CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this text, which is a story, and which has been woven together with many other texts to create the meaning that appears to you. The words that follow outline the journey of this dissertation, a journey that involved me and many others as participants in the exploration of this research topic. The ideas presented in this paper form a perspective which is only one of a myriad of ways in which this dissertation could have been constructed, and which is by no means exhaustive. The meanings of this perspective have been formed by incorporating certain texts, and not others, and having conversations with certain people, and not others. In addition, it is assumed that each time you and other readers engage with this text, its meaning will be reconstructed within the context of your own worlds.

In this text some assumptions are made about what the reader knows and understands, with regard to the definitions and meanings of some words. It is also acknowledged that words inform meanings, and that different people attach different meanings to the same words. Ideas and concepts are not as clear cut as the words that are used to describe them, and this can sometimes create confusion between what is thought, what is written and what is read.

The ideas behind this research evolved from my own training in clinical psychology. I experienced the explicit context of training as postmodern, social constructionist and ecosystemic (concepts that are explained in Chapter Two). This model of training promotes a relationship between trainers and trainees that is based on
non-hierarchical positioning, with trainers and trainees coming together in a co-
construction of meaning. I became aware of a feeling of confusion, immobility and
powerlessness during the course of my training. I wondered what this feeling was about,
and formed the hypothesis that although the explicit context of training was defined as
ecosystemic, there was an implicit level of training that was, in fact, based on hierarchy
and power relations between trainers and trainees. I experienced these two levels of
training as inconsistent with each other, and I hypothesised that this could be what was
inducing my feelings of confusion and powerlessness.

This personal experience made me wonder whether other trainees experienced
similar issues in training. The first step in my research project, therefore, was to conduct
interviews with other trainees.

The six chapters that follow have been constructed by looking at the research
topic from different perspectives. Although these chapters are presented in a linear,
progressive manner, their construction occurred in a recursive and non-linear manner.
Even after a chapter had been completed, I returned to it many times, to add and link
aspects of it to the other chapters that I was writing. I began with Chapter Three, which
comprises a literature survey on key aspects of my research topic: implicit and explicit
contexts; double bind theory; and experiences of trainees in training. I constructed this
chapter first, as I wanted to form a context from the literature within which I would locate
my research. I then moved to Chapter Two, which outlines the concept of epistemology
and presents the epistemological underpinnings of this dissertation, both theoretical
(postmodern, social constructionist and ecosystemic) and personal. Next was Chapter
Four, which covers the research design and methodology of this research project. I
selected discourse analysis as the method of analysis, and this is outlined in this chapter. I then wrote Chapter Five, which provides an analysis of the interviews that form the basis of this enquiry. Chapter Six compares the meanings constructed from the analysis with the findings in the literature from Chapter Three and the initial hypotheses. The last chapter I wrote was the conclusion in Chapter Seven.

This summary of the process of writing this dissertation is consistent with the social constructionist and ecosystemic assumptions I make in this document, which propose that a postmodern text is self-reflexive, open and recursive in nature. The text may therefore be read in any order that makes sense to the reader.