

**THE SELF OF THE THERAPIST AS RECURSION :  
CONNECTING THE HEAD AND THE HEART**

by

**CONSTANCE BERYL VALKIN**

submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

in the subject

**PSYCHOLOGY**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**PROMOTER: PROF F J A SNYDERS**

**DECEMBER 1994**

I declare that **"THE SELF OF THE THERAPIST AS RECURSION : CONNECTING THE HEAD AND THE HEART"** 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.

C B VALKIN

DECEMBER 1994

Science properly done is one of the humanities, as a fine physics teacher once said. The point of ~~science~~ is to help us understand what we are and how ~~we got here~~, and for this we need the great stories: the tale of how, once upon a time, there was a Big Bang; the Darwinian epic of the evolution of life on Earth; and now the story we are just beginning to learn how to tell: the amazing adventure of the primate autobiographers who finally taught themselves how to tell the story of the amazing adventure of the primate autobiographers. (Dennett, 1981, p. 460)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful for the richness,  
depth and generosity that is my ecology.  
Thank you for taking this journey with me.

## COLLEAGUES

Jenny  
Merle Gail  
Hannes Dorrit  
Diana Sue  
Taube

*the responsiveness,  
the encouragement*

## CLIENTS

those herein  
and the rest,  
past and  
present

*the trust and  
the growth*

## NUCLEAR FAMILY

Balfour  
Vanessa  
Adam  
Gideon

*the love*

## TECHNICAL

Lindsey  
Redhill Pre-Primary  
Ruth Viv

*pragmatics  
and mechanics*

## THE PROMOTING VOICE

Ricky

*understanding and perturbing,  
the perfect choreography*

## THE HOUSEHOLD

Aggie  
David  
Rebecca  
Viola

*the flowing warmth  
and sustenance*

## FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Dad Mom  
Ivor  
Judy  
Marge  
Vic

*the spirit, the ethics  
and the history*

## UNISA

doctoral group  
the department

*setting the scene*

## ACADEMIC AND CLINICAL VOICES

acknowledged  
herein

*new narratives,  
an expanding universe*

## CO-TRAVELLER

Gert

*being there*

These families touch and overlap.  
These contexts bring me forth.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
SUMMARY	xi
<u>PART 1</u> THE SCHOLAR	2
1 INTRODUCTORY THREADS	3
2 THE GOLDEN ARGUMENT IN CONTEXT : HOW IT ALL HAPPENED	9
3 A THEORETICAL MODEL TO SPECIFY THE RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS	22
Constructivism	26
Narrative	34
Process	37
Conclusion	48
4 A METHODOLOGICAL PLATFORM TO JUSTIFY PROCEDURES THAT ARE CONGRUENT WITH THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	50
THE SCHOLAR : A METACOMMENT	60

<b><u>PART 2</u> THE PARTICIPANT - STORYTELLER</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>5 THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PERSON : A SELF-SYSTEM EVOLVES</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Primary Context of Learning - The Family</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>As You Read It - A Media Festival</b>	<b>70</b>
Ivor's Interview	75
Judy's Narrative and Poetry	85
Marge's Ecological Digest	94
Vic's Play	103
Connie's Movie	111
<b>Epilogue : The Festival in Context</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Adolescence - In Search of Self</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Leaving Home - The Moving Self</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>The Researcher Visits</b>	<b>127</b>

6	ASPECTS OF LOVE : SELF DEFINED IN NEW SYSTEMS	128
	Couple Issues	128
	Around the World in Eighty Ways	133
	Carrycots of Desire	134
	Hard Times by Where-The-Dickens-Am-I!	137
	Turning Point - A Compass is Unearthed, Escape from Alcatraz	138
	The Researcher Visits	139
7	A NEVER ENDING STORY : PROFESSIONALISM - THE SELF EXPRESSED ACROSS SYSTEMS	141
	Introduction : Recursion and Feedback	141
	UNISA : Migrate Trek	142
	Sterkfontein : One Flew into the Hornets' Nest	143
	The Team : Learning to Ski on the Nursery Slopes	145

<b>Johannesburg</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>The Bearable Lightness of Being Home</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Clients</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Speak and Ye Shall Unwind</b>	<b>149</b>
		The Beginning : Inexperience	149
		The Context of Feedback - Setting the Scene	150
		Couples	152
		Orthogonality	160
		Stuck Systems : Moving Systems	166
		Telephonic Follow Up	176
		Redhill - the Zenith of Competence :	183
		Susan - the Zenith of Incompetence	
		Lauren	189
		Linda	193
		Peggy	195
		Anna : A Most Difficult Post Script	201
<b>Group Supervision</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>A New Challenge</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>The Group</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Co-Travellers through Adulthood</b>	<b>208</b>
		The Past in the Present	209
		A Change	210
		A Different Voice	212

Vulnerability	214
Connections	215
<b>A Useful Perturbation about the Way I am Perturbed</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>A Female Voice : The Therapist and Gender</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Stories that Pull : A Spontaneous Reverie</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>The Threesome : Clinician Meet Thyself</b>	<b>227</b>
Supervision	227
A Conversation about Many Conversations	232
<b>The Researcher Visits</b>	<b>238</b>
<i>THE PARTICIPANT STORYTELLER : A METACOMMENT</i>	<b>240</b>
<b><u>PART 3</u> THE CRITIC</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>8 CONNIE - THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS : REFLECTIONS</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>Introduction : Deconstruction</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>The Deconstruction of a Person</b>	<b>249</b>
The Sociocultural Context	249
Gender Issues	250
Interpersonal Themes and Communicative Styles	251

Identity in Context	254
<b>Deconstructing Aspects of Love</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Deconstructing the Professional</b>	<b>260</b>
Competence : Incompetence	262
Orthogonal : Accommodating	268
Distance/Disconnection : Closeness/Connection	272
Conserve : Dissolve/Transform	276
Stuck/Boring : Emancipatory/Fascinating	277
Conclusion	280
<i>THE CRITIC : A METACOMMENT</i>	281
<b><u>PART 4</u> THE INTEGRATIVE VOICE</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>293</b>

## SUMMARY

The theoretical and methodological assumptions of this research imply a move away from a positivist empiricist approach with its reliance on the real, the measurable and the predictable towards an interactive and collaborative methodology situated in a constructivist and social epistemology.

This thesis comprises a recursive intervention in the researching therapist's life. The author sets out on a voyage of self-research to investigate her "choreography of co-existence" (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p.248), due to curiosity about personal and professional impact. The purpose is to create a map of relational modes that in itself creates shifts in the therapist.

This invention-orientated research creates the context of the researcher and moves through processes: the writing of autobiography, detailed contextual description, the interpreting of feedback, and deconstruction. The contents that pour forth are many different narratives tracking the evolvment of the self in the original family, through further definition in new relationships and the expansion of roles in many professional systems both with clients and colleagues. Extracts from conversations provide new perspectives and feedback about impact. Thus a continual 'provoking of voices' becomes a thesis theme that highlights the researcher's structure, organisation and interpersonal processes.

An emancipatory and developmental process is documented through the researching therapist's positioning as actor, observer and then critic in relationship to the data. Patterns and themes emerge that facilitate both self-

differentiation and connectedness and many new head-heart connections. This new knowledge could enable the professional's skilful and intuitive use of self.

The self comes into being as it reflects itself, so a recursive process evolves where looking at the self operates on the products of its own operations. This is an active ~~process~~, where the researching therapist constructs an experiential reality. Given the accountability that accrues from constructing such a reality, a focus on pragmatic, aesthetic and ethical criteria is incorporated.

This research, like the practice of therapy, is a departure from attempts to demonstrate what is already known ~~to~~ modes of research that are recursive and improvisational.

**Key terms:**

Self as recursion; Self-research; Deconstruction; Theory practice connection; Ethnography; Professional development; Client experience of therapy; Feedback on therapist impact; Head-heart complementarity; Double description.

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances  
~~And~~ one woman in her time plays many parts,  
Her acts being four voices.

**THE SCHOLAR** : Legitimising

**THE PARTICIPANT STORYTELLER** : Creating Meaning and  
Perturbing the Ecology

**THE CRITIC** : Deconstructing

**THE INTEGRATIVE VOICE** : A Moving Theme,  
a Thematic Move

**PART 1**

**THE SCHOLAR**

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTORY THREADS

-This research is positioned in a social, as opposed to a dualist epistemology. Consequently, ecological descriptions rather than mechanistic or cognitive explanations, become salient. This implies an emphasis on context, a context marked by movement and uncertainty, where interrelatedness, patterned events, themes and the ecology of ideas become the central focus. This is a move away from a positivist empiricist approach with its reliance on the real, the measurable, the predictable and the belief in linear causal relationships occurring sequentially in time and space. This stance departs from the reduction of real world events to cognitive representations of the world with its attendant difficulties in relating cognition and action.

Social epistemologists, however, must of necessity respect that no organism functions in a vacuum where everything is valid and anything is possible, because, if this were so, it would imply that only the interior life of the organism existed. Consequently the usefulness of accepting that there is a world where real events happen independently of our descriptions, is accepted - but it is reinvented as we observe it. Maturana and Varela (1987) refer to this as "walking on the razor's edge" (p. 133) between denying the surrounding environment (whirlpool of solipsism) and the assumption that the nervous system operates with representations of a real and predictable world (monster of representationism).

This vantage point implies assumptive shifts:

- language replaces mind and cognition as a way of representing the world,

- accuracy, according to science, submits to a way of co-ordinating social practices
- utility, as it serves human enrichment and emancipation, replaces considerations of validity (Gergen, 1989).

This re-searching process affirms the ineluctable link between philosophy and social science by respecting the ideas of how we come to know what we know. Consequently the active participation of the observer in observing the products of her own observations is accentuated.

The aim is to understand and describe how a therapist creates her own perspective with which to see and construe, and furthermore, the assumption that this view is enabled by the recursive process and enhanced by the input of other voices. The purpose is to deliver a model for plotting a map of relational modes that in itself creates shifts in the therapist in the direction of effectiveness, emancipation, self-differentiation and connectedness.

The personal therapeutic problem of "not knowing my impact" centred on certain inscrutables about the professional self. Perhaps these emanated from therapeutic experience at odds with personal assumptions, for example, why some clients stay permanently and others leave; the therapist's role in the boring and stuck systems; how clients were benefitting and how they were perturbed. The investigation needed to answer the question . . . How do I co-create contexts, which voices do I bring and how do I respond to other voices? The effect of the problem seemed an inability to fully include 'the self' in problem definitions. This may, in turn, imply limitations, mismanagement or disconnecting interpersonally.

There was of course some naiveté in these formulations. Defining a therapeutic problem always felt too much like a

content bound academic exercise. The doctoral pursuit has really always been about opening a process that has a developmental aspect and would be emancipatory in terms of enlarging the professional repertoire and transcending stuck contexts both personally and professionally. What was still unknown was how the researcher was unconsciously seeking to be kept both uncomfortable and excited by provoking voices and how this would highlight structure, organisation and interpersonal pattern.

Such research relies heavily on the principles of 'second cybernetics' and its emphasis on the role of the observing system (Von Foerster, 1984). The only reality in this model represents the observer's subjective, experiential reality and her attempts to organise and construct it. Truth is relative and uncertain and the observer is in a self-referential position. Thompson (1981), after critically investigating the theory of reference and truth of both Ricoeur and Habermas, concludes that invoking the principle of self-reflection provides a non-empirical criterion for the redemption of claims to truth. Self-reference is elaborated by the concept of the structure-determined nature of systems (Maturana & Varela, 1987). This means that the organisation and structure of living systems determines how they function and their functioning, in turn, determines how they are structured and organised. The issue of self-reference clearly implies that what is perceived is determined not by the qualities of the observed but by the nature of the observer's organisation and structure. This organisation and structure also determine how a system will interact or structurally couple with other systems (Efran & Lukens, 1985).

In transcending the subjective-objective dilemma the necessary connection of the observer and the observed requires an examination of how the observer participates in the observation, or how the therapist is in the therapeutic

problem, or how the storyteller is in the story. This is a shift to descriptions that reveal the nature of the describer. The psychologist must account for herself, and psychology must be a reflexive discipline (Smedslund, 1985). The self comes into being as it reflects itself, so a recursive process evolves where looking at the self operates on the products of its own operations - self looking at self, looking at self. So if one is to respect second cybernetics and include oneself in the descriptions, the therapist has to join the client in the public domain and that means self-research.

Furthermore, the map of self or the self-aware observing system is not a stable or predictable content. Nevertheless, in investigating self-referential functioning, situated in different contexts of feedback, some principles relating to the range and manner of structural coupling become evident.

Given that the therapist is the major player or the consistent observer in this research, the ideas of Palazzoli, Cirillo, Selvini and Sorrentino (1989) which use the game metaphor as a way of not disregarding individual dimensions, become useful. They believe that individual behaviour is not just functional for the system but self-serving too. They identify moves and countermoves on the individual level that are affected by sociocultural rules on the macro-systemic level and influenced by unforeseeable events. Hence variables such as individual traits, the individual's position in the system, the customs and beliefs of the culture that influence the system and the subcultural concerns within smaller systems, can be viewed as an integral part of any deconstruction process.

This confirms that the deconstruction process would include a focus on the researcher's felt experiences, the original family practices and beliefs which are created collusively or otherwise, the life events that emerge as

central, the clients which cause problems and those which are satisfying, how professional contexts are chosen, which themes and stories are of profound interest, and how emotions are converted into preferred feelings.

Constructivism, because of its intrinsic emphasis on perspective, provides a theoretical frame for understanding that an observer can create a reality conducive to functioning in different roles and increasing behavioural options. Bruner (1987) talks of "a shift from emphasis on actuality to the evocation of possibility" (p.20). According to Gergen (1989) human reflexivity is part of man's appropriate orienting towards culture and the past. This reflexivity is our capacity to turn around on the past and alter the present in its light, or to alter the past in the light of the present. Furthermore, because of man's capacity to conceive endless alternatives, issues are rendered salient in different ways as we review them reflexively. In this research an attempt is made to illustrate how the process of recursively telling is emancipatory, conducive to shifts and has a profound effect on what happens next. Bruner (1987) states,

I cannot imagine a more important psychological research project than one that addresses itself to the development of autobiography - how our way of telling about ourselves, changes, and how these accounts come to take control of our ways of life. Yet I know of not a single comprehensive study on this subject (p. 15).

Interpersonal feedback implies a co-creation of meaning with others in relationship and moving in the direction of a conversational consensual domain. These other voices become a tool of training in the development and versatility of a "map of relational models" (Anolli, 1987, p.130). Many contexts are investigated to illuminate the different selves.

In this research, the context becomes of necessity the context of the researcher; the processes are invention-orientated research, detailed contextual description, the interpreting of feedback, recursion, the tracking of accommodation and assimilation, and finally, deconstruction. The contents that pour forth are many different narratives, the writing of autobiography, the perspectives of the family of origin, descriptions of therapy and client feedback and an investigation of other professional systems including the supervision story.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE GOLDEN ARGUMENT IN CONTEXT : HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

It has always been a belief of this author that scientific research projects contain thinly veiled attempts at resolving deep personal issues and at another level represent the researcher's attempt to gain mastery in personal or professional situations that are characterised by helplessness or vulnerability. At the most pragmatic level, a researcher may find himself working in a context that necessitates an obvious topic. This could become the expedient route with which to gain a certificate of completion. The personal or professional issues may then revolve around the need for accreditation or by finishing a thesis, completing an old incomplete gestalt. So at this pragmatic level the actual topic is less pertinent than the process.

~~It~~ has been said that the best re-search is the best therapy and vice versa (Selvini, 1988). Maybe it could be said that the best re-search could constitute the best therapy for the researcher and vice versa. There certainly are elements of a therapeutic replay of issues. These have often been covert processes left inexplicit because of the needs of scientism, objectivity and the researcher's zeal about being a discoverer of the truth.

It was with these assumptions about research that I entered the first doctoral group at the University of South Africa in 1991. We began as six clinicians, united in our direct or indirect links with the trainers at the University and differentiated by style, culture, ability, and every other possible distinction. Our trainers found one commonality - we were all *prima donnas* - I think that meant we were tough to train. However, a directed doctorate was a brand new pursuit

for all. There was caution and eagerness and an unusual amount of unpredictability. Consequently, my original fantasy of a doctoral research project, given what I thought were the usual objective and empirical demands mixed with new permission that it should also be interesting (Keeney, 1991), was to investigate how the thesis topics of the other members of the doctoral group reflect their personal issues. Their process of choosing and settling on their central themes would be fascinating and save me from the alienation I was expecting as inevitable in the thesis process. This of course would place me on a metalevel focusing everywhere but on my 'self'.

Imagine the excitement and confusion when the reality was unveiled. Each doctoral student would be engaged in a project ✓ -called 'therapist self-research' where idiosyncratic therapeutic problems would be connected to personal issues and theoretical areas of interest and then formulated into a research project, relevant for the therapeutic community. So in fact the covert themes were not only out of the closet, they were in fact centre stage!

Linking my in-session difficulties with theoretical issues and practical dilemmas suddenly threw up an image of battling with inadequate connective tissue between my head and my heart. This became a metaphor for my personal process but also for the difficulty I found in connecting the psychotherapeutic theories, the machine and biological models, with what one was actually supposed to do at the frontline with clients. What seemed to emerge was an almost political issue. In the systemic view there was an avoidance of power issues and the associated experiential realities in the client system (Dell, 1989; Fish, 1990) coupled with an assumption of therapist power and expert knowledge, that Hoffman (1991) termed 'practising down'. My felt experience of this was extreme distaste.

The thesis quest threw up many questions about what is useful or subjugating in the therapeutic system. I was reading a great deal about changes in the way the professional relationship itself was construed. This came in many different packages - 'the dropping the oracles mantle' Michael White package - the Anderson and Goolishian 'not knowing' and 'co-creation of meaning' package - and the Lynn Hoffman 'disease' package. My own focus on personal handicaps and the feelings of 'not knowing' and needing confirmation of the discrepancy between the message sent and the message received became the research problem - two different realities needed to be taken into account - double description - therapist and client creating a joint story about therapy.

So much client experience seemed covert, that it was clear that therapists should not assume that they know what their clients are experiencing. Nearly everything written about therapy emanates from the therapist's perspective and calls for a client based description of therapy were clearly audible (Kuehl, Newfield & Joanning, 1990; White, 1989; Williams, 1991). Hoffman's (1991) ethic of participation and reflexivity confirmed the focus on the importance of client subjective experience. Maturana and Varela (1987) put it this way . . . "from the perspective of an observer, there is always ambiguity in a communicative interaction. The phenomenon of communication depends on not what is transmitted, but on what happens to the person who receives it" (p.196).

Thus, conceptually, I felt that I was onto something. As participant observer there was my structural-coupling but I was concerned about how this structural-coupling was experienced by the other. Collaborative inquiry would be my technique and client and other contexts of feedback clearly became the central focus. I would investigate contexts to know about my different or not different selves.

When I review the original document with which I entered the doctoral course my sense is that although much has altered with me personally, the goals have held firm

- wanting to know how I'm doing;
- wanting the risk of intense new input;
- an excitement about the theoretical changes since I'd last been an official student;
- an intuition about how current professional issues were resonating with my life story;
- officially rejoining the fraternity.

These things that I wanted were in sharp contrast to what I didn't want.

Whoever wanted a PhD? Not me, if it took years of being cloistered behind a laptop; not if it was about creating a tome to collect library dust at UNISA in the bowels of the 7th level; not if it meant disconnecting from the stream of clients, little league soccer matches, chit chat, *cappuccino* and political angst. Was this just an opportunity to hold my breath and steel myself through an obstacle course for a certificate of completion? Should I look forward to escalating spouse irritation about the unentertained friends, the unfurnished patio or the uninteresting lunch? No definitely not, this was not the scenario, there were hints of a process quite different. I had feared that research would ~~be~~ a dehumanizing experience, yet the process of researching was in fact an investigation of my own idiosyncratic style of being human.

When I look back now at how the doctoral process fitted with my own professional disenchantments over time, I am amazed at the coherence.

During original psychotherapy training back in 1980, there were many tensions about personal limitations, criticism

and competence. Accommodations to strange and unfamiliar ways of being and thinking were painful and sometimes dissonant but it was a new and fascinating world. I think emotional commitment to the style of working lagged behind what I was able to practically do and intellectually integrate. Therapy ✓ —seemed a power play, a battle to out-manoeuvre and keep control. When the training was complete, I still felt very dependent, as though I had not learnt enough - probably a more accurate representation would be the blaming stance - that I had not been taught enough. It took years of practical work to understand just how much I had learnt.

Hence the team created immediately after qualifying, dealt with dependence but not individuation. So it became important for me to also work alone. My early years of practice were clearly motivated by needs for expertise and recognition. I widened the base to include various contexts where I was part of a multidisciplinary team and to where there was wide variety in the work. I also ensured that I was exposed to therapists with other belief systems.

Connections to colleagues provided support and stimulation but were often content focused. Conferences and reading were palliative, providing more information but they did not seem to take me anywhere.

Slowly seeds of discontent started appearing. Some were clearly professional, but they cannot be disentangled from the personal. There were endless conversations with a much loved colleague about stuck therapies. The conversations became as stuck as the therapies. There was my colleague group where we avoided issues and colluded to forget a lot of salient personal and historical insights we had about each other. Yet we were all aware of their relevance. The tell-tale sign was there. Yes, client cancellations were cause for celebration, a jail-free hour, which I often purposely did not fill. Being

a therapist felt very heavy and the documented tricks of survival such as humour, irreverence, and not taking oneself too seriously, seemed superficial and inappropriate. As the last client left at the end of the working week, I behaved like a bat out of hell swerving this way and that, shopping too much, eating too much, watching my children too much and worrying much too much - not about clients as such, but about my professional self. There seemed to be a locked up part. Maybe this was the heart part, the part that could make things happen and a cautious head part often kept the heart hidden by gentle or catchy conversation.

On a personal level, endless energy was expended watching and responding to my family - the needs of my husband - the pursuits of my children and the health of my parents. I felt my professional life was and had to remain encapsulated and invisible to my family. There were occasional exceptions when one of them came to a public talk and were slightly taken aback, or if outsiders mentioned odd things to my children, like "oh, my family saw your Mom a few years ago when I was smoking too much pot". Slowly this secret life aspect changed, my children got old enough to be quite proud of my work and my husband relaxed because I kept clients within reasonable limits. However, I think I still kept 'me' invisible. All the space was filled. I think I defined myself in terms of these roles of wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend, madam of the house and often professional therapist, because I enjoyed them and they brought confirmation. The moment of realisation came some years back, when Marge, my sister, called from London and asked the innocuous "How are you?" I answered easily with interesting newsy bits . . . "yes, but how are you?" she repeated. Did I detect irritation in her voice? Who is me? I can only answer ~~in~~ terms of what I am doing and those I am involved with. The penny had dropped. I just did not know about me. I was an expert on others.

In 1988, my baby was finally weaned after nearly four years of breast-feeding. My children and friends believed I was both disgusting and crazy and in competition with my housekeeper, Agnes, whose toddler lived on her back or at her breast. These responses never upset me, I found them amusing and felt very definite in my beliefs and actions. However, the inevitable question could now be postponed no longer. Gideon was already 4 and I was 40! What about the fourth baby? The planned family of two big ones and two little ones was not yet complete. Balfour was adamant, but I was in turmoil! I felt that he was always enthusiastic and keen on expansion, like he was always looking to open a new branch or buy a new business. I did not feel that he was anticipating realistically because at that time I experienced him as quite needy himself and very demanding of me. It all just did not seem to fit. My ambivalence was acute and distressing, the concept of a fourth child and sister for Vanessa was so clear that not having her already seemed like a loss. I tormented myself with thoughts that some decisions are wrong for now but correct for ten years time and maybe I was being short-sighted. I still wonder at the depth of this crisis. I was reluctant about the level of commitment which, with a baby, was always very heavy for me, but I was also terrified of the personal vulnerability which I feel at such times. I knew even then that there was a battle around the emerging self, a tacit knowledge that another baby could in a sense keep me invisible for another decade.

Losing my mother in Cape Town in 1990 confirmed the need for vigilance. She had slipped away without me saying goodbye. I had been caught off-guard. She was in hospital so I could not speak to her and I did not realise how bad it was. I was devastated. I could never be ready to let her go, I had always held on so tight. Gert Meyer, erstwhile trainer, then friend and colleague, and subsequently my partner in the doctoral pursuit, said something then that fitted exactly and I shall

never forget it, "because you didn't know, you could let her die . . . ." Her view of me continually feeds my strength. Exactly one year later my father took ill and died in an awful way, silenced by tubes. He had taken care of so much for me. His death forced the last bits of adulthood on me. I hated that, and still resist it in subtle ways. I often reflect on the meaning of their deaths in practical terms. I carry aspects of them more strongly now. It is a new era, and since their death, there is a new generation. I met their first great grandson while at the Amsterdam Conference in 1993. He will carry the name into the future. I miss them - the burdens and pleasures of keeping them alive - yet I know that there is a new space that I am using well.

A process had begun that gave me the clues; I could not decipher them then, but there is a now truth about what were then only facts. In years of practice, amazing moments with clients have happened unpredictably, yet I believe there are factors that facilitate this heightened experience. Three that I am aware of are: personal encounter in the here and now, the expression of emotion, and times when I as the therapist feel particularly vulnerable in my own life. A fourth one is new and thesis related. It is when I ask clients about their experience of therapy. My amazement and fascination is of course a result of the research focus and its personal relevance to me. However, professional moments that stood out as particularly challenging and enjoyable were often shared moments, when I was working with a colleague or presenting a workshop with a co-therapist. Had I not in fact chosen a Master's thesis topic where the experiment demanded a co-therapy format in each and every session? The on-going nature of this need was confirmed for me when during the doctoral programme, as occasional presentations were planned, I was always the one insistent on sharing the therapeutic space with another colleague. There was an almost physical revulsion against getting back into my own familiar therapeutic space,

not because I am uncomfortable there, but because, in these collaborative situations, working alone represented a wasted opportunity for a special kind of learning. For me, it would be impossible not to work at least partly alone, but sometimes I really need to share that space. There is a part of me that blossoms in a cross pollinating context. These factors all pointed to an immanent self and a possibly idiosyncratic relationship between connectedness and autonomy.

Richard Erskine, an American Gestalt therapist and Transactional Analysis trainer, travelled to Johannesburg and conducted workshops for therapists intermittently over many years. I could get really anxious. He touched people so deeply. I think I was fearful about the unexpressed within me. Other therapists knew exactly what they needed to focus on, in their personal therapy time. For me, nothing was that clear. I saw parallel process in supervision - it was amazing and I wondered about myself. I was wondering more and more.

Working alone for many years had allowed me to develop my ~~own~~ epistemology based on my personal and professional experiences and it allowed time for its delineation, integration and expression. However, something was missing. What I didn't know then was that only in exposing this to scrutiny, one's own and the scrutiny of others, as well as participating with other colleagues engaged in this process, does the reality of a personal epistemology really create itself. A context where this could be recursively utilized would be provided by the doctoral process.

The course had attracted me because of the promise of its practicality. The hope was that there would be a difference when I opened the door of my therapy room and saw clients sitting there. I would know more, see the clients more clearly, and be more effective with them. I could never have guessed that my personal voyage of discovery would be to

investigate who in fact opens the door of the therapy room and what in fact I bring in with me.

✓ I needed a 'map of self'. I had mapped out my whole family. I learnt to watch and to worry. As a wife and Mommy, I co-created a new family where I perceived every need and nuance. Professionally, I had been experienced by my trainers as asking lots of questions; I was insatiable for knowledge and technique. These were sometimes great assets but they represented limitations too. I was curious about clients and I focussed on their patterns. I always needed to understand the field or the vista or the drama out there, but my own relational modes remained a blind spot.

I carried a pervasive yet subjugating question in my personal and professional epistemology. At a workshop recently, Richard the visiting clinician responded to my request for supervision. Before many words were out he said "Connie is this a *déjà vu*?" I was puzzled. "I recollect you sitting just like that six years ago asking that same question. Again you're asking, 'am I doing enough?'" Oh yes. This is a frequent and familiar unanswered question. It is a significant question especially when addressed to him because he does so much. This is a variation on the need to ~~be~~ effective and the discomfort of 'not knowing'. So in another context I may ask a lot of questions or now in the doctoral context, look for feedback.

The notion distilled of wanting to know my impact and whether what I transmit is actually received - in some way I mistrust a one-sided perspective. It seemed important as regards the therapy process itself to attend to the language of the client as opposed to just the language of my own theory. This complaint - not knowing how I contribute to the therapeutic context and how I do not - creates discomfort, consequently I do not breathe properly and mismanage through

over-activity or constraint, and possibly disconnect from the client. These responses imply many levels, the emotional, physiological, behavioural, cognitive and perhaps even spiritual. The 'not knowing' could be translated into the need for a map of self.

If knowledge is something people do together in conversation (Goolishian & Anderson, 1987), then knowledge about therapy co-evolved with the client or significant others is what the research will focus on. There is concern about the inexplicable surprises around why clients stay or go or change or get stuck and the answer is clearly facilitated by a recursive process around the self of the therapist - a ~~commitment~~ commitment to investigating my own story or my own part in the therapeutic story rather than the case history or the stuckness in the client. Two-tiered observation (White, 1992) and attention to the conceptualiser's enmeshment in his own constructs (Selvini, 1988) become vital methodology. Keeney (1992) refers to the shift from being an observer of systems to an observer of one's observing systems as the difference between simple cybernetics and cybernetics of cybernetics. In observing my observing systems in the professionally significant systems of my life, I utilize observations co-evolved with the significant others in these systems.

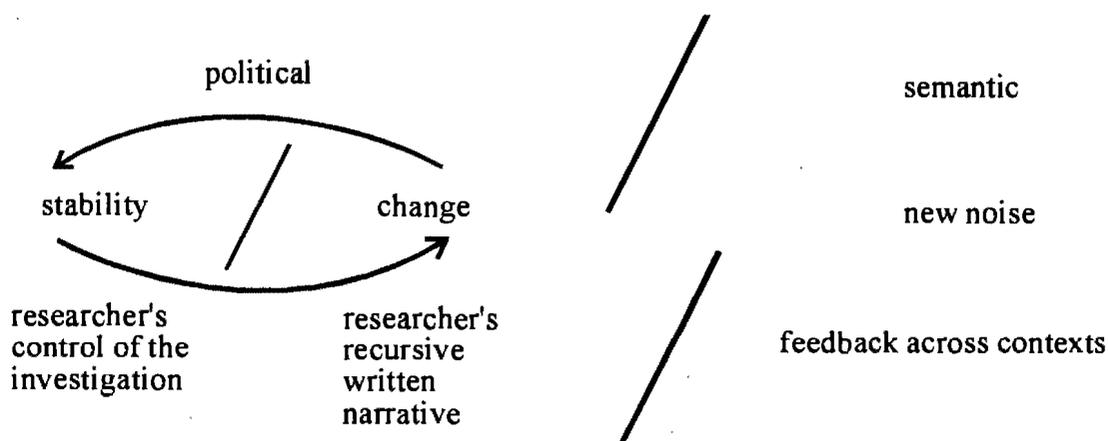
The therapist enters with her own personal demands or frame of reference which are not necessarily efficient or facilitative to the client and do not fit with clients who do not fulfil the therapist's needs. The therapist is required ~~to be~~ reflexive or risk imposing on the therapeutic process, that which is not helpful. A possible but under-utilized way of knowing is using different kinds of feedback to transcend the dilemma so that a method for establishing a self-map of relational modes is developed.

How can therapists be more masterful with what they bring

into therapy and ensure that their needs are not self-defeating? "Meaningful noise" (Keeney, 1992, p.37) via feedback across contexts would provide a way to solve the problem of staying confident of my impact on clients. In this way one system creates an opportunity where a receiving system can respond. Connectedness and interest are consequently increased and the therapeutic context revitalised. This could be viewed as the expansion of the cognitive domain that lets us "see the other person and open up for him room for existence beside us" (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 246).

In fact the dilemma could be rephrased: "...if I do not know about my impact I could mismanage, limit myself or disconnect from the client".

If this were stated in a Keeney equation (Keeney & Ross, 1992) the therapeutic intervention for the idiosyncratic dilemma of 'not knowing one's impact' could be construed as:



The self continually creates itself through narratives that include other people so in utilizing feedback within and across contexts I am investigating my "choreography of co-existence" (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 248), and how the process of researching it changes it. This space for accepting the other's reality confirms social process and therefore humanness (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Consequently, I am investigating my connectedness to get autonomous.

The project would illustrate a recursive process to the community of therapists where the re-searching therapist emerges with new eyes and the importance of this in the healing process would be stressed.

The difficult, and sometimes painful, observer-dependent question refers to who I am and how I operate. The move to watch the observer watching her observations rather than the observed represents a major personal and professional shift best expressed in the words of Proust (in Bartlett, 1980, p. 734): "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes ....."

## CHAPTER 3

## A THEORETICAL MODEL TO SPECIFY THE RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

The theoretical assumptions underpinning this personal and professional voyage are clearly situated in the postmodern tradition. The tradition proposes a challenge to replace objectivist ideals and the search for laws in the human sciences with analyses of both theory and research that are interpretive and meaning orientated.

Within this tradition lie the conceptual tools for the questioning of its own assumptions. It is impossible not to absorb the perspectives of the culture in which one lives. The postmodern tactic of deconstruction and reconstruction has the capacity to emancipate a perspective from the blinding effects of its own preferred narrative and consequently is coherent with this research.

Gergen (1991) explains postmodernism in terms of socio-cultural history when he contrasts it with the romantic and modern approaches to the self. The nineteenth century lifestyle generated the romanticist view where enduring unseen qualities resided deep within the mysterious individual soul. This language threw up concepts like 'deeply committed relations' or 'life purposes' and was coherent with Freudian concepts like 'drive' or 'instinct'. The twentieth century gave way to scientific advances and a modernist view that valued rationality and expert knowledge, and fitted with the machine metaphor. This provided a definition of self that was predictable and researchable. Its very optimism about people trying to succeed meant that a graphic vocabulary of human deficit evolved, with new unheard of words and descriptions such as 'low self-esteem', 'bulimia' or 'midlife crisis' becoming part of life.

Technological shifts have generated advances in communication resulting in massive increments in social stimulation. Through television, billboards, telephone, fax, electronic mail and frequent travel, words and images keep ~~thundering~~ in. Gergen (1991) calls this process social saturation. The ever increasing absorption of the opinions, values and lifestyles of others to the point where "life is a swirling sea of social relations" (p. 61) implies a postmodern consciousness.

This term seems to apply particularly to changes in interpersonal exposure. A push to intensify relationships so as to replace quantity with quality and deal with home that "is less a resting place than a pit stop" (p. 66) have led to a pattern Gergen (1991) calls "the microwave relationship" (p. 65), and a new pattern of self-consciousness where the individual is split into a multiplicity of self-investments. This he aptly calls "multiphrenia" (p. 73). "With social saturation, the coherent orders of accord are demolished, and all beliefs thrown into question by one's exposure to multiple points of view" (Gergen, 1991, p. xi).

This trend is echoed in Bruner's (1987) view of the change in the language of narratives. He talks of "a perspectivalism and subjectivism that replaced the omniscient narrator" (p. 20).

This way of seeing contemporary society is a clear departure from the traditional view; it heralds a social and ecological epistemology and represents an alternative account of human reality and action.

This shift has enormous professional consequences that resonate with the debate raging around the traditional beliefs in basic, true or knowable selves. Selves have to hold on to individuality, yet exposure to multiple perspectives makes the

capacity for containing contradiction an essential ingredient. The very idea of individual selves in possession of finite qualities is in jeopardy and the self as temporal flows exchanging knowledge like a "stretch of moving history" (Hoffman, 1991, p. 6) becomes more apt.

The therapeutic target has moved from the psyche of the single individual, reminiscent of the romantic period or the modifying of behaviour reminiscent of the modern tradition, to the exploration of relationship in families, groups and even communities using themes of co-operation, collusion and co-involvement.

Both within and outside the academic sphere, ways of making the self intelligible and ways of conceptualising the patterns of social life place enormous constraints on action or in fact open options. As greater relational vocabulary emerges, so will it redefine the patterns of cultural life and hopefully emancipate them.

"Beliefs about the self seem pivotal to all our undertakings" (Gergen, 1991, p. x). The ways of understanding who and what that is, becomes in itself an academic issue.

Postmodern intelligibility does not invalidate the romantic, modern or any other discourse and may resuscitate discourses that are invalidated by rigid perspectives that obliterate alternatives (Gergen, 1991). Viewed this way, empirical research is not a warrant of truth but lends literary support to a particular discursive account. A social epistemology removes truth as an arbiter among domains so each form of theoretical intelligibility "provides the culture with discursive vehicles for carrying out social life" (Gergen, 1989, p. 479).

The importance of plurality of perspectives, because there is no unitary truth, implies opening dialogue to an extended audience of 'stakeholders', increasing the number of individuals who could translate the realities of one group into the framework of others and opening the channels for feedback because no one remains to claim authority. Gergen (1991) confirms the importance of this position: "Without addressing this complexity, however, the claim to progress is but a charade" (p. 238). Constructivism has grown out of the postmodern, poststructuralist and postscientific soil. Dissatisfaction with the limitations of existing assumptions referring to 'how we know what we believe we know' and consequently 'what therapists do', certainly provides the growth conditions for constructivism.

The postmodern perspective implies the investigation of three relevant concepts, as a theoretical platform for this research.

The relational modes of human beings are best understood ~~via~~ the science of pattern, dealing with qualities and meanings rather than with quantities (Hoffman, 1990; Keeney, 1983). This justifies the focus on co-ordinations in behaviour. This focus can be defined by the word **process**. **Narrative** provides the content, the material with which to apply this focus, because experience is organised and made meaningful through narrative. In accepting the subjective nature of reality and the consequent uncertainty that allows diversity of description, **constructivism** is the overarching epistemology with which to view this research.

—These three concepts could be construed in the following way: a look through **constructivist** lenses at the context of the researcher (the observing system) where the myriad **processes** defining the self are embedded in many different **narratives**.

Hoffman (1990) connects these three concepts similarly, when she says:

Social construction theory posits an evolving set of meanings that emerge unendingly from the interactions between people. These meanings are not skull-bound and may not exist inside what we think of as an individual "mind". They are part of a general flow of constantly changing narratives. (p. 3)

### **Constructivism**

Under postmodern conditions, the boundaries of the individual as a unity of reality blur, existence is in the momentary truths "a state of continuous construction and reconstruction" (Gergen, 1991, p. 7).

The constructivist position points to a world where reality is created, arising from operations of distinction evolved through interaction, through the senses, but also through the domain of language (Keeney, 1983). Languaging is seen as the act of continuously co-developing meaning, so it is constantly evolving, and is an active social negotiation. This places knowledge within the process of social interchange (Gergen, 1989, 1991; Goolishian & Anderson, 1987; Goolishian & Winderman, 1988). The production of human knowledge thus becomes a cultural artefact which occurs in a relationship.

Constructivists acknowledge the active role they play in creating a perspective and interpreting observations in terms of it. The mode of observing changes the observation in irreversible ways (Goolishian & Winderman, 1988; Keeney,

✓ 1983); consequently, what we know is always the construction of an observer (Keeney, 1983; Von Foerster, 1984). Cybernetics of cybernetics is a move from the focus on observed systems to that of observing systems (Keeney, 1983). This challenges the objective basis of conventional knowledge and leads to the inevitable ethical responsibility for what is invented and a focus on how the observer participates in the observed. To clarify this further, non-constructivists are inventors who think they are discoverers (Efran, Lukens & Lukens, 1988). So any theory or even a narrative, as it does not represent reality, becomes in itself a matter of analytic interest (Gergen, 1985b; Smedslund, 1985).

The constructivist view would not be limited by a search ~~for what really happened in the past~~, but would see history as a key to the unfolding family narrative that gives current events their meaning.

There is no perspective-free position but a shift from reality to constructions of reality and consequently a consciousness of construction which implies continual reflexivity. Self-referentiality is intrinsic to our experience of reality and implies that the observer is part of the observed. This entails 'knowing about one's knowing' and this is always a recursive process (Keeney, 1982).

✓ Reflexivity is central to understanding the human condition: it describes the relationship between social action and conceptions of who we are, how we relate and the patterns that organise social interaction. The constructivist is consequently aware of the value-laden nature of human activity because there is no objective reality to divert the immediacy of personal responsibility for an ethical and political stance (Keeney, 1983; White, 1991).

This implies that a constructivist needs to be aware of

and constantly review her own epistemology (Anolli, 1987; Hoffman, 1990, 1991; Keeney, 1983). The social and ecological epistemology directs the researcher or therapist to observe how her own habits of emotional and cognitive construction inform and maintain a therapeutic reality. —Descriptions and explanations are parts of social pattern hence altering them constrains certain actions and invites others. Psychological theories as they enter society furnish the linguistic tools by which people construct their lives and thus provide potential for cultural construction (Bruner, 1986; Gergen, 1991). The ethical responsibility is to assess what forms of life we privilege (White, 1991).

Kenny (1988) highlights how 'reality' can also become a political tool of influence when co-ordination of action breaks down. If reality can refer to the recurrently confirmed consensual domain it can bring people into line and begin to be seen as objective, whereas novel unexpected ways of bringing forth reality could be labelled subjective or insane (Kenny, 1988).

Auerswald (1987, 1990) refers to two thought or reality systems that provide a frame for the dilemma of which discourses are preferred. He distinguishes the 'mechologic' edit of reality which implies 'thingness' and ignores the implicate non-objective relational domain. When applied to humans it results in fragmentation and disconnection which Auerswald (1990) calls 'relational hunger' and 'relational starvation'. The 'ecologic' edit of reality includes sociopolitical events in narratives and refers to the transformations or relational differences in the patterned set of connected events that occur in timespace. Ideally, according to Auerswald mechologic belongs to machines and technology and is useful in a context controlled by ecological thought. The political nature of the therapy discourse thus becomes salient and this may include the assumption that some

~~truths~~ are better for people than others.

The notions of the expert therapist and the patient whose deviance needs correcting, lose credibility in a social constructionist framework (Gergen, 1991; Hoffman, 1990; White, 1991). 'Structure determinism' where an 'informationally closed' living system cannot be 'instructed' by outside forces but determines its own response according to its own structure (Maturana & Varela, 1987) also lends a biological and differing perspective to the view that a therapist cannot change a client. A problem exists because of the way it is constructed in relationship in the linguistic domain (Goolishian & Anderson, 1987). This perspective means that clients do not 'take in' the words, meanings or explanations proposed by the therapist but rather use the therapist's communication to talk to themselves in a way that is congruent with their own structure. What happens in the process of therapy is a function of the fit between the structures of the participants. Also the domain in which the problem exists, determines the form of its cure (Efran & Lukens, 1985).

Constructivism emphasises context as defining meaning. The implication is that the researcher or therapist needs to be inclusive of wider systems rather than exclusive. Therapists have to grapple with agencies and institutions that were previously unseen and out of the comfort zone. Auerswald (1990) talks of this as involvement and possible conflict with a society where 'mechologic' prevails. As meaning occurs in language, a constructivist recognises that vocabulary affects experience and how events are construed becomes inseparable from how they are experienced. Co-ordination of action also occurs in language, hence the constructivist emphasis on therapy as conversation. Social reality emanates from a consensual domain which can become very definite operating like a truth, governed by rules that are prescriptive.

Consequently constructivism provides anything but an 'anything goes' philosophy (Efran et al., 1988).

The constructivist therapist enters as a co-participant (Hoffman, 1991) or benign detective (Auerswald, 1985), or "participant manager of the therapeutic conversation" (Goolishian & Anderson, 1987, p. 53) "who does not know too soon nor understand too quickly" (Goolishian & Winderman, 1988, p. 140) or exists structurally coupled with the family in a state of co-drift (Maturana & Varela, 1987) in the collaborative construction of new realities. Understanding is always in context and never holds over time, so understanding is always a process never fully achieved. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) see change as a process that does not exist in any cell or biological structure but in 'the not-yet-said'.

This resource, this capacity for change, is in the ability we have "to be in language" with each other and, in language, always to develop new themes, new narratives, and new stories. Through this process, we co-create and co-develop the systemic realities around which we have meaning for each other, and through which we continually reorganize our mutual living and our self-descriptions. (p. 381)

This emancipatory stance attests to the diversity of human process, the power of 'endless reconstruals' and possibilities generated from fresh conversational terrain.

With regard to constructivism an amazing case of equifinality exists in both the systems and psychoanalytic domains. In the psychoanalytic domain, from different origins but out of the same soil of discontent, constructivist rumblings are audible. In this reality system where the inner workings of the human mind allow the analyst to know how the

patient is put together, disillusion has set in.

A two-part symposium in the journal, Psychoanalytic Dialogues (1992), dedicates itself to rethinking the nature of psycho-analytic knowledge and the question 'What does the analyst know?' and the practical implications that follow from it.

Mitchell (1992) says that the analytic method cannot simply expose what is there, psychoanalytic ideas cannot correspond in a direct and immediate fashion to the structure of mind. Statements such as "it is impossible to resuscitate the authority of the analyst of Freud's day, grounded in their claim to know, scientifically, the workings of the mind" (p. 282) imply that psychoanalysts are also falling victim to the dimming lustre of science and the increasing lustre of postmodernism. So when Mitchell says "the analytical method is constructive and synthetic, it organises whatever is there into patterns supplied by the method itself" (p. 280), the song starts sounding all too familiar.

In identifying the practical implications of the shift to a constructivist perspective, Stern (1992) conveys how impossible claims to objectivity are oppressive to both analysand and analyst and contributors to the symposium focus on the redefinition of the analyst's authority from someone who "knows" to someone who "knows how to conduct a specific kind of inquiry" (Mitchell, 1992, p. 284). They speak of a new sense of risk and personal responsibility, where the analyst in departing from customary rituals allows reciprocal shifts in the patient and where the analyst needs to reflect critically on the nature of his or her participation (Hoffmann, 1992; Mitchell 1992; Stern 1992). The therapeutic experience is understood to be reflective of the analyst's own personality and history, not only of the patient's. The therapist has to own his or her position, it cannot be

justified by pulling rank as the objective scientist.

This digression comprises a kind of process of triangulation (Dillon, Moon & Sprenkle, 1990) or double description (Bateson, 1972) that gives depth to a vision. Hence constructivism is not simply the new language of third generation family therapists but a total rethinking of the enterprise of science.

So claims to knowledge and authority that ignore postmodern understanding of the constraints of human knowledge impart to traditional research and practice an anachronistic air that demands respect more out of deference than demonstrated utility. Rethinking the research enterprise does not diminish its stature but redefines it as more relevant.

Gergen (1991) makes an enormously optimistic point in favour of the postmodern view. International expansion of business and technological advance means that cultures incorporate fragments of each other's identities and come to recognise the extent of relational embeddedness. As the separation of self and other diminishes, so should conflict.

There is a small jump to the therapeutic arena. There are no true principles, only participants who are in direct interchange: "the members of a problem system are the experts in that problem; the therapist is simply an expert in maintaining conversation about it" (Goolishian & Anderson, 1987, p. 536). Conflict or problems are created by virtue of our perspective expressed in language (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Maturana & Varela, 1987). Uncertainty means diversity of description which provides increased options for researcher, therapist and client. These options mean 'change', 'restorying', 'transformation', or 'co-evolvement of new meaning' depending on who is writing about them (Goolishian & Andersen, 1987; Hoffman, 1990; White, 1989).

The therapist's position should not violate anyone's perspective and that means operating within multiple perspectives simultaneously. In this research the use of explicit client feedback *vis à vis* the therapy provides a new and perhaps under-utilised perspective. Subjects who are tested, clients who are 'therapised' are traditionally denied rights to negotiate the interpretations that will affect them (Gergen, 1985b; Hoffman 1990, 1991). Rather than making diagnoses of systems that often invalidate the experiences of the individuals with the problem, Anderson, Goolishian and ~~W~~Winderman (1986) suggest that therapeutic systems diagnose themselves, thus avoiding ideas about the objective ontological nature of social systems. This suggestion at least allows the therapist some leverage because if other people cannot be changed, the only thing we can change in the therapy room is ourselves. It is at this issue, the diagnostic dialogue of the therapeutic system itself, that this research is directed. Investigating one's behaviour in different relational contexts, revising premises and observing one's relational patterns greatly enhances personal flexibility and efficiency (Anolli, 1987).

Efran, et al. (1988) say of the commonalities between good education and good constructivist psychotherapy: "They always put one at risk. Both are designed to support inquiry, and both work best when conceptualised as hands-on adventure rather than as purely academic pursuits" (p. 35). Hopefully research can be recursively coupled with education because these comments clearly describe the researcher's experience of this research.

A constructivist orientation means that a therapist knows he or she has a role in fashioning frames of discourse for living. If scientific discourse does not have to mirror 'reality' then a researcher need no longer be constrained by arid conventions governing the writing of research. "If we

are to construct the world, we might usefully consider forms that enliven, compel or unsettle" (Gergen, 1989, p. 478).

### Narrative

This research fits with the narrative metaphor in its emphasis on experience and the interpretation of experience. Narratives of many different sorts provide the proper content or data of the study. This is coherent with the shift in focus from behaviour and structural systems to meaning systems. The key elements of narrative, according to Bruner (1986b), could be viewed as story (the systematically related sequence of events), discourse (the medium such as conversation, novel or film in which the story is manifested), and telling (the action, the communicative process that produces the story in discourse). Narratives are never isolated or static but are always in process and represent conversational consensual domains and language for making the self intelligible, for specifying relationships with others and for co-ordinating social practices.

The practice of psychotherapy represents a special case of the narrative form. Sluzki (1992) considers "the complex ecology of narrative that constitute our social world" a "core concept of the second-order, constructionist approach to therapy" (p. 230).

Science does not reflect the 'truth' out there, but is, in itself, a social process (Gergen, 1991, Hoffman, 1990). This social process of which therapy is an example, is embodied in languaging and the co-development of meaning (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). So, from a postmodern perspective, we are dealing with representations of representations of the world. Bruner (1986b) distinguishes reality (whatever that may be), experience (how that reality

becomes conscious) and expression (how individual experience is framed and articulated) so we live through an experience which then becomes self-referential in the telling.

"People do not speak their experience, rather, without forms of speaking they could not claim to have an experience" (Gergen, 1991, p. 110) and so in the realm of human interaction the uncertain and ever-changing flow of conversation is the content that carries the process. "Every telling is an arbitrary imposition of meaning on the flow of memory in that we highlight some causes and discount others; that is, every telling is interpretive" (Bruner, 1986b, p. 7).

- Words are expressions of group convention, a preferred vocabulary that may reflect or defend values, politics or a way of life. The focus on narrative as content is based on the view that "we live in a world brought forth in languaged interaction, and that we understand ourselves, our world through evolving stories (descriptions) and narratives by which we organize and lend meaning to our experience" (Goolishian & Winderman, 1988, pp. 136 - 137).

Narratives use different images, language and style and consequently "are not only structures of meaning but structures of power as well" (Bruner, 1986b, p. 144). Discourse reflects a prevailing structure of social and power relationships. This could refer to how language is constrained, what is not said and what is focussed upon. The effect of this understanding is that therapy discourse moves closer to sociopolitical discourse and forces the researcher to question the assumptions of her own epistemology.

Narratives constitute the psychological and cultural reality in which participants live or one could say history is created from the narratives of the participants. Language could be viewed as the carrier of the culture's

epistemological codes and is therefore productive in the construction of the objects of investigation, such as the therapeutic context.

Communication carries infinite new possibilities and the content of dialogue is open to change, so psychotherapists, particularly in trying to resolve what is problematic rely on their facility for evolving new narratives, themes and stories to describe relationships with others and themselves. In fact, therapist positioning becomes vital because it determines which new meanings may be generated in a situation where the other participants may be oriented to the problem story. Epstein and Loos (1989) put it very clearly when they state "It is not simply that each therapist sees the family differently, but in the act of conversing, each therapist generates with the clients a very different family" (p. 410).

In therapy it is the narrative or constructed truth co-evolved in relationship as opposed to an accurate historical truth, that determines the outcome of therapy or what happens next: "we find autobiography is anything but autonomous; it is more properly sociobiography" (Gergen, 1991, p. 164). ✓

Autobiography is thus not a record of what happened but a continuing interpretation and reinterpretation of experience. "The story of one's own life is, of course, a privileged but trouble narrative in the sense that it is reflexive: the narrator and the central figure in the narrative are the same. This reflexivity creates dilemmas" (Bruner, 1987, p. 13).

These dilemmas take us right to the issue that is addressed in this thesis namely the neglected viewpoint. The client's narration of therapy is seen as a counterpoint to the therapist's narration of the therapy even to himself. Mostly clarification of theory and practice is founded on the

experientially based investigation of the therapist's experience of the therapeutic process. Kuehl et al. (1990) quote a number of sources that confirm that most (if not all) of what is written and discussed about therapy is based upon the therapist's rather than the client's experience. Clients seldom speak for themselves. Kuehl et al. (1990) offer a client-based description of family therapy as feedback to therapists and teams in modifying their understanding of the family therapy process. Bruner (1987) highlights the autobiographical narrator's irresistible "error in accounting for his acts in terms of intentions when in fact, they might have been quite otherwise determined" (p. 13). The autobiographical narrator is both the therapist and the client. Therapy could be viewed as a re-attempt at autobiography with the therapist as an important participant in this sociobiographical pursuit. The constructed and unstable nature of life narrative in that it is highly susceptible to cultural, interpersonal and linguistic influences goes some way to explaining the potency of therapy. Therapists are often dealing with client's defacements of their own life narratives. However, the possible defacement in the therapist's narrative of the therapy is often neglected, even though the therapist's private dialogues are crucial in shaping emotional posture in therapy.

### **Process**

Postmodernism implies merit in multiplicity, so that the traditional goal of the stable self (self as object) is replaced with change of self (self as process). This move from object to process is a nontrivial distinction. It is one of those distinctions that fits with the Batesonian (1972) adage "a difference that makes a difference" (p. 272).

Perspectivism implies that the concrete entity of self is

replaced by infinite portrayals and the ways identity is created and re-created in a myriad of relationships. Gergen (1991) distinguishes this postmodern social interdependence from the stable dependence in a face to face community. The watching of sport on television, truckers connected by citizens band radio, or mass audiences of religious broadcasts and all media technology provide a type of electronic community. In the postmodern world, selves become the manifestations of relationship which ousts the individual self from its central position (Bruner, 1987; Gergen, 1991, Hoffman, 1991; Weingarten, 1991).

"Individual autonomy gives way to a reality of immersed interdependence in which it is relationship that constructs the self" (Gergen, 1991, p. 147). Even emotion can be seen as not simply residing within an individual, but cultural performance gaining significance as components of on-going relationships constructed by social sanction (Gergen, 1991). Pakman (1992) views emotion as a systemic event that is participatory. Moral decisions too are the outcome of personal interchange. This stance, where value is placed on the web of relationships in reaching a moral solution, is explicated in the feminist view.

The construct 'shared meaning' is defined by Weingarten (1991) as a social issue central to intimacy. So constructs traditionally viewed as internal representations to be discovered by empirical methods are viewed as intersubjective and a product of dialogue and languaging. Hence mental substance and materiality give way to a cybernetic epistemology which concerns itself with a world of form and pattern and organisation. This is central to the idea of a system. Lewis (1989) states, "when the elements become the focus, the system is lost" (p. 66). Hence the primacy of relationship means a focus on process. "The world of cybernetics is the world of mental process" (Keeney, 1982, p.

157).

Von Bertalanffy's (1968) definition of a system as "a set of elements standing in interrelation among themselves and with the environment" (p. 55) in itself speaks of process. Thereafter the issue of what is punctuated as an element, either matter or non-matter, or elements interrelating within a system, or informationally closed systems organised from within, structurally coupling with, but not informing another element of a larger social system, is a matter of metaphorical preference.

Miller (1978) defined process as "all change over time of matter-energy or information in a system" (p. 23). He seems to refer to the ongoing function of a system and in fact views history as the less readily reversed process of a system. A living system, he believes, carries its history in the form of altered structure and consequently of altered function also. This would be coherent with the view that social systems consist of individuals co-ordinating their processes for fit or misfit or for particular purposes to ensure survival in the environment.

'Persons in relationship' is really the tale of process and so in this research, process becomes a core concept. Our language of feelings, thoughts, and desires specifies individuality and the language of relationship is undeveloped, so the discourse of relationship has yet to emerge fully.

Seeing a social system as a 'thing' implies change through forced input rather than perturbations of autonomous structures. This view distorts the concept of autopoiesis which cannot really apply to social systems. Individuals are responsive to individual organisation not social systems. This reification is reminiscent of the structural model of family therapy or, Hoffman's (1981) "thing in the bushes" (p.

176) that has to be changed or fixed rather than the more collaborative, egalitarian stance where meanings are co-evolved and the outcome cannot be predicted. This important shift is confirmed by Hoffman (1988) when she says "a problem system is not a collection of people but a network of meanings" (p. 116). This process orientation is what constructivism significantly contributes to the emancipation of therapy.

The view that social systems are in fact individual organisms or non-material elements in process has many advantages that favour movement and change and obviate the confusion arising from inappropriate reification.

Lewis (1989) qualitatively differentiates family patterns and the patterns of self organising systems, and based on these distinctions, describes the self and the family as distinct, non-intersecting systems that nevertheless have mutual influence.

These distinctions highlight the incomparability of the processes of a self-organising system and those co-ordinated processes of a social system. As living and mental processes are characterised by pattern, form and organisation this leads to an invisible world with no 'realness' or 'thingness'. Keeney (1982) in fact defines epistemology as "a process of knowing, constructing and maintaining a world of experience" (p. 165).

Maturana and Varela (1987) explain co-ordinated behaviour and linguistic communications (which is the ascription of meaning about the co-ordination of behaviour between living beings) by their basic concepts: autopoiesis, structure-determined behaviour and structural coupling. The description of process is the reciprocal fit between the structure-determined interactions of autopoietic entities such that the

behaviour of each is the reciprocal perturbation of the other. These recurrent co-ordinations are the structural coupling of the entities in an environment where such interaction is supported (Maturana & Varela, 1987). The creation of many mini-societies where new options and unpredictable outcomes may arise, is the story of the relevant processes of this thesis.

Maturana (1975) talks about organisation as "the relations between the components which define a system as a unity" (p. 315). This coheres with the idea that social groupings gain their identity from the ways various members interact. So when we define a group we do it in terms of its process; hence the important distinction made between social systems and organisms (Chubb, 1990; Keeney & Ross, 1992; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Miller, 1983). Social systems are thus seen as the processes of interaction between and among the organisms that comprise it.

So, although Gergen (1991) and Maturana and Varela (1987) differ in the way they conceptualise the person/organism in that Gergen (1991) talks of a multiplicity of selves and Maturana and Varela's (1987) informationally closed, structure-determined system implies more stability and isolation, with either viewpoint we are directed towards relationship and co-ordinations of action as the proper focus. In both cases this focus is process.

For purposes of developing a theory of therapy Goolishian and Anderson (1987) replace the view of systems as containing mechanically interacting parts, with a definition of system as existing in language, where a client system would be a 'problem determined system'. Here again "human species are thought to be no more than a flowing network of interacting ideas and correlated actions" (p. 537). When the Galveston group talk about therapists working with a 'problem determined

'system' they are talking about a system defined by its process. The process is the behavioural co-ordination that allows a problem definition. Hoffman (1988) says, "the system doesn't create the problem, the problem creates the system" (p. 116). From this vantage point treatment is a process which is the transformations of experience communicated through language in a manner that keeps the process evolving till new language, new meaning and therefore new systems emerge, hence "change is the evolution of new meaning through dialogue" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, p. 2). Their 'not knowing' stance is a way of making the expert therapist disappear and facilitating a story where the client's competence and other types of 'newness' increase. This process proceeds towards dis-solving the problem and dissolving the system itself.

Bogdan's (1984) alternative to the reification of family systems is to define family organisation as an 'ecology of ideas', also a change oriented process metaphor illustrating a shift in focus from behaviour to ideas. This is reminiscent of Hoffman's (1988) statement "components of a system are not the individual bodies but the ideas linking them" (p. 116). From this perspective the organismic or structuralist models are seen as description masquerading as explanations. Bogdan (1984) views family structure as the name of a class of patterns of communicative behaviour between people, where the pattern is the focus that must be changed. The utility of this view is that homeostasis, denial and resistance could be viewed as cognitive conservatism, the conserving of ideas in the minds of certain persons, where abstract, overarching ideas are pervasive and inaccessible to change. The implication for the therapist positioning in dealing with resistance according to Bogdan falls into a few basic patterns: defining new behaviour as consistent (though apparently inconsistent) with the client's idea; defining old behaviour as inconsistent with an idea of the client; defining

one client idea as inconsistent with a more central premise. Within these patterns could be included the technique of 'positive connotation' which is clearly an intervention at an ideas level. A move of a single person can inaugurate a chain of events that result in a transformation of ideas and behaviour patterns of all family members that may then not include the problem behaviour. This view is based on the assumption that people behave according to how they define situations in which they are actors and that their definitions of the situation are generalisations learned through repeated interaction with others.

Turning a process into a thing is a problem that arises when a social system is defined as an organism. Constructs become real and it is easy to use dysfunctional labels as if they definitely exist (Hoffman, 1988, 1991). This makes them difficult to shift and the manner in which dysfunction changes with context is ignored. There is great utility in viewing social systems as process. Chubb (1990) identifies advantages: the concept of change is implicit as process is change; being part of the process therapists do not enter the system they are part of; therapists do not have power to change a system because they can only work with individuals whom they may influence; there is no 'thing' or system to change but thoughts, actions and experiences of a client that can be perturbed. Hoffman (1991) favours fluid processes to ensure that meanings stay unfixed and not too real. She mentions metaphor, reflecting modes, images and dreams; forms that people can associate with idiosyncratically. This means the creation of contexts where a plurality of stories is encouraged. A process model does not privilege 'family' as the only entity to work with, hence it provides a flexibility about systems that may more easily reflect social context. Hoffman (1988) defines the move away from the concept of a 'family system' as the freedom to work with any systems that are formed by a conversation about a problem.

The liberal use of the term process in Yalom's (1975) classic text on group therapy attests to the view of a group as a context for process. "Process refers to the relationship implications of interpersonal transactions" (p. 122). He sees the explanation of process as the power cell and unique feature of interactional group therapy. In this context, people are again defined in terms of the processes they tend to create or engage in. Relationship patterns are investigated in a political sense in terms of the 'how' and 'why' of behaviour and the actual content of the semantic statements. Even then Yalom (p. 122) called the focus on process a "self-reflective loop". This relationship aspect of the message is not dissimilar from Keeney's "political frame of reference" (Keeney & Ross, 1992, p. 44) in constructing a therapeutic reality. However, for Keeney this is inseparable from the semantic meaning frame and he sees the relation of semantic and political frames of reference as recursive where each is a frame for the other. These coupled frames according to Keeney (1983, 1990) organise social interaction and thus provide a description of process in therapeutic communication.

Bruner, J. (1986) proposes that stories are composed of dual landscapes - a 'landscape of action' and a 'landscape of consciousness'. Landscape of action refers to events in sequence through the temporal dimension according to specific plots; these provide the reader with a perspective on the thematic unfolding of events across time. Landscape of consciousness refers to interpretations made by the characters in the story and the readers as they interact with the characters through reflection. This landscape features the relationship characteristics, intentional states, desires and preferences of the characters.

White (1991) uses these terms very widely, based on the assumption that lives are framed through stories and therefore questions about landscapes of action and landscapes of

~~consciousness~~ tell us how life processes are constructed. These questions become therapeutic tools that invite alternative interpersonal processes that White calls "alternative knowledges of self and relationships" (p. 32) or the "re-authoring dialogue" (p.32). Although these constructs are different from Keeney's 'politics' and 'semantics' they both illustrate the drawing of a distinction, where the dialectic that exists between the two constructs involves a recursive structure so that one language frame gives meaning to the other. These are attempts to focus on "ethnographies of communication" (Keeney & Ross, 1992) in the context of therapy. Basically put, Keeney, Bruner, and White are talking about communication process and trying to articulate the most basic patterns that organise it.

~~Here~~ organisation and structure are not to do with roles or forces but the evolving results of communicative exchange. Meaning and understanding comes from the social process of dialogue that is interactively generated through words and other communicative action.

The constructions used by the Cecchin and Boscolo team to create a 'polyphonic' interactional process in therapy are the recursive links between a stance of curiosity, the orientation to aesthetics which nurtures the acts of hypothesising, and the techniques of circular questioning (Cecchin, 1987). This becomes a way of tapping into the language of relationship and implies pattern, not acts.

Sluzki (1992) specifies a transformative process in therapy when problems and symptomatic behaviours are seen as embedded, retained and maintained in collective stories. The intrinsic components of narratives are categorised and their dimensions are transformed through a therapeutic conversation. This conversation facilitates shifts in the dominant narratives, in the network of reciprocally influencing

narratives, and in the pattern of consensus. Transformation could refer to change from passive victim to active agent, or changes in the temporal, causal or value domain. The now newly construed experiences, meanings and interactions hopefully loosen the thematic grip of a set of stories. These transformations happen at the micro-level of exchanges. The recursive systemic fit in the way stories organise, maintain and substantiate problems ensures that meaningful change in the content, delivery or relationship between stories is nontrivial and affects the way problems are thereafter perceived, described, enacted and solved.

Sluzki's (1992) useful and creative blueprint for narrative changes in therapy seems to fit neatly into Keeney's idea of a therapeutic reality. When Sluzki talks about how a new story that is too different from the old will be rejected or a new story too similar to the old will not hold because the old one will reconstitute itself because it is already familiar, the echoes of Keeney's change/stability distinction are evident (Keeney 1983, 1990; Keeney & Ross, 1992). Sluzki (1992) speaks about introducing novel transformations in stories reminiscent of Keeney's 'meaningful noise' (Keeney, 1990; Keeney & Ross, 1992). So in both cases, in the therapeutic reality there is a dialectical relation between orders of recursion namely change, stability and meaningful noise.

Here, psychological process has moved to the interactional and discursive context. Words become not reflections of reality but tools of process.

Feedback has been a concept central to cybernetics that explains the mutual influence of elements and circular organisation (Keeney, 1983). Hence feedback is clearly an example of interaction for systems in process, a type or component of structural coupling. However, from the

hermeneutic perspective "the feedback loops of cybernetic systems are replaced by the intersubjective loops of dialogue" (Hoffman, 1991, p. 4).

In the arena of therapy, client feedback could be viewed as a particular deconstruction process which provides freedom for new stories, is egalitarian in nature and hopefully empowering for clients. This dialogical attitude to the therapy itself is coherent with the idea that in problem systems people become incapable of adopting the perspectives of the other (Hoffman, 1988) and connections that replace monadic patterns become useful and transforming. Client feedback is an option for dialogue rather than monologue, where persons in therapy may experience themselves as experts on themselves and on appropriate solutions. Requesting them to actually write their responses to therapy records it in a popular medium that is accessible. White (1989) speaks of explicitly challenging knowledge practices that are subjugating of clients, disembody the perspective of the therapist and emphasise notions of the expert view. He suggests:

- communicating in therapy is dependent upon feedback from those persons about their experience of therapy,
- inquiring about which ideas and developments that arise in therapy are preferred by those who seek therapy, and
- encouraging persons to interview the therapist about the interview itself, thus contributing to a context of transparency.

This positioning of White (1989, 1991) and the wide interest in the reflecting team concept of Andersen (1987) is

indicative of a real second order cybernetic approach where the conversation model is extended, to quote Hoffman (1988) "in the direction of a less hierarchical and genuinely recursive dialogue" (p. 123). The reflective formats ensure that clients have access to the thinking of the persons they consult.

This section on 'process' refers to different constructions that epistemologists and practitioners have created to investigate the organisation of relationships and the structure of languaging. The perspective moves in the direction of new foci for understanding the domain of relatedness, the development of new vocabulary and many new ideas about change and therapy.

### Conclusion

In reconnecting the three concepts as they apply to this research, it could be said that from a constructivist, more specifically a social constructionist perspective, the self continually creates itself through narratives that include other people who are reciprocally woven into these narratives. These dialogues with self and other refer to a recursive and intersubjective process. The mini-societies in which these take place are themselves not systems, but persons in process. Connecting constructivism, narrative and process under the rubric of the postmodern tradition could be viewed as a move from traditional constructions that favour biological and machine metaphors where elements are material, to constructions that favour metaphors from the language arts where elements are non-material and are more fitting for persons in dialogue. The former constructions explain how things stay the same; the latter are always in process.

Literary analogies like histories, narrative and co-

evolving dialogue, as they refer to lives, attempt to incorporate the usually invisible issues like class, race and gender and so are becoming more socially and politically sensitive, more emancipatory and movement orientated. This ~~move~~ is a process in itself, a **process constructed** in **narrative** that moves towards recursion and the literary, spiritual, philosophical and artistic currents of postmodernism.

**CHAPTER 4****A METHODOLOGICAL PLATFORM TO JUSTIFY PROCEDURES THAT ARE  
CONGRUENT WITH THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.**

-This research is based on the view that social inquiry is reflexive and is founded on the human capacity for participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). There is no possible separation of the researcher from the material researched; in fact, understanding the reciprocal effects of the researcher's participation in the surrounding ecology is the very goal of this project.

The data is experiential knowledge and the process is encounter with this data which then becomes the new data. Then a further critical perspective brings forth new data. This is reflexive participation in a process.

The very usefulness of the study is in the mutual perturbations between the studied phenomenon and the investigator. This transformative process is in fact the rationale for such a procedure and how it provides a useful model of therapist self development. Guba and Lincoln (1988) describe this level of interaction, in the relationship between the knower and the known, as one where the investigator is as much disturbed by the studied phenomenon as the phenomenon is disturbed by the investigator. The idea that the social reality constructed in a research project is created by this very interaction specifies a particular event-shape situated in time-space that could never be repeated, but could be usefully connected with for the generation of ideas and knowledge, or re-produced for therapeutic gain with different participants.

The purpose of this recursive intervention in a

therapist's life is to address the therapeutic problem encapsulated as: discomfort with stuckness and curiosity about personal and professional impact. Autobiographical narrative and 'provoking the voices' crystallises the connection of personal epistemology to interpersonal and professional habits and expands both.

This intervention which is the thesis process itself, facilitates transcending the dilemma so that the therapist knows about her knowing and experiences how she is, in the contexts she has evoked and reflected upon. Understanding the web of her connectedness hopefully creates shifts in the direction of emancipation and differentiation and so increases the professional's skilful and intuitive use of self.

The methodological platform underlying such a research process has to cohere with the identified research problem which is social, with the ecological narratives that bring it forth and with the questions that are appropriate to the emancipatory goals. Furthermore, methods of legitimising the research also need to fit with an ecosystemic view that separates the quality of knowledge from the process that generated it.

With regard to research material, Palazzoli et al. (1989) state:

The intrinsic complexity of the self-reflecting, self-aware strategic systems that are the province of behavioral science - i.e., individuals, groups-with-history, societies - resists all attempts to constrain it into physical or biological models. This silences the myth of a preeminence of the rigorous methodology peculiar to hard science: The criterion simply does not apply to the object we are

examining ....(p.xv)

Research methods have to be responsive to interesting questions that capture the imagination of a clinician. Socio-statistical methods are not designed to study social ~~interaction~~ and communication. It is an error in logical typing because quantity has little to do with identifying or explaining pattern (Keeney & Morris, 1985). Research measures of traits or personality are always taken out of context, yet, in interpreting human action, the importance of context in assigning meaning is obvious.

Research methods that can accommodate the endless permutations of co-ordinated behaviours between people that yield varied narratives are basically the methods of ethnography. The methods of constant comparison (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983), intersubjective check (Shapiro, 1986), respondent validation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) and double description (Bateson, 1979) all apply to the process of making sense of narrative data. Auerswald's (1985) idea of the 'ecological storey' also fits with the autobiographical data. ✓ The researcher's own diary of the experiences brought forth by the research process itself, provides another aspect of analysis. These methods consistent with an ecosystemic epistemology are already embedded in the methodology of therapy because it is the way to deal with material that is neither singular, stable nor predictable. The process of analysis relies on description, interpretation, recursion and deconstruction.

The transformative or emancipatory aims place this research clearly in the domain where the goal of creating new views of the social world through novel and unique observational experiences is pertinent. The author identifies with the view that, "Research could be thought of primarily as a process that facilitates conditions ripe for a flash of

insight" (Atkinson, Heath & Chenail, 1991, p.163). Researchers after immersing themselves, in such a process "then illustrate these insights vividly enough so that their colleagues and community members can understand them, try them out, and evaluate them for themselves" (Atkinson et al., 1991, p.163).

In the absence of certainty because there is no one truth to be grasped, good ideas may be evaluated in terms of their elegance, effectiveness or coherence. "There is only one requirement for research: that you can persuade others that you have indeed made a credible discovery worth paying attention to" (Tesch, 1990, p. 71).

The author would prefer the referents 'credible exploration' or 'credible invention'; nevertheless, the implication is that the criteria for legitimisation may be ethical or pragmatic but could not depend on systematic method. The onus rests with the community of consumers, not the researcher to establish trustworthiness (Atkinson et al., 1991). In this case the 'stakeholders' may include the collaborators, colleagues, readers or examiners. The communal legitimisation process is operative with clinicians anyway. ~~Therapists~~ like to be exposed to data, such as case examples, rather than computerised lists. They attend workshops to see colleagues in action. They travel to conferences to expose themselves to new ideas and to expose their ideas to the stakeholders. Clinical experience itself fosters new insights and clinicians get more successful when they are legitimised by their consumers who are clients. This is how clinicians act and this is how they acquire knowledge and test its acceptability to stakeholders.

In research as in therapy action is knowledge just as knowing is doing (Maturana & Varela, 1987).

Consequently, specific procedures (actions) adopted to research the idiosyncratic-professional problem (gaining of knowledge) and the methodological justifications (acceptability to stakeholders from the community) are discussed.

✓ Novel observation experiences with self as participant-observer reflecting on the products of that participation is a central activity throughout. Interviewing happens in natural and learning contexts with subjects as collaborators checking out through the medium of intertwining stories, dialogue and consensus what was crucial in relationship.

This process relies on naturalistic methodology in that it is interactive, hermeneutic and subjective. It is an example of Maruyama's (1981a) 'endogenous research' which he explains as research undertaken by insiders of the culture using their own epistemology. Maruyama (1981a) postulates 'relevance resonance' as an important variable in assessing the dependability of research in that those researched need to be identified with the goals of the project. Relevance ✓ resonance with clients should be high, given that the goal is improvement of service through self-research and attention to client perspective. Other participants by virtue of their very involvement in personally and professionally relevant contexts are likely to resonate with the goal which is documentation of their own interpersonal experience and those of the other participants.

Many significant aspects of this research process are defined by the term 'action research' as discussed by Tesch (1990). Action research is geared towards improvement of unsatisfactory situations. It involves practitioners in research processes that concern their own affairs and it turns ✓ research into a transformative activity. Action research is self-study and it becomes emancipatory and is successful to

the degree that the knowledge produced results in the improvement of practices and self-corrective action. This could not be assessed in quantifiable terms but by collaborative inquiry and the process of reflection.

Reason and Rowan (1981) maintain that "the validity of research is much enhanced by the systematic use of feedback loops, and by going round the research cycle several times" (p. 247). The paradigm axiom of negotiated and collaborative inquiry, also implies that the inquirer's/therapist's own activities are as much open to observation as those of the subjects/clients. Furthermore the structure and variables of the inquiry are defined and may be altered by dialogue between inquirer and respondent - read therapist and client (Guba & Lincoln, 1988).

Guba and Lincoln (1988) in focussing on collaborative research provide a rationale for feedback when they say, on validation grounds, that inquiries carried out independently of respondents constructions generate alienated half-truths, and on ethical grounds - unless inquiry is collaborative it exploits the persons it studies and the value agenda in any inquiry remains unchecked.

Katz (1992) in the preface to his novel "Home Fires" says "the family is the primary lens that filters the early and lasting light of every life" (p. xiii). This widely held assumption is explored through the investigation of the interpretive systems of members of the family of origin via their differing and intertwining stories about life in the family. This is undertaken in order to understand how the author constructed the world and how her world constructed her. This aspect becomes an investigation of how the present contains the past.

Maruyama (1981a) believes that encouraging and

celebrating heterogenistic viewpoints increases understanding. Bateson (1979) points out that an increment of knowledge results from multiple versions of the world.

The supervision group acting as a reflecting team to the therapeutic practices of the researcher and so providing two tiered observation was an on-going transformative experience. These are concepts in training and supervision using the narrative metaphor (Tomm, 1987; White, 1992). Reason and Rowan (1981) assert that valid research cannot be conducted alone and highlight the need for colleagues, peers and mentors who illuminate areas where vital awareness may be lacking. Polyocularity (Maruyama, 1981a) is also provided by colleagues with different backgrounds and perspectives.

Contexts for feedback are created through collegial dialogue, client responses, sibling stories and historical and environmental information. This constant flow of evidence from the outside affecting self-image is processed. Roles and themes begun in the family of origin and expanded and changed in other contexts illuminate the researcher's participation in the inscrutables that were the professional problems. In clarifying a 'map of self' and documenting how incoming information is utilised, the process towards differentiation and emancipation is hopefully facilitated.

Convergent and contextual validity (how any piece of data fits in with the whole picture) seem important here. Shapiro (1986) emphasises contextual validity when he says that although understanding is personal it is open to intersubjective check. Maruyama's (1981a) notions of polyocularity and binocular vision emphasise how information from insiders and outsiders can be juxtaposed.

. . . out of this tension between the inside and outside notions of who we are come the drives

towards various goals that make each of us unique. Thus, ironically, something which we all have in common - the fact of being self-reflecting conscious beings - leads to the rich diversity in the ways we have of internalizing evidence about all sorts of things, and in the end winds up being one of the major forces in creating distinct individuals. (Hofstadter, 1979, p. 696)

Tesch (1990) cites 'heuristic research' (to immerse oneself wholly in one's own experience and that of others) as being the methodology carrying farthest the notion that the researcher is the research instrument. However, it is the fundamental principle of reflexivity that defines social research in general (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Hoffman, 1991; Shapiro, 1986; Tesch, 1990) and this research in particular. Pearce and Cronen (1980) refer to this perspective as one that examines with a sense of wonder. Any powerful programme of wondering about the world will become recursive.

"If humans look closely enough at any phenomenon, they will see their own reflection and their own intellectual fingerprints, which must themselves be understood as part of that phenomenon. (Pearce & Cronen, 1980, p.2)

Tesch (1990) posits introspective contemplation that is informed by intuition and tacit knowledge and Shapiro (1986) defines this process as our bodily engagement in the world and thereafter our appropriation or interpretation of it. Tesch (1990) sees this process as at the confluence point of the social sciences and the humanities. This confluence point is reminiscent of the solid essence Hofstadter (1979) refers to as 'the eternal golden braid' binding the three strands: Gödel, Escher, Bach.

The process of deconstruction allows the systems in the narratives to be seen in context. ". . . deconstruction involves prising apart the meanings and assumptions fused together in the ways we understand ourselves in order to see them as historically specific products, rather than timeless and uncontrovertible given facts (Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984, p. 2).

The perspective for this research is congruent with the view that "the imaginative and creatively artistic sides of our work . . . is just as much an essential part of science as is rigor" (Palazzoli et al., 1989, p. xv).

As one can never represent oneself totally and it would be self-defeating to do so, the need to select limited and relevant themes across different contexts becomes important and even then, the voyage is incomplete, cannot be fully described, and will never end.

Here the idea of perspective seems apposite - it embodies a bridge between the isolation of solipsism and the burden of discovering an external reality to which one is irrelevant. Valid knowledge or one could even say 'reality' is a matter of relationship between the knower and what is to be known (Reason & Rowan, 1981). This is enhanced if we can say we know rather than simply I know, hence intersubjective check and double description become the method for increasing contextual validity and creating consensual validation. Inquiry always serves a value agenda so in using collaborative inquiry values are checked and negotiated. The only reality is this continuous process of emerging and becoming. The critical analysis of the constructions of self is a prerequisite for both understanding and development, hence the use of deconstruction.

Here research becomes an integrative process like therapy

itself, the therapist or researcher constructs an experiential reality.

Goolishian and Anderson (1987) describe our expertise in therapy as more akin to that of the storyteller than it is to ~~that~~ of the social engineer - consequently we must be experts ~~in the~~ dialogical process not in social mechanics. So if 'research' in fact means 're-look' then methodologically the author tells or creates a story about stories and describes the describer.

**THE SCHOLAR : A METACOMMENT**

The scholar has learnt an epistemology and a precision of expression that came about through sweat, agony and hours of lost living. Furthermore the intricacies of referencing part statements, immanent ideas, and concepts that come from many sources contributed to the dizziness that accrued from eye strain, intellectual strain, interpersonal strain and no exercise.

Although writing these first four chapters was a head activity that flows less freely than personal narrative which is heart activity, the weeks were not without their moments of triumph. There was the sheer fascination with the material itself, the fitting of bits and pieces together, understanding things properly for the first time, but most of all the in vivo experience that clarified how life, literature, research and autobiography is co-authored.

Sometimes I did not know which words were mine, so "saturated" was I with Kenneth Gergen. There were also moments when involvement with the reference texts were so intimate that I wondered if I had had a DNA transplant from some impressive brain like Brad Keeney's. I can scarcely claim ownership of the head full of wonderful ideas I took to conversations at lunches and dinners whilst in the thick of writing. Jerome Bruner, Lynn Hoffman and Goolishian descendants from Galveston, I will surely meet you someday.

Like many triumphant struggles it is a transformative experience and through this process my intellectual narrative has changed forever.

This legitimising voice creates a frame with which to view the data and a procedure to process it. It situates the research in current theory and provides methodology that

empowers the 'participant-storyteller' and validates the 'critic'. Consequently the 'scholar' legitimises these voices to the scientific community.

**PART 2**

**THE PARTICIPANT STORYTELLER**

Beginning such a story is a moment of great humility. It is a process about which the researcher has read widely, thought deeply and agonised endlessly and yet even as the attempts to capture it begin, it moves.

So perhaps it is wise to begin at a stable point. The theoretical and practical importance to psychotherapy of the self of the therapist is widely accepted across all schools. Psychoanalysts insist that unless conflicts are worked through, patients are being adversely affected and so they recommend training analysis. Whitaker (1976) writes about the danger of hiding behind theory because, the dynamics of therapy are in the person of the therapist. Rogers communicates in an interview (Baldwin, 1987) that he had perhaps stressed congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding too much and that it is something around the edges of these conditions that is really the most important element of therapy - "when my self is very clearly, obviously present" (p. 45). Satir (1987) says "techniques and approaches are tools. They come out differently in different hands" (p. 19). Buber (1965) expresses it as "the deciding reality is the therapist not the methods" (in Friedman, 1965, p.37).

However, it is in second cybernetic epistemology that the notion of the importance of the therapist shifts to an issue of centrality. A participatory, constructivistic view implies ~~that~~ observers actively participate in the construction of their observations, so no observation is theory-free and no knowledge is objective. Consequently systemic rather than causal thinking means that the properties of the observer become more salient than the properties of the observed.

The therapist who thus cannot choose to be in or out

"can only choose to be aware or not" (Baldwin, 1987, p. 27). Anolli (1987) speaks of the awareness that leads to a map of relational modes as the royal road to helping others change. Bouchard and Guerette (1991) in discussing psychotherapy as hermeneutical experience, stress the therapist's self-understanding and knowledge of his own prejudices as vital in grasping the deeper significance of the patient's discourse.

Many therapists and philosophers from the early existentialists to the modern constructivists have explicated the view that the self and consciousness of self emerged from social interaction, and that man is totally dependent on man in the process of becoming human (Anolli, 1987; Buber, 1965; Gergen, 1985a; Husserl, 1965; Mead, 1934; Smedslund, 1985; Whitaker, 1976). The implication is that a sense of self grows through a dialectic relationship of the individual and the environment. So, although awareness of self is deeply personal, it must occur experientially through encounter. This seems true for the newborn infant; for the formation of the self as a system, in the early stages of development; and for the process around differentiation of self, as one enters new contexts. Furthermore it is true of the psychotherapeutic encounter. So too for the therapist, awareness of the professional self is deeply personal yet it must occur experientially through encounter. Social constructivism provides a theoretical frame which stresses the utility of treating social relatedness as preeminently significant because intelligibility about the world is a derivative of persons in relationship. This thesis is the story of just such a process - the process where self-knowledge is relational knowledge.

The change of focus from behaviour to a focus on accounts of behaviour involves a metaview, a process of retelling, the ~~new~~-truth of the then facts. "Life as led is inseparable from a life as told - or more bluntly,  $\sqrt{}$ a life is not 'how it was'

but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold" (Bruner, 1987, p. 31). This provides routes into memory but also directs the self-narrative into the future and so the move to autobiography.

Life is retold and reinterpreted in this research in a new way. The goal being to create 'new noise' or to allow the researcher to be perturbed by the other voices in contexts salient to the professional self.

The first context, explored in chapter 5, refers to the evolving self-system in the primary context of learning - the family. Here, as well as the autobiographical accompaniment, the sibling perspectives on the family and its members are extensively explored. The second context, chapter 6, refers to the beginnings of experience away from the family of origin. The emerging self couples and defines itself in the creation of new and intimate systems. This is a transition between home and the context of professionalism. In chapter 7, many professional mini-societies are recursively investigated with participant feedback to establish the patterns of self, expressed in these systems. The person of the therapist becomes an interaction of her ways of processing information and the particular information used in such processes.

These perturbations and the researcher's responses to them establish the evolving epistemology of the professional self and the variations and expansion of the expressed roles, as well as the processes of self correction adopted. These three chapters become the raw material where the self of the therapist is created and reflected upon, hence the move to a personal document and the inevitable use of the first person in its telling. The 'I' translates into core experiences of individual agency, distinctiveness, continuity and reflection.

This is merely a point in time at which to tell a story. It is a telling that will hopefully impact the reader, but is an example of a tale that changes the teller - and a document of how that happens - the self of the therapist as recursion.

## CHAPTER 5

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PERSON : A SELF-SYSTEM EVOLVES

## Primary Context of Learning - The Family

The beginning precedes my own conscious memory, so how I saw myself through the eyes of others is a starting point:

The infant, as he looks into her face, sees there himself - or one might say, finds there himself - because the good enough mother, owing to her deep empathy with her infant, reflects in her face *his* feelings, this is why he sees himself in her face as if in a mirror and finds himself as he sees himself in her. (Bettelheim, 1987, p. 13: based on Winnicott, 1971, p. 111)

This is perhaps how it begins, recursiveness at its most primitive.

✓ ~~The~~ stories around my birth have a certain importance, they were always told with love and humour. I emerged quickly and easily with red cheeks and masses of black hair - a mistake and an embarrassment - born possibly out of uncontrolled passion or just an irresponsible moment. I was a fifth child born to a unique 43 year old Mom and a very responsible and hard-working Dad of nearly 50! I was welcomed by my siblings as a new toy and a unifying focus and, even as I write these words, I wonder if my task was set. My earliest memory is of a situation where Judy, Marge and Vic were fighting for the victory of getting me to sleep. I would not let Vic play parent - he was my playmate. It was a situation ~~where~~, even then, I was aware of some power.

~~There~~ are many painful memories of being taken away from

Mom and kept away by a nanny employed to save her failing health. They bring tears 43 years later. My today, spontaneous, adult words to describe the pain are "desperately needing to be next to a safe heartbeat". What significant phraseology! Her heartbeat was unsafe indeed. In fact, she had a serious heart condition. A few years later I was whisked away to an aunt in the Transvaal while my father took his precious wife on a long and tense boat trip to England to pursue the fight for her life. The story goes that the surgeons fought long and hard against huge odds, touched themselves by the story of a mere five year old waiting back home. My presence had contributed something magical to the mental set of the doctors. I did indeed have power to keep her alive and I acted on this for the rest of her life! Furthermore, this pattern of early interruptions to contact was to become a theme.

In tracking early memories and remembering the family mythology that defined me as good at getting what I wanted, I think I was accustomed to accepting and consequently creating a powerful role in situations.

Ashby (1962) has shown that living systems use solutions that in the past have optimised chances of success - so family interpretive systems are primary learning contexts for the author. These relational modes are the most persistent and must have a powerful effect on professional style (Anolli, 1987; Duhl, 1987; Whitaker, 1989). Given this primacy, the earliest system that I participated in, demands careful scrutiny.

So I wish to expose you the reader to the data, the five sibling versions of life in our primary context of learning - the family.

This unusual process is embarked upon for reasons

personal, professional and epistemological. Notions of cybernetic epistemology imply the importance of not destroying the historical and interactional integrity of the setting and of keeping explanations close to data and experience. These practices generate warm ideas and could aim at being scholarly rather than scientific, or even interesting rather than scholarly (Bruner, 1987; Keeney, 1991). Clinicians cannot relate well to secret data collapsed into computerised totals or sweeping conclusions. Clinicians like to be exposed to data, so as to resonate with it, to understand it both subjectively and objectively. Also the multiple input allows a view of the way each sibling holds others in mind and each one's idiosyncratic way of being in and perceiving the world. Duhl (1987) speaks of the benefit to clients of enacting their family where they have to be each family member in relation to themselves. Such a process changes and enhances their sense of relationship to themselves and others. In sharing this data I am just such a client. So although the words are theirs, the metaphorical processing has allowed me an immediate experience of each one's interactional context.

This is an exposition of the multiple perspectives, you could be the family therapist or identify with one of the cast, you could be the literary critic, the social historian or just experience it....

**As You Read It**

**A Media Festival**

Conceived by: Faive and Chasa Tzivia Green  
Mendel and Judes Manelewitz

Esther Green - Producer and Director

Solomon Green - Producer, Financial Backer and  
Sperm Banker

Stage Manager: Sir Cum Stance

Sets: Kennebunk - the Family Home in Cape Town  
Cape Environs

CONTENTS

Ivor's Interview

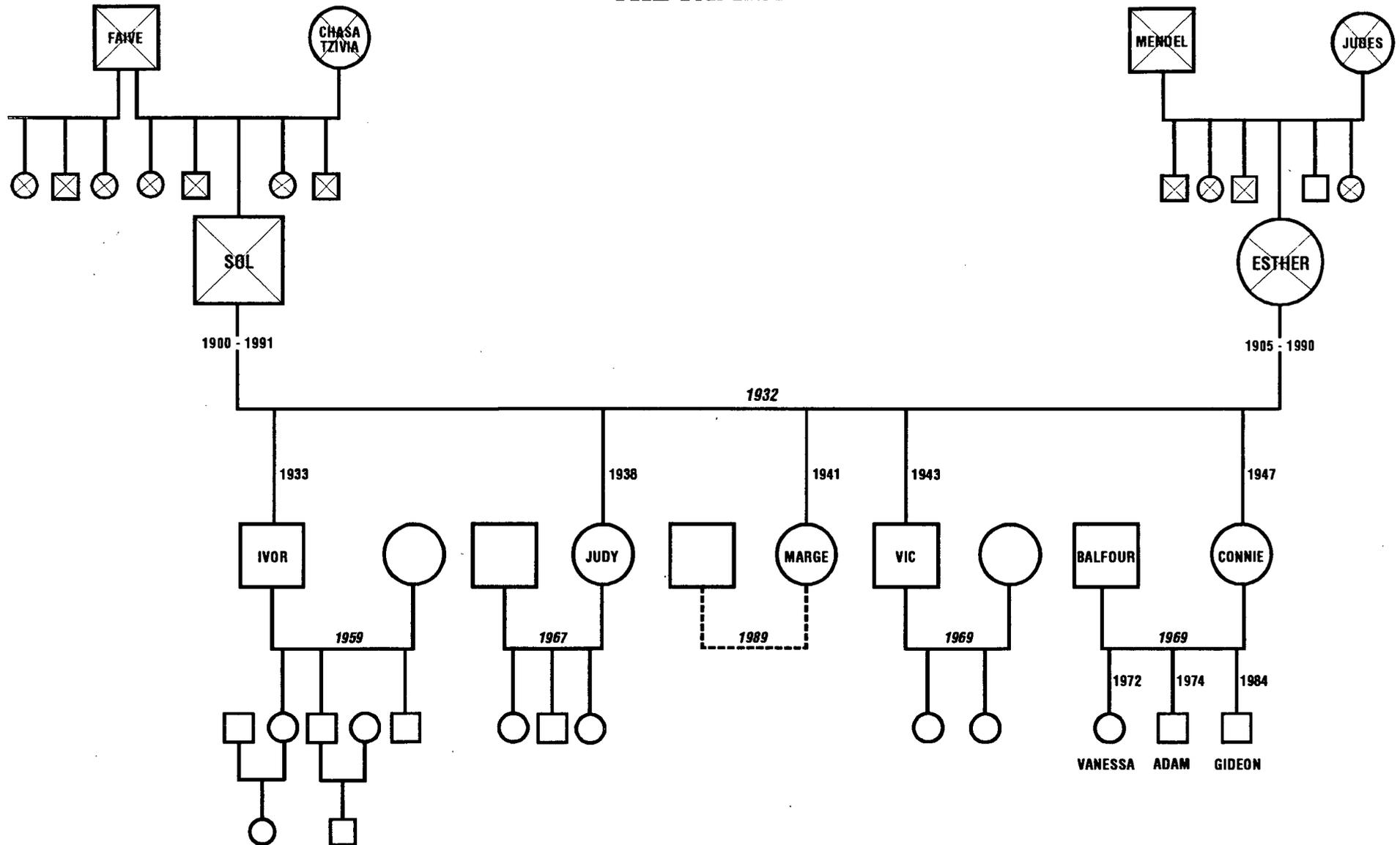
Judy's Narrative and Poetry

Marge's Ecological Digest

Vic's Play

Connie's Movie

# THE FAMILY



Esther Green: The Producer and Director

All aspiring players  
 Within this unfolding literary saga  
 Would have been mere marionettes -  
 One dimensional and wooden  
 Had it not been  
 For Esther Green  
 Who pulled their strings  
 Long after the umbilical cord was severed

Esther was the fourth in a family of six siblings, born in Rukashik, Lithuania. Her father worked as a successful flax merchant for a large firm. Her mother sold linen goods from the family home.

World War 1 saw the family move to a town in the heartland of Russia called Jaroslavl. While their parents were away, an incendiary bomb razed their home. The children fled and wandered in a state of fear and confusion for 17 days until they were reunited with their mother and father.

The Russian Revolution necessitated a move to Dvinsk, where they owned land. Esther's mother fell ill, so they stopped in the town of Vilna which was soon to fall under Polish rule. Esther attended school and university there. Her studies were interrupted by the arrival of her eldest brother, who at the age of 13 had left home for South Africa. Together with some of his other brothers they had established a successful shoe shop in Johannesburg. The year was 1929 and the time had arrived for Esther to embark upon the course of a new destiny.

In Johannesburg, together with her parents and her sister, she joined her bachelor brothers in the home they had prepared. Despite the abundance of eligible young men who

visited, Esther remained singularly unimpressed, until a young man named Solomon Green came calling. It was a call that turned to courtship and marriage.

\*\*\*\*\*

Solomon Green: Producer, Financial Backer  
and Sperm Banker

His part in this production  
Needs little explanation  
For his Kin will tell it all  
Within this exhibition  
Like Esther, he has dipped his brush  
In paints which will add shape and flush to  
To the formation of the design  
Upon this canvas

Solomon Green was 13 years old in 1913, when he migrated with his family from Lithuania to South Africa. He had one year of formal education at a school in Benoni. When his father became ill he was forced to seek employment in order to support his family. He was a man of high intelligence and intellectual curiosity. When finances permitted, he attended night-school obtaining diplomas in bookkeeping and business administration. He was a prolific reader. His father was a fairly religious man, who instilled a fierce pride of Judaic heritage in his sons.

Sol had little time for recreation. Hard work was his ethos. His first holiday was his honeymoon after his marriage to Esther. He was in his 30's when he married and was captivated by his bride's beauty from the instant he laid eyes upon her.

Recognising Solomon's astute business acumen, Esther's brothers offered him a job in their Johannesburg store. His contribution and marketing flair ensured an escalating profit margin. So it was that a branch of the business was opened in Cape Town, where Sol was to be the manager. A flat, a larger flat, a newly built house in Orangezicht . . . the family grew fast and, shortly after the birth of their fourth child, Sol purchased a large and grand home in the Cape Town suburb of Rondebosch. This was to be the family home for nearly 25 years. In the light of this, the stage set of Kennebunk features prominently in the individual literary treatments of all five players.

\*\*\*\*\*

The rest is history, recalled through the eyes of the offspring of Sol and Esther Green. This is presented to you through the metaphor of a Media Festival depicting the various styles of verbal recollection and communication.

And now the time has come  
 For the curtain to be raised  
 So come, feast your eyes upon the words  
 There's much to be appraised  
 Take your seat as evaluator  
 Make use of head and heart  
 For as the reader, you too -  
 Must play a part . . . . .

Ivor's Interview*Prologue*

*At first the entrance of the eldest son  
 The Golden child, the Chosen One,  
 The kingdom alone to him did'st belong  
 Until his other siblings came along  
 And his territory he learned to protect  
 Competitiveness amongst them, involved intellect  
 And alliances that were forged  
 The Chosen One upon his Mother's maxim gorged.*

*'Familias Primus' on the Family Crest  
 Was a rule which stood above the rest.*

*Golden child, the dynastic crown upon your head  
 Will ensure at a banquet you are fed -  
 Plate upon plate of endless crap!  
 Which you will swallow, for upon your lap  
 You proffer a seat  
 For this special family, who are an elite -  
 Body, that may have isolated you  
 In later life, from your children as they grew.*

*As businessman you reigned.....  
 Bursting with enthusiasm gained  
 From the American experience  
 Class of 55, zoom  
 An economic boom?*

*Circumstance, became your alibi and advocate  
 And then -  
 When that great crown left your head  
 You were forced to seek and create  
 A new domain*

IVOR GREEN: Central Player and Chief Spokesman

ALLIE BUY: Hostess of the popular T V chat show; "Family Ties"

ALLIE: --Good evening viewers and welcome to this edition of "Family Ties". My guest this evening is Mr Ivor Green, whose interview is being beamed live via satellite from his home in London. Ivor is renowned, by his own admission, for his rare ability to digest and swallow metaphoric crap; but I'll leave him to fill you in on the details.

IVOR: ✓ I was brought up to believe that "family" was the foundation. This deeply ingrained cultural value meant that individual sacrifices had to be made. I had 30 years of family involvement. My immediate family made enormous sacrifices because of the demands of the larger family.

London is an escape. Freedom from home. I've had my own survival problem. I've had to make a new way for myself. I've had to become self-centred. After all these years of self serving everybody, I have to ask myself the question . . . .

ALLIE: Hold it right there, Ivor! This is going to be this week's Family Ties competition question for the grand prize of a trip down to "Memory Lane" South Africa's newest holiday resort. "Memory Lane" is

part of the "Introspection" Hotel Group, who's motto is "look back so you can leap ahead".

IVOR: The question is, was my mother's philosophy defensible? Because at the end of the day, I suffered on many occasions, all for the sake of the family.

→Mother was self-focused. She didn't always absorb what was going on. In our home there was often conflict between idyllic suppositions and reality. For example, as children, if Judy and I had an argument, both sides never really knew the truth. Mother would sell me a guilt trip and sell Judy one at the same time. There was never any clear cut resolution. Anger was left to smoulder.

And yet she was not uncaring or unloving, just unsatisfying. Generally the children may have suffered from a lack of understanding. ✓Mother led us to believe that our family was special and interesting. When I got to boarding school it was a shock to discover that we weren't that interesting to anyone else. There was a centricity and narrowness in our home. She liked to be queen of those lesser than her. She needed to be queen of her court. We were an isolated cell in many respects. I thank God for my overseas and boarding school experience,

because it made me see that outside, life was not meant to be a court session. Mother's role was keeping her family of origin important in her new world.

Father was taken over by Mother's family. He was an uneducated guy and they believed that they had brought him out from purgatory. I'm not sure it wasn't the other way around. I never knew to what extent he needed to do weekend work. I often wonder if it was an escape from the family. He wasn't really focused on any of his children, but in the last few years that changed completely, especially after the business was sold. It wasn't that he was not interested in his children and their development, the question is - was his interest felt? When I went into the business, I interacted with him on a daily basis. I feel he welshed on me several times. He twisted out of situations because he had new ideas of how things should go. When there was a problem he worked harder than anybody else. He pulled away from the business when he was happy things were going well. His hands were warm and good. In the last two years I've certainly noticed Father's absence more than Mother's. I've spent the past ten years mourning her.

ALLIE: "Family Ties" will be back with you right after this important nutritional message from our sponsors, The Pejorative

Breakfast Cereal Company, manufacturers of 'Sibling Oats' and 'Rivalry Crispies'.

SPONSOR'S VOICE:

Every mom knows how healthy a little taste of competitiveness can be. To give your precious offspring a little nudge into the fast lane, they need a nutritional advantage. So what better way to start their day than with a steaming bowl of Sibling Oats or a munchingly good mouthful of Rivalry Crispies?

And now we return to "Family Ties".

IVOR: ✓ ~~There~~ There was a measure of competitiveness amongst the five siblings, in an academic sphere. Marge spurred Vic on to get better matric results than I did. I think he got one more A. Then there was the thing about which of us was supposed to be the most like Sholem, the idol. But amongst us there was a lot of mutual respect and admiration. There was also pairing off of the siblings, like the Marge/Vic alliance.

The first sibling issue I faced was with Judy. Her arrival hurt me because she knew no limits. At six years old I had to protect myself after she tore up my encyclopedias. Today I absolutely adore her, but in those days I was always at risk because of the seeds she would sow, truthfully or otherwise. She made plenty

of shit for me. My emotions vary with the amount of understanding I have of what went on. For example, we weren't given the same set of values.

Whilst I was expected to observe limits, Judy was permitted to exceed them. My emotions about her are in a sense coloured by injustice. Through all that history, Judy and I share a very close bond. We probably understand each other better than anybody else. She has an intuitive rather than an intellectual approach to things, which is sometimes delightful and sometimes horrific. Sometimes her evaluations are misspent and at other times there is an element of truth to what she says. Judy's problem in life was creating her own boundaries and that's where the issues began. She was made somewhat of an outcast figure by Father. We may react to her opinions, but she doesn't formulate ours. She always has plenty of gems worth looking for and I love her enough to look for them.

Marge was a typical middle child. She ~~was~~ never quite the favoured third child, Vic was, even though he was the fourth born. I think Marge might have felt some sort of deprivation because of this. She had an unsatisfied love affair with her brother (me) and to this day I sometimes eat shit at her hands. She has the ability to bite my head off. She always

had that potential. But she is a caring, loving person. We never really had a conflict situation, except that she would have these very intense relationships with friends and then they'd let her down. I think she feels that I've also let her down. Between Connie and Marge ~~there~~ there was an element of competitiveness about who loved Mother more.

Vic had the exceptionally-loved-third-child-role. I think that there was a time when he disappointed Mother and Father's expectations. He had the potential to be a future Sholem and he didn't act it out until much later and in that sense he disappointed father. But later, that hope was rekindled. He became viable and I became unviable. It was an interesting mix. I was the Harvard boy who wasn't making good. Vic's role was peaceful and gentle. Although in his adolescent years he became slightly aggressive and competitive, but that's what you can expect from someone of that age. There may have been times when he didn't like me but I don't believe that there was any great negative depth of feeling.

✓ ~~There~~ There was no doubt that Connie was Mother's favoured child. She was able to manipulate life and the family, though she could not manipulate me in quite the manner she would have liked. With her, there was a sense of injustice. Everyone

else had to walk to school, but she was fetched. She was mother's virgin who might be caught on the way. She was the most loved. There was more concern for her, than any I had seen for any other child. To me it seemed unfair that everyone else should fall for every manipulation or arrangement she desired. I didn't see why everyone had to dance to her tune. The other thing that comes to mind is the problem I had about communicating the news of Mother's illness to her . . . . .

ALLIE: Ivor, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I've been so engrossed in your perceptions that I almost forgot about the "Family Ties" musical interlude. Today's guest artists are the popular band from the Thorn Record Company. Paul Macheartney and the Soul Bearers singing -

It's been a hard day's slog  
 I've been hurting like a dog.  
 'Cos for the things that I do  
 I'm not always given my due  
 It's been a hard day's slog.

Thank you to the Soul Bearers. Now let's continue.

IVOR: ~~There~~ There were times when I felt thrust into various parental roles. I was an honest communicator and the task fell upon me to tell Connie at age five how seriously ill mother was. Father was not such a good

communicator. I as the eldest Manne/Green son had to try and diffuse the trauma of the situation. I don't think that I succeeded so well, because from that time onwards she suffered from a terrible fear of losing Mother. For years I believed that my sister, Connie, had done me an intentional hurt by deliberately excluding me from a dinner party where the family were invited to meet her future in-laws. I was surprised that Connie had no memory of the occurrence when I raised it. Though with hindsight she did admit that she often ~~felt~~ felt the target of my criticism and that may have had something to do with it.

ALLIE: Ivor, could you offer any pithy commentary as to the heart of your family?

IVOR: My family of origin still has soul. ~~There~~ There is no doubt in my mind that each one of us desires the other to do well. I don't believe that any jealousy exists amongst us, because one may be financially better off. We could get on top of any issues. The negative bits that I have spoken about are simply microscopic particles in the context of a much larger universe. Underneath all that the heart of this family is great! We're certainly a psychological family. We're all aware.

ALLIE: ~~Mr.~~ Ivor Green will sign off the programme  
with his own version of the Frank Sinatra  
hit, "My Way"

IVOR: (Sings to the tune of "My Way")

And now, a new chapter is here  
And so I close the prior curtain  
My friends, I say it clear  
In my own way, of which I'm certain  
Though sometimes criticised  
or misunderstood  
I can truly say . . . . .  
I did it my way.

Judy's Narrative and Poetry

*Prologue*

*Enter now  
 The second child.  
 Judy, being her name.  
 Radiating generosity, her warmth -  
 Burns like a flame.  
 The family,  
 is her reference book, her guiding light, her source,  
 A measure she will forever use  
 To steer her on her course.  
 Wishing all that's good and true,  
 Upon the members of her clan -  
 Her vision cuts through dark to light  
 Seeing their value  
 When e're she can.  
 Generous in spirit,  
 Translated into word and deed  
 Her thoughts are washed by memories  
 Upon which she doth choose to feed  
 'Tis her daily sustenance  
 She feeds upon it well  
 But this is just a prologue  
 The story -  
 Judy will tell.*

*Her script,  
 'Tis in the narrative vein  
 There's poetry within  
 Judy is the author  
 Of all that lies herein.*

NARRATOR: Often in my life I refer back to my family as a reference book. A book which I know best. It is a source to grow against. A source of security to use as a measure, whenever I am unsure of anything in my present situation. The family helps me to draw parallels between things that happened then and things that happen now.

GROWTH - ( A POEM FOR JUDY)

A tiny seed  
 Enfolded by the warmth  
 Of a yielding soil  
 Takes root  
 Stretching up  
 Towards the sunlight  
 Buffeted by the wind  
 And lashed by the rain  
 Nurtured, nevertheless

I see my parents in terms of their limitations. And I am at peace with this. Because of my own family situation, I am even more aware of their immigrant status; for generations the mothers in my family will have spoken with a foreign accent in a land which was not their country of birth.

As a child I was more accepting of my world and less questioning of it. I never resented the fact that Mommy wasn't on school committees, because I never felt I was missing out on anything. As an immigrant, she covered her lack of confidence in the outside world by making her home her Kingdom. I accepted Mommy as a great authority on a lot of things. It was easy to disregard what I didn't agree with rather than fight about it.

From the ages of 12 to 15 I was sent away with my sister to boarding school. I believe my education was severely hampered because of this. I wasn't ready for it. It wasn't until I was an adult that I was able to internalise discipline. My brothers and sisters had things like asthma, I used behavioural difficulties to draw attention to myself. At one stage in my life I was made to feel very bad about this by my uncles. They made me feel I was a bad person.

My mother's reaction to my behaviour was different. She did not reflect the world. Perhaps she should have been a little closer to what the world expected of one and a little less forgiving. She believed every child to be a *mensch* who would one day outgrow their difficulties. As a result of this, I found the outside world unaccepting. I felt defensive and under attack. There was no outside person to take my hand and say "here, let me help you". If Mommy knew more about the demands of the outside world, then I would have learnt earlier.

Yet, despite my problems, she gave me a sense of pride. She made me feel that somehow, being Jewish made us special we were better than other families.

When I came back from boarding school, I wasn't so trusting of her any more. I wanted to eat up the world. I felt that I was owed something. I had missed out on those years I was away.

Somewhere my self-image was damaged. It's occurred to me that perhaps it's something you get from you own father as a young girl. It doesn't preoccupy me now, because it's something I feel I've breached without really working through it.

I grew to appreciate Daddy in my older years. In early

childhood he was distant. Although I remember him taking us to town on the weekends when he went to do the books. We used ~~to~~ make little notebooks out of the cash rolls. He enjoined us in his world. In this respect my own husband is similar. He's always involved my children in his world, never moving into theirs.

Mommy allowed us to believe that she had married beneath her. This gap diminished over the years; he grew and she didn't. She had the greater ability to understand change and unconventional thought - that was the advantage education had given her.

I remember Dad being very important in the Hebrew Congregation. Everyone at the Hebrew School knew who Judy's father was.

When I think of my relationships with my brothers in those growing years, especially Ivor, I think my hero worship of him was certainly an emulation of Mommy's blind devotion to her brothers. If there is one thing I have to be careful of in my present life situation, it is emulation of my mother in certain respects. For one thing, to tell my children constantly how wonderful I think my siblings or their children are is a bit like the way Mommy held Uncle Sholem or our cousins up to us as a mark of their excellence. I know now, that her praise of them wasn't meant to be at our expense, but at the time it felt like it was.

Out of all the children, Marge was the one who was the most mothering to our parents. I was always the child, the one who needed to be mothered. Once when I came back to visit (in retrospect it was when my thyroid problems had begun), I went into Manne Brothers for shoes, and, after waiting ages to be served, I left. Mommy said, "come I'll go with you. When I'll sit there no one will ignore you".

Marge was different. When she came back for those five months, it was a very special time for our parents. Daddy felt the safest with her.

✓ LETTER IN RETROSPECT TO MY BELOVED PARENTS

—Mommy and Daddy,

Throughout my life, I accepted you for what you were, never trying to make you into what you were not. Your memory is very blessed to me.

I have a warm feeling about my family. Though there were times when I caused you pain and angst, there were never periods in my life where I felt anger towards you.

Mommy, in my adult life I have been able to draw on the reserves you gave me. You were entitled to know this, but you never got that back from me. I never wrote a weekly letter telling you how much of a source you were to me.

I have a lot of regrets about that, which I knew I would have. I'm sorry.

I never had any conscious intention to shut you or Daddy out of my life, maybe I just needed the separate space for a while.

Mom, Dad, hopefully, in the last years of your lives, you knew and understood the extent of the love I had for you.

In love and tribute.

Your daughter,  
Judy

Ivor played a heroic role in my life. But he was a bully. He made me feel not beautiful. He gave lots of advice. Yet he was responsible in an older brother way. When I had German measles in my matric year, Ivor encouraged and persuaded me not to cop out of writing exams. When I was 15 and he was 20, we landed up at the same party. He ignored me. I don't think I was such a dog! In retrospect I saw him as the super-confident hero, which maybe he wasn't . . . . .

#### REFLECTIONS ON IVOR

There was a time,  
 When you enthroned  
 upon a chair at the highest point of my Kingdom  
 Now you are a caricature,  
 Yet, in my eyes -  
 You will never lack the lustre I first saw.  
 Propped initially  
 By the artificiality -  
 Of all that is South African.  
 Life has let you down.  
 Disappointment and failure  
 are no longer alien citizens in your life.

Ivor -  
 I love you,  
 Even when you're argumentative,  
 or competitive, or even greedy,  
 Because shared sadness  
 Has gelled us  
 And you are still a prince!

If my sister Marge could be seen in terms of what she taught the rest of the family, it would be for her ability to show that you can make it on your own. She has proved that one can create a life for oneself, by oneself.

I envy her thoroughness, which can be seen in the professional respect she commands as a person of social commitment, something she really feels.

I feel very, very close to her and I can understand her need of separateness, although I think that she must have experienced some awful suffering in the areas where she alienated herself from us.

Historically, being the two siblings close in age, we experienced a lot of competitiveness and envy. I never felt envy at what Marge had, but I felt that she was angry with me a lot of the time. Maybe I was a limelight stealer. I had the aura of someone who was politically involved, but then so was she involved.

We moved out of each other's lives quite quickly. As Marge began to take responsibility for her own life, she was able to release herself and make herself more vulnerable to the warmth I had to offer. I feel now that she appreciates my wisdom and talent. I haven't felt hurt by her for a long time.

✓ In our family there is a lot of acceptance, nobody gives advice unless its really asked for. We give each other encouragement.

When it comes to wisdom and warmth, Marge has got twice as much as I'll ever have. She gives it out in small doses, to avoid being swamped or getting lost or being made to feel more vulnerable. When she gives, it is wholeheartedly. She is a cerebral person.

I feel enormous warmth towards Vic. He is a wonderful man. His kindness is so unobtrusive it's not forced down your throat. He is devoted. I'm sorry his flowering didn't happen

earlier. Vic and I rediscovered each other from time to time. When I compare him to Ivor, Vic is more honest and less of a slave to appetites. He is unspoilt and plays a mediating role in the family. I think he has an area of sadness in him, the area where he delayed himself. I remember voicing at the time that Vic should be encouraged to go away from home when he started Varsity.

I keep asking myself what is there to be learned from all this? What can I implement in my life? What can I tell my children?

I love Connie for her excellence. She has pulled and stretched me, making me feel motivated to do all things I thought were impossible. I saw her as leading a charmed life, but I never held it against her.

#### JUDY'S POEM FOR CONNIE

Once was a gap -  
 A chronological divide  
 That set us apart.  
 But now -  
 I feel that we are all,  
 Ageless and Timeless  
 Sharing a history.

What I've learned from experience  
 You have gained in education and experience  
 So you lend  
 an added dimension  
 To thought and feeling  
 Being 60% Head and 40% Heart

Holding back

The final word  
of praise  
or a shared confidence  
Keeping the last little bit  
To yourself -  
Is the puzzling element  
In the essence of you  
And I wonder -  
If there are times  
When you feel alone?

Marge's Ecological Digest*Prologue*

*Enter sibling number three  
 A little girl, whose fragility  
 Was put to the test -  
 An early life experience moulded the rest of her growing years.  
 Enfolded within the safety of the secure circle  
 Her siblings formed  
 She alienated herself from the adult world  
 Divided from her Parents  
 Foreigners in a new land.*

*Oft times our own self perception -  
 Does not reflect the vision,  
 Of how we are evaluated  
 By those with whom we interact.  
 And so it was, that Marge subscribed -  
 To the belief that she was a peripheral figure.*

*The family's own experience -  
 Was mirrored of a different image.  
 They saw her as a pivot  
 Upon which many a collective conception could turn.  
 Indeed t'was from her powerfully expressed notions,  
 That common ideas and assumptions -  
 Germinated, grew and took root.*

*'Tis fitting then that what should follow  
 Is a journal to peruse and swallow  
 All the commentary Marge doth make  
 And from her script, one then can take  
 Heed, of how it was for her.*

MY GREEN HERITAGE

Produced by M. Green Perceptions

## THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Reproduced from

"You'd prefer me not to mention it . . . The lives of four Jewish daughters of Refugees"

- Margaret's Piece -

My parents' lack of knowledge, foreignness and fears  
 ✓ ~~all~~ hurt, made me feel ill-equipped to deal with ordinary life. It was understood that you pacified children, that is stopped them crying by feeding them or distracting them. When they got older you deceived them, and when you were taking one of them to hospital, you told her she was going on a picnic.

So that's all the advance information I had when my father drove us to St Joseph's Hospital where I was going to be having my tonsils out the next day. It was a hospital run by nuns. The Jewish children were put on the right hand side of the ward and the non-Jewish children on the other. Anyway suddenly my parents were gone. I was in this strange place with no one I knew. (pp. 44-45)

✓ ~~One~~ nun started saying things like "you deserved what the Germans did to you in the war". She also said something about circumcision.

The outcome of my confusion about this was that I assumed  
 ✓ ~~I~~ was in hospital as punishment for being a Jew. Everything that subsequently happened there was coloured by these

mistaken perceptions. The next thing that went wrong was I was brought a jug to pee in and I couldn't do it. I got into sufficient trouble about it, that I never asked to pee again. I just tried to hold it in for hours on end . . . .

#### THE ADAPTATION OF FOREIGN SPECIES IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

-There were class differences between my parents. Dad's relatives who were butchers or shoemakers were never as good as us. Mom's family were more important. Dad didn't rebel although he was proud of his *shtetl* roots. Mom was more pretentious. Within South Africa, there was so much class distinction. The English were better than us, so we had to aspire to be like them.

As I grew up, I noticed that there were particular ways to entertain, and ways to put on a front. Dad was a remote figure. Mom was the go-between. I have images of the long staircase leading up to his office and of the fun I had going into town to visit him. I remember him sitting in the rough chair in the music room reading on a Sunday. He did used to drive us to the beach, but I remember very little of his being there. Their roles were clearly defined. Mom took care of the household and Dad went to business.

-I never trusted Mom to fight on my behalf. Her foreignness gave her feelings of fearfulness and inadequacy in an outside world. So the times that she did intervene stand out clearly in my mind. Once when the tennis teacher we had at home was being horrible to me, she said something. Many years later there was a different situation, we were in London waiting for our visas for Moscow to come through, and we were told we would have to spend another week in London. For me, this was devastating news and Mom, who never really initiated

activities picked up the threads by suggesting we visit a book fair where Laurens van der Post was speaking. I was flabbergasted by her unusual response to my mood!

#### THE FLEDGLINGS WHO MAKE THE MOST NOISE ARE NOTICED

~~We~~ were five children. Mom noticed the noisier ones. The quieter ones were often left unattended. So Vic and I supported one another. Judy also supported me. I didn't want to be visible. I remember, after the hospital, every night coming into Mom's room with a full potty. She never understood the reason for it. I remember the feeling, when I was a student of waiting for Mom to ask me the right questions. She never did. After the years of my carrying the full potty, it became too late to ask.

Connie, was the most successful daughter, who led the life which Mom envisioned for all of her daughters. I saw myself as marginal and peripheral within the family. It was only years later, when I was in therapy, that my therapist helped me see that I was much more central than I had originally perceived 15 years before. In terms of the siblings, I was in the middle. First my sense of alienation after the hospital and then my political viewpoints put me on the outside.

#### RETURNING TO ROOST

I came home in the last years of my parents lives for five months. There was mutual respect. After years of therapy and co-counselling, I felt we were at peace together. I was seeing them as people for the first time. There were no prickly areas. I got a chance to tell my side of the arrest story, which before had been unresolved. My life has been very different from all of my siblings. Mom and Dad had never understood my lifestyle. Consequently I never had their

validation. They never came to my home in London. The narrowness of their vision excluded me. Once in Cape Town, they came to hear me speak, afterwards Mom said, "I didn't know what you were talking about, but you looked like a Madonna". In their last years they told me I was beautiful, something which they never did when I was little. I will remain eternally grateful for this time spent with Mom and Dad.

#### A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF MY SIBLINGS

Ivor and I were very close when we were little. As he grew older, he became more remote. I went to boarding school, ~~he~~ went off to Harvard. He was the big deal of the family. When I was 14 and on a school tour. I met him in London. At 22, he was so handsome and I was proud of him and excited about this elder brother who made my school friends all giggly with admiration. Then somehow our lives lost track. We were different. Our emotional reconnection has been fairly recent. Once I left South Africa, he would always ridicule the country where I was living. When we saw each other it was a continuous line of attack and defence, although he never attacked me on a person level. He would visit me in whichever country I was and take me out to a posh ritzy place for dinner. It was awful! We shared no common ground. He would be the person dispensing largesse. A role he liked to play. So it was hard to put this together with the excitement I had felt at 14. Today I feel I want to support him. I don't know how to. I try publicly to appreciate him. He is vulnerable to me. Our contact is emotional. I have a big effect on him. I feel sore that our relationship isn't better. Sometimes I'd rather be more distant.

Within our family was a plentiful ecology. There were lots of siblings with whom one could form allegiances. If you fought with one, there was always someone else to be friendly

with.

Judy was the noisy one, bubbly and vivacious. She is talented in social ways and never intimidated in reaching a person. She could easily defuse me if I was prickly about something. Sometimes she was over-warm, but it was done in the spirit of generosity. She was also envious of me and it showed. I was probably envious of how well she could function socially. Something which I never dreamt I could attain.

Judy was the major one who could make me feel O.K. After I went to see the movie "Joan of Arc", I cried for many nights, in the room we shared. Judy was there, loving, caring. Sometimes I long for her. She brings a whole lot of safety with her. I transferred the longing for an idealised mother onto Judy. In practice things aren't always like the dream. Judy tends to flood me with information and gossip. There are times when she overwhelms me.

The whole family saw Judy as someone to be concerned about. She didn't achieve what was possible. We are a critical family. We never recognised her potential. We saw what was absent and did not recognise the enormous talents she does have.

Vic was my friend and ally. I taught him to read when he was three. We shared common projects and played shared games, like space ships. He is the person who best explains things I can't understand like physics or computers. Today I don't like to spend more than three or four weeks without seeing him. Things are easy between us. He is the sibling with whom I have the most contact. We tell each other what is going on in our lives. He was such a funny little boy. I used to roar with laughter at his impersonations and jokes at the table. Mom and Dad blamed me for his arrest. That hurt. It was hard. It was only later that I was able to tell my side of

the story. Yet I don't fully know what his real difficulties were.

√-Within our family, the gender expectations on the men were enormous. As women we had such an easy ride. I was supported by Dad when I trained as a therapist. We could play around with our education. The fact that Vic didn't make a career for himself for such a long time, reverberated on him. He had grown up with a pattern of how men were supposed to be. It brought him down terribly. I don't know if I fully saw how painful it was for him.

Connie was my beloved little sister. Judy and I used to vie for the title of whom she felt the most secure with, in our efforts to put her to sleep each night. Each time I came home from boarding school, she had changed, She was so beautiful. When she was 12 or 13 she had become her own person. I felt let down, disappointed and alien. We no longer had an affinity. Yet I remember long talks with Judy and Connie about how we must remain adaptable for the man we marry. How to hide your real aspirations and how not to make irrevocable decisions. Other gender discussions included endless input on ways to become thinner. Things felt very different after Connie's wedding. I didn't want to be her maid of honour. I went away. I needed four years of space. I separated myself. The birth of Judy and Connie's babies bore no relationship to anything I was involved with. I separated myself. I was radicalised and different. I reconnected with Connie because of her major efforts to be available and hospitable. And then I let her not be the younger sister. I was envious of her beauty, but not of her life.

My brothers and sisters have made me special in their lives and to their children and that brings me great joy. They have facilitated the possibility of closeness.

## HEAD AND HEART : THEIR FUNCTION WITHIN THE GREEN ECO-SYSTEM

Dad would have understood the difference between head and heart completely, Mom wouldn't have. He knew that because he felt so much, it was necessary to think carefully. Taking the best interests of the family into account, was a very Jewish thing. Mom and Dad would have always acted that way. I know that they would have hoped that we would have subsumed any difficulties which we might have encountered with our feelings, in favour of the general good of the larger family.

Personally, I feel that this is an unattainable ideal, and in fact divides people. The family isn't always this great unifying influence. The first immigrants who came to this country, used this strategy out of necessity. They subsumed their feelings, acting with head, and it was through this that they found strength.

Looking at Judy, Vic, Connie and myself, I think that we are all able to separate the head and heart. Ivor's patterns around feelings are more mixed up. He appears to rationalise but to a large extent he is guided by his feelings. I see the way that Connie, Judy and Vic have brought up their children, they are able to separate thinking from feeling, and thinking is what is used when dealing with children.

There are places where head and heart act as one. Those are the times where you challenge yourself. Times where you encounter fear, yet you are able to go against your fear. Even though you remain vulnerable whilst you are thinking. Instinctively you know that your head and heart will remain connected.

For Mom, every dinner party was a challenge, an ordeal which caused anxiety; however, she pushed herself to see it through. In a sense, she gave me a model to follow.

Dad was different. Even when he lay dying, I would have imagined that he would have revealed the frightened little boy within himself. He never did. He took the challenges of life and didn't expose his terrors. He was always such a grown-up in that respect.

THE AFTERMATH : AN INTERACTION OF HEAD AND HEART

(an extract from Margaret's piece)

The way I coped with the untold terrors of my hospital experience, was to become numb for many years. As I grew up I was filled with a sense of great longing. It wasn't directed anywhere in particular, but, from reading it seemed that other people actually had feelings (certainly they wrote about them), and I knew I didn't and I longed for them . . . and . . . ." (p. 46)

Marge goes on to say . . .

what followed was a period of self-discovery. After so many years of numbness, this journey, regaining an important part of my childhood history, was filled with many pleasures. Each tear and tremble had a component of joy . . . ." (p. 47)

Vic's Play**Prologue**

*Standing at the family's edge was positioned sibling four,  
 The second son, the gentle one -  
 Simplicity was his mantle, his essence to the core.  
 The strength of his intelligence, was taken in his stride  
 It did not make him powerful -  
 Nor fill him with false pride.  
 Indeed he was surrounded by the directions of the Other.  
 He observed the ambitions  
 Of his sisters and his brother  
 Resentment never haunted him -  
 Instead 'twas mirth and light  
 That became part of his nature, accepting it as right -  
 Never to demand a singled out attention  
 For he never conceived that he was worthy of special mention  
 His Mother was a figure, whom he loved with all his heart  
 Watching her with his sisters, -  
 Young Vic, he stood apart  
 Feeling that in his family the magic did belong  
 To a circle of women, all of whom were strong  
 Never quite aware of all that he was worth  
 He did not desire to stomp across the earth -  
 Like a conqueror or a warrior  
 Claiming territorial right*

*His memories are ordered in chronological array  
 Events being catalogued in a neatly ordered way  
 In all the sibling's plays, Vic is viewed with love  
 The second son, the gentle one -  
 Compassionate and loyal!*

(All stage directions and chronological details were furnished directly by the author himself.)

#### CHILD'S PLAY

(The year is 1947. The scene is set at Kennebunk, the family home in Cape Town. Vic, a four year old child, runs up the staircase clutching his leg. He is pursued by the large imposing figure of Nanny Agnes. He dashes into his mother's bedroom.)

VIC: Mommy, Mommy look at my leg. Look what Nanny Agnes did! [His leg shows a clear red welt.] She hit me with the handle of the feather duster.

NANNY AGNES:

[Drawing herself up to her full six foot height]: I didn't do it, Madam!

(lights dim)

VIC AS NARRATOR:

Our family was made up of presences and stages. My mother was the dominant one. In the context of a metaphor I see the family as home. Up until the time I was seven, my mother made everything glow when she walked into a room. Then there were incidents of betrayal which dissipated that glow. She wasn't that significant presence any more. When Nanny Agnes expressed the need for a radio, Mom let the radio which Mr Dektor had given me, just be taken away. No one asked me, and it hurt me very much. I felt she never stood up for me. Once Sybil came for tea, she had noticed that I was being ill-treated by the servants and she mentioned it to Mother, who

was very angry with Sybil for her interference. Yet she did protect me from Dad. I seldom saw him angry, but once when I blocked the toilet, he wanted to smack me and I remember running to Mother, who stood in front of me saying, "*Naine. Naine*".

Uncle Morris affected my life more in some ways than Dad. He used to tease me and play cards with me and trap me between his legs.

(1950, a seven year old Vic enters the lounge at Kennebunk. His mother and her brother, Morris, are sitting at a card table. The child stands quietly and watches.)

MOTHER: (plays her hand and looks at her watch):  
*Paskudniak!* A bath!

VIC: (talking as an adult): For years I believed that '*paskudniak*' was the Russian word for bath. I finally found out what it meant when I was much older. When I came home from London on a visit after 1964, I told her the story.

#### REVELATIONS

VIC: (now a young adult) Mom, for years I thought that when you said the word '*paskudniak*', you were telling me to have a bath.

MOM: But '*paskudniak*' means 'dirty rascal' in Russian.

VIC: (laughing) I know, but when you called me *paskudniak*, I thought . . . . .

MOM: (shocked) Called you *paskudniak*? I would never! I loved you. I loved all my children. I would never have used such a word.

(lights dim)

~~VIC~~ AS NARRATOR:

My memories of childhood aren't all that clear. I loved my parents. I've moved beyond suffering about the battles we had. I miss them. Dad worked hard, he smoked and he smiled genially, but I can't remember any significant interactions with him. He never played with me and when I clowned about he said, "Another Danny Kaye!" He was always willing to *shlepp* me to friends. I remember being shocked when my friend's father refused to lift him to our house because it was Sunday and he wanted to relax. My Father would never have refused.

I remember having a constant need for stimulation which I got from books. The best year of my life was the time when Reubin Musiker came to stay with us. He got me going on stamp collecting. He gave me the name and address of a firm in London to write to. We played cricket on the front lawn. He clutched his breast pocket, so that his hearing aid battery wouldn't fall out. I never expected Dad to play cricket with me, I thought of him as too old. I envied my sisters. Being female in our family made you special. My sisters had long talks and so much communication with Mother. She didn't conceive that maybe my father should give me something like she was giving her daughters in those private talks. Sometimes I had a deep sense of missing out.

Ivor, when he came home from America in the 1950's fulfilled the roles of a father. He used to let me come into his dark room and stir the pot when he was busy with his photographs. Ivor introduced us to Springbok radio and exciting new foods like expresso coffee and spaghetti bolognaise. Once he caught me in the toilet with my cousin Joy. We were showing each other what we had and he whacked me! When I was a teenager, we were sitting at the table and Dad said, "eat eggs, they're good for the balls". I was so embarrassed because Dad never discussed anything sexual with me.

Dad was a lousy father for a child, but terrific for an adult. In 1966, when I met him in Israel, I had an intimate chat with him for the first time in my life. It was wonderful, I had to go through a lot to tell him things and have him tell me stuff. We travelled around Israel together and I felt very close to him.

At my Barmitzvah, the Rabbi spoke about my simple nature. That's what I was - simple, undemanding. When you were born, ~~I~~ don't remember being told or prepared for the arrival of a new baby. Dad took me to the nursing home and there you were lying next to Mom. I took a look at your shock of black hair and that was it! I fell in love with you instantly.

I recall having the reputation of being a very bright child. It was impressive to outsiders and members of our family, but I never experienced myself as powerful. I was the outsider, never carrying great weight, I let the current carry me along. I didn't have the gift of desire. Marge and I were close. She invented the wonderful games we played and I was a good second-in-command.

## JOURNEY INTO SPACE

(The children, Marge and Vic are playing an imaginary game in the tall diagonal cupboard.)

MARGE: We're getting ready to blast off soon.  
Do you have all our supplies on board?

VIC: What are we taking, Captain?

MARGE: 200 cakes and four loaves of bread.

(lights dim)

I trusted Marge's political judgement, but I formulated my own opinions. I was arrested in 1961 for painting "strike May 29". Mandela was already underground and the call for a strike was in protest against the declaration of a Republic. I never felt strong enough to stand up to Dad.

DAD: I'm laying down the law. There will be no political activity! And there are certain people who you cannot mix with!

VIC: (thinking silently) How can I take my troubles to parents who don't understand, where there is lack of trust. Mom is more sympathetic because of her Trotskyist experiences at university in Poland, but her strength pitted against my compliance renders her manipulative. She is not easily accepting of someone else's point of view. I am too easily controlled!

(lights dim)

VIC: I think I was depressed for about three years.

~~VIC'S~~ LETTER TO JUDY

Dearest Judy,

Your all encompassing warmth gives you the outer coating of a *kneidel*. You are not a powerful figure, yet you are as soft and as appetizing as a dumpling. Your sense of humour is wonderful. I love you. I regret that during the growing years when you were berated for your lack of academic achievement, I was not able to tell you what a wonderful person you were! I should have said, "Judy - go for the drama". You who made up stories about the ongoing events in the characters lives long after you'd finished reading a book. How I wish that your wonderful talents had been more appreciated.

Today I am aware of your expressive wisdom and am able to really appreciate it.

With Love and Acknowledgement,

Vic

Marge has been so close to me for so long in various ways. She was a very formative influence on my life. She is an exceptional person. At times, she appears contrary because she stands away from accepted norms and opinions, but she generates a standpoint giving a different pole. Mom saw her as the instigator of my arrest, and that must have been hard for her. I think that one of the most charming things about her is the way she has become closer to her sisters.

Ivor was, for me, politically on another planet. I was at one stage in political rebellion against materialism, yet he was my mentor in later life. He was generous with his

knowledge and advice. Now, after learning different strategies when he becomes oppressive, I have been able to tell him in a way which is firm and not offensive!

Connie, your role has changed, from being the baby of the family, with your own agenda. You knew exactly what you wanted and I suffered from the disease of suggestibility so I experienced you as stepping on other people's toes. You have extended yourself in a way that precludes any easy judgements about your lifestyle. Your training has been with a view to effectiveness; you are able to design a response to a particular situation. Yet, even without your training you would have thought and felt profoundly for the people close to you. You have become a person of considerable substance. A person whom today I both respect and admire - someone who constantly makes things happen.

#### EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

A small bright boy,  
 Whose paucity of desire  
 stripped him of grandeur  
 or a need to control -  
 Moved into the sunlight of his own space  
 Travelling through pain  
 and recollection  
 negotiating the mountain of new experience  
 And all the while  
 his sense of exploitation diminished  
 He struggled to find his voice  
 and take comfort in his strength  
 But when he did  
 He stood  
 In the world  
 Modest, aware and  
 Empowered with the gift of self-expression.

Connie's Movie*Prologue*

*The last born sibling, number five  
 In celebration did arrive;  
 A baby girl with jet black hair  
 A plaything for the sibs to share  
 Encircled by family love she grew  
 Constantly learning things wondrous and new  
 Though there were times in those early days  
 When a worrisome issue, constantly blazed  
 Her mother's fragile health, slender as silken thread  
 From a young age activated Connie's heart and head  
 So the youngest sib endeavoured at any cost  
 To preserve a Mother's life which was nearly lost  
 Vigilance became a true watchword  
 Observing and absorbing all she heard  
 Ever aware of the need for studious attention  
 To happenings occurring in every dimension.*

*The separation of different worlds  
 Was a necessary strategy as the tableau unfurled  
 Kennebunk stood on its own and apart  
 From an outside agenda where Con took part  
 —She had demarcated her own borders between two places  
 Because in her itinerary they were in opposite spaces.*

~~Advertisement~~ Advertisement Advertisement Advertisement

Contact Lens Enterprises

(A Clearer Vision Company)

Takes pleasure in inviting you to the gala opening of their newest cinema.

Experience the thrill of the latest in movie technology, as you witness Contextarama - a series of living, evolving, cinematic features hosted by Connie.

CONNIE: "Welcome, dear guests, how glad you make me,  
That for entertainment, you have chosen to see -  
My memory project onto the big screen -  
The saga of the family, Green."

~~Living~~ with my family, was like living at the movies one just had to sit and watch as an emotional interactive drama unfolded. As I was growing up, I was terribly proud of my family. I spoke *ad infinitum* about this fascinating bright and special group of people. Up until puberty, the outside world wasn't nearly as interesting as the activity inside the theatre.

[Lights come up. A smell of condensed milk biscuits, from Mother's hand in Kennebunk kitchen, pervades the theatre heralding interval.]

Cinematic Commercials Presents:

METAPHORIC MUSING - A SIBLING'S PERCEPTION OF HER FAMILY

Sponsored by "GREEN'S - THE HOME OF PRICELESS JEWELS"

CONNIE: A circular chain with seven diamonds strung together. Each stone is multifaceted, but each one is different. Individually the diamonds are strong,

definite and clear. Each diamond occupies its own space on the chain creating a feeling of separateness and impermeable boundaries. These are natural stones, but in order to shape and polish them, they have been tampered ~~with~~. So the various gems symbolise the fact that individually they have been socialised in a different way. The gems reflect light in different ways. They are set in a round formation, representing an eternal circle.

A bell rings, signalling the end of interval. Patrons are ushered back into the theatre with the dulcet tones of Barbara Streisand's rendition of "Memories".

I had to be a diamond in order to assume a place on that chain. My family were my teachers and my support. I learned ✓ to see the world through their eyes. I was the young listener, hearing the opinions of other people. Today I can focus on the viewpoints of many people at the same time and keep them in my head. b

Daddy was always reading, passive and sedentary; yet he was a powerful force. He was very important for Mommy. There were times when she was critical of him, yet he was a vital ~~factor~~ in her life. She was open about loving him and missed him when he was away. She was long suffering with regard to his family and had to be very giving and host them. Daddy never betrayed me. He looked after the bigger issues. He was open, never secretive. I remember as an adult having to fight to get him to talk about issues other than business. I underestimated Daddy, perhaps because he didn't operate in the areas that interested me. He was an observer. He was a man of incredible restraint. He rarely lost his temper. He never

gave unwanted advice. I have such a clear picture of him in synagogue, wise and knowledgeable - a real elder. I was proud of him because he was a man of stature.

As a child I had a recurring nightmare. I was entering a public toilet and a strange, sinister coloured attendant grabbed me. My mother wasn't there, so she couldn't rescue me. She was in the images of my very early childhood, a terribly inaccessible figure, a magical fairy, whom I couldn't reach. It was as if my nanny kept me imprisoned. Being taken away from her, when she went overseas for surgery was a terrible wrench. I spent my exile at Aunty Mabel grieving for her. When I came home, she had incredible patience with me. I didn't let her out of my sight and she had the wisdom to contain my anxiety. She let me need her night and day. At that point I had internalised the fact that she could have died and I was very enmeshed with her. She gave me a lot of unconditional love and I felt good when I was around her. Yet when I perceived that she had acted unjustly, I hated her. ~~But~~ I would never show my anger in case it could have killed her!

\*\*\*\*\*

And now we interrupt this family saga to show you the trailer of a forthcoming attraction entitled "LOOK BACK AT ANGER" based on the novel by 'I who was born'. Since I've been married, I've not suffered a serious asthma attack. I wonder if this is due to improved medication, the Transvaal climate, or perhaps when I'm not within my family of origin, my anger is metabolised in a very different way. Here's what ~~a~~ renowned critic had to say: "Within the Green Family, there was very little space for anger".

\*\*\*\*\*

Mom was not a person to dump on. I had to protect her. ~~As~~I grew older, I had a need to look good in her eyes. So I would tell her things that confirmed that.

No defined role was foisted on me, but there were a set of implied injunctions which were handed down. We knew we had to be special and excellent and I know I took some of those injunctions upon myself. I had to perpetuate an image of ~~myself~~ for Mommy. I played the role of family switchboard; I was the disseminator of information. I was sometimes the glue between warring parts of the family. Mom's energy had to be conserved and I took it upon myself to watch her.

#### HEARTBEAT HOPSCOTCH

A life giving pump  
Thump, Thump, Thump.  
A role reversed  
A child rehearsed  
In the art of fearful vigilance.

Fragile and loved, needed so much  
A child glowing in the warmth of a mother's  
touch  
She was fed liberal spoonfuls of self-esteem  
And haunted by reality, not nightmarish dream  
—"Mommy, I will be your life-support machine".

This message has been brought to you by the "Con Stant Heart Foundation" - A non-aggravation organisation.

\*\*\*\*\*

My childhood was plagued by asthma attacks. There were days of nothingness where I was unable to do anything strenuous. I spent hours playing patience, or listening to my Mother relate endless stories. Her narrative was motivated by her need to recount tales that were good for people to hear. I listened to all her stories, because it gave me access to her despite her inaccessibility.

\*\*\*\*\*

Presenting "4 SIBLINGS AND A GROWING BABY"

The later picture show

I don't remember Ivor at all when I was a young child. He was away at school. There are vague recollections of him being at university but for the most part, he was a person other people in the family spoke about. I remember him coming home from America dating girls and being desirable, interesting and amusing. I was 12 when he married Esther. At that point in my life he was very critical of me, and he resented any success of mine.

Ivor's fall from power didn't affect me in the way it affected the others. I get on with him now, quite well. I am not too close to him, but neither am I too far. I wasn't as involved as all my siblings. Over the last few years, I found his discomfort and pain hard to watch, yet I don't fear for him. He is fundamentally solid. Very little will unhinge him. Despite a lot of old pain between us, he takes me seriously. He respects my life and values my attention. I feel an adult in his eyes.

Judy was the abused member of the family. Aside from my constant worry that she was upsetting Mommy and causing stress to her heart, watching what happened to Judy was very painful for me. She was criticised and insulted. She was discredited

and it took some of her power away. She was the family scapegoat, blamed for things like not doing well enough academically or being overweight or not being responsible. She was the one on whom the family anger was vented.

Judy created lots of action. She was busy with real things. She used to bake unbelievable birthday cakes. She spent hours sewing initials on my domestic science apron. She worked for student welfare organisations. She could cause tempers to rise, she gave people things to be cross about. Until quite recently, I occasionally used to feel that I could put her straight or help by telling her something. I'm embarrassed by that arrogance, and I think we relate differently now. She is always loving, warm and compassionate.

My memories of Marge are very much in the foreground. She taught me how to live in the world. She read "Famous Five" books to me, we had wonderful times in Muizenberg, we floated in the sea on huge tyres. One summer holiday cousin Joy came to stay with us. Marge was totally entranced with her. I was so jealous. I felt that she would rather have her as a sister, but I knew that it couldn't last, so I could bear it. I was very connected to Marge during her matric exams, knowing precisely when she wrote each subject. She was 16 and I was 10. When her results came out, I cried with relief because she had in fact attained a result good enough to enter Medical School. Seven years later I crawled into her bed the night before my matric exams began, frightened and unable to sleep. Marge's viewpoints were very powerful forces in the family. She was an opinion setter. Although she was not loud, in my experience she made her ideals felt, through vibes rather than shouting about them. I was careful not to get onto the wrong side of her. She and Judy often fought, when Judy borrowed her clothes. I took Marge's part, viewing Judy's transgressions with disgust. When Marge became angry

about an issue, I saw it as both dangerous and serious. She had radical ideas and saw many things as being unimportant and frivolous. I was careful not to become one of those she dismissed. Vic speaks of Marge and himself as the quiet ones. I did not find this so.

Vic was a great reader and incredibly brilliant, yet one needed to concentrate with him because his explanations were always detailed and exhaustive. He was a fantastic playmate. He invented the most wonderful games. Mommy often reprimanded him for chasing me or playing wildly because she was fearful that undue excitement would generate an asthma attack, but she was never unjust with him. As a result, Vic was never angry with me when she interceded on my behalf. I was proud of his academic achievements. I never envied his bond with Marge because I needed everything to go well for everyone. He was a person with whom I could communicate, yet we were so different. He was bookish and I wasn't. Vic is a great diplomat. There are no loyalties which could jade his fair and just viewpoints. Today I see him as this fantastic man, empathic and giving.

I began as everybody's plaything. I was made to feel cherished and cute. My social behaviour was different from that of my siblings. I had gone my own route. In these adolescent years when I was making my own life, there were discrepancies between my inside world (my home) and my outside world (my social life) which were difficult. The outside world which I inhabited invoked criticism from those in the inner world, and I took their opinions very seriously. As the baby, I was immune from criticism, but in adolescence it was suddenly thrust upon me. As a result of the two worlds, I felt I was more mature than my contemporaries. Certainly my vocabulary was more sophisticated and, from listening to conversations at the dinner table, I had many intellectual ideas which were quite unacceptable to my peers.

As an adult who is no longer viewed by her siblings as the baby, I feel more powerful. I am able to get things done. As the only remaining sibling in South Africa, I grew much closer to my parents. In a sense I played the role of needing to be excellent for them, but it felt right for me. I think ~~my~~ Mother nurtured me with the 'right stuff', I never felt in competition with my brothers and sisters. Unlike them, I never really viewed my parents as foreigners. I think that by the time I arrived, they were more comfortable and far more integrated into the South African way of life.

\*\*\*\*\*

Presenting a Light Interlude entitled -

"HAPPILY EVER LAUGHTER"

- a serious commentary by Connie -

~~Within~~ Within the family, laughter was always an issue. Everyone was always laughing and sometimes at me. I was never comfortable with it. Only in recent years, have I been able to laugh freely within my family of origin. My views and opinions caused much merriment partly because my naiveté was often removed from the seriousness of their conversations. Therefore I established a measure of safety as I learned the art of listening.

\*\*\*\*\*

Showing Shortly!! Don't Miss It!!!

FEELBERG'S : "CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE HEAD AND HEART"

Although there was a tremendous amount of heart, I think our *modus operandi* in the family was much more around head. There was a value placed on articulateness, intellectuality and academic success.

Daddy denied a lot of his emotions, though there were times when I saw him hurt or worried. I was more emotionally in touch with Mommy, I knew what upset her. She was capable of great emotion, although I would say for the most part that she acted with head. In later years, when I became sure of my own identity, I became connected to her heart. I could really talk to her about my children and share with her in a way that I was unable to do in those dicey adolescent years. Ivor's emotions bubble up and catch him unawares and then he rationalises it all away. Marge is in tune with her own emotions. She has a lot of heart, but when her emotions start coming into play she deals with them on her own or in co-counselling and so uses various skills and strategies to translate them to the level of head. Her emotions are moderated and never unbridled. Therefore she never allows herself to become as warm as she could, neither does she let herself get as angry as she could. She does not trust too many situations with her heart. For me, flow between head and heart has the connotation of connectedness. Judy embodies this concept more than any of us. Vic is very feeling and warm, yet his way of connecting is head. However, there was a certain spontaneity that was obviously dangerous in the family. We operated on a level where what we thought and what we felt was not always in keeping with what we did. There was ~~a~~ discrepancy between inside and outside. As far as I perceive myself I know that I am far more flexible in my approach to head and heart when I am outside of my family of origin. I do feel that I too operate more with head than heart, particularly in threatening situations.

I feel that the members of the family understand me well. They are easy to co-operate with. The sense of preciousness to each other that emanates from within the family cannot be equalled. The respect which exists amongst us for one another's point of view is a strong pulsating force. We are never dismissive of one another.

\*\*\*\*\*

## "SENSE OF A WOMAN"

"TAKE 5" - background music

It's not often that I set myself free. I was a worried child, although, as an adolescent, I did not let this show. I had a core that allowed me to go for what I needed. I felt that the finest thing I could give my parents, was me enjoying a successful life. As the youngest child, I had to fight for my identity. I was ever vigilant, listening, observing and internalising. All these factors I think have contributed to my profession as a family therapist. However, I see that role as active rather than passive. I learned empathy and understanding and developed an ability to tune into other people's dialogues. My need for control may have stemmed from my early years where Mommy's constant fragility left me helpless and frightened.

From an early age, I was aware that each of my siblings had a different relationship with Mommy. I could look at their viewpoints but I never had any guilt about the relationship which she and I shared. Mommy was very wise in the way that she reared me. She never tore me to pieces, or relied on punishment. She was not overly intrusive and she was a good role model. I learnt that, as an individual, I was entitled to good things for myself. She never martyred herself for any causes. She abandoned me only in order to survive. She was not as efficient or benevolent a controller as I have been for my children. Her energies were less focused.

On reflection, my parents and siblings, the jewel-like chain, have contributed enormously to any lustre, structure and resilience that I claim as my own.

AN AFTERTHOUGHT

Presented by Victor Frankness, author of "Women's Search  
for meaning"

Not realizing then that her die had been cast  
Connie's ship would sail, with billowing mast  
On a course to be chartered by two Green daughters  
Into the realms of psychotherapeutic waters  
And so it was that the seeds were sown -  
Within the larger family. I would like it known  
That many would wade through relevant text  
Graduating as psychologists. Who would be next?

Epilogue : The Festival in Context

This investigation was born out of my own need to connect with my siblings. Self-research at the time, the end of 1991, seemed a long, lonely, deep introspective trip, all the other human voices seemed to have taken flight. I was searching for heart - mine and everyone else's. Just then - a curious process began.

~~In~~ planning a tombstone for our father who had passed away nine months earlier, the five of us went into detailed deliberations across four continents, so that the inscription would represent consensus, yet respect our individual perspectives on him. I was intrigued and moved by this process. This was an opportunity to be grasped. All five of us would be gathered together for the consecration in Cape Town, the city of our childhood.

I would research these five varied perspectives on many issues, and so came April 1992, and I interviewed all four - my turn came some time later. What a happening - this was a transformative activity, valued by each of us! It changed many perspectives among us, but deepened irreversibly my understanding about my original context. It clarified struggles and victories that have reverberated throughout my life and informed my professional self. So this process ~~became~~ became a vital aspect to my own self-research.

**Adolescence : In Search of Self**

As a child, I took on the job of monitoring Mom, her tiredness, her breathing, her energy level. I worried incessantly about losing her; her fragility was palpable. Without the diversion of school, I watched too much and

perhaps played too little, so asthma attacks ruined every holiday. Being sick meant being physically immobilised with the risk of being overwhelmed and gasping, hence the push to get free or get air - yet in these situations that was dangerous, being still was the only way to ensure the next breath, so there is survival but dissatisfaction and natural energy is trapped. I believe a physiological pattern became imprinted where natural expressiveness was physically dangerous and holding back became a way of surviving. In identifying this cycle, bells ring, it is familiar, it is replayed in other contexts above and beyond asthma. There are later implications for the professional self.

Against this scenario the family was fascinating and communicative and Mom was nurturing and attentive. I enjoyed being the youngest - there was always someone around to explain, amuse or help. A strength and determination emerged in my adolescence that earned peer support, attention from boys, sibling disapproval, success at school, and lots of fun and intrigue. If this was resolution of Erikson's (1965) inferiority versus industry conflict, placed developmentally between six years and puberty, then industry certainly won the day. There was a push to make things happen.

I also remember a strange self-consciousness, a watching my behaviour with the critical eyes of my siblings, either for my frivolousness, superficial values or vanity. I should have been reading more or worrying about the University Apartheid Bill. After all, what would I gain from Beatles music, sitting at Clifton, talking with girls and flirting with boys?

And as I hovered in this new social context assimilating many new skills and games, I yearned for more proficiency, yet more attention, a better figure, and even better marks at school.

Despite all this, when at Kennebunk, I took on the ethos and the worries and guilts. There was depression and expression.

Siblings were leaving home and battling in crises of their own. A pattern grew of holding these two realities, the inside family and the outside world at once, with a tiny part that never fully belonged where I was physically present. This might have been role confusion in a context where ~~=~~searching for identity is a task of adolescence; yet this may have been the seed of role flexibility, of entering contexts with different relational modes. Who could have known that this confusion would be useful in the future?

### **Leaving Home : The Moving Self**

After matric came a difficult decision to study away from home - a change of tune, an unusual step, an adventure. I was a freshette at the University of the Witwatersrand. There was endless attention from guys, but those I really fancied were few and did not seem safe. Friendships with girls got really close, lots of warmth and activity. I remember being happy and involved, but it must have been harder than I knew. I recall afternoons of chatting and processing what was happening - I remember putting on weight - leaving essays till the last minute and lots of emotional turmoil.

There was great confusion and very little energy for intellectual clarity. I failed the first Maths test - one of the few things I would ever fail. In fact, intellectual mediocrity seemed my new and strange companion - there was just too much going on.

The student trip overseas opened a new and exciting world - fascinating buildings - wonderful art - unpredictable people

- the ardent Italian and the cunning charismatic Oxford man! I learnt many skills that covered my fear and mistrust - but being a female was always delicious!

~~I~~ think this notion was planted by Mom who had loved being an attractive sought after member of the *intelligentsia* at her university in Poland. However she stressed safety in matters of the heart and I remember her injunction that "life was easier if your man loved you more that you loved him". In re-listening to tapes of her telling her life story, I was stunned by her tales of disappointment in the local bachelors in Johannesburg when she arrived from eastern Europe in 1929. They could not debate issues or discuss literature - they were uneducated and bent only on making a living. So I must have learnt about the need for intellectual connectedness from her and I see the pattern in my daughter as she dismisses the stereotypes and looks for someone with style and unusual interests, someone outside the mould.

Erikson (1965) posits the issue of intimacy versus isolation as the conflict of early adulthood. I battled here not in oscillating between the polarities but in staying near all kinds of intimacy and then fleeing. The trips back to Cape Town and the long summer holiday, replicated the "two realities" theme. I loved the contrasts, the moving back and forth. Leaving the Wits guys at strategic moments and re-entering relationships in Cape Town. It gave me a mystique and, of course, a wonderful escape from real intimacy or continuity in relationship.

In my third year, Balfour appeared with his own unique style, strong ideals, clarity and ambition. He went to fight in the six day war in Israel - when he came back his message was clear: "I want you exclusively and now!" This definiteness cut through all my game-playing when I was with him - we studied next to each other and got close - but I

continued to create situations so that I did not have to give up all the games. I postponed my Honours year, left him and went overseas. The absences made commitment easier. I could maintain that old pattern of interruptions. He could not have dealt with all of me, perhaps no one could have then, but it left a space and that space became the agony and the growing edge.

He did not call me serious or hook any self-consciousness at all. It was just natural to be in the present, together. ~~I~~ do not know how that pattern evolved, sometimes it is difficult to maintain, but it has lasted more than 25 years.

### **The Researcher Visits**

This data about the primary learning context, contributes to the aims of the study in that it re-creates in an interpretive format the raw material provided from many ~~perspectives~~ perspectives with which to explore the family myths, communicative styles and meaningful themes. The assumptions, rules and typical games of the original system are perhaps invented in the telling, but their 'reality' is checked intersubjectively. The emerging identity of the researcher is highlighted. Her positioning and functions in this system and how she impacted it become evident, and furthermore her constructions of the world and individual organisation evolve in the telling. These issues become the data for "The Deconstruction of a Person" in chapter 8.

This information, clearly a product of the researcher's ~~interaction~~ interaction with the studied phenomena, connects to the central theme of investigating impact and interpersonal pattern in order to differentiate the self of the therapist and begin addressing therapeutic problems in professional systems that arise from 'not knowing'.

## CHAPTER 6

## ASPECTS OF LOVE : SELF-DEFINED IN NEW SYSTEMS

## Couple Issues

Our marriage took place in the "Summer of '69" in grand style. Marge came from America, Vic from England, Judy from Israel, and cousins galore. What they thought of Balfour was a matter of great concern. The synagogue personnel have never forgotten or forgiven my 'much too low' *dècolletage* and the reception took place on the tennis court at Kennebunk where we had played so often as kids, I was the only child to marry out of the house, in a manner befitting a daughter of Sol and Esther Green. There were many signs of upper middle class custom. The couturier flew from Johannesburg with the dress in a box and then, even though he was supposed to be gay, danced the night away with the trumpeter's blonde girlfriend. The setting was opulent and the clothes startling. The two families, despite a few soft spots, seemed thrilled with each other.

Exactly 25 years later, at our silver wedding anniversary celebration, Balfour, amidst lots of laughter because of the hilarious anecdotes he shared, had this to say . . . .

I think the greatest achievement in our marriage is that we have created a family of five active people - people at very different stages, yet successful in their endeavours so far. Five people with optimism and hope for a share in life's riches . . . .

I, with my thinking and language clearly influenced by the processes of this thesis, put it this way . . . .

When we got married, a lot of contextual things

matched. We were children of immigrants, there was Russian vernacular on both sides, we came from ambitious entrepreneurial stock. We were both the youngest in our families - at our wedding they even said we looked alike! However, in our processes, our method of doing things, the ways in which we operate, the differences have always been immense. Balfour was active and sporty - I wanted to communicate. He knew how to go to sleep before eleven, I wanted someone to talk to till two or three in the morning - it was the custom in my crazy family. He was impetuous, I was cautious. For Balfour, anger was no big deal; it came and went. For me, it was a tragedy and I was mortally wounded for days.

So differences have meant that we have influenced each other enormously and our children have seen two very different ways of being in the world. . . .

So there was his tune and my tune and the last 25 years has been the struggle to create a joint tune. At 21, I could never have been prepared for what was to follow. There are many possible versions. Do I tell the official story, dismissively referring to the cliched difficulties of early marriage or look for threads that make sense for today, or do I let myself relive some of the most painful experiences of my life?

Back in Johannesburg, I began Psychology Honours and Balfour the second year of an LL.B. while working in a horrible job. We were cast adrift. There was no support and very little internal resourcefulness for creating a home, being a couple, or coping with a set of demands as foreign as they seemed cruel. I had either lived in a big family or with a clutch of students. This being married was solitary

confinement.

It was hard to comprehend what we were doing together. I think Balfour was shocked at the incipient responsibility and his urgent need for success. He found the constraints and demands awful. I was deeply disappointed, but far from giving up. It was a game with new rules. After years of living with ~~an~~ inept mother, he thought women were not to be taken seriously. Words spoken today only had to be true for the moment, they were irrelevant for tomorrow. He did not like long analytical discussions round the dinner table - he took our wedding money and bought a Formula V and raced it at Kyalami. There was in him a soft streak and a tough streak that oscillated unpredictably and kept me dizzy, confused and very insecure.

Here began an awareness that close relationships can contain an enemy that does not negate intimacy but often confirms it. This must be what Whitaker (1989) means when he ~~says~~ the vulnerability and the intimacy in marriage make for an increasing temperature of love and hate. These were my first conscious experiences of how human beings affect each other in the moment and how couple behaviours are co-determined. I would later understand how much I had absorbed Balfour's moods and often became a victim of them. Of course I now know that it was a replay of my fine attunement to my mother's well-being on which my very survival depended. It has taken many years of marriage for this pattern to change, for me to learn about my strengths to shape the context and impinge on the emotional climate. Professionally this process has probably resonated with moves from empathy to choreography of change.

~~==~~Back then, I ate my way through the turmoil and excelled in my Honours class. There I found Taube, Evelyn and other islands of sanity. There was deep chaos, my stomach tightens

even as I remember. The intellectual, emotional and practical demands were too heavy and precluded anything being dealt with. So all the problems escalated. Since those days, I have a horror of overcommitment and will go to any lengths to prevent chaos. Control strategies were born to avoid this pain. I anticipate and prepare and sleep very little if I need to put in time. So I manage an enormous amount in my life, but I hold the reins very tight and do not trust much to chance.

If I were to search for some lost spontaneity I think the grave could be found in this terrain. Also I would guess that ~~these~~ these are the very experiences that entrenched the old patterns of 'needing to know' and 'vigilance' learnt in my family and so 'going with the flow', 'irreverence', and 'tolerance for ambiguity' remained even as an adult, firmly outside my repertoire. A postmodern way of being is a difficult and ongoing challenge. The view that "marriage is ~~between~~ between two families rather than between the two people" (Whitaker, 1989, p.90) allows an interesting construction. What was each family needing or what were the undisclosed, largely unconscious agendas at work at our union and how did they play out?

At that age and stage, what is in awareness is very physical. I could not get fat or neglect myself as his mother had done. He certainly needed to look a certain way - a tall, dark and handsome recipe. Were the genes doing the talking?

My current perspective is that Balfour provided my family with an active, flexible energy - a tolerance for newness - he said "yes" to ideas - my father often said "no". His family ~~had~~ had an ease about emotional expression, whereas in mine, anger smouldered or it was denied and sometimes you got asthma. My siblings travelled the world for education, his family was rooted in South Africa and anything else was out of the

question, so perhaps my parents were able to keep one child near till their death.

Balfour's response to this question amazed me in its profundity and simplicity. He said that his marriage to me had meant "a move away from downtrodden women" and that my family modelled upliftment, rather than criticism. In his family children had been naughty and had to be criticised and punished, in mine they were brilliant, special and their faults were minimised.

The need to fulfil the family of origin aims of bringing change, while simultaneously remaining loyal to all its existing structures because that is really a way of acknowledging the self, explains how these very issues caused plenty of trouble (Whitaker, 1989).

Whitaker's (1989) explanation of growth in a marriage fits perfectly: "it is a process of endless dialectical alternations between union, with the danger of enslavement, and individuation, with the danger of isolation. There is no resolution of this endless process, this alternation between belongingness and separateness" (p.96). The push and pull is easy to understand now, but at the time it was terrifying and as each cycle neared its limit, the marriage seemed in real danger.

These thoughts and experiences transposed into the professional present have created a reality where couple's anger never frightens me nor do any conflictful aspects in a marriage. This increase in both positive and negative affect is, according to Whitaker (1989), one of the greatest contributions of marriage to a person's life. The capacity for escalation, taking dips and the supremacy of the illogical are notions that are always with me. I have a sense of how much couples teach each other and what an underused richness

their differing perspectives often are. I begin to sense the covert contract that children may make on behalf of their families as ambassadors and the connections of this to socio-political and cultural themes. My own experience has taught me about the many different marriages that exist with any couple and how they change over time, as do the stories about the marriage. I now understand that this is the therapeutic wedge.

### **Around the World in Eighty Ways**

The rotten idea came from me: after studying we should travel and see the world. We sped around Europe in a car with no money and no limits. At that stage our dyad could not survive without a structured context. We really came adrift. I flew to my sister in Israel, broken and hysterical. When Balfour arrived, we played some deadly games of retribution, violence and triangulation. There was deep learning about fundamentals and fragmentation. I learnt about anger and pain, and how relationships can evoke unrecognisable behaviours closely - very closely - related to insanity. Balfour's family yanked him back to South Africa into a harness and I stayed enfolded by Judy's warmth and concern. I was a wreck, I could not eat, sleep or learn Hebrew, I was agitated and badly depressed. The young men that appeared to distract me, must have found me glazed and distant. After a few months Balfour settled, found a job, and I flew home to him. There was no more room for error, I would control every outcome that I could, according to my best judgement. This ~~was~~ commitment on a different level. There was real change, changing because you must, because the situation demands it. I believe strongly that learning happens quickly in crises. However, I know about transformations, and constraints and crises create both kinds of learning. It was a new contract with two young adults starting life again. We were not

students, life was more social and a little easier.

### **Carrycots of Desire - Motherhood**

The decision to have a baby was immensely difficult for me, but not for Balfour. I was terrified by the implications. I was loving teaching and was held back by insecurity. Nevertheless, at the end of 1972, we had a fine daughter. A first born girl was new and safe territory for Balfour. There had been no sisters whereas his own father-son relationship was fraught with conflict, there was a very punitive history. He had watched her birth and was high and happy and we were a family.

At about two days old she turned yellow and was taken from me for a blood test. She was unwrapped and wailing as her heel was pummelled for blood. I was shocked. I remember the horror enveloping me like emotion does at the moment of emerging from a vivid dream. Her well-being was such a vulnerable issue. It hit me hard. It was a core experience probably resonating with my own vulnerability. I was overcome by female responsibility, the kind that knows no rules or boundaries. I needed to know everything, nothing could be left to chance. My desire for relationship knowledge was almost physical. The way that one being impinges on another consumed me and I read and watched and looked for confirmation. With my baby there was endless pleasure in each other's presence. Enormous reservoirs of love and warmth tumbled out from my inner depths. This was a bond of amazing magnitude. It kept me with huge laden breasts for nine months, she became bright eyed and irrepressible and told us continually in that imperceptible language of actions and development that we were doing a really good job.

There was lots of tacit knowledge accumulating that could

not have been expressed in principles or theory. Now, 20 years later, I can put words to it, now I can share it with young parents and use it professionally with clients. Human babies are primarily contact-seeking as opposed to intrapsychically pleasure-seeking. What a relief when Daniel Stern (1985) clarified this in his book entitled The Interpersonal World of the Infant. I collected a lot of criticism for the viewpoint that there are no external realities like feeding schedules, dry nappies or tiredness as measured by Mom that informs the experience of an infant.

Listening and observing skills learnt in my own family became important for mothering and I learnt that there is an adjustment of a babies' behaviour to maintain maximum contact with Mom. Literature confirmed what I had known intuitively but not always managed to put into practice, namely that self-esteem builds from the earliest and tiniest interactions where respect, autonomy and warmth are intrinsic (Fraiberg, 1968; Ginott, 1967). I learnt attunement long before I was a therapist.

As soon as I began weaning Vanessa, I was pregnant again. Our new baby boy was born just 16 months after her. Balfour was pushing really hard as a young businessman and may well have felt neglected, but he never seemed envious of his children. He was more and more supportive of me, but seemed quite impervious to the intellectual and emotional needs of our children. There was always support from other mothers, but I felt very alone. I plotted and schemed until I found the best possible solutions. I made him proud of them, I surrounded us with families that contained naturally involved fathers so that there were role models and contexts for change. I subtly forced contact between him and the children till he was seduced by their loveliness.

I worked really hard for years and was relentless in my

pursuits. I must have been tough to live with. On reflection, it seems I successfully added new contexts instead of letting the gaps grow and solidify. As Balfour's success and confidence grew in the years to come, he had more and more to give until being a father became a strong and delineated role.

The price of all this was high and much of my old self was lost. In my field of vision were endless piles of nappies and the only clear role was caregiver, facilitator and nurturer.

I know what a tough time this was, a time of great adjustment. This engendered clear beliefs about the importance of adult generosity and flexibility when engaging with small children. I would later know that what felt like ~~loss~~ loss of self, is really a developing self, and that my children expanded my experience of being human, every day. These beliefs and values are intrinsic to my work with parents. With some, the best I can do is to nurture so that they in turn can nurture their small children; others need information and there are those that need to get more anxious and aware so they can stop and think again. When parents ~~understand~~ understand their contribution to their child's behaviour, a whole world opens up. It is one of the many areas where understanding connections empowers choices and change.

I also learnt a great deal about what mothers need and what makes fathers accessible. Men's and women's roles are sometimes easier to fulfil when you have more of them, because ~~meaning~~ meaning and value often come from contrasts and variation, and ~~so~~ so I discover that complexity solves many problems.

### Hard Times by Where-The-Dickens-Am-I?

A business decision demanded that we move to Randfontein, an ugly parochial gold-mining town where even more of me died. The Jewish community had wonderful women, but the living customs were archaic. The men played poker on Sundays, went to communal meetings on Mondays, drank themselves to death on Thursdays, went to synagogue on Fridays and probably screwed their wives on Saturdays, because I doubt any of them could make love. The men leered and told weak and dirty jokes. What a ghastly context. I felt uncomfortable in the community and much too visible. The books I had read and the notions I carried had not filtered into common parenting practice and definitely not in a town like Randfontein where "dankie tannie" en "bly soet vir Pa" was the order of the day. My spunky and assertive children were viewed with a good deal of disdain and their mother, who rushed off to Lifeline on her own in Krugersdorp and to a weird group in Johannesburg, was seen as a strange breed, indeed. My anger and distress knew no bounds. I fought and moaned and kicked. At critical times like this, important and abiding decisions are made. It was "I won't ever be vulnerable in the same way again"; it meant no more babies despite the pleading, until I was more secure ~~of myself~~, it meant I needed new places and spaces, it meant that I had to care for myself in a way that would secure the power balance in my marriage. I was angry but strengthening.

As I write and relive this - hot, cross tears come back. It felt such a lone hard battle. My parents visited and often confirmed my role as a mother. Judy came and saw my anger. I had close friends and interesting activities, and despite the bumpiness, I always knew that Balfour loved me a lot. Yet, that is all background scenery - the foreground is my own Passover story, a battle for liberation through a desert!

I learnt about the creative shifts necessary to survive in uncomfortable contexts. These shifts were real development they pushed me right out of my comfort zone. It is like travelling to new countries where the cultural assumptions are different and you begin to know new parts of yourself.

### **Turning Point - A Compass is Unearthed, Escape from Alcatraz**

A turning point was spawned by the fury, a sense of skilfulness that came from Lifeline counselling and validation from my colleague group. The social interaction at a dinner party with a youngblood in the department was memorable. Did he smell that special urgency that shows in a time of personal transition (Shadley, 1987)? He told me I should apply for the Clinical Masters course at the University of South Africa. This was a response tailor-made for me, who always blossomed with encouragement, who wanted to be wanted, perhaps a version of The Beauty Myth investigated by Naomi Wolf where she describes women confusing desiring with being desirable (Wolf, 1990). So I appeared to be the type they might want to train.

The year is 1979 and, on an innocent morning in Pretoria, a connection is made with a rare man. He hears quickly, he helps generously, he complicates the scene by calling people in, but, most of all, I can feel that at least my intensity is not too much for him. Neither of us could have known that for many years to come he would back me overtly, but mostly covertly, that he could motivate me by his action but also by his inaction. We would survive disappointing each other and difficulties with connectedness but there were often profound moments. Somehow my experience of him was different to what other students reported in their dealings, till I knew it was irrelevant even to listen. It is a theme for me with 'rare' people. I experience them differently. This must be the

molecule of transformation!

And so the following year after exactly ten years of growing up since my Honours Degree, I became an official student again. The time was right for another reality. The need to expand and express was already burgeoning at Lifeline and in my group. Perhaps this was another adolescence, where I rushed out of home needing to explore talents that could only be expressed in fresh soil.

In Randfontein - the cesspool of stagnation - I was called the 'silver flash' because of the speed and determination with which I fled in my silver car to Pretoria when necessary and to Johannesburg, whenever possible. Enormous traffic fines were an occupational hazard and obviously an expression of anger at a decision about a place and lifestyle I felt I had not chosen and was at the time powerless to change.

### ✓ —The Researcher Visits

The aims of the study are met in this chapter in the excavating and recounting of a transitional phase that is highly emotional and significant for the preservation of the self-system. Erikson (1965) in fact connects intimacy with overcoming a fear of ego-loss. Whitaker (1989) talks of intimacy as a lifetime motive that begins with intimacy with oneself, in fact he says, "if you can't stand loneliness, do not marry" (p. 91). The creation of new intimate systems outside the original family implies the beginning of massive learning and salient patterns directly relevant to choreographies of co-existence. Here early couplings that preceded professional connections are revisited in the telling. The autobiographical narrative facilitates an investigation into the expansion and changes of the earlier

family roles, how the disruptions were dealt with and renders visible the seeds that later translate in the professional context.

This section contains significant gender related themes in that the stories are about stages and events that are culturally accepted as life-crises, particularly for women. These processes are marriage, marriage renegotiation, childbirth, moving home or cultural emigration and a move to combine mothering with professionalism. These crises and how they are experienced and reflected upon in the autobiographical narrative, obviously enrich and constrain the professional self.

This is a phase of self-expression, yet of having to accommodate to the subtle tunes of others while not killing internal tunes. So, although this chapter links the original context with the professional context, "actually the process of learning how to love and how to become part of a we without destroying yourself is a long-term project" (Whitaker, 1989. p. 98).

These issues become the data for "Deconstructing Aspects of Love" in chapter 8.

## CHAPTER 7

**A NEVER ENDING STORY : PROFESSIONALISM, THE SELF EXPRESSED  
ACROSS SYSTEMS****Introduction : Recursion and Feedback**

Awareness of self requires being involved in an on-going research project and being curious about one's own behaviours and intentions in varying contexts (Duhl, 1987). The paradigmatic emphasis placed on self-research because of second-cybernetics, means getting beyond the rhetoric of doing this theoretically and actually viewing myself in real living professional contexts that I shape and am shaped by. This is the recursive process.

Recursion is made possible in a context of space and the continual passing of time, or in having experienced a process or thought that impinges, and itself creates a different voice. Keeney (1983) describes the therapist's task as entering a system and recursively participating in it. This requires sensors to detect difference and a range of varied behaviour to facilitate the creation of difference as well as the ability to link them and provide self-correction in subsequent behaviour. Feedback controls a system by reinserting into it the results of past performance, this may result in system regulation. If feedback changes the method or pattern, we have learning or change. "Contexts of learning and change are therefore principally concerned with altering or establishing feedback. Successful therapy requires the ~~creation~~ of alternative forms of feedback which will provide an avenue for appropriate change" (Keeney, 1983, p. 67). A one-sided therapist view from self-observation alone or feedback using only therapist sensors without another voice, could be constructed in line with the existing image or story

and be distorted and limiting. However, feedback that provides binocular vision (Bateson, 1979; Maruyama, 1981a) with the new meanings and outcomes that evolve, make more explicit what position and relational modes the therapist could adopt. This other viewpoint also provides a counter balance to the danger of a narrator accounting for his acts in terms of intentions only, when they might have been otherwise determined or received. As the self continually creates ~~itself~~ through narratives that include other people, the recursive process is enhanced and, I believe, continually ~~feeds~~ feeds off the perspectives of other people. This is a thesis theme.

This feedback is not the other person's truth, feedback is allowing your receiving system to be affected by another's experience of relationship. It is allowing one's story another voice to stimulate and propel it. What one hears will be filtered by the current need, the receiver's structure-determined nature, or the receiver's need for conservation or transformation. Thus, even if the truth of words existed, the ~~truth~~ truth of interpretation and meaning is idiosyncratic. Consequently, feedback is not a stable content, it includes processes that convey a stance or a position.

This interpersonal type of feedback is explicated in current constructivist trends such as the reflecting team and the alternating mirror (Andersen, 1987), the ethic of participation (Hoffman, 1991), the co-evolving of meaning (Goolishian & Anderson, 1988) and the non-expert role (White, 1989).

#### **UNISA : Migrate Trek**

So now it was about to start, a new decade and a new voyage. Stealing the time for the trip was not easy and often

got me into a lot of trouble at home.

If I wanted to get away from conditions on the West Rand as the story goes - the politics of the far North was different. It was not Dingaan and Piet Retief and oxen, but it was Wiehahn, and Snyders and student battles for recognition. The issues were not land, cattle and rights, but dependence, double messages and acceptable tapes. I remember that confusion was my favourite feeling, and all my trainers wanted to get rid of my worried frown. I remember fighting discomfort and feeling anxious and quite defensive. I learnt an enormous amount, was both fascinated and committed, and gave and took support from classmates like a busy bee. I hated criticism and always felt demolished by it. Consequently I went to great lengths to avoid it, either by presenting good work or by other devious means.

I remember the demise of Wiehahn, the birth of family therapy, lots of gossip, student paranoia and long conversations with a new and strange Northern Transvaal breed of male. I liked them a lot.

I was often unsure, wanting more information, more clarity, more reassurance, it was as if in mastering a new and difficult task, I was forever insatiable.

### **Sterkfontein : One Flew Into the Hornets' Nest**

A hospital experience has always evoked extreme vulnerability and although I was on the non-patient side, I was not saved from the feelings. I guess this may belong to my very early experience of being kept away from my mother by an authoritarian white-overalled nanny.

The subtlety of the inevitable abuse that exists in an

institution, cut deep. My own personal helplessness was always depressing. Interns plus Gert equalled sanity in an insane situation. Years later, when I read Victor Frankl's Man's search for Meaning (Frankl, 1971), I heard the echoes of my own gradual hardening and immunity.

Yet, I worked hard with some crazy people and impinged where possible. Freed from the Rogerian yoke learnt earlier at Lifeline, I experimented with my interpersonal influence. As I think back on some of the vignettes: Michelle crying, Clyde groaning after consuming Vim, Peter punching a cushion in a frenzy, and me enjoying a genteel cup of tea with psychotic Michael, a diagnosed schizophrenic, I feel both amazed and embarrassed by my role in these interactions. I also learnt how to survive in difficult circumstances and perfected the gentle art of wasting time at the State's expense. There was a new phenomenon - long forgotten since the birth of my children - a right belonging strictly to the working class - it was called . . . lunchtime! There was lots of laughter, re-processing therapy sessions, and playing "ain't it awful". Despite all this, there was depression in the air. I escaped from its clutches in the structured contexts co-created with men; supervision in Pretoria with Ricky, always stimulating and tense; the conflict and warmth of home; and doing family ~~therapy~~ and co-therapy with calm, containing, irrepressible Gert.

The year ended with the sweat and hilarity of producing a video of a therapy session for exam evaluation, and an unbearable practical exam where I disappointed myself and my supervisor, as therapist to Gert Rademeyer. He was supposed ~~to be~~ role playing a client, but I think the role he played was patriarch elect, showing how training should be done.

The formation of 'the team' was an exciting prospect, we were two fledglings and a cockatoo!

### **The Team : Learning to Ski on the Nursery Slopes**

Maybe we knew we had differing and complementary talents or maybe we just liked each other, but it was a great way to begin being professionals. We tried some strange and innovative things: like the team sitting in with the family (because, in Johannesburg, we had no one-way mirror), watching our anorectic family eat a meal together and instructing our pimple-picking wife to pick pimples on her husband!

Taube and I had done Honours together at Wits years earlier. Now we each had two small children and husbands who were dubious about all this 'psychology'. Her seriousness, caution and empathic talent, I think actually freed me to be the other aspects of myself. I got more playful, cheeky and took more risks. Gert kept us from ever agonising or feeling bad or wrong. He had great ability to go with the moment and save himself post mortems. What I contributed is impossible for me to assess - so maybe in line with the thesis theme I will ask them both to cast their minds back.

Gert's view was that Taube was the most careful and that he and I were the doers. He felt that, although there was always negotiation, he was the implicit leader. He defined himself and me as working very well together . . . "on different tracks headed in the same direction". He remembers us respecting each other's differences and able to fight each other head on. In this conversation, I pushed for greater differentiation between him and me, as I felt this response was a bit too cosy and evoked in the context of our current relationship. "Well you always get excited and I have to calm you down - like the Saviour keeping things from getting desperate," he responded. Taube's view, in a facsimile from Australia, confirms the different views as quite congruent. Her caution about the formation of the teams, was evident straightaway, when she said: "In retrospect it was both a

most courageous and also a most irresponsible move . . . . I worry that we were concerned with our own learning and not respectful enough of what our clients entrusted to us."

Taube confirms Gert's willingness to 'try' rather than 'play safe' and she felt her own role was to 'add' and 'disagree', but not initiate. About me she said: "Connie, I felt, was more the co-therapist. I felt that she and Gert operated as a team - that she would put her point of view forward confidently and clearly".

Being so close to the style and presence of both my team mates, provided a base for differentiation. We collected clients easily, but Taube bailed out after about a year. I seem to remember her saying she felt a little drowned out and inconvenienced.

Taube and I continued an unusual amalgam of personal and professional support that now extends across continents and permeates large time intervals, even to this day.

Gert and I took ourselves and an amazing family to Sun City for scrutiny by the profession and its maestros at the South African Association of Marital and Family Therapy conference in 1982. Mony Elkaim was our consultant. Fortunately, he and Maurizio Andolfi had a raging disagreement about 'disagreement' during the post-session discussion, so both Gert and I were saved the ruthless treatment that was part of the 'show' in those days.

In our practice, I remember us often noting the benefits of our vast differences in heritage, world view and interpersonal style. He had amazing freedom to manoeuvre with the 'enmeshed' and highly responsive matriarchal, often Jewish, families we saw in Johannesburg. I, of course, was helpfully disrespectful of the rules and assumptions of the

authoritative, gender insensitive, Afrikaans fathers and their obedient families in Pretoria. This became a shared, if not rather stereotypical, view that defined our work. Gert and I continued together with families and in industry till well after he left Pretoria and moved to Harrismith, till trips back and forth to Johannesburg became impossible.

In re-connecting with both these team mates specifically for the purpose of creating this story, emotional memories flooded back. I was struck by the feeling that the changes in my relationships with both of them were circumstantial, they never cracked or broke, even working relationships could continue tomorrow. In exploring this more widely, I know this kind of continuity is confirmed in many professional and personal contexts:

- The Lifeline branch that I started nearly 17 years ago has invited me to present a workshop at the national conference that they are hosting and to help plan their programme for it.
- My colleague group continues well into its second decade and we are embarking on a series of conversations born out of this research.
- I have just celebrated my 25th Wedding Anniversary at a bash on a boat cruising Table Bay.
- This year I begin a perpetrator's group for the Johannesburg Children's Home where I worked in the 80's.

~~So I~~ must conclude that in important contexts, I do not burn bridges and perhaps I only risk fighting when continuity is assured - or is there perhaps some sort of progress and movement I do not allow myself? If I am a conserver, does it mean I am not a transformer?

**Johannesburg : The Bearable Lightness of Being Home**

As I had been nagging for years to get out of Randfontein, I never understood why the message suddenly got through. Perhaps Balfour's growing power in business made new choices possible. However, he could not help noticing that 'the bird' was flying very happily to Pretoria and Johannesburg to work and that home base in Randfontein was holding her less and less. He acted swiftly.

We moved house three times in six months, which was not conducive to quickly finishing a master's thesis, but I was delighted to be back in Johannesburg. We were back with friends, there were like-minded women and a warm and buzzing school context for my children - quite simply 'interpersonal fresh air'.

In 1982 we purchased "Highveld", a magnificent property with incredible views. We changed the name to "Highveld Balcony" and here, for the next 12 years until the present, mostly good things would happen. We lived in beautiful surroundings from which I never needed to escape. I graduated and established myself professionally. My children grew from strength to strength and Gideon was born and nourished in every way. We celebrated a Batmitzvah, then a Barmitzvah and hosted endless dinners and visits from family. Balfour hated the strain of his monthly business trips to Germany and I think it was at this point that he fell totally in love with the family, demands and all. After years of political tension, there was amazing change and hopefulness in 1990. Halcyon Days? Well, maybe, but certain personal pain and self-doubt could never be eradicated.

Towards the end of that year, came the decision to embark on a PhD programme at UNISA. The doctorate would later become ~~an~~ an emotional and intellectual voyage and an excavation and

reflective process of enormous proportions. The process would provide moments of great loneliness and toil and yet a context for connectedness and dialogue that would ensure personal shifts, and furthermore conversations would take place, that changed reality and relationships forever.

**Clients : Speak and Ye shall Unwind**

The Beginning : Inexperience

Beginning with my own clients in the early '80's was, in itself, a lesson in differentiation. The team experience at the beginning of my professional career was an experiment in assimilation. We were an enmeshed family. A high price was put on team survival and the mutual satisfaction of all three ~~of us~~. So agreement was more highly valued than disagreement. The process of consensus was so sophisticated that it was impossible to know with whose voice one spoke.

So, as I began, I had little idea who in fact was beginning, although now, as I look back, I can see themes and patterns that were acted out in the professional context and so this pursuit of identifying them becomes an exercise in meaning making.

In the early days in practice the team was the transitional object. I took our joint strength even as I stepped into sessions alone. I never knew why people came back or what nourishment they got. But, ever so slowly, my voice got steadier and louder. It was a relief to be free of ~~the~~ fear of evaluation that came with training and slowly I got more interested in pursuing my own spontaneous responses. The voice of erstwhile trainers became less relevant. They were relics of past parental constraints.

If I were to dig up the old appointment books, endless vignettes would flash in front of me, but, maybe more important than replaying the images, is remembering that I just kept doing. At first I would need endless debriefing with peers, getting stuck was intolerable. I fought against it with energy and debate as if battling for breath in an asthma attack. Slowly I learnt that the sun still set even if I did not know what I was doing. Families returned despite the mess and confusion and some left at the moments where I thought I was at my most dazzling.

Not much was clear, effectiveness seemed more luck than good management. I could identify a goal and work like crazy to get there. I was attentive, and very sensitive to relationship dynamics out there in the family, between the couple, or even with my individual clients' network of outside relationships, but my role, my impact or my positioning in the system were total blind spots. This was in part the theoretical status of the field in the early '80s where one had to identify "the thing in the bushes" (Hoffman, 1981, p. 176) and second cybernetics was not yet in full bloom, and this was reflected in ways of working and thinking about families. However, I believe my perspective emanated from earlier times, from the fascinating movie I watched as a child, the network of family relationships, the shifting alliances, not really understanding my own place, where, because I was the smallest, the greatest power came from knowing about what was out there in the field of vision.

#### The Context of Feedback - Setting the Scene

In pondering and burrowing through all the material: therapy tapes, transcripts, clients' written stories, my own written comments, follow-up telephone conversations and endless memories, my preference is, as much as possible, to  let my clients speak for themselves. I am reluctant to build

an argument, but hope rather to expose the reader and re-expose myself to the data, and so avoid early or neat conclusions. I even feel myself resist any type of categorisation in case it forces a restrictive template.

If I think a little about the 'out' pile, that is those clients not referred to in this study, it is exceptionally large because doing mostly short-term work means high client turnover. It is filled with clients from long ago. The ones no longer in therapy that I phoned were only those that stuck in my mind, perhaps because they were fairly recent and in some way unresolved. There are many current clients whom I chose not to ask about their perspectives or on whose incidental feedback I never picked up. I think, from this current work, I omitted the inarticulate and pleasing clients and those therapies where my task and role seemed so clear and predictable that I was less curious about investigating the client's subjective experience. However, those I have asked, or those that offered useful spontaneous feedback, I have undertaken to process as best I can. Those written about consequently carry the implication of being therapies that were particularly troublesome or particularly fascinating.

Of course, those clients focused on are not dealt with exhaustively. There are many actual sessions I chose not to tape, because other therapeutic tasks were indicated. There are many taped sessions I chose not to transcribe, because they were irrelevant to this research focus, but maybe I had forgotten the issues or the cassettes were poorly labelled. — Quotes are used abridged and juxtaposed and often chosen for their illustrative value. The many choices about clients and excerpts may be partly arbitrary, but most decisions, I would guess, range from unconscious to very obvious and salient.

There were many different ways of allowing these perturbations. With some, I believe I merely tell a story and

with others I re-search my therapist positioning or play with the meanings in my own head. Sometimes client comments impinge very directly on my own self-narrative. I acknowledge the haphazardness and claim as the thread that I have allowed myself to be perturbed and so the many different narratives do the assigned job. Other voices once evoked create 'meaningful noise' (Keeney & Ross, 1992) or news of difference. This feedback contributes to personal shifts and provides an example of knowledge as inseparable from doing (Maturana & Varela, 1987). The full subjective bias in the methodology is not only unavoidable but perhaps even theoretically desirable and itself becomes data for deconstruction.

As the thesis progresses, so innocence recedes and I am aware of the inevitability of choosing themes and consciously focusing on certain issues above others. This makes me uncomfortable. How will I write this? Is there a choice? What am I choosing and why? Yet as I reread certain parts there is a deep recognition and satisfaction that it fits my ~~reality~~ reality. Could it be that at some deep level once begun the personal text flows and writes itself? Whereas here in the ~~terrain~~ terrain of clients there seem to be so many realities, so many conflicting versions, so many reasonable truths that I am much more self-conscious about my construals.

### Couples

My understanding of the overarching theme expressed by couples who reviewed the therapy process, either formally or spontaneously, centres on therapy being a highly charged emotional context that was not the usual war zone, so new things could emerge. Including someone who intrudes into an old pattern that did not function well is my understanding of it, yet this is very general and does not include my distinctive self.

So I expose you, the reader, directly to the words of some client couples:

FRAN: - This is the only place I can dare to talk directly to Simon, at home it only happens when I'm desperate and then he can't handle it. . . . .

SIMON: One gets into a cycle - I mean you and I are not relating well to each other and then it's almost as though I don't want to make the time because the time that's spent there is unpleasant times - so that hours at the office become longer and the time at home shorter. I know that what is not taking place is some kind of constructive dialogue between us about what's going wrong. You confront the issues in a way that I can't connect to you - I find your entreaties so difficult to handle . . . . .

CONNIE: —How would it work for you to hear her? What would get you? What would make you prepared?

SIMON: If she approached me with more calm, I would be drawn rather than repelled - I think what I haven't been able to learn to cope with is Fran's real sense of frustration and anger towards me. I haven't developed a capacity to sit through it, to deal with it and then to come back in a way that actually marshalls our difficulty and deals with it.

Their intellectualised monologues at each other had often flowed endlessly and at those times I found myself battling for a space to work. Their need for direct contact with each other seemed so urgent, yet so distant, but was in retrospect a necessary step that allowed them to relate better outside the therapy room.

My baseline role, the role I felt forced into, was that I provided the safety, they could then engage in this way and I was irrelevant and neutralised. I had to fight my way out of it anew in each session. What I pushed toward was to relate as a person with other views, but to maintain the temperature of the couple relationship in ways they could utilise. This meant not so hot that it was hostile, and not so cold that they were aloof and disconnected. This happened, for example, around their dreams and desires from each other. They got more hesitant, less articulate, softer and looked at rather than talked at each other.

~~In~~ answer to the question in the final session "what do you take away from this context that you can use out there?" the Lamberti's had the following to say . . . .

ENRICO: The two of us, at the moment, are much improved to when we started here and I think this has been a very interesting learning curve because it has been an opportunity to also see and understand because at the end of the day we have to solve our problems . . . what we are taking away is that there's got to be a dialogue and there's got to be a mutual understanding if you want to live together and I think we've come a long way. I have gone a long way from my side anyway, because from what I come from -

coming from Italy - and I have an Italian upbringing and I come from a family where there's been very little communication between me and my father - kind of almost no one has understanding of communication - very little with my mother. I'm not blaming them - it's just that we lived - like that way.

ABIGAIL: There's a lot from here - the easiest one is to say that no more is it just getting angry and cutting it dead. That's communicating and we can - I'm going to fight it out and when he doesn't want to communicate I just hide the car keys in the wash basket and he's got to communicate before he gets it back. Blackmail here and there is fine and when I'm not communicating he's very good at initiating it and it's all communication and I have now got the courage to say a lot about how I feel and Enrico acknowledges that and respects that instead of leaving the situation. I have the right to my feelings and him implying, in my eyes anyway, that I had no right to have these feelings.

CONNIE: Yes, that's a very big one. You used to feel sort of crazy in what you said - out of place.

ABIGAIL: I'm not worthy of acknowledgement because I didn't earn a living, so therefore I wasn't worth listening to. I had no rights - no feelings - no rights to

anything and now Enrico is actually treating me with - not all that much respect - but enough to make me feel that I am getting rid of my feelings and they are respected and he cares about them and there's a huge difference.

CONNIE: So, you don't get so hopeless when you communicate something.

ABIGAIL: No, I always did expect him to listen - now I still expect him to listen but with more conviction probably - before I'd get shocked when he'd tell me to go to hell or didn't listen or got angry with me about something - now he does listen and now he does respond and if he doesn't I hide his car keys.

CONNIE: So there are other ways of getting his attention.

ABIGAIL: Yes, dirty dealings used to be beneath me - now they're not.

CONNIE: But there were other dirty dealings. So in other words now you've got ways of getting his attention as his wife . . .

ABIGAIL: Whereas before I don't know what it was - it was maybe as his enemy - all I was doing was waiting for the relationship to happen - waiting for him to have more time - waiting for things to improve. . .

[a few minutes later]

ENRICO: We're happy to be together and we're happy in our relationship and we'll improve still in times to come because we were starting to understand each other better and I think we're actually starting to talk together and...

ABIGAIL: And the . . . We're starting to talk to each other. You got through to him for me. You gave me credibility for him and that's what started the whole process as far as I'm concerned.

As I look through the transcript, I see and remember the pattern. Here, my baseline role would have been referee while she expressed her pain and resentments and he, his frustrations, with her. Their worlds hardly matched, or rather the marriage they each held in their heads, hardly matched and they were into labelling each other. I could not tolerate that role at all. I moved out of it and into conversations. Conversations were with each individually. I always felt my role was 'a billboard' showing each, the other's message translated by me from another incomprehensible and unacceptable language into usable form. There were benefits to the individual conversations in the presence of the other. As they began to contact each other more safely at home there began a 'we'ness that was new - they began to have fun and need me less and less.

Caroline and Jack were a young American couple referred by the Wits Trauma Clinic. She had been gang-raped at a missionary station and these issues fed right into their own sexual problems. Although they expressed it differently - they were both seething with anger.

JACK: . . . man and woman are born on two different planets - they're just so different. So they don't understand each other. To me, it's just being natural - but whoever it is - a woman - she could easily identify with the other lady. I think I was concerned at first that I was going to be the bad guy and so I was a little afraid.

CONNIE: So, how's that been for you?

JACK: Well, I had a . . . . with you - I feel comfortable with you . . . .

CAROLINE: Jack is very impressed with your objectivity . . . .

JACK: Ya, which I've been . . . . now - because . . . . so I appreciate it and feel comfortable with it, otherwise I would have said something right now . . . . being objective and I look forward to coming now because I think you're good, ~~you~~ can help us - I feel relaxed - I don't see you as a threat - I don't see you taking sides.

CONNIE: ~~Can~~ you identify any particular thing that's been helpful to you or something opening up or somewhere that you have shifted in this context?

JACK: ~~The~~ main thing I guess is . . . . that you don't push - just happens that we kind of both talk - what we had been

unable to sometimes talk directly and what we're uncomfortable with and so I feel that we've both been able to do that - open up doors for us afterwards.

CONNIE: ~~Do~~ you mean - making the sort of dangerous or inflammable topics less so - is that what you're saying?

JACK: Well. I think yes - sometimes hard for us to initiate conversation on these subjects and you kind of prevent confrontation - you have control . . . we feel . . . . emotions that you help us to see why we're saying this and maybe look at ourselves . . . . I've appreciated that - not the bad person ????? and I felt like you did . . . . to look at what we're saying . . . . just trying different ????? saying what we're saying and why we're acting what we're acting.

So in helping them mention the unmentionables I was seen, at least by Jack, as moving into a role which allowed the feelings and behaviours they were engaged in to become comprehensible. Also, they could reflect in safety on the underlying meanings. So each became more entitled to and less guilty about their own preferences and actions. I also think this was a therapy about demystifying, or taking the heat out of sex. This was certainly new terrain for me. Sex was this monolith between them which had to be deconstructed so they could get a glimpse of each other and when they went home there were options.

The theme with all three couples could be construed as ~~the~~ the creation of a therapeutic context in which there is new

noise and a strong presence. How pale and bland! I am disappointed. Yet it is useful understanding because what really makes the difference is creating a context where couples begin to see, feel and respond differently to each other or "the marriage". Perhaps this is just a bland frame, while in fact it means much more in context. The simple format of moving my own role to create new behavioural options for the triangle is obviously informed by my own distinctive ways of being a third voice with idiosyncratic assumptions and interventions. So perhaps the real issue is ~~how~~ I create 'new noise' or how I move out of the baseline role. My intolerance of stuckness, which is obviously both an asset and a liability, may mean that I fight my way out of it, quite vehemently.

As a therapist, I have always found the idea that couples choose each other with 'exquisite accuracy' very useful and often true. It is a very binding idea, but I know that I do not always believe it. I can understand it as an eventshape, sometimes the accuracy was exquisite at a time and place. Whitaker (1989) talks about the couple being the same emotional age with equal, but sometimes alternating love and aggression. For me this is hard to accept as a given or an axiom - it may become so, through accomodation, because couples train each other. I see it more in terms of modifications, so that the fit improves over time if the couple stick together. There are always new discomforts as the terrain changes, but a couple have by then accumulated well trodden methodology for dealing with it.

### Orthogonality

This concept could be understood as a highly-valued ability to be recognisable yet sufficiently foreign to provoke novelty in a context. Consequently I have enjoyed comments that have defined me clearly and strongly, for example:

JOHN: I find you very aggressive - not aggressive but jumpy so that you don't let me get away with things - you keep fighting me back so you don't sit and accept - like I presume other people do. I wanted an aggressive person - somebody who's got their own thoughts and who would give me some sort of feedback - so I wanted feedback and even though you've given me a lot of feedback - because I don't want somebody who says - how do you feel this- how do you feel that. I want you to say - but that's right - you were ~~a boy~~ that was misused. I wanted that - I needed that because even though I said it, I couldn't believe it - so I needed . . . . .

CONNIE: ~~Another~~ voice . . . . .

JOHN: Not passively - the opposite of passively - not aggressive - I don't want somebody ~~passive~~ - I couldn't have done something if I had a passive person - I wouldn't have spoken myself and never got anywhere ~~but~~ I felt that you probed and brought me back to the difficult part.

And Neville, a man recently accused of physically abusing and raping both his daughters many years back:

NEVILLE: That's my story Connie. Now it's your ~~turn~~. Take your shoes and get into my brains, kick me to pieces and give me what you think about.

After about 24 sessions over an 18 month period, his last words at the session, before a negotiated six months break, were . . .

It hasn't been easy and it hasn't been pleasant, but I'm a better person for it, less angry, more ~~tolerant~~. Connie, I want you to know some of the colour in your carpet, is my blood.

Our eyes met. . . . "Wow," I said . . . there is something almost psychopathic about him, but I love the drama. I am amazed at how these comments make me smile, as if I prefer to story myself this way. So I learn that I can be ~~seen~~ as tough, and I begin to ponder how am I tough. Both ~~these~~ excerpts refer to my willingness to challenge and maintain discomfort and keep the conversation in the difficult areas and not collude with red herrings.

Interaction in its irreversibility, always has an ~~orthogonal~~ quality in that one cannot be unaffected by a coupling; furthermore any useful therapeutic interaction needs an orthogonality in that it helps to generate new possibilities in peoples' lives. Efran, Lukens and Lukens (1990) define orthogonal interaction in the following way [bracketted referents my own]:

A person [client] interacts with someone [therapist] outside a particular club [their troublesome life contexts] in a way that is different (i.e., orthogonal) from what the club rules specify. Changed in some respects by this interaction, the person returns to the club [their life contexts] and participates somewhat differently in it. (p. 145)

So hopefully many therapeutic systems fit this definition, but in this section I use orthogonality to refer

specifically to the therapeutic systems where client feedback defines me as overtly foreign to their rule systems. Both clients go on to explain their changes and what they mean and how they carry in other life contexts. In investigating a bit further I am searching for clarity about my firmer side and how it propels clients into observing their own styles of mutual co-existence.

My response to John continued from his previous statement:

CONNIE: I see what you mean - my view was a change from that viewpoint of 'I was the chosen darling therefore I had a ball' - so there was something liberating about finding out what was the downside of being the chosen child and that it wasn't so flipping liberating at all.

JOHN: I had reason for all this nonsense that I carried with me all my life . . . .

CONNIE: It makes sense.

JOHN: Ya - it makes sense and then I saw what was wrong and before I'd never seen what was wrong - I thought I was actually a very balanced person. People were saying - 'but geez you're such a balanced person' - meantime back at the ranch . .

CONNIE: So, in other words, we've got you a lot less balanced in your behaviour, but a lot happier, feeling more real . . . .

JOHN: And a lot more wonky - because now I've

got to find my feet as a different person.

Perhaps John's is a tale about a painful alternate reality that stimulated him in to restorying his life in a more liberating way. In terms of my own therapeutic role, the words that ring in my head are "therapy is not about feeling better, but about feeling more". It fits here, but I cannot always go along with it.

My response to Neville continued from his initial statement.

CONNIE: This is a painful trip . . . What do you think this journey has meant?

NEVILLE: Connie, I want to tell you. I've learnt one thing from you. I've always been a very deep thinking person but I've never ever sat and thought introspectively. I've always acted impulsively and carry on and take a decision and do it and get things done - I'm not a diddle-daddler and now I find that I think and I look into my heart and I look into my soul and ~~I~~ think that there's maybe two sides to ~~the~~ coin. Connie, I've learnt from you and you've seen the change in me over the last year from that positive, aggressive, domineering animal that arrived a year ago to the guy that sits here and bears his soul to you. I wouldn't give people the time of day that I might bear my soul to them.

CONNIE: I want to understand exactly - in which

~~way~~ did you see the change in that kind of impulsiveness and introspective ability?

NEVILLE: I'm more tolerant. I'm softer. Shirley . . . I've given her whatever she wanted. I wanted her to have - I wanted her to be happy. I want peace, Connie. [tearful]

CONNIE: Tell me about the softer.

NEVILLE: I don't see myself like I used to. Even at work when people are more ????? - I try to stop them - I try to look at the other aspect of things - I try to explain it to them whereas before 'do it because I said so'. I'll hang on a second - let's discuss it. I respect her feelings but I don't agree with her.

Well, these shifts fitted with my goals of empathy training in areas of emotional arousal - so I was thrilled that he picked up my subtly expressed discomfort at his inappropriate behaviour . . . . .

NEVILLE: . . . I gave you a greeting this morning when I saw you, . . . I apologise.

CONNIE: ~~I~~ don't want you to apologize.

NEVILLE: I said - hello kookie - how are you? You're not my kookie - I'm not allowed to call you kookie. But this is me Connie. And here's the very fact that I'm remembering that I said to you, hello kookie - how are you? - that in itself

shows you that you've taught me to think and to be aware. There's certain mannerisms - there's certain intrinsic bullshit that I've had all my life - I'm trying to curb it.

CONNIE: You don't always have to curb it - it's a thing that you can choose. The thing is - what you're learning is that you don't die when you sit with a thought or you *sukkel* through it a bit or you ponder it from the other side and maybe that's just the issue.

NEVILLE: Possibly - as you say, the message I give and the message that is received - my message is an innocent message. Sometimes its possibly received a little differently. He's making a pass at me. He's starting with me. He's a dirty old man. And now I'm watching it. There's no ambiguity. I don't want anybody to get the wrong messages and that's why I haven't seen you for a month . . . . I instinctively blurt it out - hello kookie - how are you? I'm sorry. I'm aware of the fact that you're not . . . . my kookie.

#### Stuck Systems : Moving Systems

The excerpt that follows is a really painful one and as I ruminated about the exact way to present it, I remember that it was the client I referred to when I wrote about my own perceived therapeutic handicap as the doctoral course began nearly three years ago. This is what I wrote:

February 1991

### Formulation of Handicap in Context

I often feel the most handicapped with clients who stay in therapy a long time. I can easily slip into a very ~~unsophisticated~~, first order, change orientation.

In this session where I encourage, support, validate her progress and new experiences but also make lots of blues, the difficulties are evident but they exist well beyond this particular session. I have seen this client, a single woman, aged 32 approximately once per month for about three years. She hasn't changed enough for me or for her - although she is not overly demanding about this.

Considerable progress has been made but we have together worked very hard for it. I have plodded away not creatively enough. It has taken years for her to stand up for herself at all, for some humour to emerge, or for her to enjoy any social contact. She gets into facts and tells a story and I get comfortable and our relationship is limited. I'm at my most boring. Her lack of passion de-energizes me or some such cycle with a different punctuation. I feel like the agony aunty. I've let her go on too much and I'm unsure how to proceed and be different.

In this system I battle with the dilemma about whether to dig up very early hurts and do regressive work or just to maintain a conserving and perturbing stance. I find it very difficult to create intensity. I have been many routes - we're a pretty stuck system.

November 1993

Andrea's comments

Being in therapy has been both exciting and disappointing. There were times when I came out of a session feeling particularly emotional/stressed, usually as a result of either having re-enacted or recalled childhood memories. It was always helpful and encouraging to hear that my instincts were accurate but I am still trying to find the courage to trust myself. I did not find the role plays helpful as the problem is when I am confronted, I cannot think clearly and the role plays cannot prepare you for such situations.

—The major disappointment for me is knowing and understanding why I feel like I do, yet am still not able to change e.g. my weight problem and trusting my gut feel. I know all the tricks and understand the problem but still feel out of control when in the situation.

I believe that therapy has definitely affected the track my life has taken. I'm not sure I would have attempted UNISA had I not been in therapy but I'm not sure whether that is one of my personality traits - not knowing when to give up a lost cause.

I would have liked to be settled in a stable, loving relationship but that seems to be beyond my reach and I would have preferred to have come to terms with that fact by now. ✓ Therapy has not helped me to accept my life and be content ~~with~~ with it as it is, but I'm not sure that that is what therapy is supposed to do.

I still feel, more strongly than ever, that I have difficulty in deciding and acting on what is right for me. I don't believe that I have found the real 'me' yet and rely too much on other people for advice and direction. I did always find your alternative ways of dealing with situations extremely interesting and would like to reach a stage where I

can see those alternatives myself.

Sadly, I have sometimes not trusted myself enough to take the necessary steps and sometimes feel that I am fighting a losing battle with myself. Yet, when I have met the challenge, I have always had a feeling of pride and a surge of confidence. I have realised that having someone believe in me is very important to me yet I still find it difficult to make my own decisions.

I have also encountered a fair amount of opposition, particularly from friends and am not sure if this is not another one of my 'don't throw in the towel yet' cases. I feel terribly stuck sometimes as I always seem to be rehashing old issues in different ways, and yet I know that I cannot give up until I understand why somethings don't work for me and others do - and is understanding/awareness enough to promote change. I have found psychotherapy to be a slow and tedious process and sometimes wonder if there is any value in it, yet at other times I believe so strongly that if I keep working through it, something, somewhere will change.

~~O~~I believe that therapy has been a growing experience and on reflection, think that I am not the same person I was when I started therapy but also feel that I have not begun to meet the challenges necessary to change my life.

My initial response said subvocally to myself was, "wow, good for her, it has been awful and she's said it out loud and more directly than usual". I think her written response coheres well with my experience of a boring stuck system and it is clear that nothing much shifted in the time between my handicap and her story.

Perhaps clients are entitled to judge therapy on the pragmatics of how their lives are currently proceeding. So

early last year, 1993, I began to feel that Andrea would benefit from a wider interpersonal context, a Yalom group. I am curious right now to call the therapist because I would benefit from his view. Maybe I am looking for confirmation that she is a difficult one to shift. In the early stages she found the group threatening and not helpful, and phoned me a number of times during 1994 on the point of quitting. My colleague, whom I bumped into by chance, confirms that she is hanging in by a thread.

If this represents a case of "my stuckness" then the other side of being there maintained the polarity is Nicole where her story confirms that "my being there created movement". I place them in the same continuum because I have seen them both over a number of years, I have been witness to the minutiae of their lives and they were both single women, badly parented, who were longing to be in an appropriate relationship. Needless to say that is where the similarities end.

Maybe I am searching for the 'self' that explains the differences in these two therapeutic systems.

Nicole wrote the story of therapy, but wanted to share it with me in a conversation. It was the last session of 1993 and she was marrying Colin before our next session in February. "I'm starting a new life next year and I think it is very apt to do this now", she said.

The conversation centred on general essences which she read from her page and I asked about particulars and here is what evolved:

NICOLE: Therapy gave me intimate knowledge about myself - about my destructive tendencies and why they exist and also about my

strengths and my more positive potential.  
 . . . I was able to make better and  
 healthy choices. That's how I understand  
 it. . . .

CONNIE: . . . . Mmm . . . . Right.

NICOLE: Therapy enriched me and it sharpened my  
 sense of observation and discernment.

As I listen to tapes of our sessions, it is sometimes  
 difficult to be sure which of us is speaking, so a high degree  
 of mutuality exists. Even her language is in tune with mine.  
 As I prepare to write the next quotes I am actually quite  
 embarrassed by the positivity of it - it seems a little beyond  
 therapeutic, a little too much, and I am relieved that it  
 really has been a transformation story. It could easily have  
~~derailed~~, it seems I have been too much of a model - with  
 lots of idealised projections of course . . .

NICOLE: Connie has facilitated a positive and  
 healthy chain of events, external and in  
 therapy - she's wise, sharp, astute and  
 very perceptive, these qualities are the  
 very ones that I need and have needed to  
 become healthier. I keep working on  
 these qualities and being with you has  
helped me to get them. Your warmth and  
 unconditional acceptance and sense of  
 humour are very healing and make a very  
 difficult process . . . . even enjoyable.

CONNIE: It's like a sort of osmosis . . . .

NICOLE: You've also brought - I don't know what  
 the English word is - *volias* - *volias* is

like - is probably into highlight -  
 volias is normally on a flat landscape -  
 there are mountains and everything else  
 surrounds it.

CONNIE: Brought into relief . . . .

NICOLE: . . . my positive character traits -  
 which I never got to hear about - nobody  
 ever praised me - I mean . . . didn't even  
 hear - they were buried and I think now  
the strengths are resourcefulness,  
 resilience - I'm wilful - which I think  
 is positive in some ways. I think I am  
 quite a talented type of person - which I  
 never made use of. . . . my work's  
 not a reflection of my yearning - my  
 creativity or anything like that. I need  
 to get that into . . . got to sort that  
one out, facilitate my creativity to  
 become a greater part of my life and not  
 leave it in a dark corner. . . .

later in the session:

CONNIE: What I'd like to know . . . I'd be  
 interested in particular things that have  
 been useful or terrible for you and  
 you've hinted at them from time to time.  
 Remember you said to me - there's  
 something that happens about coming into  
 this room.

NICOLE: No, in terms of your house - that's like  
 what I pick up is . . . you know - don't  
 forget - when I started therapy I was

living on my own and I was having wild . . . but it was this wild type of ad hoc existence - when I came here there was a sense of hope and you know that everybody was getting on with their lives - you were managing to somehow hold a career and all of that together and that definitely gave me something to aim towards and when you see it happening then it's not theoretical any more.

. . . I sense that everybody here is thriving and doing well - when I can see that that exists, then I know I could potentially create it in my life.

CONNIE: So from your experience having your therapist work at home and sort of having wafts of activity . . . so, for you that's been a positive? . . .

NICOLE: Very much so. I'm very susceptible to that . . .

✓ CONNIE: ~~Are~~ Are there any statements that you remember as making a difference - positively or negatively?

✓ NICOLE: - What gave me a shock was when you said 'if you have one more abortion I'd discontinue therapy.' It was quite a shock - physical shock.

and

NICOLE: One thing that did stand out - when you

were very upset about the answering machine and how I answered the machine . . . . which you said about being pleasing - not being real and I found I was like very upset about that one . . . . you ~~were~~ tough on me . . . my studies and why I gave it up . . . I feel I'm tough enough on myself . . . Yet with Liberty Life you kind of gave me the instinct to sort of be in tune with what suits me and not what suits them!

and

NICOLE: I'm trying to think of more - like you said - when I was going out with Spiro and I was agonising over every word I said . . . . or thing that I did - and I was bringing them here for analysis - you one day said to me - you know you have ~~nothing~~ to do with this; you would have messed up with him regardless because of where he was at - it wasn't so much a function of what I said or didn't say - not what I was doing but the type of . . . . person I chose to begin with - that was like a crucial thing - very crucial thing . . . . I would have failed with those people because they weren't the right choices to begin with. So, no matter what I did - no matter what I subverted myself into - it would never have worked anyway and it was just to realise that, it was the choice of the person and not me.

These particulars seemed to centre on my sometimes relieving her of an oppressive parent voice and sometimes being the oppressive parent voice.

When drawing the distinction stuck system/moving system, I set up an inevitable question and the search for its answers. What in my 'self' throws light on the difference in the therapeutic system with Andrea and with Nicole? It may be a useful question even though the distinction is quite arbitrary and the issues which allowed me to frame these clients together, are superficial.

The fact that Nicole's feedback creates a conversation and Andrea's is two monologues, is in itself telling. Perhaps this may have been the conversation Andrea and I chose not to have and should have had. Howcome this long-term relationship ~~stagnated~~ stagnated when many others do not? Perhaps we needed to focus on "us" more. I would get trapped by her impoverished life and focus there and our impoverished relationship escaped the focus.

Nicole is always connected in the world, even though she often collected lots of distress. Andrea is mostly in a victim role, wishing for more connections. How did that hook me? I think that my own prejudice made it impossible to accept her life and I kept pushing her for a better life story. I suddenly remember with some embarrassment and a lot of laughter, buying a book at an airport especially to lend her called The Fine Art of Flirting. Needless to say, this purchase elicited great guffaws from my children and a few quizzical, slightly untrusting glances from my husband.

Andrea needed closeness which I thought I was giving but I was not - it was respect, care, involvement, counsel and encouragement - whereas - I have fought with Nicole, been irritated by her, hated her obsequiousness and loved her spunk

and admired her courage - and yes we have always connected. Here the concept of impasse as a withdrawal of affect seems to fit, a sort of disturbance of relationship rather than a problem in technique (Whitaker, Warkentin & Johnson, 1950).

### Telephonic Follow Up

With on-going clients, feedback constituted an inquiry into the therapeutic context, but phoning clients from the past was a most unusual disturbance of the ecology around me. They were each surprised, pleased by my interest and very willing to talk. I am aware of losing a certain coolness in this process - maybe because in a way I was asking a favour. The egalitarian definition seemed to apply most completely in this context of client feedback. I had often been curious about how life had evolved for certain clients and, ever since this project theme was conceived, I imagined asking some of the questions that would satisfy my curiosity or create new understanding around my organisation and impact.

In engaging with ex-clients I generally asked about their lives so they could talk without me being central or obliging them to make me central. However, the role I played while travelling with them always did come into focus; I'm sure my curiosity about their construals of therapy got the better of me.

Often feedback referred to general categories of therapeutic response that were in themselves interesting. These give me a sense of how my style is perceived and how the therapeutic systems that I co-create function in the client's mind. The way I construe the feedback or even categorise it, yields clues to my own epistemology. X

Some general comments seem to refer to the benefits of an 'alternate view':

- "I'll never forget when you said the people you're worrying about aren't even thinking of you".
- "When you said that my running injury may force some new good things and it wasn't the end of the world".

or

- "You put a lot of things into perspective the - the story I told you last time - the girls that I've gone out with - stories that I believed in and thinking about and never knew what I could take out of them - important parts about them - instead of them being a grey area you've clarified it - not that I will necessarily see it your way, but there is an alternative view."

I have found 'replay' to be a significant theme. By this I mean people telling me their story or reliving an incident. Changes happen in the reprocessing or it may simply be experienced differently because it is heard properly.

- "I'm fine since going through the accident I'm not so tearful or helpless"

or

- "What worked for me was being with a positive person, because I listened to the way I was talking, I'd let myself slip."

The 24 year old student who found it hard to speak or act in a group and stayed safe and stereotyped, had this to say:

- ~~The~~ The empty chair . . . . that was major! That just showed me a whole way of behaving and a whole lifestyle it was very important - so much was important . . . . . I

think that was one moment . . . I was like shaking for three days afterwards."

She was referring to the session where we got to the nursery school experience that ensured she would be cautious and afraid to risk for years to come.

As I re-experience these comments, they leave me feeling confirmed, calmer and a reasonable technician, but I think I have learnt more from responses with valence where perhaps I am perturbed by the challenges and the drama.

Michael who slipped out of monthly sessions imperceptibly, took the phone call as a mark of respect: "you can't think I'm too crazy if you're phoning for my opinion". Laughter. He filled me in about his positive progress, then said:

The vibe was good, I found you easy to talk to, the environment very comfortable, a big garden, comforting, the occasional bird, I would look forward to the drive up - there was a whole peacefulness and tranquillity that I appreciated and someone more desperate may have appreciated it even more - I was very relaxed and never felt I couldn't open up.

The next part was so accurately my own experience of the process that I really regret that this conversation did not happen in the room, because we would surely have progressed beyond the impasse . . .

MICHAEL: The tough part was that I needed to be reassured all the time. Some things I digest and some dismiss. I prefer sympathy and patting on the back.

CONNIE: ~~Yes~~, I felt at times that I needed to rattle the cage.

MICHAEL: I didn't enjoy the cage being rattled - maybe it was beneficial - but knowing me as a person, I react better when nurtured - I react less if rattled - I get more ~~protective~~. When you were prescriptive, it highlighted my inadequacies.

As we ended, he said he was surprised and encouraged by ~~how~~ much I recalled of our sessions. I felt very connected to him, like two archaeologists, thrilled with a find.

I could not help chuckling as well as feeling sort of bad after telephoning Anne who consulted me briefly for depression. She said that everything was lovely, she now had a regular boyfriend, a job and was happy. "How wonderful. How did it all happen?" I asked. "Six months of Prozac!" she said, "and I was better after ten days!" Quite predictably, although I did not know it when I telephoned, there is R200 outstanding on her account! What I learnt from this is just how irrelevant I can be. It is an unusual experience and far from comfortable.

I am very curious about the therapy relationships that embody failure and do not yet have a clear understanding or a narrative to describe it or even if it is a useful distinction.

The Gordons completed a couple therapy contract about six months ago. Gillian said that after years of individual therapy she had found the experience frustrating. It had worked better for her husband who had become much more aware on many levels. She felt that in viewing herself as part of a couple, she lost some sense of herself and her feelings were

neglected in the couple format. She would have been pleased ~~if~~ her husband had been encouraged by me to go into his own therapy.

When she went back to her previous therapist the relationship went through a tough patch but is now going well, because getting in tune with herself again has helped. A benefit of couple therapy was that at least her therapy is no longer the contentious issue between her and her husband that it has been.

What does this do to me? I feel very self-critical and my emotional response as I track it, because I have just completed the call, is one of being quite rattled - like I pronounce myself 'not good enough' then I want to think my self-blaming thoughts. I did compromise some of her individuality because they are so disparate in their emotional sophistication. I had hoped to co-create a tune that could include them both, but I think this happened at the expense of the individuals. Maybe I could have checked and kept closer to what was experienced as useful for them.

I can save my incompetent feelings in many rational ways like telling myself that the marriage is stabilised by the emotionality and understanding provided by the female client's therapist - a necessary component that she has needed for years and still needs. Also, my instinct was not to make her husband a less attractive proposition for her by implicating his emotional incompetence and somehow she was looking for that. Perhaps couple therapy did its job in that she checked him out in someone else's eyes and now can get on with what she needs.

The rationalisations do not work because what this really tells me about me, is that I mucked up. I need to stay more alert to the need for (vertical) individual work and how

couple therapy could be subjugating for individuals. Maybe my constructions with couples are too pragmatic and cognitive and not experiential enough. And then there is a new understanding that does not ease the discomfort - someone who has been in therapy for years had probably already married a style.

Formal family feedback was a difficult format to encompass; other therapeutic tasks always took precedence and also because by the time a family could reflect on the therapy process, they were not all still coming to regular sessions. So I relied on the telephone and perhaps too much on vociferous mothers. My understanding of their perspectives was that the circuitry around the problem had shifted in therapy and then inevitably the problem or the problem story shifted.

Mrs McFarlane put it this way:

Therapy helped; it made me conscious that I overprotect and Ryan became conscious of it and could tell me to back off - he is more assertive with Dad and speaks back more. We accept and don't push. He is still not very sociable and battles to get going for school, but he's now in no danger of failing, is happy in himself and has three part time jobs all of which he enjoys.

Mrs Cohen said that her son's excessive religiousness had not changed - but that it was not ruining the family any more. "We're close and more loving."

These responses fit with the goals I identified when I participated in these systems. To return to an old concept, the parental attempts to solve, what they perceived as problematic became in fact the presenting problem, or one

could say that they were telling limited stories about themselves and each other. It is not so much the symptom but the way it is embedded that becomes foreground. This work feels like the family and I are the sculptors and the problem is the sculpture and we are chipping away to create a more aesthetic work of art.

The Hampton-Smiths were a special variation that bears closer investigation. Sean, their 11 year old son, they had told me in 1992, was awkward, irritating, poorly coordinated, lazy, unhappy, and badly teased and unpopular at school. When I phoned this month, more than a year after we had last met, she was touched and keen to talk.

"Sean is amazing," she said, "he decided to change schools, although things had got much better for him and he had won prizes at the end of primary school. He left the victim person behind and went forward with confidence and made the cricket and hockey team at his new school". What she said confirmed for me that sometimes clients learn our language so that we can help them. In response to my question: "How do you understand the changes?", she said, "once we backed off criticising, he's a different child. We understood our mistakes. His relationship with his father is much closer. He is still Sean . . . his sarcasm is the legacy of his painful years". She went on: "when you said we didn't have to produce perfect children, it was a great relief - even our other children have had the benefit".

I remember two dramatic moments in the work with this family. One was with the parents when I said something like "if you start falling in love with him, others will too". The other was when sitting eyeball to eyeball opposite a distraught little boy who had been roughed-up by a whole group, had his glasses trampled, and been humiliated for his tears, I said "No one can take on a whole group and you don't

ever ever have to be the victim again because . . . . ."

~~On~~ thinking about this - it is typical of other work where I use my gut and feel that I am including my 'self' and my belief systems at the expense of what I maybe 'should' do. I would have been embarrassed for colleagues to see it or the interventions in the school context that it led to. Suddenly a connection. . . . Is this a head / heart issue? I operated from my gut and felt apart from theory or appropriate methodology. How grossly inelegant - or is it?

When I really feel something strongly I think there is an earnestness that gets conveyed. It carries me right out of my head. I think these become dramatic moments that make a difference. There is also a growing sense that my hunches about where to move must be acted upon more.

I think when working with families, I feel less personally implicated but often energised, perhaps by that freedom, maybe busier, more alive and more alert. I always ~~find~~ find a family session enormously demanding, but it allows me to be creative, think and act quickly and more and more to put the tension back in the family.

Redhill - the Zenith of Competence :  
Susan - the Zenith of Incompetence.

May 19, 1993

At this very point in time, Susan my client for the last seven years, the one with whom I have struggled and known helplessness as nowhere else, has just telephoned to say she is going to be admitted into hospital in two hours, perhaps for the tenth time. Earlier today she identified that she had given up and wanted to be taken care of. This will be the first admission in 14 months. She has just come back from

eight weeks in Canada. By contrast some of these seven years were spent entirely in her bed at home, with the only break being her weekly one hour sessions with me. We both know that this current abyss will pass and even console each other that we will deal with whatever comes and that she will take charge whenever she can. Competent or incompetent? For many years that was the question. No longer, the challenge is to bring more and more of myself - that's all I have got. For many years she said I made no difference, now she says that my understanding touches her and that I am useful when she is well enough to function. Previous therapists had closed their doors on her, the surviving psychiatrist tries every new drug, the occupational therapist comes and goes because often rehabilitation just does not apply. Everyone gets helpless in her path.

Then juxtaposed to this is Jenny's story that has just happened. Jenny is the principal at a pre-primary school where I consult on a part-time basis. It is easily my most competent work context. So Jenny's view of me, in my construction is coloured by my role in the Redhill setting. Parents of small children are motivated, patterns are new and shifts and perturbations are thus easy to come by. In addition to this the school defines itself flexibly and is very responsive to my footprints.

Her formal and considered request for therapy a week ago left me quite stunned. I respect her so much and she knows me so well - she has seen my best and my worst. We have sat together for nearly ten years with countless parents and teachers on countless issues. I know she wants for herself what I have facilitated for certain of her family members who have been my clients. She says I am the best psychologist she has ever come across but still she's my mommy sometimes. I do not believe her anyway and if I believe that what she says is true for her, then I query her judgement. Yet it feels like

an enormous compliment, a stunning one in fact. Aha - do I believe it's that mystique that makes me desirable? If someone has seen most of me, I lose my power. I see myself holding back on parts of my story as I attempt to write a thesis, as if once written or known - I will lose something and here Jenny tells me that in all those years of sharing, doing workshops together, hearing my value system, seeing my anxieties and ineptitude with everything transparent, I have lost nothing and she would still choose me. Well, I refused gently and not definitely - because I wasn't definite. I have suggested her old therapist. Am I scared of the intimacy? Am I keeping something away - the me, as a therapist? Well, anyway, she has seen that 100 times? There are lots of external factors - no space, inconvenient times. Am I fighting for that precious space to be little? I am not sure - but it feels perhaps like the deepest professional acceptance from another person I could ever wish for.

July 24, 1993

Susan is out of hospital and the first session on the 15th of July was ghastly. No medication works, and electroconvulsive shock therapy did nothing for her. She really feels there is no point and I cannot even disagree with any honesty. The usual touchstone phrases that she holds, like "this bad doesn't last", are starting to ring hollow.

She is full of suppressed feelings; her acting out in hospital was punished. I, of course, wanted to give her a medal. And so the only positivity in the session was her smiling response to my statement that everyone in the world is allowed to be angry except a mental patient and her noticeable panic that I would be on holiday for a week - she usually does not mind a bit. Susan is my Nemesis - I have really given up doing anything but being with her. This freedom, of course, sometimes generates new possibilities.

I decided to do a very unusual thing - to schedule an extra session before my week away, based on my reiteration that I would value her anger. I have tried to do anger work with her quite unsuccessfully. She is terrified of her emotionality, has been punished for it her whole early life and needless to say since being an official patient, she dare not. She would often curl up in a ball in bed for hours rather than express anything. She knows my values on this and has occasionally shown me bits of sadness, despair or anger.

This session, I just knew instinctively, to keep it light and travel with her. We ripped a telephone book, went to the tennis court and flung balls against the wall till tears and laughter mingled. I kept coaxing as the satisfying smack resounded off the practice wall: "put words to it - what are your grunts saying?" "Shit life!" started pouring out louder and ever louder. The court was a mass of green flying balls. We picked them up without talking, keeping energy for the next round. "Crystallise the words", I said as we were about to hurl the last few. Mine bubbled out with the last throw, it had been building: "I will if I want to!" I shrieked in a voice laced with rebellion that surprised even me. She took her cue: "I've got to!" she yelled repeatedly, tears coming all the time.

"This is the final treat", I announced, feeling curiously joyous myself. I handed her one of the saucers. "No, not plates" she implored, "that's really crazy". I agreed with ~~her~~. We counted down and smashed them with all possible power. Wham! Shatter! Crash! What a relief and then a frenzy of picking up big bits and not stopping until everything was smashed into tiny shivers. She was flushed and tearful and the words that came from her were: "Its easier, I'm okay". ~~For~~ me, there was a deep realisation. Words do not work for her any more, there are none we have not said - we have done the early life ones, the triadic social relation ones, the

prescriptions and descriptions, the reframes, the tasks, the ones around her entitlement, the hopeless ones, the death ones, the referral ones.

Maybe we must do together until she dies or until it is safer for her to live. Now, as I am about to touch down at Jan Smuts after a wonderful harmonious trip as a complete family, where there was river rafting on the Zambezi, where I got mesmerised by the Victoria Falls, visited a witch doctor, caught a fish and was incredulous at the elephant outside our bedroom, I must at last face reality. I cannot help wondering what I will find on Tuesday at 5.00 p.m. I expect she will have neutralised any change - why should this time be different? I dare not expect because disappointment is our parallel process.

November 3rd, 1993

Susan has been working for one week! She told me with such pride and amazement and watched my face so intently as if she had wondered or rehearsed the moment many times before coming. The reality had sunk in, depression and functioning can live together, panic and paralysis are not synonyms. How come now? I asked myself many times. I managed to hide my scepticism, which is 'survival' in this relationship. I was thrilled - she had taken a break from monitoring herself, her moods and her mood swings.

Six days later the desperate call came. "I'm sick, I'm sick. I couldn't work! I'm thinking suicide all the time". Well, I managed somehow and she went to her occupational therapy group today and came to her 5.00 p.m. session.

She has licked the downward spiral and it's a great precedent or she has managed to let go of the 'sick poem' even after reciting the first few lines. A shift of narrative

midstream is very unusual. This is an impressive shift.

I track the perceptions, behaviour and ideas that saved the fall, we pick up meanings and then, halfway through, go for a walk. This is an activity saved for sessions where she is particularly desperate and restless, occasions of celebration.

In a surprising focus away from her anguish, she asks me what my thesis is about. There are many different ways to phrase the answer; I choose carefully, "it's about the client's experiences of therapy." "Oooh wonderful", she chirps and expands like I'd given her a new voice. "It's about time!", she launches into it spontaneously, first in general terms: "The therapist must be with the client and not push, . . . . continual understanding and encouragement is important . . . . a client musn't be left helpless."

I value her critique because she's a professional patient and in her many clinic sojourns, the 'unpacking' of one's therapist is, I believe, the overriding occupation. So she is also knowledgeable about other people's therapies. So her textbook response amazed me because it did not come from a textbook.

She spoke of her trust in me because I have not left her and said "I take your view very seriously".

I reminded her . . . "years earlier you said I understood you well, but therapy didn't make a difference". She spoke about the difficulty in letting people make a difference and her having to face that there was no magic. "You're always calm - that helps a lot" and then went on . . . "one of the  best things you ever did was that session when we discussed suicide, how I'd do it, what the funeral would be like - not that I don't often think of suicide but it changed something

. . . . I also know I felt different after we've hit tennis balls or I've cried or done something . . . ."

I had seldom heard her concentrate on anything, but her own predicament for more than a few minutes. I was quite astounded.

Susan's story has taught me how to live with 'incompetence' reframed for my comfort as 'helplessness'. Sometimes the discomfort creates a spark or allows me to be really close to her but I battle, I feel so trapped.

~~The~~ distinction competence/incompetence probably hides more than it illuminates, but feeling sure of the instrument I am in the Redhill context and critical and stuck with myself in relation to Susan, is a construction that has fitted for a number of years. It is difficult to question because it feels so 'real'.

#### Lauren

Lauren's feedback tells me that I created a context that freed the good/bad, lie/truth templates of her early learning. Notably freeing for her was the fact that I did not punt a philosophy and was unwilling to accept the labels about her father that other psychologists had given.

--You never played good guy/bad guy or said, "did you or didn't you?" So, because I was never put in a corner, I didn't have to tell you everything and when I told you a lie, I learnt even from the lie.

Once she remembered I had pressured her, she said she would have run from it, but I apologised and never did it again.

Although she was often emotional with me, she felt she

had done most of her crying with her boyfriend and used therapy to excavate important issues. She connected this to separating her selves in different relationships; I wondered what I had perhaps closed off in her. This also taught me that for her therapy should be a context where a number of differing processes occur and I needed to be particularly careful of any rigid format in sessions.

I learnt about my importance at a micro-level. If not for Sluzki's (1992) article I would never have put this meaning to it:

You always clarify what I'm saying in a way that I develop it. Sometimes your understanding changes just a few words like a 'won't' for a 'can't' and that lets me see different things.

She spoke of taking these new meanings into other areas. Sometimes there was relevance to issues she had chosen not to discuss like her anorectic stage, when she was younger.

You always gave me responses in my framework. I could move to my own stronger voice not yours. I felt in training for where I want to be not where I should be.

This confirms what I felt with her, that I got the stability/change relationship correct. She confirmed this further when she said:

Your ideas rattled me but they weren't too far off what I wanted, so I could use them.

She was aware of her control:

I can slow or hasten the pace by my understanding of

things but also by what I give to you.

Although she found this helpful because sometimes she needed to breathe a bit or excavate less, I wondered whether she and perhaps other clients are sometimes disappointed by this. I need to be more aware of being led in this way.

She conducts her relationships by focusing on the others because then she does not have to focus on herself and so she found therapy initially very uncomfortable. She felt she would have picked up my personal issues very quickly because of this.

you never brought your personal problems into therapy - I saw your humanness without you bringing problems for me to solve.

My self-disclosing behaviour, is from this feedback, just as I intend:

you bring in problems as examples of your responses which made you very human. The examples were based on what I needed to hear.

I gather she found them normalising because she kept referring to her "battle to feel normal" and how these self-disclosures provided a reference that she would take with her.

I learnt about some messages that get received, that I never knew I conveyed. Here is the evidence of this followed by how I use this evidence to talk to me about me.

It appears to me that you care about what you do, the best way I can explain it is after Pretoria, you gave me a hug - because it was a terrifying experience.

Touch when you instinctively want to

You also have a frivolous attitude which is very helpful, you often smile and joke, make it seem less important . . . that I like very much.

Do not think your humour is disrespectful

✓ The fact that you never let me smoke in here, I always look for distractions, you didn't let me hide.

Do not let clients use old patterns of diffusing their anxiety

At first your watching the clock made me nervous and was disturbing. I've got used to it.

Move the clock - all non-verbals count.

The fact that you dress very much as a woman was for me a big help. It became quite important to me to see how you dressed after I told you (about the rape) I felt - how can she dress like that after what I'd told her? So I moved through it quickly. It meant it was fine to still be a woman and have the experience I've had.

What you are can be very useful in unpredictable ways.

If there's a big decision, I come in my mind to the comfort of here - not for what you've said . . . for the way of being. I see you, the person - the personality that you portray here is very affirmative, spunky, I am, I dress, I feel, I think - I take that character and take strength from it.

I am very touched and flattered, if not a little surprised by what she saw. However the message I take is, do not underestimate the modelling dimension in therapy.

Linda

This client taught me about timing in a new way and that for me unknown territory does not equal incompetent territory. It was a therapy in two parts. This is how she puts it in the narrative she wrote as we terminated.

*The reasons that took me into therapy in 1990 were primarily as a result of my parents separation and father's extra-marital affair. I remember that I was very, very angry and that hatred consumed me, as far as my father was concerned. He had never really been a loving father and in addition he was abandoning the family for a younger option. My allegiance lay firmly with my mother and together we united to 'fight my father'.*

Part of the outcome as described by her was . . . .

*Firstly I realised that the way I felt about my life and all its complications was O K.*

*All or a great deal of my anger came out and was blurted directly at its cause - my father. It felt so great and in addition I was no longer afraid to stand up to him or tell him how I felt.*

*Thirdly, and most, most importantly I found myself telling Connie, calmly and without any pre-planned thought, how I had been sexually abused as a child. Her reaction was one of clear recognition of the serious nature of this problem and concern that we were to see each other again in a long while. She asked me if I wanted to see someone else because she*

*didn't think I should wait.*

I was actually very unsure of my competence and used the excuse of our long gaps to offer someone else.

However, I worked well with what I found to be an intelligent, tentative, confused and troublingly unfeminine young student. She had suffered insidious trauma and there was lots of unravelling to do in reclaiming a voice and a body. I knew that acting on feelings or even having them, would be problematic. As for attitudes to men, well, that was in the future, it felt premature.

She remembers:

*We began to deal with my immediate feelings of anger and guilt. I think that I am far more angry now than I was then because back then I was still trying to uncover or dig for how I felt. Now I have found ~~those~~ feelings and am doing practical things about them. In addition Connie tried to get me to form a position on how I felt about men on the whole.*

I knew we could not go further then and so we terminated with my suggestion that the time would come.

Sure enough three years later:

*I really thought, when I stopped seeing Connie, that I wouldn't go back, or need to. But after two relationships and being involved in the third seriously and having reached a point where I simply was not coping with life in general (and sex in particular) [author's comment] I decided, with support from my boyfriend, to return.*

I found her looking wonderful, spunky, interactive and much more female.

The second part she describes as follows:

*We established that as a result of being abused as a little girl I tend to operate in a void of silence in both sexual and non-sexual situations. I needed to find my voice, so Connie suggested practical ways to establish this voice. However, I realised that once I have my voice in a situation and particularly with a person, I will have it for always with that situation or person. It is almost like jumping a hurdle.*

This work would, I believe have been almost damaging if I had not waited. On one occasion she brought her boyfriend so she could find that voice:

*I began to pour my heart out in between tears.*

Her final written statement teaches me that I too, need not fear the unknown, I can do quite well there.

~~I~~ *have been able to forgive myself and simultaneously to put my emotions into perspective. I am able to focus more upon my needs in relation to others but, essentially, I am not bumbling along but taking charge of my life.*

### Peggy

I include this client mostly because she represents part of my sample where the feedback was offered spontaneously. Peggy was a client from a few years ago who recently asked what my thesis was about. I told her that I was investigating

~~Client~~ experiences of therapy. "Why don't you ask me?", she exclaimed, "I've got lots to say". Of course, I could not resist, so we set a time for a conversation.

Peggy is 40, she is a nursery school teacher and comes from England, where she was adopted at six weeks old. In her late adolescence she developed agoraphobia which has waxed and waned throughout her adult life.

As this is the last client that I am reviewing, the feedback is restricted to the comments that are particularly personal or perturbing and I attempt to crystallise the messages I take about myself and the therapeutic contexts I co-create. In re-entering the therapy room, many emotional memories resurfaced.

~~It~~ was almost like coming into a womb here because I felt so safe when things were really conking in around me.

There is a calm containing part of me. I am not often aware of the safety I can create.

I even remember seeing the box of tissues and I thought, I wonder who would need the box of tissues and when I'd gone through it, I knew who needed the box of tissues (laughter). It was very heavy.

I always remember reading about therapists who were personally powerful enough to co-create the permission for extreme emotionality. It always seemed a goal for me that I have been able to fulfil more and more.

I've always felt so totally safe with you . . .  
totally relaxed and confident with you.

I am a little surprised because I do not always feel this with myself. So because of my own curiosity about how I can convey ~~what~~ I do not always feel, I asked, "what about me and what about you made this a safe context for you?"

Because I opened my inner feelings . . . about being adopted . . . about my real mother. . . .

Sometimes contexts are defined by their contents and contents come when certain processes allow it.

After the first three sessions, I think we had six, I used to have to rush up to Woolworths when we were finished and reward myself and buy my sticks of ~~licorice~~, and then drive home - my reward system because I'd done what I was supposed to - after three I didn't need to any more.

How amusing, I used to do this after the dentist. So this is like pulling teeth - a metaphor for the therapist role.

After the first few sessions I almost got to the ~~stage~~ of wanting to come because it wasn't so scary as I thought, it got exciting.

Well, she and I were on a voyage.

We worked out in therapy, if you remember, that I have a survival kit from way back when I lay in that cot

Oh yes - this was our voyage - Peggy is confirming a courageous part of me that often hides.

We get back to your probing and your questions and your ability to listen and I remember the day you

said to me, "Right Peggy, visualise". I've never forgotten it, "visualize yourself in your cot" and . . . . oh, I hope I don't cry but anyway and "nobody to actually love you, you were just getting fed and changed by whoever happened to be on duty" and I remember having . . . . terrible. . . . sadness, terrible terrible, feeling very sorry for myself - I'd really been abandoned - even then I knew my biological mother had been sad to give me up. I still felt let down. I remember your probing in such a way, that we were able through my tears to really talk about it and investigate it and look at it from different angles and O K, I went away, absolutely emotionally drained, but it put it in perspective, it was O K , it was very sore but we worked through it.

I remember actually sobbing like a small baby, you had touched such a nerve in my psyche. Raw nerve exposed, but then the healing started . . . . I just never felt such sorrow . . . that was the most poignant part of therapy . . .

Connie, you can do this work! You can even understand it systemically, it resonates with your own insides - but often you go the less dramatic route.

Remember we created Emily Jane (the agoraphobic visitor), and I didn't have time to see her and I ~~had~~ had to have respect for her on Sunday afternoons. I remember, you lovely thing, that if I was busy in the classroom and just about to have a panic attack, ~~I'd~~ I'd have to say to Emily Jane, . . . "I'm awfully sorry, I'm terribly busy now, so I'm afraid you can't visit; don't phone, don't fax. I'll call you on Sunday afternoon". We devised this wonderful

programme - gradually - not over night - she stopped coming - now I could go out to meet her.

Oh yes, I remembered Emily Jane! It was a way to engage Peggy's humour, lighten the terror of panic attacks and befriend the monster. This is useful feedback because I often wonder if and when such ruses work.

I then inquired specifically about what she had found unhelpful in our times together. I suppose I had had enough affirmation and was looking to learn in a different way.

I tried twice to sit in the soft comfortable chair, and you said "no Peggy, you have to sit on a hard chair" and I never knew why. Just tell me why? It made me quite uncomfortable because physical things are important to me - so I wanted you to be more accommodating.

For Peggy this was tough - I think my 'serious' chairs are my way of defining this kind of conversation (therapy) as 'work'.

I tell you what else surprises me and I've noticed it in workshops at school. How its terribly safe to cry in front of you and I in this room could sob my heart out. I . . . I trust you totally . . . .

Peggy has experienced me as a therapist in three contexts - as a client, as a workshop member, and as the teacher with parents in more of a network context, so I must conclude that I can easily co-create contexts that include tears.

I actually learnt to probe myself, you leave therapy and carry on . . . . You've got to go with whats being asked. I decided for myself "you've got to open up" . So for me it was no holds barred.

I'm starting to hear that Peggy wants to be confirmed as having been a ripe and amazingly co-operative client. I hear her, we laugh and she says it: "I was a damned good client!" - and she was. I do not think I personally would find it easy ~~so~~ here I am learning about courage.

I ask what about me personally impinged on her:

—Oh, your body language! The way you shift your long skirts - fiddling with your blouse and move and I always laugh, you're getting so into the whole thing, your body language is so 125% involved with your patients. I also enjoyed, some may find it quite intimidating, I enjoyed your intensity. It's a way of getting into the nitty gritty, you're really getting stuck in. Its a message of undivided attention, I have never met anybody who can listen like you can and hear every single word and internalise it. You don't get distracted and don't get off the point . . . I loved that. I know you're really tuned in . . . and then you come with a wonderful pertinent remark which sums up exactly what's been said in one sentence I think that's an absolute gift.

I have heard this before yet I am still surprised. I know it is me, I recognise myself. This part is in all my contexts and also in the professional role. I would guess that it is curative, yet I can withhold it, or some clients do not feel it - that is the curious part.

Your flickers of humour - you sum it up so nicely you do it in a kind way.

Good, this means a lot to me because humour should never ever be minimising, and it can often be.

There were moments in this conversation where Peggy was longing to slip back into therapy and expressed a sadness that one has to go to someone, and it is not part of family life.

—My— perturbations keep her voice saying things to her about herself. I now understand that this is how a therapist's belief in her client is conveyed. Peggy's feedback allows my voice to talk to me and so constitutes 'new noise' that changes me and of course this conversation provokes her experience about what the perturbations were in therapy, that made a difference for her.

Anna : A Most Difficult Post Script

I really respect this letter and I will use it even though I swore I would put nothing more in chapter 7. This deserves to be processed.

It teaches me that, when I get trapped, I disconnect and cannot be orthogonal, quite in the way I would like. I could not work with this client and was fine about losing her. I did want her to be uncomfortable, but ideally I would have liked her to have used the discomfort and soul-searched and perhaps shifted. Should I answer and so ease it or leave the impact so that it keeps working for her?

Here is what she wrote:

*Dear Connie,*

*I have waited to write because I wanted to get more objective - then on that Saturday of Peace monitors meeting my study burnt and the letter I wrote got a bit dirty - took me this long to rewrite.*

*For myself I have to give you feedback on the times we spent*

together. I do not know you as a person and can only relate on the therapist part I met.

I found you very perceptive and clear thinking and want to thank you for some of the insights.

But I have to express my disappointment about the rest of the "therapy". You did not seem to listen to me, in any case I ~~did~~ not feel heard - you did not hear my despair and desperation. This was the first time that I, a very coping ~~person~~, looked for help. In four sessions you asked me 4 x to bring my husband and never heard my "no". You actually got up while I was talking to check something - this seemed uncaring to me as was your clock watching. I did not feel you even ~~tried~~ to understand me - I felt more as if I had to fit into something you wanted - when I didn't you lost interest or did not know how to help me.

I know I am a difficult person who can rationalize everything but I do believe this does not make me unhelpable, which was the feeling I was left with. Especially you concluding the session saying that you did not believe my constructs were as strong as I believed and that I was on my own. I felt more alone and without any one who can just hold me for a while.

Not all therapists and clients are compatible but I believe it ~~is~~ the therapists responsibility to explain this in a caring open way not with a rejecting manner that implied to me it was my fault.

Connie I am sure you are very clever but to me you seem to be lacking in warmth, empathy and listening skills. This was a great warning to me - to be more aware of my own caring skills.

This is only my opinion - from my frame of reference where I

was at the time.

Regards,

Anna

I shook when I received this. It was not surprise, but it was the shock of having it in black and white, it was about facing my own ineptitude and it was about having to process that which I preferred to leave alone. I was in real pain for days. It was another lesson about timespace, skills and abilities that I was sure I owned, could vanish. Realities ~~are~~ momentary. Even the core self is re-negotiated in every relationship.

There are many lessons for me. I could have just kept listening and so kept her company more. However, she is an experienced volunteer counsellor, a trainer, a leader, so I resisted this, in order to be foreign and not just play one of her wider family. She excluded every option and direction and presented a strong inflexible rule system, that I felt I had to challenge. In this situation I carried the idea that "a primary function of therapy is to break up patterns of activity (including thinking) that aren't readily challenged in other contexts" (Efran, et al, 1990, p.184). Obviously the climate of love that makes 'pounding' acceptable and later even valued, was absent in this case. I responded to a covert message "what are you going to do for me, while I neutralise you totally?". Completely at odds with the "I felt more alone . . . without any one who can just hold me for a while," that she reported.

Because of these other expectations, continuing in therapy was an invitation into unacceptable stuckness. Being who I am, perhaps I could not just sit with her in it. However, by not identifying my difficulty I was pulling rank, being the expert, keeping secrets. This all made for impact,

but little match between intention and effect, between the message sent and the message received. However, answer I must. Here is the proposed letter that I have written and not yet posted.

Dear Anna,

I very much appreciated your letter, taking the trouble to write given how disappointing and awful the therapy experience was for you. The feedback is very useful, painful and thought-provoking.

There was also a level on which I was not really surprised by it, because I had done a great deal of soul-searching during and between our sessions and after the final one, because the situation was very atypical for me. I felt your disappointment from the very beginning. I was simply not the therapist you had in your head, and am still puzzled by the definiteness with which I felt we were a totally stuck system. I have some hunches about it but they are just hunches. Possibly your expectations were of a supportive therapy high on the very dimensions that you felt were absent. For me, it had to go further. You had, or so it seemed, done lots of exploring already and I didn't believe that that would be fresh or useful terrain. I think your distress activated me to push too soon into transformations and movement which were too difficult and not fair for you. Maybe I have enormous shortcomings in being unable to be helpful to you at that time - but I have to take responsibility for the fact that, as it was then, there was simply nowhere to be or move - of course something about me may have activated the stuckness and your investment in it.

I felt no space for me, hence the message you picked up of me leaving you on your own or being rejected. I was rejecting the system that we co-created and should of course have been

much clearer about that. There is obviously lots to learn for me and a great deal to ponder about.

~~I~~ thank you for your integrity and energy. Like you, I too have learnt from the experience in surprising and unpredictable ways.

Regards,  
Connie

This is a story of many things but it was a meeting of mutually negating assumptions.

The fantasy is that someone else would have got through the impasses and why could it not be me. Yet, there is slow understanding that being 'me' is often an asset and that it is inevitable that because of that, there are times when it will limit me and be a liability.

~~I~~ know she immobilised me. I even felt played with. I tried to move in a way that would move her, but I do not want to retreat into the well-worn and very human game - to tell a story that ensures that my own wounds do not hurt.

As I write this and feel the distress, I wonder about including this story, while knowing that there is no way that I won't. I feel the echoes of an almost physical ambivalence. Maybe this story replays the deep structure of asthma. I will try everything, but, if truly trapped with no air, to stay is to suffer and be depressed. Whereas, if the situation allows it, to move is to live.

### **Group Supervision - A New Challenge**

A request came from Family Life Centre at the end of 1992

for a two year supervision contract. Usually psychodynamically orientated clinicians are the desired species, so I found the approach curious and challenging and immediately tested the limits in terms of constraints and freedoms. No, I would not be bound by the limits of 'case consultation' and, yes, I could tape sessions, start counsellors taping their own sessions and work in any way I chose; in fact, the organisers were quite excited by different ideas and new formats.

My initial diary entry on January 19th, 1993 was, "the group went so much better than I feared". An official "it's gone well and people are very excited" from Family Life Centre after two meetings was confirmation that once again my worst fears were a way of keeping standards high. I guess I really trade in self-doubt.

Officially requested feedback at the end of the first year required a focus on what was useful or unhelpful about the group experience with reference to structure, function and orientation.

Here are some comments:

- "I like the structure, I learn from other people, there is a lot of energy, very alive."
- ". . .strikes chords in me all the time,"
- "I like the personal stuff, its a chance to look at ourselves more and it fits the work we do."
- "I've seen my own history in my work."
- "I've held post-mortems of what I've said or not said. Felt a klutz at times wondering . . . did I come across as I wanted?"

- "I found this group somehow less threatening - that's not the right word - more accepting of difference, than any other I've been in, where I presented cases before there's always been the sense of really not quite up to scratch."
- "I never came in here feeling that I have to speak your language - I can speak my own language and understand it better".
- "For me there's always this . . . your question . . okay so what do you take out of here? . . I can see we are more important than our clients . . . it's more . . us being built up to be more free . . . because ultimately I'm the one that's going to go back out there . . . "

These comments confirmed for me that I had created a context with a good balance of tension and enjoyment. I found that counsellors had got more reflective and more confident. Of course, my personal methodology is idiosyncratic, but I cannot help but know that any credit belongs to the entire PhD group on an epistemological level and the supervision group at a process level. The echoes are clearly audible, amusingly so.

This year the group has made an enormous shift in taping their work and bringing it in. I am less popular, more invasive, clients become foreground and tension is much higher - but I am pleased with the progress and commitment. There is one 'threatened bird' in a teaching position in the organisation, who has started missing and does not want to tape - I know she feels let down - I will have to move slowly and be creative.

There is something I like a lot about this context but it is not easy - I feel really stretched, both intellectually and emotionally.

### **The Group : Co-Travellers Through Adulthood**

We formed a group at the end of a life-changing workshop in 1978, probably as a way of holding those experiences as real and trying to continue the learning and therapeutic intensity.

Some have come and some have gone, but all have risen professionally. We are six now and I know we will be intertwined whatever the distances in all the years to come. It has not been a group about telling everything and it is not been without caution and disappointment and, sometimes, despite the enormous reservoir of personal talent, we have just chosen to hang out together to chat at length or gossip or commiserate.

After spending the day listening to over five hours of taped conversations of our group in reflexive mode, I am swamped and touched by many images and meanings and I feel close to its very pulse. I have participated, thought and felt and been ever-present over the 16 years of our existence - but I have never watched our movements, heard the tune, and felt the ripples and rumblings as I experienced today in the listening role.

We are high in laughter, soft voices and long working silences, there is tension, hyperbole, and lots of the verbalisations are in searching tones. As we have been co-travellers through major personal and professional events in each others' lives, both triumphs and disasters, it is not surprising that there is a willingness to construe the group as life-enhancing and pertinent.

What came into our awareness was how much, in fact, had gone on outside our awareness. We had done lots of personal and interpersonal work even when we were not 'working'. Being leaderless meant that roles and functions were never ascribed,

so those we slipped into were all the more significant.

I have often fantasised that one day there would be a thick irresistible novel about the intertwining stories of a group of people who went through adulthood together. Their professional growth would be detailed, their personal dilemmas and how these played out over time would be explored. Its title would have been Friday's Group.

Here is a part of my story, the part that refers in particular to the group as a salient context of feedback and how this feedback impinges and changes the self-narrative.

#### The Past in the Present

There were some re-enactments from my childhood. Diana called these 'unconscious' processes.

GAIL: No your diary came out . . . your diary was always there as we were ready to leave.

DIANA: . . . it was taken care of, you assumed it . . . the question is why did you assume that . . . because I didn't feel, I didn't feel a push to do it. I kind of knew it was taken care of . . .

DORRIT: You are persistent . . . I can see the demanding little girl.

CONNIE: I'm wondering . . . I think . . . it was like, I didn't want to be 'leaveable' - all my sisters and brothers left . . . also . . . fighting a faint heartbeat . . . with my Mother . . . a parallel . . .

trying to keep my Mommy alive and trying to keep this group alive . . . I took responsibility at times for that but this group was a way sometimes of not having to take responsibility. Once we were together I could be a bit the little one - there were others that could handle things . . . so if I took responsibility for it to continue I could rest a bit.

DIANA: . . . once your Mother was there . . . she did provide that . . . and your brothers and sisters keep coming back . .

CONNIE: . . . . And then of course remember Merle last time you raised the issue of envy . . . and I thought to myself now . . . wait . . . wait . . . let's . . . I realised that there it's sibling stuff . . . because I'm identified with the group . . . they must do well . . . they must be stars . . . they must be well known . . . it's almost like it doesn't take from me . . . it sort of bolsters me . . . although I don't feel little in this group, but I think being the youngest - also my Mom really was nuts for me so I suppose it eased a lot of envies on things like achievements . . .

#### A Change

DORRIT: . . . you're very different that's where I have seen the change in you that's where the holding back and not talking

till the end and not even offering what was going on in your head even though you were so much there and we could see you thinking and watching was an indication of . . . is this safe enough, can I get into my voice here? In that way you've changed a helluva lot . . you say a lot more, more up front, say it more definitely, less tentatively and sooner. Uhm, uhm (lots of agreement)

GAIL: ✓ ~~That's~~ That's the image - the picture of you - watching and listening with lots of energy. . . .

CONNIE: I think its true - it parallels other contexts - like my family where I was quiet and watched who was in good shape whose mood was a little off. . . You know people say working with a whole family is really hard because you've got to . . . watch everyone . . No way (laughter) nothing for me . . (laughter)

HANNES: Scan, Scan, Scan (laughter)

This is an example of how new information gleaned from the recursiveness of the thesis process, facilitates new understandings of personal positioning that applies in other contexts.

Valuable feedback about the range of responses to this behaviour was quick in coming. It emerged that the two group members who had experienced their own mothers as particularly critical, had in past years found my silence oppressive and assumed I was judging or disapproving. The others were

adamant that they never experienced it as critical.

A Different Voice

DIANA: There's an emotional way in which you do it. Not that you stir up - but there's a kind of like a charming way in which you will not give up on something - you hang in with someone or on some issue even if it gets uncomfortable. There are times when I wonder if you did that in your family - or if it wasn't your role. It has the aspect that you have the sense that you can push and get away with it. It's a very valuable quality. Its the ability to go further then . . . you know we're all sensitive to the signals when people start getting uncomfortable, you . . . you hang in . . .

CONNIE: . . . . I wonder if I did it or I didn't do it or if I was scared to do it. Maybe that's the shift here a change towards acting out.

I was very moved by what was to follow, so, of course, I had to understand it exactly - my inquiries must be what Ricky meant when he referred to the way I can 'kill' with questions. Well, the group coped well and satisfied me but now I understand what he means. I also know that it is my way of integrating new information, like trying on a new coat, I have to fit it. Yet, I see now that it has a distancing effect.

MERLE: ✓ ← Just . . . for me your role is somehow the person who verbalises the unsaid with such insight. I always want to hear not

only what you're going to say but how you're going to say it . . . because what you say always . . . first of all it's very articulate and you use the kind of metaphor that I don't know and often wouldn't use - but what you always do is you always take me into another dimension of looking and I'm always waiting and you always go beyond where I am . . . it's very interesting . . . so I'll wait, I'll wait, you don't say anything for a while and then it comes and for me you really are articulate.

CONNIE: . . . I find that hard to own - you know I hear you and . . . and . . . (hesitating) I suppose it's a great compliment.

MERLE: Uhuh, uhuh . . . It is! And that's how I think of you - when I'm out of the group as well.

CONNIE: ~~The-~~unsaid . . . pause . . . what's the unsaid? . . .

HANNES: It's a very special dimension that you bring into the group a special kind of observation . . . that's what makes you so . . . I suppose . . . I don't want to use the word powerful because that's a bit of an overused word . . . so complete, maybe I would say.

Members referred to "another kind of vocabulary", that is "graphic you know very graphic" and "I've often wondered

whether it comes out of you as a person simply because that's your style or whether having been involved in the systems framework and in different ways of thinking would really precipitate that kind of perspective". "It could be both . . . it is both." Then "no, no, no, it's not jargon", and a further connection "you do have a very special vocabulary - you do have a special way of seeing things".

I have thought long and hard about the issues of my language, it has come up quite often. The notions are tentative. Maybe my husband, who is an impatient listener, sharpened my language. Perhaps it is how I carry some of my intensity and emotion, and maybe it is a tool of trade that embodies a flexibility in relating. I have a hunch that at times its been a bridge between mutually negating contexts, like the husband and wife of a couple or members of my family or different training contexts. In this regard the theoretical trends that emphasise metaphor and meaning have clearly provided a passport to fly.

### Vulnerability

A while later, I shared how stressed I had been about asking what I needed from the group.

CONNIE: There's a whole scare that I mustn't need too much - I mean it's not that I denied my needs to this group but I just don't want to need too much and if I do it makes me a bit scared.

HANNES: It's a funny place because, for the first time, you said you had needs. Maybe you're thinking I'm able to guess . . . because you can guess about me that you think that I'm able to guess - I can't .

. . . I can't . . . .

Yet, all the women had had a different experience. "That's absolute bullshit!", "No - sounds like a fat projection, Hannes", and "I've often seen you as very needy and you've been very open about it all the time."

This must be a gender issue. What do I not show men or what can they not see?

Gert thinks a bit of reassurance will shut me up. Ricky is aware of the intensity and sees my tension, but still thinks I ask more than I show.

This all leaves me puzzled and a little sad. What do I do that makes me hard to read or is there some mistrust about being let down when I need too much! Maybe some of this belongs with Balfour in the early stages of our marriage when I may have made some sort of decision that worked like "the less I need, the more I'll get".

### Connections

Diana spoke of an integration of the personal and professional in my meanings and responses.

GAIL: It's like you have your theory in them and the reality of the here and now and they come together.

DIANA: You're very you, but I experience your training . . . because you've changed - I don't think its the training thats changed you . . . . I think that because you've changed - you become a ~~professional~~ professional in a more spontaneous way -

it's somehow - it's the confidence from the training.

CONNIE: What does it mean? Can I separate them? Does it mean there's a part of me that is . . . . .

DIANA: That's connected for me and I don't know how in the topic that you've done with your PhD - how by investigating it in a particular way that you are . . . you're doing the same thing I see it as the same because you're investigating you as part of the therapeutic process and, as you engaged in doing that, you've changed. I'm sure your work's changed but you've just changed in relation to us as a group or something. So you . . .

CONNIE: How - how - how?

DIANA: I would say you've got more confident . .

HANNES: Certainty . . . certainty . . .

DORRIT: And you say it . . from a place of being sure. It's the combination of not watching and thinking, but saying it with a feeling that that is what you really think.

GAIL: Also directing us and making us do it. This is what I need and this is what we're going to do - far more forceful.

DIANA: In doing that you've added to some

quality in the group - some of the leap that we've taken has been a result of that input.

I am embarrassed to transcribe my response. It's revolting. It's a denial of my forcefulness. Siss. I could easily omit this bit, but I have to face it - these are neatly socialised tricks to avoid a depth of interpersonal emotion. I was deeply moved by what they said. These were some of the shifts I had dreamed of, dare I believe that they were actually happening.

This dialogue also needs to be situated in its context. From the inside, it is a very awesome context. Other group members made miraculous discoveries or, rather, meaningful inventions that evoked pain, tears, relief and endless reflexivity - this was non-trivial for us all!

#### **A Useful Perturbation about the Way I am Perturbed**

Ricky referred to the many other possible responses and interpretations that the client stories could have evoked and the fact that Nicole's piece, it seemed, left me untouched. I was perturbed. My mind began to race through all the possibilities, the versions embedded that are not chosen, the endless untold stories. There is always something true and something not true in such a distinction, but it is a very useful one. What touches me and what does not? It is a distinction I refer to in the section called "Stories that pull".

In tracking Nicole's specific feedback comments, writing them, attending to the job at hand, I even omitted my own transcribed responses. Maybe there were not that many because she was reading from her written story. Once again I was

probably so busy listening, careful not to be orthogonal, keen not to intrude in the process with my own self either in the moment as 'actor' or later as 'observer' that I was possibly disconnecting from myself and consequently from her. I have often resisted being touched and emotional with her in case it would unleash her 'sephardic syrup' which I wanted to contain. She referred to this restraint about a year ago when she said, "at times you are the mother's voice that I need, but it's not a sephardic mother". I think professionally I do put the feeling part on hold as if it might intrude and divert. This is the true part. The part that also finds it difficult, at times, to respond spontaneously to intimacy and emotion, although like a squirrel, I may go off with the nuts and enjoy them at leisure and deepen the relationship in my own way.

The untrue part is best encapsulated in the metaphor, of our relationship, that presented itself at her wedding. The fact that I attended it was in itself, atypical. However, months earlier when it seemed such an event might in fact occur in Cape Town, where we would be on holiday, a certain archaic phrase kept coming up at me. It was a phrase that I remember my mother using in her marvellous expressive Yiddish. This phrase was always said with great emphasis. "*Ich'll tansen af dine chasene!*" (I will dance at your wedding!) As I understood it, it was said on occasions when such a wedding constituted a great victory that my mother had particular cause to celebrate. And so it was that on January 6th, 1994, my husband good humouredly accompanied me to this gala performance in which the main players were, of course, total strangers to him. As the holy marriage moments were concluded and the couple turned while under the *chupah* to face the congregation, Nicole found me immediately far across the synagogue. She smiled, winked and waved. We stayed connected this way throughout. Driving home Balfour said, "you and she are amazingly in touch". My sense is that once again he was quite stunned at the depth of the other lives that are

inevitable for a therapist.

So this is an unsolicited story about Ricky's comment about the transcript story which is about the 'Nicole and Connie' therapy story, which of course is really a story about the structural-coupling of Nicole and Connie, which is again a story about their own lives.

### **A Female Voice - The Therapist and Gender**

"The way the therapist thinks about the world is the most powerful factor in family therapy" (Hare-Mustin, 1987, p.16). Hence the therapist's idea of male and female are embedded in the therapeutic system.

As I think back on years of practice, I have worked successfully with a lot of male clients, and often done strangely well with the male spouse of a couple. I have no difficulty engaging men who are reluctant or in using male metaphors. Even the perpetrator accused of repeatedly raping both daughters, voluntarily proceeds in therapy despite the revulsion that I can't always hide, the uncomfortable focus, and the knife that I often turn in his gut. The business mogul takes me metaphorically into his boardroom and there certainly are no other women there. These notions make me wonder about my gender-baring behaviours.

Shadley (1987), in a research project, submits that therapist gender has more impact on the way therapists make use of themselves in the therapeutic relationship than does their theoretical orientation. Female therapists were more likely to use personal life examples and present feelings with client families, whereas males frequently focus on other people's feelings and situations when responding to client experience.

Based on Gilligan's (1982) notion that masculinity is defined through separation and femininity through attachment, Collier (1987) asserts that the female therapist is better able to hear and interpret both the female and male voice and to act as a translator and trainer, because she has been conditioned of necessity to hear better and to hear men very well. Males belonging in the past to a value system that ignored 'the different voice' cannot even now connect with it so easily. Hare-Mustin (1987) explains this point when she says that females are socialised in the dominant culture, but also socialised in the female subculture.

In my childhood, the intimate and powerful influences were mostly women and there was a great deal of female strength and exclusivity. This gave women a sort of secret power that I have held and valued all my life. My professional cuddle groups have always been largely with women, both when I was a student and with my colleague group which has existed for the past 16 years. Yet, in my clinical training and professional contexts my teachers were always men. There were Ken and Hannes at Lifeline, Richard the American whizz and clinical model supremo, intermittently from 1978 until the present, and as a clinical trainee and forever in my head, were the fascinating men in the north, the 'male conspiracy' at UNISA. I think I assimilated a lot of male style in my work.

I feel I can own the asserted female characteristics of difficulties with individuation, the ability to hear both male and female voices and live in two realities. Through motherhood, there is a deep experience of responsibility in relationships that goes beyond the fairness, rights and rules that Gilligan (1982) speaks of in the male concept of morality. This is an interesting amalgam because I have actually sought male trainers, team mates and co-therapists even when there has been a choice. However, when I recall

certain incidents in my early training, I know that my response to male trainers was to control and subvert a lot of my needs and tone down some parts of me. I was unpredictably touched by Lynn Hoffman's (1991) sentiments in her article entitled "A reflexive stance for family therapy". I had an overwhelming urge to make contact with her. Without deconstructing too much, I know I was resonating with a female voice, not really a supportive one, but, for once, a transformative one.

Overall, what I have gained in options is enormous - the possibility of being distant, circumspect, of being directive and ditching my heart where necessary. I can value autonomy and competitiveness and complete a task against heavy odds. What emerges is a sense that I have had a varied exposure and that in the blending of these voices is hopefully a truly human chorus.

As I think how I actualise these options in my work, I become aware that I may have compensated my own childhood experience by especially directing children and wives to make demands on fathers and expecting fathers to discover a whole new and pleasurable world. I am always aware of any assumptions that fathers are entitled to be absent and tend to take issue with them. I often encourage mothers providing there is no 'threat of violence' to be absent more, so that fathers can step in and find their own way. This of course is autobiographical. Inevitably as a Jewish mother, raised by a Jewish mother, I assume high levels of mother expertise to be vital, so I must have done a good deal of inadvertent 'mother-bashing'. I have probably integrated equality for women, but not for mothers. However, this is counter-balanced by my naturally strong empathy for mothers, so I think I get away with it.

With children's difficulties I have always insisted on seeing both parents to disconfirm assumptions that mothers could or should manage entirely on their own. This is not a simple issue because mothers resist this when they are possessive of the domain or fear being criticised by their husbands for not managing it well. I prefer to deal with these issues rather than tacitly collude with them.

I ask myself what I convey around the issue of women 'de-selfing' themselves not to threaten men in relationships. This is personally more complicated. My mother did not seem to do it, yet, in my family of origin, the very fact that women held a secret power, is telling. I have not done it in an obvious way, but there is evidence that I can mask or tone down when circumstances demand it. In the early professional years, I kept my work as invisible as possible and, even thereafter, it remains within very strict limits. There is a certain type of pushy aggression in women with which I do not identify. Is this internalized oppression of the gender sort? I also know that men can easily determine the standard of living and social status of a couple, but the consequent feminist assertion that marriage is structured to assure the status differences between men and women, seems to me to represent a limited view. This structure is often as oppressive to males as it is to females. At the Sorrento conference in 1992, I was enormously moved by a panel discussion on gender issues. It got me tracking my stance and I now know I had probably been guilty of what Hare-Mustin (1987) calls 'beta-biases' - the ones that ignore gender difference as opposed to 'alpha-biases' which overplay differences. I think my assumptions about gender have opened options for my clients of both sexes, but my own comfort had made me insensitive.

### Stories that Pull : A Spontaneous Reverie

Harnisha Patel had booked an appointment. No one knew why and in this pre-school context I am almost always informed about the problem and the different ways it is defined by the people that surround it.

This charming gentle mother of four says the following:

✓ "At the parent evening two weeks ago, you said that parents need to be aware if they consistently experience irritation with, or difficulties in nurturing one of their children. So here I am".

She had cared for her five year old daughter lovingly when she was a baby and was verbally able to praise her, but admitted at this point an almost total inability to hug her. "I don't love her as much as the three boys," she said simply. I was fascinated already. The way the past shapes the present was patent in the story that flowed. It amazed her and left me deeply moved by the patterns of nature and the flow of generations. I knew I was in one of those fascinating junctures where it might be possible to tamper with rigid future predictability.

Harnisha was born to a Malay mother and an Indian father and had been sent to her paternal grandmother and spinster aunt at the age of three in order to go to school. Her mother never touched her after that because she hated her Indian ways and her Indian clothes and her plaits that had been lovingly tended by her grandmother.

Harnisha had been the apple of her father's eye and had absorbed every bit of cross-cultural and interfamilial friction in the marriage. As we burrowed together through the turns and tunnels creating frames and many emancipatory meanings to it all - the terrain seemed to change till there

was air and sun and colour. It was a rich terrain, rich like the varied Malay, Indian and Western heritage she is now so grateful for and bright like her enjoyment of being a capable adult woman. I have seldom been so entranced. I have to ask myself - why?

Suddenly I started to think about other stories that stood out from the rest, stories which penetrated deeply as if right into my heart or stories which filled my head space and had to be mulled through endlessly.

If a therapist should acknowledge which clients they find difficult to work with and teachers must be sensitive to the type of student that irritates and parents need to be conscious if any child collects emotional short change, then ~~a~~ reflexive therapist must consider which themes are personally profound. This is perhaps yet another lynchpin between the personal and professional.

The intensity in couple issues often leaves me gasping. An often encountered pattern is the pain of long harboured resentments and how alive the feeling is even when the event is 20 years old. I will never forget Lyn Walsh's grief and rage at her husband's affair while she was in the nursing home having a long-awaited baby. She obsessed for years, conducted frequent inquisitions, and kept the affair as alive as if it had just happened. Maybe I have personally battled to let go of pain and outrage or I am quite shocked when the barrier of time is in fact no barrier at all.

James Elliot's vulnerability when rejected sexually by his wife and his inability to engage her or get past his own pain, was poignant and wretched. My own reliance on rationality left me shocked by a new and incontrovertible reality that, despite the 6' 2" frame, there before me in the therapy room, was a three year old toddler!

These are issues where my role as 'able' or 'helpless' therapist is irrelevant. I do not think I am responding to the therapeutic dilemmas. They are themes that affect me because of their own intrinsic form and content. They are no different to the films like "The Big Blue", where the intensity lingered for days. I was quite unhinged by the style of silence and the theme of a child abandoned by the death of his father at sea, a child who subsequently could never find a place on land among people. The tears that well up when children are straining in an athletics race, urged on by spectators, leave me confused. I do not yet know from where the feeling emanates. When children's voices rise up in unison in a song of any sort, the emotion is there. I remember my mother crying when children sang, so this one must be the 'collective unconscious' and was maybe carried through successive umbilical cords. Pakman (1992) distinguished a feeling as containing a person's ownership of emotion. Possibly in these cases I have not yet made the choice of which feeling to participate in.

Some of the loaded issues surprise me and on first reflection do not seem to be personally relevant. Like Nicholas Tomazos who was savaged by a dog at two years of age. On arriving terrified at casualty, he was then savaged by the doctor who prized him off his mother's neck so he could be controlled and stitched. Perfectly logical, sensible and responsible, but an equation that disregarded the subjective experience of the vulnerable participant. When his mother consulted me, she spoke about a four year old who would not say a word to his teachers and spent the school day hiding in the locker. Now aged eight, he is still more scared of doctors than of dogs. I get furious at the belief system that purports that children do not remember and that violations do not matter. Probably my sister's hospital experience plays a part here. This theme is so strong with me that I have actually kicked up a storm and successfully fought

with a host of doctors and a few hospitals. Armed with support from colleagues and a willing journalist, I have created an article and radio coverage in order to generate some information to the public.

At the conference in Holland, Bentovim (1993), in discussing 'trauma organised systems', spoke of the rationalisation behind violence, where the reason for initiating violent behaviour is seen as appropriate and the victim's response is interpreted so as to confirm the need for the violation and then the victim eventually buys into the rationalisation and feels wrong and bad. Miller (1983) deals with the sleight of hand where children's reality is played with, because what feels bad is actually purported by adults to be For your own good - the title of her book. Enormous battles to impact children thus damaged, while working for five years at the Johannesburg Children's Home, still sit heavily with me. Consequently this package gets me up and very angry, especially because it is often entrenched, well-socialised and beyond awareness.

There is an overwhelming humility that borders on ~~helplessness~~, when the sociocultural context defines the problem. Mr and Mrs Msebe sought a consultation for marriage problems. She was heavily pregnant and in her early 40's, he perhaps five years older. He was an important ANC (African National Congress) man who was two years out of jail after a six year internment. In the early years of their relationship, she had had an abortion, so as not to interfere with her studies overseas. They had been in love, possessive and mesmerised by each other for years. Now he was punishing ~~her~~ by flaunting his affairs and expecting total submissiveness from her. While he was in jail she had had a child by another man, fearing that her fertile years were passing and not knowing how long he would be imprisoned. His pain at this betrayal was unbearable. She, after all, had

been the rope in the swirling seas. He spoke of this as the hell far more savage than the physical torture or the solitary confinement. He told of grief so severe that even his jailers were worried and contemplated hospitalising him. Oh wow, in sessions like this, an hour is far too short!

What is the thread or are there a number of threads that made these stories high drama for me? As I think about this, I know that many stories touch me, but it was these very themes that stood apart. These themes reflect my own issues and easily connect to my socio-cultural history. They provide clues from a different vantage point about my personal epistemology.

### **The Threesome : Clinician Meet Thyself**

#### Supervision

The doctoral programme that I entered in 1991 was enticing because it involved a group. This may have been some sort of unconscious recreation of family. It had great promise as a transformative experience, but it never quite worked that way or not intensely enough for me. The salient and committed learning context was the supervision group, Ricky, Gert and me.

We had been three twosomes, each with its own history, so this was an interesting regrouping. I think it provided ease and variety. I could certainly relax while they prattled on in Afrikaans about rugby, cricket and 'Griet'. Of course, I lost out on a bit of power and influence when they were in that mood. Keeping them reflexive after therapies or communicating on an 'implicate' level was no easy task. I feel I risked a lot, both personally and professionally - and this that I write is a metaphor of it. The twosomes, however,

have not died, they have a richness and a need to exist and so they creep back.

In many areas of my life, I am aware of aspects that could be better and I get dissatisfied or push myself in some way. I do not let go or stop working until it changes so that in the end I will tell a positive story. And so even as I write, I chuckle at my pattern, because I have often agonised about supervision, but I just know however difficult it could get, I loved the together time. Our joint planet was a context with many definitions, the obvious was 'collaborative learning context', but it did not end there - we played cultural differences, political arguments, gender games and an old favourite called, 'don't come too close'. We were certainly a unique kind of *ménage à trois*, the onlookers wondered, we wondered ourselves.

Supervision implied a perturbing context. Comments that I remember, wrote about in the diary or transcribed from tape, were, I guess, the perturbations that made a difference.

Some of what was evident with the first clients I took to Pretoria, was I am sure, more a function of the supervision context than characteristically 'me'. I was waiting to be instructed and I remember experiencing myself as wooden with a smaller and more tentative voice than usual. Fortunately what Ricky chose to say went beyond the actual situation . . . "you are a tension absorber". It was true everywhere and even fitted with my breathing pattern or my not-breathing pattern. In tracking the effects of this feedback, I am unsure whether it just allowed other choices, like learning to put the tension back in the family, or constituted relief in being understood or understanding better myself.

Ricky suggested I read Andolfi's section on 'provocation' - I guess he saw me being too much on the empathic polarity

and needing to move more against the stream. There were many innuendos about my needing to be more insistent on what I want and taking more space. What this told me was that less of me comes across than I think, the voice in my head is loud, but the actions may, in fact, not be. It is true I am capable of showing more, I could be less cautious and take more risks. I think the stuck part was being expert at only choosing behaviours that are sensitive to the context, a caution or reluctance about being too orthogonal.

Over canteen coffee, after seeing clients, Ricky said, "you have a flair for drama and a dramatic presence, that you constrain all the time". Well, this fitted with the locked up part, the spontaneous part that hides. Did I hear right at Barclay Square - the scene of much wisdom given in post-session afterglow? "You could give more and say more to clients - you could couple more."

Maybe I retreat from emotionality with clients who are difficult for me and so move into other roles. When Gert had listened months earlier to the taped session epitomising the personal therapeutic handicap, he had said, "you talk to her and you understand her, but you don't make love". Obviously I asked 100 questions in order to understand that one. This client is not very loveable but I subsequently managed with difficulty, to create better contact. This happened with good therapeutic effect in the short term. I pondered if this rut was only with long-term clients, because my own long-standing relationships do not feel stuck or boring at all. I conclude that in certain systems I am just down and my imagination is not hooked, yet I still try hard and keep at it. I learnt ~~that~~ certain clients or certain therapeutic systems become anaesthetising and magnify the distance until I disconnect.

Here is a diary entry a few days after an incredibly taxing Wednesday in Pretoria around September, 1992. I had

felt misunderstood and then Ricky created space for dialogue. He was patient and we struggled.

Wednesday slowly recedes its heavy grasp, a drip in reverse. In pour confirming clients, warm friendly women, hugs, chatter and endless activity and I restabilise, resisting it and relaxing into it. I try to hold the growing edge. Does Ricky know, that it's his growing edge too?

Interesting how you once said "a woman who will never buckle, never share her pain, or share her tears" and yet it is all there so available particularly in this context of reflexivity, -autobiography and mutuality. I blamed you for hiding yourself. "I don't want reactors", you say, "don't want followers", that's unfair, you know you cannot ask for what you yourself withhold. But that is history - we're through it, or are we? We both feel we have risked our own kinds of 'gold'. I used to fear your getting irritated, maybe angry or inaccessible - it's unfounded, it's an old mask. I never fell for it then - why did I worry about it now? Nevertheless we still hook each other's intellectual verbiage, we both have lots else, but that flows first. There have been exceptions, but the pattern seeps back. Is this an impasse we can't get passed? Why choose this? It's a constraint!

Another emancipatory moment came when I was trying to be 'clear' with a client couple. "Don't explain - it detracts from your impact. It helps clients to work less - make them -work more. Play with more ambiguity. Your need for knowledge creates the right attitude - but doesn't build in difference". This was very useful. It connects with 'me-the-tension-absorber'. As I rethink it now, it constitutes the 'modern'

me and delimits the 'postmodern' me that was emerging very slowly back then. 'Definiteness' and 'being sure' have been very hard patterns for me to let go.

I know that I can easily make connections; Ricky felt that my integrative both/and thinking also did not allow enough differentiation, I needed to cut up the ecology more. "I have no problem with your integrativeness, but, in therapy, you need to know when to differentiate." This was difficult to fathom because 'both/and' was more fashionable than 'either/or' - but I understood that too much connection is neutralising.

Slowly there was an indirect level of feedback that made an immense difference in supervision. These were confirmatory processes that were amazingly freeing for me. I had handed in lots of written bits that had been soul-searching and difficult to do. They had been 'indigestible' to Ricky and I had felt cast adrift by his lack of response. Now he liked what I was writing, the tentative thesis beginnings and the overview. Furthermore, my spontaneous idiosyncratic and sometimes non-systemic input on both sides of the one-way mirror, was valued in a new way and our team effort with clients was mostly going well. I knew that this group was a precious space for Ricky and I felt his regard and respect.

Synchronistically Richard came to South Africa early in 1993, talking 'Sullivan' and 'Relationship therapy'. He was ~~labelling~~ less and more situated in the present. When I worked with him, he felt my strength and despite the wobbles and meaning-making defences that I presented, he defined me as being "at the end of an era". "You'll probably do therapy a lot wilder now," he said. I felt confirmed at a very deep level.

I felt an amazing *rapprochement* between the two loud

voices contained in my professional self. These were, of course, the training context, UNISA, perhaps the head part and the T A Gestalt experiencing context, perhaps the heart part. Could I now risk my heart at UNISA and was there evidence that my head would be appreciated in Richard's new domain? Integration was surely in the air and I was doing great therapy. Even as I relive this now, I feel enormously enriched by the variety in my life.

### A Conversation about Many Conversations

Everywhere in South Africa, strange combinations of people were forging new stories about new kinds of collaboration; we were in pre-election uncertainty. With this amazing backdrop, Ricky, Gert and I met at the end of March 1994, to review our own collaborative context.

This conversation did its job, it constituted a replay in a new way of the context, processes and contents of our supervision group that had existed over so many months. It is a truly recursive business in that it crystallises the personal themes recounted in the preceding section, but also situates them in the context of the relationships where they were invented.

Three interesting new tunes play for me in listening to this tape. The first is the humour which I appreciated much more the second time around. I think I have often been so immersed in the stated agenda, that, in the moment, I screen out the frivolity even if the wise cracks are my own. Secondly, once we got going, there was an urgency about expression and we interrupted each other frequently. Thirdly, our commitment is palpable. I am not sure if it is commitment to the profession, to ourselves, to each other or simply a commitment to making meaning. The notions become so intertwined that it is almost impossible to unravel the

separate strands.

Ricky's view, as I understand it, is of a context with fit and comfort, but taxing for him in terms of his emancipatory goals for us. He even described it as "sanity" and a "haven where huh this is going to be interesting and I knew I couldn't predict the agenda!". Our group contained complementarities. I hopefully could take in Gert's 'punctuations at a non-verbal level', his action, body language and his acting on the feelings and rushing in. He could learn from my thinking, about carefulness, and how not to give it all.

Ricky experienced a certain vagueness in both our styles: Gert's emanated from his patterns around language and mine ~~from~~ a "stinginess with meaning, you can say things in such a way that I'm not sure what it means".

He had made space for my voice, talking and expressing less so that I should express more because "you have so much intensity and power and you don't use it". With Gert, he had engaged with him so that he would get into a conversation with himself, consider more and not be so automatically coupled with clients. This ability properly utilised was Gert's greatest strength. It was clear to Ricky that we had both used whatever the doctoral context offered being open, visible and present.

He was uncertain about his part. Immediately I became possessive about my own pathology - not knowing my impact - and told him not to steal it. He thought about his role and felt it was multifaceted and involved maintaining distance while being close. He spoke of himself as a therapist growing more emotional and intuitive and needing less 'head' and wondering where that competence had come from in terms of his own history.

Gert perceived himself as giving everything of himself in our group and being an emotional man and therapist who trusts his responses at a feeling level. He accepted the definition of me as showing myself in the head and language domain, but in this context was puzzled by my almost symptomatic and emotional investment in needing to be 'right' and 'sure' around Ricky. I would not trust myself to interpret him correctly and so expended energy not to misunderstand what he meant. Gert battled to connect this 'unconfident' positioning with his experience of me as competent in all spheres. For Gert, Ricky's language was 'on the table'; his emotionality was visible for fleeting moments but not given to us clearly or outwardly expressed. He was also amused at what seemed to him a recurrent interchange between Ricky and I. I would interpret a joke as a provocation, take it on and bite back - a sort of quick, friendly sword fight that presented no difficulty to either of us.

This is my view of our views as they impacted me. It stands inseparable from the dialogues that created it. This ~~is~~ how they have perturbed me and what they mean for me.

~~Ricky~~ remembered my underused presence and reactive style. The idea had been that I get more pro-active and use my intensity to operate with a bigger voice and include myself more in the tune with clients rather than "the kind of subjugations of you to what I assumed were models in your head about what is correct in therapy". His sense of my shift was a move from the illusion of the 'reality' and a dependence on ~~correctness~~ towards trusting my own voice more, a move to conversing with myself and with other people. I know that theoretical input has played a large part here because new behaviours also had to make sense to me. He felt I had ~~moved~~ to put more of myself on the table. I understand this to mean a new willingness to live with my subjective reality.

There are apparent paradoxes and hard-won resolutions in the thesis process. Looking for the client voice implicit in the feedback idea, while needing, in fact, to find my own, is paralleled in supervision where needing to hear Ricky exactly meant, as Ricky pointed out, not equality, but once again less of my own self in the equation. Although there were subjugations in these pursuits, the journey has created new and emancipatory stories.

I believe my pattern, as perceived by Gert, around Ricky was a search for predictability where I still felt dependent on his constructions and a deep desire not to disappoint him, and so to stay close and connected to his meanings. This may have been a particularly difficult task because as Ricky admits, he sometimes says things ambiguously and of course no one's meanings remain fixed. However, I know too that the more connected I felt, the less I had to do this. I also see the part of me that fusses and worries. Trading in self-doubt seems to be an element, a part of my equipment. I think now it exists mostly in areas of challenge, like therapy or writing a doctorate. Ricky identified with it, thought it perhaps one of my phylogenetic styles and felt he may have provoked it in knowing that he could not let me get away with mediocrity.

~~My~~ experience of Gert was about a pattern of avoiding negativity either as a way of conserving himself or saving himself pain perhaps because he feels his feelings so acutely. ~~For~~ me it felt like a kind of cutoff in recycling emotion, a reluctance to really work through something, even privately. Ricky identified with what may be a cultural and gender pattern - a reluctance for post mortems. Gert's willingness ~~to~~ feel, but unwillingness to process and integrate it, a resistance to being reflective, seemed to me to be linked to Gert's patterns around thinking.

I felt a variation on this was Gert's inability to 'stay with me' through struggles unless they were really bad - then he could be very caring. Ricky implied a connection to his own response of at times being distant with me.

I was puzzled about what this meant about my impact. The link may be that when I make space for the 'other', I contract my 'self' and become difficult to interact with. Furthermore, perhaps, my misery or mood is not conveyed with clear meaning and this makes closeness problematic.

My sense of myself was that I had been courageous with the clients that I brought, the way I had positioned myself in the thesis process, both the writing and the doing, and in edging us into crazy situations like this very one. I shared that I often left Pretoria heavy with pent up emotion, sensorially deprived in some way that I could not understand. The context seemed to be asking for intensity and making it impossible at the same time. Furthermore, I insisted that I was unable to 'dance naked for them' alone and I was possibly held back by fears that I can be 'too much'. Luckily for me, they agreed about that and they qualified it as the 'ultimate compliment' from them to a woman! At least, amidst the soul-searching, were lighter moments.

Ricky's reflexivity in this conversation impacted a great deal on my understanding and resolution of the struggles. He included himself, like any good second cybernetician would, in ~~my~~ battle to "put more on the table". "You had a tendency which activated my tendency of doubt in the meanings that we shared at that moment." Ricky connected this difficulty in building a relationship with me, perhaps our distance and closeness axis, to my limited voice in the early therapies. "I think you were doing analogously with clients what I was doing with you. I'm not sure I was doing it consciously - let them put more on the table - let them put more on the

table." Of course the alternate referent for 'them' would be 'Connie'. I had often been confused by the paucity of his responses and I think it created more caution.

Yes, I do have intensity and power. This is confirmed from clients and in many areas of my life, yet I can make it invisible. I wonder how I kept my emotionality out of the thréesome. Ricky put it this way: "you can give a very stereo-typed appearance. This is the point. I know that's not Connie." He touched on an idea that I decide in which contexts it is better to mask how others see me or might engage me, so I lose or mask my intensity and energy. Thankfully, you have understood that it is enormously difficult to write this thesis because I am the vortex, I often feel liberated by it, but naked and exposed too.

Then it comes, another understanding of how I have impacted you, made you hold back and created distance. "Yes, ~~because~~ you can kill one with asking questions or tapping information or asking for confirmation or 'am I hearing you right?'. You can go on for ever with that - I wasn't going to answer questions for three years!" Yes, since you said it, I've watched and listened to myself, its unmistakable - a discomfort with uncertainty and an intellectualised defence against emotion. So I pull for it, feel it and don't act on it. You hint at socio-cultural issues, a sense that maybe I never stay still. Was it that a woman mustn't express too many needs? Was expressiveness inappropriate in most situations? Were men construed as quite without understanding? Did I have no models about how to seize the moment?

This is pain but I'm using it.

There are emancipations in the dissecting of this conversation and they resonate with emancipations in the socio-cultural context - synchronistically it is the early

hours after April 27th, 1994. South Africa is generating its own new order.

In the many hours I have spent with my head and my heart in this conversation, I am struck by the flow. The story gets braver and warmer. There is fit in our intertwining perspectives and an emergence of singularities in the meanings that we invented that day. We each express ourselves in our own idiosyncratic code, but it is there - an appreciation that we were together on this trip.

### **The Researcher Visits**

The goal in this chapter is the continuation of the autobiographical narrative into the professional domain. The raw material is collected so that the relationship between a personal epistemology and habitual patterns of clinical action are illuminated. X

In sharing actual texts from clients, colleagues and trainers juxtaposed with that of the researcher, an attempt is made to utilise different perspectives about the interpersonal experience, thus creating double description. Bateson (1979) talks of two parties in an interaction as two eyes each giving a monocular view of what goes on and together providing a binocular view.

Traditional research about therapy usually focuses on client pathology or therapist traits and in this separation ignores the alternative which is the context of the therapist-client relationship and its patterns of interaction.

Although language, through the limits of its particular terms and structure, constrains our knowing, double description provides a way of using

language to direct us towards higher order description ... As two eyes can derive depth, two descriptions can derive pattern and relationship.  
(Keeney, 1983, p.38)

This chapter deals with many professional mini-societies and consequently patterns across contexts are exposed. What emerges are the types of problems, the constructed realities, and the negotiated meanings that exist in the researcher's contexts. Dialogue and feedback clarify many different impact messages and the styles of perturbation utilised professionally. Here information and action imply knowledge about impact which addresses the original problem definition of 'not knowing'.

Expansion of roles and personal differentiation are clarified in the process of recursively engaging with the data. Furthermore, in the re-searching of perturbing contexts, the structure and organisation of the professional become overt as do new professional options. This connects to the aim of mapping relational modes which is in itself an orthogonal intervention. Simply stated, exploring how professional relationships are constructed is intimately related to patterns of action. When investigating variations ~~in~~ perspectives, taken for granted realities are deconstructed and the way for change is opened. Consequently central to this research is its emancipatory function. These issues become the data for "Deconstructing The Professional" in chapter 8.

**THE PARTICIPANT STORYTELLER : A METACOMMENT**

Part 2 has brought forth an entire eventshape in timespace, one that is evoked and invented. The process represents a move from the researcher, in the framework of neutrality, occupying an outsider position to new rituals of observation in the framework of subjectivity which places the researcher in an inside position.

If being the scholar was the head part then this was surely the heart part, much less comfortable and much less safe. As the **scholar** experienced hours of lost living, the **participant storyteller** created hours of intense living. The family interviews brought unexpected anxiety, I had thought they would simply be fun. Autobiographical sections evoked endless emotion. The part about the creation of my new family seemed the heaviest because although there were many new insights, no other voices were directly consulted. This itself was a lesson in how limited stories are created by monocular vision. Client stories were the most flexible, with undiscovered meanings, new nuances and many truths. Dialogue with clients or their spontaneous comment was often a process of creating meaningful moments. I was always enthralled and at times wounded, almost stung by some construals. Clients tend to under report both negative and positive impacts (Elliot & James, 1989) and, in this research, it was these very issues that were provoked. Conversations with colleagues created an air of anxious expectation. Would I be the same when the conversation was over?

The Participant Storyteller has spilt blood and winced and sobbed. In excavating, there has been the experience of frustration, anger and pain, and the re-experience of the archaic frustration, anger and pain. The creative and soul-searching moments were often exhilarating and transformations have happened in the couplings with family, clients and

colleagues, that emerged from playing around in my own ecology in the ways that I have. There is a self-reflexive loop where the present is the fruit of the past but constantly recreates the past that created it with a view to the anticipated future.

The actual documenting of the interviews, the dialogues and the phone calls has been exacting and back breaking. The ~~conversations~~ were excavations anyway, so, in the retelling, I was excavating the excavations. I often saw much more in the recreation of moments than in the original experiences. The attempt to retrieve them, which involved hours with tapes, transcripts and memories, made for dizzy work.

Reflexivity generates heightened awareness and vertigo, the creative intensity of a possibility that loosens us from habit and custom and turns us back to contemplate ourselves just as we may be beginning to realize that we have no clear idea of what we are doing. The experience may be exhilarating or frightening or both, but is generally irreversible. (Meyerhoff & Ruby, 1982, p. 1-2)

~~There~~ There has been unequalled satisfaction, even joy at the shifts that accrue in the retelling. For someone who dared to story herself as 'not knowing my impact', this thesis theme itself became the intervention *par excellence*. This has meant a depth and valence in the process that defies description. Perhaps it fits best on the dimension of connectedness and autonomy and the curious way they exclude and facilitate each other.

Part 2, as intervention, fits with the Keeney based equation (see page 20), in the following way: the stability of the researchers control of the investigation is offset by the

change provided by the recursive narrative. New and meaningful noise is provided by other voices across many professionally relevant contexts. These voices document the researcher's "choreography of co-existence" (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 248).

**PART 3**

**THE CRITIC**

In accounting for human action, psychology includes not only the science of behaviour, but also the science of descriptions of behaviour and the science of criticisms of descriptions of behaviour (Smedslund, 1985). Consequently, in investigating the autobiographical story and the relevant contexts of feedback, the researcher occupies three positions derived directly from a consideration of psychology's reflexivity. These are the positions of actor, observer and critic.

This current position is that of the observer observing her observing systems. It is a shift with emotional sequelae. The subjectivising, as actor and observer of the actions, gives way to cutting the umbilical cord and objectifying. And ~~so a~~ new relationship is created: the relationship of Connie the critic, to Connie the actor and observer. There is a move from evidence to assessment, from heart to head, from engagement to disengagement, from passionate to dispassionate.

In Part 2, contexts were revisited through different perspectives and in the telling, here the revisitations are revisited in the deconstruction.

## CHAPTER 8

## CONNIE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS : REFLECTIONS

## Introduction : Deconstruction

To deconstruct is to undo, in particular to undo the taken-for-granted traditions and assumptions that are at the very roots of commonsense understanding about human beings and experience. Derrida's idea of deconstruction is to undo the traditional notions of identity and hierarchy (Sampson, 1992). Foucault (1986), in focusing on how human beings are made subjects, has chosen to research the domain of sexuality and madness and how power is linked to knowledge and qualification.

The tools used to deconstruct come from within the tradition. In order to move out of the uncomfortable position of attempting to account for an error by means of tools derived from that very error, Derrida (Sampson, 1992) focuses on what is absent, not present; entities are both what they are and also what they are not. Derrida (1978) relies heavily on the concept of difference, meaning that what is present is constituted through something that is a non-present difference. Linguistic meanings are based on differences, not on essences or fully present substances. This is not dissimilar from Bateson's (1972) argument that in communication and information there are only differences not things, events or forces.

Foucault's method, interpretive analytics, relies on 'archeology' and particularly 'genealogy' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986). Archeology facilitates isolating discourse objects, and refers to stripping discourse of assumed truths and meanings by distancing from it and viewing it in relation to

background elements. Genealogy seeks out historical discontinuities and minor shifts, it records the history of interpretations and so reveals how they are created and imposed by people, not by the nature of things. This pursuit opposes depth, finality and interiority and seeks to unmask (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986).

Many of the processes of this research are in fact invoked in order to move, at least to some extent, out of the blind spot trap. The very idea of dialogue about contexts in general, and therapy in particular, is what White (1991) calls "deconstruction of knowledge (and consequently power) practices" (p. 37). Double description and feedback are thus deconstructive processes. The oscillation and recursion between the position of actor and observer implies continual deconstruction. These practices that rely heavily on the concept of difference are deconstructive method.

Deconstruction in this thesis refers to a focus on the constitutive patterns in the narratives of life, relationship and the context of therapy.

White's (1991) definition of deconstruction implicates a particular methodology for therapy:

. . . deconstruction has to do with procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called "truths" that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production, these disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of persons lives. (p.27)

DeConstruction renders strange the everyday taken for granted realities by objectifying them specifically through

the use of the 'externalizing conversation' (White, 1989, 1991). White (1991) uses the term "exoticizing the domestic" (p.27). This awareness of how modes of life, language and thought shape our existence may then allow us to be in a position to choose differently through the "re-authoring" (p. 30) dialogue and provoke in therapists and clients curiosity about alternative versions.

Deconstruction, according to White (1991), refers to the dismantling of the therapist as oracle by therapeutic practices that make the client expert on himself and his therapy and expose the therapist's cultural and social epistemology to the public domain. Consequently, not only are the restraints of client narratives dealt with but those of the therapist also; thereby modern myths of expert knowledge are no longer perpetuated.

In this thesis, therapist curiosity extends beyond narrative accounts of the client's restraints to recognising and publicising those of the therapist. Herein lies a justification for what may seem, and in fact is, a narcissistic journey.

←Encouraging clients to evaluate the real effects of therapy in their lives and relationships, further challenge the expert view. This thesis theme could be understood as giving prominence to knowledge traditionally considered to be secondary (the client story) and so overturning hierarchy and rendering visible repressed meanings, which is Derrida's deconstructive focus (White, 1991).

Furthermore, feedback arising from evaluation of the effects of therapy on the lives and relationships of clients, "assists therapists to squarely face the moral and ethical implications of their practices" (White, 1991, p.37). This transparency challenges the assumption that for therapy to be

effective it needs to be secret.

Parker's (1992) interpretation of the emancipatory goals in deconstructing our cultural assumptions, based on the concepts of Foucault and Harré, would involve uncertainty about agency and the self and an on-going curiosity about how the self is implicated moment by moment through the medium of discourse. The idea is coherent with this research which continually construes the self of the therapist as recursion.

This evolving and tentative view of self also creates space, far more options, and is consequently emancipatory. Here the concept 'deep structures' utilised by Bandler and Grinder (1975) and Grinder and Bandler (1976) is useful. This refers to the fullest linguistic representation of experience the human being has had in life but it is not the world itself. Deep structure is derived from a fuller 'reference structure' which is the full range of human experience. When deep structures are challenged, the subject's assumptions that his linguistic model is reality, is challenged. 'Surface structures', which appear in the way people speak, are derived from deep structures, but carry the limitations of generalisation, deletion and distortion. In asking what is missing, the change process of expanding and recovering is begun. Thus, the limitations evident in 'surface structures' or 'deep structures' are typically constraints in the client's representation of the world and not in the world itself (Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Grinder & Bandler, 1976).

The many deconstructive practices intrinsic to this research reside implicitly in the voice of the participant-storyteller and explicitly in the voice of the critic. In Part 2, the deconstructive practices open space for dialogue and difference and in Part 3, the search for fresh understanding about how knowledge, power, gender and identity is constituted, refers back to the search for the assumptions

that drive the narratives.

### **The Deconstruction of a Person**

#### **✓The Sociocultural Context**

The family ideology as revealed was not felt equally by all participants. The need for family survival was a basic tenet; communicated it appears with an intensity that diminished with each new baby. With the passing of time, immigrant insecurity eased. Submerging an individual's feeling for the common good of the family was an immigrant ✓ survival theme that was maintained long after it was necessary and at some cost to the family members.

Myths emanated from battles to carve a place in a new society. Sol's security would be increased through money, Esther's through social ease in the Jewish community, and her children distinguishing themselves academically and marrying well.

There was a focus on status which came from education and achievement. The family business, a big retail shoe chain in the main street of the big cities, implied that we were somehow better than the parts of the family that lived in small towns or who were butchers or bookmakers. However the word or idea of class was never mentioned.

There was enormous political ambivalence for the older generation of Jews in South Africa. The concern at the Nationalist victory in 1948 was more because of the suspected Nazi sympathies than the racism. However, as victims of anti-semitism, discrimination was difficult to watch. There was felt distress at any inhumanity and suffering. This was counterbalanced with gratitude to a host country that allowed

such enormous opportunity to Jewish immigrants. Yet, Esther was adept at being a madam - her family had had servants even in Russia, but this was a class issue rather than a racial issue. In fact, even in South Africa, 'white' nannies were sometimes employed to look after the children.

Too much political visibility for Jews was considered dangerous and the parents threatened heart attacks at the thought of political involvement and, when Vic was arrested, they nearly had them. Esther's fearfulness was conveyed when there were men in uniform, like traffic officers or customs officials. Sol, because of business exposure, was more comfortable and less of a visitor in the community.

The need for excellence and to be special were family themes; perhaps this was a way to ensure acceptance and status in a new and unpredictable community. The lesson from Judy was clear, when you did not perform you were devalued. The ideology of high standards was to do with dignity and upliftment. There was a strong ethic of concern. Esther impressed on her children that she hoped they would always help each other in times of material or emotional need.

#### Gender Issues

The gender arrangement was both complex and unusual. Wanting sons was a very Jewish theme, males were prized in terms of the cultural ideology. Yet, in the Green family, being a female made you special. There were pursuits which were exclusively female. This was true in Connie's time. There was an awareness of a long line of strong women on Esther's side. Grandmother had been brainy and a natural and wise 'advice giver' in the community. The bunch of female therapists in the family was not incidental. It may have had something to do with adapting the culture inherited from the previous generation, but it was also the way the females kept

their power.

—Sol and Esther were idealistic about love, yet women's status came from marrying well and men had to be served and focused on. The context definitely provided dual socialisation for women (Hare-Mustin, 1987). This meant that women were socialised in the dominant male culture as well as the female subculture. Even for Esther, and later Connie, this was a source of strength not of oppression. Women had every educational opportunity and more choices. Men were expected to work for them. This context meant that Connie side-stepped many painful gender issues and perhaps never fully understood what some women went through.

#### Interpersonal Themes and Communicative Styles

Communication was highly valued. Discussion was a way of making suggestions and finding solutions, but also a way of actualising alliances. People would go for walks together. When Connie did this with her mother, she would give a different view about one of the siblings, a view that would ease the problem definition. She still has this role in her nuclear family and, of course, as a therapist. Life was taken seriously, there was little place for 'so what' or 'I don't care'. Everything interpersonal mattered.

Ivor resented Connie's privileges and decisiveness. She learnt about criticism, disapproval and that she could not get away with wanting too much.

Judy and Ivor's construction was that Judy needed more discipline. This amazed Connie who felt she actually needed more approval and acceptance. She was not supported enough, yet she felt she was indulged too much. Judy's is a story of deprivation and blaming herself for it.

✓ Through Connie's eyes there was a scapegoat, so by not wanting her special relationship with mother to be harmed, she may have done a great deal of vicarious learning about what not to do. Injunctions like, 'don't be fat', 'don't let people take advantage of you', 'marry early', 'don't be too political', 'be organised', 'complete your education', were heard very well.

Socially, Judy is a connector, her putting it all on the table was part of Connie's learning not to. This situates her view of Connie as "keeping the last little bit to yourself".

There were many do's expressed in the family - but somehow the don'ts stand in relief. The learning, indirectly from Marge was 'don't be too different', it could hurt or be unsafe. She and Vic have a great fairness about them. In the stories, Marge's statements are checked for truth by investigating the corollary or the exception, for example: "I never trusted Mom to fight on my behalf" but "once when the tennis teacher . . . was being horrible to me she said something," or Vic, "I can't remember any significant interactions with Dad" - then "but he used to *shlepp* me to friends". Vic always showed patience and restraint and Connie learnt how she can be 'too much', 'too sure', 'too greedy'.

Esther was always a model of someone who at least in her own domain could operate independently, but she was open about needing her man. She supported Sol in being a 'tired from work' Dad. Connie did not emulate this, nor her mother's blind devotion to her brothers. She translated that devotion into a deep respect for the uniqueness of the family in relation to the outside world and a tendency to defend its attitudes and ethics.

Marge perceived her mother unable to fight on her behalf. Maybe Esther was more confident when Connie was growing up,

but she was experienced as having a charming way of engaging people and they never forgot her. However, Connie felt that her deeper moods and struggles were never perceived, she had to watch other people's moods and worry about potential trouble. Esther made herself available or would ask "what's your hearts desire?", but that was in the shops - she could not fix or hear internal pain. Connie knew she could never rely on anyone for that. One could get material things, help with school work, companionship, but Connie had to move her own feet for progress. Esther viewed her family as special but didn't believe in direct compliments especially when her children were young - so validation was healthily pursued in the outside world.

As parents themselves, the five children put a lot of energy into areas where it was felt that Esther and Sol had been wanting as parents. Ivor would be irritated by his mother's indefiniteness and unfairness and resisted this with his own children. Judy battled in the critical versus indulging domain. Vic perceived his father as a distant figure and does not repeat that. Connie monitors, reads moods, emphasises effort, and often makes magic for her children. These positions become part of the adult roles and functions.

~~Interpersonal~~ themes of competition, envy and territoriality preceded Connie. Her struggles were around how to have a say, be empowered, and distinguish herself. This may illuminate the way she was viewed as manipulative. She did have the gift of desire - it was in that adolescent era where selfishness was survival. Here she did not accept the role ascribed by the siblings. She was demanding on herself and the environment and very goal-directed. The battle was to deal with the issues within the family and the attractions outside it, although they seemed mutually negating.

Identity in Context

The inaccessibility and separations in the maternal relationship must have made mistrust an issue. Erikson (1965) puts resolution of the trust versus mistrust conflict at around the first year. In this case it continued. The major separations at a young age were complicated because of mother's fragility. Feelings of abandonment and Mother's inability to protect because of her health meant that Connie could not afford to be disappointed or angry. However, when Esther returned alive from England and Connie returned to Cape Town, Esther did an amazing repair job in accepting without question Connie's need to be next to her and assuming that what was demanded must be what was needed. Inner wounds must have healed as hope returned and a certain resilience grew.

Connie had to work hard to be taken into account and that meant increasing her power and she did this through lots of vicarious learning about how battles were won, attention gained, and alliances formed. This fight for identity implied becoming an astute reader of situations.

Connie needed to perform well and perceived a certain spontaneity to be dangerous in the family. "We operated on a level where what we thought and what we felt were not always in keeping with what we did" (see p. 120). She carried this discrepancy between inside and outside, an ability to hold two realities "with a tiny part that never fully belonged where I was physically present" (see p. 125).

This role flexibility developed in adolescence felt like confusion, but it would become a professional asset. It predetermined an ability for quick and easy connections, but a part that was often held back, a part that could make intimacy difficult but precious.

More than her siblings, Connie took the role of being one of the teenage pack. Family heartaches unnerved her and made her much more cautious than her natural inclinations. Being helpless to impinge and fix certain family difficulties, created determination and control. She internalised a strong, parental monitoring voice.

Surviving in this context also meant needing information and because it was a plentiful ecology, a function grew of holding many viewpoints simultaneously. She learnt about different cultures even within the family. Making things predictable and not being taken unawares with nasty surprises seems an entrenched pattern. It is related to the physical experiences of early asthma and consequently an issue of survival itself. Worry and vigilance ease up as it becomes clear that they are out of date. Marge still loves crying, it means hope to her. For Connie the emotional liberation was being able to be angry.

There was a function impossible to excavate without the meta-position of this very moment. Perhaps the family gave Connie the role of successfully combining many different and opposing themes. It was tense but it made a therapist.

### **Deconstructing Aspects of Love**

The basic structure of the "Aspects of Love" story is one of strong emotional valence and the struggle around belonging and separating and as a new parent, about finding a self or losing it.

Leaving home was a way of creating options for new intimate systems. The family was such a rich and plentiful context that while inside it there was little space. Adolescence yielded clarification about values and preferences

and lots of interpersonal skills, but relationship was about roles not people - "the date", "the pest", "the gorgeous one", "the boyfriend". Only as a student away from home was Connie touched in any way. Feelings were quite terrifying and all consuming. It thus fits that, as an undergraduate, intellectual mediocrity came to be. Furthermore maybe, interrupting relationships and fleeing intimacy was a way of controlling the terrifying feelings, while not risking isolation. ✓ Mistrust because of very early maternal absences and subsequent fears of maternal loss, may connect with the pattern of holding back in relationships.

Much of Connie's identity structure and many interpersonal themes were confirmed and translated into these new contexts.

The 'two realities' theme may originally have been about interruptions in the maternal relationship, then about inside feelings and outside behaviour, then about inside home and outside social world, and as a student, there was Cape Town and university in Johannesburg. This really meant interruptions in all relationships and battles between union and individuation. This theme continues in Connie's adult life in separations between the personal and professional and in fact the way many necessary and unnecessary separations of context are maintained. The two-realities theme may be structurally connected to controlling the untenable early life physical feelings of stuckness, when suffering from asthma. So movement relieves stuckness but also implies a holding back because one is never fully present.

The early pattern of interruptions replicated in relationships as a student meant that to stay still and be fully present in a relationship was a very difficult change, but Connie had been captured by a firm and definite voice.

Vigilance that grew in response to mother's fragile health was clearly projected onto Balfour. Fear of abandonment was carried into the marriage. While travelling in Europe, Balfour's voice had wavered, Connie was lost, and the marriage teetered. Only when Esther died, more than 20 years later, could Connie as an adult really let that childlike fear of abandonment go. This pattern that what you care about and what you want to conserve, you watch hard, continued into marriage. The role of carefully monitoring and taking everyone into account was thus firmly in place. With children this vigilance became attunement which, because they were deeply understood, meant greater ease in the co-creation of competent stories for all three of them. Attunement became ultimately a professional asset.

Connie needed to look good in Balfour's eyes, as she had done with her mother, so she maintained an ability to 'do differently to how she felt' and in the early years parts of herself could not be shared because he may not have understood or approved. The only dished out marriage roles that Connie or Balfour accepted were the totally non-negotiable ones, so both often fell short of what the other wanted. With change of expectations and increased accommodations, the battleground diminished.

The family context with its own mythology, themes and patterns created expectations for Connie, so it was inevitable that structure and organisation would be severely disrupted by marriage. There are endless clues about this in the narratives that construct this phase. So although this felt bad its inevitability is captured by Whitaker (1985) when he ~~says~~ "the most important function of marriage is to increase the stress and anxiety in a person's life" (p. 166).

Connie's emotional structure had included asthma not anger. Mother's inability, because of her fragile health, to

protect Connie from worries, meant Connie could not show frustration or anger, however, as a wife, her expression was overt. So this became changed structure. Companionship given unconditionally and on one's own terms was an expectation of life. In the marriage, it was not provided and friends were not on tap as they had been at Women's Residence. The assumption that people around will help with difficulties was greatly at odds with the reality, where Balfour was impervious to Connie's stresses, like Honours papers, cooking or simply surviving. He had his own set of expectations about what should be provided for him. Communication in Connie's family was important and binding, whereas for Balfour, words had momentary meaning. The situation was volatile and so an emotional unpredictability at odds with her organisation became very difficult to integrate.

Rather than being disrupted, it would be truer to say the structures were truly ruptured. It was a move from being a child in an extended family that included co-operation almost in the African sense to being the responsible adult in a nuclear Eurocentric family that included demands, conflict and criticism.

In the family of origin, experience was of individuals, people were described separately, a skin was a boundary. In this domain, with a husband and children, there was a new force that contrasted with the tunes within the family. Small children meant intimacy that felt like 'loss of self'. There was new responsibility from which there was no respite, intimates impinged through the boundaries in ways that could not be contained or controlled. It was difficult to put together. So a great deal was learnt about how to contain and when to control.

Many of these perturbations would become professional assets. The obvious aspects are about: depth of emotion,

experience of adversity, human difference, how outcomes are co-determined, and particularly how new rules change organisation and allow new options that are unrelated to old pathologies and patterns.

Certain original structure and organisation was retained and confirmed through the new systems, a great deal was perturbed and ruptured. What emerged from this dialectic, and what were the creative outcomes of this increase in both negative and positive affect?

Whitaker (1989) talks of marriage requiring greater intimacy with oneself. Certain paradoxical fundamentals came into focus. Only when the marriage looked shaky did Connie have any clue that she really wanted it to work. ✓ An awareness grew that the less she needed from Balfour the more she got. ✓ She also learnt that the more the self expanded, the less oppressive and happier marriage became. So the immediate experiences of second-order change became professionally relevant. Personal involvement meant experiencing it and an ability to use it professionally with others.

✓ The Randfontein experience was a confirmation about how ✓ in an agony of discomfort quantum leaps are made. The telltale decision "I won't ever be vulnerable in the same way again" speaks worlds about impetus for major shifts. It was also an *in vivo* experience about the sometimes symptomatic or sometimes constructive behaviour that becomes available when locked into repressive rule systems.

✓ Connie also came to know a part of herself that could really make things happen. As a mother, where she took total responsibility for consequences, she could consciously use her impact more powerfully than had been modelled in the original family. Esther had a certain helplessness when things did not go well with the children, or people were taking advantage of

her. In these new systems, Connie found the energy to change and translate many processes modelled in her family of origin. Customs around food, emotional expression, exercise, involvement and sickness changed, yet there are many ethics, attitudes and values that remained unedited and were imprinted on the new family quite unconsciously.

This new context of intimacy was definitely a place where Connie's competence could grow. This 'growing competence' becomes a system rule in the nuclear family.

There began an ability to look out for the system rather than the self, a caution about how new things would affect the marriage or impinge on the children. Underpinning this, are socio-cultural assumptions about continuity in marriage and the sacredness of children.

There is also a certain repetitive tune to the story. Just as all settles and gets a bit bleak lightning strikes. The first cycle was 'Leaving Home', the second was the 'Turning Point', and perhaps the third is the emancipation inherent in the 'Doctoral Process'.

They all refer to a new space. Pushing away from Randfontein was like rushing out of Kennebunk - an adolescent in search of new things. This always bred involvement and determination. Of course, the move into clinical training was a professional adolescence. Lifeline and the colleague group had confirmed the sweet taste of outside nourishment and that Connie could do well there. New places created a high deliverance of self-esteem.

### Deconstructing the Professional X

The professional story is about a particular category of

mutual perturbations - so the researcher researches her research systems. Chapter 7 is a collection of discrete stories that are connected in various ways. It is a metacontext, a context of contexts out of which themes emerge.

Some themes occur across the contexts in the metacontext of professionalism. Certain themes are specific to particular contexts and so differentiate the metacontext. What emerges is a matrix of continuity covered in the first three distinctions to be drawn and a matrix of specificity covered in the final two distinctions to be drawn. This could be construed as a stability/change dialectic of defining themes. It is this distinction that frames the 'factoring' process.

The themes that run through and address the patterns across contexts, illustrate the types of problems, realities, and meanings that carry through the therapist's professional domain. This is counter-balanced by the enunciation of themes that are context or relationship specific, which represent unique outcomes. These highlight the therapist's atypical pattern, or the 'trace' in the Derridean (1978) sense and so the exceptions, the not easily known aspects of therapeutic behaviour, are highlighted. This is a search to illuminate the contexts the therapist sets in order to work - how she affects people so that they are ready or unwilling to connect with her meanings.

Deconstruction yields themes that connect to Connie the professional and define her choreography through the contexts. The professional stories and the meanings that are co-generated are often about polarities, about therapeutic problems that are interesting or difficult or construed as such by the researcher.

Understanding the reciprocal effects of the researcher's

participation in the surrounding ecology permits new understanding through which therapist changes are provoked. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) put it this way: "For us the willingness to risk and undergo change is the essence of therapeutic ethics. We would hold that the only person the therapist changes in the therapy consultations is himself or herself" (p. 385).

The intersubjective checking, the double descriptions and the way 'new noise' in the form of client and colleague feedback is processed and internalised, ensures perturbations for the therapist. This provides a structure that expands professional options.

#### Competence : Incompetence

This is a life theme that evolves as the autobiography progresses. In the family, Connie did not evoke strong criticism from her parents and never developed any tolerance for it. She was cautious in order to avoid blame or censure and carefully watched the interplay with her siblings. She absorbed lots of information, so she could always anticipate and be prepared. When, as an adolescent, she found the older ones too critical, she created different space. There was so much vicarious learning about what would please or upset Mother that Connie became competent in order to save her ~~mother~~ from worry. In marriage, it was safer not to incur criticism, so Connie's ability to carefully monitor situations was maintained. As the professional context began, criticism was experienced as demolishing. As a trainee at UNISA in a foreign context, Connie was insatiable for knowledge in order to make the terrain familiar. Perhaps this is an echo of how a tentative immigrant would need to develop comfort in strange and foreign soil. Professional experience meant that a personal ideology and clinical patterns formed, but Connie wanted to know and understand her impact. The phylogenetic

style of 'trading in self-doubt' expresses itself in the thesis theme and coheres well with the competence/incompetence distinction.

Throughout the professional stories there is concern with being a competent therapist and difficulty in dealing with incompetence. In fact, the thesis theme of using feedback to check and stay confident of impact on clients, is an issue of effectiveness and difficulty in dealing with ineffectiveness.

There are, of course, endless ways of construing therapeutic incompetence. It could be defined by connecting to a theory, or to critical voices of trainers or colleagues, or simply to internal discomfort, but perhaps it is useful in this research to connect therapeutic incompetence to client dissatisfaction. This is of course just one version of it, and a version with dangers; nevertheless, a version congruent with the construals of clients as experts on themselves. So it becomes clear that Connie's personal ideology would value co-created contexts that are experienced as emancipatory or transformative by clients.

—With couples the theme of competence is addressed in how the therapist creates a different context or how 'new noise' is introduced. Connie's idiosyncratic way centred on certain values, like not overvaluing harmony, valuing difference, and a plausibility that comes from being able to hear well. Good communication is modelled in the therapeutic context. The pattern lifted out in the stories seems to be validating and making the couple believable to each other. There is a translator role, involving a thin line of communication that is both acceptable and empowering to the listener and in that moment true for the speaker. This extends to a flexibility with language, where certain carefully chosen words really get through. Connie's incisive words work best when conveyed with warmth, yet they are provocations with an element of danger,

threat or discomfort. Poor progress with couples seemed to involve being change orientated in a behavioural way and neglecting the need for individual work.

As a result of Connie's own research there is an awareness about a family's embeddedness in complex socio-political and religious rules that affect it in a profound way. It is part of a new expertise that allowed new frames with the religious family and provided new options for the families whose children were not settling with peers.

In the areas where Connie is overtly experienced as provocative, the competence/incompetence issue seems to come into sharp focus. An immigrant who includes herself and does well, brings something new to the culture and transforms it, but when she is excluded or excludes herself, she is neutralised or perhaps cast as the enemy. Competence, while being foreign with Neville and John, seemed related to warmth and connection and Connie's ability to challenge and push and value constructive discomfort. With Anna, the incompetence was Connie's impatience and intolerance with being trapped, otherwise she might have found a way.

With Andrea and Susan, incompetence connects to withdrawal of affect, to a preoccupation with doing rather than 'being' and so implies personal disconnection. In the Susan story learning to live with incompetence is about giving up 'doing' and a certain pain in learning to 'be'. Here the Redhill context provided an interesting counterpoint. Connie shared lots of herself, her just 'being' self and her competence, surprisingly for her, was never compromised by this. In fact, her close involvement with Jenny seemed to enhance, not diminish Jenny's view of her competence. At Redhill, as at the Johannesburg Children's Home, Connie had a motherly reference person who admired her and defined her competence, and so it took hold. In addition, these were

contexts where the issues were personally relevant - issues as evidenced in "Stories that Pull", issues like the 'power of early experience', 'abuse' and 'abandonment'.

Implicit in the narratives are assumptions that emotional, intense and dramatic moments are transformative for clients and comprise for Connie therapeutic competence. When they are absent, particularly when she feels stuck, incompetent construals are more likely.

There are technical notions that seem to comprise competence; issues like 'replay', 'unique outcomes', and portraying an 'alternative view'. These concepts are invented in the narratives and their connection to the researcher becomes obvious. Replay to improve, or replay to control, or replay because Connie is reflexive, imply that this is a pattern. Unique outcomes fit with the push to make a difference, to distinguish herself to create positive and catchy stories. Empathy that existed with all members of the family of origin, ensures a pervasive ability to respect all views as parts of a truth. These notions are almost too general to be useful, but they are part of the therapist's clinical habit and are also identified because they are theoretical constructs thrown up by clinical theory at the current point in time.

There are also general notions that apply to certain clients and so create specific meaning. These are extremely useful and highlight both competence and incompetence. Some clients, like Peggy, are sensitive to any censures or to clock-watching. Lauren's feedback taught Connie to vary the process of therapy in a particular way and that it might be useful to share openly when she felt that Lauren was slowing the pace. Andrea's feedback alerted Connie to how enactment can even increase client helplessness. Some clients like Nicole and Lauren, were particularly alert to the person of

the therapist who provided a strong model for positive projections.

There are also idiosyncratic abilities that emerge through the stories; these are a certain ability to push and challenge that imply a probing style, a special kind of observation described as 'verbalising the unsaid with insight', and the way language is a bearer of intensity and emotion and so becomes a tool of trade. Feedback about Connie's particular ways of co-creating with Peggy, with John, or with the colleague group were surprising and confirmed the untold benefits of such conversations. Feedback that confirmed what the researcher already knew, confirmed that intuition must be acted upon and that therapeutic instinct is in fact well-grounded.

As a group supervisor, Connie looked for a new area and sets a context rich in competence for everyone, yet in a sense she disconnects from one counsellor, whom she felt tried to neutralise her impact. In the colleague group growing competence seems to centre on an ability to influence more and observe less, an ability to be more transparent.

As therapist, working in the threesome, competence initially may have required Connie to stop gathering information and use her intensity and operate with a bigger voice and not be subjugated by the models in her head about what was right in therapy. However, it also meant a move from knowing as a head exercise, to a more intuitive kind of knowing, a knowing through doing. In all the group contexts, there is a great enjoyment in being intellectually and emotionally stretched, a place where the tension and intensity are used constructively.

This distinction competence/incompetence is not just a matter of reflecting on oneself or of finding oneself, it is

✓ a matter of inventing oneself. It cannot be underestimated that the thesis is the ritual for claiming a certain expertise. Consequently, in choosing this theme, Connie perhaps respects a central life theme and again willingly accepts a role dished out by this scholarly context, while of course connecting with it in her own way. This particular thesis anyway is about appropriating the competence and understanding the incompetence.

This distinction also changes on a number of axes. The biases of the professional stories are that they are optimising as opposed to pathologising and, when they pathologise, they do so interpersonally and not intrapsychically. The ideology accepts that resistance lies between people. The epistemology does not allow a maladjustment bias where the lowest level of psychological fixation or regression is even brought into awareness. So, if story tellers are accountable in terms of who is served or disempowered by a particular construction of reality, then of course there exists the inevitable competence and incompetence in the choice of the themes and stories. In putting client dissatisfaction out on the table, in wanting to know about failure and by so doing ignoring other legitimate themes, the researcher can never fully escape her structurally determined blind spots. In choosing client stories that were interesting or problematic and collegial contexts with great personal relevance, there is an implicit undertaking to stay perturbed and to keep learning.

This fits with 'giving the self a hard time' so that Connie, in the end, can tell a more competent story, a story that includes an understanding of her own impact. Ricky's ✓ sense of the shift was Connie's move from a dependence on correctness towards trusting her own subjective reality. The ✓ ~~new~~ story deals with the 'being' part of the competence/incompetence distinction rather than the 'doing'

part.

Orthogonal : Accommodating

This is not a mutually exclusive distinction, but, rather, involves a subtle blending. Nevertheless, there is an implicit battleground in this polarity that seems reminiscent of the enslavement/isolation dialectic in intimate relationships.

There are many pulls to orthogonality. They seem to originate with cultural themes of distinguishing oneself and standing out, notions around being an unusual mix and a desire to be special while growing up. Personal transformation often accrued from atypical connections with people or taking a step into a new context, like leaving home to go to university, or dating someone much too old, or doing therapy in Afrikaans with Gert in Verwoerdburg, to name the more moderate. This fitted with Connie's organisation; it was not a problem to stand away from consensus or be out of the ordinary. However, there was a feared pattern - to have a group, originally the siblings, turn on her or lobby in such a way that she was left without support. This was replayed on very few, but unforgettable occasions. One was, as the only English-speaking, liberally-minded, 16 year old school girl, at a Youth Leaders Conference, sponsored by 'Die Burger', a Cape Afrikaans, and in those days, right wing newspaper. Another was a brief group therapy experience while a trainee at UNISA. Connie learnt that the odds against one can be so large that all power or credibility is lost. This created great sensitivity in choosing behaviours sensitive to the context. While these experiences were harsh, they were highly atypical situations. So Connie is seldom that vulnerable and, being foreign, novel and at odds with the flow, is well within her repertoire, particularly in the therapist role. Connie enjoys evoking strong construals about herself. They would only be

uncomfortable if her femininity or competence were at stake.

✓ The ability to create a transactional context which disrupts the client's habitual patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour, is in fact considered the mark of true skill (Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Efran et al., 1990; Grinder & Bandler, 1976; Kaye, 1983). This seems to describe the appropriate yet elusive blend.

High levels of empathy with couples in their experience of adversity, means accommodating to them for a while. This important restraint precedes challenge and novelty. Moving from a parallel to an orthogonal position and an awareness of it, is complex in a threesome, because there is also the issue of everyone's relationship to the client's 'marriage'.

Connie's being with and alongside Nicole, was interspersed with surprises and new rules for both, in a helpful balance. With Andrea, Connie could only be accommodating. Her predicament was anaesthetising, she had so little support. Connie could not love her enough to connect properly, couple and make a difference.

Susan asked for more orthogonality in identifying as helpful the sessions that were active and those where the worst and most hopeless aspects of her life were in focus. However, she often lost concentration when orthogonality was too difficult to handle and pulled instead for the usual 'life support'.

Connie's therapeutic systems, it seems from feedback, often include safety and containment, sometimes allowing ✓ clients to set the pace. These are aspects of Connie in accommodating mode, just there, present and listening. ✓ Connie often looks for links and bridges and translates. This in supervision was seen as her over-connected both/and style that

did not build in enough difference. However, Connie is seldom neutralised or entangled by her empathy or the pulls of a system, because stuckness is so negative. As a result, she always has energy to invest and an idea about how things could shift.

With Neville and John, contact was good and Connie positioned herself to challenge, build in difference, create discomfort, and move into new roles. It is almost as though she sensed a strength in them that allowed her own strength.

Connie seems to take more therapeutic permission with male clients, in terms of rattling the rule systems and behaving less stereotypically herself. Maybe because her own transformative contexts were with male teachers and clinical models, something was absorbed that Connie could hold and use to re-create transformative contexts. Yet, with female colleagues, there is more freedom to be expressive and needy, but not necessarily orthogonal. This is possibly reproduced with female clients.

✓ The holding back theme translates here as accommodating behaviour. When Connie was a child, it began as a struggle for breath. It showed in the colleague group, not as being absent or disconnected, but as loaded silence. System challenges leaked out in the guise of a special kind of observation. Colleagues saw in Connie a growing certainty and forcefulness that helped to create transforms for the group. With the threesome, the holding back behaviours were being the quiet student, absorbing everything, reluctant to define herself and unclear on meaning. Novelty leaked out in some dramatic moments and in Connie's positioning around the clients she brought and in edging the threesome into 'implicate' conversations and prodding for a recursive involvement with each other. However, in her therapist role Ricky always pushed for orthogonal punctuation from Connie

~~with~~ comments like 'put more on the table', 'you could couple more', 'you have a dramatic presence that you constrain all the time', 'go and read the section on provocation'.

✓ As a tension absorber Connie, would be containing enough tension without looking to create more - so a caution about orthogonality may have been restraining. Connie's natural organisation also values the conserving of systems, so tension may represent a useful attunement to the dangers of provocation and the risks of system dissolution. It seems, in certain circumstances, Connie instinctively fears something ~~about~~ her powerfulness. This perhaps is old baggage, a self-consciousness, the watching her behaviour through critical ✓ ~~eyes~~. Ricky called it 'modernism', which meant 'attempts to do what was right in therapy'. A certain self-doubt can mask the energy. Of course, disqualifying contexts neutralise certain transforming roles so they become inappropriate, or just unavailable. As of now, an aware tension absorber, Connie is easily able to bring forth intensity. This amplifies her own voice and impact. The courageous and dramatic part always rattles a system and can move into experiences, not just words.

Constructing contexts with clients where they could make personal comments was itself orthogonal. Although not incoherent with future trends, the whole thesis is an orthogonal intervention, foreign to the traditional professional rule system. Researching therapist impact and the client's subjective experience of therapy, thereby defining a more egalitarian situation for clients, represents ~~an~~ expression of the usually unexpressed. The feedback process itself creates a context of metacommunication.

One of the moves in this axis is a move from modern to ✓ ~~post~~modern, a move from a right way to trusting more of what flows and coping with the uncertainty and ambiguity. Being

✓able to explain less, work less - and make clients work more. The continuum also touches on which dishes out roles and meanings Connie can accommodate and accept and which are personally impossible and so lead to new or more creative roles. The growing edge is about utilising these abilities to influence the context rather than the person.

Feedback taught Connie about how she can be a strong model to clients, inadvertently orthogonal in illustrating other ways of being. In these situations, it is the way she ✓thinks about the world, her positioning, beliefs, values, language and presence that comprise the orthogonal instrument.

There develops in Connie's life a growing ability to be less accommodating personally and professionally and to perturb more with carefully chosen words, frames or ways of being. Coming to grips with an influential role implies that ✓hunches can be relied upon more and that she does not have to satisfy everyone in the system.

Distance/Disconnection : Closeness/Connection

Like a fish in water, it is difficult for a participant to be aware of the givens in the surroundings. Perhaps the givens become assumptions about the world, yet with the freedom of looking back, the emotional climate in the family of origin was intense and quite anxious. Connections on a head level were strong and pervasive. However, authentic connection on an emotional level was more difficult. Anxiety ✓may have driven certain projections and distortions. Esther may have conveyed what she thought would be helpful rather than conveying her deepest personal experience, she certainly did not seem keen to get too embroiled in those of her daughters. Connie did not take this permission with her father or brothers either, and so privacy rather than secrecy, became desirable in emotional matters. Involvement and

✓discussion was habitual, but connectedness in areas of emotion or in areas of difficulty was limited. Consequently, marriage brought new learning and perhaps Connie's choice of profession, as accidental and circumstantial as it sometimes seemed, was in fact a culmination of a long preparation of watching and listening and a growing need to extend her experience of closeness into the difficult and emotional areas.

✓Helplessness to impact in situations seemed to create depression, withholding and disconnection. The mystifying contexts, as a trainee, or the ambiguous and abusive ones at Sterkfontein, restimulated this. The metacontext of apartheid plays a part here. Sometimes to disconnect was inevitable because what you saw or knew was denied or pushed away, or if you felt guilt or distress, it had to be suppressed. What seemed to keep you safe was ugly - very ugly. Individuals in the culture, including Connie, learnt an emotional blindness that often alienated South Africans from their experiences and falsely eased the 'apartness'. ✓Close relationships with other peoples were minimised and differences were maximised. Boundaries were social currency. However, the more recent lessons from the metacontext are quite different; they are about unpredictables and new and difficult connections, and how the impossible is possible. These changes define new directions that impinge on or emancipate therapists.

As a professional Connie easily maintains boundaries and space. If there is a difficulty, it is about creating enough connection in certain relationships. Enmeshment and dependence are highly unusual in her professional co-existence with clients. Clients rely on their own resources and Connie expects this. However, connecting is always quick and easy initially, and never feels overwhelming. In many stories, there is a calm containing part that empowers clients and admits enormously difficult and troublesome content. The

potency, consistency and safety factors that enable closeness are available. In powerful moments, Connie understands the rituals that facilitate the expression of feelings and that communicate connectedness.

Clients come because of their 'relational' or 'connectedness' difficulties, so they are usually willing to learn how to change or be pulled back if they slip away. Susan is the notable exception; she disconnects often because of mood swings, depression, pain, anxiety and concentration problems from electro-convulsive therapy. This willingness to connect with the therapist often through 'relationship hunger' seems an under-explored source of influence. This conception clearly catapults distance and disconnection or overconnecting in therapy into the domain of therapist limitations.

Distancing emotionally has been Connie's response to impasse, to being stuck. She could not accept Andrea's impoverished life and so she would just keep supporting and pushing in a low-grade way. With Anna or the recalcitrant member in the supervision group, she withdrew. With the Gordons or with Michael, disconnecting meant suspending her attunement. Emotional disconnection does not mean inactivity, in fact, it is often carried in too much activity.

Connie cannot, nor could anyone, stay close endlessly; distance allows one to breathe and sets the scene for the next connection. However, there were certain patterns around distance and a difficulty with responding spontaneously to intimacy. With Nicole, Connie sometimes chose to hold back and not intrude. This pattern was enacted with Jenny, where a certain intimacy was avoided. Sometimes Connie disconnects from her own outrageous, but creative, ideas and so may distance herself at a significant moment. This perception is confirmed from its corollary - from the moments of deep connection when her presence and intensity are not masked.

This happens in incidents with Susan which went beyond words, with Peggy in the pit of grief, with Neville when Connie wondered if he would get up and hit her, or with the battered schoolboy Sean, when she herself was close to tears.

Themes identified as personally relevant to Connie, will create connection but not necessarily competence - so the "Stories that Pull" imply that connection will be strong to content around socio-cultural inevitabilities, pain and outrage, generational transmission of patterns, and issues around abuse and the significance of early experience.

With colleagues, Connie's behaviours that evoke distance are her silence, her masking herself, and her intellectualised and meaning-making defences against uncertainty. Yet, for Connie, the disconnections she fears are quite different and may be reverberations from earlier systems. Connie fears distance from others when she is too much or too needy.

However, connections with chosen colleagues are strong and close because of the unlimited egalitarian definition and the intimacy of shared meanings. In all the collegial contexts, the erstwhile team, the group, and the threesome, Connie feels enormous emotional and intellectual investment propelled by her tendency to conserve what is deemed valuable. There is a style of making these contexts very important and never being dismissive. Obviously with trainers there is a specific need for recognition that does not exist in other therapeutic systems. This may explain the battle between doing the right thing and doing the spontaneous thing. At times connection could not be expressed in words or clear actions and energy was trapped. This was particularly true in the threesome where the context was marked by a subtle blend of provocation, restraint and humour.

There is a willingness on Connie's part to absorb, re-

work and be perturbed by feedback from her colleague group and in supervision. They are clear in the pull on Connie to use herself more, couple more with clients, and to be less fearful of her authenticity, a colleague identified it this way: ". . . you've changed - you become a professional in a more spontaneous way" (see p. 216).

As these issues are brought into awareness through the deconstructive process, Connie is freed from disconnecting because of her own inadvertent emotional structure. Varying distance and closeness in professional relationships can become more of a spontaneous choice almost like varying the male/female component. New options emerge where therapist awareness of her engagement and disengagement become a barometer of covert issues that could be made overt.

Conserve : Dissolve/Transform

Connie tends to conserve contexts and enjoys many varied and long-term relationships. However, her belief that the client exercises the choice about leaving the therapist whenever they are ready, means that Connie will generally accept this move, and seems to have no problem letting go. However the therapist can prod, but should not abandon. Premature dissolution at the client's request may be arbitrary or it is positive and about clients wanting to test themselves. However, it is clearly also about Connie's therapeutic errors. Dissolution when appropriate is about sticking to a time-limited contract or about the subtly negotiated end of therapy.

Premature dissolution represents a giving up, which is very rare for Connie. So it might be truer to say that dissolution at Connie's behest is a bid for renegotiation or it may mean that Connie refused the ascribed roles, like with Anna or Michael. This might mean that she was truly trapped

and could not breathe; so to move was to survive. Another pattern in situations that are more threatening and harder to leave can best be described as keeping the lid tight on a boiling pot, because to express would be dangerous. In such situations, she gets tense and hardly breathes. She becomes quiet and inactive and here survival is to freeze - literally to take the heat away. This is conservation at a price. It happened at times in the large doctoral group, occasionally in my colleague group or in an organisational working environment. It happens less and less.

With valued colleagues, there is a conserving role and in the colleague group, Connie acted this out. In colleague contexts, Connie will be alert to the ascribed role and may take it, because need for acceptance is high, yet the ascribed roles with chosen colleagues would probably fit anyway or could be negotiated.

These distinctions merge because relationships have to be conserved in order for transformations of self and other. Connie's dissatisfaction and push for better stories is about just this, the conserving of relationships is a commitment for transformations within it.

✓ It is important to track themes that distinguish contexts, because a second-order family therapist needs to monitor her own personal investment and prejudices.

Stuck/Boring : Emancipatory/Fascinating ①

This distinction has very evocative meanings for Connie and in the very formulations of it, clarity and new meanings have evolved.

-Boring means impasse and no movement, it means that imagination is not hooked and it means relationship

disturbance. It means clients that anaesthetise. It means Andrea looking for connections and Connie unable to connect. It means couples where Connie vehemently fights to get out of the vice.

Stuck systems make Connie want to do things and she then moves into first-order thinking, or perhaps emotional buttons are pushed that make changing the situation imperative. This imperative to move invents a first-order frame which magnifies stuckness. Stuck situations take away one of Connie's relational strengths, which is a role flexibility and an ability to be in two realities and to watch contexts.

What Connie finds fun, fascinating and personally hooking means energy, creativity and connecting. Variety provides this, like the different member styles in the Family Life supervision group or coping with strangeness like the Afrikaans families in Pretoria when she started out. New challenges are compelling, like Linda, the first adult survivor of child sexual abuse with whom Connie worked. The Msebe's emotional and urgent story evoked activity and flexibility. Sometimes male clients fall into the category of fascinating, in that their lives have a strange component. Perhaps this explains Connie's perception that she has worked successfully with male clients and connected well with the male spouse of a couple.

Intensity and fascination with the context creates emancipation. These situations provide challenges and although pushed into discomfort there is movement to produce more or perhaps to produce more of oneself. Somehow emancipation means the ability to move to effect second-order change.

With Linda, emancipation was experiencing that the unknown did not equal the incompetent. There is a pattern

where spontaneity emerges in contexts of shared responsibility, like in the colleague group or when Taube's responsible presence in the team left Connie lighter and more playful. It has also happened on various occasions when co-presenting with a colleague. Connie takes a freer role with families, because there is so much conservation and containment intrinsic to the system for which she is not responsible.

Personal emancipatory themes reverberate. They were often hard won and borne out of extreme discomfort; the relief of no evaluation as Connie emerged from clinical training, how new rules change the organisation and release old pathologies, Jenny knowing so much of Connie and still adamantly wanting her as a therapist. Sometimes emancipation is not instantaneous and it takes a while to know the meanings, so Connie offered Linda another therapist, or she sent Jenny to someone else without acknowledging the deep connection.

-Michael's story illustrates a move from stuck to fascinating, which happened because the telephone conversation about therapy that took place, created a transformation.

The ultimate emancipation is when Connie gets what she wants. This happened in supervision when she was deeply understood or new meanings made new freedoms possible. This happens when clients move. Above all, this happens in moments of deep connection. Perhaps this is the fun that is seldom written about in the therapy field.

Distinctions are always forced, incomplete and arbitrary. Those chosen highlight preferences and prejudices, they intersect and overlap. Those omitted may illustrate what is beyond awareness.

-A delineated map limits the territory. This has to be a

map useful for unknown territory. It is a point where to  
-further describe will be to prescribe, to further excavate  
will be to asphyxiate. This is the useful punctuation and it  
is a full stop.

### Conclusion

Therapies change the therapist and the process of  
researching interaction provokes conversations that re-create  
the experience and generate a recursive self. Researching  
impact changes it. Diana expressed it like this: ". . .  
/ because you're investigating you as part of the therapeutic  
process and as you engaged in doing that, you've changed. I'm  
sure your work has changed but you've just changed in relation  
to us as a group . . . ." (see p. 216).

A recursive self is a finer instrument, because, if the  
therapist's habitual assumptions, internal maps, and  
intuitions are recognised and appropriated, they empower her  
actions.

**THE CRITIC - A METACOMMENT**

The critic tried to keep an eye on contexts and embarked on a long and arduous sifting process reminiscent of a detective. This involved creating the distance necessary to move on, despite the exposure, and actually produce the document. Tracing realities, Connie-type problems, patterns and themes through the three phases of the story, could only be partial and incomplete. Of course, the reader will have formed his or her own impressions and spotted the telling omissions. The researcher wished that her supervisor would give her all the themes so that there would be no obvious and embarrassing blind spots. Yet it is clear that it is the researching therapist's themes that count. Often she wished to be saved from the vortex.

If, as Whitaker (1989) says, the magic is in the coupling and not the method, then the vital function is the elucidating of choreographies of co-existence as they illuminate professional impact. This comprises new learning and furthermore a process of learning about how learning takes place.

--Reflexivity made me aware of how my own relationship to the operation influences it, how the data and descriptions are biased toward my personal ideology and theoretical models. --Yet, the data and descriptions inform and expand my own theories and clinical habits. Madigan and Law (1992) talk of "discourse-responsibility" (p. 35) as requiring the critical examination of how and what therapists do in order to examine their own practices. Furthermore they assert that therapy discourse cannot be separated from socio-political discourse that connects the narratives of therapeutic work with the narratives of the therapist's broader personal and

professional life. As language is no longer usefully viewed  
✓ as a mirror reflection of reality, the emphasis on narrative  
in language enables the researcher to look critically at her  
own objects of construction.

It was just this critical looking that provided the  
surprises in 'factoring' the data. It was about the weaving  
of themes over time and through contexts, the threads to pull  
through, yet an awareness of what was unique and did not  
←confirm the pattern. Is this my self in tapestry?

**PART 4**

**THE INTEGRATIVE VOICE**

Integration of a recursive pursuit implies the interconnection of the producer, the process and the product. This production makes the researching therapist the vortex. The difficulties in doing this cut very deep. There is revulsion at the narcissism of it, shame at the exposure and fears that such nakedness is risky in the community.

A thesis is a process that creates shifts and being the vortex meant that the tendency to take in, to stay mysterious, to ask and to know was forcibly reversed into giving out, defining the self, answering and doing. So of course the intervention *par excellence* or the emancipatory story would be predictably tough and predictably worthwhile.

Meyerhoff and Ruby (1982) enunciate the enormous change that consoles me. "Until recently it was thought inappropriate, tasteless, unscientific, overly personal and trivial to include information about process and producer in a product" (pp. 6 - 7). Whereas now .... "backstage proves to be considerably more alive and full of possibilities than the domains of well-engineered, cosmetic front regions to which we were previously confined" (p. 7). Reflexiveness in its drive to self-awareness is purposive and intentional, not merely narcissistically revealing. "Only if a producer makes awareness of self a public matter and conveys that knowledge to an audience is it possible to regard the product as reflexive" (Meyerhoff & Ruby, 1982, p. 6).

In other words the reader is a mediating presence. The text's reality is established in the response and reconstituted in the reader's active participation, because the reader is made conscious of his or her own experience. ~~Perhaps~~ Perhaps the reader is a co-author. Hutcheon (1985) offers ~~this:~~ "texts are . . . produced rather than consumed by the reader" (p. 141). So recursion properly done, and hopefully this thesis moves in that direction, means that the subject is

not lost in her own concerns, but pulled inexorably towards the 'other' and in the pursuit of self-knowledge the surrounding ecology is taken into account.

The accountability that accrues from constructing a reality like this thesis, implies a pragmatic, an aesthetic and an ethical imperative (Von Foerster, 1984). These are all to be judged by you, the stakeholder. I must not only believe, but also illustrate that these criteria are met, otherwise I would be storying myself in contradictions.

The pragmatic imperative is served if there is new action in resolving problem areas. Keeney (1983) talks of this as immediate pragmatic outcome and urges a more encompassing ecological view. It is impossible to know yet about ripples in response to this eventshape, how it will resonate with its readers or impinge usefully on broader contexts. It may evoke laughter, or encourage brave and more fascinating research, it may confirm or embarrass those in my contexts, or it may simply document a voyage. However, the immediate pragmatic frame is served in that enhancing partnership enhances the capacity of participants to observe themselves from new perspectives.

Elliot and James (1989) highlight the pragmatics of sensitivity to clients' experienced impacts. ✓ "Therapists should more often ask clients what they are experiencing" (p. 462). Thus, conversations provide a way of being sensitive and clarifying that clients are expert. Clients' voices seemed in these conversations to grow and a new closeness and impetus often emerged. Family and colleagues were willing participants, some experienced transformations.

The researcher's new observable actions in her problem areas were an inevitable by-product of recursion and feedback. However, there were moments when perturbations created anxiety

and excitement, a mixture of masochism and stimulation that certainly called pragmatics into question. However, the desire to reflect and collaborate with other voices continues. In a professional sense, it is a new pattern welcomed as new structure. Personally it is enormously enriching. It created new definitions of relationship with all participants.

Von Foerster (1984) describes the ethical imperative as acting to increase the number of choices. The researching therapist felt that this was attained on the grounds of her own experience, but it is confirmed by the idea that the shared story domain creates room for change and altered perceptions (Anderson, 1987; Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Hoffman 1991). This, in turn, creates new options for clients or the same cycle with a different punctuation, because people you engage with change who you are, and sometimes, particularly if they are clients, expose your pathology. Whitaker's (1989) own personal theory crystallises the idea of therapy being a dance of mutual growth. Hopefully the research creates some such moments.

✓ Keeney (1983) posits ethics as the examination of how the observer participates in the observed. Hopefully this thesis exemplifies the participatory as contributing to an ethical perspective. The observer's preferences and personal ideology are acknowledged, publicised and in the true sense become data that is offered up for change through dialogue. ✓ The conceptualiser's enmeshment in her own constructs are centre stage. If ethics implies making a motivated and informed stand, the thesis fulfils the criterion simply in its warrant of usefulness according to stated theory and therapeutic action. Ethics implies a tolerance and detachment from our own perceptions and values to allow for perspectives of others. This says Varela (1984), "is the very foundation of knowledge and also its final point. At this point, actions are clearer than words" (p. 323).

The aesthetic imperative, "If you desire to see, learn how to act" (Von Foerster, 1984, p. 61) has particular relevance for the researching therapist whose habit was to understand first and then feel or act. The discomfort in the thesis process accrued from exactly the necessity of embracing the unpredictable and the move towards contexts where actions and feelings preceded understanding. Keeney's (1983) idea of an aesthetic base for therapy or in this case, the thesis, refers to awareness that any feeling, perception or idea is a fragment of the context that embodies it - a respect for the ecosystem. He says: "Commitment to an aesthetic base for therapy requires that we see therapy as a form of practice. Like Zen, the practice of therapy becomes a context of higher order learning for a therapist" (Keeney, 1983, p.195).

Certainly the practice of this research provided a transformative and developmental process, even aesthetically enjoyable. This research, like the practice of therapy, is a trip away from attempts to demonstrate what is already known and to ensure acceptability ahead of time to modes of research in specific circumstances with local aims that allow for on the spot error correction.

In visiting the many contexts, seeing the pictures, hearing the messages, and re-experiencing the favourite feelings it is difficult, but not impossible, to get out of the vortex and comment. What is the genre of my story?

My own reality is a movement story . . . it connects all the realities. It is the Jewish immigrant reality, not only movement for survival, but for a better place. It is the personal reality of a little girl dying to move and held back by asthma and a big girl reluctant to stay still and feel too much. It is the marriage and Mommy story where I have to keep doing because there is lots on the agenda to ensure everyone is happy and successful. It is also the professional story

where movement for growth and development is the politically correct positioning for a therapist, and vital positioning in the South African context, where uncertainty drives the need for options. There are behaviour patterns that confirm the ecology of movement. There is horror at being stuck, a tendency to question constantly and a push for high standards with an attendant dissatisfaction until the story improves. There is my tendency to perturb with language and use it as a vehicle for movement in conversation. There is the 'two-realities' pattern and the understanding that operating in different worlds and moving between them, works for me in my life. Furthermore, the movement theme reverberates around me; a family of origin spread all over the world; an ambitious husband; children set in a movement path, one already a student in America. I create contexts with clients where I expect movement; maybe that is universal, but if I get stuck I am poorly equipped to deal with the inertia.

There is much I hold still in order to support this organisation. There is a continuity in many relationships that may conserve energy for real movement pursuits by avoiding distractions. I hold continuity in pragmatic categories like houses, schools, my profession and community, but this does not even touch the existential core. Movement has been a responsible pursuit, perhaps too much so. It has not been anarchistic, it has not been to separate from my contexts and it has not been to stop caring. However, movement also conceals, it avoids the horrors of being trapped with difficult feelings. It could be oppressive both personally and interpersonally.

There are always challenges or I am continually inventing them. There is movement in terms of constant perturbation and the doctoral option came at a time when I was ripe for movement inwards. This thesis is a particular instance of it. The creation of a context of risk, a willingness to

depart from customary ritual, and my own willingness to break out of set patterns and so encourage others (family, clients and colleagues) to do the same. The whole thesis construed in the equation (see p. 20) is a movement intervention - of course nothing else would do. There has been a push to increase my own therapeutic nose, to fulfill the Proust quote (see p. 21) by developing new eyes. It has required new structure, or new organisation, or new narratives or new rituals or just simply new action. I had to learn from my mistakes, increase my experience of myself, and strengthen my voice. In order to move forward, I had to stay still and write and think and agonise and feel. What a cunning promoter to have choreographed the choreographer in this wicked way.

The movement story itself has not changed, but there are ~~new~~ routines in the dance. Perhaps the reader may not see them but if there are shifts they also reside in the story.

✓ ~~—~~ 'Being' raises integration and personness, whereas 'doing' implies roles and can be an avoidance, because if you keep doing you do not have to be (Whitaker, 1989). Movement perhaps concealed my entrapment by roles, however, Whitaker points out that as capability and mastery increase, greater ~~—~~ enjoyment of role means being less enslaved by it. Hopefully these are the directions of the new movement. Implicit in researching my choreography of co-existence is movement to differentiate.

— There is a sense of how to feel and then understand, rather than the old favourite of wanting to understand and then feel. This represents a new head-heart connection.

✓ ~~—~~ There is an understanding that my incompetence with stuckness emanates from needs to specify a change rather than setting a context for change, almost as if my head deserts me because of my own distress.

The thesis has been discourse changing in that the sorts of conversations embarked on were a form of intimate interaction, according to Weingarten's (1991) definition. This created the self as a proliferation of roles (Lovlie, 1992). In the case of the thesis, this led to a continual re-storying of myself - where the self can be invented - where the self is a recursion.

Awareness of preferred feelings can be seen as transitory social roles and accounted for in terms of relationship. (Gergen, 1991; Pakman, 1992). Movement through this process also means a change of feelings: a change in how emotion is appropriated and the roles I consequently take. A move from worry, confusion, uncertainty and anxiety, the old favourite feelings, to new contexts marked by intuition and reflection, and an ability to express and bring more of myself. So if I allow myself more emotion as a therapist, there develops more knowledge which can produce new emotions. Onnis (1992) speaks of the complementary couple 'emotions - knowledge' so I would read 'head - heart'.

The researcher's habits of emotional and cognitive construction create and maintain a therapeutic reality, so that movement is its existential core, its metatheme!

This research is a clinical exploration born out of curiosity about the ways of therapies and myself as therapist. It also meant learning how I learn and act. The research uses data that researchers need to move closer to, the data that therapists work with - peoples' attempts to express their lives in language (Chenail, 1990/91). So the real science of therapy and the real prosthetic device would be a basic ~~science~~ ✓ ~~science~~ of listening and talking. "The only way to narrow such a gap between the speaker's words and the listener's hearings is through conversation" (Chenail, 1990/91, p.11).

And to extend this to the many conversations, Onnis' (1992) metaphor about the Bernini columns, comes to mind:

. . .the therapist should not be satisfied with a single view-point which would render his vision and his mind rigid, but should search for various viewpoints, integrating and correlating them, aware that each of them provides a partial view of the complexity of reality. And thus the therapist, through this passage among the Bernini columns of therapy, also discovers himself. And he discovers himself more humble, but at the same time richer.

(p. 4)

This research has also been about the therapist needing support for experimentation and feedback on her own experience so that she can see herself at work. This product is not different from the process of doing it. In wondering how I had actually got to the end, I remembered the idea that the process of doing the thesis is also a *leitmotif* of the researching therapist. So the core is 'movement against all odds'. My supervisor, Ricky, who patiently nudged and confirmed the process, put it this way: "It's been the height of ecstasy and disaster". Does this describe me at work? Oh, yes!

~~Art~~ Art emerges when head and heart  
become parts of a cybernetic  
system capable of ecological  
self-correction. (Keeney,  
1983, p. 192) . . . . .  
. . . . .

## REFERENCES

- Andersen, T. (1987). The reflecting team: Dialogue and meta-dialogue in clinical work. Family Process, 26, pp.415-428.
- Anderson, H, & Goolishian, H.A. (1988). Human systems as linguistic systems: Preliminary and evolving ideas about the implications for clinical theory. Family Process, 27, 371-393.
- Anderson, H., Goolishian, H. & Winderman, L. (1986). Problem determined systems: Towards transformation in family therapy. Journal of Strategic and Systemic Therapies, 5, 1-14.
- Andolfi, M., Angelo, C., & de Nichilo, M. (1989). The myth of Atlas. New York: Brunner Mazel.
- Anolli, L. (1987). The psychologist must consider his own role. In M.S. Palazzoli (Ed.), The hidden games of organizations (pp.125-138). New York: Pantheon.
- Ashby, W.R. (1962). Principles of the self-organizing system. In H. Von Foerster & G W Zapf (Eds.), Principles of self-organization (pp.45-61). London: Pergamon.
- Atkinson, B.J. & Heath, A.W. (1990). Further thoughts on second-order family therapy - this time it's personal. Family Process, 29, 145-155.
- Atkinson, B., Heath, A., & Chenail, R. (1991). Qualitative research and the legitimization of knowledge. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17, 161-166.

- Auerswald, E.H. (1985). Thinking about thinking in family therapy. Family Process, 1, 1-12.
- Auerswald, E.H. (1987). Epistemological confusion in family therapy and research. Family Process, 26, 317-330.
- Auerswald, E.H. (1990). Toward epistemological transformation in the education and training of family therapists. In M.P. Mirkin (Ed.), The social and political contexts of family therapy (pp.19-50). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Baldwin, M., & Satir, V. (1987). The use of self in therapy. New York: Haworth.
- Baldwin., D.C., Jr. (1987). Some philosophical and psychological contributions to the use of self in therapy. In M. Baldwin & V. Satir (Eds.), The use of self in therapy (pp.27-44). New York: Haworth.
- Baldwin, M. (1987). Interview with Carl Rogers on the use of the self in therapy. In M. Baldwin & V. Satir (Eds.), The use of self in therapy (pp.45-52). New York: Haworth.
- Bandler, R., & Grinder, J. (1975). The structure of magic 1. Palo Alto: Science & Behavior Books.
- Bartlett, J. (1980). Bartlett's: Familiar quotations (p.734). USA: Little Brown.
- Bateson, G. (1972). Steps to an ecology of mind. New York: Ballantine.
- Bateson, G. (1979). Mind and nature: A necessary unity. London: Collins.
- Bentovim, A. (1993) Child abuse. Workshop presented at the 5th World Family Therapy Congress. Amsterdam, Holland.

- Bettelheim, B. (1987). A good enough parent: A book on child-rearing. New York: Knopf.
- Bogdan, J.L. (1984). Family organization as an ecology of ideas: An alternative to the reification of family systems. Family Process, 23, 375-388.
- Bouchard, M., & Guerette, L. (1991). Psychotherapy as a hermeneutical experience. Psychotherapy, 28, 385-395.
- Bruner, E.M. (1986a). Introduction: Experience and its expressions. In V.W. Turner & E.M. Bruner (Eds.), The anthropology of experience (pp.3-30). Chicago: University of Illinois.
- Bruner, E.M. (1986b). Ethnography as narrative. In V.W. Turner & E.M. Bruner (Eds.), The anthropology of experience. (pp.139-155). Chicago: University of Illinois.
- Bruner, J. (1986). Actual minds, possible worlds. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Bruner, J. (1987). Life as narrative. Social Research, 54, 11-32.
- Bruner, J. (1990). Acts of meaning. Massachusetts: Harvard University.
- Buber, M. (1965). The knowledge of man. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Cecchin, G. (1987). Hypothesizing, circularity, and neutrality revisited: An invitation to curiosity. Family Process, 26, 405-413.

- Chenail, R. J. (1990/91). Bradford Keeney's cybernetic project and the creation of recursive frame analysis. The Qualitative Report, 1, 7-14.
- Chubb, M. (1990). Looking at systems as process. Family Process, 29, 169-175.
- Collier, M.V. (1987). The differing self: Women as psychotherapists. In M. Baldwin & V. Satir (Eds.), The use of self in therapy (pp.53 - 60). New York: Haworth.
- Dell, P.F. (1987). Maturana's constitutive ontology of the observer. Psychotherapy, 24, 463-465.
- Dell, P.F. (1989). Violence and the systemic view: The problem of power. Family Process, 28, 1-12.
- Dennett, D.C. (1981). Reflections. In D.R. Hofstadter & D.C. Dennett (Eds.), The mind's I: Fantasies and reflections on self and soul. (pp.456-460). Great Britain: The Harvester.
- Derrida, J. (1978). Writing and difference. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Dreyfus, M.L., & Rabinow, P. (1986). Michel Foucault. Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics. Sussex: The Harvester.
- Duhl, B.S. (1987). Use of self in integrated contextual systems therapy. In M. Baldwin & V. Satir (Eds.), The use of self in therapy (pp.71-84). New York: Haworth.
- Dupuy, P. (1993). Women in intimate relationships. Unpublished manuscript. University of Toledo, Ohio.

- Efran, J., & Lukens, M.D. (1985). The world according to Humberto Maturana. The Family Therapy Networker, 9, 23-28.
- Efran, J., Lukens, R.J., & Lukens, M.D. (1988). Constructivism: What's in it for you? The Family Therapy Networker, 12, 27-35.
- Efran, J.S., Lukens, M.D., & Lukens, R.J. (1990). Language structure and change. USA: Norton.
- Elliot, R., & James, E. (1989). Varieties of client experience in psychotherapy: An analysis of the literature. Clinical Psychology Review, 9, 443-467.
- Epstein, E.S., & Loos, V.E. (1989). Some irreverent thoughts on the limits of family therapy: Towards a language based exploration of human systems. Journal of Family Psychology, 2, 405-421.
- Epston, D., & White, M. (1992). Experience, contradictions, narrative and imagination: Selected Papers. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre.
- Erikson, E.H. (1965). Childhood and society. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Fish, V. (1990). Introducing causality and power into family therapy theory: A correction to the systemic paradigm. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 16, 21-37.
- Foucault, M. (1986). The subject and power. In M.L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics (pp.208-226). Sussex: Harvester.
- Fraiberg, S.H., (1968). The magic years: Understanding the problems of early childhood. London: Methuen.

- Frankl, V.E. (1971). Man's search of meaning: An introduction to logotherapy. Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Friedman, M. (1965). Introductory essay. In M. Buber, The knowledge of man (pp. 11-58). London: Allen & Unwin.
- Gergen, K.J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. American Psychologist, 40, 266-275.
- Gergen, K.J. (1985b). Social constructionist inquiry: Context and implications. In K.G. Gergen & K.E. Davis (Eds.), The social construction of the person (pp.3-18). New York: Springer.
- Gergen, K.J. (1989). Social psychology and the wrong revolution. European Journal of Social Psychology, 19, 463-484.
- Gergen, K.J. (1991). The saturated self. USA: Basic Books.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Ginott, C. (1967) Between parent and child. New York: Avon.
- Goolishian, H.A., & Anderson, M. (1987). Language systems and therapy: An evolving idea. Psychotherapy, 24, 529-538.
- Goolishian, H.A., & Winderman, L. (1988). Constructivism, autopoiesis and problem determined systems. The Irish Journal of Psychology, 9, 130-143.
- Green, M. (1983). Margaret's piece. In The Jewish Women's History Group, You'd prefer me not to mention it . . . The lives of four Jewish daughters of refugees (pp. 38-61). London: North Star.

- Grinder, J., & Bandler, R. (1976). The structure of magic II. Palo Alto: Science & Behavior Books.
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1988). Do inquiry paradigms imply inquiry methodologies? In D.M. Fetterman (Ed.), Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education (pp.89-115). New York: Praeger.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). Ethnography: Principles in practice. London: Tavistock.
- Hare-Mustin, R.T. (1987). The problem of gender in family therapy theory. Family Process, 26, 15-27.
- Henriques, J., Holloway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdene, V. (1984). Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity. New York: Methuen.
- Hoffman, I.Z. (1992). Some practical implications of a social-constructivist view of the psychoanalytic situation. Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 2, 287-304.
- Hoffman, L. (1981). Foundations of family therapy: A conceptual framework for systemic change. New York: Basic Books.
- Hoffman, L. (1985). Beyond power and control: Toward a second-order family systems therapy. Family Systems Medicine, 3, 381-396.
- Hoffman, L. (1988). A constructivist position for family therapy. The Irish Journal of Psychology. 9, 110-129.
- Hoffman, L. (1990). Constructing realities: An art of lenses. Family Process, 29, 1-12.

- Hoffman, L. (1991). A reflexive stance for family therapy. Journal of Strategic and Systemic Therapies, 10, 4-17.
- Hofstadter, D.R. (1979). Gödel, Escher, Bach: An eternal golden braid. London: Penguin.
- Hofstadter, D.R., & Dennett, D.C. (1981). The mind's I: Fantasies and reflections of self and soul. Great Britain: Harvester.
- Husserl, E. (1965). Phenomenology and the crises of philosophy. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hutcheon, L. (1985). Narcissistic narrative: The metafictional paradox. New York: Methuen.
- Katz, D. (1992). Home fires: An intimate portrait of one middle-class family in postwar America. New York: Harper Collins.
- Kaye, J.D. (1983). On the exploration of client experience in counselling and psychotherapy. Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage & Family. 4, 191-200.
- Keeney, B.P. (1982). What is an epistemology of family therapy? Family Process, 21, 153-168.
- Keeney, B.P. (1983). Aesthetics of change. New York: Guilford.
- Keeney, B.P. (1990). Improvisational therapy: A practical guide for creative clinical strategies. St. Paul, Minnesota: Systemic Therapy.
- Keeney, B.P. (1991). Research. Workshop presented at the University of South Africa. Pretoria, Republic of South Africa.

- Keeney, B.P., & Morris, J.P. (1985). Family therapy practice and research: A dialogue. In L.L. Andrezzi (Ed.), Integrating research and clinical practice (pp. 98-107). Rockville: Aspen.
- Keeney, B.P., & Ray, W.A. (1992). Kicking research in the ass: Provocations for reform. AFTA Newsletter, 67-68.
- Keeney, B.P., & Ross, J.M. (1992). Mind in therapy: Constructing systemic family therapies. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Kenny, V. (1988). Constructions of self-organizing systems. The Irish Journal of Psychology, 9, 1-24.
- Kuehl, B.P., Newfield, N.A., & Joanning, H. (1990). A client-based description of family therapy. Journal of Family Psychology, 3, 310-321.
- Lewis, B. L. (1989). Self as system: A second order cybernetic perspective. Journal of Strategic and Systemic Therapies, 8, 65-72.
- Lovlie, L. (1992). Postmodernism and subjectivity. The Humanistic Psychologist, 18, 105-119.
- Madigan, S., & Law, I. (1992). Discourse not language: The shift from a modernist view of language to the postmodern analysis of discourse in family therapy. Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 1, 31-35.
- Maruyama, M. (1981a). Endogenous research: Rationale. In P. Reason & J. Rowan (Eds.), Human inquiry (pp.227-250). New York: Wiley.

- Maruyama, M. (1981b). Endogenous research: The prison project. In P. Reason & J. Rowan (Eds.), Human inquiry (pp.267-281). New York: Wiley.
- Maturana, H.R. (1975). The organization of the living: A theory of the living organization. International Journal for Man-Machine Studies, 7, 313-332.
- Maturana, H.R., & Varela, F.J. (1987). The tree of knowledge: The biological roots of human understanding. Boston: Shambala.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). Mind, self and society. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Meyerhoff, B., & Ruby, J. (1982). Introduction. In J. Ruby (Ed.), A crack in the mirror (pp.1-35). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Miller, A. (1983). For your own good: Hidden cruelty in child-rearing and the roots of violence. Great Britain: Virago.
- Miller, J.G. (1978). Living Systems. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Mitchell, S.A. (1992). Introduction symposium: "What does the analyst know?" Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 2, 279-285.
- Moon, S.M., Dillon, D.R. & Sprenkle, D.M. (1990). Family therapy and qualitative research. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 16, 357-373.
- Neill, J.R., & Kniskern, D. P. (1985). From psyche to system: The evolving therapy of Carl Whitaker. New York: Guilford.

- Onnis, L. (1992). The therapist: Who is he? From the problem of models to the problem of therapists and their emotions. Workshop presented at the First International Conference of the European Family Therapy Association. Sorrento, Italy.
- Pakman, M. (1992). Sketch for a constructivist theory of feelings: A moral choice for the practitioner. Workshop presented at the First International Conference of the European Family Therapy Association. Sorrento, Italy.
- Palazzoli, M.S., Cirillo, S., Selvini, M., & Sorrentino, A.M. (1989). Family games: General models of psychotic processes in the family. New York: Norton.
- Parker, I. (1992). Discourse and power. In J. Shotter & K. J. Gergen (Eds.), Texts of identity (pp.56-69). London: Sage.
- Pearce, W.B., & Cronen, V.E. (1980). Communication, action and meaning. The creation of social realities. New York: Praeger.
- Reason, P., & Rowan, J. (1981). Human inquiry. New York: Wiley.
- Sampson, E.E. (1992). The deconstruction of the self. In T. Shotter & K.J Gergen (Eds.), Texts of identity (pp.1-19). London: Sage.
- Satir, V. (1987). The therapist story. In M. Baldwin & V. Satir (Eds.), The use of self in therapy (pp.17-25). New York: Haworth.

- Selvini, M. (1988). The Work of Mara Selvini Palazzoli. New Jersey: Aronson.
- Shadley, M.L. (1987). Are all therapists alike? Use of self in family therapy: A multidimensional perspective. In M. Baldwin & V. Satir (Eds.), The use of self in therapy (pp.127-137). New York: Haworth.
- Shapiro, K.J. (1986). Verification: Validity or understanding. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 17, pp. 65-81.
- Shotter, J., & Gergen, K.J. (1992). Texts of identity. London: Sage.
- Sluzki, C.E. (1992). Transformations: A blueprint for narrative changes in therapy. Family Process, 31, 217-230.
- Smedslund, J. (1985). Necessarily true cultural psychologies. In K.J. Gergen & K.E. Davis (Eds.), The social construction of the person (pp. 73-88). New York: Springer.
- Stern, D.B. (1992). Rethinking analytic knowledge. Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 2, 305-316.
- Stern, D.N. (1985). The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology. USA: Basic Books.
- Tesch, R. (1990). Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools. New York: Falmer.
- Thompson, J.B. (1981). Critical hermeneutics: A study in the thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

- Tomm, K. (1987). Interventive interviewing. Part II. Reflexive questioning as a means to enable self-healing. Family Process, 26, 167-184.
- Varela, F. J. (1984). The creative circle: Sketches on the natural history of circularity. In P Watzlawick (Ed.), The invented reality (pp.309-323). New York: Norton.
- Von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). General systems theory. New York: Braziller.
- Von Foerster, H. (1984). On constructing a reality. In P. W Watzlawick (Ed.), The invented reality (pp.17-40). New York: Norton.
- Watzlawick, P. (1984). The invented reality. New York: Norton.
- Weingarten, K. (1991). The discourses of intimacy adding a social constructionist and feminist view. Family Process, 30, 285-305.
- Whitaker, C. (1976). The hindrance of theory in clinical work. In P.J. Guerin (Ed.), Family therapy: theory and practice (pp.154-164). New York: Gardner.
- Whitaker, C. (1985). Functions of marriage. In J.R. Neill & D.P. Kniskern (Eds.), From psyche to system: The evolving therapy of Carl Whitaker (pp.166-175). New York: Guilford.
- Whitaker, C. (1989). Midnight musings of a family therapist. USA: Norton.
- Whitaker, C.A., & Keith, D.V. (1979). Experiential - symbolic family therapy. In A. Gurman & D. Kniskern (Eds.), Handbook of family therapy (pp. 230-315). New York: Brunner Mazel.

- Whitaker, C., Warkentin, J., & Johnson, N. (1950). Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 20, 641-647.
- White, M. (1989, Summer). The externalizing of the problem. Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 3-21.
- White, M. (1991). Deconstruction and therapy. Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 3, 21-40.
- White, M. (1992). Family therapy training and supervision in a world of experience and narrative. In D. Epston & M. White (Eds.), Experience, contradiction, narrative and imagination. (pp.75-95). Adelaide: Dulwich Centre.
- Williams, L.M. (1991). A blueprint for increasing the relevance of family therapy research. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17, 355-362.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1971). Playing and reality. Great Britain: Penguin.
- Wolf, N. (1990). The beauty myth. Great Britain: Cox & Wyman.
- Yalom, I.D. (1975). The theory and practice of group psychotherapy. New York: Basic Books.