

Poster Submission: 2024 Advocate Health *10th Annual Narrative Medicine Conference*

Conference Title:

The Evolving Practice of Narrative Medicine: The Healing Power of Stories

Poster Submission Title:

Narrative Identity Theory as a Framework for Interpreting Dyadic Encounters

Abstract:

I first encountered Paul Ricoeur's concept of "narrative identity" in the Narrative Medicine program. His claim that stories find completion, not in their own texts but in their recipients, gave me a deeper sense of purpose within my discipline, healthcare chaplaincy, and fresh respect for all caregiving dyads (Ricoeur, 1991). Imagine my delight when I discovered Narrative Identity Theory (NIT) while researching my doctoral dissertation! NIT, pioneered by Dan McAdams, started with Ricoeur's ideas and proliferated into a well-established psychological theory.

Viewing the narrative attributes of the clinical dyad through the framework of NIT may allow narrative medicine practitioners to interpret their work differently. The data-driven claims of NIT provide insights to clinicians and clinicians-in-training regarding the power and nature of narrative exchange. For example, NIT researchers claim that a story-teller—an adult looking for a recipient who can complete the meaning of their narrative—will assess the willingness of a listener to co-bear the burden of their story. Then the story-teller will edit the content of the story based on their perception of the listener's capacity and readiness to receive that story, particularly if the story includes personal suffering (McLean et al., 2007).

This poster presentation describes several central claims of NIT with possible applications for clinical training and practice. I use them in my master's-level courses for healthcare chaplains. I am looking for partners interested in investigating NIT's claims in other contexts of clinical education.

Bio

Dr. Bleeker, a board-certified healthcare chaplain, is Assistant Professor and Chair for Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care Programs at Denver Seminary. She incorporates narrative methodology in her teaching, research, and writing.