

Essay for Library research submission
Christopher Bengtson

This research project entitled “A Narrative Approach to Forgiveness Amidst Disagreement” was conducted for the philosophy Senior Seminar course taught by Dr. Paul Reasoner in Fall 2016. The goal of this project was to a) synthesize current and previous philosophic and academic thought on the topic of forgiveness and narrative theory, b) research how narratives and communication can be helpful in resolving disputes, and c) explain how the use of narrative can foster forgiveness and potential restoration of relationships.

I began my research by scanning reference sources on philosophy and ethics to gain a better grasp of what authors and topics would be helpful for my investigation. I decided to start by canvassing because my knowledge into the topic was limited *and* a reference librarian suggested it might be useful for doing in-depth research. By using philosophy dictionaries (both hard copy & online) I was able to find the works of Paul Ricoeur, which proved useful in finding resolution to my topic and providing background knowledge of pertinent issues.

Once this phase was completed, I moved on to look for hard copy books in the library. I first searched for Ricoeur’s works on Time and Narrative, and any other surrounding works that may be useful in understanding his theories. After this, I ran general searches on the topics that were part of my paper. I spent a large amount of time in the second floor of the library finding books on topics such as narrative theory, forgiveness, ethics, and moral philosophy. I also examined the shelves nearby to find other relevant sources.

To find more recent sources on the topic, I expanded my search to online journals. My main source for this was JSTOR, where I found many helpful journal articles that provided more in-depth examinations of particular topics. It is here that I found the work of Jürgen Habermas and discourse ethics, which became a key component of my research in how to incorporate narrative and communication to foster understanding and forgiveness. In addition, I found articles on narrative theory, which led me to other authors doing more comprehensive work on this topic. I then used these articles as a basis for running another search on books that would be useful for my paper.

Some of the books that I required were not part of the Bethel library, so I requested them through ClicNet. While I waited for these books to arrive I continued to canvas books and articles, *and* began reading through the material I had collected to find pertinent information.

My research process consisted of simultaneously collecting, reading, and sorting out irrelevant materials. Some articles were sorted out by a quick read of the key points, while others were read more thoroughly and became part of my bibliography, but did not prove to be directly useful in the actual process of writing. Some of the books I used were collections of essays; these provided useful information, but only one or two articles per book proved useful. Some books, such as those by Ricoeur and Habermas were read in almost their entirety, as they provided deep insight into my research topic.

As I read and sorted through the material, I took rigorous notes, compiling an upwards of fifteen pages of quotes, paraphrases, and useful information from twenty-two articles, entries, and books. From these notes I began the process of writing the paper and

synthesizing the concepts that I had learned of during my research. I found that not all of the information I found was useful in discussing my topic, but I believe this was worthwhile, as it gave me a narrower focus and allowed me to select only the most relevant information to the resolution of my topic and support of my thesis.

The entire process took around six to seven weeks in total. Topic generation and initial research took around two to three weeks, collecting and reading resources another two, and two more weeks were allotted for writing and revising. Since so much of the writing and research rested on use of academic articles, treatises, and books, the library was an indispensable resource in this project. Being able to request books helped me broaden my scope of research, and access to online journals and resources allowed for more breadth by helping me find sources I would not have uncovered otherwise. This project helped me learn how to do better in-depth research and provided me with experience that will sure to be useful in my post-undergraduate academic career.