

# Counseling for Work and Relationship (CWR)



**AN APPROACH TO PRACTICE**

**MARY SUE RICHARDSON  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY**

# Outline of Presentation



- 1) The goal of practice
- 2) Two epistemological perspectives → a set of theories that ground and inform practice
- 3) Narrative theory
- 4) Two readings of narrative theory → two approaches to practice
- 5) Unpaid care work as a disruptive discourse
- 6) Conclusion

# The Goal of Practice is Central



- 1) To help people co-construct their lives through work and relationship (market work, unpaid care work, relationship)
- 2) To help people co-construct **meaningful** lives **going forward** through work and relationship
  - To help people construct lives they want to live
  - Makes explicit an orientation towards the future

# Two Epistemological Perspectives



- Objective view – from the outside – developmental science
- Subjective view – from the inside – sociocultural psychology
- CWR– grounded in sociocultural psychology (narrative theory) and informed by developmental science (life course theory)
- A work in progress

# Narrative Theory



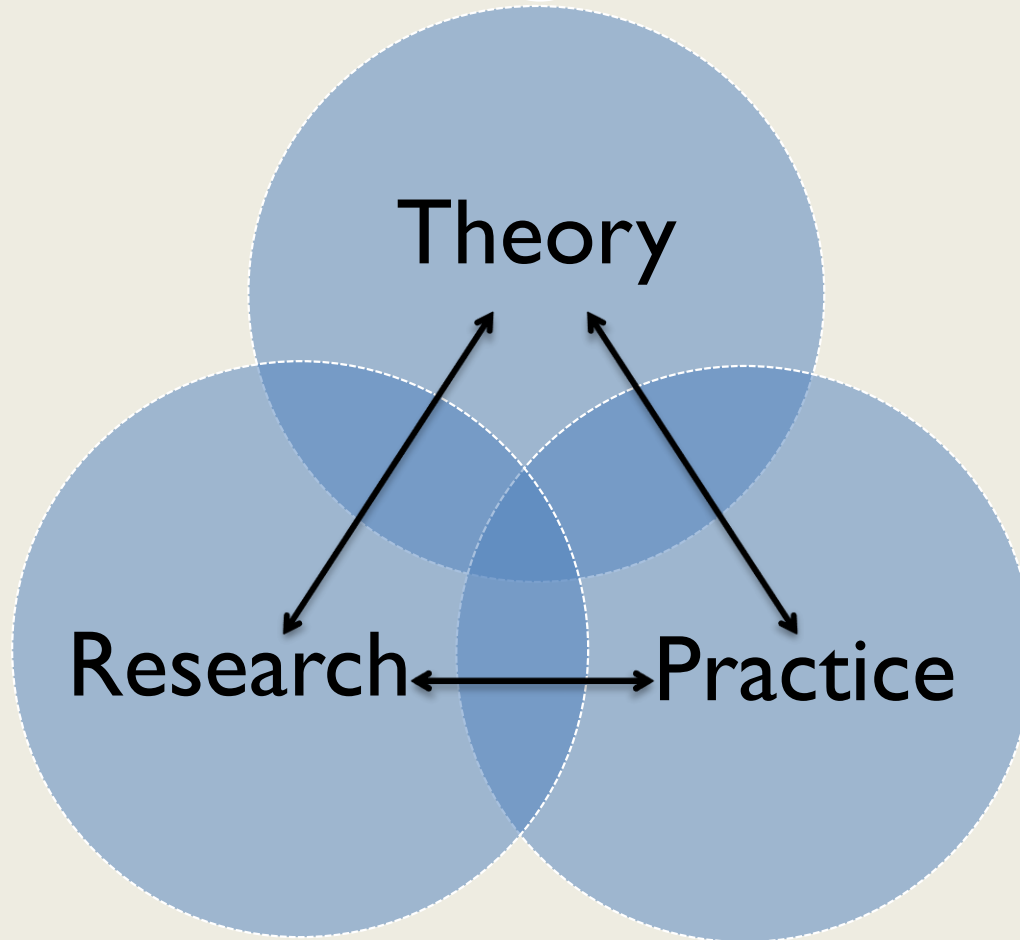
- Narrative is a way of thinking that enables people to make sense of their subjective experience
- A set of principles about narrative and human development
- Counseling practice – how people make sense of their lives

# Narrative Theory



- Narrative as a common denominator across theory, research and practice
  - Theory
    - ✦ narrative is central to human development
  - Research
    - ✦ Understand human development through the stories people tell about their lives
  - Practice
    - ✦ A focus on the narrative dimension of counseling practice
- Enables multiple connections across these categories

# Narrative Theory



# (I) The First Reading of **Narrative Theory** - CWR



- About lives unfolding in time (Ricoeur)
- The **story lines of the future** emerge from the telling and retelling of the stories of the past, **in the present, through action**
- Focus on agentic action
- **Informed by life course theory**
  - Agentic action across life contexts
  - At different points in the life span, different life contexts are more or less salient
- **Work and relationship counseling**



## (2) The Second Reading of Narrative Theory - Psychotherapy



- About lives unfolding in time (Ricoeur)
- The story lines of the future emerge **from the telling and retelling of the stories of the past, in the present**, through action
- Psychotherapy is about restorying a life
- Psychotherapy theories are narrative structures that facilitate the restorying of lives (Hansen, 2006)

# (1) + (2) → Counseling/Psychotherapy



- **The story lines of the future emerge from the telling and retelling of the stories of the past, in the present, through action**
  - To help people reconstruct and co-construct stories of the past that limit them as they co-construct meaningful lives going forward through work and relationship
  - Does not split past and future
  - Does not split inner worlds from the social worlds in which people are embedded

# Unpaid Care Work as a Disruptive Discourse



- Not how people think about their lives – a challenge to prevailing narrative structures
- Rationale
  - Adaptive
  - Social change
    - ✦ Gender equity and sustainable capitalism

# Conclusion

