

BEHIND TRAINING: DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF OF A  
PSYCHOTHERAPY TRAINEE

by

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submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF F.J.A. SNYDERS

JUNE 2013

## DECLARATION

I declare that *Behind training: Differentiation of self of a psychotherapy trainee* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SASJA VAN DER MERWE

.....

DATE

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation with sincere appreciation to...

### ***My God...***

*“Give me words to speak....*

*‘Cause I can’t think of anything worth saying*

*But I know that I owe You my life....”*

*(Shust, 2007)*

*AND TO*

### ***My therapist...***

*“Don’t know how it is you looked at me*

*And saw the person that I could be*

*Awakening my heart*

*Breaking through the dark....*

*Like sunlight burning at midnight*

*Making my life something so*

*Beautiful, beautiful....”*

*(Battistelli, Eskelin & Fromm, 2008)*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### **Ricky...**

*There is something about you that radiates warmth from within that makes me want to listen to every word you say. I am grateful that I listened to you so intensely. I internalised your voice and it still helps me to successfully resolve many difficulties that I encounter as a therapist. Thank you for engaging with me as supervisor in a way that turned my research journey into a meaningful growth experience.*

### **My husband & my daughter...**

*I never would have embarked on this journey if it wasn't for your encouragement. Having you at my side - loving me, supporting me patiently, and believing in me, made this journey both meaningful and beautiful. I know that you made many sacrifices; I know it took incredible patience. You truly are the wind beneath my wings and I love you more than words can say.*

### **Ma & Ben...**

*Thank you for opening your home and your hearts to me and my child. You provided us with safety, security, and more love and warmth than I can describe with words. You became such strong threads of my safety net and I never would have been able to look back and call my psychotherapy training a wonderful journey if it wasn't for the two of you. I love you both.*

### **Pa...**

*Thank you for teaching me the importance of education, for breeding within me a love of learning and a yearning for knowledge. Thank you for seeing the best in me.*

**Pierre & Jorita, Stéfan & Johanni, Ma-Lorraine & Pa-Hendrik, Shani & Lorandi...**

*Thank you for your love and support throughout. I am truly blessed to have you in my life.*

**Johan Kruger...**

*I will always remember you as my Socrates. Thank you for not allowing me to be superficial, by believing in the depth of my character even when I didn't. Thank you for teaching me how to create spaces in which I could just be. Thank you for teaching me, by example, about mindfulness and respect.*

**Lesiba, David, Nikki, Franco, Catherine, Gcina, Banti, Boshadi, Khumo, Elmarie & Juan...**

*Thank you for creating a context where I could learn and differentiate. Thank you for provoking me to be the best that I can be while supporting me at the same time. Thank you for believing in me. I will always remember you as the parents of my psychotherapy family of origin and I have integrated and internalised all of your voices and I carry that with me in whichever therapeutic encounter I engage with.*

**Christel, Niel, Stephanie, Tlou & Charmaine...**

*You were the best friends that anybody could hope to have undertaking a journey like this. Your love and acceptance changed how I feel about myself, never to be the same again.*

**Tania...**

*You know that this journey at times took its toll on me, but with your expertise, compassion and love, you managed to keep me whole both physically and emotionally. You are an incredible healer and I am grateful to have you in my life.*

## ABSTRACT

Psychotherapy is an interpersonal encounter where a therapist collaborates with clients to facilitate a healing process. Due to the personal nature of the therapeutic encounter, the therapist requires the necessary skills and knowledge, as well as a differentiated sense of self. The importance of supporting the psychotherapy trainee's own differentiation process seemed to have been neglected in research in recent years. In South Africa there has recently been increasing pressure to select larger groups of trainees which has the risk that the tending to differentiation would further be neglected. The purpose of this research study is to re-emphasise the importance of differentiation of self of the psychotherapy trainee by examining my own process of differentiation during my psychotherapy training. This study introduces the reader to these concepts and explores psychotherapy training in general and the Unisa training method specifically. The research design of this study is autoethnography which falls in the realm of social constructionism and the coding method is Thematic Data Analysis. The research findings as reflected in the two global themes namely *individuation*; and *gaining and strengthening authentic relationships*, seem to accurately reflect the process of differentiation. The specific training method of the Unisa training team in combination with the way in which I engaged with this process seemed important for the facilitation of this process of differentiation.

### Key terms:

Psychotherapy; Psychotherapy training; Differentiation; Self; Psychotherapist; Self-awareness; Self-reflexivity; Ecosystemic paradigm; Supervision; Autoethnography; Thematic Data Analysis; Social Constructionism.

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CHAPTER 1:  
**INTRODUCTION**

Introducing: Myself



**Images 1-3: A beautiful day in Llandudno**

*This view is incredible. I can see the mountain, the waves, the rocks and the deep sea. It is all around me.... The ocean calms me; it allows creativity to rush through my veins. I have so many options; I have places where I can go to where I can create the spaces that I need. I am so blessed.... I love the ocean. I love nature. I love the mountains. I love good red wine and French champagne. I love fresh oysters and sushi. I love salty snacks and rare steak. I love egg yolk, but I don't like the white of the egg. The yolk must be runny otherwise I don't care much for it. Like a surgeon, I carefully cut around the yellow part, taking care to not pierce the yolk sack but at the same time to get rid of all the white. After this procedure, I carefully*

*lift my end-product into my mouth and then I pierce it with my tongue and allow the yolk to burst into my mouth. That makes me really, really happy. I love Cafe Latte's and I hate it when people put sugar in my coffee. I love ice-cream, I hate small talk. I love horses and all forms of beauty, including nature, art and literature. I love my animals. I love my friends. I love my parents. I love my brothers. And above all.... I love my child, my husband and my God....*

*I am going to be OK. I am going to pass my tests and my orals. My child is going to be OK. My arm will heal. I will get back on my horse's back. I am ready to do what I need to do to continue with this healing process.*

*To my direct right is the mountain, rocks, trees, a roof, some houses and a road. In front of me I can see the mountain reaching into the sea. There are rocks and dark blue water, some boulders and then closer to me a beach that I can't quite see, with waves and a few black spots in the water that I assume are people swimming. The wind is playing with the leaves and nature seems to be in a good mood today: energetic, determined and content. Everything is working together in such breath-taking harmony that I feel so small and so humbled by the absolute perfection of God's creation. To my left is only the ocean: dark blue, deep sea. And I am drifting above this water that stretches as far as I can see.*

*I find myself sitting here in the middle of a 'painting' that reminds me of the movie 'What dreams may come'. It is a picture filled with different shades of blue, brown and green and some touches of white; a picture with texture that you just want to run your fingers over but you can't because your fingers are just so tiny and insignificant it would be like trying to catch all of the wild horses in my dreams. A picture filled with so much emotion: intense pain*

*and terror but also with such overwhelming beauty that it brings about an indescribable calmness and a feeling of contentment; knowing that the One who created all of this is also in control of my life. Bringing about gratitude for this gift. The gift of being allowed to live on such a beautiful planet, to share in such beauty. This could be heaven. Joy. Excitement. Courage....*

*I never lost my gentle heart, my gentle touch. I have always had room to love animals and I am learning to love humans. I really, really have nothing to be ashamed of. It's been hard. It's been really hard and there have been really hard times. I will work through them. Leave what needs to stay in the past and take back that which I lost that belongs to me. Let's leave the shame. Things just happened the way that things just happened. It was what it was and it wasn't really about me. Sometimes things just work out that way. Live and let live. It is OK. It is really OK.*

*The sun is shining; it's a hot day in Llandudno. The world is beautiful.*

**Text box 1.1: Journal entry from 2011-05-03**

Thank you for opening my dissertation. Thank you for entering into conversation with me, for using my voice to co-create a new story for yourself and for allowing me to share some information with you that you may find useful to you on your journey. I believe that I only have chapter 1 to convince you to continue reading, so I will get straight to the point:

Allow me to be painfully honest because I want to make sure that I am clear – just as it would be very difficult to take nutritional advice seriously from an overweight dietician -or dental advice from a dentist with bad teeth it does not seem appropriate to seek the advice

and input of a psychotherapist who seems emotionally immature. Furthermore, one would hope that when seeking the advice of professionals that they have been well-trained.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the training of psychotherapists and more specifically to examine my training towards becoming a psychotherapist. This examination brings to the forefront certain questions. Two questions or issues that I believe are essential to the prospective or current psychotherapy trainee and that were certainly on my mind are whether I grasp the importance of the profession of psychotherapy and if I take psychotherapy training seriously enough to embrace my training with all that I have and all that I am.

#### Introducing: my Dream

I do not have many memories of my childhood, but there is one that stands out. I was eight years old and I was walking home from school. On my journey I met a little boy who was lost and I helped him to find his home. This was the first deep and truly meaningful encounter that I remember having as a child and my heart still warms up when I think about it. The next deep and meaningful encounter that I remember was when I was 12 years old and that time it was with a book, *One Child* by Torey Hayden (2002). It was the story of an emotionally disturbed little girl and a teacher who completely changed the course of this girl's life (Hayden, 2002). I knew very early into the book that that was what I wanted to do with my life - I wanted to meet and help lost children. I do not know where their homes are, but they do, and together we can search for markers that can act as guides away from the fear and towards safety, peace and contentment. From that day onwards, the books I chose to read, the movies I chose to watch and the thoughts surrounding those were guided by my

dream and in turn they shaped my dream. I never had any doubts that this is what I wanted to do and throughout my life I increasingly became aware of the importance of psychotherapists.

### Introducing: my Personal Psychotherapy

I became particularly aware of the importance of the profession of psychotherapy when I had to sit in the office of a psychotherapist and experience the kind of effort it took to be there with a broken soul, to somehow gather the strength to withstand the anxiety and to tell another human being the most intimate and painful details of my life. I wondered to myself what it would take, to become the kind of human being that can bring about enough trust in another human being to encourage them to share these intimate, painful and frightening thoughts and emotions. I wondered what the requirements of a training programme would be that prepares a human being to work with the soul of another human being. I somehow found this profession too important and I found myself too unworthy to even attempt to enter into training to become a psychotherapist.

Despite the hardships and the self-doubt, I have never been without support. It was especially the support of my own psychotherapist that made me want to connect with my courage and achieve my dream. Early in 2010, I found myself standing in Professor X's office asking him if he thought I could become a psychotherapist. He responded by telling me that in order to survive in the business of being a psychotherapist, you need to have a passion for psychotherapy. I wondered if he thought that I had this 'passion' and he answered my silent question by looking into my eyes and saying: "Sasja, there is nothing else that will ever

make you happy.” So I went through the selection process and I began my journey towards becoming a psychotherapist.

### Introducing: Training Stories

I loved my training so much that I could not get enough of it. I never actually left Unisa. When I went home, I took my trainers and my fellow trainees with me in my thoughts and I constantly read any material that I could find. I read the books that I was expected to read and the books that I was not expected to read.

I broke my arm during my first semester when I fell off my horse. It was a bad break and I had to have quite a serious operation. I was unwilling to stay home to allow my arm to heal but when the plate and screws that were implanted in my arm began to get infected, I realised that I really needed to stay home and rest.

In an attempt to remain connected to the training process while staying at home healing and trying to make sense of why this process was influencing me so intensely, I began to read the dissertations that previous psychotherapy trainees wrote about their training experiences at Unisa. Reading these dissertations, they sparked my curiosity about the psychotherapy training experience. I was curious as to how it is possible that different trainees experience the training process so differently and I was especially curious about the unique training method of the Unisa psychotherapy training team and the intensity that appeared to go along with this training method.

Dlamini (2005) described her training journey as feeling like she was hit by a car and stated that she felt ambivalent and uncertain, but also that she realised the value of self-reflexivity and of connecting with the inner child. Jansen (2001, p. 144) claimed that trainees felt “constantly imposed upon” and reported that the participants of her research who were her fellow trainees “felt uncontained, unsupported and ungrounded in the training placement” (2001, p. 142). Jansen (2001) however also stated that most of the participants still regarded their psychotherapy training as a growth experience. Sewpershad (2003) questioned the ethical integrity of an experiential training approach and didn’t feel that she obtained the necessary skills in order to do effective group psychotherapy. Prentice (2001) claimed that the psychotherapy training experience was confusing at a philosophical level and that the nature of the training program disrupted the process of defining a self, while Lloyd (2003) claimed that the Unisa training method placed trainees in double bind situations which left them feeling powerless. Prentice (2001) furthermore described the training context as incoherent and unreadable. Richards (2003) stated that she was frustrated with the unstructured nature of the training program but concluded her study by recognising the value of the Unisa training method, specifically in the development of the self or the personhood of the therapist.

Nel (2006) claimed that making meaning of her training experience by telling stories, contributed to her process of differentiation of self. Nel (2006) furthermore claimed that she was able to use her training experience as a metaphor to work through her own unfinished business and stated that she felt supported despite provocations from the training context. Small (2003) used the metaphor of alchemy where raw material is turned into something magical and stated that even though as a trainee she felt the heat of provocation from the training context, the end-product was a well differentiated and integrated therapist. Small

(2003) also emphasised that it is the responsibility of the trainees to learn to negotiate through the paradoxes and double-binds that are a part of experiential training and that if they manage that the result is a streetwise, individuated therapist. Small (2003, p. 209) uses the metaphor of “[negotiating] her way successfully through the training labyrinth”.

I realised that these dissertations only represented a moment in time and they were merely a punctuation of the place where the authors were standing and the lenses with which they were viewing their own processes at that time. I returned to Unisa two weeks later and began to learn about social constructionism. I discovered that there is no objective reality and that life really is just what we make of it. It is about the stories we tell and the conversational partners that we choose to tell these stories to. I kept this in mind while attempting to study the work of the previous trainees and it brought about the realisation that there is information in their work that I do not have access to because even though I do make my own assumptions about the unspoken information in their texts, these assumptions are tainted by my own epistemology, by my own way of knowing. I became aware that reading their texts was actually a co-creation of their work, together. In the end, the information that is produced is not purely “the information in their dissertations” but new dissertations with new information that we co-created. I decided that because there is a co-creation of information, I would prefer this co-creation to be applied to my own text rather than the texts of others. After a conversation with my Ecosystemic Psychology professor, I realised that my research question would be simply to see what conversation would result from the conversation between me and my text about my psychotherapy training experience. I recall how seriously he looked at me and said: “I would love to read it”. His comment gave me the confidence to proceed.

## Introducing: my Dissertation

The above sections show how my own text and the stories I wrote while in training to become a psychotherapist, became my research data. I wanted to examine these data to answer the following questions:

- How have I changed?
- What are the things that helped me in my journey and what are the things that hindered me?
- How have my relationships changed?
- How has my epistemology -the ways in which I get to know my world- and how has my ontology -my unique assumptions and beliefs that I have about my world- changed?
- What can I do now that I could not do before?
- What things am I not good at even though I thought I could do them before?
- How have I come to know and accept myself?
- Did I obtain an understanding of the psychological theory taught in order to have a foundation for future learning?
- Did I achieve a certain level of therapeutic skill in accordance with what is expected of me at an internship level?
- Did my training experience efficiently equip me to fulfil the important role of becoming a psychotherapist?
- Did I show sufficient personal growth in order to be emotionally mature enough to work with the soul of another human being?

I believe that the above-mentioned questions can be addressed by my understanding of the concept ‘differentiation of self’. **My research purpose then was to examine my own process of differentiation during my psychotherapy training.** A central question would be if my training experience contributed to my own self-differentiation. I attempt to answer this question by examining the stories I wrote in my personal journal during my training experience. I believe that if I examine these stories then this question will be answered. I also believe that I will find the answers to many more questions that I have not asked. I believe that the above question is relevant and important and I will briefly explore the relevance and importance thereof in the following section.

#### Introducing: the Training of Psychotherapists

Let me return to the point of training. Most people would agree that electricians need to be well-trained to ensure that they do not endanger themselves or others. In the same sense, neuro-surgeons need to have the expertise to enable them to operate on people’s brains. I believe that the quality of the training will contribute to the quality of the electrician or surgeon that they will eventually become. Furthermore, because of the complex and dynamic nature of the world that we live in, I believe that it is extremely important that this training needs to be done in such a way that it will ensure that they, as professionals, remain in training for life. They need to expand on their knowledge and skills and they always need to grow and evolve because being rigid in an ever-changing world may contribute to inefficiency.

Discussing the importance of training electricians and neuro-surgeons well, brings me back to the matter regarding psychotherapy training. I have said that I believe you need to

possess certain qualities that will be required in order to be an efficient psychotherapist, including emotional maturity. I have also discussed that I believe that training is important in the facilitation of the development of these qualities. Thus the question of whether my training experience has facilitated the development of these qualities within me becomes relevant. I believe these qualities are essential to fulfil the incredibly important job of managing intense emotional experience in other human beings. If the answer to the above question is yes, one should also ask how the development of these qualities is facilitated by the training and why.

There will be a constant interplay between what is spoken and what is unspoken throughout the text. As Andersen (1992, p. 66) explains, “[s]ome of the words .... are sacred, sometimes so sacred that they can not be spoken....”, but I hope that this will not stop you from engaging in a conversation with my unspoken stories by using the spoken stories as a clue to enable your own sacred stories to co-create new meanings.

## Conclusion

The concepts ‘differentiation’ and ‘self’ are often difficult to understand and may appear rather abstract. Chapter 2 will attempt to explain my understanding of these concepts as well as the concept of psychotherapy training, with reference to the relevant theory. Chapter 3 will discuss the specific research design used for this study, while Chapter 4 will discuss the results obtained along with various extracts from my personal journal. The study will be concluded with Chapter 5, which will be used to interpret the results and make closing statements.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEFINING THE NODAL CONCEPTS

#### Introduction

This chapter will introduce the reader to the concepts relevant to this study. These conceptual processes include differentiation of self and psychotherapy training. These concepts will be described by making use of the relevant literature.

#### Differentiation of Self

##### *Differentiation*

Differentiation is a higher order ability that allows an individual to balance two essential, symmetrical, and reciprocally enhancing life forces: namely that of individuation and that of emotional connection (Meyer, 1987; Schnarch, 2009; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Bowen (1988) further explains differentiation on an intrapsychic level as being able to distinguish between emotional and intellectual impulses and reactions, as well as being able to choose whether one's behaviour will be controlled by emotions or by intellect. On an interpersonal level he explains differentiation as being able to tolerate intimate relationships while simultaneously being autonomous (Bowen, 1988). Schnarch (2009) describes differentiation simply as "the ability to maintain who you are while you're close to people important to you" (2009, p. 59).

In order to make the concept more understandable, differentiation can be described from a biological perspective as the following: during conception, the sperm and the egg meet and become a zygote which is essentially a blob of similar matter (Schnarch, 2009). Differentiation then begins to take place and the cells begin to specialise and become more sophisticated (Andolfi, Angelo, Menghi & Nicolò, 1983). These rapidly increasing cells still belong to the same body, but they individuate to become more specialised. By the time babies are born, their bodies consist of a multitude of different cells, all belonging to one body, but the cells are specialised to perform different and unique functions (Andolfi *et al.*, 1983). The different cells make up different organs that become part of different systems, and thus they work in integration to allow the human being to see, hear, smell, taste, feel, think, experience, learn, work, play and rest. At the moment of birth, babies have an almost fully evolved body that can deal with most of the challenges that the physical environment brings.

### *The Self*

The self of a person, or what Satir (cited in Brothers, 2000); and Whitaker and Bumberry (1988) term personhood, refers to the innermost part of our being, the unique essence that makes us who we are. It is the sum of our life's dreams, our beliefs, our philosophical assumptions and biases, our hopes, our memories, our challenges and victories, our desires, our sexuality, our intuition and our spirituality (Kübler-Ross, 1995; Smith, 2003; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Jung (cited in Hyde, 2004, p. 57) define the self as "the totality of the individual, conscious and unconscious, which carries an individual's sense of meaning and purpose as he or she moves towards it"- it is the "whole person" (Hyde, 2004, p. 116).

Boscolo and Bertrando (1996) refer to this inner world of our thoughts and experiences as the unspoken. Emerson (1909) refers to this inner world as the part that speaks louder than the words we say. According to Haber (1994),

[t]he self uses the language of dreams, metaphors, feelings, symbols, intuition and physiological responses to represent its reality. We can learn to ignore this language, like a dream in the middle of the night, but we are still influenced by the character of these experiences. (p. 270)

Hoffman (1992) argues that the self is not something that is merely within an individual, but that the self is a co-construction that happens within relationships and within a given ecology. She illustrates it as a path that one can walk and dance on (Hoffman, 1992). Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that in order to understand how the self is formed, one needs to also investigate the social processes in which the individual participates. They argue that the self is, in part, a product of social experiences and can only be fully understood if the social context where the formation of the self takes place is considered (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

### *Differentiation of Self*

The process where a human body differentiates happens without our conscious awareness. The self of a person, however, often does not differentiate to the state of maximum usefulness throughout life for a variety of reasons. As Andolfi *et al.* (1983) explain: sometimes the rules of a family system prevent their members from becoming autonomous. Members are forced to play only certain roles and the members then define

who they are in terms of others (Andolfi *et al.*, 1983). These members, in other words, are not allowed to differentiate and the unspoken restriction on their own individuation process brings about restricted ways of relating to others, regardless of the context. They retain the fear of the threat of rejection and isolation should they experiment and explore (Hendrix & Hunt, 1998). These members therefore never allow themselves to individuate or to become autonomous (Hendrix & Hunt, 1998).

For individuals with an undifferentiated sense of self, it is difficult to find balance between true emotional connection and individuation (Schnarch, 2009). They respond reactively to others and are unable to choose whether to be led by emotions or intellect (Bowen, 1988). According to Andolfi *et al.* (1983), these people deal with life issues and relationships in restricted and rigid ways. Rigidity in patterns of relating to others could play a role in these people becoming involved in co-dependent relationships, being overly sensitive to evaluation from others and having a higher incidence of dysfunction without the ability to recover rapidly (Bowen, 1988). Sussman (1993) states that individuals with a narrow and rigid sense of identity often find it difficult to empathise with others. Bowen (1988) explains that these individuals often overtly or covertly attempt to control the behaviour of others.

In explaining the concept ‘differentiation of self’, it is important to keep in mind that individuation has to take place in the context of connection. If the cells of the body or aspects of the self evolve without remaining connected, fragmentation would occur and these aspects will not be useful in isolation. It is exactly the integration of these individuated aspects that contribute to usefulness. The self of an individual with a high level of differentiation is like an orchestra playing in perfect harmony because the control of the conductor keeps all the

musicians connected to the same masterpiece, while each musician plays their unique and individual melodies. Becker (cited in Muncey, 2010) describes the developing self as harmonising the different components of our psyche into a context of independence and autonomy. In a relational context the differentiated self manifests where individuals in relationships remain connected while they allow themselves and each other to individuate and to increase their level of autonomy (Andolfi *et al*, 1983; Schnarch, 2009). On an intra-psyche level the differentiated self can be observed in cases where emotions, thoughts, memories, sensations, impulses and all the other manifestations of the self can be actively and consciously used in order to obtain desired social and emotional outcomes (Kübler, 1995; Satir, 1987). Instead of being unknowingly influenced by the self, the self can now be used efficiently. Individuals with a differentiated sense of self are able to tolerate intimacy in relationships because they do not feel threatened by another person's reality (St. John, 1987) and they do not fear a loss of their sense of autonomy when they allow themselves to feel a sense of belonging in an emotional relationship (Andolfi *et al*, 1983; Hendrix & Hunt, 1998).

The process of differentiation of self thus includes the potential to individuate and remain connected simultaneously and to balance these two forces on an inter-personal, as well as an intra-psyche level (Bowen, 1998; Schnarch, 2009). The differentiation of the self is a process of evolution within a context of connection and it involves developing emotional maturity, becoming more sophisticated and specialised, and having a greater range of options available with which to respond (Bowen, 1988; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Self-differentiation brings a liberating and empowering sense of autonomy and agency and the potential for true, intimate relationships (Andolfi *et al*, 1983; Bowen, 1988; Hendrix & Hunt, 1998; Satir, 1987; Schnarch, 2009; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988).

## *The Importance of the Differentiation of the Self for the Psychotherapist*

Human beings are often unaware of how an undifferentiated sense of self can impede their quality of life. However, when they have the courage to change their behaviour and to face the fears that have kept them confined to discomfort and then to turn to a psychotherapist for help, they need to be treated with the reverence that such a courageous act deserves (Satir cited in Brothers, 2000). As Legg (1999) states

[r]esistant clients are not asking whether you know how to carry out specific techniques, they are asking whether you have the personal resources to help them cope with what will happen when they attempt to change. Will you be able to cope with their fear, their anger, and their desire? Trust is not about ‘doing’, it is about ‘being’, about who you are. (p. 133)

Whitaker and Bumberry (1988) explain psychotherapy as a human encounter, reminding therapists that everything they do filters through their internal mechanisms and that it is the personal process of the clients in which therapists participate that brings about an impact. Andolfi *et al.* (1983) add that it is who the psychotherapist is in relationship with the client that facilitates the healing process. Satir (cited in Cowley & Adams, 2000) emphasises the importance of psychotherapy and explains that the therapist works towards the “recovery of another human being” (p. 62). Andolfi *et al.* (1983), Brothers (2000), Legg (1999), Satir (cited in Aponte & Winter, 1987), Smith (2003), and Whitaker and Bumberry (1988) all state that the self of the therapist is the main tool for initiating change in the client. Satir (1987) uses the metaphor of a musical instrument for the self of the therapist - “How it is made, how

it is cared for, its fine tuning and the ability, experience, sensitivity and creativity of the player will determine how the music will sound” (p. 35).

Aponte (1994) acknowledges that it is challenging for therapists to be able to use their personal selves within the therapeutic relationship. Satir (1987) and Whitaker and Bumberry (1988) emphasise the importance of developing one’s own humanness, maturity and love for oneself in order to be efficient in the therapeutic relationship - the place where the magic of therapy happens (Marovic, 2000). Snyders (1990) explains that the therapist is the choreographer of context in the therapy session and therefore has the responsibility to create the context for differentiation. Snyders (1990) also states that an undifferentiated therapist would certainly block the differentiation process in their clients. According to Small (2003), the potential of a client to differentiate during the therapeutic process is closely related to the therapist’s level of differentiation. As Kübler-Ross (1995) states, “....you cannot heal the world without healing yourself first” (p. 62). It is furthermore important to mention that the process of differentiation is extremely difficult and painful at times (Schnarch, 2009) and therapists who have not engaged with this process, may have reduced insight and empathy with regard to their clients’ processes.

Therapists with a lower level of differentiation, tend to become overly involved in their clients’ lives (Bowen, 1988; Titelman, 1987). These therapists find it difficult to form an emotional connection because of their own intolerance of intimacy, and they are usually unable to model individuation and autonomy (Andolfi *et al.*, 1983; Bowen, 1988; Satir, 1987; Snyders, 1987; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Reactions and responses from therapists with an undifferentiated sense of self often have more to do with their own unfinished business and unmet needs than the clients’ problems (Bowen, 1988; Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987).

Aponte (1994) argues that in order for therapists to touch the lives of their clients, they need to master their own personal selves. Aponte and Winter (1987) claim that the therapist's inner resources are more important therapeutic tools than anything else. Keith (1987) also argues the same principle and states that "the power of the therapist resides in the capacity to change himself, the power to join and the power to separate" (p. 65). Therapists with a sense of self that is sophisticated and specialised are able to identify and accept their own feelings and thoughts (Bowen, 1988; Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987). These therapists can experience their own emotional reactions but still remain in control of their responses and connect themselves with their clients allowing for a healing process to begin to unfold (Lander & Nahon, 2005).

As active agents in their own processes of differentiation, therapists can connect with their clients and model how to make use of their own inner strength and resources. They can do this by discretely sharing some of their own life experiences and by intimately connecting with the client in a context of empowerment, rather than co-dependence (Satir, 1987; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). In order for therapists to use the self effectively, they need to know themselves and be emotionally mature (Carlock, 2000). Differentiated therapists then do not impulsively react to impulses evoked by clients, but they are able to identify their own emotions and use it as information and then bracket these emotions so that they can work towards the best interests of their clients (Carlock, 2000). Differentiated therapists are aware of and are able to utilise their strengths and are also aware of their weaknesses which enables them to manage their own shortcomings (Haber, 1990; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Therapists with a high level of differentiation are free to connect with their clients, but they also take care of their own emotional needs and engage in their own continuous process of self-healing (Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987). They do not only rely on acquired knowledge

and skills, nor do they attempt to play the part of the expert during the session as this could make them appear cold and clinical (Smith, 2003). As Smith (2003) states,

Techniques that are not brought to life through the deeply developed personhood of the therapist lack humanness and tend to be mechanical. Such a therapist is a therapeutic technician, performing certain practiced manoeuvres from a set repertoire. At best, he or she is shallow and fades as the novelty of those gimmicks is lost through over-use. (p. 157)

In a study done with real patients by Orlinsky and Howard (1986); they furthermore found that the perceived effectiveness of the therapeutic encounter was firstly indicated by the quality of the relationship between the therapist and the client.

Therapists who are able to use their own selves in therapy listen receptively to their clients, while allowing, validating and managing their own thoughts, experiences and emotions (Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987). They are also capable of co-creating a context for healing that is congruent with the client's life experiences (Snyders, 1990). The possibility for true emotional connection and intimacy in the therapy session then becomes possible and a warm therapeutic relationship where healing can take place, both for the therapist and the client, is facilitated (Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988).

### *Differentiation through Self-Awareness and Self-Reflexivity*

According to Whitaker and Bumberry (1988), therapists can only attempt to make sense of the complexity of the impulses and symbols of their clients' inner worlds when they

begin to become truly aware of their own inner worlds. Self-awareness is what makes it possible to enter into the therapeutic encounter as a human being, instead of just bringing a “therapist’s uniform” (Smith, 2003, p. 157). When therapists dare to become self-aware, their clients may have the courage to do the same (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Aponte (1994) states that therapists always need to be aware of how the therapy that they are conducting is affecting them, as well as the material that they take into this encounter, so that they can use these resources for the benefit of their clients.

Keeney (1983) explains that true learning takes place when individuals go beyond simply receiving feedback to a place where they begin to reflect on the feedback that they receive. According to Cecchin (1992) therapists need to engage in a self-reflexive loop and they need to become aware of the positions they take, and then place these positions in a larger context, if they wish to *become* therapists rather than just *do* therapy.

Aponte (1994) and Marovic (2000) both emphasise the importance of the therapist’s self-awareness and self knowledge through continuous self-reflection in order to be more efficient and increase their potency during therapy sessions. Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) claim that the process of self-reflection assists therapists in being able to better understand their personal lives and to integrate this into their professional lives. Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) also warn therapists that without this process of individuation through reflection, they are in danger of remaining what they call ‘wounded healers’ and they then have the potential to harm their clients.

Carlock (2000) claims that without self-awareness, therapists have as much potential to harm the client as they have to help them. Marovic (2000) states that without self-

reflection therapists are in danger of allowing their own dysfunctional patterns to have a negative impact on the therapeutic process.

According to Jung (cited in Smith, 2003), therapists cannot hope to put anything right in clients that they have not become aware of and attended to within themselves. Carlock (2000) and Smith (2003) both state that increased self-awareness in therapists adds to their potency and effectiveness. Skynner (cited in Marovic, 2000) claims that “self-reflexiveness brings increased alertness, a sense of heightened interest, greater consciousness, new knowledge and personal and professional growth” (p. 317).

The self always plays a role in the emotional experiences of human beings (Haber, 1990). However, the choice to be made is whether the self will be a blind influence or whether the self will be used actively to assist in daily living and in conducting therapy. Self-awareness obtained through self-reflexivity gives therapists the ability to identify and acknowledge their own beliefs and with that emerges the choice of how they are to use those beliefs (Satir, 1987; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Through self-reflexivity, self-awareness increases and creates the possibility of acceptance of all the different aspects of the self and the ability to integrate these fragments into a useful and coherent whole (Andolfi *et al.* 1983; Schnarch, 2009). This difficult process of self-awareness and self-acceptance through self-reflexivity is the mechanism that guides individuals through their processes of differentiation (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Therapists need to be able to deal with intimacy and to allow themselves to individuate and become autonomous while they simultaneously connect to their clients emotionally (Smith, 2003).

Once therapists begin to reflect on their own lives and become aware of the restricted range of ways they often use to react to and respond to others and to life situations, they can become self-reflexive (Kübler-Ross, 1995). Once they become self-reflexive, they can begin to specialise, to mature emotionally, to evolve and to explore (Andolfi *et al.*, 1983; Hendrix & Hunt, 1998; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). They begin to make sense of both the verbal and non-verbal feedback that they receive from others. They test out new behaviours, explore new activities and begin to gain mastery over their emotions and thoughts. As Duhl (1987) states “[u]sing oneself well then means to be involved in an ongoing research project: to be curious about one’s own reactions and intentions in varying contexts, and to locate the source of reactivity in one’s learned-to learn patterns” (pp. 74-75).

Differentiation is a life-long process and cannot be completed during psychotherapy training. This process involves the trainees becoming aware of how they think and their own beliefs and an awakening of the parts of themselves that they were unaware of (Duhl, 1987). If trainees can utilise the training context as an opportunity to facilitate this process, they can continue on this journey of differentiation and take with them valuable tools on how to continuously differentiate themselves. This development of a differentiated sense of self will reflect a continuous expansion of the role repertoire of the therapist in order to meet different client styles and strategies (Cashdan, 1982).

The following section will serve as a description of psychotherapy training with the focus on the importance of facilitating a process of differentiation of the self during training.

## Psychotherapy Training

### *Defining Psychotherapy Training*

According to Woolfe (1999) psychotherapy training should include personal therapy or growth, working with clients under supervision, acquiring skills, understanding theory and carrying out research. Woolfe (1999) also insists that training should provide trainees with an opportunity to relate to others. There are many ways to define psychotherapy training (Nel, 1992), but the logical goal is the training of a successful psychotherapist. Training institutions differ greatly in the method of how they go about achieving this goal. I will focus the following discussion on my experience of the Unisa Master's Programme for Clinical Psychologists, keeping in mind that this programme includes education in terms of psychological theory, training to develop skills, and supervision.

### *A Subjective Description of Psychotherapy Training at Unisa*

The Unisa trainee group in recent years has consisted of between eight and 12 heterogeneous members. Training consists of two academic years after which a student does a year of compulsory internship and a year of compulsory community service. After the successful completion of the four years and the passing of the National Board Examination, the individual can then register to practise as an independent Clinical Psychologist. During the two years of academic training the trainee,

- attends lectures and workshops
- participates in group therapy

- gains practical experience while acquiring therapeutic skills
- works with clients under supervision; and
- conducts research.

Trainees are also free to make use of their trainers as mentors for their training-related difficulties and experiences.

Unisa follows the ecosystemic paradigm which includes cybernetics, systems theory and ecological ideas. Becvar and Becvar (2009) explain simple cybernetics through concepts such as recursion and feedback. Therapists observe systems in terms of their interrelatedness by looking for the way different parts of systems relate to each other and how they keep their own patterns and rules intact (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). Second order cybernetics is explained as a perspective where the observer becomes a part of the observed to form a new system, emphasising the impact the client makes on the therapist and vice versa (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). Within a second order cybernetic framework, a context is created where trainees need to learn to become self-aware through self-reflexivity and they need to learn to increase their awareness of the responsibility they have to take regarding the impact they make on the client (Becvar & Becvar, 2009).

Systems theory teaches systemic principles like circular causality and it teaches the trainee to view the family or individual in terms of the different systems and subsystems to which they belong (Hoffman, 1981). Ecological approaches teach trainees to place all behaviour within a given ecological context and to keep the environment in which the behaviour occurs in mind (Keeney, 1983).

The both/and ecosystemic principle allows the Unisa training team to teach students theory from all other relevant psychological paradigms, making this model a meta-model or a model of all models. This model differs from eclecticism, in the sense that it is not ‘bits and pieces’ taken from different models, but models as complete wholes are used as they are appropriate to the context (Keeney, 2009). These complete models are discarded when they are no longer appropriate or if they are no longer useful (Keeney, 2009). The ecosystemic paradigm is thus inclusive of all relevant psychological theory and the trainees are trained accordingly. This inclusivity increases the range of available theoretical paradigms that one can apply to a therapeutic situation. This flexibility of choice could contribute greatly to the usefulness of the therapeutic encounter, as Keeney (2009) states,

Whether therapy markets itself as analytical, postmodern, behavioral, interactional, systemic, narrative, feminist, positive, constructionist, experiential, scientific, outcome based, or neurolinguistic is less important than whether it ascends into the realm of being a dynamic transformative art. The latter includes any and all of the contributions of the former domains of knowledge but expresses them only when appropriate, that is, called forth by the situation at hand. (p. 13)

Paradigms are taught in a way that is “interrelated and organized through complex circular processes” (Nel, 1992, p. 14). Theoretical lectures are interactive in nature and trainees are encouraged to take part in the learning experience. Altucher (cited in Snyders, 1985) states that the training experience happens on both an intellectual and emotional level, but claims that the emotional part is more important. The Unisa training team takes the importance of the emotional component seriously, while also teaching the necessary theory.

Unisa's strategy is in accordance with Haber (1990) who claims that training psychotherapy trainees on an emotional level often works best when trainees are grounded in theory as well as in practice.

Supervision is given in a group setting in a flexible way and it aims at developing the personal skills of the therapist, rather than being specific to the case (Aponte & Winter, 1987). The supervision integrates "technical and personal competence" (Aponte & Winter, 1987, p. 89). Trainees are required to integrate the feedback received from their clients, their fellow trainees as well as their supervisors in a context of "supervisor support and peer encouragement" (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992, p. 33). Supervision then becomes a collaborative effort that engages the personal styles of the trainees and teaches them different ways of thinking (McCann, 1999). With the support of their supervisors, trainees are required to integrate the knowledge they acquire during theoretical lectures with their practical work. Within the supervisory relationship trainees experience the importance of relationships for change and growth (Alred, 1999; Peterson, 1991).

While education is useful to increase sophistication in explaining certain phenomena, it is important to remember that therapy is a personal encounter and that the importance of training psychotherapists lies within social relationships (Alred, 1999; Aponte & Winter, 1987; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). The Unisa psychotherapy programme focuses on bringing about internal changes rather than simply teaching theory. The ecosystemic model acknowledges that the unique organisation of each trainee will play a role in how information is received and used (Nel, 1992). Trainees' issues are often addressed within the training context and they are made aware of how their personhood influences clinical situations (Haber, 1990).

This kind of experiential learning can be confusing to the trainee at times, as Hoff (1982) explains, “Knowledge and Experience do not necessarily speak the same language” (p. 28). Harding and Hintikka (cited in Baloyi & Mkhize, 2011, p. 17) state that for received information to become knowledge, it needs to be “grounded on experience, because human experience differs according to the kinds of activities and social relations in which humans engage”. Whitaker and Bumbery (1988) state that “true emotional growth occurs only as the result of experience” (p. 85) and “[i]nsight and understanding happen as a result of experience, not as a precursor to it” (p. 86). The Unisa training programme utilises a large variety of contexts as encouraged by Aponte and Winter (1987) and has the added benefit of the trainee experiencing the conceptual process of ecological ideas, that teach the trainees to place experiences within given contexts.

Trainees are furthermore taught the ecosystemic principle of uncertainty and are taught how to adopt a curious stance and how not to accept any explanation as a definite truth, but rather to investigate explanations and theories in terms of their usefulness within a specific context.

### *Both/and Responsibility*

Haber (1990) emphasises that the trainer is responsible for the co-creation of the training context and Snyders (1990) focuses attention on the responsibility of the trainee when he states that “a therapist or teacher cannot change or teach anything; one can only co-create a rich context in which a student or a client may decide to learn or not to learn, to change or not to change” (p. 4). According to Alred (1999), the greatest challenge and opportunity for trainees lies within taking responsibility for what happens during their training. Smith (2003)

acknowledges the challenge to therapists when they begin to work on themselves and when they choose to live a full life. The Unisa training context provides trainees with the opportunity to be active agents in this challenge.

### *Training as a Context for Differentiation of Self*

Aponte and Winter (1987) argue that training should involve the creation of an autonomous therapist. Aponte and Winter (1987) also state that the personal development of the trainee should be addressed within a training context. According to Snyders (1985), for trainees to become sensitive and insightful enough to become efficient therapists, they require a “high level of differentiation” (p. 104). Snyders (1985) adds that “[a]n exclusive imparting of techniques to trainees will lead to rigidity and a lack of creativity and intensity” (p. 105).

Andolfi *et al.* (1983) argue that when differentiation is facilitated in trainees, they will be able to use themselves effectively as the “major instrument of work” (p. 3). Shepard (cited in Smith, 2003) claims that it is not possible to teach psychotherapy, but that the aim of training should rather be on developing therapists.

Alred (1999) claims that psychotherapy training that encourages self-reflexivity often confronts trainees with their unfinished business. Haber (1990, p. 383) acknowledges that working with the personal history of trainees “creates a fine boundary between therapy and training”, but he argues that this allows trainees to evolve in different spheres of their lives, including personally and professionally. Aponte and Winter (1987) state that trainees who are given the opportunity to work through their personal conflicts will have fewer blind spots that cause projection onto clients and they argue that “in all circumstances it will mean knowing

how to manage within the therapy his reactions to unresolved personal issues in ways that will benefit the client” (p. 100). Haber (1990) agrees with the importance of psychotherapy trainees working through their unfinished business by claiming that supporting trainees in the resolution of their personal issues will “help elicit the necessary resources to break the rigid, relational rules that impede differentiation” (p. 384).

Psychotherapy trainees would inevitably require vulnerability to open themselves up to this kind of training, but according to Aponte (1994), this vulnerability brings a sense of liberation in relationships. Smith (2003) adds that true emotional growth will take place in a context where there is heightened awareness. Whitaker and Bumberry (1988) believe that the kind of anxiety and confusion this kind of training can cause for trainees is essential for differentiation and they claim that “confusion is the real essence of unlearning and new learning. If there is no confusion, there can be no change, no progress. Until you break with your patterns, the ruts continue to deepen. Life goes on, as living dies” (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988, p. 83). Whitaker and Bumberry (1988) also argue that intellectual insight is not sufficient for learning to take place, but that teaching needs to be more invasive if any change is to take place. According to Aponte and Winter (1987) these kinds of struggles during training are essential for trainees to gain an understanding of and empathy for the struggles their future clients will bring into the therapeutic situation.

Nel (1992) explains that from a second-order cybernetic framework, trainers understand that they only have influence over the training context and not over the trainees themselves. Trainers need to work with the process of the group in order to create a context for differentiation (Haber, 1990). Andolfi and Zwerling (1980) make the following suggestion regarding how trainers may go about creating a context for differentiation:

If we hope to initiate a process of differentiation, we have to clash with this sense of security that the apparent group unity supports in each member.

This clash gradually breaks through the defence-based unity, which gives way to a new structure. In order to facilitate this passage from an apparent unity to a real unity, the trainer, while respecting each individual, must decisively and directly assume a strongly provoking position. Rather than shielding each member from embarrassment at self-individuation within the group, the trainer must force them to a real openness. Stress and confusion are unpleasant, but essential components of the process. (p. 242)

If trainees are able to make themselves vulnerable to this difficult process of differentiation within the training context, they can increase their awareness of the impact of their personhood on others. This awareness will help them to “act in a more congruent, flexible, and creative fashion” (Haber, 1990, p. 377). They will also develop “a wider range of behavioral alternatives in dealing with diverse families and clinical situations” (Haber, 1990, p. 382), which will add to greater fulfilment within their personal lives as well (Aponte & Winter, 1987).

### *Psychotherapy Training as a Reflective Journey – the Trainee as an Active Co-Creator*

Nel (1992) argues that in order for trainees to create a training context that is beneficial for their growth and development, they need to re-search their own training journeys. Nel (1992) also claims that researching one’s training journey may provide information essential for trainees to become co-choreographers during the training process. Duhl (1987) also recommends being involved in one’s own personal and ongoing research

project and becoming curious about one's own reactions and responses. Duhl (1987) furthermore states that the willingness to explore one's own patterns, will have the liberating effect of no longer responding impulsively to internal reactions. This commitment to self-awareness through self-reflexivity throughout the training journey then facilitates the trainee's differentiation process and brings about a greater understanding of themselves and others (Alred, 1999).

If trainees experience an evolving epistemology and the move towards an "entire new system of punctuation" (Keeney, 1983, p. 159) for themselves, they will develop a deeper understanding of how to facilitate this change in the lives of their clients (Reamy-Stephenson, 1983). This form of self-reflexivity through trainees' re-searching of their own training stories, aids in the integration of all the voices they hear throughout their training experience (Boscolo & Bertrando, 1996, p. 39) and allows all the acquired knowledge to filter through their own personhood. This process of integration through self-reflexivity then creates psychotherapists who are free to use themselves and their experiences within the personal therapeutic encounter to connect with clients intimately without sacrificing their own sense of agency (Satir, 1987; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988).

Psychotherapists who are exposed to a training process where differentiation is facilitated are then able to face their limitations within the therapeutic context and find ways to respond to their clients that will be for the benefit of both their clients and themselves (Haber, 1990). They will also have a better understanding of their own personal lives (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992), which will lead to less unfinished business and a more fulfilling life and will also reduce the chances of therapist burn-out (Kübler-Ross, 1995).

## *The Importance of Exploring Psychotherapy Training*

In South Africa at present there is mounting pressure to select larger groups of trainees, which poses the risk of the training becoming less personal. According to Boscolo and Bertrando (1996), the unique traits that therapists exhibit can be traced back to their training experience and the way they made sense of it. It is therefore important to explore psychotherapy training as the quality of their training may have an influence on the efficiency of psychotherapists for the remainder of their careers.

Therapists trained only by means of acquiring knowledge and learning skills while neglecting the self of the trainee, are in danger of being influenced by their own blind spots, such as making excessive use of projection (Aponte & Winter, 1987), becoming over-involved in their clients' lives (Bowen, 1988; Titelman, 1987), suffering from therapist burn-out (Kübler-Ross, 1995), and being unempathic because they lack an understanding of their clients' process of change (Reamy-Stephenson, 1983).

### Conclusion

It is important for therapists to have a thorough knowledge of psychological theory with an understanding of human behaviour and to be well skilled in therapeutic techniques to have the necessary potency to bring about change (Smith, 2003). However, the facilitation of a process of differentiation within the psychotherapy trainee is essential to protect the future client and therapist from the harm that can be done by an excessive projection process and the disabling effect of co-dependence as well as disempowerment within a therapeutic relationship (Aponte, 1994; Bowen, 1988; Kübler-Ross, 1998; Satir, 1987; Whitaker &

Bumberry, 1988). The psychotherapy training team then has the responsibility to expose the trainee to all the above-mentioned aspects, while the trainee has the responsibility of engaging actively in the training experience.

The following chapter will be used to describe the research design for this study and will include an exploration of autoethnography as the research method; thematic network analysis as the coding method and social constructionism as the underlying research paradigm.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### Introduction

In this chapter autoethnography as the research design will be discussed and the relevance of this method for this specific study will be explored. Thematic Data Analysis as the coding method will be described. Autoethnography will be contextualised within the realm of social constructionism as a qualitative research method. The relevance of making use of this paradigm will be evaluated and ethical issues, as well as the reliability and validity of the research study will be explored.

#### Research Purpose

**The purpose of this research study was to investigate whether a process of differentiation of the self was facilitated in me during the first 18 months of my psychotherapy training.** In order to obtain information regarding this process, the data to be examined were obtained from my personal journal. My personal journal is the ideal place to begin to know my thoughts because I can see what I said about particular occurrences, as explained by Auden (cited in Haarhoff, 1998). I believe that this text will be the appropriate data to use as the stories in my journal reflect my goal to “write meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and may make a difference” (Shelton cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742) and the stories include both “sensory and emotional experience[s]” (Shelton in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742). Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe this process as follows:

The stories we write put us into conversation with ourselves as well as with our readers. In conversation with ourselves, we expose our vulnerabilities, conflicts, choices, and values. We take measure of our uncertainties, our mixed emotions, and the multiple layers of our experience. Often our accounts of ourselves are unflattering and imperfect, but human and believable. The text is used, then, as an agent of self-understanding and ethical discussion. (p. 748)

This type of research method is referred to as *autoethnography*, and is described by Heapy (in Ettore 2010, p. 488) as a “reflexive methodology” where researchers need to reflect critically on how their own position shaped their narrative by reflecting on the experiences and interactions between themselves and their worlds and how these elements in turn impacted on each other (Thoreau in Haarhoff, 1998). Bruner (1987) emphasises the psychological importance of the investigation of how our telling of ourselves changes over time and Ettore (2010) adds that this process of giving a voice to experience provides a valuable tool for the analysis and enlightenment of these experiences in the world.

Autoethnography is thus a useful method in enabling me to engage with the personal conversations that I had regarding my experiences during my psychotherapy training in order to investigate the research question at hand. As McAdams (cited in Haarhoff, 1998) states:

If you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am. And if I want to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my life, then I too, must come to know my own story. (p. 9)

## Describing Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a research method that studies the self and enables the researcher to explore personal and cultural connections (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Due to the personal nature of this research, it takes place in a vulnerable and intimate climate and exposes the lenses through which researchers engage with others (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Chang (2008) explains that autoethnography is a style of writing that is easy to read and personally engaging, while Muncey (2010, p. 8) describes it as a method that is “artistically constructed”, that evokes the imagination and increases understanding. Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 742) further describe autoethnography as a self-conscious exploration of “the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation”.

Polkinghorne (2004) explains that this narrative is a reflection of the researcher’s identity and it changes shape as the stories are retold. Muncey (2010) emphasises that researchers using this method need to organise their text to display the way that they position themselves in their world and around the interactions of their experiences in their worlds - in other words, they need to look at the “juxtaposition of your own experience and outside influences, and the interaction between the two” (p. 10). Mykhalovskiy (1996) further describes autoethnography as a social process within a context of dialogue and collaboration where an author is prepared to engage with a variety of social processes and reviewers that may be critical.

## Autoethnography as a Relevant Method for the Study

Chang (2008) describes autoethnographic writing as an appropriate method to increase self-knowledge and insight into the self and the world in which one lives. Muncey (2010) and Chang (2008) explain that it is the weaving of stories that aids in bringing about an understanding of the self and becoming aware of the assumptions that play a role in governing the behaviour of everyday life.

Muncey (2010) explains this kind of writing as a “creative device” (p. 8) that can represent a “flow of experiences, actions and events” (p. 13) as the writing changes over time. Chang (2008) explains that autoethnography “brings this self-development process to light” (p. 140) while Muncey (2010) states that it is a way in which to capture growth. Ellis and Bochner (2000) and Reed-Danahay (1997) argue that autoethnography allows researchers to use both their academic and personal identities by fusing social science and literature as they investigate how their own personal experiences illuminate the study at hand.

Muncey (2010, p. 23) uses the metaphor of an iceberg to explain the self - initially only a small part can be seen, but it becomes more visible upon closer inspection. Muncey (2010) explains how autoethnography increases the visibility of the research object, which is the self. Autoethnography, as a research method, provides researchers with the opportunity to observe the research as well as participate in it and thus also to illuminate the multiple worlds in which they live and how experiences and behaviour differ depending on different contexts (Muncey, 2010). Autoethnography then provides valuable information on the different aspects of the self, including emotional, physical and spiritual aspects (Muncey, 2010).

Kennet (cited in Chang, 2008, p. 213) states that autoethnography provides students with the opportunity to “reflect on the forces that have shaped their character and informed their sense of self”. The purpose of autoethnography then is to “extract meaning from experience” (Ellis cited in Ettore, 2010, p. 270). This purpose links to the research purpose of this specific study, which is to look at the experiences and extract meaning, specifically in terms of differentiation of the self. Ellis and Bochner (2000) explain the following:

The stories we write put us into conversation with ourselves as well as with our readers. In conversation with ourselves, we expose our vulnerabilities, conflicts, choices, and values. We take measure of our uncertainties, our mixed emotions, and the multiple layers of our experience...The text is used, then, as an agent of self-understanding and ethical discussion (p. 748).

Chang (2008) explains that this research method allows for in-depth data analysis and interpretation because researchers are already familiar with their data when they begin with the process of interpretation. According to Gergen and Gergen (cited in Chang, 2008) the researcher has a “unique voice” (p. 14) and readers can respond to this voice because the “emotional expressiveness is valued”. Chang (2008) and Muncey (2010) state that autoethnographic studies have the potential to transform the self and others and to teach compassion while motivating readers to “live more fully” (Muncey, 2010, p. 97).

Ellis and Bochner (2000) claim that autoethnography is a method that has the ability to provoke readers to change their thinking while Salmon Rushdie (cited in Viljoen, 2004) adds that writing your own story provides the author with power because it enables new ways of thinking. Ellis and Bochner (2000) also emphasise that readers can potentially enter

empathically into active dialogues with the perspectives of the author and become participants through the “evocative power of narrative text” (p. 748). The author and the readers then have the opportunity to become more self-aware and add to their own emotional development and differentiation of self.

In conclusion then, it becomes clear that autoethnography (as a research method) is not only an appropriate tool for the investigation of the differentiation of self, but that, in effect, it can also contribute to this process for both the reader and author.

### Validity, Reliability and Ethical Issues in Autoethnography

#### *Validity*

Muncey (2010) warns researchers making use of autoethnography not to “attempt to achieve internal validity in research at the expense of ecological validity” (p. 28) in order to avoid the possibility of “the complexity of individual experiences [getting] lost in the wash”. Borbasi (cited in Muncey, 2010) expresses concern that the “blurred relationships between the researcher and researched .... may lead to problems with reliability and validity” (p. 28). However, Rudge (cited in Muncey, 2010) argues that because these researchers are aware of the “history behind the research question” (p. 32) it actually strengthens their credibility.

Duncan (2004) and Richardson (2000) explain that for autoethnographic studies to be judged as valid, they need to increase the reader’s understanding of social life by emphasising certain aspects of social situations, as well as to provoke the curiosity of the reader about these aspects. Ettore (2010) and Richardson (2000) emphasise the importance of aesthetic

appeal and explain that to increase validity the work needs to be interesting and satisfyingly complex. Richardson (2000) further suggests that the text must be representative of the reflexivity of the author. Muncey (2010) also states that the sense of the author's subjectivity will enhance the quality of the work. Richardson (2000) suggests that the emotional impact that the text has on the reader will be an indication of the validity. Muncey (2010) refers to this impact as "emotional resonance" (p. 94). Muncey (2010) describes this resonance as stories that evoke emotions and provoke memories, as well as stories that elicit emotional responses from the reader so that the reader is able to "imagine what it is like to be like us" (p. 94) and thus possess "imaginative participation, sometimes called empathy" (p. 94). Goldberg (cited in Haarhoff, 1998, p. 108) explains that

Writing is not psychology. We do not talk 'about' feelings. Instead the writer feels and through her words awakens those feelings in the reader. The writer takes the reader's hand and guides him through the valley of sorrow and joy without ever having to mention those words (p. 108).

Validity will further be increased if the text is coherent, trustworthy, convincing and believable (Ettorre, 2010; Muncey, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006) and if the text is judged to be an accurate representation of the reality of the author (Duncan, 2004; Ettorre, 2010; Richardson, 2000). According to Van der Riet and Durrheim (2006), the qualitative researcher does not increase validity by providing accurate explanations but rather by increasing the understanding of a certain phenomenon. Van der Riet and Durrheim (2006) recommend that the qualitative researcher make use of triangulation by using more than one research method to further increase credibility.

### *Reliability*

Yin (1998) claims that for autoethnographic studies to be viewed as reliable, there has to be evidence that the author made use of a continuously developing reflective journal. It should be evident that the conclusions drawn are based on an actual narrative account and the journal should be available for review by appropriate persons involved in the research setting (Yin, 1998). Ettore (2010) views the reliability of autoethnography as reflected by authors who are ethically self-aware and thoughtful in how they portray themselves and others, while being honest about their own subjectivity in a reflexive way.

Van der Riet and Durrheim (2006) propose that within the realm of qualitative research, the researcher needs to strive for an increase in the dependability of the study, rather than focussing excessively on achieving reliability. Dependability is described as “refer[ring] to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did” (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006, p. 93). Dependability can be achieved when the researcher makes use of “rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in, and developed out of, contextual interaction” (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006, p. 93).

### *Ethical Issues*

Chang (2008) alerts researchers making use of autoethnography to remain aware that the study does not take place in a vacuum but that everyone conceptually and personally connected to the self are also participants of the study. In accordance with this awareness, Muncey (2010) reminds researchers of the ethical principle of protecting the indirect

participants who influenced the writing of the stories from harm. Researchers need to take all the necessary steps and “model an honest and conscious effort to adhere to the ethical code of research” (Chang, 2008, p. 69).

Chang (2008) provides the following guidelines for researchers conducting autoethnographic studies:

- obtain informed consent - the participants need to be “carefully and truthfully informed about the research” (p. 68)
- protect the participants’ “right to privacy” (p. 68) by protecting their identities; and
- protect participants from “physical, emotional, or any other kind of harm” (p. 68).

Chang (2008) suggests making use of pseudonyms where informed consent is not possible while Frank (2002) encourages a stance of having “a consideration of respect for stories” (p. 7) and explains that “[p]eople are not going to stop telling stories; moral life, for better or worse takes place in storytelling. Narrative analysis can be a significant model for society that will continue to work out its moral dilemmas in story form” (p. 7).

Ettorre (2010, p. 488) emphasises that “[i]n all types of autoethnography, there is explicit recognition of the significance of interpretation”. Chang (2008, p. 51) suggests that the analysis and interpretation of the text is what moves it from a mere “autobiography or memoir” to a powerfully engaging autoethnography. It is thus important for the text to be coded in order to extract meaning and to tend to the research question at hand.

## Coding

The text in this study was coded in accordance with Attride-Sterling's Thematic Data Analysis (2001). This is a recursive coding process with the purpose of doing an in-depth exploration that leads to increased understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Attride-Sterling, 2001). The researcher began by actively reading the text after which the material was coded by the construction of groups that were significant through the organisation of the data (Attride-Sterling, 2001). The codes were sorted into themes and the themes were then re-read in order to identify the underlying patterns (Attride-Sterling, 2001). The recursive nature of this process led to a refinement of the themes to ensure that there were no unnecessary repetition, but the process still encompassed the various ideas (Attride-Sterling, 2001).

In accordance with the Attride-Sterling (2001) method the themes were then used to construct a network that consisted of the following:

- Basic themes: These are “simple premises characteristic of the data” (p. 389) that when organised together represent an organising theme.
- Organising themes: “This is a middle-order theme that organise the Basic Themes into clusters of similar issues” (p. 389) with the purpose of the enhancement of the meaning and significance and the representation of the main ideas suggested by the basic themes. These themes then aid in the analysis of the underlying ideas and united to form the global themes.
- Global themes: These are the super-ordinate themes “that encompass the principal metaphors in the data as a whole” (p. 389). These themes provide an interpretation of the text and a summary of the themes.

Basic themes were investigated to establish what the underlying stories were that these themes were telling (Attride-Sterling, 2001). The thematic networks are web-like illustrations that aid in the removal of “any notion of hierarchy, giving fluidity to the themes and emphasising the interconnectivity throughout the network” (Attride-Sterling, 2001, p. 389). These networks were not the final results but tools to aid the researcher with interpretation through description and exploration (Attride-Sterling, 2001). Finally, the network was summarised and patterns could be interpreted in order to “bring to light the meaning, richness and magnitude of the subjective experience of social life” (Altheide & Johnson, cited in Attride-Sterling, 2001, p. 403).

It is important to note that the coding process was done openly and inductively with no formal hypothesis or theoretical frameworks in mind. The text to be coded was seen as reflexive and constructed and interpretation was not seen as an “unchallengeable ‘truth’” (Hayano, 1979, p. 102) as there is a recognition of the many different ways in which the text could have been interpreted. The stories told that constitute the text, the thematic networks representing the stories, as well as the interpretation and explanations are thus seen as reflexive and constructed, as explained by the social constructionism approach (Andersen, 1992; Efran & Clarfield, 1992).

### Additional Coding

In order to increase the validity and credibility of the study, the text was sent to independent coders for additional coding. The coders also made use of Attride-Sterling’s Thematic Data Analysis (2001). The results obtained from the independent coders were

integrated into the results chapter and the coding report from the independent coders was attached as Appendix A.

### Social Constructionism

Autoethnography, in essence, is the telling of a story with a search for meaning rather than for an objective 'truth'. Muncey (2010) explains that

[a]utoethnography has to be considered within the period often referred to as the postmodern, where provocative modes of discourse, writing and criticism have led to the abandonment of the search for facts and truths, challenging traditional boundaries between art and science (p. 95).

The postmodern era enabled researchers to break traditional research boundaries and to make use of qualitative research methods in order to describe human behaviour and emotion (Durrheim, 1999).

Efran and Clarfield (1992) explain that according to the social constructionism approach "one never directly gains access to an objective reality" (p. 202). Andersen (1992) adds that "we relate to life based on our perceptions, descriptions and understandings of the world. Squarely spoken, we do not relate to life 'itself' but to our understanding of it" (p. 61). According to this epistemology, people participate in the creation of their understanding of life and in essence they invent their own reality (Andersen, 1992; Efran & Clarfield, 1992). Nel (1992) states that a "'multiverse' of realities may co-exist, each valid in its own right" (p. 22), while Efran and Clarfield (1992) emphasise the importance of the constructionist taking

“responsibility for his or her opinions, values, and beliefs, and the consequences connected to them” (p. 216).

## Conclusion

The research data of this study is a construction that resulted from my participation in the writing of my stories and I take full responsibility for my own opinions, values and beliefs. The coding process was a continuation of this process of construction. The way in which the themes were extracted and analysed followed this inductive and intuitive way of constructing meaning. As Andersen (1992) explains, “one might wait with the applications of theory and let the practice be as free as possible in its search for ‘relevant’ descriptions and understandings. Thereafter one might discuss these ‘findings’” (p. 55). Andersen (1992) describes intuition as the “state of being open and sensitive to the touches from the ‘outside life’ and at the same time being open and sensitive to the answers from the ‘inside life’”. This intuitive coding process was essence then a construction of a new conversation that resulted from being open and sensitive to the text (the outside life), while being open and sensitive to the messages coming from within the self (inside life). According to Andersen (1992, p. 55) “one might say that the search for new meanings, which often comprises searching for a new language, is a search for us to be the selves with which we feel most comfortable”. This search for *self* appropriately follows the research question and the research design addresses this in a way that is authentic and congruent to the purpose of the research.

The following chapter will be a discussion of the results, accompanied by web-like illustrations and extracts of the text.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

In this chapter the findings constructed within this study will be discussed. I will begin by discussing the seven organising themes that I obtained by organising the basic themes extracted from the text. Web-like illustrations that indicate the structure of the organising themes will be included and discussed. It is important to note that the content of the organising themes overlaps and some basic themes apply to more than one organising theme. In order to avoid repetition, the basic themes will only be discussed once under the organising theme that I found to be the most accurate and valid fit at the time of writing the chapter.

These themes will be supplemented by extracts from my journal in an attempt to illustrate and substantiate the themes. Some extracts have been slightly adapted in order to protect the privacy of those who inevitably formed a part of these stories. In the event where actual names are used, informed consent has been obtained.

The two global themes will then be listed along with their web-like illustrations, but will only be discussed in the following chapter. To conclude the chapter and in order to increase the reliability of the study, I will indicate where the themes extracted by independent coders overlap with the themes that I extracted. The report from the independent coders will be attached as Appendix A.

## The Organising Themes

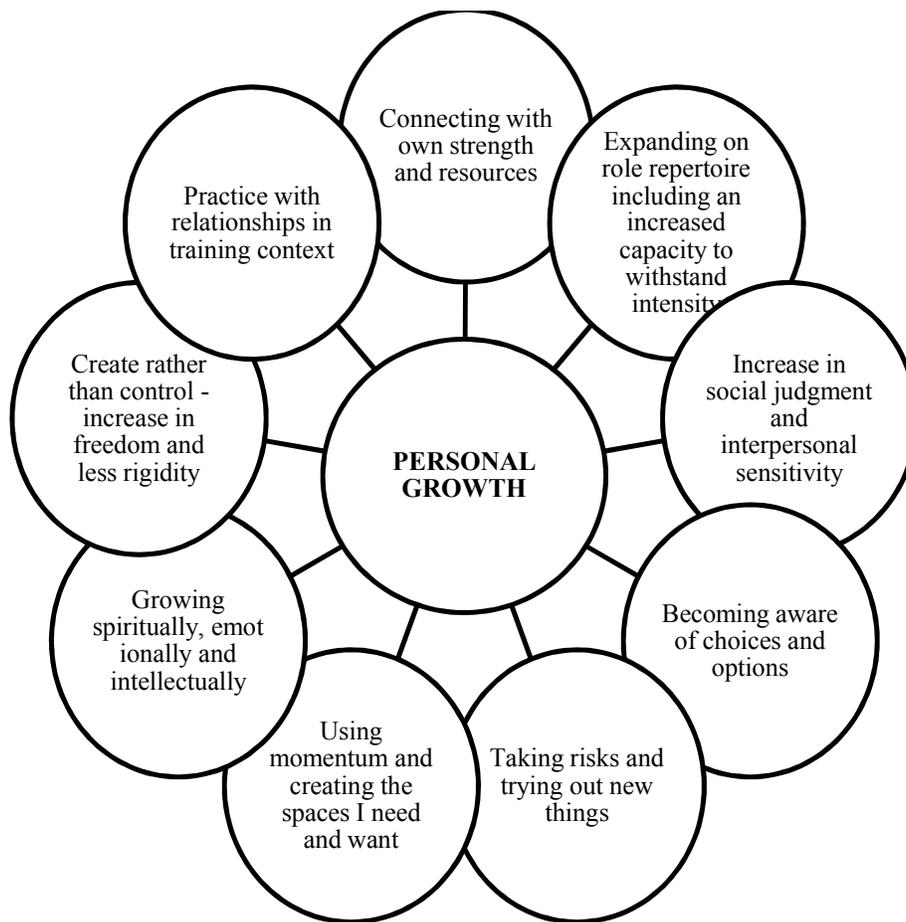
### *Organising Theme One: Personal Growth*

This theme refers to becoming an active agent, inventor and creator by being an active decision maker. There is an expansion of the role repertoire and an increase in autonomy, as well as a decrease in dependence

*Despite the anxiety it caused, I loved playing chess as a child. My weakness, in chess, were the knights. I loved using the castles and the bishops, because they moved in straight lines. But the knights? Who moves like that? Forward, forward, sideways. Sideways, sideways, forward. Backwards, backwards, sideways. I hardly ever used my knights in attack and found it difficult to play an opponent who attacked with his/her knights. Funny, how the real life horses are teaching me. They are teaching me that it is not always wise to just steady-on ahead. That you can actually change direction. Move strategically. That sometimes moving in long strides are not the best thing to do. Sometimes making smaller movements and going in more than one direction at one time, is the wise thing to do. I was like a disabled chess player. I basically played the game with fewer pieces than my opponent. The universe blocked my bishops and my castles and forced me to start using my knights. The universe used a variety of tools, including my horse and the people at Soshanguve and my training and Student A and my therapist and Professor X and Lecturer G. It wasn't easy. It was so frustrating. You can't really block a knight, they jump. The only piece on the table that can jump. I learnt to use my knights and I learnt to jump. It's exhilarating but it is also tiring. Learning to jump. Learning to move strategically, using all your options, going in more than one direction at once. Which is really actually just one direction, except the line isn't that*

*straight. It curves. Unless you see it as straight but then the line won't go through the corners of the squares on the board. Confusing thing, this horse. My pieces that I usually used, that was easy for me to use, were blocked. I learnt to use new pieces. It's still really hard, and now I can't go back to my usual style of playing because now everything, all my laid out plans, are scrambled. I know it's for the better.*

**Text box 4.1: Journal entry from 19-05-2011**



**Figure 4.1: Web-like illustration of personal growth**

*You are confronted with your past, with your fears, with those things you thought you safely tucked away in the closet. Your group members begin to represent that which you are afraid of. Some lecturers are caring, protective and parental and you are confronted with issues of dependency. You are left with a choice: deal with it, or push it down even further and risk*

*psychosis. You are provided with a pseudo-safe place: group with Lecturer J, supervision with Lecturer H and Lecturer D. Except, it is not really safe. It is sometimes hostile and competitive and very unsafe....Yet, you grow. Like weed, you stubbornly grow roots and keep your head up. You deal with the ghosts from the past, you take the feedback, external and internal feedback, and you try to sculpt: a healer.*

**Text box 4.2: Journal entry from 20-04-2011**

Throughout my training experience, I became aware of my own strengths and I learnt how to use my own inner resources. I learnt to look for the answers inside myself rather than always asking for outside advice. I was willing to be courageous and to take risks and to grow in the face of difficulty, which in turn symmetrically increased my awareness of my own resources. This process enabled me to begin to take control of my own life, to reduce my dependency on others and to increase my autonomy.

*When I get stuck, I can ask, but if there is a way that I can find the answers by myself and make my own way around the obstacles, then that is also wonderful because it means I have begun to search for the answers inside of me. It means I have begun to believe in myself and my own ability to solve problems.*

**Text box 4.3: Journal entry from 17-04-2012**

The training journey facilitated an expansion of my role repertoire. I used to be the one in the group to bring down the emotional intensity, but in time, I became more able to withstand intensity and eventually I was able to function in and effectively use conditions of heightened emotional intensity.

*Intensity. I have come so far from where I used to be. I remember how harshly Lecturer J and Professor X dealt with me for being unable to stand the intensity. And now, this year, May 2012, I am the one who pleads with my M2 group: “stay with it, just stay with it, because it is worthwhile”....Simply by asking my group for representatives to share their genograms, I began a process that created a lot of intensity. I then wrote the essay and began my presentation in class yesterday. I played my guitar and sang to them, alone. I sang to them, with Student I. And people started talking. They started, for the first time, to really talk about their lives during Apartheid. It began yesterday in the African Epistemology class that I facilitated and it continued today in group. There is an intensity in our group in these discussions that no words can explain. Today after group Lecturer B said to me in private that he does not know how to express his gratitude to me for my courage and for what I dared to do. He said to me that even though he said to me yesterday that I will never be the same again, he wants to tell me that our group will never be the same again either.... I surprised myself this week with my own honesty and with how my ability to withstand intensity have improved.*

**Text box 4.4: Journal entry from 08-05-2012**

I learnt that I can choose to play different roles in different relationships and sometimes play different roles in the same relationship. I realised that I do not always have to play the role of the therapist in friendships and family relationships and I began to choose to play different roles and to clarify these roles for myself and for others on a non-verbal level. Resisting the pull to consistently play the therapist-role, increased my sense of autonomy as it brought about the ability to play a variety of different roles that were unfamiliar to me in the past. These different roles included entering into symmetrical relationships with my friends and family where I did not create distance by claiming the ‘expert-therapist’ role.

*I spoke like her friend and not her therapist and apologised for not realising that she needed a friend and not a therapist. I told her that that is what I do when she withdraws. She said withdrawal is her default defence mechanism. We chatted about it, like friends, not therapists. And it brought us even closer to each other.*

**Text box 4.5: Journal entry from 30-07-2011**

I increased my ability to be respectful towards other people by allowing them their opinions, instead of intruding and imposing what I used to perceive as my own ‘expertise’ on them. There was an increase in my ability to engage closely with others by making less use of the style of advising and helping. I instead learned to listen and attempted to understand by reflecting and validating the emotions and experiences of those around me.

A strong theme throughout my text was that of *choice*. I became an active co-creator of my own experiences by becoming aware that I always have choices available to me, especially with regard to how I deal with what happens to me. Becoming aware of the many options that are always available to me at any given time filled me with a sense of empowerment and liberation. This awareness of my available options included claiming the right to choose relationships that are good and healthy for me and exiting from relationships that are not. I began to choose who I listened to and what I needed and I did not naïvely accept what was said to me. This freedom to choose increased my sense of autonomy and I became aware that even when things happen that are out of my control, I still retain a certain amount of power in deciding how I respond to the situation.

*I am not helpless, I am not hopeless, and I am not a victim. I am an active creator of my own reality. I am where I am because this is where I want to be, where I choose to be. I am in the relationships that I am in because they are the exact relationships that I need for my own evolution. The harder the relationship is, the more potential it has to contribute to my own evolution. I am free to leave any relationship at any point. I choose not to. Those that hurt the most are the ones that teach me the most important lessons....I have a myriad of choices. The possibilities in front of me are infinite. I can do what I want to do. I make choices that contribute to my healing. Sometimes I don't. Even those choices eventually lead to my growth and my healing, because I learn from them.*

**Text box 4.6: Journal entry from 19-04-2011**

*I also decided that I will utilise Lecturer I for the emotional part of my research journey. He provokes my creativity and expects me to remain true to who I am and not leave my 'heart' out of my research. I will take him along on this journey because I choose to and because with all the information that I have at this point, he seems to have my best interest at heart. I am also realising that things don't change overnight, it takes years. And I cannot change other people. I can simply take responsibility for myself.*

**Text box 4.7: Journal entry from 19-11-2011**

This process of personal growth included an increase in social judgment and sensitivity. I began to become aware of the impact I have on others by reading non-verbal feedback. I realised that sometimes it is not appropriate to share my opinion impulsively. I learnt that how I treat others influences the way relationships are defined and that it is important to take responsibility for the impact I make, whether it be positive or negative. I became less of a passive victim and more of an active creator. I also began to differentiate

between the appropriate time to talk about intense and personal matters and the inappropriate time to do so. I also began to realise that choosing the appropriate time is as important as choosing the appropriate person when sharing intimate details of my life.

*The Unisa psychotherapy training team creates a certain context. You decide what you do with it. You become a co-creator of the training context and depending on what you do with the context and the role you play in the co-creation of your training, certain things happen. Deductive learning is one thing that happens. One small thing. Differentiation happens if you allow it to. You learn to deal with intimacy, with intensity. Just to name but a few.*

**Text box 4.8: Journal entry from 18-08-2011**

*This is not about 'doing' anything. It is about not reacting blindly to emotional impulses. It is about taking back my sense of autonomy, my sense of agency. It is about taking, perhaps for the first time ever, control of my life. I choose my relationships and I choose to be in them. And I will BE in them. Not doing anything other than just BE in them. It is so strange, when I make these decisions, things are just different. I have come to realise that my reactions and my impulses really have as much to do with my inside than with what is happening on the outside.*

**Text box 4.9: Journal entry from 14-03-2011**

*So here I am, in the bush, with my daughter. Who would have ever thought that I could do this? Not too long ago, if my husband were to tell me that he is going away for business, I would become completely incapacitated with self-pity. Not too long ago, I said that I hated the bush. It feels like a lifetime ago. I don't know how to explain the amount of tranquillity that I have experienced these past two days. I am an active creator of my own reality and I*

*am using that power responsibly and for my own benefit and the benefit of those around me.  
And it is truly incredible.*

**Text box 4.10: Journal entry from 22-03-2012**

*Yet, over the years I have managed to change my experience of life from simply being a victim of the events that 'happen to me' to being an active participant and conversational partner to 'my life'.*

**Text box 4.11: Journal entry from 28-04-2012**

I learnt to allow different relationships and different degrees of closeness within relationships. I also learnt to allow the distance in relationships to increase and decrease, beginning to understand the dynamic nature of relationships. Another important lesson that I learnt in terms of interpersonal relationships was that I need to be responsible with how I empathise with others. I learnt that it is not appropriate or healthy to empathise with just anyone, as this could lead me to become over-involved in the lives of others and to spend emotional energy on relationships that are not healthy for me.

The training experience provided me with the opportunity to take more risks and to try out new things in accordance with my needs. I was willing to expect the unexpected and to try out new behaviour and allow for new experiences. I learnt how to create the conditions that I needed to be able to work efficiently.

*[I think] about how I get to spend 45 minutes with myself in my car, every morning driving to work and driving home. How I can use this time to create spaces, the way that Lecturer I has taught me. Where I can create the space to be the therapist when I drive to work, to bracket*

*all my own stuff and all my own issues and be the therapist that I can be. And then again, another 45 minutes driving home, to bracket everything that happened during the day and again get into the space where I am a wife and a mother.*

**Text box 4.12: Journal entry from 07-07-2012**

I grew spiritually by reconnecting with God in a way that was helpful to me. I grew emotionally and intellectually by taking control of my thoughts and my emotions. I learnt to create rather than control and experienced freedom rather than entrapment from previous rigid ways of thinking and being. The training group became a place where I could practice not to sacrifice relationships while individuating. I was able to grow and evolve while I simultaneously became more connected.

*Lecturer G told me that the best feedback that she can give me is that there were no fighting about my mark. And I remember my psychologist teaching me that when you invoke very different reactions in different people it usually means that you are unable to communicate directly. So it would seem that I have learnt how to communicate directly.... Lecturer B told me that I flew during my oral and was able to come across as intellectually very strong and conceptualised well while at the same time being vulnerable.*

**Text box 4.13: Journal entry from 07-07-2012**

*I think that is what I am trying to get at. All of them carve at the marble. My family, my psychologist, my horse and Instructor A, my lecturers, my friends, my group members and my clients. Carving at the marble. Sometimes when they chip at a piece that is especially sensitive, I cringe. I show my teeth and bite at them like my horse does when Instructor A tightens her girth. But after some guidance from my psychologist, I usually stop resisting and*

*after a while I let that piece go. Because it is not helpful. I save the piece to remind me that it belongs to me. And I put it in a box. But even though it belongs to me, it doesn't belong on me. Because it hinders my movement.*

**Text box 4.14: Journal entry from 11-09-2011**

*Organising Theme Two: Increasing Self-Awareness*

This theme includes an increase in self-awareness through an increase in the ability to read and receive feedback and an increase in self-reflexivity.

*I know that I am beginning to realise that the options that my therapist sometimes talks about may have something to do with this 'gift' that God gave us: free choice. Free will. So that we can choose to love Him, if we will. I choose to love Him, the best way I know how to right now. I know that having free will, free choice, is not as simple as that. I know that if I close my eyes, too afraid to face the monster(s) in the dark, free choice is simply an illusion. Because even though I don't know how to academically say this yet, I honestly believe that if you can't be courageous enough to become truly self-reflexive, you will always be influenced by your Self, instead of using your Self. And within that, free choice disappears.*

**Text box 4.15: Journal entry from 05-03-2012**



**Figure 4.2: Web-like illustration of increasing self-awareness**

*I am a little crazy. I am also sometimes, like Monday morning, very weak. It's a part of who I am, the craziness, the weakness. I impact on people in a very powerful way. I irritate some, I threaten some, and I confuse some. Others find me fascinating, endearing, supportive, enlightening and fun. I have come to realise that my judgement of others, my preference for some and my resistance to others speak more about me than about those I judge. There is always room for reflection and as long as I reflect, I will evolve. I don't want to stop writing, even if I can do it with only one hand. I have a gift. I will use it.*

**Text box 4.16: Journal entry from 19-04-2011**

*My aim is to be a therapist. My aim is to be able to be real with my clients. In order to do that, there is a lot in myself that needs to evolve. My self-awareness and how I care about myself, for example. I need to be a role model of somebody who takes care of her own emotional wellbeing. It is unfamiliar and hard for me. I need to learn to really become comfortable with intimacy. And not just with people who have the capacity for intimacy but also with people who struggle. These things are very, very hard for me. Learning to be congruent, choosing a friend who demands that, at all times. Learning to belong while individuating. These are hard things that I am learning. And it is only to name a few.*

**Text box 4.17: Journal entry from 07-08-2011**

My training journey facilitated an increase in my awareness of my own needs and interest by teaching me to read my own internal feedback. Examining what I wrote in my journal allowed me to begin to identify what my true interests were, rather than pursuing too many potential areas of interests. Becoming aware of my true interests and deciding to focus on these, reduced my anxiety and the pressure to attempt to tend to too many different aspects of the work at the same time.

*I then ask him if he has any feedback for me. He asked me my mark for my oral and about Lecturer B's feedback to me. He tells me that there is only one thing. He believes that I have no problem with competence, with my abilities or my capabilities and skills. With my ability to integrate. He tells me that I understand the theory and the concepts. He tells me that I can choose, should I want to, to not only be a clinical psychologist, but to be a psychotherapist. Then he tells me that I am going to have to look at how I spend and conserve my energy. He tells me that I need to prioritise, and he believes that I can. But that he is afraid I am going to burn myself out because I get so excited about everything. He tells me that if I'm going to get*

*aroused by everything I am going to get killed. He tells me I have to choose a frame of reference and investigate things inside of that and reject the rest, because he can see what happens to me. I get excited about everything, and then I get extremely anxious because I can't get to everything, and then I get very tired.*

**Text box 4.18: Journal entry from 15-15-2011**

*The world seems caught up in this whole black and white thing. Always. Never. Life is not like that. You will never ALWAYS get it right. Neither will you NEVER get it right. Life is just not like that. And that is the beauty about feedback. If you can just open your ears to the world around you, to the people around you, you begin to really hear them. And that is how I heard my daughter today. I surely don't have her message 100% right. But I am listening, I am paying attention. I look for the feedback. From her, from the environment...I do make mistakes. But if I can continue to listen to the feedback. Her feedback. The feedback from the environment, and the way that my gut reacts to the feedback it receives, we can all operate more efficiently...Thank you Professor X; for making me aware of my inability to read feedback. Thank you for punching my wind out, with a voice that was as gentle as a fountain, bubbling over with sincere concern. 'You can never really predict the impact that you make on others. The only thing that you can do is to read the feedback. And I don't think that that is a lesson that life ever taught you.'*

**Text box 4.19: Journal entry from 02-09-2011**

This process of being self-reflexive and reading feedback allowed me to become aware of my own shortcomings and strengths. It also brought about a realisation that becoming a psychotherapist is a life-long journey and that there is no way in which to master psychological theory during the Master's Training Programme. It also allowed me to become

aware of what I am good at, including doing presentations, conducting therapy and being a member of a therapeutic team. I also connected with a deep desire that I have had for many years to become a clinical psychologist, which provided me with drive and momentum that I needed in challenging times.

*I am simply, who I am. I am bright and full of energy. I am filled with potential and promise. I am scared and sometimes get very sad. I can be a very good friend and a terrible friend. I struggle with interpersonal relationships but I am getting better. I am a good therapist. I will one day be a good psychologist. I am satisfied with my life. I am excited about my journey.*

**Text box 4.20: Journal entry from 11-06-2011**

*Doing this presentation energised me as if I got a fountain inside of me that just continued to bubble. I am finding it easier to distinguish what I want in my frame. When I read things I have to do for my training and it is not in my frame, I scan it. I don't attempt to understand everything.*

**Text box 4.21: Journal entry from 29-07-2011**

I learnt how to get to know myself better by reading the feedback I received from others, even though I sometimes had to write it down first in order to make better sense of the information at a later stage.

*Then Lecturer H takes over and says to me that I have a very good ability to articulate myself and that that is a great strength. She says what happens, when I use that strength, is that I allow other people to build on their strengths and develop their strengths, through my strength. She says that a lot of healing takes place, through my gift. And I am absolutely astonished. I breathe through my stomach not caring if anybody notices, to fight the tears.*

*And then I know, I am OK. I am going to be OK... I learnt so much today. I learnt that I am not perfect. That I don't always pick up on what is going on and that sometimes trying to say something intelligent takes away from me the ability to be sensitive to what a friend is trying to say. I learnt that by constantly referring to myself in a negative way, because I am scared of threatening people and that they then won't like me, I am forcing them to question the positive evaluation they had of me. I learnt that when I struggle with clients, it is not always about me and my issues. I learnt that my classmates are not threatened by my strengths and that I don't need to constantly place the emphasis on my weaknesses, they enjoy learning from me as I enjoy learning from them. I learnt that Lecturer D and Lecturer H are not expecting me to be perfect. They just expect me to learn, as they expect from of all my classmates.*

**Text box 4.22: Journal entry from 16-02-2011**

*Lecturer J told me that what I do, is that I think what I am going to say, then I say it, then I anticipate what the other person is thinking and I react on what I think that person is thinking without them actually saying it and I carry on like this and then I don't stop talking and I lose my message. I suppose that links up strongly with what Professor X said. Lecturer J said that I have very powerful messages, but that I have to learn to be more succinct.*

**Text box 4.23: Journal entry from 03-06-2011**

Writing stories in my journal also allowed me to work through past experiences, to identify patterns in my life and to notice how my behaviour maintains some of these patterns.

*I don't know what to do about it, but at least I am growing in awareness, through being so reflective about this thing. Because with pain comes the opportunity to grow and to learn. And on some level, this pain is OK, because I feel that it is the fuel that is keeping me on*

*track in this process of self-reflexivity. And if it wasn't for Tuesday's group, I wouldn't have gotten a key to this drawer that I am staring at now. It is a drawer that I have looked at many times in the past, but it is not one that is sorted out. And it is a drawer that leads to different drawers and it is very complex. And a part of me is urging me to leave this drawer and ask my psychologist to help me sort it out and another part of me is simply telling me to accept it for what it is. To own it as a part of who I am and to just always try to be aware.*

**Text box 4.24: Journal entry from 07-04-2012**

This writing was often emotionally taxing, but it brought about a sense of freedom and liberation, as well as new ways of thinking and behaving. An important area of self-awareness that gave me the strength to persist on this journey was the ability to become aware of my own emotional needs. I was provided with the opportunity to re-examine how different relationships impact on me differently by writing down my experiences. I also recognised the roles that I play in the outcome of certain social experiences. I realised that people are different and have different realities and that we impact on each other differently on different occasions, while there is also often some consistency within these differences.

[Talking to myself] *"Sasja, you have to learn. And you don't learn easily because your patterns are so rigid. But you had to be confronted with this self-defeating self-sacrificing nature of yourself. Not because you are going to now instantly overcome it. But sweet girl, today you are more aware of this than ever before. And today you are aware of how devastating the impact of your actions can be. Sasja, you have to, you have to realise how powerful you are. Because you are irresponsible being in denial about it. You are irresponsible towards yourself and towards others."*

**Text box 4.25: Journal entry from 26-05-2012**

[Talking to myself] *“There is an OT that lives inside of you that knows a great deal about time management, stress management, planning, and study methods. You really, really need to go to that lady. She is very kind and very helpful and to children who want to learn she can be such a source of support. You need to utilise her for this course from now on. You tried the other way. You tried to listen to lecturer G and you tried saying to yourself that marks aren’t all that important and you don’t need to study that hard because just a pass will do. That is not true, it’s not authentic, it’s not congruent, it’s just not who you are. And it is about more than marks. It is about the kind of psychologist that you want to be. The knowledge that you want available to yourself in your work. Knowledge that you can use like weapons in your armoury. It is not useful to have all the weapons if your body is too weak to use them. You need to also build your muscles, work on your flexibility, on your resilience....This is all about learning. Learning about the DSM and Watzlawick, but more importantly, learning about you. Learning about your standards, accepting what you can’t change. You can’t change this.”*

**Text box 4.26: Journal entry from 01-09-2011**

My increase in self-reflexivity included the ability to look to the past, to look inside of myself, to look around me and to look to the future. I became aware that throughout my life there have been people who cared about me and supported me and this awareness bred a sincere appreciation for those relationships that are the threads of my safety net.

*I was given positive feedback about my self-awareness. My willingness to be courageous. Not resisting provocations, not resisting the process....What do I want? What do I want to do? I want to be a Clinical Psychologist. I want to write and heal and inspire and teach. I want to remain connected, compassionate, vulnerable, courageous.*

**Text box 4.27: Journal entry from 06-06-2011**

*I wake up with a sense of peace and a physical sense of being bullied from my bed by my daughter who climbed in with me a few hours earlier. I watch with amusement how she pushes her little bum into my back more and more until she has 80 percent of the double bed and I barely have enough space to fit when I lie on my side. She is still half-asleep but I gently push her back and with half-closed eyes she tells me about the bunny that she is dreaming about. And I can sense that she is much calmer today than the angry, restless little soul I had on my hands yesterday. And I realise: I have to write. I really, really have to write. Because my writing has magical powers and when I am courageous enough to be honest with myself then things change in different places. And it calms down my daughter.*

**Text box 4.28: Journal entry from 16-06-2012**

*Organising Theme Three: Increase in the Quantity and Quality of Connections*

This theme includes an indication of how the relationships that I belonged to changed. The change included entering into relationships with different people, as well as a change in the nature of the connection within already established relationships.

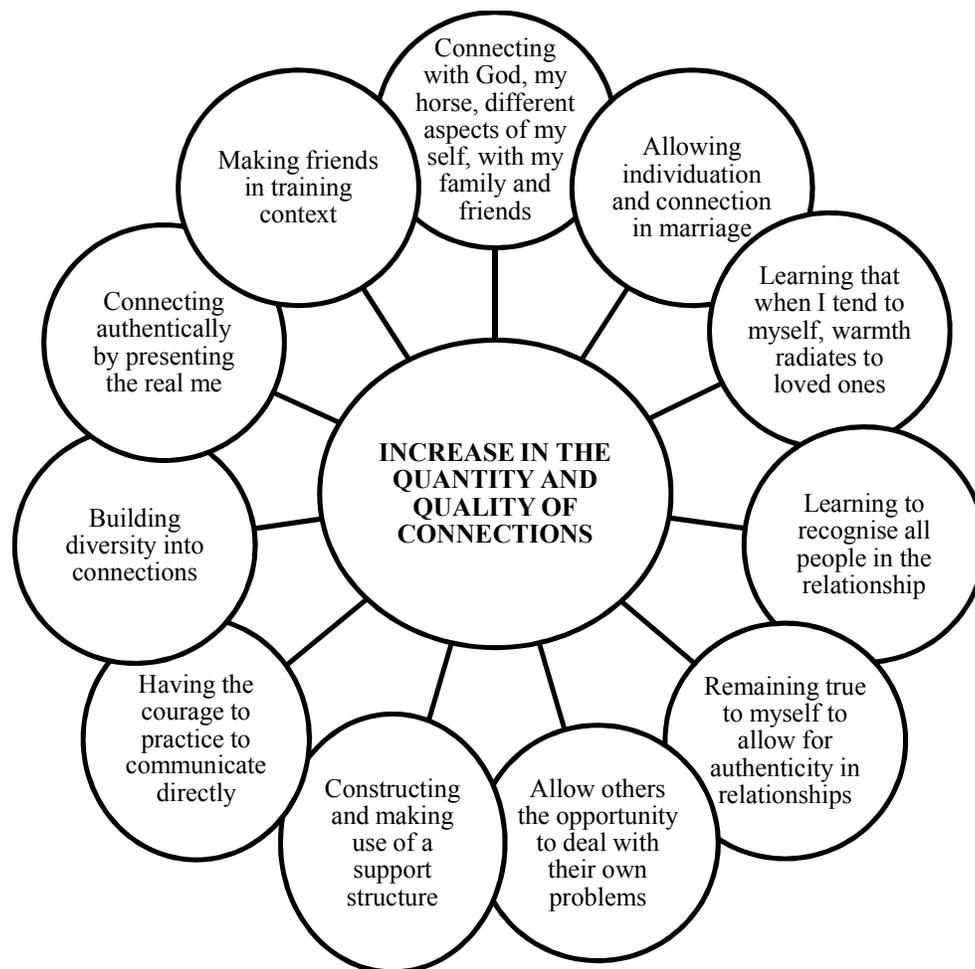
*So, this 'whole new world', is actually exactly the same world, except I have changed and I haven't. I am still anxious, but now I can deal with it. I still struggle with relationships but now I can face it and share my difficulties with the people I am in relationships with so they can understand me. Because I know now there are two people in a relationship.*

**Text box 4.29: Journal entry from 17-05-2011**

*I think about all the connections I have made in the last year. Connecting with my extended family, going back to the farm. Connecting with my parents and my brothers on deeper levels*

*than before. Connecting with my husband and my daughter in ways that are so unfamiliar to me. Letting go of the control. Connecting with Student A and Student J, my horse and Instructor A. Holding on to my connection with Friend A. Holding tightly onto my connection with my animals. I am connecting in a way that allows me to still move and be true to myself. I am healing. I am differentiating.*

**Text box 4.30: Journal entry from 19-05-2011**



**Figure 4.3: Web-like illustration of the increase in the quantity and quality of connections**

*If these were the Oscars and I were to make a speech, I would sincerely thank them all: My God, my psychologist, my husband, my parents, Professor X and all of my lecturers, my friends, the old ones and the new ones, all the animals who have contributed so greatly to my*

*healing and me staying whole and sane, to my homeopath with her expertise and her caring and her empathy. To my beautiful daughter who completely changed my life.*

**Text box 4.31: Journal entry from 11-06-2011**

*And I can feel us growing, closer and closer. And it's hard. But it is so meaningful. My mother loves me, my stepfather loves me, my daughter loves me. Instructor A loves me and my horse loves me. And my husband loves me. I phoned Friend A tonight and we are organising to get together next week Monday- or Wednesday night. I need to see her. I miss her so much. She loves me too. And my animals. And Student A and Student F and Student J. And my therapist. And my brothers and my father.*

**Text box 4.32: Journal entry from 02-08-2011**

The training journey facilitated an awareness of the need to form more relationships and stronger connections. Through my spiritual growth, I connected with God in a way that was stronger than ever, but in a different way - a way that was useful to me.

[An extract from a prayer] *"I thank You, for Joseph Prince and for bringing him into my house because You know that I struggled to find You in the churches that I went to. Thank you that I can get to know You better through his teachings, which I truly believe is from Your Holy Spirit. I know today, that You are more beautiful than I can ever imagine. I know today, that if I can dare to lift my eyes and see You in Your splendour, I won't be able to help but radiate with love and beauty. I know, today, that everything beautiful in this world is from you. Everything that brings true joy and pleasure. And I feel so grateful to be able to bask in Your blessings...."*

*Following Joseph Prince's ministry has helped me to open my eyes. I realised that what Jesus did was all that I needed to be blessed; and that all I need to do is just receive. As much as I can take. And to try to learn to receive more, because God has so many more blessings for me, if I could just learn to open my arms. And that there is nothing left for me to do, because Jesus yelled: 'IT IS FINISHED'"*

**Text box 4.33: Journal entry from 16-04-2012**

After becoming more aware of the different aspects of my being, it became possible to integrate these different aspects which also included traits that I struggled to connect with in the past like the child-like traits which are also a part of who I am. The connection with my husband became more differentiated as we both had the opportunity to participate in separate but fulfilling activities. The change in our relationship appeared to bring us closer together, because we were content and happy being together and being apart. My husband differentiated in the roles that he played within our family, especially when he had to take over most of the duties when I broke my arm during my first year of training. When I allowed my daughter to go to nursery school and to form her own relationships independent of me, it strengthened our bond. Our connection strengthened because the time that we did spend together increased in quality and because it was time that we truly wanted together and chose to spend together.

*I got home just before six. My daughter was happy to see me but she was really OK. We played, read a book, watched TV and took a bath together. I don't think we have ever had so much fun together. I put her in her bed and she was fine. She was at peace and went to sleep all by herself. And I realise that quality is more important than quantity. Quantity is overrated. Quality-time is underrated....My husband and I had a date last night and it was*

*wonderful. I told him everything of my week and told him what I had learnt about content and process. He talked to me about his work and about his visit with an old friend. We spoke about his school days and we laughed. I told him about my lecturers and my fellow trainees. We shared our meals. I told him how happy I was. He told me that he is happy as well. It was a wonderful evening.*

**Text box 4.34: Journal entry from 02-02-2011**

*I received one of my Whitaker books yesterday. I felt like a kid at Christmas. My husband laughed at me. "Shouldn't you be studying?" He asks me with a smile on his face. "I know! Stupid test! I am just going to read the foreword." And I do, then I put my book down and switch the light off and fall asleep with a smile on my face. Just because that was a special moment with my husband. He loves seeing how excited I get about certain books. He's becoming more and more involved in my passions and it excites me.... I think he is enjoying this experience with me more and more, because I am not neglecting him so much anymore. Because I make time for him and for my daughter. He knows if he comes and he wants my attention, mostly, I'll close the book and talk to him. Because he is more important than my books. And he can feel it.*

**Text box 4.35: Journal entry from 19-08-2011**

*It was very clear to me this weekend; that my husband and I have never been as close to each other as we are now. We talk about our problems, the serious ones and the stupid ones. We laugh together. We talk about our family, our future. We are open and honest. We figure out what the other one needs.... I also realised that my husband truly loves me very, very much. And I love him too.... I have some good friends and am closer to my mother than I have ever been before. I have a wonderful relationship with my stepfather. And above all, I am close to*

*my husband and my child. I further realised that when my connection with my nuclear family is harmonious, is when I am at my happiest. It's harder work, to take care of the connection with my husband, because I am afraid of rejection. But it is worth it. And it is getting easier. I am truly, truly, very happy.*

**Text box 4.36: Journal entry from 13-11-2011**

*My husband and I spoke more yesterday than we may have spoken since the last time we went to Tzaneen. We spoke about everything. About his work and my training and how it is impacting on us. On how important this little family of ours is to us and how we try to keep it safe and do what is best for us. We spoke about things and people. We shared some viewpoints and respectfully differed about some things. It was wonderful. When I can withdraw my investment from places (like Unisa) where I don't get the return I was hoping for, I can invest into places (like my marriage), where I sometimes actually do get the return that I was hoping for. Because my husband really does love me very much. And he really does want what is best for me. We spoke about possibilities. It was an incredible night. It was a truly wonderful night.*

**Text box 4.37: Journal entry from 07-04-2012**

Through tracing my family tree in completing my genogram, I re-connected with my family, both my family of origin as well as my extended family.

*They are intelligent, spontaneous, friendly and warm. One of my aunts walked around the table, hugging everybody, even those she had never seen before in her life, thanking them for making her day so special. I held her and wanted to say to her 'it is you that made my day special.' I did miss my father, I did miss my brothers. But very soon into the night, it wasn't about them. This was about me, finding a piece of myself. Finding out that there is more to*

*me, and more to my family. There is magic. I hope that I will see them again. These people are so delightful and I feel so proud to be able to say that I have their blood running through my veins.... And I am so grateful that Professor X encouraged us to do our genograms, otherwise I would have never gotten in touch with these people and tonight would have only been a distant dream.*

**Text box 4.38: Journal entry from 13-03-2011**

I allowed closeness in my relationship with my mother, allowing our relationship to deepen by accepting and trusting her unconditional love. I re-connected with old friends and I built new and deep authentic friendships within my training context. The support and accurate empathy that I received from these new friends who were also participating in their unique journeys of differentiation was an incredible source of support throughout the training process.

*So I actually have a personal life as well. I saw Friend A Friday, for the first time since I started my studies. It was so nice. We had so much fun. We actually had a bottle of wine together while the children were playing and they had to ask us to leave Jingle Jangle Friday afternoon/early evening because we were just not ready to go yet. And we made each other a promise that no matter what, we will see each other at least once a month. It was so, so good for my soul to be with her.*

**Text box 4.39: Journal entry from 13-03-2011**

*Somehow, thinking about my friends got me through it. Realising that I have never in my life had as many good and true friends as I have now. Friends who accept me for who I am, good and bad. I thought of Friend A, Student A, Student J and friend C.*

**Text box 4.40: Journal entry from 15-07-2011**

*I'm thinking I need to tell her. That I can be a good friend but that relationships are hard for me. That her congruence, her openness and her directness threaten me and then I get snippy. That I need her feedback and I really don't want to mess up our relationship. That I will always be there for her if she needs somebody to talk to, or somebody to help her out when she is in trouble. That I have really good qualities and really bad qualities and I'm still trying to find balance. That even though it might not always seem that way, that I really care about her. And I will ask her not to give up on me.... Student A is my horse-friend. She demands congruence.... it is not easy for me, but it is very rewarding. I'm thinking if I had the above conversation it would greatly reduce my anxiety about losing her, so I send her an e-mail with the above words and I think it will be OK. We will be OK. And now I don't have to try so hard.*

....

*I know that despite my struggles, I do also have qualities that make me a good friend and I believe that Student A and I are going to make it. I believe that this is a relationship that is going to be very meaningful to me, and will challenge me and teach me to communicate in a way I have never communicated with a friend before.*

....

*Student A and I laughed like children and even though we participated in the Bootcamp-activities, it was all in the background and at times our instructor and the other women completely disappeared.*

**Text box 4.41: Journal entries from 10-05-2011; 11-05-2011 and 15-06-2012**

*Our lunch was intimate. There was no small talk. There was a lot of anxiety; there was also a lot of laughter. Student F can be a difficult person. He knows it and I know it. It doesn't matter to me. I love him all the same. He is my friend.*

....

*I am so grateful for how my life has changed. I am so grateful for the new friends I have made, and having Student F as a friend is truly wonderful. I can just be who I am, not having to hide my faults or amplify them. I don't have to help him or be helped by him, I can simply be with him. We can talk about the hard stuff without attempting to make it better for each other. When I ask him something very personal it is not because I want to help him, it is just because I care and I want to know him.*

....

*I am going to miss him so much next year, but what is the point in being sad about that now? I let him into my being. I showed him parts of my 'self' that I have not shown very many other people....I let Student F into my life. And I allowed him closer to me than I ever thought I would. And when the training of this year is finished, he is moving to the Cape. And yes, I will see him again, but it won't be the same. But I know, that I will keep him in my heart forever and that I will be more beautiful for having let him in. And that it is not always about letting people in and then they leave you again. That is a very simplistic and reductionistic way to look at things. Life is more complex than that.... And this was the theme for the week. With my horse and Instructor A, with Student F and with Student A. Like an onion has layers, a layer has been removed within our respective connections and we are just a little bit closer. The connection is a little bit deeper. And it is very, very scary. And very new. And beautiful.*

*And again I think about the Little Prince and about this new level of friendship between me and Student F and about him leaving at the end of the year. And even though we may lose touch, I now know that I am able to make a friend and be a friend. It made me think of the story of her sadness that the lake told after Narcissus fell into her. Because she saw her beauty reflected in his eyes and now that he is gone she can't see it anymore. But at least she*

*was able, to for a while, see her beauty and know that she is beautiful, even though she is now sad. At least, for a while, I could see my beauty reflected in his eyes. I watch him watching me and what I see in his eyes is beautiful. And I hope that I can someday see myself that way without having to first have it reflected in his eyes.*

**Text box 4.42: Journal entry from 16-08-2011; 17-03-2012; 06-04-2012 & 07-04-2012**

I formed a strong relationship with one specific horse, finding peace within our togetherness and learning about power in the context of gentleness.

*But it doesn't really matter, I will never know. I probably won't keep close contact with my clients from Soshanguve. I will always wonder about them. But I will carry them inside of me and they will add to my beauty. And people won't be able to tell what it is that makes me so beautiful, because what is really important, can't be seen. That is why my horse is so beautiful, because of all the lives she has touched.... Instructor A tells me that I mustn't personalise the horses too much. She doesn't always understand. This horse has touched my life in a way not many humans have. And our relationship is real to me. And whether anybody else recognises it or not, is not really that important. I add to her beauty. When you look at her, you wonder why she is so beautiful. But you won't be able to figure it out when you try to get the answer by looking with your eyes. However; if you look with your heart, the warmth of hundreds of souls that have been touched by the healing powers of this incredible horse, will filter through your heart and warm every fibre of your being. And then you will know why she is so incredibly beautiful. And I am honoured, to be a golden thread that runs through this big brown healer.*

**Text box 4.43: Journal entry from 24-09-2011**

It was important to me to connect authentically with others and present my new friends with the real me with both my strengths and weaknesses, despite my fear of rejection. The real me that I presented was accepted and validated – specifically with regard to my mother and her husband, my lecturers and the friends that I made within the training context. I built diversity into my connections, including making a friend who is from a different cultural background than I am. I was given the opportunity to connect with clients of different ages, different socio-economic circumstances, different levels of functioning and different cultural backgrounds.

*When I laugh with a young black woman and I feel our hearts connecting. That is what truly humbles me. That is what changes me. And all the words, all the verbal positive feedback in the world, could never, never compare to shared, warm, heartfelt laughter with people who don't even speak the same language that I do. Who I could never impress or control with my words. All I had to give, was me. All I could be, was just who I am. I am truly going to miss them so much.*

**Text box 4.44: Journal entry from 11-05-2011**

These new relationships increased my courage to communicate clearly and directly and they taught me to address issues rather than avoid them. I constructed a safety net and made use of this support when I needed it. My new friends taught me that the role of a friend is not only to 'help' but it is a role that allows others to work through their own problems, while being supportive. It is also a role which is empowering and creates authentic relationships rather than co-dependence. I learnt that I do not always have to help in order to be accepted. I took small steps to reduce the distance in significant relationships, allowing more closeness and intimacy.

*Student A asked me to let her do my hair for me Wednesday morning in Soshanguve, and I allowed her. And it was so hard, but in the end it was nice. Student J put snacks on my plate and gave it to me with our picnic, and it was hard, and I allowed her. My mother and my stepfather have showed me so much love, and I accepted it. I let them take care of me and my daughter for one special weekend and despite the pain in my arm it is a weekend too special to ever forget. And they remain interested, and I allow it. My friends have been so supportive, even my brothers and my sister-in-law showed support on facebook. And I allowed it. And it was good.*

**Text box 4.45: Journal entry from 03-04-2011**

I became aware that pleasing others at the cost of myself leaves me with a feeling of emptiness and I experienced that when I tend to myself, warmth will radiate to the ones that I love. I became aware that when I allow myself to grow and evolve I may lose connections with other people if they are unwilling or unable to evolve and grow, but I connect more strongly with those who are also interested in evolving and growing. I learnt how to value and validate both of the people in a relationship, in other words, both myself and the other person. I also realised that the needs of one person do not have to be fulfilled at the cost of the needs of the other person.

*I think about how precious my time is and that I no longer want to spend it on things that aren't important to me. That I need to be selfish and save my time for my training and my family and that trying to keep relationships going that aren't really viable anyway is no longer a priority.*

**Text box 4.46: Journal entry from 07-02-2011**

In terms of my relationship with my trainers, my psychotherapy journey was indicative of how I gradually moved away from complete dependence on them to a place where I became more autonomous. In time, I did not naïvely adopt their opinions as my own anymore and I began to remove them from the strong parental roles that I initially placed them in. This was a mutual process where my trainers also became less willing to play the parental roles and encouraged me to draw from my own support structure and from my own personal resources.

*I think I also chose him on a different level so that I can heal. And I have learnt and grown. I'm still learning and growing, but I have learnt a little bit about relationships from my relationship with Professor X. About defining a relationship, about distance and closeness and boundaries. About redefining and meta-communicating with somebody despite severe anxiety. This will be a continuous challenge, but a worthy one.*

**Text box 4.47: Journal entry from 29-05-2011**

*Without examining my text, only examining my heart, I see so much that wasn't there before. I see my Lord God who I have come to know more, and through the teachings of Joseph Prince and the guidance of the Holy Spirit have realised how much He loves me and how His grace really is enough for me. I see how He really has given me more than double reward for the pain I have had in my life. I see a wonderful relationship with my mother, how I truly now realise that she really does love me unconditionally and with an appreciation for the closeness and the love and the support that I have received from her, more and more over the past years. I see my stepfather, and how he opened his home and his heart for me and my family. I see my psychologist, who is also my mentor, my fellow traveller, my therapist. I see some really good friends, Friend A, Student A, Student F, Instructor A, who have supported*

*me and given me companionship. I see my precious husband and child, who only ever gave me love, encouragement and support throughout this journey. I see my lecturers, especially Professor X, Lecturer I and Lecturer G who has been such a powerful part of this journey. And I see much, much more. But let me not get ahead of the process.*

**Text box 4.48: Journal entry from 07-07-2012**

*Organising Theme Four: Increase in Self-Acceptance and Self-Worth*

This theme involves an increase in self-acceptance and self-worth, which allowed for an integration of the different aspects of myself, taking better care of myself and being gentle with myself.

*So I hear voices. The voice of God, who tells me that although He is able to heal my broken arm, He is more interested in healing my broken heart; and that right now it is useful for my arm to be broken to teach me what I need to learn. Because five weeks will go by in the blink of an eye once I begin to see this injury as the opportunity it is. An opportunity to learn to be gentle on myself, to allow others to nurture me, to re-organize and re-wire myself, my family, my support system. To make room in my own personal system and all the systems I belong to, for myself, and for the others. To organise the space.... After establishing some medical facts, the voice of my therapist links up with the voice of God and speaks to me about gentleness. About needs. About nurturing. And these voices tell me that I am special, just the way that I am, that I am deserving of care and nurturance. That I really am, good enough, simply for who I am. And somehow, all of a sudden, everything sinks in and I can't even find the words to explain it. All I know is that I am taking care of my arm, and very, very slowly, learning to take care of myself.... But let me draw a final conclusion: these voices, God, my therapist and*

*my horse, have some very distinct things in common. These voices are gentle, these voices care, they are wise, sometimes they are cruel to be kind, but they always have my best interest at heart. And how much of these voices have to do with an actual God, an actual therapist and an actual horse, and how much of it is my own construction, is not all that important right now. What is most important, is from where I am looking at things right now, these voices bring healing, so I will continue to let myself be guided by them.*

**Text box 4.49: Journal entry from 03-04-2011**

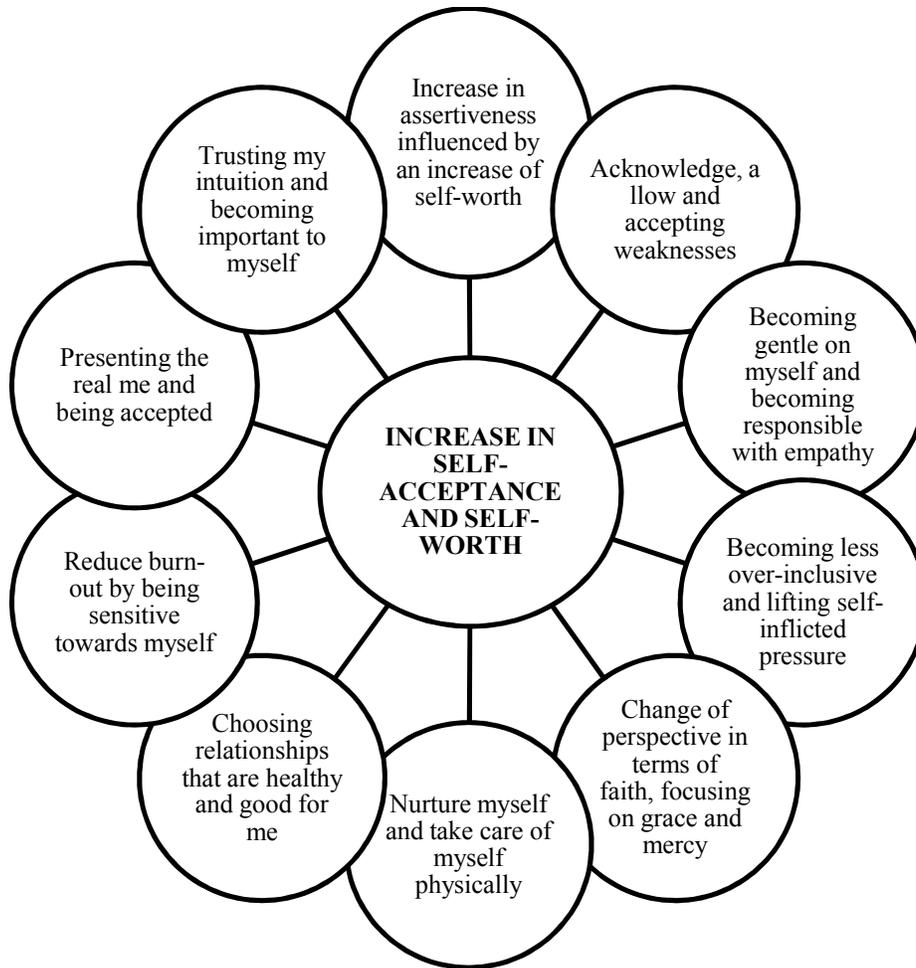
*I am resting, I am sleeping well and long hours. I am very sensitive to what I can and cannot do with my arm and let myself be guided, mainly by avoiding anything that causes me pain.*

**Text box 4.50: Journal entry from 17-05-2011**

*This, is one of those times where I need to take extra special care of myself. Extra, extra special care. A time where I take all the homeopathic meds that I need, a time where I need to breathe through my stomach and tap myself into calmness, a time that I have to keep my body healthy and nourish my soul and my spirit. And it is all my responsibility.*

**Text box 4.51: Journal entry from 15-06-2011**

Throughout my text it is noticeable that there has been an increase in my ability to be assertive, with a simultaneous increase in self-worth. It appears that once I began to value myself, I became less willing to allow others to abuse or exploit me. I began to believe that I was worth taking care of and standing up for. My self-doubt decreased and my self-confidence increased.



**Figure 4.4: Web-like illustration of the increase in self-acceptance and self-worth**

I engaged in a process where I began to accept the different parts of my self – both my strengths and weaknesses. I began to allow myself to make mistakes and I began to be gentle with myself, which was something that was very new to me. Accepting the different parts of myself allowed integration of myself rather than fragmentation. I was able to present both the weak and strong areas of myself to people. Even though I presented both the positives and negatives, I was still accepted and validated, which facilitated a process of self-acceptance and acceptance of the whole of who I am. This process reduced the expectations I placed on myself to perform and facilitated self-acceptance and being gentle with myself. I did not feel

the need to please everybody else and I began to differentiate what my needs and interests were by placing more importance on what I needed rather than on what I perceived others' expectations of me to be. I began to allow myself to do what I enjoyed and what I am good at.

*You can acknowledge my strengths, but then please also take into account my weaknesses and don't expect me to perform because I have no desire to. Expect me to sometimes be full of nonsense because that is just a part of who I am. Sometimes I will say something wise and sometimes I will say something really stupid. Sometimes I will help you and at other times, I may unintentionally hurt you. Sometimes I will make you laugh and at other times I might make you angry. I am not easy to understand.... I need to take very good care of myself to stay healthy enough to get as much out of this process as I can, and that takes up a lot of my time.*

**Text box 4.52: Journal entry from 02-02-2011**

Accepting the whole of who I am, contributed to my sense of feeling like an active agent rather than like a passive victim. I felt that when I accepted the weak areas, I could manage them rather than have them unknowingly influence me. I began a process where I stopped forcing myself to do things that I was uncomfortable with, despite feeling pressure from others to do things that I did not want to do. It became more important to follow my intuition and do what I believed was right for me as I felt that I am important enough and of sufficient value that I can do so.

This process of being sensitive towards myself and my own needs became very important to reduce my feelings of burn-out. When I received internal feedback in terms of feelings of burn-out, it facilitated a learning process where I became aware that I could only

tend to the needs of others once I have effectively taken care of my own needs. Being sensitive towards myself made it important to actually become aware of these needs, especially my emotional and spiritual needs. This sensitivity also included the importance of being responsible with my feelings of empathy for others in order to be respectful to myself and not to dis-empower people because I did not allow them the opportunity to take responsibility for themselves.

*I need to be a role model of somebody who takes care of my own emotional wellbeing. It is unfamiliar and hard for me.*

*I'm taking my homeopathic meds, well, I'm trying to remember to take it regularly. I'm drinking chamomile tea. I'm doing my Nia dancing. I'll start doing some yoga next month; I need to get my arm stronger. So there are some things that I am doing, some things that I am trying to do and some things that I am planning to do.*

**Text box 4.53: Journal entry from 07-08-2011 & 18-08-2011**

Taking care of myself and my own needs also included choosing relationships in which my needs for companionship and support were met. I had to learn how to allow support from others and to enjoy the companionship that came along with a collective search for meaning.

*I love my daughter more today than I have ever loved her before. I love that big brown horse with the white foot more than words can say. And I love myself. I really dealt with this whole thing as well as I possibly could have. And tonight, I have some perspective. I don't know how an outride with my horse and Instructor A and her horse and showering my horse with*

*water and love and shampoo and conditioner and more love turned into an experience that strengthened me from the inside and lifted me to a place where I can see clearly. But it did. And somehow I washed the mud from my eyes. Somehow I untangled my feelings of self-pity and self-hatred and self-blame. And I feel clean and soft. Shining like a show horse. It has been hard. But in these hard few weeks, lay a beautiful gift. I am a very strong young woman. I am the best mother to my daughter that I possibly know how to be. I try to make the right decisions, even when it is hard. This holiday I didn't touch my dissertation because I knew my daughter was more important. I nurtured myself. I bonded with my horse like never before, without expecting her to do anything. All I needed from her was her presence. And she gave me that and so much more. I bonded with my daughter through difficult times. I found a strength inside of me that I did not know existed. I moved closer to God than I have ever been before in my life. I am starting to more and more get a clearer picture of what it is that He wants for me. And I am so blessed.*

**Text box 4.54: Journal entry from 13-01-2012**

I began to allow myself to enjoy nature and other forms of beauty like art and musical performances. I realised the importance of taking time for myself to nurture myself and the importance of being in environments that filled me with a sense of peace and fulfilment.

*Where am I, in that moment when time stands still? Where is that moment where my whole body reacts, when the molecules that make up my body and my soul begin to vibrate and I feel aroused and awake? The strings of my heart are pulled and the music that play in my soul is so powerful that my entire being shudders and I feel completely weak. Like that moment when the boy you have been admiring for months, softly takes your hand.... I sit and I watch them, 7 teenage girls and Instructor A, playing on their horses. They gallop and they*

*turn. The wind is in their hair and the speed of their horses exhilarates everybody who watches.... Instructor A sits with me later and she points my horse out to me, walking with a groom in the road. "I love that horse too much", I say, with genuine concern. She laughs at me and tells me it just gets worse.... You can't get away from the love, she says. I spend four hours at Liberty in the presence of these majestic horses. I watch them in all of their beauty. I sit in the shade and I watch horses play. I watch their riders allowing them to truly be themselves, not holding them back. They are allowed to playfully compete and just be silly. I sit with this woman who understands all of my craziness.... I am delirious in the glory of the moment. My daughter is at complete peace, colouring in. It is warm but I sit in full shade with a light wind cooling the air to make the temperature just perfect. I watch the horses peacefully grazing in their camps, others running and playing and others rolling in the ground. I chat to teenagers and to this woman who stimulates me intellectually and emotionally.... Here at Liberty my whole being reacts to the context I find myself in. A context where I experience more peace than I have ever experienced before in my life.... Time stands still at Liberty. It's because of a little greyish white pony and a beautiful gentle giant. A gorgeous Arabian horse that looks like a schoolboy. It is Juanita who takes care of these animals as if each one of them were her only child. It is the wind in my hair and the peace in my heart. It is the smell of sheep and dust and a horse's tail proudly lifting as he trots to show off his majesty. It is my daughter who is so calm that nothing upsets her. It is Liberty.*

**Text box 4.55: Journal entry from 26-11-2011**

It became important to me to take care of myself physically by leading a healthy lifestyle and making time for exercise, which turned out to be extremely beneficial. The Adventure Bootcamp allowed me to spend time in nature and it also allowed me to connect with one of my fellow trainees who became a very good friend of mine. The horse riding and

Nia dancing provided a resource with regard to tending to my physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Horse riding and Nia dancing became a vital area of my life as it allowed me to release pressure and to take my mind away from the pressure and challenges that go along with psychotherapy training.

*Una must be one of the tiniest human beings I have ever come across. Not short. Just petite. She reminded me of a forest fairy and the music just made the image all the more appropriate. She is timid and reserved but when she dances she moves like the flames of a giant campfire. And that is what Nia is like. Una is our leader. She is clothed in a dress made of green velvet leaves, sometimes decorated with little pink and yellow flowers. We all dance around the fire at midnight, floating like fairies, we are all the same. It doesn't matter what the shape of your body is, how old you are, what colour your skin is and what your nationality is. Nobody cares who you are during the day. In that moment, we are forest fairies, floating through the air, dancing with Una. We are all beautiful in the glow of the fire. We become warriors and ballerinas all in one dance. We lie on our backs and like babies rediscover our legs. I love Nia and I love Una and I love all my fellow-fairies.*

*For one hour on a Monday, and one hour on a Thursday, I get to be a fairy. My spirit leaves my human body behind and I enter into different bodies. Sometimes I am a child-fairy, me and my friends, playing with the moon, playing in the rivers filled with rain that leads to the reservoir, ready to be spilled out onto earth. Then my child-like fairy body transforms into the shape of a guardian fairy, keeping the babies safe, holding them, ever so gently. For this hour, babies don't die, we keep them safe. For this hour, I pretend that ten-year old girls don't get raped and physically abused and tell me projective stories about lions who are beaten to death with stones and are then burnt. Stories about cats that kill themselves and*

*about puppies who go get their puppy-dog friends to beat up their mothers with stones because she punched the baby in the fist. For this hour, I don't live in a world where twenty-year old girls lose their parents, suddenly, one after the other. Where they get in terrible car accidents that breaks their bodies and deforms their faces as if they didn't have enough damage already. Just one hour, I get to be a fairy and forget that these things exist. Because it doesn't happen in fairy-land. We dance around the fire, we play with the moon, and we play with the water. We cradle babies and keep them safe, we become baby fairies, and we treasure beautiful flowers. My body moves to the sound of the music and I am aware of every single muscle and joint in my body. I'm alive, I want to cry from contentment. Just one hour on a Monday, one hour on a Thursday, I forget about the pain in this world. Dancing with Una.*

*What an incredible experience. We flew and we floated. We played in cool water and made shapes through the air. I opened my heart and gained so much strength. Enough strength to thrust negative visions from my thoughts. Enough strength to decide: Enough is enough. I paid for my mistakes and I learnt through them. That was my process. I don't have to take any responsibility for others and for their choices. I have no need to protect others anymore and I have no need to feel sorry for others anymore. I don't have to look down on others, I can simply accept them. I am withdrawing my investment into other people's lives, because it is not good for me.*

**Text box 4.56: Journal entries from 16-08-2011; 15-09-2011 and 19-11-2011**

In terms of my spiritual needs, it became important for me to turn my faith into a source of support and healing rather than judgement and condemnation. I allowed myself to be guided by a specific preacher on the Christian Network Channel in becoming less

conscious of my sin and shortcoming and more focused on the grace, mercy and love of God. I began to accept God's love for me and let go of the judgement and condemnation that I used to feel when it came to religious matters. I began to see Him as a loving parent rather than as a judgemental ruler.

*Organising Theme Five: Becoming Aware of and Accepting of my Own Internal Emotional State*

This theme includes, a need to be authentic, genuine and congruent along with a willingness to do important emotional work on myself, including a reconciliation of the past.

*But it is so hard, and nobody seems to understand how hard this is for me. Not the training, I am absolutely loving the training. This self-discovery. This self-reflection. Growing, changing, developing. It is hard. How can I explain to somebody that there is a Tasmanian Devil running around inside of my stomach and my chest. How it crashes into the sides and it feels as if somebody is hurting me from the inside. Smashing against the borders of my being from the inside out.... I am making no sense but I can't seem to get through the sadness and I have so many other things I want to get to but I need a better understanding of this deep sadness inside my soul.*

**Text box 4.57: Journal entry from 07-02-2011**

*I lost my hair, I broke my arm, but I made it through the first semester. Now, I am hanging in the deep sea. The waves are not threatening, but still I am scared. The emotions bubbling from my stomach like a violent volcano is pushing up like thick acid into my throat. It reaches*

*my eyes and speaks of confusion. Then my confused eyes flip over, look inwards, and I gradually begin to understand the terror in my stomach.*

**Text box 4.58: Journal entry from 26-07-2011**

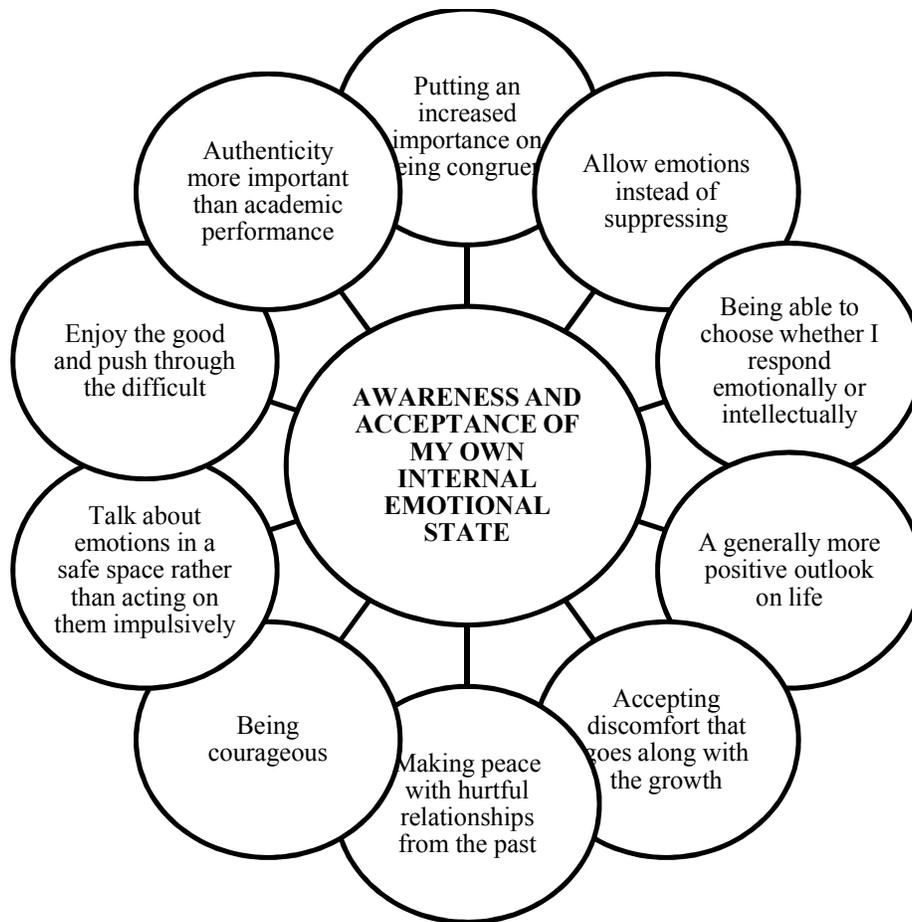
*There is so much sadness inside of me, residual sadness. It is not always easy to face all of that. But I try. It would be impossible to do everything I want to do and stay at peace if I didn't intentionally go looking for peace. I need to fill myself with peace, add some stillness to the storm. Otherwise I will surely drown.*

**Text box 4.59: Journal entry from 07-08-2011**

*My homeopath told me today that with great power come great responsibility. She said to me that taking the route I did, took extreme courage. She said that I must have known it was going to plunge me into spiritual growth. Now if we can just help me embrace the journey and not to be so afraid of the growth, so afraid of my strength, my power.*

**Text box 4.60: Journal entry from 22-09-2011**

Throughout my training journey, being authentic and genuine became more important than academic performance and pleasing others. I learnt to develop my own language instead of just making use of psychological jargon so that I could remain authentic and genuine. I allowed myself to enjoy the highlights of my training experience and I pushed through the challenging times. My resilience increased and I was able to recover more quickly from difficult emotional experiences.



**Figure 4.5: Web-like illustration of the awareness and acceptance of my own internal emotional state**

*What happened in my world was that my fellow trainee yelled and I cried. And I cried and I cried and I cried. And through my tears I thank him for the feedback.... I tell him that it is OK, that I am sad for a lot of reasons and not only what he said, but that I ask for feedback and I welcome feedback even though it is very hard for me to take. Even though it hurts. I tell him that I also have a fear of rejection and a need for acceptance which makes this especially hard. But the tears stream down my face non-stop.... And all I want to do is run. I want to run as fast as I can and I feel like a little lamb that is in a corner about to be slaughtered. And I*

*just want to run. And the group finishes and I get up immediately because the tears that continually ran down my face were nothing compared to the sobs I was holding back.*

*There is a little girl inside of me who wants to give up, replaying Lecturer B's words in her ears, over and over again saying "what makes you so special?" and her response "Nothing. There is nothing that makes me special." And I know, she really, really believes that. And I somehow try to connect her with the adult Sasja but she is hurt and she has built her walls. And I decide to let it go. Until I sit down in front of my mirror, I look up, and I feel my spirit lifting. I don't know if it was a combination of Student I's words, Joseph Prince's words and my words. But somehow everything connected and shifted the structure in my stomach and I feel my energy returning. And the little girl's voice that says: "I am not strong. I am so weak and nothing makes me special" gets drowned out by a voice without words. The voice without words somehow sends a message into my being without talking: "You are strong. And you are special. You are not special because of what happened in Lecturer B's group. You are special because of the way that you will deal with this. You can become very defiant, if you so choose, but you are too smart for that. You can sulk for three days if you so choose, but you are too strong for that. So lift up your chin and go about your business." And I do.... At the end of the day, all that yesterday's group was, was simply feedback. It was information that I can use however I choose to. It is an incredible opportunity to show that I can simply get back up, without having to attack anybody. That I can feel completely humiliated in a group and walk into the classroom the next day with a smile on my face. And I do.... And it hits me this afternoon that it really is a spiral. The event was similar. A horrifying group where I felt attacked and felt like a 5-year old girl. Except.... this time instead of four days, it took me less than a day to pick myself back up.*

**Text box 4.61: Journal entry from 02-03-2011 and 22-02-2012**

I also learnt how to accept and allow myself to feel my emotions rather than suppress them. When I allowed myself to feel my emotions, it enabled me to manage my own emotional experiences more efficiently.

*Lecturer H tells me that I must not always look at the fear as a bad thing. She said it can be counter-productive but it can also work in my favour. She says I have learnt to sit with intense fear, and to work through it. She says it is like that in therapy, with our clients, and I can model that to them. She says I have the ability to very quickly get people to open up and plunge into intense emotion. And then I model to them how to work through it. Because I can do it myself.*

**Text box 4.62: Journal entry from 28-09-2011**

*Professor X gave me feedback from my oral. He told me that they spoke about how I have gained balance and how I don't become overly-anxious about everything anymore.*

**Text box 4.63: Journal entry from 15-11-2011**

*The most meaningful thing Lecturer H gave me regarding the feedback on my oral was when she told me that I conducted myself with a lot of confidence. I told her that I was anxious and she said it didn't matter; because I had handles everywhere where I could hold on to. She said I could manoeuvre through the oral despite my anxiety because of the handles. I liked that picture. I didn't need anybody else to hold on to – the handles came from me, and I could hold on to them. She said I had handles all over the place. That makes me very happy! I grew handles from the inside that I can hold on to. And I have quite a few so I get to manoeuvre despite anxiety. Isn't that incredible?*

**Text box 4.64: Journal entry from 29-11-2011**

*And I allowed myself to feel the fear without paying too much attention to my thoughts or emotions.... And I had learnt a very valuable lesson. That I can allow fear and sadness and anger within myself without taking it too seriously. That when I stop feeling guilty about my thoughts and taking responsibility and accountability for every negative or evil thought I have and not take them so seriously, it passes quite quickly. And it was very valuable.”*

**Text box 4.65: Journal entry from 02-05-2012**

Managing my own emotions included writing about my experiences and talking about them in a safe and appropriate space, rather than acting on them impulsively. In these safe spaces I could make peace with hurtful relationships from the past and begin a process of forgiveness to forgive the people who I perceived as having harmed me. This process of forgiveness increased my feelings of peace and reduced my feelings of fear and anxiety.

There was a continuous interplay between being courageous and doing the difficult emotional work - between the writing and working hard in my own personal therapy. This process included experiencing intensely painful and fearful emotions, as well as freedom and liberation and new ways of thinking that came as a reward for doing the difficult emotional work.

*And how I can be a ‘real’ person, who is present? Who is afraid but not afraid to face a moment, even when the moment is difficult. It is about being brave and courageous, about doing the right thing even when it’s hard. About being responsible about impulses and desires that I know will be harmful to me.”*

**Text box 4.66: Journal entry from 18-01-2012**

There was discomfort that came along with the growth, including feelings of confusion and disorientation. However, I developed a generally more positive outlook on life and sense a sense of gratitude in knowing that I am loved and blessed. I learnt to accept what I perceived to be gifts of support and favour.

*Look at how far I have come. I am overwhelmed. I am happy. I am settling. I love my life....*

*It's like a dream. Like a dream. Thank you God!*

*I find myself wishing there were more hours in a day. Almost every day. I must be really enjoying my life.*

**Text box 4.67: Journal entry from 15-06-2011 & 13-09-2011**

It seemed that for the first time in my life, I was able to choose whether I responded with my head (intellectually) or with my heart (emotionally). I learnt how to allow emotion and to own it and I also learnt how to decide to respond to emotion intellectually. In turn, when I spent time with friends and felt the pull to give advice, I was eventually able to choose to react emotionally and just feel with them, rather than taking a disengaged intellectual position by analysing them and giving them advice. I felt that I gradually gained more control over my feelings of anxiety and depression.

*This was actually such a good experience for me to realise how I react internally to certain things. And that I then have a choice to own my own impulses. To be aware of them, to accept them, and then to decide what I want to do with my own internal responses and reactions IN COMBINATION with what is going on at the outside. I don't have the answer. Right now, all I have is a little bit of awareness. The attention flattered me. It gave me a sense of self-*

*importance and I felt a little arrogant. If I only react outwardly, in response to my internal impulses, I am in grave danger. But I will own it. I will own my feelings, own my thoughts, and own my experience.*

**Text box 4.68: Journal entry from 14-03-2012**

*Organising Theme Six: Looking at the World Through Different, More Evolved Lenses*

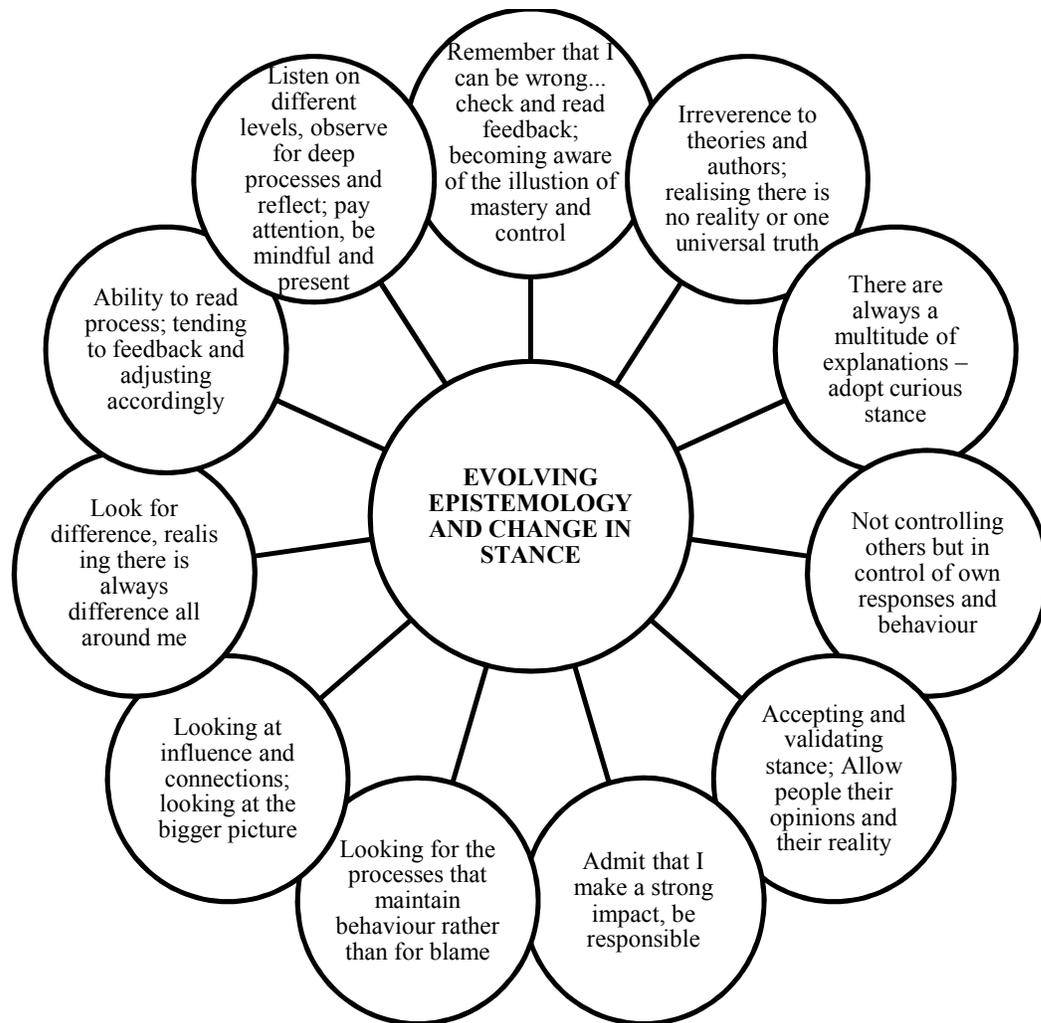
This theme includes the increased ability to see difference. It also includes adopting a curious stance and embracing uncertainty, reading feedback and making sense of this feedback. At the same time I learnt to consider the impact I make on other people and on the world, and I adopted a more accepting stance, rather than a controlling stance.

*Student I taught me to shut-up and sit down without him saying a word. But I did shut-up and sit down. I closed my mouth and tried to shut down my mind and I observed. I learnt so much. I observed with my senses, with my heart and with my stomach. Student I says he thinks my mind runs on a generator and he looked for the button to just switch it off. He somehow found that button and with an open mind, I could see. I saw the things my trainers are teaching us.*

**Text box 4.69: Journal entry from 11-05-2011**

My training experience facilitated an evolution of my epistemology, the way that I get to know and make sense of my world. I learnt to pay attention to verbal and non-verbal messages, to be mindful and present and to observe deep processes, and to reflect on what I observe. This increase in observational skills included the ability to read process - to look for the meaning behind the simple things that happen around me. I began to look for difference and I realised that there is always difference around me. I learnt to look for influences,

connections and patterns by paying attention to the ‘bigger picture’ and by attempting to temporarily look at it from an outsider’s perspective. Instead of looking for blame and victims, I learnt about circular influence and that it is more meaningful to look at the processes that maintain certain behaviours.



**Figure 4.6: Web-like illustration of the evolving epistemology and the change in stance**

I realised the importance of admitting that I do have a strong impact on those around me. I learnt to read the feedback that I receive from others, to end to the feedback and adjust accordingly. I furthermore learnt to be responsible with my understanding of things and not to share my opinions impulsively. I also developed a growing awareness that my understanding of things could be inaccurate and less useful at certain times.

*I learnt today that it is important to consider the effect my comments have on others. Lecturer H said when you communicate on a process level, you communicate on a level of relationships and you must have empathy and consider your impact.*

**Text box 4.70: Journal entry from 02-02-2011**

The interactive, relational nature of the training and my increased ability to read non-verbal feedback facilitated the adoption of a more accepting stance, as opposed to a controlling stance. I am now able to allow people to have their own opinions and their own views on reality and therefore I am also able to validate their perspectives. I realised that I cannot control people's behaviour, but I can be in control of my own behaviour and observe the impact I have on others and the impact they have on me. I have come to realise that everyone views reality through their own unique lenses and they make sense of the world in different ways. I also realised that everyone's views are equally valid.

*It's like the day my Ecosystemic Psychology professor put me in a hypnotic trance. Despite me resisting him, he managed to take the control from me and that is the day our relationship changed and we had warmth and intimacy after that. Letting go of the control is sometimes such a glorious thing.*

**Text box 4.71: Journal entry from 24-11-2011**

*I know, today, that at least 50% of my reaction to what is happening to me has nothing to do with the provocation from the outside and everything to do with who I am on the inside. I know, today, that I have no answers and that I am unable to explain anything. This world that God created for us to live in, the human being that He created, is just far too complex for a human mind to even attempt to comprehend and explain. God did give me the incredible ability to reason, and I do reason. I find descriptions and I attempt to fit them into the frames that I have created for myself in an attempt to make sense of my world. But in the end, it is never a final answer, or a fixed explanation. I cannot explain life and I cannot explain human behaviour. I cannot explain my own behaviour and I cannot explain the behaviour of others and to even attempt to do that, in my opinion, would be very arrogant.*

**Text box 4.72: Journal entry from 22-03-2012**

Initially, I felt pressured to understand all the literature that I was exposed to, but I came to realise that there is no way in which anyone can master psychological theory or fully understand human behaviour because of the complex and dynamic nature of this field. This realisation facilitated a process of letting go of the illusion of mastery and I became aware that being curious and open to different perspectives was more useful than attempting to master and explain everything. My realisation was that there are always more things to take into account than what I am aware of at the time and this moved me to keep describing what I observed rather than always search for explanations. It began to embrace uncertainty from a position of not-knowing, while remaining curious of the processes happening around me. This position of curiosity went along with an increased awareness that any information that I perceive is always simply more or less useful in a specific context at a specific time.

*I am overwhelmed with everything at the moment and I am feeling very uncertain about everything, but I will embrace the uncertainty, the not-knowing. And I will find my way.*

**Text box 4.73: Journal entry from 17-03-2012**

*As I walked into my community psychology placement, I knew, I knew from the pit of my stomach that I was completely out of my depth. And the further I walked and the more the caretaker spoke, I knew that if I were ever to let go of my teaching and advising style, this was the place where it was going to happen. That first day gave the 'not-knowing' concept an entire new meaning for me. Because here, I really, DID NOT KNOW. All I had to give, was me. I had no advice, I had no answers, I had no plans, no goals, no outcome in mind. All I had, was me.... And with every word she speaks, I sink into my own uncertainty. Yet, it didn't scare me.*

**Text box 4.74: Journal entry from 14-03-2012**

My increased sensitivity to context made for a more flexible way of making sense of the world and a break in the rigidity that used to be characteristic of my thinking patterns. I learnt to adopt a stance of irreverence to psychological theory and designs - not attaching myself to one explanation or one author's way of describing human behaviour. I also learnt the importance of remaining accountable for the stance that I do decide to take at any given time.

*I have been able to extract value from Lecturer I's input into my life. And yes, there are times that I corrupt my thinking with System's Theory (or shall I rather say Meta-theory in respect to Professor X). The thing is, just like Lecturer I, or Professor X, or Watzlawick or Whitaker, you can't have yourself be seduced by one way of thinking. One way of operating. It is not*

*either/or (a useful systems concept). There is a time and a place for all of these authors, all of these theories and Meta-theories and paradigms. But the epistemology I am developing will be unique and ever-changing and I am not attempting to follow a single lecturer, a single theory, a single author, even my incredible therapist. It will be my way. I don't know what "my way" is yet. But it is part of the journey.*

**Text box 4.75: Journal entry from 05-08-2011**

*When I write, it is simply one description of the way that I felt at that point.... It was only one description and it was valid then. But as soon as I move, even when I move just a little bit, my whole view changes. And writing does that to me. It moves me and my view changes. My perspective changes. So it would make sense that I arrive at different 'explanations' for the same phenomena. It doesn't invalidate how I felt yesterday and the way I described it yesterday. There is still value in the way I saw things yesterday and maybe tomorrow I will have another description. And the more descriptions I have for an event, the more depth and dimension there is to my experiences. Which means that there is more information available to me about my world.*

**Text box 4.76: Journal entry from 11-03-2012**

*Organising Theme Seven: Support from my Personal Therapist*

This theme includes support from my personal therapist in encouraging me to follow my dream through a process of finding fit and flow.

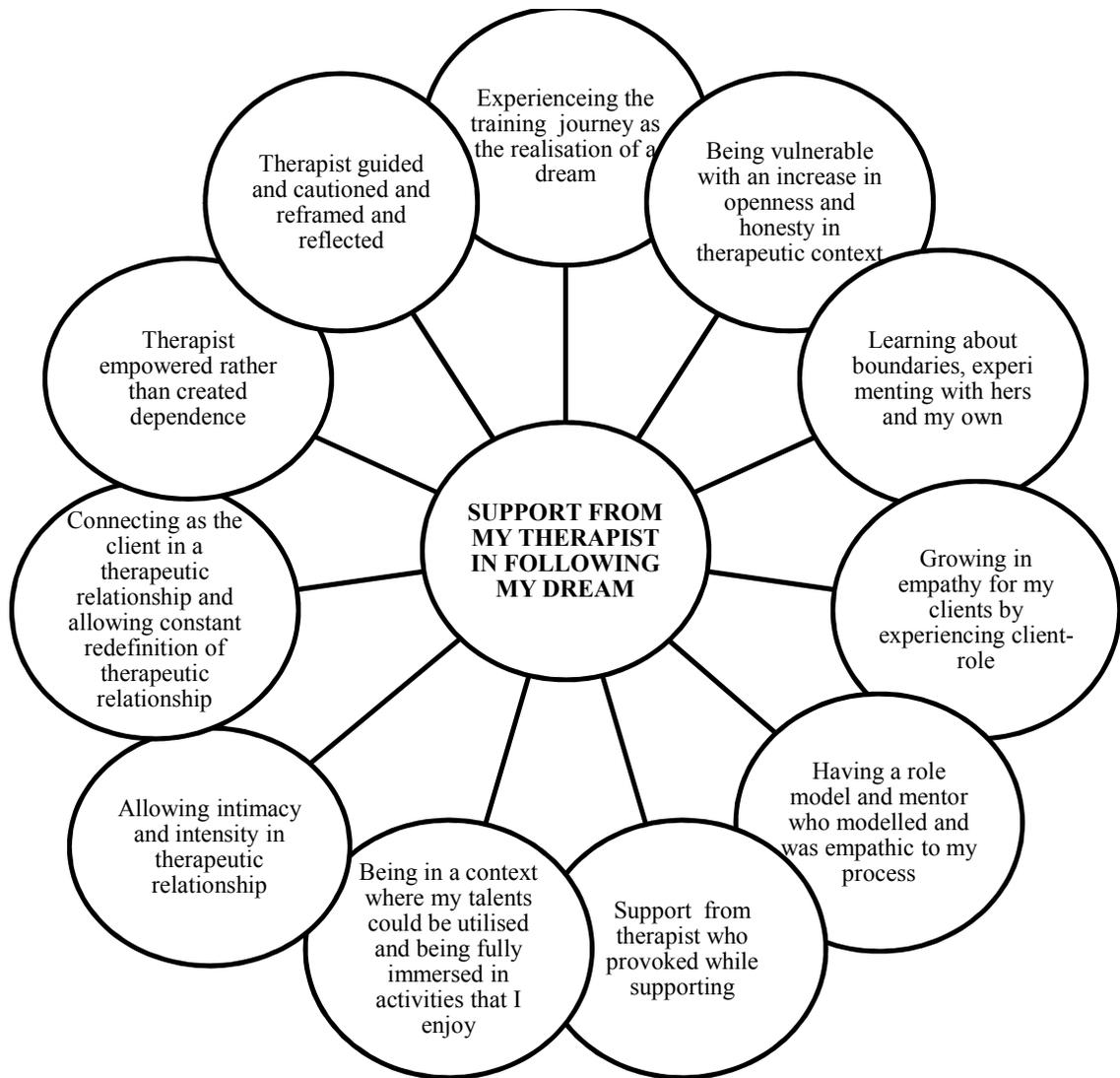
*Sometimes, I believe that she is an angel that God put on earth especially for me. But mostly these days, I realise that she is human, and that our relationship is real. That it is not just in*

*my head. I hear her voice, almost every day. Sometimes little pearls of wisdom, suggestions or provocations that she actually uttered, sometimes I make up things that I think she would say. Because you see, once a week for an hour, is simply not enough because there is too much time in between where I am in danger. In danger of hurting myself and hurting others, because I sometimes feel so lost. So I construct a voice inside of my head.*

**Text box 4.77: Journal entry from 03-04-2011**

*This dream, I sometimes tell people, was born when I was 12. That is not true. This dream was born the day that I was conceived. It is a part of my DNA and it rushes through my veins. Every time my heart beats, it is there. I understand that I need to take a break from my training and the studying, but I also need to accept that this is more than a 'job' for me. I need to be accepting of the passion that rushes through my entire body when I realise that my dream is coming true. It's not really a dream, it's my destiny. And finally, finally, I am moving in the direction where everything flows because somehow it is just right. And I can suppress it as much as I like but rebelliously it rises up with a vengeance because it is a part of who I am. A painter can decide to take a break from painting, yet it won't stop him from seeing art and beauty come to him when he looks at something. Something that makes his blood warmer and causes it to rush through his veins. Then he can say: "it is OK, we will paint it, but not now, we are resting now". But he needs that acceptance. I need the acceptance. I can take a break from writing, but that doesn't stop the words rushing through my mind, words that want to move through my fingers onto my screen. Sometimes, I can say, "not now, we are resting", and be gentle about it. But I can't make a stupid heading that reads Clinical Psychology, as if it is something separate from me and reject everything concerning that because I am on holiday. That is ridiculous. It is a part of who I am.*

**Text box 4.78: Journal entry from 26-06-2011**



**Figure 4.7: Web-like illustration of the support from of my therapist in following my dream**

*I have no idea how she did it. How she became as soft and as warm as her jersey. Covering me with care. But that was what I needed. And I am not interested to judge my need and to label it as pathological. The only way I am willing to describe that need is as real. I had a real and a profound need for my therapist to 'hold' me and to let me know that even though I lashed out like an angry teenager the previous week, blaming her for my pain, she still loves me.... Tonight, I don't care where I do my internship. The only thing that matters to me right*

*now is that I get to be a Clinical Psychologist. And walking on the streets of Sterkfontein Hospital it hit me like a strike of thunder. It is so close that I can almost taste it. I am really, really going to be a Clinical Psychologist. And I can't wait. And we will all adapt to my working hours. And my daughter will be OK, because I will be happy.*

**Text box 4.79: Journal entry from 15-06-2012**

*What an honour. What an incredible honour to walk into a broken life, with a broken soul and a broken body, and create a context with them, where they may just have a chance. Even if it is a slim chance, it is a better chance than they had before our journeys crossed.*

**Text box 4.80: Journal entry from 15-09-2011**

My psychotherapy training experience created a context for me where I reached a place of impulsion, recognising from deep within myself that I was living the realisation of a dream. I remained aware of how strong the need within me was to become a psychotherapist and I realised the importance of finding what I was good at and actually doing it. I became fully immersed in activities that I enjoyed and I remained energised and focused and observed how my involvement in these activities brought me a sense of accomplishment and success. Finding something that truly fulfilled me left me feeling inspired and enriched and it gave me the courage to withdraw from activities and involvements where I did not find a fit and a sense of flow.

*Yesterday as I was driving home from Bootcamp, the DJ on the radio spoke of a study that was done to measure how children's dreams change as they grow up. How they wanted to become doctors or policemen but that that usually change as they grow. And how these dreams usually don't come true. She asked people to phone into the radio station and answer*

*the following question: "If you could choose anything, anything in this world that you could do and get paid for, what would it be?" And without any doubt, I know what the answer to that question is for me. And that realisation and the whole process of becoming aware of what is busy happening in my life hit me at such a deep level that I can still feel it more than a day later. And I know, I know, that I am truly, truly blessed.... that moment of becoming aware that I am going to do exactly that which I have wanted to do my entire life, begins a ripple effect and I realise that it is about more than a profession for me.*

**Text box 4.81: Journal entry from 22-01-2011**

*And then my community psychology supervisor looks at me and says to me "it's just like you Sasja, you go to Soshanguve even when you are in pain with your finger because I know that this runs through your nerves and your fibres." And somehow, those words reminded me how badly I wanted this. That despite my experience that our group facilitator is making this hard on me, there is nowhere else in the world I rather want to be. Because this really does, run through my nerves and my fibres.*

**Text box 4.82: Journal entry from 13-03-2011**

*Simply acknowledging that families impact on you is not enough to make you a second order therapist. You need to acknowledge what you take into the therapeutic situation. Your self. Your unique essence, your past, your memories and your dreams, your unfinished business and unmet needs, your ideals and ideations. And I realise: when I walk into a ward round, the context arouses me the same way I get aroused at Liberty. Because this is the context of my dreams. Ever since I was a very small child. Every book I read, every movie I watched. The games of my fantasy. They were games with psychiatrists and psychologists and*

*psychiatric nurses and social workers. My dream. And I am sitting here, aroused to my core, hanging on every single word the psychiatrist is saying.*

**Text box 4.83: Journal entry from 18-04-2012**

Following my dream was strongly facilitated through the continuous support from my personal therapist who provoked me to remain authentic and congruent, while at the same time she supported me to be true to myself and what I truly wanted and needed. She was a model and a mentor to me and was empathic to my process. She also guided me, cautioned me, reframed the meanings that I attributed to my perceptions that caused me discomfort and reflected my feelings and my experiences. She empowered me rather than creating dependence.

*But she is not going to treat me as if it is 2001 anymore, because it isn't. She is not going to treat me as if I am sinking in the sand, because she knows that I'm not. She is not going to treat me as if I am lost in a big black hole, because she knows that I'm not. She knows I haven't forgotten. She hasn't either. But she knows that I am about much more than my past. I am about more than the pain and the tragedy. I am also about the healing and the growth and the strength. And she is not going to let me seduce her into believing that the little girl inside of me needs to be on her lap, because she knows the little girl inside found a place on my lap. It's like I said to my client at Soshanguve: 'it's not my job to comfort the little one inside of you, it's my job to teach you how to comfort her'. One hour a week simply is not enough for a job that important. And my psychologist knows. And I know.*

**Text box 4.84: Journal entry from 11-09-2011**

*I will never ever deny what my therapist has meant to me and I believe that she still has more to give. I don't feel that we are at the end of our therapeutic journey. But I can stop for a second and place our relationship in context. That she has had an impact on me and on who I have become, is inevitable. But it is not because she molded me or because I molded myself in an attempt to become more like her. It is simply because she has helped me to get in touch with my authentic self and my dreams and my capabilities. And we have some things in common. I don't have to know her personally to know that. But I am not a function of her, I am not her puppet and I was not molded by her. We work together to get me as unstuck as I possibly can be so that I can move freely to become who I want to be. She simply walks my journey with me. She doesn't direct my path. I make the choices and I take responsibility for them.*

**Text box 4.85: Journal entry from 11-06-2011**

*Joseph Prince says that we grow character through hardships. Lecturer I says that character is the life jacket that brings us back to the surface when the storms of life take us under. Well, I guess that is why she makes it so incredibly hard. Maybe it is because I keep growing through her provocations that she keeps on provoking me. Whitaker says that personal confrontation is the other side of personal caring. He believes that one of the main tasks of the therapist is to mobilise the courage that the clients need in order to work through their own struggles. But sometimes, I want to rebel and ask her to leave me alone.... This relationship is so confusing. She has taught me about God simply by accepting me and loving me just the way that I am. My therapist gives me a chance to experience that unconditional acceptance. And that may well have been the greatest gift that she has ever given me.*

**Text box 4.86: Journal entry from 04-07-2011**

In our therapeutic context, I learnt how to differentiate between academically learning about becoming a psychologist and having a relationship with a psychologist. Our therapeutic context became a place where I could learn how to connect intimately with another person and how to allow the intensity that came along with the connection. Experiencing the anxiety that comes along with being in the client-role helped me to grow in empathy for my clients.

*It is so hard to be the client in a therapeutic relationship where you feel intensely cared for and care intensely. Being allowed to have conversations of mutual affection in a relationship that on so many levels is so one-sided. It's all about me-, me-, me-, except IT ISN'T. But I don't get to ask her how she is doing. How her dog and her horse and her cat is doing. We don't get to talk about her feelings. That's not what I pay her for, which in a way makes it cold and clinical. I sometimes wish she could just be my friend. I sometimes want to discharge myself, find myself a different therapist and ask her to just be my friend. I so wish that I could just, for once in my life, also mean something to her. And now I feel like breaking down because I know that I can't. I need her to be my therapist. Not a wise owl or a magical unicorn. Just my human therapist who is helping me to get the knots out of my hair. I need her to help me because I have some injuries and I can't reach everywhere. And I can't see anywhere. I need her help. And she helps me. In a place where it is warm, accepting, safe. And where we care about each other.*

**Text box 4.87: Journal entry from 07-04-2011**

*The work I did stretch far beyond simply reading and studying and experiencing the first semester. It is about so much more than writing tests, doing practicals and orals. It goes back to everything I have been through, everything I survived. It includes every hour spent in my psychologist's office and only God knows how hard that sometimes was and still is. Some*

*sessions bring immense relief and sheer joy, but some sessions are so hard that I don't know if I can keep going back. But I do, because hard as it is, I allow the healing to happen.*

**Text box 4.88: Journal entry from 26-06-2011**

*My psychologist has taught me so much about God.... she demonstrated unconditional love and acceptance to me, making Joseph's sermons so relevant. I would have never made the spiritual progress that I have, if it weren't for her. She may be somewhat uncomfortable with me referring to her as 'the healer of me' and would probably remind me that I worked hard with her and that she simply created the context for healing. That is OK. We can use those words. It doesn't really make a difference to how I feel. And now I am losing the words because I feel overwhelmed with emotions and I simply don't have the vocabulary to turn my coming tears into words. How will I ever be able to thank her? And how do I even begin to thank my Lord for sending her on the broken road that I was on. And now all I have are these tears that I can no longer hold back. And no words that are good enough. But seeing as she is very good with reading subtext and since she can see beyond what she can see, I will try...*

*[An extract from a letter to my psychologist] Other times I feel that maybe the strategies that you use in therapy work for me when I see my clients, not only because of a process of imitation, but perhaps because inside of me those skills lay dormant and you simply awakened them and showed me how to use them. That maybe it really is me, and not me trying to imitate you. And when I think about my clients and feel myself connecting with them in a powerful way, I know that it can't be you, but that this really is me, connecting with my clients, caring for them, accepting them, validating them, for some, maybe for the first time in their lives. And I know that it is not a strategy that I learnt from you, because caring that sincerely for another person without even trying is not something that comes from the outside*

**Text box 4.89: Journal entry from 16-04-2012**

It is within this personal therapeutic context that I learnt about boundaries and had the opportunity to experiment with boundaries - hers and my own. I increasingly became more open and willing to be honest about what has happened and what is happening as well as about my thoughts and my feelings. I experienced that allowing myself to be vulnerable leads to true interpersonal connection. My therapist has been a role model and a mentor throughout this process of psychotherapy training. She has also been a tremendous source of support and she provided me with a context for deeper learning.

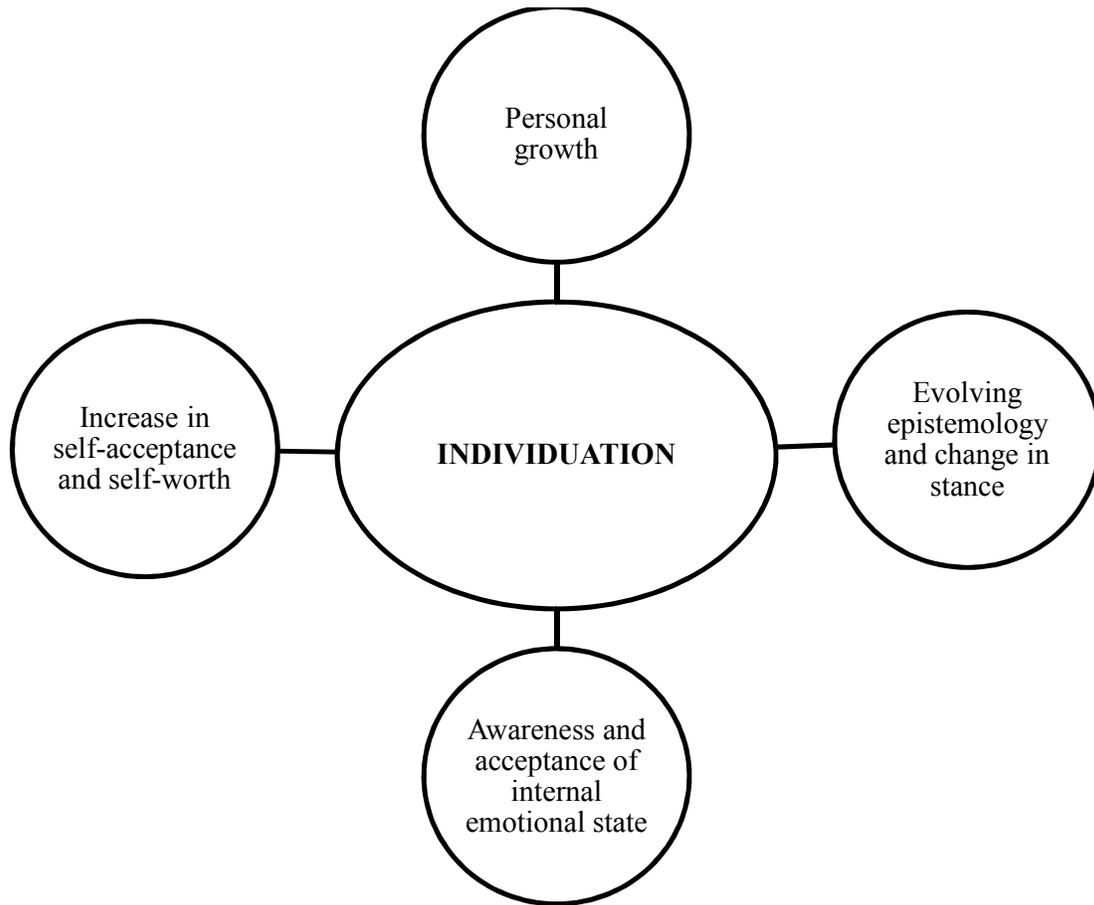
[Talking to myself...] *“And it is OK to just be grateful that you found a good psychologist who cares about you deeply. The two of you have spent a lot of time together and have worked through a lot of pain, a lot of fear. You have untangled a lot of knots. And she will always be a big part of you. Somehow, the journey you have shared so far has brought about that she is a big thread that runs through your life story. Off course you want to be special to her. You told her your story, best as you knew how to. Best as you could remember, and as honestly as you were capable of. And she listened. I guess, at the end of the day, all we could ask for is for somebody who finds our story worth listening to.*

**Text box 4.90: Journal entry from 30-09-2011**

I will now list the two global themes which constitute the central story line. These two themes will be discussed and interpreted in Chapter 5. After listing the global themes, the themes extracted from the independent coders that overlap with the organising themes I extracted will be discussed.

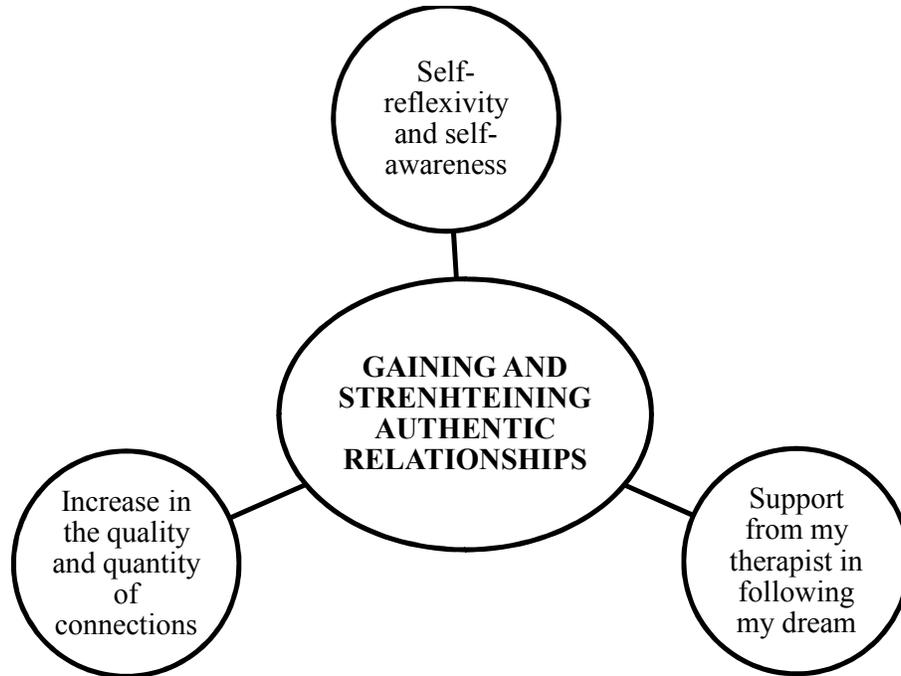
The Global Themes

*Global Theme One: Individuation*



**Figure 4.8: Web-like illustration of individuation**

*Global Theme Two: Gaining and Strengthening Authentic Relationships, with the Self and Others*



**Figure 4.9: Web-like illustration of gaining and strengthening authentic relationships**

Themes That Overlap With Those of the Independent Coders

*Themes overlapping from Organising Theme One: Personal Growth*

The following theme overlapped with regard to Organising Theme One:

- Moving from dependence to autonomy.

*Themes overlapping from Organising Theme Two: Self-reflexivity and Self-awareness*

The following theme overlapped with regard to Organising Theme Two:

- Increasing in self-awareness.

*Themes overlapping from Organising Theme Three: Increase in the Quantity and Quality of Connections*

The following themes overlapped with regard to Organising Theme Three:

- Increasing in the ability to communicate directly (confrontation).
- Developing a sense of togetherness.
- Connecting with the horse as a
  - source of fear and power;
  - symbol of freedom;
  - symbol of spirituality;
  - source of companionship;
  - healer and teacher; and
  - symbol of tameness and harnessing of power.

*Themes overlapping from Organising Theme Four: Increase in Self-acceptance and Self-worth*

The following themes overlapped with regard to Organising Theme Four:

- Increasing in self-confidence.
- Increasing in self-belief.
- Investing in enduring relationships.
- Trusting and resting in God.
- Developing an openness to growth within the context of relationships.

*Themes overlapping from Organising Theme Five: Awareness and Acceptance of the Internal  
Emotional State*

The following themes overlapped with regard to Organising Theme Five:

- Increasing in authenticity.
- Reconciling the past.
- Re-connecting with the inner child.
- Increasing in openness and congruency.
- Demonstrating courage.

*Themes overlapping from Organising Theme Six: Evolving Epistemology and a Change in  
Stance*

The following theme overlapped with regard to Organising Theme Six:

- Letting go of control.

## Conclusion

This chapter discussed the results obtained from this study. Extracts from my journal were provided in an attempt to add to the authenticity of the findings. The following chapter will contain the interpretation of the central story line through a discussion of the two global themes in order to answer the research question. The study will thereafter be concluded.

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

This chapter will serve as a final interpretation of the central story line in an attempt to answer the research question. The findings will be grounded in the theory that was explained in Chapter 2, by referring to literature that is in accordance to the research findings. The chapter and the research study will then be concluded by a consideration of the possible implications of the study and an exploration of the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future studies will also be made.

#### Interpretation of Central Themes

##### *Introduction*

From the literature that I reviewed for the purpose of this study, it appears that the concept ‘differentiation of self’ in relation to psychotherapy training has not been used in recent years. I was unable to find recent literature on the concept of differentiation and on training the self of the therapist and therefore I mostly made use of early pioneering work in the literature review in Chapter 2 on the differentiation of the self during psychotherapy training. Concepts that have been recently used include terms such as *personal growth* and *individuation*. I made the decision to use the pioneering work that was done on the process of differentiation as I believe that the concept deserves more attention, especially in the area of psychotherapy training. My understanding of the concepts of *differentiation* and *personal*

*growth* or *individuation* is that they cannot be seen as synonyms. Even though differentiation does refer to a process of personal growth and individuation, it is important to take note of the fact that differentiation happens in a context of connection, whereas individuation may possibly lead to isolation.

When I entered into psychotherapy training, I found that many stories describing how the training process was a lonely journey, and how relationships deteriorated outside the context of training, were told by previous psychotherapy students. I was never willing to accept this as an absolute truth and I decided that if individuating and growing by myself will cost me my outside relationships, then I would much rather differentiate as this option seemed to me to make room for the strengthening of relationships.

#### *The Results: The Central Story Line*

The central story line that is reflected in the two global themes, namely *individuation* and *gaining and strengthening authentic relationships*, seems to reflect the process of differentiation accurately. The combination of these two processes are in accordance with the literature that defines differentiation as the ability to balance individuation *and* emotional connection, which includes the ability to distinguish between emotional and intellectual impulses and the ability to choose how to respond to such impulses (Meyer, 1987; Schnarch, 2009; Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988). Differentiation is further explained as being able to tolerate intimate relationships *while simultaneously* being autonomous (Bowen, 1988). It would therefore appear that throughout my psychotherapy training there was a successful engagement with the process of differentiation and a focus on integration, rather than isolation. The increase in integration in turn increased my emotional maturity, the

sophistication of my thinking processes, my role repertoire and the strengthening of authentic relationships.

*Interpreting the Results: A Successful Engagement with the Process of Differentiation of Self  
During Psychotherapy Training*

I believe that this process began with a dream that I was passionate about. I was then given the opportunity to follow this dream which led me to a place of incredible flow and momentum. I began to do what I enjoyed and what I was good at, and my feelings of positive emotion increased. However, with the increase in positive emotion came a responsibility to manage emotional arousal because it had the danger of facilitating a stance of over-inclusiveness, which also had the potential to lead to frequent episodes of burnout.

My trainers took the responsibility of curbing me when it was necessary and they told me to slow down. Even though I did not listen at first, I began to realise that they had a point and I eventually learnt from my own experiences that it is not possible to do absolutely *everything* – the lesson was there as a thread in the tapestry that was my journey of becoming a psychotherapist. The thread would not have integrated into this tapestry by deductive learning only. It had to be experienced and this experience had to accompany emotional arousal for this thread to become a part of who I was becoming, even though it was sometimes painful.

Smith (2003) explains that lessons learnt in a context of increased emotional arousal are the lessons that are integrated into our *selves*. The lessons increased while I got to know who I am through a process of self-reflection. Alred (1999) explains that increased

self-awareness that is obtained through self-reflexivity facilitates the process of differentiation and an increased understanding of the self and others. Boscolo and Bertrando (1996) state that this form of self-reflexivity enables us to integrate all the different voices we hear throughout our training experience. I began to learn how to use my strengths and manage my weaknesses. I had to learn to draw on a support structure because asking for help and support was something that was very unfamiliar to me. I learnt that reflecting on feedback is essential for the feedback to be a source of deeper learning (Keeney, 1983).

One of the most significant inner experiences that I had during this process was the realisation that the psychotherapist is also a human being, a unique human being with a set of assumptions and their own share of unfinished business and unmet needs (Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987). I was confronted with my own unfinished business and I was given the opportunity to begin to work through my personal conflicts in order to reduce the amount of blind spots I had (Alred, 1999; Aponte & Winter 1987). This made it easier for me as a human being who happens to be a psychotherapist to deal with what my clients bring to the therapeutic process efficiently, without letting my own emotional issues contaminate the context (Aponte & Winter, 1994; Haber, 1990). The support of my trainers in the resolution of my own personal issues facilitated a process where I began to connect with the inner resources required to break with the rigid relational patterns that impeded my process of differentiation (Aponte, 1994; Aponte & Winter, 1987; Lander & Nahon, 2005).

I became increasingly aware that as a psychotherapist, I need to be able to take care of my own emotional welfare (Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987). I have to be able to respond to my clients and not to react to them impulsively (Bowen, 1988). I realised that in order to accomplish this, I would require sufficient inner resources to deal with what my clients bring

into therapy (Aponte & Winter, 1987; Lander & Nahon, 2005). I learnt to create places for myself outside of the therapeutic context where I could refuel emotionally so that I would be able to tend to my clients in the therapeutic context. At the same time, I believe that I need to be very honest and clear about my assumptions and the positions I take in the therapeutic context in order to be an honest, congruent and authentic therapist (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988; Satir, 1987).

I used my training experience to act on these cognitive realisations and I actually began to put into practice the things that I was reading and writing about. Keeney (1983) explains that when students experience for themselves an evolving epistemology, they become able to move to an “entire new system of punctuation” (p. 159). Bach (1977) illustrates the same concept by stating, “The world is your exercise-book, the pages on which you do your sums. It is not reality, although you can express reality there if you wish” (p.97).

The liberating effect of an increased awareness of the options that are always available to me made it easier to remain committed to the difficult process of differentiation. I experienced that the anxiety and confusion that goes along with differentiation truly is essential to the growing and learning process (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988).

I have learnt and experienced that clients bring their distinct behavioural patterns into my office and that these patterns play out in the therapeutic relationship (Cashdan, 1982). As a psychotherapist, I have to be able to observe from a distance and attempt to understand the meaning of their behaviour, as well as attempt to understand the needs behind their demands (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). I have to be able to work from a first order cybernetic perspective to co-create a context for change with my clients (Becvar & Becvar,

2009). However, I should also be able to move into a second order cybernetic perspective and into a reflexive stance where I can observe the deeper processes occurring within the therapeutic context (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). I learnt to allow myself to feel the impact that my clients made on me, but I also learnt to identify their impact and then observed the whole of what is happening (Cecchin, 1992). Being sensitive to the impact that my clients made on me while taking the context into account, allowed me to learn to bracket my own emotional issues. It also allowed me not to get stuck in the content of what my clients brought into therapy and not to react impulsively to the impact my clients made on me (Whitaker & Bumberry, 1988).

I learnt that as a psychotherapist I need to accept my clients the way they are, but I must also be brave enough to confront their behaviour when it is harmful (Smith, 2003). In order for me to be able to confront their behaviour, I need to be emotionally mature and have vast inner strength and resources (Aponte & Winter, 1987; Lander & Nahon, 2005). I require a lot of support in my own personal life and I need to take good care of myself (of my body, soul and mind) when I am not with my clients (Kübler-Ross, 1995; Satir, 1987). I believe that it is then that I am able to connect with my clients and encourage their strengths. It then becomes possible to accept my clients and care for them so that in time they will begin to accept and care about themselves. I believe if I go about this in a very authentic way, my clients will respect me and my opinions. I have realised that when I respect my clients, when I can see their worth and when they are convinced that I am authentic and congruent, they will recognise this and a process of increasing their sense of self-worth may be facilitated (Kübler-Ross, 1995, Satir, 1987).

### *Conclusion of Interpretation of Findings*

I will state my current beliefs and assumptions after the interpretation of my research results. I believe that psychotherapists need thorough academic knowledge and a large repertoire of skills in order to be potent in the therapeutic process. They also need to be authentic and genuine, and they need to be supported by people who can remain connected to them while allowing them to grow and develop continuously. Psychotherapists should not react impulsively to provocations from clients. They need to tend to their own unfinished business and unmet needs in their own time and work through their past experiences, their current hurts and their future fears.

They need to be aware of their own strengths so that they can use these strengths and they need to be aware of their weaknesses so that they can manage them. Psychotherapists need to be emotionally mature and self-aware. They also need to increase their own self-awareness through self-reflexivity continuously. They need to be able to carry out deep observation and sophisticated conceptualisation. In essence, psychotherapists need to have a developing, differentiated sense of self and they need to be committed to the process of differentiation continuously.

### *Answering the Questions*

In closing this research study, I will tend to the specific questions that I posed at the beginning of the study.

**Question 1:** *Did my training journey grant me with the qualities and skills mentioned in the previous section that I believe are required in order to be an efficient psychotherapist?*

I have come to realise that psychotherapy training is not about receiving a certain set of qualities from a training team or a training institution. However, I have allowed my training experience to contribute to my interest in engaging in the process of developing and refining these qualities (Haber, 1990; Snyders, 1985). I have realised that it is a continuous process, and that it is imperative that I remain committed to allowing these qualities to evolve that I believe are important for a psychotherapist to possess. I furthermore realise that I need to be open to the possibility that there are many more qualities required to do this job efficiently that I am not yet aware of (Satir cited in Brothers, 2000; Smith, 2003).

**Question 2:** *How did my training experience facilitate my engagement in the process of adding these qualities to my therapeutic identity?*

It is my opinion that the Unisa training team is truly aware of the importance of training their trainees on an emotional level, while also not neglecting theory. The relationships between my supervisors and I is where the training took place. The training was a collaborative effort that encouraged integration of technical as well as personal competence, which included new ways of thinking (Alred, 1999; Aponte & Winter, 1987; Haber, 1990; McCann, 1999; Peterson, 1991; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). It was my experience that the team was interested in the creation of an autonomous therapist, rather than exclusively teaching techniques (Aponte & Winter, 1987; Snyders, 1985).

My exposure to the theory, both on a didactic as well as on an experiential level, and being introduced to different authors in the field of Psychology provided me with the opportunity to expand my knowledge regarding psychological theory (Keeney, 2009). My supervisors, during the supervision of my practical placement, provided me with the opportunity to fit my experiences and observations with regard to therapy to the theory that I have been exposed to (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). They believed in me and in my skills which gave me confidence. My supervisors also recognised both my strengths and my weaknesses and they were able to form a strong connection with me to make room for growth within that supervisory relationship (Aponte & Winter, 1987). My supervisors saw how the unique traits that made me who I am impacted on my work as a psychotherapist and confronted me with the resulting impact by provoking me to grow, but in a context of support (Andolfi *et al.*, 1983). Furthermore, my trainers confronted me very directly with certain habits that I have that can negatively impact on my skills as a therapist (Aponte & Winter, 1987; Haber, 1990; Snyders, 1985).

I was also exposed to ecosystemic theory, which proved to be useful in adopting a different and more sophisticated way of getting to know and understand my world (Becvar & Becvar, 2009; Hoffman, 1981; Keeney, 1983; Watzlawick *et al.*, 1974). My self-awareness was significantly increased by receiving constant feedback from group members and trainees and reflecting on this feedback, both in my journal and with my therapist (Andolfi *et al.*, 1983). I formed authentic relationships in the training context along with a sense of achieving success in what I did, which contributed to a sense of self-acceptance and an increase in self-worth.

The demands of the psychotherapy training caused me to realise that I cannot do everything by myself and that I had to learn to ask for help, as well as to take care of myself in order to survive the training journey. My relationships with my trainers provided me with an opportunity to deal with my tendency to place those who I perceive to be ‘parent-like’ in parental positions. My training experience became a mirror and a training ground to deal with my automatic, but less useful ways of being (Aponte, 1994; Haber, 1990).

**Question 3:** *Which factors played a facilitating role in my engagement with the process of differentiation?*

I believe that my life experiences added to my emotional maturity at the time of my entry into training. Emotional maturity contributed to my capacity to be able to engage with others intimately, to become an active agent of my training experience and to utilise this context as a provocation to facilitate differentiation (Duhl, 1987). I realised early on in my training journey that it was both my responsibility and that of my trainers to co-create a context where I could learn and change (Haber, 1990; Snyders, 1990). Snyders (1990, p.15) states, “the evolution of contexts is a co-production written by all participants”.

The realisation that I was truly following a life-long dream provided me with the motivation not to lose momentum during difficult times. As Coelho (1998, p.180) states, “When you want something with all your heart, that’s when you are closest to the Souls of the World. It’s always a positive force”. The support I received from my family and my friends during my training experience was essential, including the support from three of my fellow trainees who became my friends and who understood the challenges that went along with psychotherapy training. My own engagement with activities that nourished my body and

my soul outside of the direct training context proved to be important factors that contributed to my emotional wellbeing. These activities included the Adventure Bootcamp in the Botanical Gardens, Nia Dancing and most importantly, horse riding.

I will close this final chapter of reflection by leaving you with the thread that ran throughout my training journey and this study - the significance of experiencing for myself the importance of psychotherapy. I have increasingly been able to make myself more vulnerable to the process and to experience the liberation that comes along with responsibly making myself vulnerable (Aponte, 1994). Therefore I will end my story the way I began it and I will share why I believe I chose this specific study, why I was able to persist with this study and why I am now able to release this study.

I have been the one on the ‘couch’. I was afraid and I was sad. I was afraid to talk, I was afraid to feel and I was afraid to trust. I know today that I would not have been able to work with somebody who did not value herself or who did not know herself or who was not especially skilled and knowledgeable. I needed someone with the capacity to be real and authentic and to connect with me. I brought my hurt, my guilt, my shame, my hopes, my dreams and my fears and all of the other aspects that make up my ‘*self*’ into the office of a psychotherapist. And somehow because of what my therapist did and who she was, I learnt how to feel and how to trust and I became whole. I know where I was ten years ago and I can see where I am today. I know that my psychotherapist played a very important role in my growth and if I could rise from the ashes like a phoenix, then so can others. I want to be there to show others how strong and how special they are in the way that I learnt how strong and how special I am.

In conclusion then, let me be very clear on my position. I believe that the psychotherapy training team needs to create a context that facilitates differentiation of self of the trainee: A context where the trainee learns and experiences individuation in a context of connection. I also believe that trainees need to take full responsibility for the co-creation of their training experience and be active participants.

I wonder, what will happen in the future of psychotherapy training. I wonder what the future generation of psychotherapists will look like, should training become less personal and more mechanical. I want to believe that there will always be institutions that recognise the importance of developing the personhood of the therapist. I want to believe that there will always be trainees who will be willing to open themselves up to the process of differentiation, and that in the future there will still be many warm therapeutic encounters for a world in need.

## Conclusion

### *Evaluation of the Study*

#### *Validity*

Means taken to ensure validity included attempting to provoke the curiosity of the reader by inserting text extracts from my personal journal. I also attempted to increase the understanding of the reader about the topic of differentiation of self by using literature and presenting it in a way that is easily understandable (Duncan, 2004; Richardson, 2000).

Presenting the reader with text that is complex, multi-layered and aesthetically appealing by making use of literature, stories of actual experiences and diagrams, was a further means that I attempted to ensure validity (Ettorre, 2010; Richardson, 2000). The study represents the reflexivity of the author and provides the reader with a sense of the author's subjectivity as well as an emotional impact (Muncey, 2010; Richardson, 2000). The authenticity of the stories shared in this text increases the believability of the text (Ettorre, 2010; Muncey, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006) and triangulation was used by making use of independent coders (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

### *Reliability*

The study presents the reader with evidence that I made use of a continuously developing reflective journal which increased the reliability of the study and the raw data would be made available for review (Yin, 1998). The nature of the text-extracts reflects a sense of self-awareness and honesty which further increased the reliability of the study (Ettorre, 2010). In order to increase dependability of the study, I made use of "rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in, and developed out of, contextual interaction" (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006, p. 93).

### *Ethical Issues*

I took care to keep in mind that my study involved others and protected the identities of these indirect participants (Chang, 2008). I respected their privacy but at the same time respected the stories written by keeping them in their true form with only the exception of revealing personal identities (Chang, 2008; Ettorre, 2010). The text was furthermore coded in

order to extract meaning and tend to the research question in order to move it from a mere autobiography to a research study (Chang, 2008).

### *Implications of the Study*

I realise that the indirect participants of this study, even though I did not use their true identities, will inevitably be affected by this study should they choose to read my experience of our interactions. I realise that my experience of the training team at Unisa may affect expectations that others may have of them. These expectations can be more or less useful in any given context. I wish to remind the readers of my stories that my experience, just like the experience of all psychotherapy trainees that came before me or are to follow me, was unique. It was the reality that I created and the meanings that I made from my own training journey.

There are some key participants in my life who have affected me on a very deep level. Some of these participants have been a part of my life since I was born and others I have met along this training journey or somewhere in between. Many of the stories that involve these participants were not explicitly told, but I realise that these role players may be able to read into the unspoken and be deeply affected as well. The encounters have been deep and meaningful. There has been much pain and hurt, but there has also been much healing and joy. I hope that even though these extraordinary people who are such an important part of my life and who may indeed be deeply provoked by what lies in the spoken and the unspoken aspects of my text will understand that it was important to me to be as authentic and as genuine as I had the courage to be. I pray that when they draw their own conclusions about the spoken as well as the unspoken, that the conclusions will be positive. This journey has

been a truly meaningful journey to me and it was co-created within the relationships that I was a part of. I am truly blessed to be able to say that I carry these relationships with me into the next chapter of my life.

### *Strengths of the Study*

This study brought to light the concept ‘*differentiation of self*’ that has been neglected in recent years, as my literature review revealed. I believe that the study of this concept within the realm of psychotherapy training has the potential to add value to the future of psychotherapy training. I believe that this study highlights the importance of a personal approach to psychotherapy training, rather than a mechanical approach.

As I used my own text as the research data, I reduced the risk of the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of data and thereby also increased the authenticity of the study. The data that was available from my journal that was kept current on an almost daily basis meant that I did not have to rely on my memory to obtain data for my study. I was able to reflect on my immediate experiences and I was able to obtain information through examining the different ways in which I made sense of my experiences over time. New conversations arose every time that I reflected on my reflections and this added to the depth of my experiences.

The stories that I wrote in my journal were honest reflections of how I experienced my training journey on many different levels. I did not, however, limit my stories to the direct training context, but I also included my life outside of the direct Unisa context. Including the stories not directly related to my training, enabled me to examine the factors in my personal life that added to the quality of my training experience. The use of independent coders who

obtained similar results to my results added to the dependability and trustworthiness of this study by eliminating the possibility that my coding process was merely an inventive process and not based on the research data.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The biggest limitation of this study was time. At the time when I began my study, the Health Professions Council of South Africa stipulated that Clinical Psychology students in the Master's Programme needed to complete their dissertations before they entered into internship. Even though they changed this deadline later in our second year, I decided to stick to my initial timeline in order to do my year of internship without the added pressure of writing a dissertation. This decision brought about that I was unable to add my experiences during the fourth semester of my psychotherapy training to my research data – a semester that was rich with new experiences and information.

My attempt to complete the research study during the last semester of my academic training proved to be a challenge on many different levels. I attempted to reflect on and make sense of a process of which I was still a part of. The nature of the final semester of academic training inevitably included written examinations, the completion of various academic articles, as well as the final comprehensive oral exam. I had to meet these expectations while also tending to my own family – both of which consumed my time and emotional resources.

The nature of the autoethnographic study has the benefit of being an in-depth study of an individual, but inherent in this is the limitation that it is only the examination of the experiences of a single person.

## Recommendations for Future Studies

As I was completing this research study, there were some questions or aspects that arose in my mind that could be useful ideas for future studies. One idea for a study is an in-depth study of the importance of personal therapy for the psychotherapy trainee. Another aspect that arose in my mind is the examination of the distinctly different ways in which trainees experience training, which could provide useful information for selection criteria. I also believe that examining the training experiences of psychotherapy trainees across different universities may provide useful information.

## The End?

Flach (2008) advises that one never really finishes a book, but that there comes a time to separate from it. This research study was an evolving project and at times, the possibilities for exploration seemed to be endless. The words of Elliot (1971, p.58) proved useful to me in my process of separation from this study – he states, “What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from”. So this is not really the end, but simply the place where I release my stories and the meanings I made from them to my readers to explore and for them to make their own new meanings from entering into conversation with me. The final thought that I wish to share with my readers (especially if they are current or prospective psychotherapy students searching to find meaning in the training experience) lies in the words of Dublin (paraphrased in Smith, 2003, p.170):

With strong strokes, go against the backwards current. At first, in silence, look into the darkness. Without intent or definition, feel the uncertainty. Turn loose of all support and stand alone. Stand with your curiosity. And do not conform. Walk alone in the night, and write a song. After the dark night will come the mist of morning. Look carefully at the shapes in the mist and beware of crippling labels, calendars booked full with therapy appointments, uniforms, and quick cures. Get on the edge and be ready; light a match, even if your fingers get burned. Don't be too rough; see the needs of others. Don't be afraid when the creative energy comes. Do not seek power or domination. Do not offer yourself as a sacrifice. See each person freshly. Take care of your body and keep it together with your mind and your spirit. Ride the wind out. Know that you cannot create a better world. Skip to work and play hopscotch on your lunch break. Listen to the children – they know. Do what you will on weekends. Wherever you go, make music.

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## APPENDIX A

### REPORT FROM INDEPENDENT CODERS



Coding report for Sasja van der Merwe

for the study:

**BEHIND TRAINING: DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF OF A  
PSYCHOTHERAPY STUDENT**

24 August 2012

**CODING METHOD:**

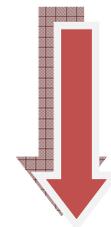
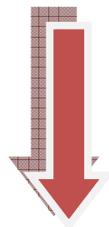
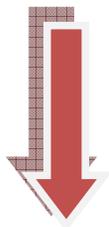
**Thematic network analysis (Attride-Sterling, 2001)**

Basic themes were extracted which were then organized into central themes and ultimately into one global theme presenting the central story line.

**CODING WAS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH QUESTION:**

**How did a psychotherapy student differentiate during psychotherapy training at an open distance learning institution?**

**The central storyline** (stories within the story) reflects differentiation (*“finding sea legs”*) as a **process of becoming** through a **constant seeking of tension/balance between different but overlapping relational polarities** (self, others, God), **openness and courage to grow**, despite the discomfort thereof, and an almost ‘ruthless’ honesty with self and others resulting in increased self and other awareness (differentiation) but also exhaustion at times. **Sasja’s relationship with one specific horse (as well as horses in general) stands out through the narrative and metaphorically highlights the journey towards differentiation.**



Vacillation of tension/balance between different but overlapping relational polarities:

- Self
- Others
- .

Openness and courage to grow through a process of confrontation and antagonism within the context of relationships

The horse – as part of both the literal and metaphorical aspects of Sasja’s narrative reflecting a journey towards differentiation

## 2. Vacillation of tension/balance between different but overlapping relational polarities

The context of relationships includes:

### (1.1) Relationship with self

### (1.2) Relationship with others

### (1.3) Relationship with God

#### 2.1.1 'Relationship with self'

##### 2.1.1.1 Insecurity/fear --- confidence/faith in self /authenticity

- *"I told her that I don't understand why nothing will ever be good enough. She said to me that it doesn't matter what I do, or what I achieve, I will always fear that the next time, I will fail. She said there is a constant fear of failure, because I don't see my own value"*
- *"Because, pretty soon, they will all see my true colours. Pretty soon, they won't like me anymore. I will disappoint them all and irritate them. And then, I will try even harder, and I will achieve something which will only make my classmates like me even less"*
- *"I did and have come to realise that I really do have a gentle voice. So I use my gentle voice"*
- *"She says I have the ability to very quickly get people to open up and plunge into intense emotion. And then I model to them how to work through it. Because I can do it myself"*
- *"I am who I am. And this is how I am. And this is who I am. Raw and uncut"*
- *"I am finally ready to present to her: me, just as I am"*

**2.1.2 Unreconciled to past --- recognition of new life born out of pains of the old aka where  
*"light meets darkness"***

- *"Life can't be perfect, that would leave no opportunity for growth. For change. We need the hard times. We need the pain, the disappointment"*
- *"And after I explained to Student D and Student F that going through hard times increases insight. I don't know where I am growing to, but I know that I am growing. And I just want to go with it. I want to go with the stream".*
- *"He is more interested in healing my broken heart, and that right now He needs my arm to be broken to teach me what I need to learn. Because 5 weeks will go by in the blink of an eye once I begin to see this injury as the opportunity it is. An opportunity to learn to be gentle on myself, to allow others to nurture me, to re-organize and re-wire myself, my family, my support system"*
- *"They say you can't escape your past, but I don't believe that. I believe you escape it every day, over and over again ..." Susan Richards*
- *"And I can't swallow it down because my intuition is telling me that I lost something in the dark and I'm trying to find it in the light but it's not here and it never will be, it doesn't matter how hard I try to find it. It's simply not here. There is still too much I haven't worked through, the pieces are not fitting. And I want to go back"*
- *"OK, here's the thing: I know that there are things that I need to face and I believe that Therapist M can help me to do that and that it will greatly contribute to my healing. But I am scared and I think I am strong enough but I'm not sure."*
- *"Sasja, why do you see a psychologist?" In one clumsy sentence I try to explain and I mention anxiety and depression and dependence and I tell her that I am doing much better but that it is so easy to slip back into old patterns"*

- *"I have been thinking back a lot to my life ten years ago. I don't know why. But somehow, instead of being grateful for how far I have come; I am angry. I am angry because people don't understand"*

### **2.1.3 The inner child/vulnerability/freedom --- adulthood/responsibility**

Nia dancing and time with my horse and other horses as well as with Instructor A = reconnecting with inner child, escapism, relief, freedom, part of the spiritual. Ambivalence towards adults (prefers children and the elderly). Adult roles = the weight of responsibility and source of growth.

- *"For one hour on a Monday, and one hour on a Thursday, I get to be a fairy. My spirit leaves my human body behind and I enter into different bodies".*
- *"Just one hour on a Monday, one hour on a Thursday, I forget about the pain in this world".*
- *"I don't know why, sometimes it takes no effort to be the grown-up, I just am"*
- *"She needs to receive time-outs when she is naughty. She needs me to make the rules and to enforce them. she needs me to recognize her emotions, to acknowledge them and to have empathy. She needs me, to consciously be her mother"*
- *"Grown-ups are very strange indeed"*

### **2.1.4 Control --- surrender**

Perfectionism, fear of failure, dislike of mediocrity, focus on marks

Safety/familiarity in control (*"I felt good, I felt completely in control"*)

- *"I have to say, it is delightful to not try to be the star student"*

- *“OK, so realistically, that is not going to happen. And honestly, I am not even going to try. I will do my best, because I do want to know my DSM as well as possible at this time. But I don’t want to sacrifice my sanity in the process. It’s not worth it”*
- *“I might not be able to save her. But I am going to at least try to be a positive role player in her life”*
- *“Afterwards I wondered if I had done the right thing. I justified it to myself that if they already know beforehand of certain individuals who they believe are good candidates, then it would be OK if I tell them of someone else who I believe is a good candidate. So I gave Instructor A that little push that can work for her or against her”*

#### **2.1.5 Aloneness --- ‘Solitude of heart’**

- *“The pain is going through my heart and burning my nose. Alone. I just feel so, so alone”.*
- *“I am making no sense but I can’t seem to get through the sadness and I have so many other things I want to get to but I need a better understanding of this deep sadness inside my soul”.*
- *“I will be completely alone. Because I am not worth being loved, being liked. It’s all just a front and I won’t be able to keep it up. It is just a matter of time”*
- *“And I feel alone and small”*
- *“And I feel like a child. He makes me feel like a child. And when he does, I want to cry and tell him how sad I am and ask him to make it better”*
- *“Climbing on her back and running away from everything. From everybody. From all of these people who have come too close”*
- *“And I fantasised about next year. About how I get to spend 40 minutes with myself in my car, every morning driving to work and driving home”*

### 2.1.6 Preoccupation with self (negative evaluation of self) --- self-awareness

- *“what is it that you think you lost in the dark?” “I don’t know. Trust, hope, love..., myself”*
- *Voice of Therapist M: “OK, but you are beginning to find yourself where you are right now?”*
- *“maybe, but there must be so much more, it just feels as if there is so much more”*
- *“I will never be a therapist who simply uses techniques, or teach, or train. I will always be a therapist who connects, and listens to people”*
- *“You can’t go back. And it’s frustrating. Because sometimes I want to go back. Sometimes I want to say screw them all. And now I can’t. And this is an intensely lonely place to be. And I blame Therapist M. Give me time, then I will thank her”*

## 2.2 Relationship with others

The second group of poles between which tension/balance vacillates occur within the context of ‘Relationship with others’:

### 2.2.1 Dependence --- autonomy

‘Need to be needed’

- *“But now that she doesn’t need me anymore, will she still care? Off course she will, says the adult. She has always cared, she just didn’t always know how to show it. She is not now going to look down on me because she has “everything”*
- *“It’s not that she wasn’t warm, she always is, it’s not that she wasn’t empathic, she always is, but I needed more from her than what she gave and I don’t know if she withheld it from me on purpose or if she didn’t realise how much I needed it”*

- *“Instructor A tells me that I mustn’t personalise the horses too much. She doesn’t always understand”*
- *“having a need to feel needed by Therapist M and the horse. They have their own friends, they have people and animals that they need. I do not fall into that category and that is OK. In my life, there are people who need me”*
- *“And ties never bind only one person. It binds two. I may not be Therapist M’s friend and she may not need me, but in a way she is bound to me as much as I am bound to her”*
- *“And I feel like a child. He makes me feel like a child. And when he does, I want to cry and tell him how sad I am and ask him to make it better”*
- *“Because I really want to believe that he cares about me and I really want to be special to him. Today I felt small and helpless and nervous and I didn’t know how to deal with it”*
- *“Professor X turned me into a 11 year old child who is super excited because she has sparked the interest of her dad”*
- *“It was really hard to get to a place where I can still be connected with him in a healthy way. I don’t really know how to connect with people like Professor X while not becoming dependent”*

### **2.2.2 Receptivity --- confrontation (and receptivity through confrontation)**

- *“I tell Instructor A to give me a break I am dealing with enough at the moment but she replies “well, while you are on roll you may as well deal with this as well”*
- *” and slowly but surely I realise that this is not only about the horse, but also about my daughter. And today the horse wanted me to learn that I am not doing my daughter a favour by being too easy on her”*
- *“I reply by acknowledging the fact that I am aware of the tension between us but tell her it really is not about her, it is my projections. I witness insecurity and defensiveness in her and that upsets*

*me because it is two of my weaknesses and really has nothing to do with her. I explain to her how I envy the fact that she is doing this at 23 and that it has taken me so long to get to this point"*

- *"My mother and my stepfather have showed me so much love, and I accepted. I let them take care of me and my daughter for one special weekend and despite the pain it is a weekend too special to ever forget. And they remain interested, and I allow it. My friends have been so supportive, even my brothers and my sister-in-law showed support on facebook. And I allowed it. And it was good"*

### **2.2.3 Rivalry --- togetherness**

- *"It was a good learning experience, me and my colleagues collaborated and formed an efficient team, utilising all resources we could to aid the client in receiving the help that she so desperately needed"*
- *"Maybe, I feel that she betrayed me. Maybe I feel that I am in a war. A war against my classmates, against my lecturers, a war I am fighting to somehow stay OK, and she joined forces with the other side"*
- *"Alliances are healthy. Lecturer J called the connection I now have with Student J healthy. I love how we shift. I love being able to sometimes move away from them and spend some time with Student F or some of the others even though it is sometimes difficult. Moving is wonderful"*
- *"friendship with Student J and Student A is strong and healthy because I worked hard on it and still do"*
- *"I said I wanted her to get selected to level the playing ground. What a silly thing to say. There is nothing level about the playing ground. She now has everything. She has the horses, she gets to be around them every day for as long as she wants. She knows how to ride them. She can run and jump and do whatever it is that she wants to do on them and she doesn't really get scared. And*

*now she is also becoming a clinical psychologist which now not only puts me in a one down but in like a three down position from where I am looking at it"*

- *"I built relationships, with Student I, with the caretakers and with the Workshop members. We connected. We connected with each other and with them"*

#### **2.2.4 Control/closedness/pride --- surrender/openness/humility**

Surrender to the seasons/vicissitudes of life

Acknowledge achievements

Crossing the line between helping and manipulating

- *"I was terribly sad about my daughter. About this new phase in our life and about the adjustment. About the sadness and the loss that goes along with it"*
- Surrender in therapy: *"I cannot save my patients. I cannot change what happened to them"*
- *"She cried as if her little heart was physically breaking and later the teacher took her and I had to go. And I knew that I had a choice: I can fall apart or I can pull myself together"*
- *"You have to be able to say to yourself when you sit in the middle of the night with a child with a fever 'just hang in there'. YOU have to be able to say to YOURSELF 'sweetie, you did very well'"*
- *"She said I was always congruent and she always appreciated that, but that I wasn't accepting of my group members and it showed so clearly in my non-verbal behaviour. She said that that changed in the second semester. She said that I am still congruent but that now I am accepting of everybody and that I have learnt that I can learn from my group members"*

### 2.2.5 Investment in temporal relationships --- investment in enduring relationships

- *“I probably won’t keep close contact with my patients. I will wonder. But I will carry them inside of me and they will add to my beauty”.*
- *“I have come to realize that my greatest concern about this case is to actually care deeply for this child who might still take her own life; as well as the challenge of identifying with so much pain and being uncertain on how to detach from that after a session”.*
- *“We spoke about his school days and we laughed. I told him about my lecturers and my fellow trainees. We shared our meals. I told him how happy I am. He told me that he is happy as well. It was a wonderful evening”.*
- *“and then I hear my daughter laugh and I get up and go outside to play with them for a little while. And I think about how precious my time is and that I no longer want to spend it on things that aren’t important to me. That I need to be selfish and save my time for my training and my family and that trying to keep relationships going that aren’t really viable anyway is no longer a priority”*
- *“She tells me that she believes that holidays are hard for me and that it is hard for me to rest. She tells me that I need to say to people “I am busy now, I can’t help you.” She tells me to preserve my energy for myself and for my husband and my child”*

### 2.3 Relationship with God

*The third group of poles between which tension/balance vacillates occur within the context of ‘Relationship with God’:*

### 2.3.1 'Mountaintop'/awaking/epiphanic experiences --- 'valley' experiences

- *"thank my God for how He blesses me. For the honour of being useful, to broken souls"*
- *"And honestly, I can describe it in two words. Waking up. It is as if every cell in my body wakes up and begins to move"*
- *" I had such strong goose bumps over my entire body that it actually hurts ... But in the dim light, I see myself, I see those children, and I see the horses. And just typing a sentence where I put those three words together causes something to happen inside of my stomach that I can't explain. It's like a volcano, just bubbling, just pushing up"*
- *And that, dear child, is the heart of the sadness. It is the same old pattern, and it doesn't even matter how I am loving my life, somehow I can just not get away from feeling worthless*
- *I feel like I'm treading carefully at a very high place, like the hind in Habakkuk 3:17. The view is phenomenal and I'm feeling alive, exhilarated and terrified.*
- *Wild horses visit me in my dreams. I anthropomorphize ALL THE TIME. And the day I stop doing that, will be a sad, sad day.*
- *"The mountain, the waves, the rocks, the deep sea. Everywhere. I just want to write. I look at the water and I feel an attraction from the centre of my stomach and again I am realising that attraction is about so much more than sex"*
- *"I stand in the botanical gardens and I watch that place: where darkness meets light and in a way, I realise that this is the most beautiful time in my life. The time where my darkness met the light"*
- *"I am very tired. I know there is meaning in what happened, in what I witnessed. I felt so sad and so sick and so grateful"*
- *"An hour a week, and yet they infiltrate my being. They begin in my consciousness and crawl their way deeper and deeper, even into my dreams"*

### 2.3.2 Fear/weariness/striving ---Trust/prayerfulness/rest

Gratitude for favour and protection (expressed after witnessing accident)

- *“I need to lift my eyes”*
- *“And I am tired. But I will keep going, I will lift up my eyes to the hills, I know where I can get help, where I can get strength”*
- *“that there is a monster in the dark and facing the monster will be too scary and I will fall apart.”*
- *“And I will look back on my life and remember this time. This time of beauty, where I learnt how to take care of myself, to trust God. Where I rested on His wings and sometimes allowed Him to carry me around His shoulder”*
- *“I am so tired that I struggle to lift my head. I really am too tired”*

## 2. **Openness and courage to grow through a process of confrontation and antagonism within the context of relationships**

In order to better illustrate what is that we picked up in Sasja’s journey, regarding her personal growth and development particularly, Jennifer have included a quote, by Oswald Chambers (Utmost for His Highest), that came to mind when reading through her work:

*The law of antagonism: “Life without war is impossible either in nature or in grace. The basis of all physical, mental, moral, and spiritual growth is antagonism”*

- *“She acknowledges that I am tired, that I had a long week. I could have gotten that from the mirror. And so, I struggle through the session. I somehow, wanted her to make it all better. To*

*calm the storm, to infuse some energy into me. But she doesn't. She sits there and makes me experience everything I experienced that day, as if I hadn't had enough yet"*

- *"This self-discovery. This self-reflection. Growing, changing, developing. It is hard. How can I explain to somebody that there is a Tasmanian Devil running around inside of my stomach and my chest. How it crashes into the sides and it feels as if somebody is hurting me from the inside. Smashing against the borders of my being from the inside out"*
- *"Maybe, I feel that she betrayed me. Maybe I feel that I am in a war. A war against my classmates, against my lecturers, a war I am fighting to somehow stay OK, and she joined forces with the other side"*
- *"And I get soaked in the rain and drive through rivers of water over the roads, praying just to make it home alive through the storm. But I don't stop and I don't wait for the storm to pass, because I have a desire to make it through. To push through. To keep on keeping on. And so I do"*
- *"because according to Instructor A she believes that any rope-like thing that is white is electrified And I wonder why Instructor A put it on the floor before we walked out because the fright was so big that it was almost impossible in stay on top of her. But I did. And Instructor A looks at us and laughs and she asks me "what did you learn?" and I know that she wants me to answer "that even when you are out of the arena you have to remain vigilant" but instead, I express my frustration with her (Instructor A) and I tell her "I learnt that I have to stay on my horse"*
- *"and differentiating is really, really hard. And it is taking so much longer than I thought it would"*
- *"Last Friday, my previous session with Therapist M, left me feeling very uncomfortable. I contaminated the contexts in my head. I try to comfort myself, saying to myself that the experience taught me a very valuable lesson. But the price was almost too high. The discomfort it left me with was almost unbearable"*
- *"All of them carve at the marble. My family, Therapist M, the horse and Instructor A, my lecturers, my friends, my group members, the workshop, my patients. Carving at the marble. Sometimes*

*when they chip at a piece that is especially sensitive, I cringe. I show my teeth and bite at them like when Instructor A tightens my horse's girth"*

- *"I am angry at Therapist M. And I don't want to get into it because I know I am going to be grateful to her once I've vented the anger. But right now, I am angry. And I got so angry with her, that when she attempted to make it better I perceived it as her patronising me and that made me even angrier"*

**3. The horse – as part of both the literal and metaphorical aspects of Sasja's narrative reflecting a journey towards differentiation**

*There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man - Winston Churchill*

Sasja's relationship with horses in general and one horse in particular stands out throughout the narrative and metaphorically highlight important aspects of her journey towards differentiation.





Symbol of freedom



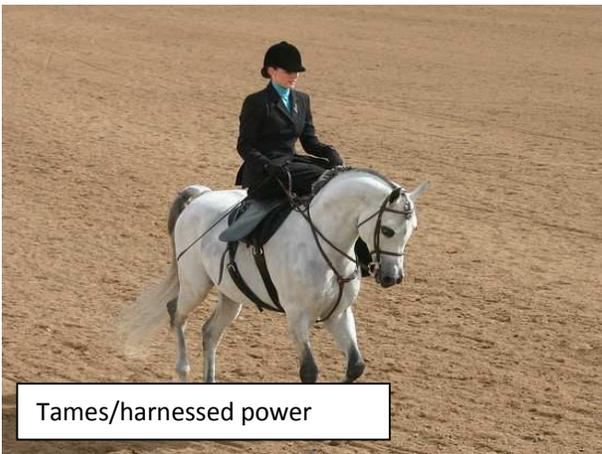
Spirit animal



Companionship



Healer and Teacher



Tames/harnessed power

Report compiled by:

**Dr. Retha G Visagie & Jennifer A Graham**