoring of skills and knowledges and um inquiring and you can ah- you can see people kind of engage because um because they share story about what it is um that's important to them and uh- and so in that way I feel like there's it doesn't feel threatening to people. In fact, it feels quite empowering. And um it's a it's a big difference to uh you know to other training things that I do. Like I have you know many things that I deliver in communities some that are very straight sort of educational things like mental health first aid um. And then you know which has got a very different kind of feel about it. It's got very much um you know whilst no matter how much I'd like to tell people I'm not the expert I actually am the expert you know in the sense of you know I have the knowledge around uh diagnoses and whatever else.

Interviewer: [Mm-hmm]

Interviewee: And I love that the Tree of Life whilst um it is uh prescriptive like I am kind of you know I create a scaffold for these questions to occur and there's a framework. Um there is this lovely sense that people populate it as they will and you know the one that we did in XXX (place) it was so hilarious that- I don't remember which section we were on. But just people just kind of wanted to move to another bit and it was like, "Oh okay you know move we will." You know so you know it's interesting and kind of going uh we'll get back to this or suddenly- uh you know suddenly we're talking about bark and we're talking about you know how trauma thins your bark and you know how it just makes you more vulnerable. And you know so people are kind of uh- well not only people but facilitators and the participants get excited about using the analogies. And so, it shifts and changes and you know as people move on.

And I think when we did one in XXX (place) um the women wanted to add wind to the Tree of Life um. And the wind were the ancestors who had been before and who sort of swirl around and can shuffle the leaves and kind of provide comfort but also can let us know when we may have transgressed things and they'll blow harder and you know. So, it's just really beautiful to yeah kind of see people also wanting to um uh make it richer for them you know or how they might use that kind of analogy so which I think is really lovely about not being as prescriptive about actually how the um the parts of the tree are used either and then it continues to be co-created with the people that you're working with; and I think that's exciting about what how people would like to add things to it or

Interviewer: Yeah. What- what do you think enables a group the group to um to feel empowered enough to kind of say I would like to add this or change this or adapt that bit of it? What- what process do you think is happening there that enables that?

Interviewee: I think it's about- um I think it's about being able to eh- I think it's about facilitators taking a step back and allowing it to evolve and not being too caught up in a particular process that needs to happen. Um I think it's about the questioning that can happen uh when people bring things up. I can't exactly remember how the wind occurred. I think someone said something like um "you know our ancestors are always around us". And I think then the question was you know in uh you know how would we depict their presence you know in the Tree of Life and then someone said, "Oh you know it's the wind. It's like when the wind comes through." And you know so um you know part of it is kind of trying to manage or maintain connection to the sense of an analogy, but at the same time letting people um riff off it I suppose and make sense of it. The context it's in.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. hmm I- I wonder if you could um say a little SC about um how kind of who or what has influenced you in this process of kind of coming to use the Tree of Life?

Interviewee: Um who... uh I suppose um you know my colleague in uh- well I suppose the first people who really influenced me using this was the clients that I was seeing who are in crisis who actually weren't taking their lives, but were having a completely shit time of it. And there was the kind of interest for me about, "My god how do you keep standing like I'm amazed that you are managing." You know there are- uh "you know your experiences would have failed you know better people than me you know so I'm amazed." And so that idea of kind of uh knowing there were other stories that weren't being spoken about that I was interested in

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that we see and I'm flawed at their levels of resilience and how much hope is still held even when uh that people are constantly told it's hopeless. Um and kind of wanting to look out for ways that we might be able to do something differently and then- um yeah and I think people like Auntie Barbara Wingard just for the work that she has done with uh indigenous peoples around uh storytelling and using different sorts of methodology, but also the Tree of Life has kind of been influential in the sense of thinking this has been a methodology that's been used in communities and has resonated well [coughs]. So, you know have interest in uh kind of exploring that.

To be honest I think part of being ███████ of what influences the want to use it because I think um it has a really beautiful mixture of explorative conversation, curious kind of avenues to follow, but also um using art and a creative medium I think it's been something that actually sits very well as an ████████

Coding Density

Choosing which stories in preference
ToL is honouring
Used in different ways, with different communities, as different times
Impact on practitioner - my own transformation
Representing community, cultural rituals, values, hierarchies
Allows people to stand taller, stronger, more confident
Marketing
Ensuring everyone has a voice
Trust, Go with The Process
Adaptation to include ancestors as kind soil, fallen leaves
Acknowledges those who've gone before us (e.g. ancestors, histories)
I mean a big effort - time, money, resources, taking care
I honour the stories shared
Variety of Possibilities
Evidence for alternative, counter story or narrative
Centres. Privileges the person and their stories, experiences, what they bring to the space
Hard to describe the work, or the practitioner's role in that space
Communities of Practice
Different training may lead to different process and/or outcomes
Leaving a legacy from the work
Community Based Allows for Richer Exploration
The way I work has become more community based
Seeking stories of strength and resilience
ADAPTATIONS
Creativity and Flexibility Amongst Structure
Adapting the methodology for specific topic or community
Interested or inspired by others work

those skills. And yeah, so I think that's the gift it gives. I think it gives the gift to people being able to stand very firm and strong and tall and it offers a gift of people being able to uh not necessarily feel so alone. And uh, it helps kind of set a scene that kind of opens up in when storms are spoken about that kind of hope that there is enough having been uncovered to kind of you know draw upon to how people may respond um to those stores. So, yeah, I think that's um- I think it's an honoring space and I think it's a space where uh particularly the people that I work with uh um that is a real asset uh model. You know like it's a real model of strength and yeah it's kind of lovely.

Interviewer: [Mm-mm]

Interviewee: Yeah, I'd be interested uh to know- you know I mean I- I- I can talk for hours about it but I'd be interested to know you know like I will often ask people you know what was it uh like for you or what did you think about the workshop and- um uh oh god- what did um XXX (name) say- I can't remember now- it's called- oh god it's a beautiful quote now it's gone completely out of my head... Oh she said it's something- something of the nature of um it was really good it made us remember things that we'd forgotten you know. And so, um it was a really beautiful description about the fact that it wasn't actually um it wasn't telling people anything they didn't know it's just that they'd forgotten it you know like that they hadn't it was no longer or hadn't been kind of brought to the forefront. The workshop helped bring it to the forefront and it's interesting that was with the women's center in XXX (place) and then I've been back quite a few times for other projects. And um the trees are still hanging up you know and it would be over a year ago now you know know that um yeah, the pictures are still on the wall. You know the photo frames are still there with people's speech bubbles about their hopes and dreams. And um yeah, I think that that is telling in itself.

Interviewer: Yeah what's a testament to the work definitely. Um I guess but for us to move into kind of move of the branches and think about the hopes and dreams um what- what would you say what do you hope for this work to become the Tree of Life?

Interviewee: For my work with the Tree of Life?

Interviewer: I think both your work specifically the wider work of the Tree of Life I either or really...

Interviewee: Yeah. Uh for my work with the Tree of Life my hope is that there will be um more ▓▓▓▓▓ workers who are working in this way that are in my you know up here. So, you know I'm hoping to get some people trained. I'm hoping that um that people can feel more confident about having those sorts of conversations with people um. I think my hope is that there is um kind of ongoing sharing in the broader community of how people tweak and change it to kind of suit spaces and enquiries that are particular. So, you know I really love the work of um people I've forgotten her name- somebody XXX (last name)- XXX XXX (full name)- I think XXX

ADAPTATIONS
Coding Density

Choosing which stories in preference
Tol e honouring
Used in different ways, with different communities, at different times
Impact on practitioner - my own transformation
Respecting community, cultural rituals, values, hierarchies
Trust, Growth The Process
Allows people to stand taller, stronger, more confident
Marketing
Ensuring everyone has a voice
Adaptation to include ancestors as wind, soil, fallen leaves
Acknowledges those who've gone before us (e.g. ancestors, histories)
I make a big effort - time, money, resources, talking care
honour the stories shared
Variety of Possibilities
Evidence for alternative, counter story or narrative
Centres, Privileges the person and their stories, experiences what they bring to the space
Interested or inspired by others work
Hard to describe the work, or the practitioner's role in that space
Communities of Practice
Different training may lead to different process and/or outcomes

Creativity and Flexibility Amongst Structure
Adopting the methodology for specific topic or community
Community Based Allows for Richer Exploration
The way I work has become more community based

Seeking stories of strength and resilience

Leaving a legacy from the work

Appendix U

Photos of the Categorising Process
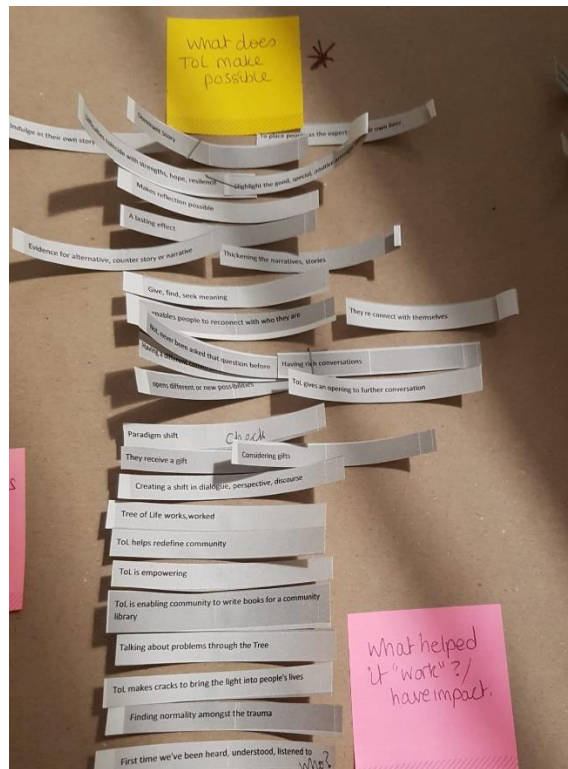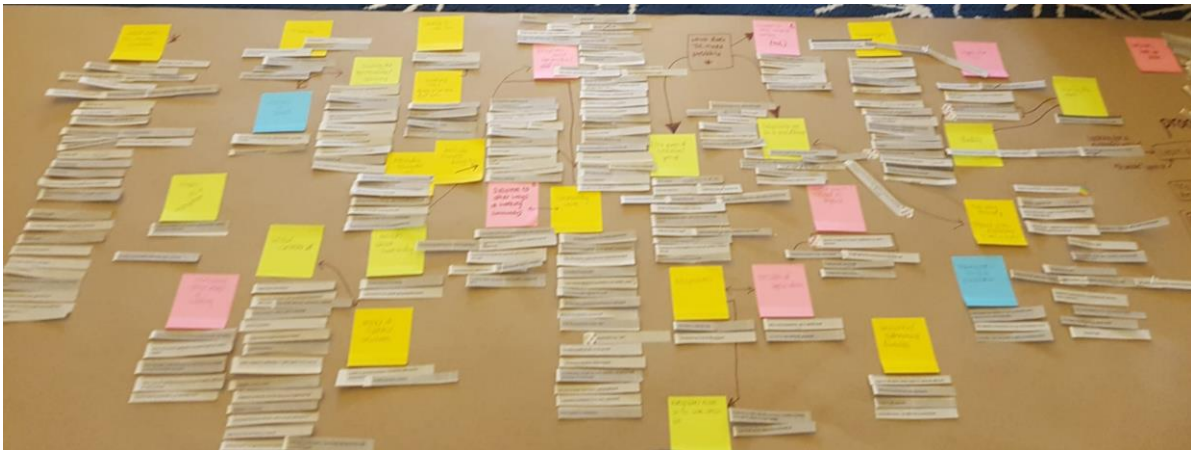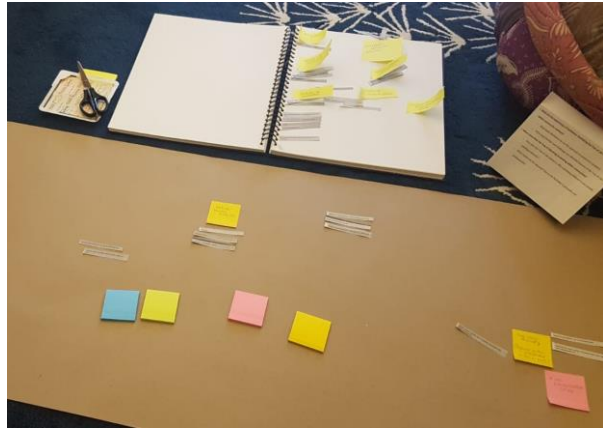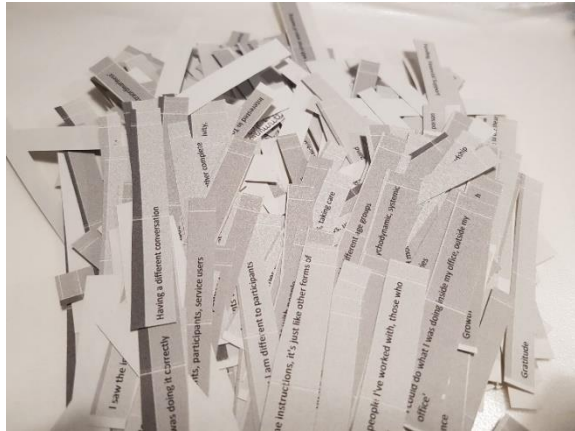
Appendix V

List of Initial Clusters

- ATTITUDES TOWARDS NT,NP
- INTEGRATE OR MOVE TO USING OTHER NPs
- PRACTITIONER INTENTIONS, APPROACH TO ROLE
- PRACTITIONER VIEWS OF RESPONSIBILITIES
- TOL MAKES POSSIBLE...
- THINGS THAT FACILITATE TOL 'WORKING'
- VIEWS ABOUT OTHER WAYS OF WORKING
- WIDER SOCIAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL CONTEXT
- TRAINING
- LEARNING ABOUT TOL
- CHOOSING AND BEGINNING TOL
- ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOING TOL
- DIFFERENT WAYS OF WORKING (COMMUNITY)
- EXPERIENCE OR BACKGROUND OR PRACTITIONER
- IMPACT OF SYSTEMS OR STRUCTURES
- WORKING WITHIN COMMUNITIES
- THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE, GROUP
- DIFFERENT WAYS OF WORKING (ToL)
- IT'S HELPFUL TO ME AS A PRACTITIONER
- I HEARD, SAW, NOTICED IT'S IMPACT
- BREADTH OF APPLICATION
- ADAPTATIONS
- SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENCE, DIVERSITY
- CHALLENGES
- HOPES FOR TOL
- SHARING THE WORK
- TWO WAY THERAPY - IMPACT ON PRACTITIONER AS WELL AS PARTICIPANT
- TAKING PART IN TOL AS A PRACTITIONER

Appendix W

Process of Evolving Thematic Maps, Maps 1-4

Thematic Map 1
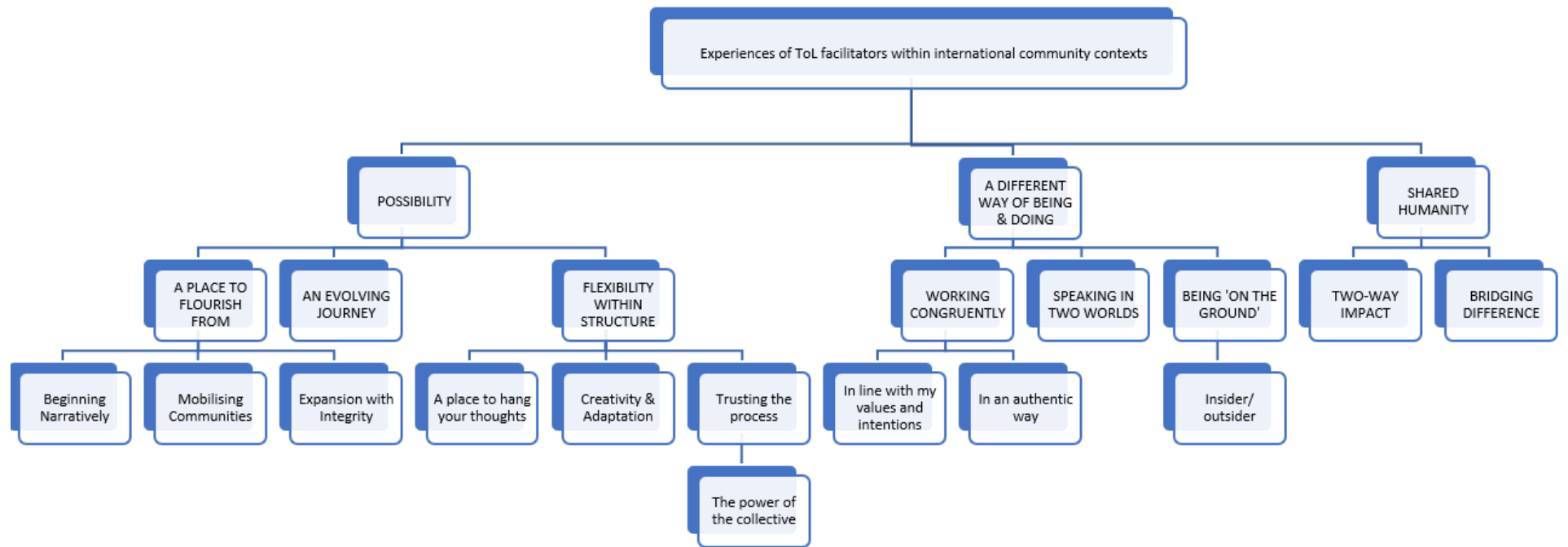
Thematic Map 2
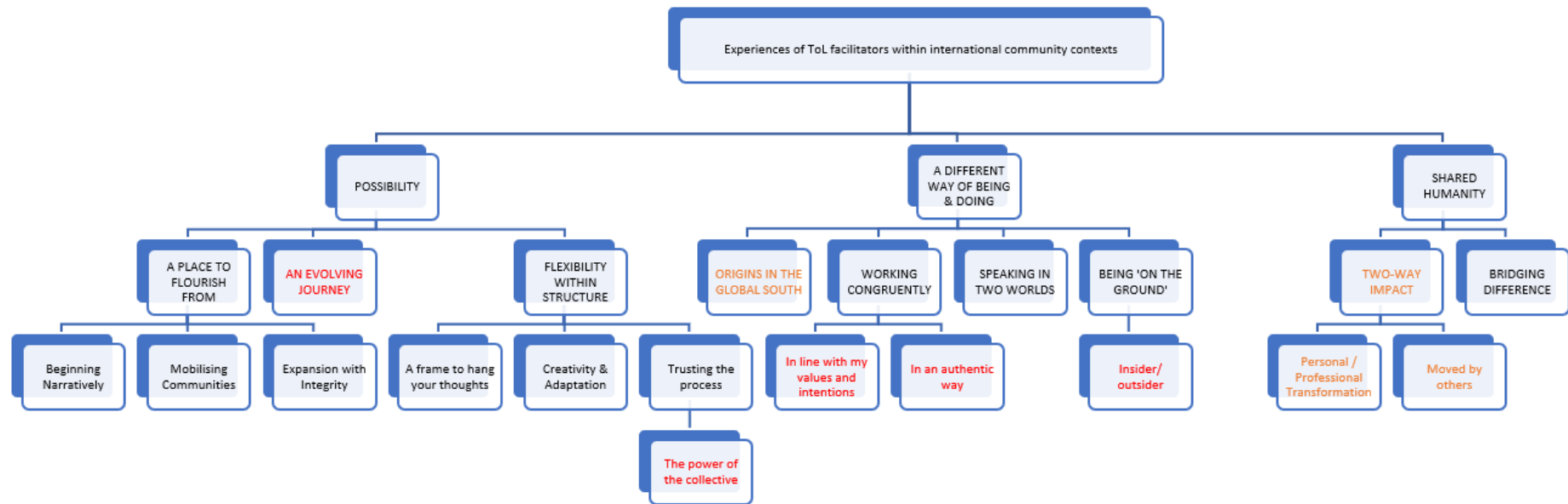
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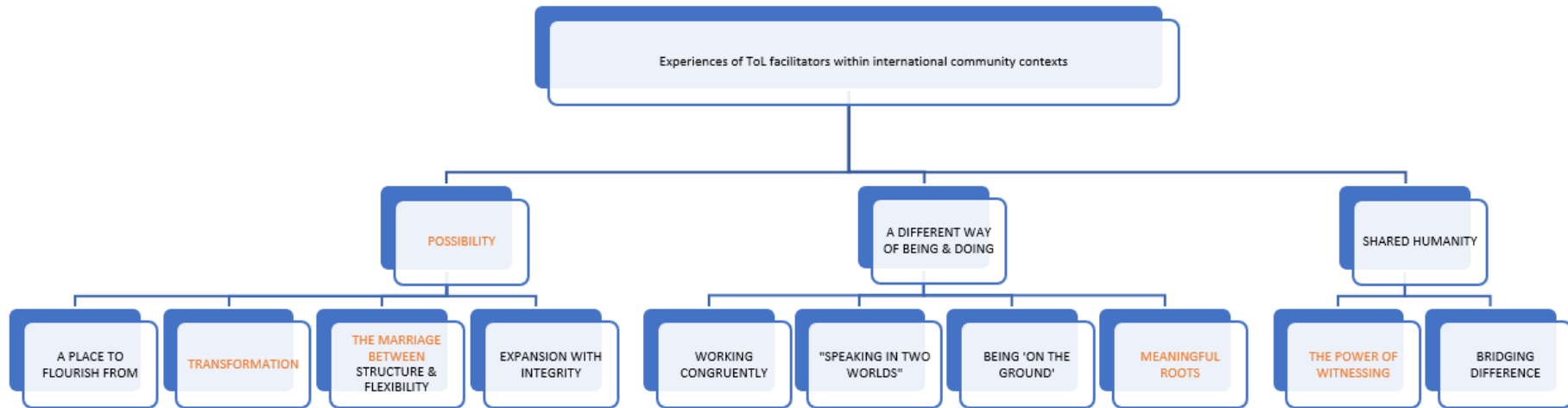
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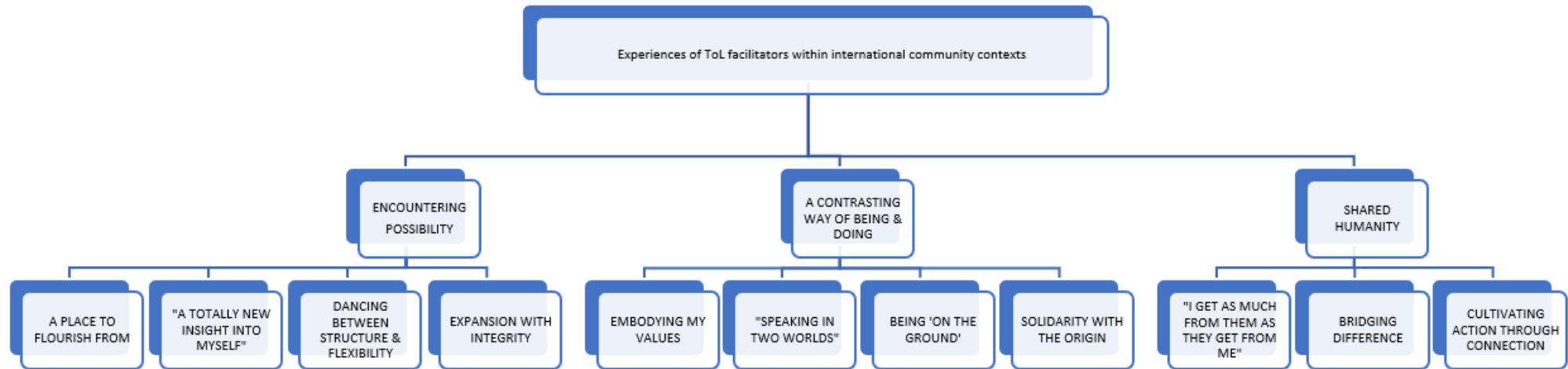
Appendix X

Final Thematic Map
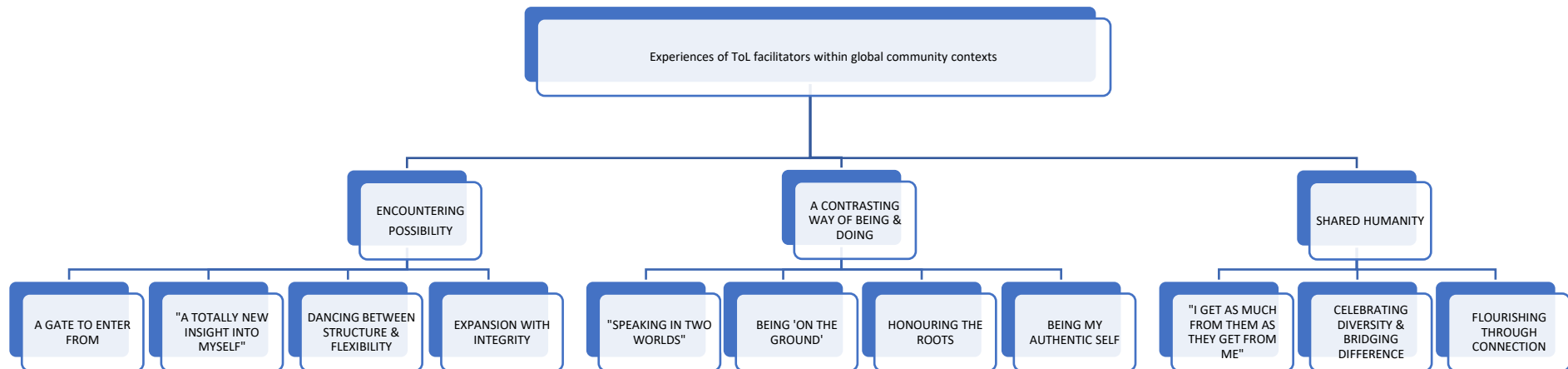
Appendix Y

Example Conference Slides (selection, not whole presentation)