LIFE STORIES OF ANXIOUS PEOPLE

by

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I declare that **LIFE STORIES OF ANXIOUS PEOPLE** 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.

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SIGNATURE   DATE
(Ms M I Stanton)

ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at giving a voice to two people, constructed as anxious.

The epistemological framework is social constructionism. Two in-depth interviews with individuals who constructed themselves, or accepted the constructions of others of themselves as anxious, were done. The 'case study approach' was chosen as most suitable method to gain access to the information. 'Thematic content analysis' was the method of analysis.

The life stories of participants were reconstructed in terms of themes. Recurring themes in these life stories were elucidated and linked with the literature.

This study allowed valuable and rich information about the life stories of two anxious people to emerge. Amongst the identified themes, 'sensitivity' and the need for 'authenticity' were identified as particularly important areas for clinical practice and future research. Lay people wishing to gain a better understanding of either their own or their loved one's anxiety could also benefit from this study.

Key terms:

Anxiety; Authentic self; Case study; Constructivism; Emotional connection; Emotional independence; Emotional responsibility; Epistemology Isolation, Life stories; Modernism; Postmodernism; Purposeful sampling; Qualitative research; Research methodology; Sensitivity; Social constructionism; Thematic content analysis.

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Dedicated to the memory of my late Grandmother ,

Maria Isabella de Vaal,

who passed away on 8 November 2002

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When you die and go to heaven our Maker is not going to ask, "Why didn't you discover the cure for such and such? Why didn't you become the Messiah?" The only question we will be asked in that precious moment is "Why didn't you become you?"

Elie Wiesel

A Personal Statement

In the context of the above quote, the researcher acknowledges that this study is done as part of a personal journey that she embarked on when she commenced her studies in the field of Psychology. Her interest in Psychology was sparked by a deep seated need to know and understand herself, her world and others. She hoped to find a voice, as she often found herself voiceless, particularly in relation to the more dominant voices in the world. As her journey progressed, she learned that in order to understand herself in the world, she first needed to understand herself in relation to herself, and then in relation to others. Therefore this journey has been, and still is one in which she is learning to connect with herself, and have a voice that reflects this self, through which she can relate to others. This study is therefore part of her becoming more of herself. Through giving voice to others who, similar to herself have often felt silenced by more dominant voices, she therefore hopes to further explore that which Wiesel proposed in his quote, namely: the soul's purpose to become all that it can and/or wants to be.

Introduction

Anxiety is classified as a disorder in the American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Text Revision (2000). Punctuating from a Social constructionist point of view, anxiety and its various classifications may be said to be a co-constructed idea between a group of people considered or constructed by a dominant societal discourse as experts (Gergen, cited in Lyddon & Weill 1997). When a person is classified as anxious, it is done usually by someone who is regarded as an expert who 'knows' what is wrong with this person. This expert also knows what to do to rectify the situation and how to 'treat' the anxiety from an 'objective' viewpoint. Similarly, research into anxiety has been done from an 'objective' perspective to discover the causes of anxiety which will help the expert to prevent it and control it. However, these ideas preclude alternative possibilities. This study will be done from a collaborative stance and the participants considered as anxious will be given the space to tell their life stories. Therefore the participants themselves, rather than outside experts, will provide the information and will be regarded as the experts on their life stories with reference to their experiences of anxiety. In essence this study will aim to generate knowledge about the life experiences of two people constructed as anxious, as part of a bottoms-up process rather than a top-down process. The participants will therefore provide the clues to the researcher (and perhaps future researchers) of how to move forward in terms of clinical practice and future research. Therefore this study may provide an alternative look at or add to 'the' current and perhaps more traditional ways of viewing and treating anxiety.

Explaining the Title

The title of this study, *Life Stories of Anxious People*, will now be explained briefly. This title points to the essence of this study and sums it up as such.

In essence this study is aimed at hearing the life stories, as told by two people who construct themselves as anxious and/or have accepted others' (for example, medical professionals) constructions of them as anxious. The Collins Shorter English Dictionary (1994, p. 653) defines 'life' as: "the time between birth and the present time." Rappaport (1993, p. 240) says that in telling their stories, people give "order, coherence and meaning to events and provide a sense of history and of the future." This study is therefore geared at giving a space for these two people to share their experiences and subsequent meanings, from birth to the present time (the time of the interview). No set definition of anxiety was given to the participants. However, their participation depended on them experiencing themselves as anxious and/or if they accepted the constructions of others about themselves as anxious.

The Aim of the Study

It is the researcher's aim during this study to create a safe space in which two participants who construct themselves as anxious and seem to accept the constructions of a larger social discourse (for example medical professionals) of them as anxious, may tell their unique life stories. Through this in–depth and sensitive inquiry she hopes that rich and perhaps even 'new' understandings may emerge about the life experiences of those living with anxiety which is often pathologised within the larger societal context. Social constructionists challenge the dominant beliefs or stories that tend to dictate single accounts of reality, as they believe them to form the context for the development of problems (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Such dominant belief systems often tend to pathologise those who do not fit into the ascribed or expected norms (Rapmund, 2000). Ultimately the participants in this study may find a space in which their voice may be heard. This seems important as the dominant voices about anxiety often seem geared at attempting to rid or 'cure' people of anxiety, and thus 'enabling' anxious people to fit into the larger societal context, which therefore does not seem tolerant of anxiety. This is often done without giving room for the unique voices and personal meanings of those living with anxiety to emerge.

Although the researcher's aim is to give voice to her participants, free of judgement or prejudice, she recognises that her mere participation in the conversations, along with her analysis of the stories, is likely to colour the interview process and the final outcome of the study, with her own perceptions and story. Therefore the researcher acknowledges that the conversations with each participant, along with the final written product, will be a co-construction between her reality, that of the participants, as well as the various theoretical voices she incorporated in this study.

The Design of the Study

From the researcher's exploration of the literature, it seemed that most research about anxiety was done from a more positivistic and empirical point of view. These studies therefore seemed to be geared at finding particular causes for anxiety with the hope of generalising findings to the larger population. This seemed evident in for example the studies done by Bifulco, Harris and Brown (1992), and Weems, Berman, Silverman and Rodriguez (2002) as well as others cited in Chapter 2. Many of these studies seemed to struggle to come to any conclusive outcomes around the phenomenon of anxiety, and therefore encouraged further study. An individual's meaning making around his or her life history and his or her subsequent experiences of anxiety, therefore seemed to be a somewhat unexplored area in the literature, and thus became the inspiration for this study.

To allow for personal stories and therefore personal meaning making to emerge, this study will be done from a social constructionist perspective, which is a theoretical stance in Psychology that falls under the philosophical umbrella of postmodernism to be discussed in Chapter 3. This perspective is particularly interested "in accounts that honor and respect the community of voices inherent in each individual and [also looks at] how these accounts can be respected within a particular system" (Doan, 1997, p. 131).

As opposed to a quantitative study which would quantify the results, this study with its aims of generating information from the participants themselves, suits a qualitative

research approach. This methodology allows for an inquiry into the personal stories and meanings of persons constructed as anxious, and is less concerned with generalising findings to a larger population (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). By conversing with the participants around their life stories, the researcher may, through her interactive participation contribute to a co-constructed interview, as she may bring to the conversation parts of her reality according to her own story. After the conversations have taken place, the researcher will reconstruct their stories in terms of themes. Themes that are present in both the stories will then be discussed and related to the literature. Although the researcher recognises that the lens through which she looks at this particular point in time will be coloured by her own account of reality, she nonetheless acknowledges the importance of allowing each participant to remain the expert on his or her life story. The final presentation of highlighted themes as well as comparative themes, may therefore represent a co-construction between the researcher's reality and the participants' individual accounts of reality. Although this co-constructed reality will not be generalised to a larger population, it could stimulate a somewhat different understanding of anxiety, and may open new doors for the thinking about and 'assistance' to those experiencing anxiety.

Sampling and selection

Following from the above, the researcher will make use of 'purposeful sampling', in order to select two information rich cases, for the purpose of this study. The two participants will need to construct themselves as anxious and/or accept others' (for example medical professionals) constructions as anxious, and be willing to share their life stories with the researcher.

Collecting the information

Prior to the interview with each participant, basic personal information, for example, their age and field of profession will be requested. The method of inquiry thereafter will be an individual in-depth interview with each participant around his or her life story, in the form of a conversation. Although the conversation will be mostly unstructured to allow for spontaneous telling, the researcher may at times guide the questions in a manner so as to cover the life stages of each participant's life story. The researcher may also feel it

necessary at times to ask questions guided by her own understanding of, or experience of working with anxious people in a clinical setting. Such questions will be asked purely for the purpose of in-depth inquiry and further exploration of a topic with each participant.

Analysing the information

A 'thematic content analysis' method, will be used as the means of analysing and making sense of the information obtained during the interviews. Analysing information from a qualitative interpretive approach does not usually follow rigid rules. However, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) provide guidelines for a content analysis process, which the researcher will follow during her analysis.

In order to practically execute the study, the researcher will follow the following steps:

- After the purpose and procedures of this study have been explained to each participant, they will be asked to give written consent to their participation in this study and to the tape recording of the interviews. An example of the consent form will be included under Appendix A. The actual consent form of each participant will not be included in order to protect their anonymity. Each participant will then be interviewed individually. The times and duration of the interviews will be adjusted according to each participant's personal needs and style of speaking.
- The tape recorded interviews will then be transcribed. These transcribed interviews will be included under Appendix B and Appendix C respectively.
- Themes as identified through the researcher's lens will then be highlighted from each individual story or transcribed interview.
- The themes that are present in both stories, as identified by the researcher, will then be highlighted and linked to the literature where possible.

The Format of the Study

This study will entail both a theoretical component and a practical component.

The *theoretical part* will comprise a literature review, a discussion of the epistemological stance for this study, as well as a discussion of the research methods to be used in this study. The language in the theoretical part will have a more formal tone as it will be written in a manner that reflects the academic nature of the content.

The literature review in this study entails the researcher's exploration of the reasoning and outcomes of previous studies around the roots of anxiety. Research done from a more positivist and quantitative perspective usually includes a literature review with the aim to form hypotheses (Neuman, 1997). However, from a social constructionist perspective, ascribing to qualitative research methods, the researcher does not work with a hypothesis in the hope to generalise findings to a larger population (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The researcher instead is interested in generating information from the personal meanings of those participating in the study. The literature review is therefore geared at giving the reader a view of the researcher's exploration of the literature, and serves to provide a "background of the research" around the roots of anxiety, as well as "an alternative voice with which the emerging themes can be compared" (Rapmund, 1996, p. 10). This is done with the aim to incorporate many voices about the roots of anxiety in order to remain true to the "both/and perspective" fundamental to the postmodern epistemology.

In the *practical part* of the study, two people constructed as anxious will be given a voice as they will tell their life stories. Their voices will be added to the voices in the literature. Therefore, the reality of the participants, together with the reality locked up in the literature review will be co -constructed (Rapmund, 1996). In accordance with postmodern thinking, "reality is not external to us but is also constructed by us as we bring our own personal perceptions to bear on it and give meaning and order to it" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, pp. 10-11). A third voice and therefore a third reality, namely that of the researcher's will also contribute to the co-constructed process and outcome of this study. This part of the study will therefore be coloured by the researcher's own language, and will be written in a language that reflects a more casual and everyday manner of writing.

The Presentation of the Study

The study will be presented through means of the following chapters.

Chapter 2 will firstly comprise a discussion of anxiety in terms of the way in which it is defined in the medical context. Thereafter, the roots of anxiety will be discussed by considering the outcomes and reasonings from previous studies, along an integrative approach, which explores the biopsychosocial perspectives. As it proved difficult to divorce the 'purely' psychologically inclined studies from the 'purely' sociological inclined studies, and the researcher felt that these areas in particular mutually influence each other, this discussion will be structured in terms of the various contexts around the roots of anxiety, namely the Biological context, the Childhood context, the Societal context and the Religious context.

Chapter 3 will entail a discussion of the epistemological stance of this study. Modernism, as an epistemological stance is briefly discussed, to set the stage for the discussion on the shift away from modernism towards postmodernism in Psychology. A brief discussion of the basic concepts of postmodernism follows, after which 'constructivism' and 'social constructionism' as theoretical stances are highlighted. This is followed by an explanation around the practical application of 'social constructionism' for the purpose of this study.

Chapter 4 will describe the research method according to which this study will be done. The research design to be used as a framework for the description of the methods to be applied during this research process, will be highlighted. The characteristics of the qualitative research approach, as most suitable for this study are discussed, along with the proposed methods for obtaining and analysing the information. The information is analysed according to the 'thematic content analysis' method.

Chapters 5 and 6 will entail the reconstruction of the stories in terms of themes identified by the researcher, following careful analysis of the transcribed conversations

(Appendix B and Appendix C), between her and each participant. Each of these chapters, will be concluded with the researcher's personal reflections.

Chapter 7 will comprise the comparative analysis between the recurring themes and the links with the literature.

Chapter 8 will be the concluding chapter for this study. A brief overview and evaluation of the study is given here, along with recommendations for application in clinical practice and future research.

Conclusion

Most previous studies about anxiety seemed to seek particular reasons for the experience of anxiety and sought to generalise the findings to a larger population. Personal accounts of anxious people were missing from the literature. This study, will therefore aim to give voice to two anxious people around their unique life stories. This will be done along a social constructionist theoretical perspective using qualitative research methods. Although this study is not meant to be generalised to a larger population, the researcher hopes that rich and perhaps even 'new' understandings may emerge from the co-constructed outcome of this study, about the lives and experiences of those constructed as anxious, and often pathologised within the larger societal context.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is right for one soul may not be right for another. It may mean having to stand on your own and do something strange in the eyes of others. But do not be daunted. Do whatever it is because you know within it is right for you.

Eileen Caddy

Introduction

As it is the researcher's impression that the medical model has the most prominent voice in the literature with regards to the thinking about anxiety, the American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Text Revision (2000) (the most widely used measuring instrument in the psychiatric field today), will be used as a basis to define anxiety. The researcher will stress that participants in this study do not need to fit a particular anxiety category, as is stipulated by the DSM-IV-TR Classification system. However, participants need to have experienced anxiety as a general emotion in their lives or need to have been constructed by others (such as medical or other professionals) as being anxious to take part in the study. Therefore anxiety will be defined along the most commonly experienced subjective feelings and often accompanying physiological symptoms as referred to in the medical context. The roots of anxiety will then be traced in the literature. This will be done along the lines of various contexts. The biological context will be referred to first during which the development of anxiety will be looked at in terms of a genetic predisposition, biochemical factors and brain imaging studies. Thereafter the childhood, societal as well as the religious contexts will each be highlighted.

What is Anxiety?

Defining anxiety has proved to be a challenge as different theoretical perspectives seem to hold somewhat different viewpoints about what anxiety actually is.

The medical and psychodynamic perspectives seem to be the dominant voices in the literature with regards to defining anxiety. The researcher therefore chooses to highlight these dominant beliefs around anxiety as they seem to form the dominant current reality in terms of which anxiety is understood. First, however, it seems important to differentiate between fear and anxiety (Sadock & Sadock, 2001).

Fear is said to be "a response to a known, external, definite, or nonconflictual threat" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 591). Fear is also said to be related to a more sudden onset in the face of the observed danger (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Even though the person may experience intense discomfort in the face of observed danger, the assumption is that the person will be able to help him- or herself in such a situation, either by fighting off the danger or removing him- or herself from the situation (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003).

Anxiety refers to a response to an "unknown, internal, vague, or conflictual threat" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 591). With anxiety, the threat is believed to be within the person as the origin of the anxiety is believed to be at least partially unconscious (Meyer et al., 2003). Therefore anxiety is often described as having more of an underlying quality (Sadock & Sadock, 2003) and the cause or object of the anxiety is often not clear (Meyer et al., 2003). Persons who experience anxiety often report two prominent features. Firstly they tend to experience "physiological sensations (for example heart palpitations and sweating)" indicative of a "hyperactive autonomic nervous system" (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 150; Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 592). Secondly they report having feelings of "dread," nervousness or being frightened (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 150; Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

Feelings of anxiety and resulting physiological reactions can become present in a person's life to such an extent that the person struggles to perform daily activities. Bell-Dolan and Wessler (1994) state that those who experience anxiety are often faced with impairments that include "avoidance of feared stimuli or situations that are often important for optimal development (e.g. school, peer involvement, separation from parents), and somatic or physiological distress, which may reach the point of requiring medical attention" (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994, p. 80). In children a marked difference in their interaction with family and the peer group is often evident (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994). Those living with anxiety therefore often feel unable to function either according to their own or according to society's norms and expectations (Pollock, Rosenbaum, Marrs, Miller & Biederman, 1995). The determination or perception of particular events or situations as stressful enough to bring about continuous ongoing experiences of anxiety seems to be very individually defined. This difference is believed to be influenced by the nature of the event(s), coupled with the person's internal as well as external resources (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

According to the DSM-IV-TR classification system (2000), the diagnostic criteria for anxiety is organised according to various categories in the psychiatric community (cited in Sadock & Sadock, 2001). These categories distinguish between 'Panic Disorder with or without Agoraphobia', 'Panic attacks', 'Generalised Anxiety Disorder', 'Specific phobia', 'Social phobia', 'Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder' and 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder'.

Panic Disorder with or without Agoraphobia
The defining symptom here is the presence of panic attacks. When these panic attacks occur along with a fear of being outside, in large open spaces or between large groups of people, it is termed as 'panic disorder with agoraphobia'.

Panic Attack
This is not considered to be a disorder in itself, but is often seen as a prerequisite in order to make specific anxiety diagnoses. According to the DSM-IV-TR Diagnostic Criteria (cited in Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 151) a panic attack is seen as "a period of intense fear or discomfort in which four of various symptoms" (including heart palpitations,

sweating, trembling or shaking, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain etc.) "develop abruptly and reach a peak within 10 minutes."

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

This state involves "excessive worry about actual circumstances, events, or conflicts" (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 150).

Specific Phobia

This is seen as "irrational fear of an object" during which "the person experiences massive anxiety when exposed to the feared object and tries to avoid it" (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 150).

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

This implies that a person experiences "recurrent intrusive ideas, images, ruminations, impulses, thoughts (obsessions)" that cause intense feelings of anxiety (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p.150). In an attempt to alleviate this anxiety these persons will engage in "repetitive patterns of behaviour or actions (compulsions)" (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 150).

Post Traumatic and Acute Stress Disorder

Anxiety here is believed to be "produced by an extraordinarily stressful event," which is "relived in dreams and waking thoughts (flashbacks)" (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p.150).

For the purpose of this study no set category of anxiety will be a prerequisite for the selection of participants. As many of the experiences in the anxiety categories appear to overlap, anxiety in its broader sense and as a base emotion will be the focus. Participants in this study may group themselves or have been grouped by a professional body (i.e. psychiatrists, other medical practitioners or psychologists) into one of the categories according to the DSM-IV-TR classification system. What remains important is that the participants either construct themselves as anxious or alternatively have accepted constructions of themselves by others as anxious. Their experiences might involve "feeling panicky, sweating, experiencing tachycardia, and having difficulty

breathing" (Haack & Alim, 1991, p. 50), but might include other self-constructions as well.

The Roots of Anxiety

Anxiety appears to have been experienced by most people in differing degrees (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). This phenomenon has sparked much research in an attempt to gain a better understanding and possible reasons for anxiety and anxiety-like symptoms. Most theoretical perspectives seem to agree that apart from the presumed biochemical and genetic factors that appear to be evident, great stressors in a person's psychosocial development have been found to significantly contribute to the experience of continuous anxiety or anxiety-like symptoms (Haack & Alim, 1991).

Since Freud, the different theoretical perspectives and various theorists in psychology have therefore attempted to understand anxiety. The methods and outcomes of these studies appear to be coloured by the various theoretical lenses through which they were conducted. However, there appears to be common themes emerging from the various perspectives and the differences often seem to be merely a matter of semantics.

In the literature as well as in the psychiatric community, the 'biopsychosocial' approach is mostly used to search for the roots of anxiety. This points to an integrative approach in which anxiety and its presence in people's lives may be investigated from a biological, a psychological and a sociological perspective. From the researcher's exploration of the literature, it appeared that the majority of studies were done from a more positivist and empirical perspective. Such studies seemed to focus on finding conclusive evidence that certain life stressors or circumstances may be sure causes of anxiety and hoped to generalise their findings to the larger population. This seemed evident in for example the studies done by Bifulco, Harris and Brown (1992), Weems, Berman, Silverman and Rodriquez (2002), Yama, Tovey, and Fogas (1993) and others also cited in this chapter. In addition, studies often attempted to separate the psychological and the social areas in

their quests for finding 'causes' of anxiety. The majority of studies concluded that more research around anxiety and its roots are needed.

The researcher finds it particularly difficult to divorce the psychological and the social areas from each other as she feels that in the field of psychology these areas mutually influence each other. Therefore she will discuss the literature in terms of various contexts around the roots of anxiety. This may at times merge the boundaries between the psychological and the social or environmental aspects of human functioning. As the medical model currently has a strong voice with regards to anxiety, the biological context will therefore be referred to first.

The biological context

Being rooted in the medical model, the biological approach aims to look at the biological causes of the physiological responses that are defined as anxiety or panic symptoms. These studies look at the source of these symptoms in the neurological functioning of the human brain and also in the genetic or hereditary predisposition to later development of anxiety that people are born with. As anxiety according to the medical/biological model is classified as a disease, the aim of research from this perspective is to find a cure. Research then often looks at how medication can be developed that can alter or 'correct' the believed chemical imbalance of the brain.

A genetic predisposition for the development of anxiety is believed by many researchers to exist (Haack & Alim, 1991; Koenig, Ford, George, Blazer & Meador, 1993; Pollock et al., 1995; Sadock & Sadock, 2003; Weems et al., 2002). The genetic inheritance of anxiety and particularly panic disorder was discovered through studying twins (Haack & Alim, 1991). About 5% of people who experience "high levels of anxiety," also "have a variant of the gene associated with serotonin metabolism" (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 158). It was recently found that persons with a "polymorphic variant of the gene for the serotonin transporter, which is the sight of serotonergic drugs…produce less transporter and have higher levels of anxiety" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 595). Genetic studies have also found that a genetic link exists between alcoholism and anxiety disorders (Haack & Alim, 1991). According to Sadock and

Sadock (2001), about 50% of people who experience panic related disorders have at least one relative who also experiences anxiety. Anxiety is also often found within first–degree relatives (Pollock et al., 1995; Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

Bowlby's (cited in Haack & Alim, 1991) attachment theory may be linked with theories around separation anxiety in children, where children experience great amounts of fear when confronted with separation from their mothers or primary caregivers. He argues that the infant's nature and degree of attachment to his or her mother is due to genetic and biologically determined factors as opposed to environmentally learned responses. Difficulties with separating from the mother or primary caregiver have been strongly linked with the development of anxiety symptoms, particularly panic attacks in later life (Klein, cited in Haack & Alim, 1991).

Adult patients diagnosed with panic disorder have been found to report a history of being shy and anxious in new circumstances (Pollock et al., 1995). Such children who are behaviourally inhibited have been found to have "lower thresholds for arousal in the amygdala and hypothalamic regions" of the brain (Pollock et al., 1995, p. 749). This has led "to the hypothesis that temperamental characteristics apparent in early childhood might predict a predisposition to later childhood or adult psychopathology" (Pollock et al., 1995, p. 749). The following are temperamental characteristics: "to be irritable as an infant; shy and fearful as a toddler; and cautious, quiet, and introverted at school age, with marked behavioural restraint and physiologic arousal in unfamiliar situations" (Pollock et al., 1995, p. 749). The trait of inhibition has been linked with anxiousness in children and it is believed that this trait could have an inherited component (Pollock et al., 1995). However, one needs to be cautious in drawing final conclusions of such a nature. These temperamental characteristics could also be interpreted as symptoms underlying a mood state. Such a mood state (i.e. anxiousness or depression) may in turn be interpreted in a psychological manner as either an internal process in a person and/or a person's response to his or her environment.

Although there seems to be evidence in the literature for a genetic component in anxiety, "the exact mechanism of genetic transmission is not understood, and the complex

interaction between environment and genetic vulnerability remains unclear" (Haack & Alim, 1991,p. 51). There may be a strong link between the biological predisposition and the psychosocial/environmental factors (which will be referred to later) in a person's life. Hence the age-old question of 'nature verses nurture' continues.

Biochemical factors and studies from this perspective have elicited many theories about the causes of anxiety. In general, "peripheral nervous system approaches indicate that anxious patients, including those who experience panic and agoraphobics, have higher rates, blood flow, and skin conductance" (Haack & Alim, 1991, p. 51). Another theory holds that those who experience panic attacks "have abnormal beta adrenergic receptors" (p.52). These receptors are said to be "hypersensitive or hyperactive" (p.52).

The most recent beliefs in this regard according to Sadock and Sadock (2001, p. 157) are the following:

- Decreased levels of *ó*-aminobuttyric acid (GABA) causes CNS hyperactivity (GABA inhibits CNS irritability).
- Serotonin decrease causes anxiety; increased dopaminergic activity is associated with anxiety.
- Activity in the temporal cerebral cortex is increased.
- The locus ceruleus, a brain center of nonadrenergic neurons, is hyperactive in anxiety states, especially panic attacks.

However, there appears to be discrepancies in these theories and the research in the field of biochemical factors contributing to anxiousness and panic-like symptoms is not conclusive.

Brain imaging studies have shown some 'abnormalities' in the temporal lobes and the right hemisphere in the brain images of anxious persons (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Such studies up until now have concluded that, "some types of cerebral asymmetries may be important in the development of anxiety disorder symptoms" of specific persons (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 595). However there seems to be uncertainties surrounding the outcomes and conclusiveness around many of the findings produced by brain imaging

studies.   It cannot be said with certainty that any particular brain abnormality causes anxiety or vice versa.

Although research in terms of the biological factors surrounding anxiety seems appropriate and much needed, the focus of the current study falls on the psychological factors contributing to the experience of anxiety. As the psychological and the sociological factors in a person's life tend to mutually influence each other, it therefore seems fitting to explore these 'psychosocial' reasonings around the roots of anxiety. The researcher interprets the term *psychosocial* in terms of the psychological and the social factors (which in some studies are referred to as the environmental factors) in a person's life that mutually influence each other.   In this regard the psychosocial reasoning in the literature in terms of the childhood context will be looked at first.

The childhood context

Freud, who is often regarded as the father of psychology, appears to have discussed most psychological phenomena from the childhood context (Meyer et al., 2003). Therefore it seems appropriate to firstly give a brief description of his understanding of the roots of anxiety. This will be done with the aim to give acknowledgement to Freud's view and to set a stage from which other arguments in the literature around the childhood context can be discussed.

Freud considered the individual's psychological functioning in relation to his or her environment when he discussed how the growing child has to deal with inner conflicts, which are related to his or her environment and particularly his or her relationships with his or her parents. In this regard Freud already acknowledged the interaction between the child and his or her environment and focussed on the importance of relationships between parents and children.

According to Freud, the essence of life lies in the persons' "tendency to maximise instinctual gratification while minimising punishment and guilt" (Maddi, 1996, p. 28). The main task of the ego (the core of the person) therefore is to bring pleasure to the id's

drives (a person's own needs) whilst at the same time minimising guilt from the superego (the part of the psyche that contains the internalised moral prescription of society) (Meyer et al., 2003). According to Freud this conflict between id and superego is ongoing throughout a person's life.

Anxiety according to Freud was originally believed to be the result of a "psychological build up of libido" which refers to sexual energy (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593). He later "redefined anxiety as a signal of the presence of danger in the unconscious" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593). Therefore according to this theory anxiety is the result of "unconscious impulses (e.g., sexual or aggressive)" that attempt to surface into the conscious mind of a person (Sadock & Sadock, 2001, p. 157). Unconscious sexual or aggressive urges are thought to come into conflict with the superego which has internalised the external world's prescriptions (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). This process, according to Freud, leads to the experience of anxiety. However, the ego makes use of defence mechanisms, which evolve from this state of inner conflict, to keep these urges (accompanied by various thoughts and feelings) from surfacing into the conscious mind of the person.

Freud distinguished between *neurotic anxiety* and *moral anxiety* (Meyer et al., 2003). *Neurotic anxiety* is referred to as the ego's fear that an unconscious and forbidden drive will surface into consciousness and that such a drive will spin out of control and result in the person being punished or experiencing intense guilt (Meyer et al., 2003). In the case of *moral anxiety* the focus falls more on the ego's fear of being punished by the superego for acting on a "forbidden drive or action" (Meyer et al., 2003, p.62). It is this buildup of sexual and aggressive energy that a person has to deal with since his or her childhood years, that Freud believes causes *moral* and *neurotic* anxiety.

Neurotic anxiety or *neurosis*, is today referred to as an *anxiety disorders* in the 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders' (DSM-IV-TR) (cited in, Carson & Butcher, cited in Meyer et al., 2003). Freud argues that the roots of neurosis may be found in the notion that the ego is unable to deal with the continuous conflict between the id and superego (Carson & Butcher, cited in Meyer et al., 2003). The belief is that a

particular incident causes an underlying conflict to surface. The ego therefore "produces a symptom in a desperate effort to save the situation" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 79). In other words, should desires or memories be suppressed they will continue to be present in a person's psyche on an unconscious level and cause great levels of discomfort referred to as anxiety. The level of repression of the id's desires has a lot to do with the nature of the superego. According to Freudian and psychoanalytic theory in general, the superego is believed to be "involved with all mental disorders" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 75).

The concept of *superego-* or *moral anxiety* is understood in terms of a fear of being unable to "live up to internalised standards of moral behaviour derived from the parents" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593).   In this way moral anxiety stems from the person or child's own drives that come into conflict with the norms set by his or her caregivers or parents. The superego already starts to form from birth already. However it is during the Oedipal complex for boys and the Electra complex for girls that the superego, according to Freud, attains its final development (Meyer et al., 2003). In Freudian language, this stage of development is known as the phallic stage (between approximately 3 and 6 years of age) (Maddi, 1996). It is during this phase, that children become more aware of their bodies and those of others, particularly in terms of the genital area.

During the Oedipal complex, the young boy fears "a retaliatory parental figure, usually the father, damaging his genitals or otherwise causing bodily harm" as a result of the boy's erotic feelings toward his mother (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593). In order for the boy to deal with this conflict, and his jealousy towards the father, he needs to repress his sexual desires for his mother as well as his fears of being castrated by the father (referred to as castration anxiety) , and identify with and model his father (Meyer et al., 2003). By identifying with his father he wishes to be like his father and ends up modeling the behaviour of the father which enables him to assume "some of the father's characteristics, especially the moral codes of society that are represented by the father" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 74). By doing this the boy is granted the mother's love and respect. The boy's superego, therefore, develops in this way.

A similar yet somewhat different process is said to happen with the girl child in her relationship with her mother, and is referred to as the Electra complex (Meyer et al., 2003). It is believed that the girl realises that she does not have a penis and holds her mother, with whom she has enjoyed a loving relationship, responsible for this (Meyer et al., 2003). She also starts to envy her father for having a penis (hence the term 'penis envy') and starts to develop sexual desires for him in the hope to "acquire a penis from him" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 75). Like the boy she too represses her aggressive wishes towards her mother and her sexual wishes towards her father and identifies with the mother.

As this phase marks the final development of the person's superego, it is believed that fixation in this phase is linked to the development of "neurotic characteristics" in people (Kaplan, Freedman & Sadock, cited in Meyer et al., 2003, p. 75). In this regard Freud argues that should the "ego be too weak to handle conflict between the id and the superego effectively," (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 78) various symptoms under the umbrella of psychological disorders (which includes anxiety–like symptoms) may result.

According to Freud an ego may be unable to effectively handle the conflict between the id and the superego due to historical or contemporary reasons. Historical reasons include experiences that children may have in relation to their parents whilst growing up. For example, an overly strict superego may develop when the child identifies with a parent's overly strict rules or alternatively when a child in relation to a parent lacks the freedom to express his or her aggression (Meyer et al., 2003). This "excess aggressive energy is then used by the superego against the child itself" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 79). Contemporary reasons in turn refer to "any changes or crises that upset the person's balance between the fulfillment of drives and guilt feelings" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 79). A traumatic event in a person's life (for example a highjacking) may therefore also be grouped under contemporary reasons.

It therefore seems clear that Freud already drew the links between the individual in relation to his or her environment. In this respect he particularly pointed out how childhood experiences and children's relationship with caregivers may be important in

shaping people. Therefore the childhood context seems to be an appropriate context to start searching for the roots of anxiety.

Since Freud has drawn attention to the <u>nature of the child's relationship with his or her parents or primary caregivers,</u> this has been a main area of interest in the literature in the search for the roots of anxiety in people's childhood years. The nature and capability of children to form "an enduring emotional bond with their care takers" from birth is often referred to in the literature as *attachment theory* and has often been looked at in the search for reasons behind human phenomena such as anxiety (Weems et al., 2002, p. 160). The crux of *attachment theory* is "that adequate care initially from the natural mother and later from surrogate caregivers is crucial for later cognitive and/or emotional development" (Bifulco et al., 1992, p. 446). Although Bowlby (cited in Haack & Alim, 1991) argues that the extent to which the infant attaches to his or her mother is genetically and biologically determined, other researchers have pointed to alternative reasonings behind the nature of attachment between the child and mother or primary caregiver.

In the childhood context, Weems et al. (2002) point to the important role that learned history plays in the development of anxiety. When the child experiences the bond between him or her and the primary caregiver (often but not necessarily the mother) as loving, nurturing and responsive to his or her needs a sense of security exists in the child, which remains with the child even in the absence of the caretaker (Weems et al., 2002). So are the child's first attachments said to form a "template for future relationships…through childhood, adolescence and adulthood" (Hazan & Shaver, cited in Weems et al., 2002, p. 160). Various theorists point out that this first experience of a relationship between the baby and the mother or primary caregiver

> is believed to be transcultural and is hypothesised to influence an individual's later (i.e. adolescent and adult) cognitive response style (i.e. their relationship beliefs) in terms of the way they view themselves and others in close interpersonal relationships
>
> (Weems et al., 2002, p. 160).

In this regard it was found that people who experienced insecure attachments with their primary caregivers tend to develop "negative cognitive response styles" and they tend to struggle to make accurate interpersonal interpretations and often "display interpersonal distrust and behavioural avoidance of others" (Ruben & Mills, cited in Weems et al., 2002, p. 160). This in turn was found to "lead to distorted and selective encoding of anxiety related sensations" and thus leave them more sensitive to feelings of anxiety (Weems et al., 2002).

Linking with attachment theory, Bifulco et al. (1992) suggest that a 'critical period' exists in the early years of life during the attachment process between mother and child. An interference during this time such as loss of the mother or primary caregiver through death or separation for at least a period of a year before age 17, "is associated with a helpless cognitive set that in turn increases risk of adult affective disorder" (Bifulco et al., 1992, p. 446). The quality of the relationship between the mother and child, specifically in the first two years has been particularly associated with adult outcomes that include anxiety. The first two years of the child and the relationship with the primary caregiver during this time has also proved to be particularly important in studies done with adult children of alcoholics (ACOA's). It was found that those "ACOA's who developed serious problems later in life had experienced more stressful life events in their first two years of life" (Haack & Alim, 1991, p. 53). Such interference was identified as early risk indicators for depression and anxiety in adults. In this regard, inconsistent or inadequate "mothering" or caretaking in the early years is therefore seen as an important factor in the development of anxiety (Bifulco et al., 1992, p. 445).

However, the nature and quality of the early relationship between the mother (or primary caregiver) and child before the loss, coupled with the nature of the care given by the father (or other caregivers), as opposed to the loss itself, have been found to be more indicative of the development of depression and/or anxiety. It was also noted that the nature and "quality of early attachment" to the mother, before the age of 6, was found to correlate with the amount of "helplessness" and emotional turmoil that a child will feel after losing the mother (Bifulco et al.,1992, p. 433). It was found by Mireault and Bond (1992) that adults who had lost a parent during childhood due to death perceived

themselves as more vulnerable to further losses as they grew up. It is therefore this perceived vulnerability to loss and not so much the early loss in itself that seems to be the prominent predictor of anxiety in adulthood (Mireault & Bond, 1992). It can therefore not be assumed that all children who lose a parent as a child will be anxious as an adult. Neither that such an adult's anxiety is directly due to his or her early parental loss. The degree of his or her perceived vulnerability in terms of future loss therefore seems to be a defining factor here. It therefore appears as though the "key to later psychological well-being" lies more in "the quality of attachment" before the loss along with the quality of attachment with other caregivers after the primary caregiver's loss, and not so much in the trauma surrounding the actual loss (Bifulco et al., 1992, p. 447).

Linking with a person's perceived level of vulnerability, the perceived level of support in the family as was noted before also seems to be a key factor. It is argued that in families where one parent passed away, there may be less support as a result. This may occur as the remaining parent may be less available emotionally whilst having to deal with more responsibilities. Alternatively, the remaining parent may remarry soon and be perceived by the children as being less available (Mireault & Bond, 1992). A key theme here seems to be one of emotional connectedness between child and parent.

In order for the attachment between mother and child to be adequate, it is important to note that a mother or primary caregiver needs to be responsive to the child's needs in accordance with the child's developmental age (Bifulco et al., 1992). For example the development of a sense of mastery is particularly important for a child in the phase that Erikson terms 'industry vs. inferiority', in order for the child to gain confidence in his or her abilities (Bifulco et al., 1992; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). During this phase the child particularly needs the parent of the same sex to model age and gender-appropriate tasks and provide a safe basis from which he or she can practise such newly acquired skills.

A child's inability to move away from his or her caregivers at appropriate times such as to explore his or her environment or new found skills have been referred to as *separation anxiety*. It was found that "20% to 50% of persons with panic disorder or agoraphobia report pathologic separation anxiety as children" (Haack & Alim, 1991, p. 52). Klein

(cited in Pollock et al., 1995, p. 746) studied 32 adult patients who experienced panic attacks and found that half of them "were fearful and dependent children, with marked separation anxiety, and difficulty in adjusting to school." Klein's hypothesis entails "that childhood loss or separation difficulties could evolve into adult panic disorder with consequent agoraphobia, and that a common underlying physiologic dysfunction was the basis of this development" (Pollock et al., 1995, p 746). It was further noted that those who experienced separation anxiety in their childhood were likely to experience panic attacks in adulthood when they were confronted with separation (Pollock et al., 1995).

Separation anxiety in children is explained in terms of, attachment theory (Bowlby, cited in Haack & Alim, 1991). The relationship between the child and the caregivers needs to be of such a nature as to provide the child with feelings of nurturance, safety and protection in order for the child to be able to separate from the caregivers with the confidence that he or she can return to the safe and nurturing relationship that they have with their caregivers. Such a safe relationship in which a child can freely separate when appropriate and reconnect again with the parent or primary caregiver seems to be jeopordised when the child functions as the one in the relationship who takes responsibility for parents, who for various reasons are often unable to take parental responsibility. These children often find themselves in a position where from a young age they fear for the wellbeing of the family's physical survival or alternatively where they fear for the emotional wellbeing of the parent(s). The child therefore fears leaving the parent's side out of fear for the wellbeing of the parent or family when he or she (the child) is not there. When the child becomes emotionally responsible for a parent, due to the parent's own inability to contain his or her emotions, the child then is unable to differentiate from the parent. This is often referred to as an enmeshed relationship (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). The child therefore becomes the emotional container for the parent and may therefore not leave the parent as the parent's survival depends on the child's emotional availability to the parent. This kind of a relationship between mother and child seems to resonate with the concept of *disintegration anxiety.*

A branch of psychoanalytic theory termed object relations theory points out that *disintegration anxiety* may be present in the early years of development (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593).

> This anxiety may derive either from the fear of losing the sense of self through merger with an object or from concern that the self will fragment because others are not responding with needed affirmation and validation.

This seems to link with the humanistic-phenomenological point of view that understands anxiety as "the emotional (affective) response when the self concept is threatened" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 382). Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) argues that in order for humans to reach their full potential ('actual potential'), they need to receive unconditional positive regard from significant others. If they receive this, they develop 'self concepts' that are 'congruent' with their 'actual potential'. The development and growth of humans' self concepts, which point to "the symbolised version of the organism's experiential field," therefore depends greatly on the positive regard they receive from others (Rogers, cited in Meyer et al., 2003, p. 382). This in turn, allows humans to approve of themselves, and therefore have 'self concepts' in which they can believe. However, some people receive conditions of approval from others (for example, parents or caregivers in the case of children), which they incorporate into their 'self concepts', and are 'incongruent' with their 'actual potential'. Such people's needs for positive regard may become so strong that it may override their full actualisation potential. They may thus relate to others in a manner pleasing to them (others), through continuously incorporating others' values into their 'self concepts', at the expense of fulfilling their true potential.

When people have experiences that threaten their 'self concepts', anxiety, according to Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003, p. 382) is the resulting "emotional response." Such a person uses defences such as denial and distortions to protect the self concept "against incongruent experiences" (Rogers, cited in Meyer et al., 2003, p.383). However, the more the 'self concept' of a person is incongruent with the 'actual potential' of the person, the more the 'self concept' (which serves to make the person approved of by others) feels threatened. The person will therefore use defences to protect his or her 'self concept' and maintain the approval from others. By resorting to such defensive behaviour, the person

narrows his or her range of experience, which prevents the person from experiencing a "rich, full and exciting" life, as Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003, p. 381) describes the life of a "fully functioning person" (Rogers, cited in Meyer et al., 2003, p. 381). The person will therefore not actualise his or her full potential. In a way the authentic being of a person cannot exist as long as the person is focussed (through defences) on protecting his or her self concept, which is coloured by the conditions of significant others in his or her environment.

The nature of attachment between mother and child can therefore be related to the level of safety that the child experiences in his or her relationship with his or her parents or primary caregivers on both an emotional- and physical level. On a physical level the safety may include the necessary concrete physical nurturance such as food, shelter and protection against danger. The emotional safety may include emotional nurturance, meaning closeness and availability, as well as the space to fully express him- or herself in terms of his or her authentic self's needs. Here the theme of emotional isolation therefore seems prominent as it can be hypothesised that the quality of emotional attachment between mother and child may be related to the level of emotional connectedness vs. emotional isolation that the child experiences.

A parent's or caregiver's pathology or rigid personality traits have been found to impact on the relationship between parent or caregiver and child. In this way the nature of the child's attachment to the parent is often complexified if a parent experiences some form of emotional 'dis-ease' (such as depression, agoraphobia or social phobia) of his or her own. Parents with severe psychological or psychiatric difficulties (often referred to as psychopathology) may tend either to overprotect their children or on the other hand be unable to provide their children with sufficient protection and emotional availability and therefore be either emotionally absent or alternatively emotionally intrusive in the relationship (Pollock et al., 1995). Such parents may also find it difficult to guide their children in "acquiring adaptive coping strategies" (Pollock et al., 1995, p. 761). In this manner, an overprotective parent may struggle to allow a child to develop an ability of independence and confidence and may be reluctant to encourage his or her child when the child is hesitant or anxious (Pollock et al., 1995). The other side of the coin may suggest

a parent who is so overwhelmed by his or her own emotions that he or she is unable to provide his or her child with necessary structure and stimulation. Such a child is often left to fend for him- or herself emotionally and even tends to take responsibility for the parent's emotional wellbeing (as was highlighted earlier). The nature of attachment between parent and child may therefore be greatly compromised as the quality of this relationship may be identified by either too little or too much emotional closeness and may impact on the degree of emotional connectedness experienced between parent and child. This may in turn determine the degree to which the child feels safe and secure in relation to the parent whom he or she regards as his or her leader and protector.

In addition to the nature of the connection or relationship between child and parent or caregiver, it is also believed that children model parents' or caregivers' behaviour and acquire their ways of thinking about situations (Haack & Alim, 1991). In this way anxiety patterns in parents may be modeled to children who then learn these patterns as children, identify with their parents and imitate them (Meyer et al., 2003).

Given this theory that children model parents' behaviour, the situation seems to be complexified as was previously mentioned should parents display psychopathological behaviour to their children. According to the learning theories, the risk is therefore high that children may learn anxious behaviour as it is modeled to them by their parent(s) (Pollock et al., 1995). It is further argued that such parents may model "fear and avoidance responses" to their children when faced with "anxiety-provoking" stimuli (Pollock et al., 1995, p. 761). Underlying such behaviour is often particular cognitive beliefs that through the modeling process are also transferred to the growing child. Such passed on, incorrect, distorted and nonproductive patterns of thinking may lead to the children experiencing a range of emotional distresses (Sadock & Sadock, 2001; 2003) and ultimately lead them to behave in a rigid manner when faced with stressful situations. From such a cognitive perspective, it is believed that in some instances persons who experience anxiety may have learnt to "overestimate the danger and the probability of harm in a given situation and tend to underestimate their abilities to cope with perceived threats to their physical or psychological well-being" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 594).

Beck, cited in Bell-Dolan and Wessler (1994, p. 82) argues that persons who tend to be anxious often

> distort relatively minor risks as being dangerous, an overperception of threat that leads to the vulnerability set and danger-related thoughts. However, in contrast to the normal individual's fairly accurate appraisal of danger and appropriate responding, the anxious person's distorted perception and thoughts are maladaptive.

In addition to the nature of the relationship and the degree of safety the child feels in relation to his or her parent or caregiver, the parent's or a caregiver's emotional and psychological well-being naturally also impacts on the nature of the environment that the child grows up in. In this regard "a grossly disturbed childhood environment" has been strongly linked with anxiety and in particular with panic disorder (Haack & Alim, 1991, p. 52). As it proves to be difficult to divorce these factors (parental emotional and/or psychological difficulties and the environment the child grows up in) from each other, the impact of growing up in workaholic, alcoholic- and abusive environments combined with the impact of such parental relationships will therefore be highlighted briefly.

Studies done during the late 1980's have shown how workaholism, like alcoholism can be related to severe dysfunction in families which often include unstable family relationships and conflict in parents' marriages (Robinson & Kelley, 1998). It is also argued that due to dysfunctional family systems associated with workaholic parents, traits of depression and anxiety (that are often found in workaholic parents) can be passed onto the children growing up in such homes (Robinson & Post, cited in Robinson & Kelley, 1998).

Children of *workaholic parents* were compared with children of non-workaholic parents in terms of self-concept, anxiety, depression, and locus of control (Robinson & Kelley, 1998). It was concluded that "children of workaholic fathers not only had greater depression and external locus of control, but also scored higher on anxiety" (Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p. 223). It is argued that workaholic parents tend to be experienced by their children as emotionally and often physically absent in their lives (Robinson & Kelley, 1998). However, when workaholic parents are indeed present in the lives of their

children, they tend to place a lot of pressure on their children to meet similar standards (which are often of a perfectionist nature) as themselves of achievement (Robinson & Kelley, 1998). Particularly, driven fathers, who are often referred to as type A personalities, have been found to set higher standards for their children. Such standards are often too high for children who then soon start to internalise their perceived failures which leaves them with feelings of inadequacy or incompetence. It was also found that when children are unable to achieve at such high expected levels, such type A fathers tend to "make more critical statements and take more punitive actions than mothers or non-Type A fathers" (Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p. 232). Sons of fathers who are very driven in their work have reported that they feel accepted by their fathers if they manage to perform according to their fathers' performance expectations. These sons were found to be "more impatient and aggressive when their fathers behave in hard-driving and time urgent ways" (Yamasaki, cited in Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p. 232).

In this instance there seems to be a message of conditional love being communicated to the child. The literature states that such children are likely to "become other directed and approval seeking to meet adult expectations" (Robinson, cited in Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p, 227). These children thus often grow up to be workaholics themselves, which appears to perpetuate the cycle. In this regard the literature has shown that "workaholics exhibit greater anxiety, anger, depression, and stress than nonworkaholics…" (Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p.227).

Further more it was found that "children of jobstressed fathers evidenced a high level of aggressive behaviour" (Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p. 225). In clinical practice, aggression in children is often regarded as an indicator of an underlying mood component for example depression and/or anxiety. Linking with this, "an unsupportive family climate and lack of positive familial affiliation have been linked empirically with children's anger and hostility" (Woodall & Matthews, cited in Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p. 225).

The effects of growing up with an *alcoholic parent* and therefore growing up in an alcoholic environment have also been a topic of interest in the literature. Adult children

of alcoholics (ACOA) as a risk group for developing symptoms such as anxiety and depression or other psychiatrically classified disturbances have been the focus of multiple studies, as was pointed out earlier (El-Guebaly, Stanley, Leckie & Koensgen, 1992; Haack & Alim, 1991; Robinson & Kelley, 1998). In the literature, coupled with clinicians' experience in practice, it is suggested that an increase of anxiety and panic disorders appear to exist in alcoholic families (Haack & Alim, 1991; Robinson & Kelley, 1998). There therefore seems to be evidence that children who grew up with alcoholic parents may be more likely to experience anxiety (Haack & Alim, 1991). Although a parent's or caregiver's alcohol abuse may have a direct impact on the nature of the relationship the parent or caregiver has with his or her child, the environments in which alcohol abuse occurs have been found to subject the growing child to various "psychological stressors such as unstable environments, explosive relationships, and family strife" (Haack & Alim, 1991, p. 53). In addition, the environments in which alcohol is abused by parents have often been associated with "divorce, separation, spousal abuse, and poor parental modeling" (Haack & Alim, p. 53). These have been found to be stressors that correlate with anxiety in children growing up in such environments. In addition to anxiety, parental alcoholism has also been associated with "low self-esteem, external locus of control and higher levels of depression" (Robinson & Kelley, 1998).

Wilson and Orford (cited in Haack & Alim, 1991) note a variety of factors that may contribute to various different experiences of the parent's drinking and the impact thereof on the children growing up in such a home. These factors include the

> degree and type of exposure to parental drinking and variation in its impact; effect of parental drinking on the child's mood and the atmosphere of day-to-day family life; the presence of significant others who may cushion the children from the impact of parental drinking; the presence of violence and fear in the home; and the role and family task arrangements that the children may assume due to parental drinking

<div align="right">(Haack & Alim, 1991, pp. 52-53).</div>

The relationship between a parent's or caregiver's alcohol problems and the later development of anxiety in the offspring seems to vary and findings in this regard do not seem conclusive (El-Guebaly et al., 1992).

Abuse in general has been found to be related to emotional problems that includes depression and anxiety (Portegijs, Jeuken, Van der Horst, Kraan & Knottnerus, 1996). *Physical and/or sexual abuse* were found to be strongly present in the histories of those experiencing panic and anxiety symptoms (Haack & Alim, 1991; Portegijs et al., 1996). However, physical abuse is often hard to determine as it is difficult to distinguish physical abuse from "the well-deserved spanking most of us have had" (Portegijs et al., 1996, p. 9). Still, *physical abuse* in childhood has been related to depression and anxiety, and is considered to hold similar consequences as sexual abuse (Portegijs et al., 1996).

Sexual abuse seems to have received greater focus in the literature. Therefore this discussion will continue with more of an in depth look at *sexual abuse*. However, this is done with the understanding that there may be similarities in terms of the relational dynamics between parent and child, the childhood environments, as well as later outcomes in the context of both forms of abuse.

In a study that looked at the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and later symptoms of anxiety and depression in women, a correlation seemed to exist (Yama, Tovey & Fogas, 1993). Three themes seem prominent during sexual abuse, firstly the nature of the relationship between parent and child which points to the parent's (in)ability to provide the child with a physically and emotionally safe environment. This is complexified even more when the sexual abuse occurs between child and biological parent, as it communicates an unsafe and intrusive relationship for the child in relation to his or her parent. This links with what has been referred to earlier in terms of how the parent's own pathology impacts on his or her relationship with his or her child and the level of connectedness between them. Secondly the theme of the child not being in control and therefore being controlled (in this case by the parent) seems prominent here. This theme regarding the degree to which a child feels in or out of control in his or her environment has been linked to anxiety and will be referred to later. Thirdly the theme of

not being able to differentiate from the parent and develop a sense of self seems prominent here too. This factor links with the previously mentioned 'enmeshed relationship' in which the child tends to be responsible for the parent's emotional and even sexual needs, leaving the child emotionally unnurtured and in essence emotionally and physically unsafe.

In addition to the impact that the sexual abuse per se has on the relationship between child and caregiver and ultimately on the child, the larger family environment in which sexual abuse occurs (as was found with alcoholism and workaholism) has also been found to be important. A large body of literature done on families in which sexual abuse occurs indicates "that victims of sexual abuse come from families that are clearly disturbed and have multiple problems" (Herman, cited in Yama et al., 1993, p. 136). Many theorists have pointed out that these victims often perceive their own families as dysfunctional (Yama et al., 1993). Such families also tend to engage in overall "maladaptive patterns of interaction" which often maintain symptomatic behaviour across generations (Madonna, Van Scoyk & Jones, cited in Yama et al., 1993, p. 136). It is further argued that such 'dysfunctional' interactional patterns may impact negatively on later psychological functioning even in the absence of sexual abuse being present in the family. The impact of a negative family environment in totality was therefore found to be a contributing factor in the development of later anxiety or other symptoms (Yama et al., 1993).

Therefore parents' or caregivers' emotional difficulties or personality characteristics as was referred to above may impact on the relationship between parent and child and contribute greatly to what the child takes from the relationship. The nature of the relationship between parent and child in turn also shapes the kind of environment that the parent is able to create for a child and in essence also determines the degree to which the child feels safe and secure in his or her environment.

A child's predisposed sensitivity has been noted to contribute greatly to the way in which he or she may experience various childhood events or stressors (Jung, cited in Aron, 2004). Jung (cited in Aron, 2004) argues that about 20% of humans and other

living beings have a natural sensitivity about them, which he refers to as 'congenital or innate sensitivity' and is therefore present at birth. They tend to pick up on the subtle distressful or threatening cues between people. Such sensitive people, as children, may experience similar childhood events as non-sensitive people, but those who are innately sensitive are likely to develop more depression, anxiety and shyness in response to certain life stressors (Aron, 2004). Such people, as children, may also be more tuned in to underlying positive or negative messages from caregivers, which may in turn impact on the interaction between them and their later interactions with others. It is further argued by Perera, (cited in Aron, 2004, p. 351) in terms of 'The Scapegoat Complex', that "[i]ndividuals who are overstimulated by parental needs or who are especially sensitive by nature may perceive both pain and pleasure intensely."

Jung, (cited in Aron, 2004) noted that people who identify themselves as sensitive often function according to strong intuitive abilities. Aron (2004), further noted that in addition to strong intuitive characteristics, sensitive persons also tend to be introverted. However, she also noted that not all introverted people are sensitive and vice versa. In addition to those who know themselves to be highly sensitive, she noted the following probable indications for sensitivity: "being easily overloaded by stimulation or bothered by intense stimuli such as loud noises, scratchy clothing, harsh lighting, or strange odours...sensitivity to pain" (Aron, 2004, p. 356). Jung identifies highly sensitive people as tending to experience a sense of difference from the 'norm'.

> A sensitive and somewhat unbalanced person, as a neurotic always is, will meet with special difficulties and perhaps with more unusual tasks in life than a normal individual, who as a rule has only to follow the well-worn path of an ordinary existence. For the neurotic there is no established way of life, because his aims and tasks are apt to be of a highly individual character. He tries to go the more or less uncontrolled and half conscious way of normal people, not realizing that his own critical and very different nature demands of him more effort than the normal person is required to exert. ...So it comes about that there are many neurotics whose inner decency prevents them from being at one with present-day morality and who cannot adapt themselves so long as the moral code has gaps in it which it is the crying need of our age to fill

(Jung, cited in Aron, 2004, pp. 348-349).

Jung (cited in, Aron, 2004, p. 349) argues that such a highly sensitive and/or neurotic person is ill, "because he has not yet found a new form of his finest aspirations." Aron (2004, p. 349) also makes note of Jung's implication that such aspirations are often "unique and spiritual."

Socioeconomic factors such as 'economic instability' and 'undersocialisation' (which often, but not necessarily goes hand in hand with alcohol and sexual abuse environments) often bring about an unstable environment which may elicit low–self esteem in children growing up in such environments and have been linked with anxiety in children (Haack & Alim, 1991). An unsafe emotional environment for the child seems prominent here too and may be linked with the nature and quality of the child's relationship with the parents or caregivers, which in turn disputes the parents' or caregivers' ability to provide the child with a safe and predictable environment.

A child's feeling of being powerless in his or her environment has sparked arguments around the notion that it is not necessarily a particular stressor (i.e. an alcoholic parent or low socio-economic circumstances) that determines the later development of anxiety but rather the degree to which a child at first and later as an adult feels in or out of control, that needs to be looked at. It is argued that children who grow up in environments where stressors such as those mentioned above occur, may easily feel out of control, powerless, and hopeless which they may internalise and which may predispose them to feel these emotions in future situations (Beck, cited in Yama et al., 1993).

However it needs to be noted that in the context of sexual abuse for example, this experience in itself implies power or control issues as it is by nature an act during which the child experiences physical and emotional intrusion which naturally creates a situation in which the child may feel helpless and powerless (Finkelhor & Browne, cited in Yama et al., 1993). In this way the child may experience his or her relationship with the parent or caregiver as one in which he or she is powerless and in the control of someone on who he or she is dependent for his or her survival.

This naturally also extends to the environment in which the child grows up, in that when his or her parents or caregivers are unable to provide him or her with a safe environment, he or she may also experience feelings of being out of control. In the case of an alcoholic parent the child may continuously be faced with an environment in which he or she cannot depend on the parent's consistent care, as alcoholics' availability and trustworthiness tend to fluctuate in correspondence with their drinking habits. Being unsure of where the child stands with a parent and a parent's ability to provide for him or her, may therefore result in the child experiencing a great degree of powerlessness.

Following from the above, the same reasoning can apply to parents who do not necessarily sexually abuse their children or abuse alcohol, but who on an emotional level, as was highlighted before, engage with their children in ways that may leave them feeling either over controlled or under nurtured. The former situation may leave the child experiencing an environment in which he or she is unable to explore and express the totality of him- or herself as he or she is so rigidly bound by the parents' rules. The latter situation may leave the child experiencing an environment in which no structure or guidance is provided and he or she is left to fend for him- or herself. Both these scenarios in their extreme forms may therefore threaten the child's existence, leave him or her feeling powerless or out of control and may contribute to the development of anxiety.

In addition to children's feelings of being in or out of control and its relationship to anxiety in the childhood context, Fiske, Morling and Stevens (1996) have also looked at this matter in terms of the larger social context, which will be referred to next.

The societal context
        In terms of power and control, it has been found that persons, particularly those who present with panic disorder "often have thoughts of loss of control and fears of dying that follow inexplicable psychological sensations (such as palpitations, tachycardia and light-headedness)" before or during the panic attack (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 594). Fiske et al. (1996) propose that anxiety's roots may be found in society when social structures are of such a nature that they "threaten people's core motives" and "basic human needs" (Fiske et al., 1996, p.122). In this regard "structures of social control can

make powerless people anxious by threatening basic motives for competence, control and self-esteem" (Fiske et al., 1996, p.115). However the extent of powerlessness may differ from person to person as the degree of control from the person in the power position may differ (Fiske et al., 1996).

In addition, individual feelings of powerlessness over the success or failure of a task's outcomes also tends to make a person feel vulnerable in terms of their level of competence and ability to be in control. Dépret and Fiske (cited in Fiske et al., 1996, p. 116) define power "as the control over other people's outcomes and powerlessness as the lack of sole control over one's own outcomes." In this regard it is argued that people who experience that their outcomes are controlled by others "may feel too anxious to cope and may abandon control-resorting strategies" when faced with such powerful others (Fiske et al., 1996, p. 116). A person's attributional style therefore seems to play a big part in how a person experiences and/or deals with societal attempts for control.

Attributional style refers to the manner in which persons "perceive and describe causality in the world" (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994, p. 80). A person's attributional style therefore greatly determines how he or she engages with and experiences the larger societal context. The nature of a person's attributional style has been associated with depression, self-concept, motivation and other emotional characteristics (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994). The "literature supports a relationship between anxiety and negative attributional style, with negative attributions most strongly related to social anxiety" (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994, p. 79). It is further argued that as a person's attributional style is believed to greatly contribute to the way in which he or she will interact in the world, it will therefore influence how a person will experience and deal with societal attempts for control.

One of the factors that influence attributional style is a person's *locus of control* (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994). Those who tend to be directly influenced by the external world's demands are said to have an *external locus of control* and those who prove to be more able to rely on internal resources in spite of external demands are said to have an *internal locus of control*. A person's subjective perception of his or her ability to be and

remain in control in a particular situation (Anderson & Arnoult, cited in Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994) seems important for optimal emotional functioning. In addition, the stability of a person's locus of control over time and how wide this range is across various situations has also been found to be important (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994).

In this way it can be argued that family structures and the different roles that parents or siblings in authority positions play in families can mimic social structures in such a way that some of the family members' basic needs and core selves may be threatened as they may be placed in the powerless position in relation to the other members. In such a position the formerly mentioned members (for example the child who is desperately trying to meet the demands of his or her perfectionist workaholic parent, or the spouse who is abused) may experience a sense of voicelessness and subsequently feel emotionally isolated. Various symptoms of which anxiety may be one can therefore be experienced by the indicated member. This reasoning links with family therapy theorists' thinking in that a symptom is a way of dealing with a relationship and/or relationships in a system (Jackson & Haley, cited in Vorster, 2003). It is often also through this symptom that a person can regain a sense of control.

A sense of relatedness and belonging in a group have been found to be linked with anxiety. According to Stevens & Fiske (cited in Fiske et al., 1996, p. 116) all human motivation can be looked at in terms of "maintaining relatedness to others in the social group." Leakey (cited in Fiske et al., 1996, p. 116) points out that "group membership is essential to human physical survival from infancy onward." In this regard many theorists in both psychology and sociology have argued that it is a person's subjective experience that he or she belongs securely to a group that is correlated strongly with his or her survival and well-being (Fiske et al., 1996). People are likely to feel anxious when their subjective experience of belonging to a group and/or their skills to remain as members of a group is threatened (Fiske et al., 1996). In order for persons to feel securely part of a group they also need to feel "competent,…good and worthy" and have a "sense of the world as a benevolent place" (Fiske et al., 1996, p. 116). However, continuous feelings of powerlessness may influence the manner in which persons evaluate themselves which

may in turn impact on their self–esteem and also influence their perception of the world as a benevolent place.

The religious context

Religion and its relationship with anxiety have also fascinated theorists since Freud's era. Freud frequently "commented on the neurotic aspects of religious beliefs and behaviours, emphasising that these engender repression of natural drives, which increase intrapsychic conflict and thus anxiety" (Freud, cited in Koenig et al., 1993, p. 321). Freud along with other theorists have noted that "the religious person is portrayed as inflexible, conforming, prejudiced, and emotionally unstable, dwelling in a world of fantasy and illusion" (Koenig et al., 1993, p. 322). It can therefore be hypothesised that a feeling of being constrained by outside prescriptions of 'how to be' may be related to anxiety.

Jung, however regarded religious practices and beliefs as valuable for people's healing. He (cited in Koenig et al., 1993, p. 322) wrote:

> Among all my patients in the second half of life – that is to say, over thirty-five there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.

This debate around the relationship between religion and a person's emotional health still seems to continue as some theorists argue that "religiousness engenders neurosis and increases anxiety," whilst others contend "that religion buffers against and relieves anxiety" (Koenig et al., 1993, p. 321). However, little research exists that can shed light on how come "religion may be unhealthy for some kind of individuals and beneficial for others" (Koenig et al., 1993, p.322). Most information in this regard was gained from testimonies given by anxious people with regards to their religiousness and non-religiousness. But, it is argued by Pollock et al. (1995) that such testimonies are to be criticized as they are not 'objective' and are thus filled with personal bias. Some studies, however concluded that "religiosity" in people diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive

Disorder (OCD) "was significantly and positively related to severity of OCD symptoms" (Koenig et al., 1993, p, 338).

Two factors playing a role in the search for the relationship between religion and anxiety were found to be 'age' and 'the particular religious characteristics'. Religion was found to positively relate to anxiety among young adults and not so much in older adults. In addition, Koenig et al. (1993) point out that young adults ascribing to more fundamentalist kinds of religious beliefs and practices who struggle with issues on a moral and familial level, as well as issues around sin and the like may be more prone to anxiety. Linking with this, anxiety has been found to be "higher among those at either end of the religious fundamentalism spectrum" (Koenig et al., 1993, p. 337). Hence the question, why do "some religious beliefs promote anxiety and others offer protection"? (Koenig et al., 1993, p. 340). In the literature this answer seems to be inconclusive and nonetheless complex. Those who do not consider themselves 'born again' were also found to be more anxious.

When people engage in religious activities in an interpersonal manner, they seem less likely to feel anxious (Koenig et al., 1993). Those who engaged in more isolated and individual activities for example watching religious programs on television or reading the Bible by themselves were found to correlate more with experiences of anxiety (Koenig et al., 1993). In addition, higher rates of anxiety was found to occur amongst those who infrequently attend religious gatherings (Kierkegaard, cited in Koenig et al., 1993). These results may be understood in "terms of increased social support and social and cognitive integration" that tends to occur during religious gatherings and interactions (Koenig et al., 1993, p.339). Those who have no religious affiliation were found to be vulnerable (Koenig et al., 1993). The crux here therefore seems to entail what Kierkegaard (cited in Koenig et al., 1993) points to as, having a subjective experience of "a 'defining relation'" (Koenig et al., 1993, p. 339). Kierkegaard (cited in Koenig et al., 1993, p. 339) states that "various syndromes that we now define as anxiety disorders can evolve when lack of such a relationship exists."

The connection between anxiety and religion therefore is of a complex nature and requires further study (Koenig et al., 1993). Two themes and their relationship with anxiety however seem to have emerged. Firstly the theme of emotional isolation and loneliness and its relationship with anxiety seems prominent in these findings. Secondly the theme of feeling constrained/controlled by rigid laws that prescribe one set 'way of being' and its relationship with anxiety also seems evident.

Conclusion

This discussion mostly reflected the researcher's construction of the literature around anxiety as it has been looked at from the modernistic point of view. Anxiety was therefore observed from an objective viewpoint which did not include the constructionist view that allows for subjectively constructed meanings. However, although the modernistic reflection is not the only voice on anxiety, it was nonetheless an important voice to include.

In the literature, the search for the roots for anxiety has been along a 'biopsychosocial' approach. In the biological context a genetic predisposition for the development of anxiety is believed by many researchers to exist. In the literature, evidence exists that biochemical imbalances in the brain cause anxiety. However, this research does not seem conclusive or exhaustive. There also seems to be uncertainties surrounding the outcomes and conclusiveness around many of the findings produced by brain imaging studies.

In the childhood context, difficulties with separating from the mother or primary caregiver have been strongly linked with the development of anxiety symptoms, particularly panic attacks in later life. This points to the fundamentals of attachment theory and appears to have support in the literature for both genetic and psychological components. Throughout the literature the relationship that the child has with his or her caregivers or parents from birth, appears to be important. The nature of this relationship may be influenced by psychological or psychiatrical difficulties experienced by either of the parents. This in turn may influence the first experiences a child has of a relationship

with another as well as his or her environment. The emotional and physical safety that a growing child experiences in his or her relationship with parents or caregivers also seems to be linked with the development of anxiety. The nature of the relationship between child and parent naturally extends to the child's environment and determines to what extent the child may feel in or out of control and therefore secure in his or her environment. The degree to which a child feels in or out of control may also influence the degree of safety he or she feels with a parent or caregiver. This in turn tends to influence the degree of security that he or she feels in relation to a parent both physically and emotionally, and includes the extent to which he or she is free to express him- or herself in the relationship. The relationship between child and caregiver or parent therefore tends to influence the growing child's learned behaviour responses, cognitive functioning and overall emotional health. This may extend to other contexts in the child's life as he or she grows older, and influence how he or she as an adult engages with others in his or her environment. Some people also tend to be innately sensitive beings and seem to be more affected by childhood or other stressors than those who are less sensitive. These sensitive people also tend to be more in touch with underlying positive or negative messages from caregivers (at first) and later on between others.

In addition, the way in which people interact with each other has also been found to contribute to emotional well-being. In this context the degree to which people feel in or out of control in their social environments along with the degree to which they experience being connected with others have been associated with anxiety. Prominent in the literature regarding the 'psychosocial' roots of anxiety, therefore appears to be the level of emotional connectedness with others (with caregivers in the case of a child). This appears to imply both emotional isolation vs. emotional exploitation, which in both instances appears to leave a person or child feeling unprotected or faced with not being able to be true to themselves and fully express themselves in a particular relationship or context. The inability for a person to be who he or she essentially is and to give expression to that, in turn tends to perpetuate feelings of being out of control and has also been associated with the development of anxiety. These experiences seem to impact even more greatly on those who have an innately sensitive being.

In the religious context it seems as though some religious beliefs tend to contribute to some people experiencing anxiety whilst other beliefs tend to offer a sense of peace or protection to some. What seems important in this context is that those who experience a sense of relatedness through their religious beliefs and/or practices were found to be less anxious. Secondly, there appears to be a correlation between the level of rigidity in a particular religious orientation and the degree of anxiety that may be experienced by a person adhering to that religion.

Although evidence exists for strong biological, psychological and sociological factors contributing to the experience of anxiety, these factors seem to mutually influence each other in a somewhat complex manner. Therefore further research is recommended in the literature.

CHAPTER 3

EPISTEMOLOGY

Power comes from understanding that wherever others are is where they need to be, and whatever they are doing is for their highest growth, and you should not judge it. Totally accepting other people's reality invigorates your own progress, because judgement holds you back to the baser physical levels.

Stuart Wilde

Introduction

In this chapter the term 'epistemology' will be defined first. Modernism, as an epistemological stance, will then be highlighted in order to set the stage for the discussion on the shift away from modernism towards postmodernism in Psychology. The basic principles of 'general systems theory' and 'second order cybernetics' will then be referred to in order to provide the reader with a more comprehensive picture of the move towards postmodernism. A brief discussion of the fundamental concepts of postmodernism will follow after which 'constructivism' and 'social constructionism' as theoretical stances will then be highlighted. Lastly it will be explained how 'social constructionism' will be applied to this study.

Defining Epistemology

According to the new Imperial Reference Dictionary (cited in Botha, 1988), the term 'epistemology' is derived from two Greek words, 'epistèmé' meaning knowledge, and 'logos' meaning reasoning. Vorster (2003, p. 17) points out that the concept epistemology, was originally a philosophical notion that "referred to a set of analytical and critical techniques that defined boundaries for the process of knowing."

Bateson (cited in Fourie, 1998) points out that the shared way in which scientists think about the world refers to their epistemology. Bateson, (cited in Vorster, 2003) was concerned about the notion of epistemology and spent a vast amount of time thinking about a theory of epistemology. He (cited in Vorster, 2003, p.17) defines epistemology as

> a branch of science combined with a branch of philosophy. As science, epistemology is the study of how particular organisms or aggregates of organisms *know*, *think* and *decide*. As philosophy, epistemology is the study of the necessary limits and other characteristics of the process of knowing, thinking, and deciding.

Becvar and Becvar (2000) refer to epistemology as philosophic assumptions about the world. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 157) state that

> *Epistemology* asks, how do I know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? Every epistemology…implies an ethical – moral stance towards the world and the self of the researcher.

In this study, therefore epistemology is understood as the framework that will inform the researcher's knowing, reality and decisions. The postmodern epistemological stance, and in particular social constructionism, will be the framework from which this study will be approached. Postmodernism and social constructionism will be discussed later in the chapter. In order to set the context, a discussion of modernism follows.

The Newtonian or Modernistic Epistemology

The modernistic epistemology is also known as the Newtonian epistemology. It rests on the belief that knowledge can be obtained objectively and known universally (Lyddon & Weill, 1997; Lynch, 1997). It is within this modernistic epistemology that scientists and philosophers such as Aristotle, Descartes and Newton shared a thinking in which they believed that there is a true nature of things out there; a true reality that ought to be investigated and understood (Fourie, 1998). In their quest for understanding and

ultimately controlling reality, modernistic thinkers ascribe to three fundamental beliefs namely, *reductionism*, *linear causality* and *neutral objectivity* (Fourie, 1998). These fundamental beliefs link with each other but will be referred to separately.

Reductionism

This assumption points to the Newtonian notion that an observed object or phenomenon needs to be broken up into its constituent parts in order to measure, understand and rebuild it (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Schwartzman & Simon, cited in Fourie, 1998). The aim of reductionism, therefore is to ultimately understand the whole (Schwartzman & Simon, cited in Fourie, 1998) and to "uncover the laws according to which the world operates" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 4). The assumption is that this procedure will lead one (researchers and/or observers of phenomena) to those absolute truths about the reality out there that need to be discovered (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). Once this reality is discovered, one is able to make certain inferences and predictions about human behaviour. Therefore one is then able to control and bring about change in a particular direction. This ultimately allows one to gain control over the world in which we live, as well as its inhabitants.

For example, if anxiety is understood to be "related to multiple conflicts" within a person "at various developmental levels" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593), anxiety can be broken up into various conflicts and traced back to the different developmental stages of a person's past. After these smaller parts have been identified, it is therefore believed that researchers can conclude that particular events and sequences of events (such as loss of a parent at age four or an alcoholic father), will lead to particular inner conflicts, which will again lead to anxious feelings and corresponding behaviours. Therefore once anxiety has been understood an intervention can be made to effect change in a particular direction. The way in which particular events are believed to result in other events and ultimately phenomena such as anxiety and anxiety-like behaviour, point to the next modernistic premise termed *linear causality* and will be referred to next.

Linear causality

The second assumption underlying modernist thinking implies a *cause and effect* notion, and holds that a particular 'new behaviour' or outside 'correction' (*cause*) will result in a predictable outcome (*effect*). In other words there is the belief that one part or element causes the other (Fourie, 1998). This cause and effect philosophy implies that should one be able to answer the question, 'Why?', then one will be able to solve the problem at hand (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). However, in order to answer the question, 'Why?', one often needs to trace the sequences of cause and effect events in history as is done during the process of reductionism. This is believed to lead to a better understanding of particular outcomes in the present.

For example researchers can study a population of anxious people and find that according to the norm of the sample there have been particular life events resulting in anxiety. In this way a conclusion can for example be made that should a person experience particular life events such as growing up with an alcoholic parent or losing a parent at a particular age, he or she is destined to become anxious. Such findings or conclusions are often measured against a normative standard. Anxious behaviour resulting from such past events can therefore be termed dysfunctional and is usually generalised to a larger population regardless of other factors unique to each person's context. This cause and effect reasoning therefore tends to limit alternative possible outcomes of people's reactions to these particular life events. The same cause and effect reasoning is often applied to design studies that search for solutions to eliminate 'problems' such as anxiety in an attempt to make individuals more 'functional' and ultimately aim to make the person fit within the norm. Such found 'solutions' also tend to make little room for different outcomes on different people. Various theorists including Durrheim (1997, p. 175) refer to this way of thinking about the world as a "utopian vision of modern psychology" which as a science with modernist premises, "planned to predict and control human behaviour."

Neutral objectivity

Thirdly, the assumption of neutral objectivity refers to the belief that one can and should observe phenomena *objectively* (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). This implies that

the observer stands separate from that which is being observed or researched and does not exercise any influence over it whatsoever (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). Such an objective stance to observation and/or research leads the observer to find or see, that which is believed to be the ultimate truth (Colapinto, as cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). In essence this modernistic belief holds that a "single, stable and knowable reality" does exist (Gergen & Neimeyer, as cited in Lyddon & Weill, p. 76). This "reality and the theories about this reality are seen as either/or, black or white, right or wrong explanations" of the world (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 4). The mind, is believed to exist independently from this reality, which allows the observer to observe reality without also influencing it (either through his or her own values or perceptions) during the act of observing it (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). For example the researcher/therapist is believed to have an objective view about a particular person's situation and/or behaviour, so much so as to measure certain behaviours according to an 'objectively attained norm' and ascribe certain terms such as, 'dysfunctional' to them. It is then believed that one is able to dictate a new or alternate behaviour to a person that will alter the behaviour and make it fit closer to the norm, which is believed to be more functional. This is done whilst believing that the researcher's/therapist's choice of behaviour is attained through objective means, meaning that it is free of any personal values or standards. Secondly it is believed that the nature in which the researcher/therapist introduces this alternative to the person, can be done in an objective manner.

Fourie (1998) writes of the growing confidence that Newtonian scientists, particularly in the field of physics, attained by the end of the 19th century. Their confidence was of such a nature that they "believed that the basis for understanding the universe was virtually complete" (Fourie, 1998, p. 12).

The thinking in the human sciences was also influenced by the Newtonian epistemology which, as was highlighted above, looked at how human behaviour could be reduced to its basic parts and how these parts could be linked to each other through cause and effect (Fourie, 1998). As psychologists and researchers in the field of psychology hoped to gain the same recognition for their work as other scientists did, with what they believed to be a value–free and objective science, they too embraced these methods in their attempts to

explain human phenomena (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). This is how the focus in psychology became the "individual and the individual's specific behaviours or the internal events of the human mind" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 5). However, in spite of this growing confidence, prominent modernistic physicists such as Einstein, Planck and Heisenberg started realising a growing lack in the pure Newtonian way of thinking in order to understand more complex phenomena in the world (Auerswald, cited in Fourie, 1998). These Newtonian or modernistic scientists drew mankind's attention to the "interconnected dynamic system of relationships," which "led to a completely different view of the universe" (Fourie, 1998, p.12). A questioning of that which was once unquestionable started and sparked the emergence of thinkers with a more 'holistic' approach towards phenomena.

The Move Away from Modernism

With the shift away from modernism a focus on the interconnectedness of parts and on patterns became important. In addition the context in which phenomena occurred, was considered important for the first time. This sensitivity to the context also influenced the manner in which those in the field of psychology considered human behaviour. Following from these realisations, the possibility of objective observation was questioned and sparked a debate around the neutrality of the observer (Fourie, 1998). Hence the shift toward a new epistemology began.

Two ways of thinking emerged from this shift, namely 'general systems theory' or 'simple cybernetics', and 'second–order cybernetics' or 'cybernetics of cybernetics'. These movements mark the shift away from the Newtonian or modernistic epistemology towards the postmodern epistemology in the field of psychology.

To illustrate how the nature of thinking about the world particularly regarding the neutrality of the observer changed, general systems theory will be briefly highlighted after which second order cybernetics will be discussed. This is important for this study as postmodernism and social constructionism both believe that how we observe is coloured

by the lens through which we look. An objectively knowable reality and therefore an objective stance to observation is believed to be unlikely according to postmodernism and social constructionism.

An Epistemology of Cybernetics

Cybernetics refers to the epistemology in which "units of interconnectedness are being seen as parts of larger wholes" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 64). Hoffman (1990, pp. 1-2) points out that this concept termed cybernetics came from Norbert Wiener who referred to it as "the science of communication and control." In essence this new way of thinking shifts the focus and sole responsibility from the individual, to considering the nature of relations among people. How they mutually influence each other in a *reciprocal causal* manner, as opposed to a linear causal manner become the focus of inquiry (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

'Systems theory' and 'cybernetics' in general are often used as synonyms and share the same fundamental principles. In essence the fundamental beliefs imply that a system has the ability to correct itself (Keeney, cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2000). However, a distinction is made between 'simple cybernetics' (general systems theory) and 'cybernetics of cybernetics' (second order cybernetics) (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). This distinction has to do with the positioning of the observer. A brief discussion of both follows.

Simple cybernetics

At the level of simple cybernetics the observer places him- or herself outside that which is being observed, and the focus lies in the description of 'what' is happening (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). The observer is said to hold a 'bird's eye view' perspective in relation to the observed phenomenon and/or system.

According to Becvar and Becvar (2000) the fundamental beliefs regarding 'general systems thinking' or 'simple cybernetics' include the following:

Recursion, which implies a focus on the interaction *between* people, as opposed to a focus on the individual or phenomenon in isolation. The belief is that systems and individuals influence each other recursively. This also holds that the relationship, and the *context* in which it occurs, are of fundamental importance. Following from this, the focus for observation thus falls on the relational interaction as opposed to merely the individual or past events. The search for the cause behind a phenomenon and the natural question 'Why?' is replaced by a search for 'What?' is happening. This shift in thinking emphasises *recursion* as opposed to *causality.*

Feedback is a process pointing to a system's ability to 'correct itself'. Becvar and Becvar (2000, p. 66) define feedback as "the process by which information about past behaviours is fed back into the system in a circular manner." In other words a system is believed to channel information about its output back into itself, and can be accomplished either by the environment or by other systems (Fourie, 1998). Positive and negative feedback thus points to the impact that certain behaviour can have on a system and the manner in which the system responds to this behaviour. *Positive feedback* refers to a change that occurs which is accepted by the system and *negative feedback* points to no change occurring within the system. Again the context here remains important in order to determine the efficiency of this process (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

Morphostasis and Morphogenesis are also important fundamentals in simple cybernetics. *Morphostasis* points to a system's tendency to remain stable whilst *morphogenesis* implies a system's tendency to welcome change or shifts. A good balance between both these states seem necessary in order for a system to remain healthy and functioning (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

Rules according to which systems tend to function are also recognised by systems theorists. These rules are evident in the patterns of interaction in relationships. Due to the diverse and unique nature of different systems, these sets of rules also function as boundaries between systems, and can be determined by observing the patterns according to which systems behave. Members of the system tend to abide by these often unspoken

rules, even though they are not always consciously aware of them (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

Boundaries imply the *hierarchical structures* within systems as well as the *subsystems* within systems and the *suprasystems* that a system is part of.   These invisible boundaries divide these systems from each other (Fourie, 1998) and regulate the kind and amount of information from and to the system.

How open or closed a system is will determine the amount of new information that the system will allow to enter into it. Again the balance here seems important as an extreme of either one could point to a system that does not function as healthily as it could. The context will also determine whether a system needs to be more open or more closed. This is often important to ensure the system's survival in a particular context (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

Entropy and Negentropy links with the above concepts of openness and closedness. *Entropy* is said to be the state that a system is in when it is either too closed or too open, which holds a danger for the survival of the system. *Negentropy* points to a system that has a healthy balance between openness (allowing in new information in order to grow) and closedness (not allowing in information that might threaten survival) (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

Equifinality and equipotentiality are concepts that lead one to ask the question 'What?' The process is therefore looked at, instead of merely a sequence of cause and effect that is often traced far back into past events. The focus therefore does not fall on the past events in a person's life but more on the here and now interactional patterns that are believed to maintain the phenomena/behaviour. *Equifinality,* in the system's context, refers to those repeated interactional patterns, whereby people engage with each other, leading them to the same endings. The system can thus be said to "be its own best explanation of itself; for regardless of where one begins, the end will be the same" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 71). *Equipotentiality* holds that there may be different ends although the beginnings may have been the same. This viewpoint cautions against the

notion that set developmental rules or achievements will necessarily lead to a particular outcome that is always the same for all.

Communication and information processing are said to be the essence of systems theory, where interactional patterns between people are the focus of observation. The important fundamentals here are, firstly, that "one cannot not behave, one cannot not communicate and the meaning of a given behaviour is not the true meaning of the behaviour; it is, however the personal truth for the person who has given it a particular meaning" (Becvar & Becvar, p. 73). Also important to note here is that communication takes place in three different ways namely the 'verbal' (the actual words being spoken), the 'nonverbal' (the meaning with which the sender of the verbal message communicates it and lies in nonverbal communications such as tone of voice) and the 'context' (the situation that will determine the kind of rules in a relationship). The latter two together are often referred to as the 'analog' or 'process' which is the important part of the communication and information processing when observing interactional patterns.

The manner in which communication occurs and how information is shared between people in a particular context, point to the relationship and wholeness aspects of a system. The relating individuals plus their interactions indicate that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" and refer to an important basic premise of systems theory (Becvar & Becvar, p. 75). The interaction and relationship styles within the context thus become the focus. This avoids merely labeling the individual with a set personality, and disregarding the pattern of interaction and the context of the interaction. In focusing on the whole and the interconnectedness of the members, the notion is that when one part of the system shifts all other parts of the system will also shift.

Therefore it can be concluded that the shift towards a new epistemology, and in essence 'systems theory' or 'simple cybernetics', is based on a circular approach as opposed to a linear cause and effect approach. Systems theory does not reject individual theory but is regarded as a metatheory that allows for movement between an individual and a systemic way of thinking (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). The question, 'What is happening?' is being asked as opposed to 'Why is something happening?', therefore placing the focus on the

interaction and not the phenomenon or individual. Also important is the context in which phenomena occur, as well as the meanings surrounding the phenomena. The present interactions become the focus as opposed to past events that may, through speculation have caused a phenomenon.

With regards to the position of the observer, it seems clear that from a 'simple cybernetics' point of view an outside observer standpoint is possible and that such an observer is able to observe and describe interactions that are happening in a system (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). By implication it is believed that the observer has an objective stance in relation to the system and the interactions being observed, and has no influence over that which is observed (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). An outside objective person with expert knowledge is seen as able to manoeuvre a system in order to fit into a larger societal norm or way of being (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). From this perspective, one is thus still able to see, understand and manipulate a reality that is outside of oneself. This stance, although different from the individual focus, therefore still seems to fit within a modernistic approach.

Cybernetics of cybernetics

The shift towards a new, postmodern epistemology led to a higher level of thinking in cybernetics that is often referred to as 'cybernetics of cybernetics' or 'second order Cybernetics' (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). Whilst the fundamentals on which 'simple cybernetics' rests still fit with modernistic premises, 'second order cybernetics' may be classified under the philosophical umbrella of postmodernism, which will be referred to later. Second order theorists mainly question the observer's ability to remain objective and believe that the observer becomes actively part of the observed system. Therefore the observer cannot have an objective view.

With this move towards a higher order of observation and a new epistemology, theorists arrived at similar conclusions to Einstein and Heisenberg in the early 20th century. Heisenberg (cited in Fourie, 1998, p. 12) stated in his uncertainty principle that "what we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning." As a result

the notions held by modernistic scientists, as was discussed previously are questioned and challenged in second order cybernetics (Fourie, 1998).

The principles of 'second order cybernetics' will now be discussed.

The notion of an objective observer is firstly questioned on this level of thinking. It came to be realised that it is not possible for an observer to not influence that which is being observed. The shift to a higher level of thinking takes into account the two systems; namely the observer system as well as the observed system, and looks at how they both interact with each other in a larger context (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). Observer and observed are seen as mutually influencing each other and the observer becomes part of that which is being observed (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). This shift took place as theorists came to acknowledge that "the very act of observation influenced the behaviour of the people under observation" (Fourie, 1998, p. 15). This acknowledgment of the role of the observer also implies that whatever the observer observes, is coloured by the glasses through which the observer looks. The observer thus looks at the observed reality from his or her perspective which in turn suggests that an objective observational stance is not possible. In other words, the observer's frame of reference or epistemology influences what and how he or she observes. In essence the notion held by 'second order cybernetic' thinkers within a postmodern paradigm is that, "reality is not external to us but is constructed by us as we bring our own personal perceptions to bear on it and give meaning and order to it" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, pp. 10-11). This manner of describing the observation of what is being observed, points to the essence of a higher order of observing and thus a 'second order cybernetics' or 'cybernetics of cybernetics' (Fourie, 1998).

The self-determining quality of systems is another fundamental difference between 'simple cybernetics' and 'second order cybernetics'. On this second order level of thinking about living systems, systems are said to be self–deterministic. According to Fourie (1998) this means that they are more closed for information than open (as is the notion held on a 'simple cybernetics' level). By implication the thinking on the 'simple cybernetics' level focuses on the interactions in a system where the objective observer

aims to facilitate change through manoeuvring the roleplayers' interactional patterns and styles through his/her expert knowledge. The thinking on the 'second order cybernetics' level however, tends to focus on the autonomic functioning ability of the system (Fourie, 1998). Becvar and Becvar (2000, p. 79) define the autonomy of a system as being "the highest order of recursion or feedback processes of a system, and the range of deviation of level or stability maintained is that of the organisation of the whole." On this level of thinking it is therefore believed that the system can react to perturbations from the outside (often the participating observer) but only in ways that its own structure allows it to react (Fourie, 1998). An objective outside observer is thus not likely to influence a system with expert directives in a predictable outcomes based manner, as is believed to be possible on a 'simple cybernetics level'.

As 'second order cybernetics' as a framework marks the shift to postmodernism in psychology, the fundamental premises of postmodernism will now be discussed.

A Postmodern Epistemology

Postmodernism can be thought of as a philosophical umbrella covering various theoretical stances in many fields of study (of which 'second order cybernetics' is one in the field of Psychology). In the shift towards postmodern thinking, perspectives replace the modernistic notion of facts. Postmodernism questions persons previously known as knowledgeable along with their notions (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). "Postmodernism questions those assumptions about reality, knowledge and truth that have subjugated the modern era and that were once unquestionable" (Lyddon & Weill, 1997, pp. 77). Postmodernism therefore in essence introduces the possibility that more than one perception may be possible and therefore holds the notion that multiple realities or accounts of reality exist. Anderson (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p.88) speaks of postmodernism as having

emerged as an alternative form of inquiry among theoreticians and scholars across disciplines who are in the midst of questioning the metanarrative, the certainty, and the methods and

practices of modernism in traditional science, literature, history, art and the human sciences and who are ex – ploring alternative conceptions and descriptions.

In essence postmodernism aims to liberate older often rigid ways of thinking about the world and enhance it by opening up possibilities for additional meanings and perceptions. Durrheim (1997) argues that the essence of modernism is to predict and control. However, he points out that the modernistic approach, when applied to human behaviour and phenomena tends to fail due to the vary nature of humans to be continuously active and unpredictable. It is this acknowledgement of the unpredictability of human behaviour by many postmodernist thinkers that seems to have allowed a sense of respect for the unique experiences of persons in an unpredictable and ever changing world. This awareness for another's unique experience refers to the fundamental belief shared by postmodern thinkers namely that no one true reality exists. The notion of multiple realities along with the concept of the 'self' will be discussed next.

The notion of multiple realities

The postmodern view is based on the premise that no one true reality exists and that " 'realities' that people inhabit – rather than what they are 'given' – are instead socially constituted and thus may vary quite dramatically across cultures (or subcultures), time and context" (Neimeyer, cited in Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 77). In addition to acknowledging the existence of multiple realities, postmodernists also believe that all realities are not equally valid (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). Postmodernists feel strongly that some accounts of reality "are not respectful of difference, gender, ethnicity, race, or religion" (Doan, 1997, p. 130). The modernists' notion of 'seeing is believing' is being replaced by the notion that 'believing is seeing' (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). This implies a belief that reality is created as opposed to being discovered and holds our languaging and the various meanings around phenomena at the core (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

Within the postmodern paradigm both researchers and therapists look at how reality is constructed socially as well as linguistically (Kvale, 1994). That which we believe, or the knowledge which we live by, is believed to be "an expression of the language, values and beliefs of the particular communities and contexts" in which we live our lives (Lynch

1997, p. 353). It therefore seems natural to believe that the 'self' too can be shaped by the community or context in which we live. Researchers and therapists therefore both remain aware of multiple accounts of reality and guard against enforcing their own account of reality on the research or the therapeutic context.

The concept of the self

The modernists regard the self in essence as "a bounded and autonomous entity that possesses a relatively coherent and consistent sense of identity across time and contexts" (Cushman, cited in Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p.77). These characteristics of the self are regarded by postmodernists as being "impossible and irrelevant" (Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 77). Postmodernists prefer to view the 'self' as "a medium for the social world" (Kvale, cited in Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p.77). The postmodernists prefer to say: "We communicate, therefore I am" as opposed to the Cartesian notion "I think, therefore I am" (Gergen, cited in Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 78). The self in postmodern theory is thus regarded in terms of an ongoing process as "continually constructed and reconstructed in particular relationships over time" (Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 78).

To conclude, it seems important that postmodernism as a philosophical umbrella highlights the concept of multiple realities. However it seems relevant to distinguish between the two processes through which reality is said to be constructed namely Constructivism and Social Constructionism. In order to illustrate the difference in reasoning around multiple realities, Constructivism will be briefly discussed first after which Social Constructionism as epistemological stance for this study will be highlighted.

Constructivism

Some theorists tend to use the term 'constructivism' as an umbrella term for both 'constructivism' as well as 'social constructionism' (McLeod, cited in Rapmund, 2000). However, there seems to be fundamental differences between these concepts. According to the constructivist approach, the observer gives meaning to that which he or she

observes (Jonassen; Von Foerster; Von Glaserfeld; Watzlawick; cited in Rapmund, 2000). This means that the lens through which the observer observes colours the reality that he or she sees. Fourie (1998, p. 16) states that according to constructivism, what we observe "is at least partially constructed by us." In this light, reality is said to be *created* by the observer. By implication the constructivist perspective rejects the notion that a single 'true' interpretation of reality exists (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996; Doan, 1997) whilst allowing people to form their own perceptions of reality. In this way different people can construct their realities, which also implies that the same event or experience can be constructed differently by others, and differently by the same person at different times.

Constructivism adheres therefore to a belief in multiple realities, which is consistent with the underlying principle of postmodernism. However, in constructivist spirit, every person's perception of reality is seen as equal to any other person's perception of reality, provided these perceptions of reality fit within a particular context (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996; Doan, 1997).

This constructivist notion, that all accounts of reality are equally valid therefore seems to be in contrast with the postmodern belief, which argues that all perceptions of reality are not equally valid (Gergen, cited in Becvar & Becvar 2000). Postmodernists ascribe to this belief as they recognise that some accounts of reality tend to disregard, disrespect and often subjugate other accounts of reality (Doan, 1997).

In addition the constructivist approach fails to recognise that the larger or dominant social reality may greatly shape the manner in which meaning is created and reality is constructed (Held, cited in Rapmund, 2000). It is this need for the inclusion of the role that the social and cultural context plays in the manner that a person perceives reality (Dean & Rhodes, cited in Rapmund, 2000) that led to the postmodern theoretical stance known as 'social constructionism'.

A Social Constructionist Approach

Social constructionism is a contemporary approach within psychology and psychotherapy and falls under the umbrella of postmodern philosophy. As was highlighted above, social constructionism and constructivism both acknowledge that more than one reality or account of reality exists. However, social constructionism takes the effects of a larger social and cultural context into account, and concurs with postmodernism that all accounts or perceptions of reality are not equally valid. Anxiety for example can therefore be viewed in many different ways, but its meanings are influenced by our social and cultural contexts. Some accounts tend to disrespect those who experience it, by pathologising them for example.

Gergen, (cited in Lyddon and Weill, 1997, pp. 78-79) sums up four important fundamentals of the social constructionist perspective:

- The belief that what we know of the world is determined by the conceptual and linguistic categories we possess to define it.
- The idea that concepts and categories by which the world is comprehended are social artifacts – products of historically situated interchanges among people.
- The view that the degree to which a particular belief or understanding is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on its empirical validity, but on the vagaries of social processes.
- The notion that descriptions and explanations of the world are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally intertwined with the full gamut of activities in which people engage.

In essence "social constructionism highlights the social, historical, and collective nature of human consciousness" (Durrheim, 1997, p. 175) and focuses on "social interpretation and the intersubjective influence of language, family and culture" (Gergen, cited in Hoffman, 1990, p. 2). The two important fundamentals in social contructionism to be highlighted therefore are the role that the specific *societal context* in which people interact, plays along with the *languaging* that takes place between them. This will be briefly discussed.

The role of the social context

Important to social constructionist belief is that the social communities and contexts in which people live create particular attitudes and meanings for them to live by (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Owen (1992, p. 386) states that social constructionism is

> the claim and viewpoint that the content of our consciousness, and the mode of relating we have to others, is taught by our culture and society: All the metaphysical qualities we take for granted are learned from others around us.

Therefore social constructionists believe that when a situation occurs in which a number of observers agree with each other about their observations they are said to have come to a co–construction of reality (Hoffman & Von Glaserfeld, cited in Fourie, 1998). In other words, when a group of people come together and agree on a particular set of rules or norms according to which all need to live, this may be said to be a socially constructed reality.

Such a group's reasoning and decision making process may in turn for example be coloured by historical and community beliefs. The laws that govern a country can be considered an example of a socially constructed norm or reality. Such a socially agreed upon or constructed norm is often constructed to protect the reality of the majority. These kinds of socially constructed norms can find shape on various levels in society. There may for example be socially constructed family norms or socially constructed professional norms. These often mutually influence each other within a larger societal context.

Social constructionists further point out that it is through "socially shared constructions" that "human meanings originate" and that these meanings need to be the focus in psychology (Gergen; Harré; Secord; Sampson; Shotter; cited in Durrheim, 1997, p. 175). From this perspective the aim for a researcher or therapist would therefore be to locate "meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social, community context" (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p. 80). In conversing with

anxious people the researcher in this study may therefore gain an understanding of what anxiety means for each of them and how it impacts them in their particular life contexts.

Following from this reasoning, the 'mind' in social constructionism is also seen as "a social construct and a person's beliefs, memories, and thoughts are understood as largely socially constituted phenomena" (Coulter, Valsiner, cited in Lyddon & Weill, 1997). Gergen (cited in Hoffman, 1990, p.1) states that "from a constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, co-operative enterprise of persons in relationship." "A person's verbal accounts are not viewed as the external expression of his or her internal cognitive processes, but rather as an expression of relationships among persons" (Gergen, cited in Lyddon & Weill, 1997). From this perspective knowledge is thus located in the social processes of "symbolic interaction and exchange" rather than in the minds of individuals (Hoffman, 1990; Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 79). In contrast with the more traditional and modernist perspectives that tend to focus on the mind and/or the individual, the social constructionists have shifted to a "world of intersubjectively shared meaning making" (Gale & Long, cited in Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 92). It is therefore important for social constructionists that the reality that is co–constructed in a system by a researcher or therapist needs to fit with the members in the system and their unique reality (Fourie, 1998).

A researcher or therapist working from a social constructionist perspective therefore guards against enforcing his or her account of reality on the person or system. Instead researchers or therapists aim to engage in conversations with the person or system, during which an exchange of realities occur. In this way both parties have a voice and have an opportunity to enhance their realities with elements of the other party's reality. It is also with this understanding in mind that the researcher will engage in conversations with anxious people during this study. A space will be created in which the reality and the voice of a person who construct him-or herself as anxious may be heard. At the same time the researcher and participant may learn from each other's constructions of anxiety, whilst coming to a co-created reality about anxiety.

Those dominant beliefs in society that tend to disrespect others who may act or believe differently, and in some instances may even pathologise these individuals, are also essentially what social constructionists have great sensitivity for (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Social constructionism looks at how what is taken to be "right" is often culture and "gender as well as class–specific" (White, 1995, p. 16). White (cited in Corey 2001, p. 431):

> believes a dominant culture is designed to perpetuate viewpoints, processes, and stories that serve those who benefit from that culture, but that may work against the freedom and functionality of the individual and the family.

Important is that social constructionism focuses on the notion that knowledge is power. Therefore, what the culture or the society specifies can greatly impact on people's lives (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Social constructionists further point out that dominant voices or accounts of reality often exist within communities and in society as a whole which fail to accommodate differences among people, their different voices, or differences in knowledge (Rapmund, 2000). Doan (1997, p. 130) refers to these dominant voices as powerful "Grand Narratives" which "are supported by the weight of numbers, tradition, and firmly entrenched power structures" in a community. White and Epston (cited in Speed, 1991, p. 400) agree "that the particular meanings we impose on behaviour are dictated and organised by whatever 'dominating analogies or interpretive frameworks' are currently available" (Becvar & Becvar, 1993, p. 303). These dominant voices often propose and even advocate a specific norm or way of being. According to Owen (cited in Rapmund, 2000), social constructionsts see relationships between people as either conforming to or failing to fit such proposed or idealised ways of relating to others.

Doan (1997, p. 130) argues that "people are *communities of selves,* and that each person contains a multitude of voices with varying points of view." It is within both the postmodern and social constructionist spirit to respect such multiple selves, meanings and contexts (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). These different voices and unique experiences regarding topics, of which anxiety is one, can often be silenced by the dominant voices and beliefs within a society. Therefore social constructionist researchers

and therapists aim to give voice to those who may experience a sense of voicelessness in the face of dominant beliefs. It is during such conversations that new meanings and understandings about particular phenomena (which are often believed by the dominant voices to be fully understood) can emerge.

In this framework it therefore becomes possible to take a critical look at the "status quo values, political arrangements, and power relations" present in a particular societal context (Rosen, cited in Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p.79). This refers to the social constructionists' fundamental belief that whatever we believe about the world stems from society and is locked up in our dialogues with each other (Berger & Luckman, cited in Speed 1991; Hoffman, 1990). In this regard the medical voice can be seen as the dominant language in which conversations about anxiety occur in society. Therefore our thinking and responding to anxiety may be strongly influenced and even subjugated by the notions held by the medical voice's account of reality. The language amongst people is therefore considered important in the process of shaping realities, and will be highlighted next.

The role of language

Language, according to social constructionism is believed to play an important role in constructing reality. As stated by Corey (2001), this perspective holds that reality is based on the use of language and that both language and reality is largely a function of the situations in which people live. In this light Anderson and Goolishian (cited in Hart, 1995, p 184) state that "we live with each other in a world of conversational narrative, and we understand ourselves and others through changing stories and self descriptions."

Reality, according to this epistemological stance is thus believed to "exist within the conversation between knower and known" (Jankowski, Clark & Ivey, 2000, p. 242). In their interaction the knower and the known hold an interdependent attitude towards each other, whilst co-constructing their common reality in a mutually reciprocal manner as they respond to each other and find a common language (Jankowski, Clark & Ivey, 2000).

The languaging around a concept such as anxiety may therefore greatly impact on the way in which a community or society regard it, and the way in which a person who is constructed as anxious is regarded. In addition the person's own regard of him- or herself and his or her abilities in society may also be influenced by the way in which anxiety is talked about amongst others and towards him or her. For example, the voice of medicine, whose premises for 'knowing' are mainly based on modernistic notions, seems to be a dominant voice in society today. Therefore the language of medicine seems prominent in the dialogues around anxiety. In this way, anxiety is therefore often spoken about in a language that dictates abnormality rather than normality. Terms such as dysfunction, disease, unhealthy, disorder, cure and so forth often feature in conversations about and with persons who experience anxiety. Therefore the message communicated about and to anxious people seems greatly influenced by such dominant voices and their language. Naturally such a dominant language may create a co-constructed reality about anxiety which may in turn impact on the language that anxious people use to describe and construct others and themselves. This will in turn colour their construction of reality and influence their 'being' in the world.

Social constructionism in practice

Social constructionists challenge the dominant beliefs or stories that tend to dictate single accounts of reality, as they believe them to form the context for the development of problems (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). They argue that often people's personal stories do not have a place within these dominant belief systems (Rapmund, 2000). Such dominant belief systems often tend to pathologise those who do not fit into the ascribed or expected norms (Rapmund, 2000). True to the postmodern spirit, social constructionists are interested "in accounts that honor and respect the community of voices inherent in each individual and how these accounts can be respected within a particular system" (Doan, 1997, 131). In practice they also aim to help those whose stories have gone wrong or do not work for them any more, as well as those families whose *"stories are in collision"* (Doan, 1997, p. 131). In addition they recognise links between persons' stories (Parry, cited in Doan, 1997) whilst having the awareness that one story cannot go ahead at the expense of others, without affecting relationships negatively. They ultimately aim to deconstruct stories that tend to dominate others, which

in turn allows for the discovery of alternative voices (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Coale (cited in Rapmund, 2000) states that clients tend to discuss the dominant discourses of their lives with therapists. She proposes that the problematic realities which are represented by these discourses can be 'deconstructed' and new realities can be 'reconstructed' or co–constructed by a therapist (or researcher) and a client to elicit new meaning. This practice also aids in externalising the problem as opposed to looking for it inside the person, which allows the person to escape the domination of "oppressive domains of knowledge" (Doan, 1997, p. 131). In this way a space may be created for anxious people to have a voice and to tell their story in conversation with the researcher.

Important to the social constructionist belief is that therapist and researcher prefer "stories based on a person's lived experience" rather than on "expert knowledge" (Doan, 1997, p. 130). This allows "for the experience of personal agency" (Adams – Westcott, cited in Doan, 1997, p. 130). At the same time the sociopolitical context that is addressed challenges the political status quo (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). In therapy or research the mutual aim of therapist or researcher and person is thus to co–create a reality in which the focus falls on the person's "subjective experiential world" (Gale & Long, in Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 92).

Applying social constructionism to this study

Following from the above it is clear that a social constructionist stance allows for new meanings to evolve within interactions between people (Hoffman, 1990). It is therefore the researcher's aim during this study to be in a conversational space with persons who have been constructed by a larger societal discourse (for example by health care professionals such as psychiatrists) as being anxious, or who construct themselves as anxious, and to explore their subjective unique life stories with them. In the spirit of social constructionism, Hoffman (1990, p. 3) reframes problems that persons experience "as stories that people have agreed to tell themselves." These personally told and believed stories in turn may be linked with the participants' subjective meanings and languaging around their anxiety, in their particular living contexts. Such stories may indicate how these persons through the history of their lives, constructed their realities which lead them to a place in their lives in which they have 'acquired' a societal label termed 'anxiety'.

The suitability and application of this theoretical framework to the study will be highlighted further during the following chapter.

Conclusion

Having traced the shift away from the modernist epistemology, the stage was set for a discussion of postmodernism. Within the postmodern epistemology, social constructionism as a suitable theoretical framework for this study was discussed. Social constructionists seem interested in personal stories whilst having the awareness that dominant stories in the larger society may subjugate individual experiences. This process of co–constructing a common reality between researcher and participant may hold the key to unlocking the life stories of persons constructed as anxious. Therefore the social constructionists' manner of inquiry seems to be the most appropriate lens through which to observe and mutually interact with the participating persons during this study. Through this in–depth, yet sensitive inquiry, a rich and perhaps even 'new' understanding may emerge about an experience that is so often labeled as 'anxious' and pathologised within the larger societal context. Ultimately these persons may find a space in which their voice may be heard. This seems important as the dominant voices about anxiety often seem to leave little room for the unique voices of those living with anxiety to emerge.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conformity leads to mediocrity. If the individual is to grapple with life, it's intricacies, it's miseries and sudden demands, he must be infinitely pliable, and therefore free of theories and particular patterns of thought.

Krishnamurti

Introduction

In this chapter the meaning of research methodology will be explained first. Then the research design to be used as framework for the description of the methods to be applied during the course of this research process, will be discussed. The qualitative research approach was selected as most suitable for this study and this approach's characteristics will be highlighted. Attention will be given to the chosen theoretical perspective or paradigmatic stance, the focus of inquiry, how the inquiry will be conducted as well as the research methods that will be used for collecting and analysing the information obtained from the inquiry.

What is Research Methodology?

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 6) define methodology in the context of research as the way in which "the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known." For them, methodology makes up one aspect of a researcher's paradigmatic stance, which in essence refers to the way in which he or she looks at the world out there and how he or she sees the relationship between the researcher and that which is being researched. A researcher's preferred paradigmatic stance will in turn

determine the research approach from which the researcher will draw his or her practical, and therefore methodological solutions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim,1999). Considering that this study will be done from a social constructionist perspective, the methods and principles used in this study will therefore need to fit with the social constructionist fundamentals, and will be highlighted in this chapter.

First it seems appropriate to distinguish briefly between the two methodological stances for research methodology. Research finds its methodological answers and strategies in either the *quantitative* or *qualitative* research approaches. *Qualitative* researchers in essence focus on immersing themselves in information in order to discover unique meanings, whilst *quantitative* researchers seem mostly interested in testing hypotheses in objectively controlled ways in order to generalise findings in a statistical manner to a larger population (Neuman, 1997).

This study will be conducted from a qualitative research perspective, which will be referred to in more detail later. It is important to note that a qualitative research approach does not prescribe a fixed set of procedures according to which to conduct a research study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). However, it still seems advisable to decide on a research design which will include the manner in which the inquiry will take place and the manner in which information will be collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The researcher will be able to structure her thoughts and actions during the process by following such guidelines. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) propose guidelines of the various stages involved in the research design. It is around these guidelines that this study finds its shape and along which it will be discussed.

The Research Design

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 368), "the research design… situates the investigator in the world of experience." A research design that fits a qualitative methodology, is not as rigidly set out from the start, as is the case with a quantitative study. Drawing from Dewey and Eisner, Janesick (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.

369) sees research design from a qualitative perspective "as a work of improvisational, rather than composed art – as an event, a process, with phases connected to different forms of problematic experience and their interpretation and representation." It is along the guidelines proposed in Denzin & Lincoln (2000) that this study will be done. As qualitative researchers allow for flexibility in their designs, the researcher will therefore abide by these guidelines whilst keeping a flexible attitude and will leave room for the emergence of new information during the course of this process.

The essential aspects of a design are, according to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), as follows:

- How the design will be linked with the chosen theoretical perspective or paradigmatic stance.
- What the focus of inquiry will be.
- How the inquiry will be conducted.
- The research methods that will be used for collecting and analysing the information obtained from the inquiry.

Each guideline will be discussed in terms of its application during this research process.

The chosen paradigmatic stance

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 6), "paradigms are all–encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their inquiry along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology." They state that *ontology* refers to "the nature of reality that is to be studied, and what can be known about it", whilst *epistemology* in the context of research refers to "the relationship between the researcher (knower) and what can be known" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). *Methodology* as was defined previously points to practical ways in which the researcher conducts his or her study, and can be grouped in either qualitative or quantitative methods of doing research.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 6) speak of "three dimensions of paradigm," namely the positivist, the interpretive and the constructionist paradigms.

Positivist researchers tend to hold the belief that an objective and true reality out there exists and that it can be discovered through objectively controlling and manipulating it. These researchers usually prefer quantitative methods of research, which correlate with the modernistic epistemological premises as was discussed in the previous chapter. These methods often include the objective observation of phenomena in a controlled environment followed by detailed statistical analyses with the aim of generalising findings to a larger population (Neuman, 1997). Ultimately it is hoped that these findings will elicit a better understanding of reality and human functioning.

From the researcher's exploration of the literature (as pointed out in Chapter 2) it seems that much of the research to date on anxiety has been quantitative and therefore positivistic in orientation. Such studies are often designed to gain information, which can be generalised to all people and provide readers with one true way of thinking about anxiety. In addition these studies aim to disregard contextual influences contributing to anxiety and claim to describe anxiety as a state that will remain with a person regardless of changing contexts or times. In this way the personal accounts and experiences of those with anxiety are often sacrificed for the more dominant or global beliefs under which all anxious people can be grouped and dealt with similarly. As such an approach does not allow for personal voices and experiences to emerge, it is therefore not suitable for this study. The interpretive and social constructionist approaches allow for the exploration of personal experiences. These approaches will be discussed next.

The interpretive approach is the epistemological stance towards research that focuses on explaining "the subjective reasons and meanings that lie beyond social action" and attracts researchers who are interested in how reality is shaped by "people's subjective experiences of the external world,…" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). Researchers ascribing to this approach believe that reality which they wish to study consists of people's subjective perceptions of the world out there.

Research methodologies in this epistemological stance include techniques such as interviewing and participant observation which "rely on a subjective relationship between researcher and subject" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). This reasoning also

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seems consistent with the social constructionist beliefs (as was discussed in the previous chapter and which will be discussed next) in terms of the process through which interacting persons (i.e. researcher and participant) engage in a co–construction of realities between them.

A social constructionist perspective to research holds "that reality consists of a fluid and variable set of social constructions" and these researchers often ascribe to "a suspicious and political epistemological stance" about the various accounts of reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6), and particularly about those that dominate others. This paradigmatic perspective adds to the interpretive research possibilities by looking at how "constructions of reality make certain actions possible and others unthinkable" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). It is in the social constructionist spirit that the dominant societal discourse in terms of 'anxiety' may be critically viewed during this study, and space may be created for the emergence of those often small or silent voices of persons constructed as anxious. The social constructionist theoretical perspective is therefore the suitable paradigmatic stance for this study.

However, the interpretive and the social constructionist approaches seem to enhance each others' thinking. Both approaches also seem to allow the researcher to be part of, as well as apart from the information being generated and analysed. The most suitable research methods or techniques for the purpose of this study will therefore be drawn from both the interpretive and social constructionist approaches.

It is in the qualitative research approach that the most suitable research methodologies and reasoning most fitting to the research needs of the interpretive and social constructionist stances can be found. The qualitative research approach will therefore be the methodological stance from which this study will be conducted. The main principles of this approach will therefore be highlighted next.

The qualitative research approach

This approach to research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 189) started as "a reformist movement that began in the early 1970's in the academy." Qualitative research

is usually equated with the postmodern way of thinking about the world and reality, as qualitative researchers fundamentally aim to understand the subjective life world of people, whilst being guided by a specific epistemology as a lens for viewing the world. However, some qualitative research approaches still ascribe to the assumptions underlying the modernistic epistemology. These assumptions include reductionism, linear causality and neutral objectivity (as was discussed in the previous chapter) and can be referred to as the positivist paradigmatic approach to qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Research done from a first order cybernetics perspective and a systems theory would also fit within modernism and therefore in the positivist paradigmatic approach.

Graham (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) highlights important underlying assumptions of qualitative research. It is along these assumptions that the qualitative research approach applicable to this study will be discussed.

The holistic quality of qualitative research allows the researcher to look "at the larger picture, the whole picture, and begins with a search for understanding the whole" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 385). In essence it is not concerned with gaining proof in order to control others or the environment. From this research perspective the context in which phenomena or behaviour occur is essential. This sensitivity for the bigger picture therefore fits well with the social constructionist paradigm (as was pointed out in the previous chapter) as social constructionists consider all people, behaviour or phenomena within their context(s). In this regard each participant's unique contextual circumstances will be taken into account when analysing the information. Larger contexts such as family, work and even society in relation to each of the participants' experiences of anxiety may therefore form the background for conversing and meaning-making around anxiety. The aim is thus to give voice to the participants' own experiences of anxiety, in the context of each participant's life story, and not to generalise it to a larger population.

The here–and–now and personal accounts become the focus in a qualitative research study. The aim of qualitative researchers is to find ways of inquiry that "will allow them to make connections among lived experience, larger social and cultural

structures, and the here and now" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 367). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 128), the aim of interpretative research (implying qualitative research methods) is to "get to know people quite intimately, so that we can really understand how they think and feel." It is through qualitative research methods that this aim can be accomplished. Through these methods persons' intimate and personal experiences may be accessed by looking closely at "concrete aspects of the world" (Neuman, 1997, p. 328), such as documenting people's personal accounts. In this way, the researcher acknowledges that she is subjectively involved with the participants and that it is neither desirable nor possible to maintain the objective stance of modernistic 'inquiry'. This is so, as modernistic inquiry has a different aim in the sense that it wants to generalise findings to the larger population, which will in turn allow them to understand the 'one true reality' out there.

As qualitative research is interested in documenting people's personal accounts, this approach to research seems most suitable for the purpose of this study (Neuman, 1997). It is this sensitivity for the unique experiences of people that makes the qualitative research approach fit well within the social constructionist theoretical framework and makes this approach most suitable for this study. In this way anxious people may find an opportunity to tell their individual stories and therefore have a voice amongst many other and often more dominant voices about anxiety. Respondents' experiences may be different in some ways and in others be similar, which in itself is not easily quantifiable. However the qualitative approach ascribes to the discovery of subjective meanings and the description of specific cases which allows for the emergence of differences in respondents' experiences (Neuman, 1997). In this way there may be similarities in the different stories, but at the same time there may be unique differences in each person's experience and construction of anxiety.

Understanding as opposed to making predictions is important in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers as opposed to quantitative researchers are less concerned with finding universal truths, and focus more on making sense of "human experience from *within* the context and perspective of human experience" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 398). Findings obtained through qualitative methods are believed

to enhance richer understanding about a phenomenon, case or individual as opposed to generalising it to a larger population. During this study the aim is not to convert the data or information into "reliable, objective numbers" (Neuman, 1997, p. 328) from which statistics can be drawn in the hope of discovering, what modernists/positivists would term an objective reality. Instead the researcher wishes to engage with the respondents (persons who construct themselves or have been constructed by others in society as anxious) in a manner so as to gain "a better understanding of social life and social interaction" regarding their anxiety (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 7).

The role of the researcher plays a big part in the qualitative research process. The researcher is said to become the tool during this process. It is often required that the researcher "must have the ability to observe behaviour and must sharpen skills necessary for observation and face–to–face interview" (Graham, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 386).

In addition, the role of researcher often includes "a description of the researcher's own biases and ideological preference" (Graham, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 386). Qualitative researchers also tend to think "reflectively and historically as well as biographically" and often "draw upon their own experiences as a resource" during their research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 367). Following from this, qualitative researchers hold the belief that "there is no such thing as value–free inquiry, and in qualitative research this premise is presented with clarity. Such clarity permits the value commitments of researcher to be transparent" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.367). Researchers ascribing to these methods thus acknowledge that their findings may be influenced by their own ways of looking, or in essence their own accounts of reality. Objective observation as ascribed to by quantitative researchers is thus strongly questioned.

During this study the researcher therefore acknowledges that the findings may be coloured by the lens through which she looks at the world. This lens refers to the social constructionist theoretical premises that were highlighted before. In essence the researcher acknowledges that how she conducts the interviews and reconstructs the

findings may be coloured by her own way of meaning making in the world. This in turn may be influenced by her socialisation, and languaging, which in essence again resembles the societal communities of which she has been part of. This awareness seems congruent with the premises underlying the social constructionist framework, which allows for multiple realities to emerge and to be co–constructed between researcher and participant.

Informed consent and ethics are an important factor in a qualitative research study. Stake (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 447) makes the valuable statement that "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world." As the topic of this study can be very sensitive, Christians (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) refers to four guidelines for conducting qualitative research. It is along these guidelines that the researcher aims to conduct this study. The guidelines include, *informed consent*, *deception,* and *privacy* and *confidentiality.*

With regards to *informed consent*, the research community feels strongly that participants in any study "have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences" of the study of which they will be part of (Christians, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 138). This implies that participants must firstly "agree voluntarily to participate - that is, without physical or psychological coercion" and secondly this agreement should "be based on full and open information" (Christians, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, pp. 138 -139). In this regard the researcher will be clear about the purpose of the study being that of a master's dissertation in clinical psychology. She will also make it clear to the participants that although they may gain personal insights which may lead to a degree of personal growth or even change, that the interview process will not be defined as therapy but as research.

With regards to *deception*, the "deliberate misrepresentation" of the nature and aims will therefore not be acceptable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 139).

Privacy and *confidentiality* refer to the safeguarding and protection of the identities of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Important here is that any information that is printed will be done so in an ethically responsible and anonymous manner. The

researcher will assure anonymity to the participants prior to commencement of the interviews and will ask them to sign a consent form in which anonymity along with the purpose of the study is assured.

In addition, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) refer to the caution that needs to be taken whilst conversing with the persons with regards to intense personal experiences as this deep level of interviewing or conversation may lead to respondents feeling particularly exposed or vulnerable. In this regard they strongly suggest that it is the interviewer's responsibility, at all times, to make sure that the respondent is at ease with the degree of intensity and exploration of the interview. Keeping with the responsibilities of the researcher as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) proposed, the researcher intends to prepare the respondents as much as possible for the nature of the interview. Prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher will enter into a verbal agreement with each participant whereby that they may indicate to the researcher what their level of comfort is at any time during the interview. Following from this the researcher also intends to communicate to the respondents that they have a choice to answer particular questions or not.

In addition, the researcher remains aware that the conversations with each person in itself will be an ethical issue. In this way the researchers is aware that the manner in which she speaks and what she says will influence the participant and vice versa. Linking with this awareness, the researcher also acknowledges that the manner in which she writes the person's story and the themes that she elicits are an ethical issue, as she needs to take caution not to include or exclude information on the basis of her own bias.

Continuous analysis of data is important during qualitative research, as the focus is more on the process than on a set of fixed procedures (Rabinov & Sullivan, cited in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). For this reason the researcher will remain flexible and aware of new information that may at any time enter into the process.

Validity in qualitative research mainly refers to the degree to which the interpretive and conclusive outcomes can be trusted to be sound (Stiles, cited in

Rapmund, 2000). Validity in qualitative research is different to validity in quantitative research. In quantitative research the importance falls on the assurance that the study will measure what it sets out to measure (Rapmund, 2000). The implication in quantitative research is also that "a stable and unchanging reality" can be investigated (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 64). Therefore the generalisability of results is an important aim in quantitative research. Other factors that may influence outcomes, and stray from the research outcome need to be controlled during quantitative studies so that a better understanding of the one true reality out there is gained. Quantitative researchers' surety about a study's validity, thus directly correlates with the degree to which they are sure to gain an accurate account of reality. Quantitative researchers therefore tend to regard "validity threats as nuisance or extraneous variables that can be controlled and eliminated" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 63).

Various qualitative researchers however, "believe that 'nuisance' variables are an integral part of real-world settings, and instead of eliminating them, they try to find out what impact they have on the outcomes of the study" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 63). They therefore argue that it is not possible neither is it necessary to accurately pinpoint and eliminate such outside threats to validity prior to the research. It is often these 'other variables' that make up the contextual circumstances that lie at the heart of the social constructionist researcher's interest.

In addition, social constructionist's believe that all research is coloured by the researcher's perspective (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Therefore even the measuring instruments used in quantitative research are believed to have been developed whilst being coloured by the researchers' perspectives. Therefore it is believed that no one (i.e. researcher) can come to any "accurate reflection of reality" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999 p. 62). The aim in qualitative research is therefore not to come to a better understanding of 'reality' but rather to come to a better understanding of personal experiences.

According to qualitative researchers it is therefore more important that a study be credible, which means that it "produces findings that are convincing and believable"

(Terre Blanche & Durrheim, p. 62). The credibility of research is "established while the research is being undertaken," as the researcher looks for discrepancies which may influence the presentation of "a rich and credible account" of that which is being studied (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 63). In essence it is important that the researcher continuously describe and explain how he or she came to his or her intepretations and conclusions. There are different ways of doing this. One way is triangulation which implies "employing many different research methodologies to find out whether this provides discrepant findings" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 63). Kelley (cited in Rapmund, 2000) explains that triangulation refers to using various different viewpoints against which the researcher can measure his or her own standpoint. In this regard the researcher may make use of various psychological, biological and sociological theories against which to measure her own interpretations.

In addition to triangulation, Stiles (cited in Rapmund, 2000) highlights other methods of assuring validity in a qualitative research study. These include 'coherence', 'uncovering', 'testimonial validity', 'catalytic validity' and 'reflexive validity'. 'Coherence' refers to the degree to which the interpretation fits with the theoretical stance of the study (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). For example the researcher in this study, working from a postmodern social constructionist perspective needs to caution against writing in a modernistic linear cause and effect manner.

'Uncovering' refers to the degree in which the research study has had a personal 'sense-making' experience in the researcher (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). Therefore the researcher needs to be able to reflect back at the end of the study and acknowledge and indicate how something in her has changed through the process of conducting the study. In this way the researcher may find that she may share similar meanings with participants' experiences of anxiety on the one hand and on the other hand she may gain personal growth through learning from those meanings shared with her during the conversations that are different from her own.

'Testimonial validity' points to the validity that is obtained from the participants (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). In other words the degree to which they consider that the way

in which the study was explained to them and the way in which it was conducted was done so in a valid manner. Each participant will be asked after the study has been conducted to comment on their personal perceptions around the validity of the study, with particularly reference to how the study was explained to them and how this measured up to the way it was practically conducted. They will also be allowed to give honest feedback to the researcher with regards to any possible concerns that might have evolved.

'Catalytic validity' links with 'testimonial validity' and refers firstly to the participants' experience - that the research process makes sense to them - and secondly that they have gained some degree of growth, change or personal value from the research process (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). After the interviews have been done, the participants will be allowed and encouraged to share with the researcher any personal insights, shifts or growth that they may have gained during the process. They will therefore be encouraged to share with the researcher how the process may have impacted on them as a person.

'Reflexive validity' links with 'coherence' and refers to how the researcher's thinking has been challenged and broadened as he or she came in close contact with the information whilst highlighting the themes (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). In this sense any pre-conceived ideas that the researcher may have had before commencement of the study may be challenged during the conversations with the participants and whilst the themes are being highlighted during the analysis phase. The researcher will remain open to sharing such new insights with the readers.

Reliability in qualitative research in essence refers to the degree to which the researcher's observations of the generated information can be trusted (Rapmund, 2000). Like validity, reliability is also regarded differently in quantitative and qualitative research. Researchers who work from a quantitative perspective strongly focus on the quality and the nature of the measuring instrument and place a lot of emphasis on how reliable this instrument is to produce the same results when a study is repeated. This seems to be an important prerequisite for research studies conducted from a positivist and therefore a quantitative approach, as these researchers believe that "a stable and

unchanging reality exist" and can be measured (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 64). In this way reliability is a "highly valued criterion that indicates how accurate and conclusive the findings are" across time (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 64). A change in context is not permitted to influence the outcome of a study, therefore quantitative researchers go to great lengths to ensure that outside disturbances, which are often referred to as extraneous variables are controlled to such an extent that they do not impact on that which is being measured.

However, for researchers who work from an interpretive and social constructionist framework, the meaning of the study is very much locked up in the mutual interaction between contexts and phenomena. These qualitative researchers "do not assume that they are investigating a stable and unchanging reality and therefore do not expect to find the same results repeatedly" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 64). They expect and look for changes in opinions and behaviour as contexts change (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). It is the change of contexts and how this may influence personal experiences that becomes the essence of qualitative research from an interpretive and social constructionist perspective. For these qualitative researchers it is therefore more important that findings be dependable.

Dependability of findings refers to "the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.64). This is "achieved through rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and developed out of contextual interaction" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.64). Therefore the context in which phenomena occur is important and the researcher recognises that contexts tend to change which will necessarily ask for a change in interpretation along the lines of different contexts. In this study the researcher thus aims to stay congruent with each participant's context and make continual references back to the text of each interview whilst making interpretations.

Stiles (cited in Rapmund, 2000) provides guidelines for ensuring reliability in a qualitative research study. These guidelines include: 'disclosure of orientation', 'social

and cultural contexts', 'internal processes of investigation', 'engaging with the information', 'iteration', 'grounding interpretations' and 'asking questions in context'.

'Disclosure of orientation' merely points to the researcher's own thinking about the study which includes her theoretical orientation, personal values and expectations (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). In this study the researcher has made it clear that she will be working from a social constructionist perspective which was discussed in the previous chapter. She will therefore be aware that the conversation and written interpretation will be a co-construction between her and the participants' realities.

The 'social and cultural context' in which the study takes place needs to be highlighted (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). In this study during the interpretation of each story, the social and cultural context of the participant will be highlighted and integrated into the interpretation.

'Internal processes of investigation' point to the effect that the research process has on the researcher and what the researcher becomes aware of in him- or herself whilst going through the research process (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). The researcher in this study during the interpretation will highlight such internal processes.

How the researcher 'engages with the information' and the relationship between researcher, participant and information is important in the sense that the researcher needs to remain aware that both her and the participants will mutually influence each other's realities and come to a co-created reality. Prior to having the interviews with the participants, the researcher will communicate to each participant that she will engage in a conversation with them around their life stories with the aim to gain an understanding of their personal meanings around anxiety. She will be clear that she has her own meanings around anxiety stemming from her life history which she may share during the conversations with each participant. She will be clear that this will be done not in an attempt to enforce her meanings on them but in an attempt to co-create meanings between her and each of the participants in order to gain insight into each participant's unique experiences.

In this regard the researcher will also remain aware that her own reality, therefore her own values and viewpoints may influence how she constructs or interprets each participant's story. This too may be made explicit to the reader during the interpretation phase.

'Iteration' refers to the marriage between theory based interpretations and the context in which the participants find themselves (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). In this regard the researcher will remain sensitive to keeping with a circular approach whilst interpreting that which is given by each participant in his or her particular context (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000).

The researcher will also aim to remain 'grounded' through quoting from the interview and taking extracts from it in order to avoid making assumptions, and therefore remain coherent with the content and context of the text whilst continuously making interpretations (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000).

Along with this it is important that the researcher asks questions that are coherent with the topic and the context in such a manner as to encourage participants to engage in the dialogue with the researcher and share their stories (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000).

Having discussed the paradigmatic stance as well as the qualitative research approach attention can now be given to the methodological strategies through which the practical execution of the study is possible.

The focus of inquiry

The focus of inquiry refers to the 'who' and the 'what' that will be the focus of the study and in qualitative research this can include "cases, or instances of phenomena, or social processes" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 369). For the duration of this study the focus of inquiry will be two persons who either construct themselves or who have been constructed by the larger society as anxious. According to Stake (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) the approach that focuses on a number of cases (namely more than one

case) is referred to as the 'collective case approach'. Each of these cases is then analysed according to a chosen analytic strategy. However, it is important that the researcher first gains access to the data or information that needs to be analysed. This is possible through various means of inquiry and the means of inquiry for this study will be discussed in the following section. In order to obtain the data or information the researcher intends to interview two persons. The interviews will take the form of conversations between the researcher and the participants about their life stories, with particular reference to their experiences of anxiety.

Selection of cases will be done on the grounds of the following important criteria:

1. Participants need to be persons who construct themselves or who accept their construction by others as anxious.

2. They need to have given consent both verbally and in writing to sharing their life stories with the researcher. An example of the consent document is included under Appendix A. However, the actual consent documents as signed by each participant is not included, in order to protect the participants' anonymity.

Sample size: As the researcher will be working within the qualitative framework, she will be less concerned with generalising findings to the larger population and more focussed on the "detailed and in-depth analyses" of two individuals' experiences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 45). Due to these unique criteria pointed out above the researcher will make use of purposeful sampling as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) term it, in order to select two information rich cases, for the purpose of this study. Purposeful sampling also fits within the thinking of social constructionist researchers, as they often "seek out groups, settings, and individuals where and for whom the processes being studied are most likely to occur" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 370). In this instance according to Psathas (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 371) it is also not important to sample from a population as

the goal is not an abstract or empirical generalisation; rather, the aim is 'concerned with providing analyses that meet the criteria of unique adequacy.' Each analysis must be fitted to the case at hand, each 'must be studied to provide an analysis *uniquely adequate* for that particular phenomenon.'

The means of inquiry

The means of inquiry "comprises the skills, assumptions, enactments, and material practices that the researcher–as–methodological–*bricoleur* uses in moving from a paradigm and a research design to the collection of" suitable information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 371). It merely entails how the researcher will gain access to and collect his or her data (the material he or she is interested in analysing) and how he or she will go about analysing it.

With regards to collecting the information or data it is important to note that the word 'data' fits better within the quantitative mode of conducting research. In the qualitative approach the 'data' that is collected and analysed is referred to by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) as information that is richly interrelated. They further state that the intention from a qualitative research point of view is not to break the data or information down into smaller bits as would be done during quantitative research, in the hope of obtaining a result or absolute truth through statistical analyses. With this awareness, the researcher chooses to use the term 'information' for the remainder of this study.

The 'case study approach' as a means of inquiry is, according to Hamel, Dufor and Fortin (cited in Berg, 1998, p. 212), not in itself an information-gathering technique but more "a methodological approach." They further state that it does nonetheless "incorporate data–gathering measures." Stake, however (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 372) argues that those case studies that are qualitative in nature are "not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied,…" Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 255) refer to case studies as being "intensive investigations of particular individuals." Whilst acknowledging the differences in opinion around what a case study is, Stake (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.436) states that a case study implies "both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry."

Berg (1998, p.212) notes that with this method it is possible to "systematically gather enough information about a particular person, social setting, event or group to permit the

researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions." The immersion that is possible during a case study, allows the researcher to become intimately familiar with the respondents' various lives and cultures (Neuman, 1997). Case studies further allow the researcher to search for "patterns in the lives, actions, and words of people in the context of the complete case as a whole" (Neuman, 1997, p. 331). As Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 372) state,

> researchers routinely provide information on such topics as the nature of the case, its historical background, and its relation to its contexts and other cases as well as to the informants who have provided information

In addition to the rich descriptions about specific individuals or situations (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), case studies allow researchers to be quite narrow in their focus (Berg, 1998). In this regard it will be possible to look at the respondents' experiences of their anxiety and more particularly to look at these experiences through the lens of how the larger social reality tends to dominate and minimise their voices.

Important too is that "case researchers seek both what is common and what is particular about a case" (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 438). By studying a collection of cases, the researcher is aware that the outcomes may elicit similar or different characteristics between the cases (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). However, although there may be similarities, these will be manifested in unique ways. It seems important that "they are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorising" about the personal experience of 'anxiety' (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 437). Although the aim in this study is not to generalise to a larger population, generating a better understanding of personal experiences may well lead to finding overlapping themes in the different stories. Such findings may in turn shed light or give voice to 'anxiety' as a whole (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 437). The insight that may follow from these inquiries may elicit "material for readers to learn, on their own,…" (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 442). Various researchers such as Hamilton, Kemmis and Yin have found the answers to those who question the amount that can be learned from single cases (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). They state that "how we learn from the singular case

is related to how the case is like and unlike other cases (i.e., comparisons)." Various other researchers argue that

> from case reports we increase both propositional and experiential knowledge. Readers assimilate certain descriptions and assertions into memory (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 442). When the researcher's narrative provides opportunity for vicarious experience, readers extend their memories of happenings. Naturalistic, ethnographic case materials, to some extent, parallel actual experience, feeding into the most fundamental processes of awareness and understanding

(Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 442).

Stake (cited in, Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 442) refers to the information obtained through the case study inquiry as us coming "to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience." In this way the voices of anxious people which are often small in relation to the more dominant voices in society regarding anxiety may therefore be heard though a study like this. By hearing their voices we may be informed by their experiences and stories, and gain a better understanding of anxiety. It is for these advantages and therefore the notion that this method allows for investigations that may lead to new discoveries or other understandings (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, cited in Berg, 1998), that it is chosen as method of inquiry. The hope is to give anxious persons a 'voice', a chance to inform others and in this way allow others to better understand their life worlds.

In–depth interviewing, according to Yin and Hagan (cited in Berg, 1998) is one of the data gathering techniques used within the case study approach. The researcher intends to use the method of in-depth interviewing in order to gain a better understanding of the participants' life stories and their experiences. This method allows for a deep level of understanding whilst remaining sensitive for "linguistic patterns" that emerge during the interview (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.153). Both of these qualities are also important to a social constructionist inquirer and therefore make it suitable for this study. The nature of the interview during this study will therefore mainly entail asking the person to tell his or her life story.

In this way the interviewing will be done along the lines of a conversation between the researcher and each participant. Although the researcher may guide the conversation in such a way as to gain information about the life story of the participant, there will not be a set sequence of questions to be asked. However, the researcher may ask some questions that are based on her own beliefs and experiences that she gained in dealing with anxious people, during the course of her training. Such more specific questions will also be asked with the aim to explore with each participant his or her unique experiences and meanings.

During the interview or conversation, the researcher will remain aware of the social constructionist belief that when people come together their own experiences are co-constructed with that of others to create a new co-constructed reality (Owen, 1992). Therefore the researcher will remain aware that "whatever meanings are created in the interview are treated as co-constructed" meanings between the researcher and participant (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 153). The researcher also aims to remain sensitive to the other social constructionist belief that the meanings co-constructed during the interview must also be considered within the larger social context of which they may be a product (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Therefore the meanings constructed by the participant and the researcher alternatively is considered to be the product of the societal influence and related language that each has been a part of. A co-created meaning between the two is therefore to be expected during the conversation.

Analysing the information

Important for qualitative researchers ascribing to an interpretative approach is to "stay close to the data, to interpret it from a position of empathic understanding" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 139). Miller and Crabtree (cited in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 140) state that

> interpretive analytic styles vary along a continuum from quasi-statistical styles to immersion/crystallisation styles. Quasi-statistical styles involve using predetermined categories and codes that are applied to the data in a mechanistic way to yield quantifiable indices. Immersion/crystallisation styles involve becoming thoroughly familiar with phenomenon, carefully reflecting on it and then writing an interpretation

It is according to the latter style of analysis that the information in this study will be analysed. One of various methods of analysing information from a qualitative research approach is thematic content analysis and will be highlighted next.

Thematic content analysis as a means of analysing and making sense of the information obtained during the interviews will be used as the method of analysis. This method allows the researcher to become immersed in the information and to reflect on it continuously throughout the process (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). This method fits within the qualitative research approach, as its fundamental objective centres around the researcher's aim to gain understanding and get to know intrinsic meanings (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Analysing information from a qualitative interpretive approach does not usually follow rigid rules. However Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) provide guidelines for this process. It is according to these guidelines that the researcher will structure her analysis.

The guidelines include the following proposed phases:

1. Familiarisation and immersion:
The information gathering period is considered to be a starting block for this phase, as the researcher already starts to develop "ideas and theories" about that which is "studied, even" before and during the interviews (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 141). After the interviews are conducted they are transcribed so that the researcher will have a text in which she will be able to immerse herself. During this phase it is important to reread the text enough times in order to know it well enough to know "what kind of things can be found where, as well as what sorts of interpretations are likely to be supported by" the information or not (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 141).

2. Inducing themes:
According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 141), the term induction in this context or phase means to "infer general rules or classes from specific instances." The aim during this phase is to look at the information in such a way as to determine "what the organising principles are that 'naturally' underlie" the information (Terre Blanche &

Durrheim, 1999, p. 141). Important during this phase is to steer away from rewriting the actual content, but to "think in terms of processes, functions, tensions and contradictions" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 141). In essence the researcher looks for themes in the text. The key is also to find enough themes to make the later integration meaningful. However, caution needs to be taken here by noting that when too many themes are highlighted, it may indicate that there needs to be more "main themes" under which "sub-themes" may be positioned (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 143).

3. Coding:

The phase of coding entails that the information obtained from the previous phase needs to be broken up in "analytically relevant ways" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 143). To be more specific, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 143) refer to the process of coding as breaking down

> a body of data (text domain) into labeled, meaningful pieces, with a view to later clustering the 'bits' of coded material together under the code heading and further analysing them both as a cluster and in relation to other clusters. This may be done simultaneously as the themes are being highlighted.

Coding merely entails that the researcher marks the "different sections of the data as being instances of, or relevant to, one or more" of the themes (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 143). In this way for example the content of a sentence may refer to more than one idea which may in turn refer to one theme. These different ideas therefore need to be noted by being coded.

This process tends to merge with the previous phase during which themes are elicited. As the elicited themes tend to "change in the process of coding," the researcher tends to "develop a better understanding of them and how they relate to other themes" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 143). For this reason codes are considered to be open to change as the process unfolds.

4. Elaboration

This process entails that the themes are explored "more closely" in a manner that more "sub-issues and themes" may emerge (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 144). In this way the researcher can have a new look at the information again and re-evaluate those themes and sub-themes that she has initially grouped together, with the aim to "capture the finer nuances of meaning" that may not have been captured yet by the previous phases (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 144). Often the researcher will need to go back to the third phase to re-evaluate the original coding that took place. This process of "coding, elaborating and recoding until no further significant new insights appear to emerge" is an important part of the thematic analysis process (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 144).

5. Interpretation and checking

During this last step, the researcher needs to present the interpretation of that which she has studied in written format by shaping it around the "thematic categories" that were elicited from the analysis (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 144). She will go through the interpretation in detail in search of contradicting statements, mere summaries of the text, over-interpretations and so forth (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). During this last phase the researcher may also reflect on her "own role in collecting the data and creating the interpretation" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 144). Therefore the researcher's own perceptions and how this may have coloured that which she presents as an integration needs to be made explicit to the readers during this phase.

According to these guidelines it seems possible to obtain recurring and even comparative themes in the life stories of anxious persons. After the process of analyses the comparative themes as a common thread that links the various experiences of each participant may therefore be highlighted to the reader. However, it should nonetheless be remembered that the themes will play out in an idiosyncratic way in each participant's story. Although comparative themes will be highlighted, it will therefore be done not with the aim to generalise them to a larger population, but with the hope that such shared themes may allow for an enhancement of the current understanding of anxiety. Themes that are present in both participants' stories will then be compared to the literature.

Conclusion

A broad overview of the concept of methodology was firstly given, after which guidelines for the design of the study was highlighted. It was pointed out that a qualitative research approach comprises the most suitable research methods for the purpose of this study. This approach, along with the appropriate methods to gain access to the needed information and analysis thereof was discussed. The case study approach was highlighted as the most suitable method to gain access to the information. Two persons who have constructed themselves or have been constructed by society as anxious will be interviewed according to the 'in-depth' manner of interviewing. It was pointed out that these interviews will take the shape of a conversation between the researcher and the participants and will be conducted according to strict ethical guidelines of which informed consent and anonymity form a big part. The information or data obtained will be analysed according to the thematic content analyses method during which common themes in the life stories of the participants will be highlighted. The researcher also acknowledged that her way of looking at the world may colour the findings in this study. At the same time she expressed the hope that by co-constructing a common reality with the respondents during the research process, a new and co-created understanding about the life-worlds of those who construct themselves or have been constructed by a larger society as anxious may evolve.

CHAPTER 5

THE LIFE STORY OF JANE

Personal data

Participant   :   Jane Smuts

Age   :   Late twenties

Field of occupation   :   Information Technology

Research setting   :   The interview was conducted at Jane's home.

Introduction

In this chapter a transcribed conversation between the researcher and the participant, Jane, is carefully analysed and emerging themes are highlighted. The transcribed conversation is to be found in Appendix B. The themes highlighted here may not necessarily be mutually exclusive and may therefore overlap. It needs to be noted that the themes highlighted here are coloured by the glasses though which the researcher looked at this interview at this particular point in time. They are therefore not meant to represent an ultimate truth about the participant's reality or about anxious people in general, nor are they exhaustive. Another person, looking through his or her particular lens, may highlight different themes and/or add to the ones presented here.

The analysis is followed by a brief personal reflection by the researcher.

<u>The Story of Jane</u>

The researcher identified the following themes from Jane's story.

Connection vs. Disconnection

It seemed that from a young age Jane felt connected and disconnected with people in various contexts. She also seemed to exist in contexts of disconnection.

She observed the physical and emotional *disconnection between her parents.* She said the following about their physical disconnection:

> I can't imagine there was a very close…but to be honest, my father was away a lot, so I can't remember them being together lots of times.

Her father had an affair and the fragile marriage between her parents ended in divorce when she was about seven or eight years old.

It seemed that what she remembered most was the silence that existed between them. When the researcher explored the nature of her parents' conflict with each other, Jane said the following:

> I would rather say silence. I've seen them fight after they got divorced, but before...I can't remember any interaction, so I would say silence.

Jane's *relationship with her mother* was coloured by disconnection on an emotional level as she experienced her mother as emotionally unavailable for her from a young age. She remembered:

> She worked full day, so the domestic worker...looked after us, she was a full time worker and my mother started studying…, She was a teacher and then she started studying her master's and doctor's degree, so she was also very busy. When she came home she studied.

Her mother's tension seemed to contribute to the disconnection. She recalled:

> I can just remember she was always very tense and she always screamed in the mornings and she always screamed at us and she was incredibly stressed out and I think that made me pull back,…

In addition, it appeared as though Jane's experience of disconnection with her mother was perpetuated by her mother's intrusive attempts to get closer to Jane. Jane recalled:

> …and that she tried to approach me a lot and she tried to get closer… but I think I pulled away a lot. I didn't like it when she hugged and kissed me, she likes to hug and kiss me. …with her especially I feel uncomfortable if she comes too close to me.

Her mother's responses towards her therefore seemed inconsistent. This inconsistency therefore appeared to contribute to the disconnection between Jane and her mother. Jane's sense of disconnection with her mother also seemed perpetuated by her experience that her brother and mother had a closer connection with each other.

Apart from the strong theme of disconnection, it seemed that Jane did at times experience some sense of connection with her mother. She recalled:

> I would always go to her if I was in trouble. She does give very good advice, and I do love her and I do all of that, but I don't know, I can't tell you why I feel uncomfortable with her, but I do, but I still feel close to her. It's strange,…

From the above it seemed as though Jane experienced a sense of ambivalence around her feeling of connection with her mother.

In relation to her father, Jane also experienced a sense of disconnection. Her experience of her father being emotionally and often physically absent seemed to have contributed to the disconnection between them. She recalled:

> I don't really have a very emotional close…I have never had that close emotional relationship with him. ...I can't remember much of him being at home.

In addition he moved out of the house after he and her mother divorced. After the divorce her father had allocated visitation times with them.

When Jane and her brother used to visit him, the emotional disconnection between him and them was particularly prominent. This was evident in her following recollection:

> We went for breakfast, then he went to work and we played in the house, in the flat, so he didn't really have that much contact with us, even when we were there. We were only there for say a Saturday and then he would go to sleep or watch rugby and then go to sleep and then we were not allowed to make a noise, or wake him up or anything like that.

It seemed as though Jane experienced her father as having strict and rigid rules to which she needed to conform. When she conformed she sometimes gained a sense of connection with him as he was then a bit more satisfied with her and he did not reject her. She remembered:

> I would always feel rejected and you can only be a certain way because he has a certain view on how one should be and how people should be and what manners are and if you are not like that or maybe if there is a dirty spot on your clothes or if you sit with your knees on the ground instead of on the couch...he would freak out…

However, her father's rules and expectations tended to be unrealistically high and when she 'failed' to meet these high expectations, she forfeited any sense of connection with him. This disconnection was demonstrated to her on an emotional and a physical level. On an emotional level he would disapprove of her. She recalled:

> It almost felt as if you were rejected emotionally....it was almost a feeling of him not being satisfied with us. ...He was just very distant and cold and he always said even if we did very well, he said you can do better. So he never said: 'Great, that's fantastic, very good.' I don't think he ever said that.

She recalled that he used to make promises for closer connections should she meet his expectations. These connections never realised when she failed to meet them.

He always set ultimatums for instance: 'If you get some distinction, I will take you overseas…, '
And if you didn't achieve it, he wouldn't give it to you, obviously.

It seemed as though Jane's mother's reaction to and construction of her father contributed to the disconnection she felt with her father. She said:

…my mom would have to sit and wait before he would come and then she would freak out because he was late. …She just screamed and told us how selfish he was and things like that. …especially in the mornings when my mother screamed at us about clothes not being ironed or us being late or that she screamed completely hysterical and she would cry and talk about my father.

It further seemed as though Jane felt embarrassed by her father's weight problem, which contributed to the disconnection she felt with him. She recalled:

I was actually shy of him, because he was so fat. I didn't want anyone to see him, I didn't want my friends to see him. I would always try and avoid that.

Jane also experienced her father as having an intrusive nature by making personal comments toward her and in essence trying to get too close to her emotionally. His verbally intrusive nature contributed to the disconnection Jane experienced in relation to him. When this was explored with Jane she reported that she often felt "scrutinised" and "criticised." She further recalled:

I remember one day, my hair was loose and he said: 'It looks sloppy' and 'you can't wear your hair loose' and as well as with my clothes and the colour of clothes that I wear, that I look pale and that my clothes look dull, that I should wear brighter clothes and things like that.

Perhaps Jane also experienced her father's critical nature and high expectations as intrusive as she felt fearful of him. She described this as follows:

I was very scared of him. [He was] Critical, hard on people, he thinks he is the best and knows the most of everything and nobody can tell him anything else...

Jane recalled two childhood memories during which she felt a degree of connection between her and her father, as she recalled a sense of happiness. She recalled:

> I've got one or two good memories. He used to walk me to school, ...this was again in primary school...before that…I remember on Sundays, when he was there, that we would jump on his bed and play, my brother and I, but that is it, that's all I can remember.

Following from these examples the degree of closeness between Jane and her father seemed somewhat vague. Given the bigger context of how she experienced her relationship with her father as she grew older, one may therefore wonder if these connections she described here carried as much meaning for him as they did for her.

Jane's sense of ambivalence about her connection with her father therefore seemed prominent too. However, it appeared as though the disconnection between them was highlighted more. Her father's physical absence, and critical and intrusive manner of relating to her, seemed to contribute to the disconnection. It appeared as though the degree to which Jane conformed to his high expectations determined the degree to which she felt connected to him.

When Jane's father remarried, she experienced further disconnection, in her *relationship with her stepmother,* particularly as she grew older. Jane described it as follows:

> …well, when we were very little she would play with us, but later on …I don't think she is really a kids kind of person.

Upon further exploration of Jane's disconnected relationship with her stepmother, she described her as "hard and dynamic." She experienced her father and her stepmother as, "very much the same."

The strong emotional connection between her father and her stepmother, appeared to have perpetuated her feeling of emotional disconnection in relation to them individually, as well as in relation to them as a parental couple.

Jane's *relationship with her brother* was different from the relationship she had with her mother, father and stepmother. Jane experienced a sense of disconnection in her relationship with her brother, in that she felt that he needed more closeness from her than she was able or willing to give him. She recalled:

> I think he wanted to be more dependent on me, but I didn't want to allow him or let him come too close to me.

From this it appeared as though she was sensitive to too much emotional closeness and therefore connection with him. In this way Jane may have come across as emotionally distant in her interactions with her brother, and may thus have contributed to the disconnection between them.

The conflict between her and her brother also seemed to contribute to the disconnection between them. However, she saw this conflict in the context of 'healthy' sibling rivalry.

Apart from her sense of disconnection with her brother, Jane was also aware that they shared a special bond with each other. This bond she believed was born from them being in the same circumstances. Even though they did not overtly communicate about it, they were tied together by their shared experiences. She said:

> I think we had a silent bond, because of what we were going through. I think we both understood that …

Jane therefore seemed to have a sense of ambivalence about her need for connection with her brother. On the one hand she seemed to create distance as she perhaps, being a child, lacked in herself the emotional support that her brother was seeking from her. On the other hand she acknowledged and valued the closeness they did share through their bond of shared suffering.

In relation to her peers, Jane experienced a strong sense of disconnection. During pre-school she recalled that she had "maybe one friend."

Jane's sense of disconnection with her peers was also perpetuated by connections of an intrusive nature. She remembered being teased by other children at school which made her feel disconnected from them:

> Primary school was my worst time, because kids tried to make jokes with me a lot, and they laughed at me and when they did that I completely freaked out, and the more I freaked out the more they laughed. Once at a camp, they said something really nasty...I was very upset and I started crying and they started laughing more and more, I got more upset and they started laughing more and more, so I became completely breathless and I pulled their clothes off the railing and I remember some of the children's buttons tore off. ...I wouldn't see the joke in it and I would become very upset and aggressive, yes.

Another time, when she was in about Standard 4, a friend made intrusive comments about her:

> 'Jane,' something like: 'I hate you, you are so pretty,'...I was like, why did she say that? I wasn't actually aware of …, I mean I never looked at other children and thought: 'Oh she's pretty.' I didn't understand where that came from…

It seemed as though there was an element of competition from this friend, which contributed to their disconnection. She described it as follows:

> I didn't feel that I should compete but she felt that she should compete with me the whole time and she was very condescending. In high school I remember her saying: 'You are not really pretty.' And when I would swim or come out of the shower, she would say: 'You are not really actually pretty when your hair is wet,' or 'we discussed you while you were doing athletics this afternoon and, me and some other girls, and we decided that if you cut your hair, you would be ugly.'…always those kinds of comments that I would never make to another child.

So it seemed that the 'close' friend she had did not meet her need for closeness, but instead distanced her because of the competitive nature of the 'friendship'.

Later in high school, she experienced some meaningful connections with peers who were not in the main peer group. Jane seemed to feel more connected to the boys in her peer group too, as she experienced them to be less competitive. She remembered:

> Other children were nice to me. So what I am saying is that young children were nice to me...and people that I wasn't really good friends with at school were nice and friendly and normal, but the people close to me were really nasty to me. ...I never really had a boyfriend or anything, no. Funnily enough they always joked with me, like I was their sister or something. ...if they talked to me it was more like…I think they were nicer than the girls in some ways, they weren't as catty...

It therefore seemed as though Jane learned that even though the intrusive comments and competitiveness between the girls in her immediate peer group led to her feeling disconnected from them, she was still able to form connections with others. She also did not experience the competitiveness of the girls when she interacted with the boys. Perhaps the boys interacted with Jane in a more open and honest manner, which recognised her as another person and not as potential competition for them.

However, these positive relationships with boys in her teens, did not carry over into her later *relationships with men*. Jane's sense of disconnection seemed prominent in her first two relationships and seemed similar to the disconnection she experienced in relation to her father. The first two significant relationships were with men who had similar characteristics to her father. The first relationship she recalled:

> …was very bad, with a guy that was a marshal arts guru, or so he thought and he was very much like my father. Critical, hard on people, he thinks he is the best and knows the most of everything and nobody can tell him anything else, and he was very…, it was like a power relationship, where he tries to overpower you or have power over you or manipulate you, so he was very manipulative.

In terms of her second significant relationship with a man, Jane recalled that:

> …he was also very critical. The same type of person, very much the same.

During the first relationship the physical connection included a sexual connection. Jane experienced this relationship as negative on both physical and emotional levels. It seemed as though the negative emotional connection along with the negative sexual connection were interweaved with the overall destructive nature of this relationship. This led to a strong sense of emotional disconnection. She recalled:

> We lived together, it was my first sexual relationship and it was very, very bad for me.

His intrusive nature appeared to have a strong controlling and emotionally abusive quality to it, which led to her losing the connection. She described it as follows:

> …it was like a power relationship, where he tries to overpower you or have power over you or manipulate you…Emotionally abusive...about what he said and the way that he broke me down and by talking about other woman, about big breasts and about we should get someone to sleep with us and about my friends and their sexuality.

The disconnection between them seemed to be perpetuated by the possibility that he had connections with other women. She remembered:

> He was always flirting with other woman but very obvious and if I would say anything he would say that I am paranoid. He was always making comments about how he was going to look at other women's boobs when we go on holiday and I would completely freak out.

She eventually seemed to lose connection with her own sense of self. The more she lost the connection with herself the more she connected with a persona that she needed to be to 'survive' in this relationship. She became the way he wanted her to be. She described it as follows:

> I thought that he was the 'be all and end all', without him I'm nothing and he even said to me: 'Jane you were such a wild horse when we started going out and now you are like a donkey.' ...I started believing in weird things like aliens, because he believed in it...He told me about aliens that they exist and spirits and I started seeing funny things like spirits and he was in the marshal arts as I said, so...it made the belief stronger.

Although the disconnection seemed prominent, it seemed as though Jane had some kind of a connection with him. It appeared as though the connection was of a financial nature. Jane was unable to support herself financially at that stage. She started working for him and thus gained the financial support that she needed. She therefore needed to connect with him and his wishes and disconnect with her 'self' in order to maintain this financial connection between them.

In addition to the financial connection, it seemed as though she experienced a 'father-like' connection with him. Perhaps in some way on an emotional level Jane connected with him in a way that was similar to her connection with her father. As her connection with her father may have served as a template for being in a 'caring' relationship with a man, Jane may have felt that the relationship with this man gave her the same feelings of 'care' and 'love' that she had for short periods with her father. She recalled:

> …he was almost like a father figure. …I don't know what the need is that he fulfilled, but it is obviously something, maybe something fatherly...

However, this relationship seemed to only serve to maintain her disconnection. Eventually she found the strength to break it off.

A sense of disconnection was also prominent in her *second relationship*. She experienced this second partner to be inconsistent in terms of his need to be in a relationship with her. The connection between them was therefore uncertain and inconsistent. She recalled that:

> Then I was in another relationship with someone who wasn't sure…, he wasn't sure whether he wanted to go out with me…

It further seemed as though this person had similar critical and intrusive qualities as her father and her first partner, which contributed to the disconnection. She recalled:

> …he was also very critical. The same type of person, [as her father] very much the same.

In addition, the disconnection between them seemed to be perpetuated by Jane's sense that he desired to have connections with other women. She said:

> …he also talked about other girls and his ex-girlfriends and going out with them. There was always the feeling that there was a third person and I'm not the only person...

In this relationship Jane seemed to lose the connection with her sense of self and became what he wanted to her to be in order for her to remain in the relationship. She described it as follows:

> I had to be more perfect and more the way you dress and the way you talk, I can't just be myself, I had to be perfect and like the right music and otherwise he would be embarrassed by me.

Therefore, this relationship also maintained disconnection and eventually ended.

Despite these first two destructive relationships with men, it seemed that Jane became more in touch with her needs in terms of a relationship with a man. In her *third relationship*, therefore, she seemed to experience more emotional connection, as she found it easier to remain connected with herself. She experienced this man as having characteristics that differed from her father and those of her first two partners. She said:

> It's different because this person is not as critical. He accepts me for who I am. I can be myself. He is more relaxed; he doesn't try to overpower me. He gives me freedom and space and he's actually very kind and gentle.

Even though the connection between them seemed significantly closer, there seemed to be times during which she also felt disconnected from him. This man's tendency to become aggressive seemed to contribute to the disconnection she felt in this relationship. She described it as follows:

> But sometimes he can be very angry and he seems aggressive. He seems aggressive and that scares me again, so…

Jane also pointed out that her difficulties at work seemed to contribute to the disconnection that they felt between each other. She said:

> Sometimes very and sometimes I just feel tense about my work, I think that it's such a strong emotion; I think it pushes me away from him.

Although she seemed to have a better degree of emotional connection in this third relationship, it appeared as though there is a sense of ambivalence around it.

To sum up, it appeared that despite a bad start in her first two relationships with men, Jane seems to be on a more positive road, not without its difficulties though.

In her *work environment* the theme of disconnection seemed prominent too. It seemed as though Jane experienced a sense of disconnection with her sense of self by being in an environment that she described as follows:

> ...it's very technical. You do presentations that I'm scared of and I get those same symptoms and you have to talk in front of people, where I feel exposed, when I have to do something. …you can't be yourself. You have to be very confident and very efficient and very business-minded. You must be more like a man than what a woman would naturally be...

It seemed as though Jane needed to disconnect from a kinder more feminine part of herself, which she valued, in order to continue working in that environment. This part of herself, representative of perhaps a more traditional female role, did not seem to fit in her work environment that she perceived as hard and demanding and that points to perhaps more traditional male qualities. However, Jane remained in this profession, and denied those more feminine qualities that were dear to her, in order to maintain the financial connection that she had with this profession. She recalled:

> I just got the job and from there it was good money...once you've got a certain living standard it is difficult to change it.

Jane also appeared to have a sense of disconnection from her colleagues in her work environment.

> The people that are very hard and driven and dynamic, I don't get along with as well.

However, even though it seemed as though she felt mostly disconnected from others in her workplace, she did mention some meaningful connections.

The researcher explored the possibility of another career with Jane, and it seemed as though a prerequisite would be more connections with people. She said:

> The human element. Connection, intimacy...[would be the contact she would prefer.]

The above exploration points to Jane's significant disconnections with others, as well as her own ambivalence around needing to connect and to maintain distance. Her ambivalent feelings may stem from her experiencing one of two extremes in her relationships from a young age. On the one hand she lacked emotional connections and therefore experienced emotional distance in her relationships with significant others. On the other hand when closeness was given to her it was either done in an intrusive manner which disrespected her needs and/or boundaries, or it asked her to deny herself and conform to the ways and wishes of the person from whom she was to receive her much needed connection (which often included some emotional, but mostly financial connections). Despite this, there appeared to be connections that Jane enjoyed. These seemed to be with others with whom she did not feel intruded upon or where she was expected to change in order to maintain the connection with them. It appeared that there was both a bit of distance as well as connection in these relationships.

Feeling different from others vs. Feeling similar to others

Jane's sense of feeling different from or similar to others, influenced her sense of connectedness with others, which therefore links with the previous theme.

In her family context, she felt like an outsider, separate from the perceived close bond between her mother and her brother.

With regards *to her peers,* it seemed as though Jane often felt that she was different from the others. She recalled:

> I had a lot of allergies and things like that, so I felt a bit also scared the whole time and isolated, like I didn't fit in and the other children were better than me, they didn't want to play with me. So I actually, I don't think I had a lot of friends maybe one friend. ...I was always...not sure...in a concert for instance that I would be doing the right thing.

This, once again highlighted her isolation and her inability to fit in.

In her work environment, she seemed to feel different from her colleagues and their norm. She described it as follows:

> I'm not as technical as some of those people. I don't like being as technical or as sort of standing in front of the whole company and presenting, I'm not like that at all.

It seemed she felt more comfortable on the edge of the interaction, rather than being in the thick of it. However, there did seem to be a few people with whom she felt she shared similar qualities, and therefore felt connected to them. She described one colleague, in particular:

> ...especially...one person,...and this person is more soft-spoken, very quiet, academic. It's a guy, he's very sensitive and more that kind of person.

It seemed that Jane could connect to those who shared her sensitivity and who did not need to be the focal point or dominant in some way.

In order to help Jane to connect and to minimise the panic attacks she was suffering, she took medication, which enabled her to fit into her work environment and therefore feel more similar to her colleagues.

Conditional Love or Acceptance

It seemed as though Jane gained acceptance and love from others only when she conformed to their wishes. In a sense Jane was faced with a paradox. As a child, Jane needed and was dependent on emotional closeness and physical care from her parents. She therefore was forced to remain in her situation and could not leave it. However she was faced with strict rules dictating to her how 'to be' in order to be loved and accepted and to continue to receive the physical care she needed as a child. Jane therefore learned to conform to the wishes of those on whom she depended for physical and emotional nurturance (i.e. her parents), so that she might gain their love or acceptance (closeness). This pattern therefore started with her parents and later extended to various relationships with others.

In her *relationship with her parents,* she recalled dealing with their prescriptions by conforming to them as much as she could. She said:

> I tried to be like they wanted me to be.

Severe punishment often followed if Jane failed to meet the standards and strict rules set by her parents. The emotional component of the punishment was particularly prominent. It gave her the message that her 'true self' or the way she was naturally, was unacceptable, and if she did not conform to their wishes, she therefore forfeited closeness, love and acceptance from them (and therefore from others).

In her *relationship with her mother,* Jane experienced her mother as extraordinarily strict with her. She described it as follows.

> I felt that she was very strict with me, more than other mothers were with their children, …And she would tell me for instance you look slutty if you wear your hair like this or you look slutty if you wear a short top. Although I think I wasn't very naughty, she behaved as if I was some drug taking, smoking kind of person and my brother was the good one.

In a way Jane's mother pathologised her by making her the 'bad' one and created a good/bad dichotomy with regards to Jane and her brother, and Jane and others. When Jane failed to meet her mother's standards or live according to her mother's rules and set ideas, it appeared as though Jane experienced punishment more on an emotional level. She often received the message that she was to blame for her mother's and brother's unhappiness. She therefore believed she needed to change in order for her mother (and brother) to be happier. She said:

>…she always made me feel as if I was not a good child.

In a sense Jane therefore believed she was the cause of her mother's unhappiness, as she failed to live up to her expectations. This seemed evident in the example Jane gave when she recalled the Sundays when she was a child. She said:

> [Her mother said]...you always spoil our day...I think especially that was when she had a boyfriend, they always wanted to go for ice-cream and I didn't really like him very much and I always had to go with. I would ask her if I could stay at home with the maid and she would say, no I can't, and I didn't want to go out. I preferred being alone and she would freak out and say I can't stay at home and I always spoil everything for her and eventually she would cry and tell me that I am like my father.

When Jane's mother equated her with her father, Jane clearly got the message that she was the reason for her mother's unhappiness. In the first instance her mother cried illustrating to Jane that she was sad and unhappy. Secondly Jane knew that her mother felt hurt and 'done in' by her father, therefore she believed that she too hurt her mother in the same way as he did.

Jane therefore experienced conditional acceptance from her mother and was not accepted for the way she was.

In her *relationship with her father* she recalled that she needed to be a certain way to maintain his love, acceptance and financial support. She recalled:

You could only be a certain way because he has a certain view on how one should be and how people should be and what manners are and if you are not like that…he would freak out...

When Jane and her brother visited her father on weekends she recalled that her and her brother did as he pleased, which mostly entailed being quiet and not expressing their own needs too much. She recalled:

My brother and I played very quietly in our rooms. I just tried to be extremely neat and clean when I went to my father and tried to sit right and to do everything right and do my homework, so I was very quiet and very disciplined, it felt like I was in the army or something.

She particularly recalled how her and her brother were forced to eat what her father prescribed. She said:

He always forced us to eat all our food and I hated that, we always had to eat all our food. …but I'm not talking about normal portions, I'm talking about…we had to eat the starter, the main course and the desert…So we were completely overfed...

The punishment she received from her father was often both emotional and physical in nature. She recalled that when she was younger she was at times

…locked up in the bathroom.

As she grew older the punishment was more of an emotional nature. She would be given promises that she would receive rewards should she comply and meet his standards. Alternatively she received threats should she fail to meet his set standards or comply to his rules. She describes his conditional acceptance of her graphically. She said:

It almost felt as if you were rejected emotionally. ...but it was almost a feeling of him not being satisfied with us. He was just very distant and cold and he always said even if we did very well, he said you can do better. And he always set ultimatums for instance: 'If you get some distinction, I will take you oversees, or I will buy you a car or I will buy you...' if you didn't achieve it he wouldn't give it to you obviously...his expectations were too high, so I rarely actually made his expectations.

It therefore seemed that his conditions or expectations ensured failure, which in turn perpetuated her feelings of not being good enough to gain love and acceptance.

From a young age, Jane came to believe that love or acceptance from others was conditional, and therefore based on her being what she was required to be for the other person. This in turn influenced her to interact in a similar way with her peers. This pattern of interaction also repeated in her later relationships with men.

In her *relationships with her peers*, Jane often felt disconnected, as was discussed previously. In her attempts to gain some acceptance she tended to do what pleased them. This seemed to leave her vulnerable to abuse from them. She recalled:

> [That] one child who always wanted me to go check on the board if she has more stars or more marks than other girls, they were in competition. I was used a lot…

It therefore seemed as though she placed other children's needs and wishes above her own needs. Jane started to compliment and boost her peers and felt that she gained some connections through doing this. However, she recalled that in spite of her attempts to make them feel good about themselves, the derogatory comments towards her did not stop. She described it as follows:

> ...I would always try and make them feel good about themselves and boost them. …I think people like it when you boost them, so maybe that is why they accepted or why they were friends with me...but it didn't make the comments go away, no.

It therefore seemed as though she fell into a vicious circle by conforming to others' wishes in order to gain their acceptance, which seemed to perpetuate their abuse toward her which in turn reinforced her belief that she was ugly and/or not accepted. This again perpetuated her need for acceptance, which made her fulfil others' wishes.

In her *later relationships with men*, this cycle seemed prominent, particularly in her first two relationships.

In her first relationship she conformed to a lot of this person's wishes and in return she received financial support and his acceptance, which she believed was his love. She even took over his belief system. She recalled:

> I started believing in weird things like aliens, because he believed in it...

It seemed that her identity became merged or was rather dominated by his.

As she worked for him, as a marshal arts instructor in his school, she often did the more risky manoeuvres he told her to do, even if it meant that she did something she was scared of or that she would feel embarrassed by. She said:

> He sometimes singled me out and told me I have to do something that he knew I was really scared of, like tumbling or handstands and then rolling over and he knew I was terribly scared of this…everyone was watching me and I would cry and I would get...asthma attacks...and people would joke about it as well.

In her second relationship she recalled that she needed to fulfil this man's wishes by being the kind of person that he would not be embarrassed of. She described it as follows:

> I had to be more perfect and more the way you dress and the way you talk, I can't just be myself, I had to be perfect and like the right music and otherwise he would be embarrassed by me.

Therefore in her first relationship with a man, Jane was not accepted unconditionally, but had to conform to this person's wishes. Again, the theme of conditional acceptance coloured these two relationships where Jane had to conform to their wishes, in order to connect and experience closeness.

Conditional acceptance also appeared to exist in Jane's *work environment.* Here she seemed to experience more acceptance and therefore less isolation when she worked at the same pace and in a similar manner to her colleagues. As long as she functioned in her work environment she also gained the financial benefits. Thus, in order to fit in, Jane

took medication to control her anxiety symptoms, which helped her to be the person she needed to be in order to function effectively in her work environment.

Given the above it seemed as though the theme of conditional love or acceptance was prominent in many areas of her life. It nonetheless appeared as though she did have a few interactions in which she could experience unconditional love and/or acceptance (as noted in the following discussion).

In relation to her peers, when she was in about Standard 9 and Standard 10 she recalled that there were those who made her feel unconditionally accepted. She recalled:

> ...but other children were nice to me...young children were nice to me, in Std 6, 7 and 8 and people that I wasn't really good friends with at school were nice and friendly and normal...

In her *third relationship with a man,* Jane experienced more unconditional love and acceptance. When this was explored she said:

> It's different because this person is not as critical. He accepts me for who I am. I can be myself. ...He gives me freedom and space...

In her *work environment* too, Jane experienced that there were some colleagues with whom she felt unconditional acceptance. She said:

> There is actually one, two people...more one person, ...that I get along with well and this person is more soft-spoken, very quiet, academic. It's a guy, he's very sensitive…

Even though Jane often felt that she needed to be a certain way in order to be accepted, loved or supported, she did however seem to have had some experiences of being accepted and even loved unconditionally.

Taking emotional responsibility for others vs. Placing her own emotional needs second

Following from Jane's experience of conditional love, it seemed as though Jane learned from a young age to place her own emotional needs second. She often did this whilst considering and even taking responsibility for the emotions of others, first.

In relation to her mother Jane tended to take responsibility for her mother's emotions. She received the message that she was responsible for both her mother's and her brother's happiness. She recalled the following:

> She would always say I always spoiled the day for her and for my brother. I always spoil every day for them, so I felt like it was my fault that they didn't have a good day.

In this way, Jane may have grown accustomed to taking responsibility for her mother's emotions, whilst keeping her own emotional needs in the background.

In relation to her father, it seemed as though Jane took responsibility for her father's potential emotional discomforts by being pro-active in being the way (he wanted her to be) that made him feel emotionally satisfied. When she failed to do this she seemed to get an underlying message that it was her responsibility to leave him with feelings of safeness and satisfaction. She recalled his response when she failed to do things his way:

> He would freak out…just completely freak out.

By conforming to the rules, Jane therefore seemed to take emotional responsibility for her parents' emotional needs and wellbeing, whilst putting her own emotional needs second. In turn, Jane gained their approval and her father's financial support.

Having thus experienced a strong message of conditional love from her primary relationships (with her parents), Jane continued to interact with others in a similar manner by placing her own emotional needs second and taking responsibility for the feelings of others, in an attempt to gain their love or acceptance.

In relation to her peers, who used to make intrusive comments toward her, she started to boost them and thus direct the attention away from herself. By doing this she took responsibility for their emotional comfort. She recalled that from a young age she

> …told them how nice they looked and how pretty they are and how nice the things they have are and so I would always try and make them feel good about themselves and boost them.…and check their marks and to make sure that they are okay.

In her later *relationships with men,* Jane tended to take responsibility for their emotional comfort and satisfaction by changing herself and becoming who she thought she needed to be, or who they wanted her to be, in order to gain and/or hold on to their love or acceptance. This she did at the cost of her own emotional needs. She therefore did as they pleased and refrained from showing her emotional needs, in order to hold on to their financial support (particularly in the first relationship) and the brief periods of love or acceptance she experienced with them.

Jane therefore learnt to place her own emotional needs and the immediate gratification thereof second, in order to take responsibility for others' emotional comfort. It may therefore be argued that Jane became mostly emotionally dependent on herself, which perhaps led to her being or appearing in some ways more emotionally mature, than what one would expect of someone her age.

The loss of an authentic sense of self

The researcher regards the concept of an 'authentic sense of self' as the core part of a person in which the person's true sense of who they are, and who they need to be, resides.

Given Jane's early experiences of conditional love and acceptance, coupled with the way in which she placed her own needs second and took responsibility for others' emotions, it may be said that Jane lost touch with who she was at the cost of becoming what she was expected to be to maintain love, acceptance or financial support. She therefore lost her sense of authentic self and became an inauthentic being in many relationships.

<u>A lack of self-expression</u>

This seemed to be a sub-theme here. It appeared as though Jane, from a young age experienced little or no room to give full expression to her authentic sense of self in her relationships with her parents, as she feared losing their love and acceptance. As Jane lost touch with her authentic self, she therefore lacked the ability to express herself according to her own personal 'truth'.

In *relation to her mother,* Jane's attempts to express and assert her needs were often met with attempts from her mother to instil guilt in her. She said:

> I think especially that was when she had a boyfriend, they always wanted to go for ice-cream and I didn't really like him very much and I always had to go with. I would ask her if I could stay at home with the maid and she would say: 'No,' I can't,... I preferred being alone and she would freak out and say...I always spoil everything for her and eventually she would cry and tell me that I'm like my father.

Her mother's response to Jane expressing the needs of her authentic self, may therefore have left her feeling rejected and guilty.

In relation to both her father and stepmother, she felt that she could not express her authentic self. She described it as follows:

> You have to sit a certain way, you have to eat a certain way, you have to talk a certain way, you have to dress a certain way, you have to be everything they dictate.

In *relation to her father* in particular, Jane's need to express her authentic self seemed evident through her choice of how much she wanted to eat. However even with regards to her eating she was told and forced to eat according to his prescriptions. She recalled:

> He always forced us to eat all our food and I hated that...He screamed at us if we didn't and we had to sit at the table until we did, but I am not talking about normal portions, I'm talking about ...the starter, the main course and the desert...I just wanted to eat balanced.

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From the above it seemed that in relation to her father in particular, very little in her life was just allowed to be, even with something as natural as eating. There was therefore so much being forced onto her. Therefore, she found it difficult to express her authentic sense of self. This difficulty continued to manifest in many of the life choices she made later on, as well as the experiences she later had in her relationships with men. Following from this, it appeared that she continued to relate to others in an inauthentic manner.

In the *context of Jane's career choices*, she was again unable to express the needs of her authentic self and choose her career accordingly. She started studying Graphic Design

> ...because my mother wanted me to be an artist and my father wanted me to be an academic, so I was being pulled in two directions and...I felt a lot of pressure.

Attempts on Jane's part to express herself and live her life accordingly, were again met by messages of conditional acceptance from her father, which in turn made it difficult to express the needs of her authentic self and be true to them. She described them as follows:

> …I wanted to stop in April that year and my father said if I do, he will give me two months to find work and he was going to stop paying for my studies and he was going to take away all the maintenance that he gave to my mother and I would have to look after myself. So he said I have to finish the year and I have to pass. If I don't then I must say good bye to everything. So I finished and I passed but I hated it. Then I started studying normal BA languages, because he said I must study it and I didn't want to study it, but he said that some of the wisest people on earth say that you must study music and languages and everything that's classic first before you can study law. I actually wanted to study law and he said: 'No.'

Jane therefore denied the wishes of her 'true' authentic self and continued an inauthentic life by choosing a field of study which pleased her father and not her authentic self. She entered into a profession in which she worked in a corporate environment, working predominantly with computers. As her work did not fit with her authentic self, she could not fully express who she regarded herself to be authentically. On exploring her reasoning around entering into a profession that does not suit her and her reasons for

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staying in such an environment, it appeared firstly as though she gained financial security by being in this occupation. Secondly she was being that which her father approved of. She responded:

> Because my father forced us to be financially independent…And now I'm sitting with a job that I hate, but I get money for it…You can't be yourself. You have to be confident and very efficient and very business-minded. You must be more like a man than what a woman would naturally be...I don't think it is something that I really want to do.

She therefore continued living and expressing an inauthentic sense of self by choosing an occupation in which she was not able to express her authentic self. Even when she expressed herself, it appeared that her voice was simply ignored. However, her inner voice continued to remind her of her authentic self.

Expressing herself

It appeared as though there were a few times and interactions during which Jane was able to express her authentic self whilst experiencing valuable or meaningful connections.

Her late *high school years*, Jane recalled, was a time during which she felt more able to express what she regarded to be true to her authentic self. She said:

> I think the happiest I have ever been was Standard 9 and 10, but then I took part in sport and I wasn't so focussed on doing well at school...I became a bit more relaxed. I think almost rebellious ...against my father...I was closer to who I really was, because I was more spontaneous, I enjoyed athletics because it was not something that my father forced me to do…

It therefore seemed that during this time and in this context, Jane became in touch with her authentic self and lived her life accordingly.

In her *third relationship* too, she experienced that she could express herself more freely than what she was able to do in her previous two relationships. She said:

> He accepts me for who I am. I can be myself. He gives me freedom and space...

During the interview Jane expressed her needs in terms of a profession that would better suit her authentic self. She gave examples of her preferred profession:

> Something like…sports instructing or physiotherapy or something where you teach people or help people.

Jane therefore seemed able to be true to herself and express her authentic feelings during the interview. Given this, it seemed that Jane did have some experiences of expressing her authentic self in relation to others.

Doubting herself vs. Believing in herself

The themes of conditional love, Jane's difficulty to fully express herself and her loss of authentic self seemed to form the foundation for the doubt and lack of faith she had in herself and her abilities. This appeared prominent in various areas of her life.

<u>Needing outside approval</u>
As Jane seemed to doubt herself she often needed outside approval in order for her to accept herself.

In relation to her peers, Jane seemed to need their approval in order for her to accept herself. She tried to gain their approval by continuously pleasing them.

> I tried to please everyone…I think, because I wanted to be pretty.

In her *first two relationships* it also seemed as though Jane needed approval, in order for her to like herself. However, it seemed as though these men did not give her the approval that she needed, as they spoke of other women and therefore did not confirm her as someone who was worthy and accepted by them.

Although Jane's tendency to doubt herself seemed to be dominant in her life, there were however times during which she believed in herself. Jane gained a better sense of self

when she noticed that other children liked her and did not make degrading comments about her. She recalled:

> …young children were nice to me...and people that I wasn't really good friends with at school ...and I did some athletics and I did fairly well...I think that also makes people acceptable, if they do well or if they succeed in things, people accept them.

Following from the above, it therefore seemed as though Jane believed in herself to a certain degree. However, it seemed that when others believed in her, she was more able to believe in herself. She also seemed to feel more connected to those who believed in her, which in turn helped her to keep believing in herself.

Feeling powerless vs. Feeling powerful

As Jane tended to deny and doubt her authentic self, she often felt powerless in her relationships. In addition she also seemed to feel powerless to change things in her life.

In her *relationship with her mother,* Jane seemed unable to shift her mother's view of her. This seemed to contribute to her feeling powerless from a young age.

In her *relationship with her father,* it seemed as though she felt powerless most of the time. This seemed evident in many of the previously highlighted examples around the strict and rigid rules that Jane needed to abide by in order for her to feel approved of. He was all powerful and demanded that she do what he wanted. When she tried to have her say, he would simply ignore or override her voice.

In relation to her peers, Jane also seemed powerless in many of the incidents that she recalled. Her powerlessness seemed particularly prominent when she became upset and angry. Here she seemed powerless to control her own reactions. When she reflected back on being teased by other children, she recalled:

> I wouldn't see the joke in it and I would become very upset and aggressive.

In her *first relationship with a man*, she seemed particularly powerless and helpless. She said:

> He had complete control over me, complete…emotionally, physically, everything.

The fact that she worked for him and was therefore dependent on him for financial support made her feel even more powerless, as she needed to be what he approved of in order for her to remain in the relationship and therefore keep her income. She started losing touch with what she believed in and who she regarded herself to be. She recalled:

> I started believing in weird things like aliens, because he believed in it...I started seeing funny things like spirits...I saw something in my room one evening just before I went to bed, like a priest kind of figure and once just a black figure surrounding me and pulling my arm away in the other direction…, something that looked like him but just more like a monster kind of thing that was…,when I woke up a few times, I remember this now, something was pushing me down on the bed and I couldn't move…, I was awake and I was screaming but I couldn't scream...it felt like something was...pushing me down.

This experience seemed to symbolically represent her powerlessness.

In terms of *her second relationship with a man,* she seemed less dependent on him for financial support. However it appeared as though she attempted to reach his 'unrealistic' standards, which dictated perfection. Trying to keep up with such standards could have left her feeling powerless on many occasions.

Although Jane seemed to feel powerless in numerous of her relations with others, there also seemed to be times that she experienced power. It seemed as though her tendency to make her peers feel good about themselves may have been a way in which she regained some control in situations where she felt powerless. She said:

> I just kept quiet and told them how nice they looked and how pretty they are...so I would always try and make them feel good about themselves...I think people like it when you boost them...

Trust vs. Distrust

From a young age a lack of trust was evident in her relationships.

In relation to her mother, it seemed difficult for Jane to know which of her mother's messages to trust. On the one hand her mother seemed to dislike her so much that she blamed her for her (mother's) unhappiness and equated Jane with her father. On the other hand she demonstrated her love for Jane in an intrusive manner that left Jane feeling uncomfortable.

In relation to her father, Jane seemed to find it difficult to trust her father. This was partly due to the conflicting messages her mother communicated about him. In addition, her father's actions as well as his messages of conditional love towards her made it difficult for her to trust him. She remembered:

> He was always late coming to pick us up...my mom would have to sit and wait before he comes and then she would freak out because he was late.

In relation to her peers, Jane, seemed to trust them and their opinions of her over her own, rather than believe her own intuitive voice. She tended to trust their comments about her being unattractive as they resembled the messages about her being 'bad' that she received from her parents. She recalled:

> The kids confirmed to me what my father and mother, the way they treated me, like: '...you are slutty if you wear your hair like this, or you can't dress like that it's ugly...'

Trust was also difficult in her later *relationships with men*. In both her first two relationships she was cheated on.

In her *third relationship* it seemed as though she was able to trust this person more than the previous two partners, as she said that he was different from them. However, it

seemed as though she found it difficult to trust their connection when he became angry. She described it as follows:

> It's different because this person is not as critical. He accepts me for who I am...But sometimes he can be very angry and he seems aggressive. He seems aggressive and that scares me again, so…

This theme of distrust may also be linked with the previously mentioned theme of losing her authentic sense self. In a sense Jane seemed to struggle to trust herself to be who she authentically was in a relationship with another for fear of rejection. She therefore tended to be inauthentic in relation to others. One may thus hypothesise that she was not true to herself in most of her relationships, and she may therefore have come across as 'not real' in a sense. Who she was presenting herself to be to others was therefore not true to her authentic self, as her sense of self has become coloured by others' expectations. Therefore punctuating from the other party's point of view, it may have been hard to trust Jane as she did not show her 'real' self which made it difficult to know who she 'really' was. It therefore became difficult to connect with someone who was not 'real' or rather authentic.

Fear

Following from the above, 'fear' seemed to be a re-occurring theme in Jane's story. Her fear centred mostly around two aspects: one being fear for the wellbeing and safety of others in her life world and secondly (which often followed from this first fear) a fear for her own wellbeing and safety.

In relation to her mother, it appeared as though her mother's tension contributed to Jane's fear about her mother's wellbeing. It was important for Jane that her mother be well, as Jane and her brother, being children, depended on her for physical and emotional nurturance in order for them to feel safe. She recalled:

[She feared that her mother] was going to leave it, or something, that she was going to leave or have a breakdown.

In relation to her father, Jane recalled how fearful of him she was and how she tried to please him.

Jane also remembered that she had a strong *fear of death* from a young age. She recalled:

I was always very scared of dying, always. I always ask other people: 'Are you scared of dying?' ..I'm very scared of dying, especially cancer, I was always very scared of cancer and I still am.

Perhaps Jane's fear of dying is symbolic of a fear of losing her 'self' (thus her authentic self). And her fear of others' death may be symbolic of a fear of being left by others. This theme may also link with the theme of feeling powerless vs. feeling powerful, in that 'dying' may represent the ultimate loss of power or control.

Jane also seemed to fear *public exposure*. She recalled that she experienced panic attack symptoms when she was in situations where she felt exposed. Jane's fear of exposure seemed evident when she started working in the IT profession. Perhaps she was scared that people would see her weakness and the facade she put up. She recalled that she had panic reactions when she was faced with being in situations where she was exposed, such as giving presentations. She said:

You do presentations that I'm scared of and I get those same symptoms and you have to talk in front of people, where I feel exposed...

An underlying sense of fear of losing her life or another's, or being exposed and thus open for scrutiny by others, therefore seemed prominent throughout Jane's story.

Sensitivity

A theme of being sensitive both on a physical and a more emotional level seemed prominent throughout Jane's life.

<u>Physical sensitivity</u>

In terms of physical sensitivity Jane reported that she experienced particularly her auditory and visual senses to be significantly sensitive. She recalled:

> The first day I went to school, the teacher phoned my mother and said she must come to fetch me because I can't take the noise....I don't like light and I don't like noise at all.

She further experienced various physical ailments from a young age. She said:

> I know I was quite kind of ill. I had a lot of allergies and things like that, …Tonsillitis, sinusitis.

Jane also recalled that she had enuresis (bed-wetting) during pre-school until about the age of seven.

Jane further reported that she often had and still does have nightmares. She recalled:

> I had a lot of nightmares when I was very small and through high school and still.

Compared to other people Jane therefore seemed to be more sensitive physically.

<u>Emotional sensitivity</u>

During her life Jane became aware of her sensitivity for the subtle dynamics between people. She recalled:

> I was very sensitive. Very sensitive to what other people thought and to the way they behaved and so forth and to people's feelings.

This sensitivity at times appeared to transcend to a more *metaphysical level* in that she experienced strong intuitive abilities in her relationships. This was particularly evident in her relationships with men. She said:

I was very telepathic or sensed things…

In *her first relationship with a man* for example she recalled:

I didn't want to sleep with him any more, because I got the feeling that he was using me sexually...then he cheated on me, actually I started suspecting him, that something was going on ...for some reason I had a dream about them and I confronted him and there was actually something going on. When I confronted him with these things he said I am too clever and its just things that I sensed, its not things that I knew. I just said it as if it was true and I was right about the person as well.

She also recalled an incident during which she experienced seeing creatures of a more meta-physical or spiritual kind. She described it as follows:

I saw something in my room one evening just before I went to bed, like a priest kind of figure and once just a black figure surrounding me and pulling my arm away in the other direction and once another…, something that looked like him but just more like a monster kind of thing that was…, when I woke up a few times, I remember this now, something was pushing me down on the bed and I couldn't move my…, I was awake and I was screaming but I couldn't scream, I physically trying to push my arms up but I couldn't, it felt like something was sitting on me pushing me down.

It therefore seemed as though Jane was sensitive both physically and emotionally. It may be hypothesised that her sensitivity on a meta-physical level might have to do with a spiritual sensitivity.

Personal Reflections

Reflecting back on the encounter and the dialogue with Jane, the researcher acknowledges that she was continuously aware of the similarities between Jane's story and her own story. Although the content of Jane's story differed significantly from the researcher's, there were similarities on a process level. The researcher therefore feels that she could understand and relate to some of Jane's experiences, and thus felt connected to her. This allowed for in-depth yet sensitive explorations around particular feelings. However, the researcher acknowledges that for the same reasons, she often found it emotionally challenging to be confronted with familiar emotions as Jane told her story.

Conclusion

During careful analysis of Jane Smuts's life story the following themes were highlighted.

- Connection vs. Disconnection:

From a young age Jane's relationships were predominantly marked by her experiencing extreme forms of either connection or disconnection. In some of her connections she felt intruded upon, which contributed to her feelings of disconnection. Although Jane experienced more disconnections there seemed to have been a few meaningful connections too.

- Feeling different vs. Feeling similar

Jane's sense of being different from others perpetuated her disconnection from others. However, there were a few times that she felt a sense of similarity in relation to others, which gave her a sense of belonging.

- Taking emotional responsibility for others vs. Placing her own emotional needs second

Jane experienced little or no room to express her emotional needs in relation to others. She placed her own needs second, whilst on the other hand considered the emotional needs of others, to the point that she felt responsible for their emotional wellbeing. She continued taking responsibility for others' emotional wellbeing. This led to Jane being emotionally dependent on herself, which contributed to her having an early sense of maturity.

- Conditional Love or Acceptance

Jane often faced severe emotional and/or physical punishment when she voiced her needs and expressed her spontaneous and true self in relation to her parents. She therefore soon came to believe that love and acceptance would only be received conditionally. In this way, Jane conformed to others' wishes and rules. In return she gained short periods of love and/or acceptance, and often financial support as well.

- The loss of an authentic sense of self

Following from the previous theme, Jane therefore silenced her authentic self's needs to gain what she needed during the various stages of her life. In this way she lost touch with her authentic sense of self and acquired an inauthentic way of being in relation to others. However, there were a few relationships and times during which Jane was able to express her authentic self and also gained or maintained acceptance from others.

- Self doubt

Jane seemed to doubt herself often. This seemed to contribute to her need for outside approval which she seemed to need in order for her to accept herself.

- Feeling Powerless vs. feeling powerful:

Jane tended to conform to others' wishes, take responsibility for others' emotional wellbeing and sacrifice her authentic self to become what she needed to be, in order to gain or maintain others' approval and often material support. She therefore often found herself feeling powerless, as she risked losing what she needed from others when she

became more true to herself in those relationships. This loss of power often left her feeling powerless to control her own reactions. However, there were a few times in Jane's life that she seemed to experience a sense of power.

- Trust vs. Distrust:

Jane seemed to receive contradicting messages in many of her relationships. This seemed to contribute to her distrust in relationships. However, as Jane seemed to struggle with being true to her authentic self in relation to others, she in a sense struggled to trust herself to be herself. In this way it was hypothesised that even though Jane struggled to trust others, they too may have struggled to trust her as she was not expressing her true self in relation to them.

- Fear

From a young age Jane seemed fearful of the wellbeing of those around her, as well as her own wellbeing. Jane felt an intense fear of dying both in terms of herself and others. She also seemed particularly fearful of being exposed in front of others.

- Sensitivity:

From a young age Jane appeared to be aware of her sensitivity on a physical, emotional and a metaphysical level.

Following from Jane's story, one seems left with a picture of a somewhat dimly flickering flame, fighting to let its light shine. It seemed that Jane struggled to let her own voice be heard by herself and others. However, her spirit, despite adverse circumstances, seemed nonetheless alive and indomitable. It appeared that she was starting to listen to her inner authentic voice and braved to voice this to others. In a subsequent conversation with Jane, it seemed that she was on a road doing what she enjoyed, therefore allowing her flame to shine brighter.

CHAPTER 6

THE LIFE STORY OF MARK

Personal data

Participant	:	Mark Müller
Age	:	Early twenties
Field of occupation	:	Art, film and Journalism
Research setting	:	The interview was conducted at the researcher's home.

Introduction

In this chapter a transcribed conversation between the researcher and the participant is carefully analysed and emerging themes are highlighted. The transcribed conversation is to be found in Appendix C. It needs to be noted that the themes highlighted here may not necessarily be mutually exclusive. Neither are these themes meant to represent an ultimate truth about the reality of this particular person or about anxious people in general. The researcher therefore acknowledges that the themes highlighted here may be coloured by the lens through which she looked at this particular point in time. She further acknowledges that these themes are by no means exhaustive. Another person, looking through his or her particular lens, may therefore highlight different themes and/or add to the ones presented here.

The analysis is followed by the researcher's personal reflections.

<u>The Story of Mark</u>

The researcher identified the following themes from Mark's story.

Isolation

The theme of isolation seemed prominent in Mark's story. From a young age and in various contexts Mark seemed to feel isolated. However, in some instances it even seemed as though he preferred isolation and willingly isolated himself. Therefore, it appeared as though Mark felt ambivalent about his isolation. In some instances he seemed to seek out isolation for himself, whilst in other instances he did not seem to enjoy feeling isolated.

In his home environment Mark seemed to experience isolation from his family members, on the one hand, and yet he seemed to seek it out. He recalled this as follows:

> … I mean I've always been alone and it's always just been me, this idea of being a single [child], even though I had a sister, … I started reading more and more books, which was where I pretty much went for company during my childhood, mostly.

During *his school years*, Mark had some friends, but he still seemed to feel isolated. He sometimes sought out his pets rather than people, which perhaps was firstly a function of his isolation, but then served to perpetuate his isolation. Perhaps Mark needed a degree of isolation, which contributed to his ambivalence about his need to be with others vs. his need to be by himself.

When Mark went to Standard 6, even though he did not have to change schools as his school included both a primary as well as a high school, he recalled that his sense of isolation was still prominent. He said:

…it was a time of increasingly greater isolation. …all my friends were always loners.

And so it seemed that the friends he made did not make him feel connected, but tended to maintain his isolation. He longed to leave the German school and attend the Art school. He remembered it as follows:

> I wanted to desperately go to another school. I didn't have any friends. …Or at least I felt like I didn't. I had like these loner friends like one here and one there who kind of were part of the main group of friends anyway, but then when they were with me they would be different people and that would be fine, you know, we'd get along on that level. And I used to get teased a lot. There were times that the boys in the class would gang up on me and like tease me, that's why I always pretty much felt like an outsider, but they kind of cemented that.

Mark also described how he tended to isolate himself willingly.

> …at the German school I would hide away in the library during break.

When Mark went to art school, he recalled times during which he felt isolated from his peers and also often preferred isolation. It seemed as though he managed to isolate himself through either physically withdrawing from his peers, acquiring an aloof 'persona', or achieving high standards which distinguished him from them. He recalled:

> I didn't really have a lot of friends at art school. I was very aloof, …so they kept their distance from me, I…. There were times, sort of in later years, I think especially during my matric year, at which stage every one started to become a little frightened of me because I was overachieving like a freak. But I would hide at the top of the school, there was this fire escape, and I would hide like right at the top of the fire escape cause no one ever came there, …and I would just sit there and read like waiting for the next class to start or …, we very often had a double art period with a break in between and I would get keys from the teacher and lock myself in the classroom and keep painting or do whatever I wanted to do and then unlock when everyone else was about to come back and put the key on the teacher's desk.

In relation to colleagues, Mark remembered that he felt isolated when he worked as a lecturer at a university after he moved back to his parents' home. He said:

I probably spent the second half of my year there sleeping under my desk most of the time, sadly nobody noticed, because everyone was so busy with their work anyway.

Following from the above it seems clear that the theme of isolation is prominent in Mark's story. It seemed as though he disliked feeling isolated on the one hand and yet he preferred being isolated on the other hand. Therefore it appeared as though he tended to have conflicting feelings about his isolation. From the dialogue with Mark, various other themes have emerged which seemed to have contributed to his experience of isolation. These will be highlighted next.

Connection vs. Disconnection

This theme of being either connected and/or disconnected seemed prominent in Mark's story. This seemed to be prominent in relation to others in his life, but also in relation to himself. He recalled that he felt mostly disconnected from others, however, he also mentioned having numerous connections. Perhaps he had a sense of ambivalence about the nature of his connections, as well as his own need for connections. There nonetheless seemed to be an inconsistency in terms of the degree of connection vs. disconnection that he felt with others.

In terms of *his parents' relationship with each other* there seemed to be disconnection. This seemed particularly evident in the conflict between them. He said:

…my parents would fight even when I was very young…When I was very young, I think I didn't even know what they were doing. I would go away, if it got too loud, sometimes I'd cry then they would tell me to go away. Yeah, I would lock myself in my room sometimes cause I was scared...

The disconnection between his parents was also prominent in the physical distance between them. He remembered:

…my parents slept in separate bedrooms… I know that the last time my parents slept together was like 12 years ago. My mom ..., she found out that my dad was having an affair and she said well, you will never sleep in my bed again.

Given the above, it therefore seemed as though the disconnection between Mark's parents contributed to the disconnection he felt in relation to them. Perhaps, during the times that he sought out isolation, he was seeking refuge from their quarrelling.

In relation to his parents it seemed as though Mark was aware of the emotional disconnection between him and them, as well as between them as a couple. He said:

…my parents aren't really people you can talk to about anything...My parents were always very materially supportive of me, just emotionally I don't think they could support themselves, so they never really knew what to do with us kids.

When he reflected back, Mark seemed unsure about which parent he connected best with. He said:

I don't really know. I don't think either of them, when I think back really. Because I know I spent a lot of time with my dad in the workshop making things out of clay and like learning how the different machines and things work ...and I know I spent a lot of time in my mom's sewing room as well, where she would be making quilts and batiks and things like that...

It therefore appeared as though there were times that he physically spent time with each of his parents, however during these physical connections, it seemed as though he still felt emotionally disconnected from them. Given this, it seemed as though Mark experienced a sense of ambivalence around his connection with his parents.

He recalled a time during his university years that he missed them. He described it as follows:

I still remember actually one day when I was in my first year, I sort of started missing them a little bit and I was talking to them on the phone, but I didn't have any money left and they knew what the phone number was ...and then the phone went dead, but I didn't have any money but you know how you can still hear them talking on the other side and they can't hear you anymore cause your money's finished and my mom said: 'You have to phone him back, you have to phone

him back.' And my dad said: 'What for?' and he put down the phone. And I just realised actually yeah, what for did I need to speak to them anyway as well.

This again reiterates the emotional disconnection Mark experienced from his parents. Yet his ambivalence about his need to connect with them seemed strong. He seemed to both desire and reject connections with them.

In relation to his mother, Mark seemed to feel disconnected from his mother as her intrusiveness appeared to push him away. He described this as follows:

I remember my mom always use to ask when we got home, like: 'What did you do today?' And then you had to tell her exactly what you did the whole day and most of the days I did bloody well nothing so it was always a very irritating question to answer, but my mom always wanted to know everything that you had done.

Mark interpreted his mother's inquiry as intrusive. Perhaps his response was based on previous experiences of his mother as intrusive, and not really being able or interested in connecting with him as a person. It seemed that many times he experienced 'smother love' rather than 'mother love'.

He gave the following other examples, that may have coloured the way in which he perceived his relationship with his mother. He said:

…she's incredibly over protective of me and she wanted to know like absolutely everything. What really upsets me is the fact that my mom always shouts at you,…You might start off having a normal conversation and by the second sentence she is screaming at you.

He also gave an example which illustrated that he perceived his mother to be physically intrusive and somewhat 'inappropriate' in the context of a mother and son relationship. He recalled:

I specifically remember this incident because it always made me very uncomfortable in a way, like when she came to my room, and she sort of started talking to me and whatever and then eventually she said: 'Ag mamma is net so honger vir 'n bietjie liefde.' I gave her a hug and whatever and you know she gave me a hug. ... it's not a nice position to be put in.

Mark therefore seemed to experience his relationship with his mother as intrusive or invasive, which served to disconnect rather than connect.

In relation to his father, Mark experienced disconnection. It also seemed as though his disconnection with his father was influenced by his mother. He said:

In a way I think a lot of my narrative about my father has been constructed through the stuff my mother has always said, about the way that she felt… cause my mom was always going on about what a jerk he was...,they were always fighting. I'd kind of think, yeah, okay he is a jerk,…

Perhaps Mark fulfilled his mother's expectations and gained a sense of emotional connection with her, by believing her construction of his father.

He also recalled feeling intruded upon by his father, which seemed to contribute to the disconnection between them. He said:

When I got older my dad was even more so [intrusive], he started going through my mail, listening in on the phone, he would like follow me around in the car, things like that. I actually got quite scared of him,…

His father's intrusive nature seemed particularly evident on a verbal level. Mark observed this in the relationship between his parents and felt the impact thereof in his interactions with his father. This seemed to perpetuate Mark's sense of disconnection with his father. He recalled:

…because my dad would always like put her down in company and sort of play himself up and if she told a story he would say: 'That is not exactly true' and make her out to be a liar and told the story exactly the same way basically...which my dad has always done with me as well. You know anything you say or do, like he can do better. He would improve on and tell you what you are doing wrong with this and that. …there is a subconscious part of him which does always come and try to like push all your buttons and find your weak spot and like hit it and then like start telling me how crap you are and this and that, but in normal conversation, without it like being openly aggressive about it, it's always in this passive kind of way putting me down, 'ag do you really think you could do that?'

This therefore perpetuated the disconnection between him and his father as he seemed to feel minimised by his father. He said:

> I feel shone up by him in a way...

In addition, Mark tended to feel embarrassed by his father. Mark seemed intelligent and started to use his intellectual abilities to do to his father what he felt his father did to him. Mark therefore perpetuated the disconnection between them by being similarly verbally intrusive and condescending to his father. He said:

> I realised I was always embarrassed about my dad and I felt bad about being embarrassed… in that way my dad, who's German was like this Bavarian dialect and he'd never really been to a proper school, …and had forgotten a lot of the German from being in South Africa for too long and speaking English, he was even an embarrassment within his own community to me and because I was reading stuff all the time and I was learning stuff, you know my level of education advanced quite rapidly to the stage where I would get so embarrassed about my dad that I would start correcting his accent and say: 'No you have to say the word like this and you have to do it like that.'

It therefore seemed as though Mark started interacting with his father in a similarly intrusive and demeaning manner. Even though this seemed to help Mark reconnect with himself, it perpetuated the disconnection between him and his father.

In relation to his sister, Mark's disconnection with her seemed prominent. He said:

> I'm not an only child, but my sister usually avoids the situation at home by going to stay at a friend's house or she's always somewhere else. So I always pretty much felt like an only child.

It therefore seemed as though he experienced both physical and emotional disconnection with his sister as she was physically and emotionally absent in the home.

Their disconnection was further highlighted by the conflict between them when they were young. He said:

…I was about 11 or 12 at which stage there wasn't a room for my sister, my sister and I shared a
room and we were getting older and we always use to fight anyway like mad.

In relation to his peers, Mark reported that he felt mostly disconnected and yet he
often also mentioned numerous friends with whom he felt connected.

During his school years in the German school he recalled feeling disconnected from his
peers, as they told him that he was weird. He said:

...they thought I was weird. They kept somehow going to the idea that I was weird...

In a way he did act weird (compared to his peers), which perhaps also disconnected him
from them and gave him the isolation that he at times seemed to need.

However, he also reported having connections with some peers in the German school. It
appeared as though the friends with whom he felt connected had families that were
similar to his own. In this way he felt that he and his friend, Oscar connected through
their understanding of each other's creative, but unstable home environments. He
responded:

His family was really creative as well,…Oscar kind of I guess understood how wild my family
was at times...

He also felt that he and another friend, John, shared similar experiences in their families.
However, they also seemed to connect on an intellectual level. He recalled:

I think almost one of the main reasons we got along was because we saw that a lot of the
'patterns' were the same, because both our families were severely dysfunctional at the end of the
day. ...He was quite bright and he had all kinds of new ideas from Germany, from his school.
He was quite outspoken about a lot of things that no one else then knew about and I just found
that interesting.

The connection that Mark experienced in his friendship with John was at times contrasted
with disconnection. It seemed as though the times of disconnection came from an

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abusive kind of impact that Mark felt in relation to John, which left him confused about the connection between them. He described it as follows:

> My friendship with John was a strange one, because he had these bouts of being incredibly nasty, it was almost like he was a different person sometimes for a while and would just be like really, really horrible and like ignore me and say horrible things to me and start pushing me around and stuff like that. And other times he would be really, really nice.

The next significant friendship in which Mark experienced a sense of connection was when he was in about Standard 7, with James. Although the similarities between his and James' families created an initial connection, Mark became aware of his need to extend this emotional connection to one that included a deeper love connection. He remembered:

> His dad played in the same band as my dad did. ...I'd see him at band practices... We would like run off and like do stuff together cause the adults were practising their trumpets… I think by that time I was also starting to realise that I was definitely probably more interested in boys than in girls really. That's what the whole thing with James ended up being. I think I pretty much fell head over heals in love with this dude, …he was pretty much everything that I wasn't.

It therefore appeared as though the connection with James had a lot to do with Mark finding in James what he felt he lacked in himself. This also seemed to cohere with his new found sexual identity.

When Mark went to Art school, to complete his high school education, he on the one hand experienced disconnection from his peers, yet he recalled having numerous connections with others. It seemed that he felt an outsider. He said:

> You know, everyone kind of had their own little clique, everyone had their own little friend that they were talking to and I always felt like I was intruding or I didn't know what to say to people.

Nonetheless, the art school context seemed to create a space in which the students experienced a large degree of freedom to express themselves as they wished. It seemed as though there was a greater tolerance for difference between the students. He said:

No one cared that I was weird, cause there were so many people there who were so much weirder than I was. ...My teachers were really supportive of me.

It therefore seemed as though 'weirdness' was in a way the 'norm' in Art school. For this reason Mark seemed to feel more connected in a general sense. He also seemed to gain valuable connections with his teachers through having a space in which he could fully express himself.

However, it seemed that, on a one-to-one level, the contradiction between 'connection vs. disconnection' was highlighted even more during Mark's Art school years due to the general tendency in this context to connect very closely with someone and then to disconnect just as easily. This seemed evident in Mark's description of his interaction with his friend, Allen. He said:

…he started paying me a lot of attention and started following me around and he always used to like come drag his easel next to mine when we were painting...Like sometimes when we were in sculpture class he would...start massaging my shoulders and like do weird stuff... ...but then he started from one day to the next, ignoring me, like in public...but then when we were on our own, he'd get like really intense.

When Mark's and Allen's 'friendship' started to disconnect it seemed as though he felt a general sense of disconnection with the larger peer group. However, this pervasive feeling of disconnection seemed to include a sense of connection. He mentioned a valuable friendship with a girl called Moira.

It therefore seemed as though Mark had a sense of ambivalence about his connections in art school. His disconnection was coloured by experiences of connection.

Following this disconnecting experience he had with Allen, Mark focussed his attention on his interests and joined an Internet talk group where he gained valuable connections with others who shared similar interests. He recalled:

I had a lot of friends on the Internet at the time.

Through connecting around their similar interests, he was thus able to enjoy close emotional connections with his friends on the Internet in spite of the physical distance between them. It seemed as if he could connect when there was distance. Perhaps he preferred connection in the context of disconnection.

In the context of Mark's *interactions with medical professionals,* it seemed as though his sense of disconnection was also prominent in his interactions with doctors and other professional people to whom he went for help for his reversed sleeping patterns and panic symptoms.

Mark's working hours were excessive and totally unbalanced during his final year of film studies when he was doing his practical training. He said that he had a "nervous breakdown" as a result. After this final year at university, he went home where he experienced severe panic symptoms and seemingly related attacks. It could be speculated that he went back to his parents' home, after his demanding year at university, hoping to find either connections with family members, or perhaps, find solace in the way he was able to retreat within himself in his home environment.

Mark searched for answers around his physical experiences from various medical professionals. His disconnection became more pronounced as the various doctors he consulted did not seem to connect with each other in terms of the different diagnoses they made and treatments they suggested. He recalled:

> I think I had a nervous breakdown, …I was diagnosed with Narcolepsy by a doctor…I went to
> see a psychiatrist who wanted to put me on epilepsy medication for the fits which I was still
> having…The psychiatrist said I was bipolar. Then I went to see another doctor who said that he
> was sure all of this sounded like yuppie flu and I had MS and then I thought…, like okay to hell
> with this…, oh and I went to see another neurologist in between ...they couldn't prove anything,
> there was definitely no conclusively diagnosis of Narcolepsy, it was 'let's try this medication, lets
> try that medication, ...oh that doesn't work, why don't we try this,' …until I got so sick and tired
> of trying things for that entire year…

It seemed that what Mark needed was to connect with someone and share his understandings and his experiences about his life and his life's outcomes. However, it

appeared as though little or no space was provided for his voice in these interactions, which added to his sense of disconnection. He said:

> …I went to a psychiatrist and I said to her: 'Surely your environment has got something to do with the way that your brain functions and the experiences that you have.' And she said: 'No my darling, it's all chemistry.' And she started writing out a prescription with all kinds of hectic stuff that when I showed it to another psychiatrist he said: 'This woman is mad.'

Following from this theme of 'connection vs. disconnection', with others, it appeared as though Mark needed to be emotionally self-reliant many times during his life. This required a certain amount of inner strength, which seemed to have enabled him to remain connected with himself. As Mark managed to connect with himself he often gained valuable connections with others. This is explored next.

In relation to his authentic self, Mark seemed able to listen to his inner authentic voice and remained focussed on connecting with his 'true' or authentic self even though it proved difficult at times. As was highlighted earlier, Mark was told by his peers in the German school that he was weird. Although this made the connections between him and his peers difficult, he seemed able to embrace his 'weirdness' and gain a connection with himself. Through this process he found and developed what may be referred to as his authentic strengths and talents. He said:

> I realised that being weird then meant that I was able to do a whole lot of stuff that they couldn't do. I was the lead part in the school play...I'd have like my work...this big exhibition thing. ...apparently it was always the best in art class,... Apparently I was like the brightest kid in class as well, but I didn't know that. I mean I knew I got good marks but I never compared it to anyone else's.

He therefore became aware of the abilities of his authentic self and received praise and awards for them, which enabled him to believe in himself.

However, it appeared that the more Mark gained connection with himself, and acquired authenticity, the more he seemed to experience disconnection from his peers. He said:

Eventually what I did at the German school for the last three years is that I spent break in the library...That's how I got through primary school.

The Art school context seemed to allow for the expression of each student's authentic self. For this reason Mark seemed to enjoy Art school as he was able to be and express himself without the concern of what others might think. He said:

I felt like happier...No one cared that I was weird, cause there were so many people there who were so much weirder than I was. There was this girl Mia, with red hair that would stand up on a table in the French class and start doing songs from Annie. There was this guy called Noel who shaved off his eyebrows and kept the dog embryo next to his bed in his bedroom. ...There were all these people who were characters in there own right. ...I felt like suddenly I discovered I was a self. I felt like, oh gosh, like I can do all this stuff and like I'm actually...intelligent, like vaguely good-looking. I didn't realise that I could draw or paint really well. It was just like this total resolution to me...it was a complete shift and I am so glad that I went, because it allowed me to believe in myself...I probably would have gotten a better academic education if I had stayed at the German school, but I might have ended up being like an accountant or a plumber or and electrician or something like the rest of them.

It therefore seemed as though he was able to connect with and develop his authentic self during his Art school years, which in turn enabled him to believe in himself.

Mark seemed to feel more disconnected from the larger peer group when his relationship with Allen broke up. This seemed evident, as Allen seemed strongly connected with the larger peer group. However, in spite of this, Mark again managed to reconnect with himself by exploring and focusing on the subjects that he held as personal and authentic interests from a young age. He recalled:

We finally got the Internet and I joined a mailing list for people interested in Native American spirituality and all kinds of weird things...

It further seemed as though the more he connected with his authentic self, the more he believed in himself and the more he was able to connect with others who shared similar interests. Mark showed insight into how he needed to connect with those who shared his authentic interests. He described this personal experience as follows:

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Getting involved with myself as such, very much retreating within myself,...I was also discovering in a strange way how my self was connected to the rest of the world in a very strange way along pathways of perceptions which I had never been aware of to that extent until then. Yeah, I think it was an intense period of solitude,...people on the Internet whom I couldn't see, but I could feel the positive responses or negative responses or people feeling a certain way and that's what really made me feel so aware, that this physical world is such a small part of our experience...

After finishing school, Mark attended university where he experienced a significant degree of disconnection as he felt he did not fit in. Mark therefore experimented with being like the rest and doing the things they did in order for him to feel more connected to them. However, this in turn led him to lose connection with who he felt he was authentically. He recalled:

I went to university and I realised that well if I want to have a conversation with anyone or actually like socially bond with anyone I'm going to have to go out and get drunk with the rest of them and then even when you are drunk, it's kind of difficult to talk to people, so I would borrow other people's cigarettes and start smoking as it was something to hold on to…, it makes you feel safe. ...so I got drunk and I passed out once or twice and that was it. I really hated having someone else to take me home, I hated waking up in the middle of some deserted club at 03h00 in the morning...It's not something that I find suits me very well.

After Mark sought treatment for his 'narcolepsy' he was put on anti-depressant medication, which changed him and made him 'inauthentic'. He said:

I said I would never ever go on anti-depressants but I did, because I would have to leave varsity or something because I was just sleeping all over the place so I wasn't coping...But they didn't really work that well.

He described how he became what he needed to be to connect with others, but at the same time he lost the connection with what he knew his authentic self to be. He recalled:

I felt like I didn't know who I was anymore. I felt like I was this plastic nicety nice person...because the medication made me feel better so obviously I was being more positive and friendlier towards people even though I wouldn't be that inclined, cause I didn't like them... I felt like it was almost robbing me of my ability to choose in a way and I got bored ...of feeling the

same way all the time, because I didn't feel anything else except this kind of not very happy really, but kind of content pose…

Mark also spoke of feeling "irritable and moody" whilst being on the medication. This may either indicate that people respond uniquely to medication, or alternatively that he felt irritable and moody over losing his connection with his authentic self.

Even though Mark felt disconnected from his authentic self, it appeared as though he found the strength to reconnect with his authentic self's needs and decided what was best for him. He said:

...eventually I said the hell with all of this and I took myself off the medication.

Mark's disconnection on many levels actually allowed him to connect to his 'true' or authentic self.

Feeling different from others vs. Feeling similar to others

This theme seemed to follow from the abovementioned themes and may have contributed to his experiences of isolation and disconnection.

This theme of feeling different appeared to be particularly prominent *in relation to his peers*. He often felt himself different from the larger peer group. However, on the other hand it appeared as though Mark preferred being different from others, as this distinguished him from the norm about which he tended to be critical, and to which he did not wish to conform. It therefore seemed as though he experienced a sense of ambivalence as he felt on the one hand that he did not fit in, but by making sure that he remained the highest achiever and by being 'aloof', he seemed to choose to remain somewhat untouchable, and thus willingly highlighted his difference from the rest.

Exploring his feelings of difference in relation to his peers he said:

I never felt like a child when I was a child. …, I think I always felt a bit out. When I look at the school photographs of me it's like sometimes I'm not even looking at the photographer, ... like I'm just not quite there... when people played games, I remember them playing police, police in pre-school and I wanted to be the black woman who answered the phone. Everyone else wanted to be like the cops and the robbers....I just wanted to be the black woman who answered the phone ...that's the position I wanted to be in, like never mind the cops and the robbers…

Mark also felt different as he did not enjoy sport. He said:

I hated sport. …I never really understood the idea of someone telling you to like do something which doesn't really have a purpose...when someone said: 'Run after the ball and kick it', I was like 'why, but there wasn't a reason,'...

What seemed to contribute to Mark feeling different from his peers was the teasing he received at the hands of other children and their intrusive comments towards him. He said:

…I used to get teased a lot. …There were times that the boys in the class would gang up on me and like tease me, that's why I always...felt like an outsider, ...one of the older boys one day decided I was a 'fucking fag' before I even knew what either word meant, I think I must have been about 12 or 13. I was pretty much branded from then on…the guy on the bus,…used to …take away my school work, cause I would go and sit in the bus and start doing my school work, that's how nerdy I was. He...like pretending to throw it out of the window. …It was all just because they thought I was weird.

The teasing and intrusive comments from peers therefore perpetuated his sense of being different and ties in well with the previously mentioned themes, as his sense of difference tended to perpetuate his disconnection and isolation from others.

In Art school the context seemed to allow for difference in that students had a sense of freedom to be who they wanted to be and expressed themselves freely in their chosen art forms. It seemed as though Mark felt more similar to others here in the sense that he was not the only weird person any more. He said:

No one cared that I was weird, cause there were so many people there who were so much weirder than I was.

However, in spite of Mark being able to express himself through his art in this context, it seemed as though there were times when Mark felt different in relation to some of his peers. He would then further highlight his difference by isolating himself and becoming a high achiever. He recalled:

> Everyone kind of had their own little clique, everyone had their own little friend that they were talking to and I always felt like I was intruding or I didn't know what to say to people like when I stood there and like sooner or later they started ignoring you if you didn't want to say anything and then you felt even more stupid. So yeah, I'd do that, like go and sit somewhere with a book...There were times... I think especially during my matric year, at which stage everyone started to become a little frightened of me because I was over achieving like a freak.

In addition it seemed as though his homosexual preference led him to have a sense of difference. However, when Allen showed interest in him, he seemed to have a sense of being similar to one other person for a short time. He said:

> I just thought, hey cool, someone to share this little thing with, cause I didn't know anyone else that was that way inclined.

During his university years it seemed as though Mark felt significantly different from the norm. During his first year in university, whilst he was in residence, he recalled:

> I...realised that,…I'm in a res. with a whole lot of jocks and...they literally thought a girl moved in... I guess cause of my voice, I'm just quite small and not like really built or anything and yeah, and then I needed to become a guy as well, it just like started being a really important thing to me. But at the same time I didn't want to be a guy like those guys, because they didn't represent anything to me that I approved of....someone was drunk and they were screaming… and I just thought: 'How backwards are these people?'

It therefore seemed that even though Mark felt different from the norm, he seemed proud of his difference and at the same time critical of the ways of his fellow students.

Following from his awareness that he was much different to the norm in this setting, he started to explore the norm, perhaps in an attempt to feel less different. He recalled:

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I realised I needed to find out what the norm was, because I had been so hectically abnormal...

In relation to the larger societal norm, Mark seemed to feel different from others. This appeared evident in his sleep patterns that tended to differ from the norm.   He said:

Also during school vacations I would stay awake at night and sleep during the day so that I could do my own thing, I could paint, I could listen to music, the phone never rang, it was great. ...I slept a lot of times in lectures...It was really embarrassing...eventually I was diagnosed with Narcolepsy...

In spite of Mark's sleeping patterns not fitting the prescribed norm, he was nonetheless able to use this difference or so called 'abnormality' to his advantage, during his final year at university, when they were required to edit their films. He recalled:

I didn't really care because there wasn't enough equipment for everyone to use during the day, so some of us had to use it during the night and then we would take turns editing, ...

It therefore seemed as though Mark experienced a sense of ambivalence around his difference from others. On the one hand he felt different from the norm in various contexts and interactions, and on the other hand he tended to accentuate his difference and feel proud of it.

Trust vs. Distrust

This theme seemed to link with the sense of ambivalence that Mark had about his relationships. It seemed as though Mark found it difficult to trust others, as the messages that he received from them were often contradictory and confusing. However, it further seemed as though he too tended to give contradictory messages, by for example isolating himself, being 'aloof' and critical towards others on the one hand, and yet looking for connections on the other hand. Punctuating from the other parties' point of view, it may have been equally difficult for them to trust Mark, as Mark was not consistent in his

attempts to connect. This may therefore explain the contradictions in Mark's dialogue about his relationships.

In relation to his father, it seemed as though he received inconsistent messages and therefore struggled to know which messages to believe. He was thus not sure which representation of his father to trust. He described this as follows:

> I was always angry with my dad for the way that he spoke to me, the way that he acted...for always doing stuff and then claiming that he had done something completely different…and for acting in ways which he could then no longer remember...you would always wonder that maybe you were making it all up…

Mark's confusion also seemed to lie in the fact that his father tended to break him down, yet on the other hand, being a child, he needed to feel protected by his father. Mark then started giving his father similarly confusing messages when he started isolating himself from his father and breaking his father down. In this way it may therefore have been similarly difficult for his father to trust Mark. For on the one hand Mark was his son who was supposed to love and respect him, yet on the other hand Mark's responses towards his father did not meet those expectations. This seemed clear in Mark's account of the critical and condescending manner in which he tended to speak to his father.

In relation to his peers Mark recalled a relationship during which similar conflicting messages occurred, which made it difficult to trust the nature of the connection. He described it as follows:

> ...there was this guy called Allen,…Allen was…, this tall blonde guy with this big smile and like amazing personality...

Although Mark seemed to notice him he said:

> I didn't really pay him a lot of attention, …

This may serve as an example of contradictory messages he perhaps sent to Allen. From Mark's point of view he also felt that he received contradictory messages from men. On

the one hand he received definite communications that they had a special connection and that Allen was interested in him. He remembered:

> …he started paying me a lot of attention and started following me around and he always used to like come drag his easel next to mine when we were painting and eventually I like realised...this guy is actually like really hot. …and then if I was working outside on the balcony and no one else was there he would like come and sit and talk to me and tell me about these gay dating agencies he heard about on the radio...I just thought, hey cool, someone to share this little thing with, cause I didn't know anyone else that was that way inclined.

On the other hand Mark seemed confused when he received messages from Allen that communicated that they did not have a connection. He recalled:

> ...but then he started from one day to the next, ignoring me, like in public...but then when we were on our own, he'd get like really intense. ...sometimes when we were in sculpture class he would…start massaging my shoulders and like do weird stuff…

Mark's struggle to trust what was communicated to him seemed prominent as he reflected back on this:

> ...if I think back about it, I think he was probably like experimenting,...He was probably into the whole thing for a while and then got cold feet and decided...this is like definitely not for him. Cause then he would like...start telling me about the crush he had on this girl...

Mark's difficulty with trusting someone also seemed evident in the one friendship he seemed to have during this time. He said:

> ...I actually didn't want to believe Moira.

In addition to Mark coming to terms with trusting others, he was confronted with the degree to which he felt connected to himself and therefore able to trust himself, as well as his responses to others' messages toward him. He said:

> That was a huge crises for me, because by the end of it I didn't know who the fuck I was anymore.

However, it appeared as though he found ways of maintaining his trust in himself which in turn enabled him to believe in himself again. He recalled:

> I started keeping a diary, because I had to somehow figure out who this person was that I was, I knew there must be some consistent things that I did and I wanted to hold on to, like something, somehow I guess.

Taking emotional responsibility for others vs. Placing his own emotional needs second

Throughout Mark's story it seemed as though he tended to be alone with his emotional needs in that he could not rely on others to meet his emotional needs and tended to subjugate them to second place, whilst on the other hand taking emotional responsibility for others.

In relation to his parents it seemed as though Mark experienced them as unable to deal with their own emotions. He was therefore aware from a young age that he should not add to their emotional burden by making his own emotional needs clear to them, as it tended to result in unpleasantness. His parents took what he said as criticism, and he became the locus of their blame. In this way he seemed to learn to take care of his own emotional needs. This seemed to perpetuate his feelings of disconnection with his parents and contributed to his isolation. He said:

> They didn't know what I was doing half the time and so I always kind of felt ...that I was like on my own devices. …my parents aren't really people you can talk to about anything, because they get upset about everything and take everything personally or they start telling you how bad you are and like start condemning you for whatever you are trying to discuss with them…

He seemed to feel responsible for his parents' conflict and even started to take responsibility for reconciling them when they were experiencing conflict in their relationships. He said:

I remember like one of the things they used to like say in arguments was: 'Your child is this and this and this' and then like 'your child, no it's your child actually.'…and I'd feel, why are they fighting about me, what have I done. ...Later on, we would get in between the fight and I would try to make them realise how childish they were being and almost like play referee.

Mark's tendency to place his own emotional needs second seemed to spring from the message he got in his home environment that he was 'bad'. It therefore appeared as though in order for Mark to gain the acceptance and approval of his parents, he needed to take responsibility for their emotional well-being and place his own emotional needs second. Once their emotional needs were met, they seemed to feel more content and therefore happier. In this way there was a more peaceful atmosphere in the home, which in turn seemed to make it more bearable for Mark to be there. He recalled:

…I think I was always pretty much trying to please everybody and because everybody thought I was so bad, I was always trying to be like really good...better than everyone else. I tried to be like the nicest person and the least aggressive person, because my parents are both fairly aggressive...they always have fights...

It therefore seemed that in a way Mark tried to balance what was happening in the house with his 'good' or pleasing behaviour.

In relation to his mother, Mark seemed aware of the role he played in taking emotional responsibility for her and being her ally against his father. He remembered:

My mother was expecting me to play referee afterwards when she went through the whole argument with me in monologue…I've always been very protective towards my mom..., maybe she even had us to protect her from my dad, I sometimes get that idea, that she needed company or something ...because whenever she would be crying after they'd had a fight or something…, I mean who else was there, there was just me. In thinking back it's quite not a fair position to place a little child in, but I always had to be there, like hug her and like have something intimate to say, about things are going to get better. I think through that I developed an anger towards my dad at a very young age which I have only now started to really deal with, but that anger was really my mom's anger.

It appeared as though Mark became her emotional support from a young age. It seemed as though he needed to fill the gap that his father was not able (or perhaps not allowed to by his mother) to fill for her. It appeared that his mother needed him to console her on emotional matters, a role that would be more appropriate between two adults, than between mother and son. In this way Mark needed to be emotionally mature at a younger age, as he needed to provide and even take responsibility for her emotional needs. This seemed evident in the nature of the conversations his mother had with him and continued to have with him as he grew older. She tended to share her marriage difficulties and personal struggles about being a mother with him. He described this as follows:

> My mom tells me stories about when I was three and my dad took the plate of food that she cooked and put it down on the floor and called the dog to eat it...Even now when I came back after varsity, when I had to stay with them...she still expected me to listen to her and…she starts talking and yelling...and she rehashes like stuff that happened 10 years ago...

Mark therefore seemed ambivalent about the role he fulfilled with his mother as well as the boundaries between them. This seemed evident in an incident, which was highlighted earlier. As Mark reflected back, he seemed aware that he was fulfilling a role for his mother that asked a greater degree of emotional maturity from him than he felt able and/or willing to give. He said:

> ...it always made me very uncomfortable in a way, like when she came to my room, and she sort of started talking to me and whatever and then eventually she said: 'Ag mamma is net so honger vir 'n bietjie liefde.' I gave her a hug and whatever and you know she gave me a hug. You know as a child it didn't really upset me that much, but when I think back about it now, it's like a really bad thing to say to a child and it's not a nice position to be put in.

Mark therefore seemed to sense that the boundaries between him and his mother were not appropriate for a mother and son relationship, and that he needed a higher level of maturity to be able to contain his mother's emotions than what he, as a child, possessed. Therefore, it can be argued that Mark perhaps needed to be emotionally more mature sooner in his life, as more mature demands were placed on him.

In relation to his father, there were times that Mark felt angry with his father when he felt his father behaved immaturely and irresponsible. However, as he reflected back, he seemed to take responsibility for his father, by considering his father's frame of reference and background. One example of this was:

> I was always angry with my dad for the way that he spoke to me, the way that he acted...for always doing stuff and then claiming that he had done something completely different. That was stuff that he never claimed responsibility for...I now know that he doesn't really realise very often what he is doing, he can't help himself...I didn't want to play games anymore and my dad still wanted to play games, because that was what he had always wanted to do when he was young and he didn't have a dad.

He therefore showed understanding for his father's needs even though his needs were somehow compromised.

Mark seemed to feel more mature than his father from a young age. He said:

> ... but he used to act in a very immature way anyway. ...I'd be more sensible than everyone else and be more responsible. I would say that, especially with my dad. …,my dad did I guess what most fathers would do except I was just too serious and too interested in other things to really want to play games for that long, …… I reached a certain age where I didn't want to play games anymore and my dad still wanted to play games,...

It therefore seemed as though Mark tended to feel confused about the roles that he and his father fulfilled in relation to each other. He often felt more mature than his father and therefore responsible for his father's wellbeing, much like a father needed to feel about his son. He remembered:

> ...that always really bothered me, because he was supposed to be my dad, he wasn't suppose to be my friend...My dad, just in terms of acting irresponsibly sometimes would like go and get drunk at a Beer-fest. ...He would disappear and we would have to go and look for him at one, two in the morning...then he wouldn't want to come home, he would like be sitting with his friends and telling jokes...

Similar to his relationship with his mother, Mark therefore seemed confused about the role he fulfilled in relation to his father.

In relation to his younger sister, mark showed an early sense of responsibility for her particularly when they were very young and their parents were fighting. He remembered:

> My sister would start crying sometimes and I would have to pick her up until she stopped crying. ...and I would think…take this thing away, I don't know what to do with it….what do I do with this now.

Mark therefore felt a sense of responsibility to take care of his sister's emotional needs during a time that he actually needed emotional nurturing himself.

It therefore seemed that Mark often needed emotional holding, but there was little space for his emotional needs as he needed to consider others' emotional needs at the same time. Therefore he seemed alone with his emotional needs, and perhaps learned a sense of emotional independence and acquired an early sense of maturity. It seemed that his unmet emotional needs and his experiences with his parents, placed him in a paradox between emotional maturity on the one hand, and emotional bereftness on the other hand.

Conditional Love or Acceptance

Following from the previous theme, it seemed as though Mark gained a sense of belonging when he accommodated his parents' emotional needs and thus placed his own needs second. Mark therefore learned to be a certain way, so as to meet his parents' expectations, in order to feel accepted and loved in his home environment. He said:

> With both of my parents I guess I've always wanted their approval in some way, because they always withheld it, you know they'd always hold it just that far away from you so that you just can't like get at it, or feel that you have done well enough.

As was pointed out before, Mark longed for his parents' happiness, in order for him to feel happy. He therefore believed that his parents would be happier with each other and therefore with him when he conformed to what pleased them. This seemed evident in his need to achieve high standards, as he perhaps felt that they would not have a reason to be angry with him. As he often felt blamed for their arguments, he believed that, by becoming better, their reason for fighting might disappear. He said:

> ...being the best...trying to please them at the same time and trying to make things right...And I did and I was the school nerd. I walked away with like every single trophy for every single subject...I got seven distinctions.

Furthermore, it seemed important that Mark lived up to his parents' expectations as he was dependent on them for financial support. When he therefore decided on a direction in which to study, he needed to conform to their expectations in order to maintain financial support during his studies. He said:

> …I always wanted to be an archaeologist actually. I've always been fascinated by secrets and ancient things and other cultures, but my parents said I had to do something practical. My mom said: 'I did archaeology at college and it didn't help me anything,'...since I've always wanted to tell stories as well and do something creative...we came up with the solution that I could be a journalist and I could go into video or television and eventually work my way to film.

In relation to his mother, it seemed difficult for Mark to feel loved and accepted by his mother when he was not being her emotional support and therefore what she needed him to be. When he attempted to redefine his relationship and boundaries with her so as to incorporate his needs, he was often confronted with attempts on her part to make him feel guilty and bad about himself. He described it as follows:

> She gets very accusing ...like 'you don't care', when I say like 'listen enough of this, this is not my problem, this is your problem and daddy's problem and I have absolutely nothing to do with this, so please just leave me out of this', she doesn't actually understand. She says: 'But you don't care.' ...my mother's entire life was based on guilt. My mother is big on guilt...

In relation to his parents, Mark therefore seemed to strive for high standards and thus learned to incorporate their expectations in order to gain their love and acceptance. This enabled him to gain the financial support that he felt he needed to become independent and therefore his own person.

In relation to his peers, at university it seemed as though he felt he needed to change in order to be accepted in his peer group. He said:

> Until I went to university...I realised that well if I want to have a conversation with anyone or actually like socially bond with anyone I'm going to have to go out and get drunk with the rest of them and then even when you are drunk, it's kind of difficult to talk to people, so I would borrow other people's cigarettes and start smoking as it was something to hold on to...

However, later on he did what he pleased even though this highlighted his difference and perpetuated his disconnection and isolation from others.

It is important to note that, although Mark experienced conditional love and acceptance from a young age, it seemed as though he himself tended to acquire a similar way of thinking about others. Throughout the conversation this seemed clear as he occasionally spoke of others in a critical, non-accepting manner. An example of this seemed to be his description of his one friend's mother as:

> ...his mother was this obsessive like neurotic, controlling freak of a woman who like basically probably only lived to give birth to him and like raise him.

Perhaps Mark's tendency to break others down enabled him to regain a sense of power which he may have felt he did not have growing up. This will be highlighted next.

Feeling powerless vs. Feeling powerful

Linking with the previous theme, it seemed as though the theme of 'feeling powerless vs. feeling powerful' emerged in a contrasting and extreme manner. Mark tended to feel

powerless in such an extreme manner that he needed to regain power in an equally extreme manner, which in turn often left him needing to relinquish his power and be dependent again.

Mark's tendency to feel powerless and his need to regain power seemed to begin in his relationship with his parents.

In relation to his mother, Mark seemed powerless, as attempts to stop being his mother's emotional 'partner' were met by her efforts to instil guilt in him, as was highlighted earlier.

In relation to his father, it was also explored earlier that Mark often felt demeaned by his father, which left him feeling powerless. However, he seemed to feel more powerful in this relationship when he communicated with his father in a similar demeaning manner. He said:

> …especially during my early teens...I discovered I had some kind of power over him in that sense and that he was insecure about that and I would start to deliberately like ripping him off and started turning the tables on him and...just speak in like this really heavy German accent, which he doesn't even have, but like making all kinds of grammatical mistakes and things and like kind of like showing him up almost in a way, and it deeply upset him, because I use to do it in company, I wouldn't care.

It seemed that Mark was caught up in a destructive relationship with his parents, and longed to be independent from them and have power over his own life. But he was dependent on his parents for financial support to educate himself and obtain a qualification, which would enable him to be financially independent from them. However, in order for him to maintain their financial support, he needed to maintain their approval and therefore do and be what they approved of. This maintained his feelings of powerlessness. However, it seemed as though he gained power by striving to be 'perfect'. He said:

I decided that the only way I was ever going to get away from them was if I started working really hard at school and I got good marks, so I could get a bursary to go to a good varsity and then maybe after that I'd like get a good job and I'd like wouldn't have to go back there all the time and need them and their money and whatever. ...in a way that was still playing in the whole pattern of like being the best...trying to please them at the same time and trying to make things right...And I did and I was the school nerd. I walked away with like every single trophy for every single subject, I did. I got seven distinctions.

It did however seem that he tended to set extreme and unrealistically high standards for himself, which soon exhausted his inner resources. When this happened he became dependent on his parents again and was again placed in the powerless position from which he tried to escape. He described this as follows:

I am only now learning even how alienated and emotionally cut off ...I was while I was at varsity and how little I actually allowed myself to enjoy anything cause I really thought that if I worked hard enough I was somehow going to get away from everything and ironically I worked so hard that I got so ill that I had to go back to everything...

It therefore seemed as though Mark tended to swing between two extremes. He either felt too powerful by taking too much on himself and even pushing others away. He then became isolated and drained which placed him in a position in which he became dependent on others again, which perpetuated his powerlessness. He therefore perhaps needed to find an integrated balance by taking responsibility for himself and regaining power over his life, and also allowing outside support that acknowledged his authenticity without attempting to render him powerless.

Sensitivity vs. Insensitivity

Mark tended to be sensitive, both on a physical, as well as on an emotional level. His emotional sensitivity seemed to extend to a somewhat meta-physical level of sensitivity. However, even though he seemed a sensitive person, at times he was also rather insensitive in the manner in which he spoke to or about others.

Physical sensitivity

Mark suffered from enuresis from a young age and this seemed to last until he was about 10 years old. He also seemed prone to other illnesses when he grew older and was at one time diagnosed with Tickbite fever.

Mark's anxiety also led to him becoming physically ill during his university years. He was given various different diagnoses during these times. He recalled:

> I was diagnosed with Narcolepsy by a doctor… Then I went to see another doctor who said that he was sure all of this sounded like yuppie flu and I had MS and then I thought…Then eventually...this woman who has treated people for chronic fatigue syndrome...found mainly Bilharzia, but also a whole other host of small parasitic infections, I think it's a type of Tick–Bite-Fever...

Perhaps these physical symptoms, that seemed somewhat inconclusive, may have been physical extensions or physical responses to his high level of anxiety.

Emotional sensitivity

Mark was also sensitive to interpersonal dynamics. He was able to observe the processes according to which others interacted with each other. He was also sensitive to the impact that people had on him. He described his relationship with John, his friend in his primary school years. He was able to observe the same pattern in this relationship as he observed between John and John's brother. He was also able to link this experience and his own particular way of dealing with it, to his relationship with his father, as well as the relationship between his parents. He described it as follows:

> But my friendship with John was a strange one, because he had these bouts of being incredibly nasty, it was almost like he was a different person sometimes for a while and would just be like really, really horrible and like ignore me and say horrible things to me and start pushing me around and stuff like that. And other times he would be really, really nice. And he did the same thing to his little brother as well...that's the kind of thing that my dad would do to my mom, ...you kind of always hope that the nice one is going to come out sooner or later and then everything would be fine again. Because you care about this person and you have some kind of dependency on them, it becomes almost part of the friendship, ...they'll go on for as long as they

think that they almost got you in tears and then it's fine, and then they know they kind of have power over you and they will be nice again.

On a more *meta-physical level,* his emotional sensitivity and his ability to be socially observant and tuned into the dynamics between people seemed to lead to him becoming aware of his strong intuitive abilities which further extended to psychic abilities. He became more aware of this when he joined the group of people on the Internet who shared his interest in Native American spirituality. He said:

I would say that I am…, perhaps psychic is the best word, clairvoyant...

He subsequently started to develop these "clairvoyant" or "psychic" abilities. He said:

I could feel the positive responses or negative responses or people feeling a certain way... We'd meditate together at a certain time, …and it would become quite clear to me that there was something amazing happening that we were all connecting in the same way, and I could sort of feel people's presence as such, as all being part of this sort of collective energy in a way, because it was the same time. We would like meditate, like if there was a plain crash or something, for the survivors and stuff like that. It was like praying together in a way. They also talked a lot about sending healing energy to people or positive thoughts that kind of thing, 'Healing life' as they called it. And I started doing that and I started reading books...and eventually I realised that when I was sending healing light to people, and I was imagining being there, that I could actually see things...see what was going on and eventually I started mentioning this to the people...and they would be like, 'that's really interesting, cause I was wearing a red sweater that day' and like 'I was in my kitchen doing things' and that kind of thing and eventually I realised that in some way I could actually see these things, see what was going on. ...there were...these cards that everyone was using, they were called totem animal cards....I also realised…because these cards in some way predicted the future as such, that when I was doing these readings for people, that all this other information would come suddenly that wasn't in the card, and I would be talking about it,...and I just know somehow that I had to say this and that and whatever. I initially questioned it, and I was a bit scared, but I prayed and I asked for protection and that it would stop and nothing negative ever came of it, there was never anything bad that I would say to people, and so in time I grew to trust and accept it and it has been a very real part of my life ever since. ...I can't tell people what's going to happen, but when I do a reading for somebody I am somehow able to see what the different possibilities are for the future. And I can see people as well in those people's lives, I can describe them physically to them, I can describe to them

what kinds of situations and what kind of relationships they have with them and how that is going to affect the future outcome of a situation if they choose to pursue a certain path with that person or choose to pursue a certain course of action. …I have had a woman come to me once and I said to her: 'Your sister has died, she had breast cancer' and this was all true...and then quite surprisingly she said: 'Well, is there anyone else?' And I said: 'Well yeah, there's this older man and he's like holding out this thing and I don't want to be stupid, but it looks just like the Maltese cross.' And she said: 'That's my dad, he won the Maltese cross in the war.' So I have had moments like that where even me, who is sometimes very doubtful of things, had to accept that I was doing something which was useful to people in some way and which was very real.

As Mark reflected back, he recalled that he became aware of his sensitivity and these psychic abilities from a young age already. However, he only seemed to have developed it later in his life. He said:

I think I have always been more sensitive. When I was very, very young, I must have been 5 or 6 or 7, round about that age, I remember walking in the shopping mall with my mom coming down the escalator and I remember always asking my parents these questions whenever I was in a public space: 'What's so sore inside? I don't understand why is it so sore.' And they just thought I was being silly and they never really understood what I meant. When I went down the escalator I realised that the pain that was passing through me as such, this feeling and emotions that was passing through, disappeared the further the people went up the escalator and I realised that I was just really picking up maybe the energy field of every person that was coming past and that was the first time that I realised that this weren't actually my own emotions, that somehow I had access to other people's emotions and that I would feel them in that way. It's not a very nice thing initially until you learn to control it. With my ability to pick up people's thoughts or life circumstances that kind of thing, it is something I choose to have access to when I am asked to use it. It is not something that I really use in my own life, I feel that it is an ability that was given to me to help other people, but I think that if I started using it in my own life, I think I would probably start abusing it in some sense. I think it would be almost irresponsible to do. And besides who wants to know what is going to happen in their own future all the time. You just have to be sensible really and you can figure out most of those possibilities for yourself anyway.

Despite Mark's sensitivity on one level, he also tended to be insensitive to people at times. It may be argued that in a context where he did not have a lasting and close relationship with a person, or perhaps when the relationship was coloured by distance, he was free to be sensitive. However, when he was involved with others more personally

and perhaps closely, he managed to distance himself from them, and therefore protect himself from potential intrusions towards him, by being insensitive.

Personal Reflections

The researcher found this dialogue fascinating, although some readers, reading the interview in Appendix C, might feel confronted and/or overwhelmed by the extreme, perhaps harsher and ambiguous manner in which he told his story. Nonetheless, his descriptions were rich and he passionately shared his story with the researcher. The researcher felt a certain kind of familiar connection with Mark, as she understood the spontaneous perhaps 'extreme' manner with which artistic people engage with others and the world. This understanding may have partly resulted from the researcher herself attending an art school during her high school education. She was therefore accustomed to the more free, open and perhaps more intense way of being, which is in her experience, an integral part of the art school context.

The researcher also felt that Mark showed a degree of insight in his life and his personal growth. This, according to the researcher's perception, enabled the conversation to reach certain depths from which rich material was able to emerge. Again here the researcher was aware of certain similarities with her own story. She also found herself particularly captured by Mark's story around his sensitivity and psychic abilities. This has been a growing interest in her own life as she has been personally aware of a similar sense of sensitivity, however on a much lesser developed level. The researcher therefore found that her own intuitive 'knowings' and/or beliefs are shared by others. She felt inspired by Mark's ability to reconnect with himself and therefore connect with others and the world on a higher spiritual level. Since the interview she has continued to connect with herself and search for a higher spiritual knowing.

Conclusion

The researcher analysed a transcribed interview between herself and a participant, Mark who constructed himself as anxious. A strong sense of ambivalence was evident in many of the themes.

The following themes were highlighted:

- Isolation

Mark's sense of isolation seemed prominent throughout his story. On the one hand he seemed to feel isolated from others and on the other hand he seemed to purposefully isolate himself, and even valued his isolation.

- Connection vs. Disconnection.

Mark seemed ambivalent about his connections with others. This ambivalence seemed to be perpetuated through the contradictory messages he received from others, as well as his own contradictory way in which he tended to connect with others. It further seemed as though the times in his life during which he felt most disconnected from others, he found the space to be with and connect with his authentic self. This allowed him to get in touch with his authentic abilities. In some instances this further perpetuated his disconnection from some people as he became distant and almost untouchable. However, when he connected with his authentic self, he gained deep emotional and even spiritual connections with those who shared his interests.

- Feeling different from others vs. Feeling similar to others

On the one hand Mark felt different from the norm in various contexts and interactions, and on the other hand, he tended to accentuate his difference, feeling proud of it and even used it to connect with himself.

- Taking emotional responsibility for others vs. Placing his own emotional needs second

Following from the previous themes it seemed as though Mark tended to take responsibility for others' emotions, whilst placing his own emotional needs second. In this way Mark tended to be alone with his emotional needs from a young age and perhaps needed to be emotionally more independent in some ways. He often felt placed in roles that demanded of him a level of maturity for which he was not yet ready. He seemed caught up in a paradox between emotional maturity and emotional bereftness, as his own emotional needs were not met.

- Conditional love or acceptance

As Mark often felt responsible for his parents' emotional well-being, he strove to become what his parents would approve of in the hope that they would be happier, and the climate in the home would therefore become more bearable. He also longed to be his own person one day. In order to accomplish this, he needed to educate himself. As he was financially dependent on his parents, he therefore needed their approval in order to gain their financial support. This contributed to him meeting their expectations. In turn he gained and maintained their love, acceptance and material support, but sacrificed himself.

- Feeling powerless vs. Feeling powerful

Following from the previous theme, Mark often felt powerless as he was not free to be himself and express his emotional needs out of fear of losing the acceptance and support he needed from his parents. He seemed to regain a sense of power through achieving high goals. This in turn, further differentiated him from others, and perpetuated his isolation and disconnection. The goals he set himself and the pace that he tended to follow seemed to be extreme, which often led him to fall back to the other extreme situation in which he felt dependent and again powerless.

He also seemed to feel powerless when he was demeaned by others. He seemed to regain power, by speaking to and about others in a similar demeaning and condescending manner.

- Sensitivity.

It was illustrated that he tended to be sensitive on a physical- and an emotional level. His emotional sensitivity tended to extend to a somewhat meta-physical level, in that he had strong intuitive and psychic abilities.

In a way Mark's sharing of his life story and his experience of anxiety painted a more vivid picture than Jane's. This seemed illustrated by the element of excessiveness that coloured his experiences, as well as the manner in which he told his story. Mark seemed to embrace his inner authentic voice, which highlighted the more uncomfortable aspects of life such as, disconnection, isolation and difference. However, through listening to his inner voice, his life in a way seemed more comfortable, as he thus nurtured his connection with his authentic being. Therefore it seemed that Mark's spirit has shone brightly, but at times, perhaps in aid of its survival, even threatened to burn others. Therefore, as Jane perhaps needs to explore and listen to her inner voice more and allow her flame to burn brighter, Mark's challenge possibly lies in finding a workable balance between allowing his vibrant spirit to reach its fullest potential, whilst remaining sensitive for the path and voices of others.

CHAPTER 7

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter a comparative analysis between the themes associated with anxiety that emerged from the life stories of the two participants and the literature, will be undertaken. Similarities and differences between the themes and previous research will be discussed.

The themes that seemed to re-occur in both stories were the following:

- Connection vs. Disconnection.
- Feeling different from others vs. Feeling similar to others.
- Conditional Love or Acceptance.
- Taking emotional responsibility for others vs. Placing their own emotional needs second.
- Being authentic vs. Being inauthentic.
- Trust vs. Distrust.
- Feeling powerless vs. Feeling powerful.
- Sensitivity.

The Theme of Connection vs. Disconnection

In various of Jane's interactions with others she seemed to experience a strong degree of physical and/or emotional distance or intrusion, which contributed to her sense of disconnection from others.

In relation to her parents, Jane's sense of disconnection was particularly evident. In relation to her mother, she experienced emotional disconnection on the one hand, and physical as well as emotional intrusion on the other hand. This seemed to leave Jane confused about the nature of her relationship with her mother. In relation to her father, Jane seemed to experience strong emotional disconnection, which was perpetuated by his intrusive manner of interacting with her. After her parents divorced, the disconnection between her and her father was highlighted by the physical distance between them. It therefore seemed as though Jane struggled to form a lasting emotional bond with her parents. Weems et al. (2002, p. 160) refer to children being unable to form "an enduring emotional bond with their care takers" from birth. This is often referred to as *attachment theory,* and the reasons behind anxiety are argued to stem from the nature of attachment between parent and child. Weems et al. (2002) further note the important role that learned history plays in the development of anxiety. When the child experiences the bond between him or her and the primary caregiver (often but not necessarily the mother) as loving, nurturing and responsive to his or her needs, a sense of security exists in the child, which remains with the child even in the absence of the caretaker (Weems et al., 2002). This seems important as Bifulco et al. (1992, p. 447) point out that the "key to later psychological well-being" lies more in "the quality of attachment" before the loss of a parent due to death or divorce. Jane seemed to experience little to no emotional connection with her father which indicated that she had a poor attachment with him before she 'lost' him (after the divorce). Although Jane's father did not die, he did leave the family physically. Klein (cited in Pollock et al., 1995, p. 746) argues "that childhood loss or separation difficulties could evolve into adult panic disorder." As her attachment with her mother seemed characterised by emotional distance and confusing messages, this attachment seemed poor as well. According to Bifulco et al. (1992, p.447), the quality of attachment with other caregivers is important after the loss of one caregiver. Therefore the perceived level of support in the family seems to be a key factor. It is argued that in families where one parent passed away, there may be less support as a result. This may occur as the remaining parent may be less available emotionally whilst having to deal with more responsibilities. Alternatively, the remaining parent may remarry soon and be perceived by the children as being less available (Mireault & Bond, 1992). After Jane's father left, it seemed as though her mother became more stressed over

having more responsibilities to deal with. She also had another partner at a stage which made Jane feel left out and led her to perceive her mother as less available for her.

Although it is difficult to identify if Jane's parents had any particular psychological difficulties, one may hypothesise through her descriptions of them, that they may have had some degree of emotional difficulties. Pollock et al. (1995) argue that parents with severe psychological or psychiatric difficulties (often referred to as psychopathology) may tend either to overprotect their children or be unable to provide their children with sufficient protection or be emotionally available to them, and therefore be either emotionally absent or alternatively emotionally intrusive towards their children. Such parents may also find it difficult to guide their children in "acquiring adaptive coping strategies"(Pollock et al., 1995, p. 761). According to Jane's descriptions, one may hypothesise that her father showed strong characteristics of workaholism. The literature states that "children of workaholic fathers not only had greater depression and external locus of control, but also scored higher on anxiety" (Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p. 223). It is argued that children of workaholic parents describe them as emotionally and often physically absent in their lives (Robinson & Kelley, 1998), which is similar to Jane's descriptions of her father.

Hazan and Shaver (cited in Weems et al., 2002, p. 160) point out that the child's first attachments form a "template for future relationships…through childhood, adolescence and adulthood." In this way many of Jane's other relationships shared strong similarities with the nature of her relationships with her parents. In relation to her peers she seemed to feel disconnected. Their intrusive comments perpetuated this disconnection. In relation to her first two significant relationships with men, she often felt disconnected. Their intrusive and abusive nature seemed to resemble her experiences with her father. However, she seemed more connected in her third relationship as she experienced more emotional closeness and less intrusiveness. With the exception of a few connections with her colleagues in her work environment, Jane seemed to feel mostly disconnected from them.

Although Jane made slight mention of her natural preference to remain at a distance from others, Jane's sense of isolation and need for isolation was not foreground, as it was in Mark's story. What seemed prominent was that Jane continuously sought connections with others, even at the cost of losing connection with herself. She therefore seemed isolated from her true self. When Jane connected with herself in the first instance (for example during her high school years, participating in the athletics that she enjoyed), she connected with others, and seemed less concerned about the disconnections she had with those who tended to break her down and made intrusive comments toward her. This was a time that she appeared more content and secure with herself.

Mark's experience of 'connection vs. disconnection' seemed prominent in his relationship with his parents, which similar to Jane, served as a template for his later connections with others. It seemed as though he did not experience adequate attachments with his parents, as he did not experience these connections to be consistently loving, nurturing and responsive to his needs (Weems et al., 2002).

In relation to his mother, it seemed as though Mark experienced a degree of connection. However, he seemed to experience his connection with his mother as emotionally and physically intrusive. Bifulco et al. (1992, p. 446) state that "adequate care initially from the natural mother and later from surrogate caregivers is crucial for later cognitive and/or emotional development." Although one can only hypothesise about the emotional well-being of Mark's mother, it seems as if he perceived her to be intrusive and overprotective towards him. This may again be linked to what Pollock et al. (1995) refer to in terms of parents with severe psychological or psychiatric difficulties who tend to overprotect or be emotionally intrusive in relation to their children. The intrusively close emotional relationship that Mark seemed to experience with his mother, is often referred to as an 'enmeshed relationship', in which the boundaries between people, in this case between mother and child, seem blurred (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

In relation to his father, Mark seemed to feel disconnected. His father's intrusive and derogatory manner seemed to contribute to the emotional distance between them. In addition, it seemed as though Mark experienced him and his father to function on

different intellectual levels, which further perpetuated the disconnection between them. He also experienced his father as physically absent, which contributed to the disconnection Mark felt in relation to his father. As with his mother, one can hypothesise about Mark's father's emotional well-being, considering Pollok's (1995) description of how parents with emotional difficulties can be emotionally intrusive or absent in their children's lives. In addition, it seemed as though Mark experienced a similar environment in his home as that of children who grow up with an alcoholic parent. Although Mark did not construct his father (or his mother) as an alcohol abuser, he seemed to experience similar "psychological stressors" such as an unstable environment, explosive relationships and "separation" between his parents and between him and his parents, general "family strife" and "poor parental modeling, which is often associated with alcoholic family environments" (Haack & Alim, 1991, p. 53). These environmental stressors have been found to correlate with anxiety in children growing up in such environments.

As mentioned previously, according to Hazan and Shaver, (cited in Weems et al., 2002, p. 160), the child's first attachments tend to form a "template for future relationships…through childhood, adolescence and adulthood." Mark's later relationships with others resembled a similar degree of 'connection vs. disconnection' that he experienced with his parents. The 'connection vs. disconnection' in his later relationships were also characterised by emotional and/or physical distance on the one hand, and emotional and/or physical intrusion on the other hand. This seemed evident, for example in his experience with his friends John and Allen. This seemed to leave him with feelings of ambivalence about the nature of his interpersonal connections, as well as his need for connections with others. On the one hand it appeared as though Mark longed for connections with others as he felt disconnected from them, and on the other hand he seemed to purposefully disconnect from others, as this enabled him to connect with himself. It therefore seemed as though Mark's sense of disconnection and thus isolation from others was more foreground than Jane's, as Mark often seemed to choose to isolate himself. However it appeared as though he seemed less isolated compared to Jane in terms of the needs of his true self, as he continuously sought to reconnect with himself, even though this meant that he forfeited his connections with others. Nonetheless, these

were times that Mark connected with himself and, similar to Jane, made valuable connections with others (especially those who shared his interests), which made him less concerned about his disconnections with those who tended to make intrusive comments towards him.

The Theme of Feeling different from others vs. Feeling similar to others

As Jane, from a young age had a sense of being different from others, she seemed to feel disconnected and therefore questioned her status of belonging in her family, her peer group, her relationships with men and to her colleagues. This seems significant as Fiske et al. (1996) note that people are likely to feel anxious when their subjective experience of belonging to a group and/or their skills to remain as members of a group are threatened. The latter seemed particularly important as Jane often had the sense that she did not 'measure up' to others in terms of her abilities and/or personal characteristics. Fiske et al. (1996, p. 116) highlight that in order for persons to feel securely part of a group they need to feel "competent,…good and worthy." Jane often felt incompetent, bad and not worthy in terms of who she was. Therefore she strove towards belonging with others' ways and norms, in order to feel a sense of belonging, as she regarded others to have the qualities she 'lacked'. Important to social constructionist belief is that the social communities and contexts in which people live create particular attitudes and meanings for them to live by and thus 'fit' into (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Jane seemed critically aware of her difficulty and need to fit in with the norms or dominant voices prescribed by the various contexts in which she functioned. According to Owen (cited in Rapmund, 2000), social constructionsts see relationships between people as either conforming to or failing to fit such proposed or idealised ways of relating to others. It seemed as though the less Jane fitted in with others, the more she doubted herself and the more she longed to fit in. However, the more she tried to fit in, the more she felt she lacked the skills and qualities to fit in and the more she became anxious. In her work environment for example, she needed medication to help her display the qualities that she needed in order to fit into that norm.

However, the time in her life when Jane managed to believe in herself, and focussed on the activities that she enjoyed and was good at, (for example her athletics in her high school years) she found that there were others who believed in her too and with whom she had a sense of belonging. In addition, by focussing on what she enjoyed, despite the dominant voices in her life at that time (for example that of her father's and those in the dominant peer group who made intrusive comments towards her), Jane gained a sense of achievement and competence, which enabled her to feel a sense of belonging with others.

It further seemed as though Jane tended to be highly sensitive (this will be referred to later) which contributed to her feeling different from others. Her physical and emotional sensitivity seemed to highlight her difference from others and often made it difficult for her to fit into the norm. As a little girl for example, Jane recalled that she was often ill and was overwhelmed by the loudness of the children at school. Jung (cited in Aron, 2004) notes that highly sensitive people, who he also referred to as 'neurotic', tend to experience a sense of difference from the 'norm'. He described it as follows:

> A sensitive and somewhat unbalanced person, as a neurotic always is, will meet with special difficulties and perhaps with more unusual tasks in life than a normal individual, who as a rule has only to follow the well-worn path of an ordinary existence. For the neurotic there is no established way of life, because his aims and tasks are apt to be of a highly individual character. ...So it comes about that there are many neurotics whose inner decency prevents them from being at one with present-day morality and who cannot adapt themselves so long as the moral code has gaps in it which it is the crying need of our age to fill
>
> (Jung, cited in Aron, 2004, p. 348-349).

Throughout Mark's story it seemed evident that he too tended to feel different from others or the norm. As was noted with Jane, Fiske et al. (1996) argue that people are likely to feel anxious when their subjective experience of belonging to a group is threatened. Sometimes Mark attempted to fit into the norm, by being more similar to others. However, when he did this he often felt that he lost touch with himself. An example of this is when he started drinking and smoking to fit into his peer group at university. Another example is when he used medication to fit into the larger norm in terms of his sleeping patterns, and in an attempt to rid himself of his panic attack

symptoms. However, he seemed unsure if he wanted to fit into the norm. It therefore seemed as though he often embraced his difference (which included his anxiety). Through embracing his difference he further developed himself in his fields of interest, which led to him achieving high standards. This seems important as Fiske et al. (1996, p. 116) argue a person needs to feel "competent,…good and worthy" in order to feel securely part of a group. Even though Mark's achievements gave him a sense of accomplishment, this tended to perpetuate his difference from others particularly in terms of his peers. However, in a more positive way, he gained a sense of competence which enabled him to believe in himself and made others, such as teachers, believe in him too. Through embracing his differences, he found others, such as the people on the Internet, with whom he shared similar interests, particularly around spiritual matters. His feelings of similarity with these people enabled him to feel connected with them on a deep emotional and spiritual level. This led him to achieve what Fiske et al. (1996) argue to be important, namely having a subjective sense of belonging. It therefore seemed as though Mark, similar to Jane found it difficult to fit in with the more dominant discourses in the contexts in which he functioned. However, Mark seemed to remain more focussed on connecting with others who shared his constructions and beliefs of reality. He seemed less concerned with conforming to the dominant voices of those who ascribed to a reality that he either did not approve of or that threatened to override his ways and his voice.

Mark perceived himself to be highly sensitive. His highly developed intuitive abilities in particular, which Jung (cited in Aron, 2004) believes are often characteristic of sensitive people, may have contributed to Mark feeling different from others. Perhaps his sensitivity asked of him to isolate himself at times. Jung (cited in Aron, 2004) argues that innately sensitive people are likely to be introverted. Mark's diminished need for interactions with others, or his presumed ambivalence around this, may therefore have been perceived as significantly different from the norm. Referring again to Jung's (cited in Aron, 2004) argument that sensitive people tend to feel different from the norm, may be particularly evident in Mark's understanding of himself as 'weird'. This may link to what Jung (cited in Aron, 2004, p. 348) describes as the neurotic for which "there is no established way of life, because his aims and tasks are apt to be of a highly individual character." Mark's 'weirdness' spoke of a strong need to remain busy with his interests

that seemed to reflect a deep sense of, and need for creative expression and spiritual connections. In order for him to create a space for himself to accomplish this, he might have come across as different and often detached. He also seemed rather critical of others, for example his university peers, who did not show appreciation for what he considered valuable and important. His tendency to be self critical seemed evident in the high, often unrealistic goals he set and aimed to achieve. This too seemed to highlight his difference from others. This seems to link with what Jung (cited in Aron, 2004, p. 348-349) said about sensitive persons:

> He tries to go the more or less uncontrolled and half conscious way of normal people, not realising that his own critical and very different nature demands of him more effort than the normal person is required to exert.

For a person who embraces and places focus on his or her 'difference', as Mark often seemed to do, it may thus be very difficult to be similar to and fully functioning in the more dominant structures of the world.

> So it comes about that there are many neurotics whose inner decency prevents them from being at one with present-day morality and who cannot adapt themselves so long as the moral code has gaps in it which it is the crying need of our age to fill
>
> Jung (cited in Aron, 2004, p. 348-349).

Social constructionists argue that often people's personal experiences or accounts of reality do not have a place within dominant belief systems (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Doan, 1997; Rapmund, 2000). It therefore seemed that Jane and Mark at times both felt that their preferred ways and voices were silenced by the more dominant voices of those in the contexts in which they needed to function. Jane seemingly tried to conform more to the dominant beliefs that tended to dictate, a set account of reality (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Mark seemed to more purposefully challenge those dominant beliefs that aimed at advocating one set account of reality.

The Theme of Conditional Love or Acceptance

Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) believes that people need unconditional positive regard to be healthy and lead full lives. For Jane, love and acceptance seemed to be given based on certain conditions. This is similar to Rogers' (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) ideas regarding conditional positive regard. These conditions included that Jane abide by the strict rules of her parents and that she conform to their wishes, both physically and emotionally. In relation to her father, in particular, she was often faced with having to meet his unrealistically high standards. In return she gained his approval and financial support. Although one can only hypothesise about Jane's father's workaholic characteristics, it seemed as though he tended to be similarly driven and critical. Robinson and Kelley (1998) point out that when workaholic parents are present in their children's lives, they tend to place a lot of pressure on their children to meet similar standards of achievement (which are often of a perfectionistic nature) as themselves. Driven fathers, or type A personality fathers, have been found to set higher standards for their children, which are often too high for children who then soon start to internalise their perceived failures, which leaves them with feelings of inadequacy or incompetence. It was also found that when children are unable to achieve at such high expected levels, such driven fathers tend to "make more critical statements and take more punitive actions than mothers or non-type A fathers" (Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p. 232). Sons of fathers who are very driven in their work have reported that they feel accepted by their fathers if they manage to perform according to their fathers' performance expectations (Robinson & Kelley, 1998). Given Jane's experiences, this seemed equally true for daughters of driven fathers.

When Jane failed to conform to her parents' wishes at the cost of her own wishes, she felt unloved and unaccepted. She often faced emotional and/or physical punishment. The emotional punishment seemed more prominent, and was often geared at making her feel guilty about her natural needs. She would then deny her needs and meet her parents' needs in order to avoid feeling guilty. This seems to link in some ways with Freud's (cited in Maddi, 1996) ideas about punishment or guilt. In short he argues that an individual unconsciously attempts throughout his or her life to find a balance between

meeting his or her own needs, whilst avoiding punishment or guilt. However, it seemed as though it was tough for Jane to find a workable balance as the standards to which she needed to abide were unrealistically high, and she, being a child, was dependent on her parents for physical and emotional nurturance.

Jane's perception that love and acceptance were earned, according to her meeting her parents' and predominantly her father's conditions, continued in her later relationships with peers, men and colleagues. The literature states that children of workaholic or driven fathers are likely to "become other directed and approval seeking to meet adult expectations" (Robinson, cited in Robinson & Kelley, 1998, p, 227). Jane seemed to fall into a paradox as she felt dependent on others' approval and/or support (often financial) and therefore 'needed' to conform to their wishes and/or meet their expectations to gain and maintain the approval and/or support she struggled to give to herself.

Jane's need for outside acceptance may also translate to her need for belonging. It seemed as though she lacked a sense of belonging in her home, school, intimate relationships and work environments. As was noted above, Fiske et al. (1996) argue that people are likely to feel anxious when their subjective experience of belonging to a group is threatened.

Mark often felt blamed for the conflict between his parents, as well as between him and his parents. By setting 'perfectionistic' goals for himself, it seemed as though he wanted to be sure that he met and even exceeded his parents' expectations. By striving to be 'perfect' he believed that he would not give them any reason to disapprove of him or continue with their conflict. If they were happier with him, he thought, they would therefore be happier with each other. In this way he would gain their approval which would allow him to maintain their financial support. He did not receive a bursary for his studies, and felt therefore dependent on their financial support to qualify himself in a way that assured him a profession which would allow him ultimate independence from his parents in the future. Perhaps his longing for independence from his parents had to do with a longing to be free from blame and therefore guilt for their unhappiness, firstly with each other, and secondly with him. By trying to please his parents, he often placed his

own needs second. For example he continued to place extreme pressure on himself to succeed and achieve yet even higher goals, which soon drained his physical resources. When his resources were drained, he needed to go home again. This placed him back in the environment in which he felt blamed and guilty, and which fueled his first attempts to be 'perfect.' Through striving for perfection, Mark perhaps felt that he would accommodate all expectations, those of society and those of his parents. He therefore attempted to incorporate all that he felt was 'good' or 'perfect' at the expense of a balanced and healthy lifestyle (which points to his physical and emotional needs). In return he hoped to feel (perhaps also on a subconscious level) free from blame and guilt. This may again link in some ways with Freud's (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) ideas about punishment or guilt. However, it seemed as though Mark's efforts (which often came close to perfection in terms of his level of academic and artistic achievements) were not enough, as his parents' unhappiness stemmed from their personal characteristics and the dynamics between them.

Mark seemed less concerned than Jane about meeting others' expectations in his later relationships. This may be due to one of two reasons: Firstly, through his attempts to be 'perfect,' he already tried to achieve all expectations that others and society might have. Secondly, he seemed able to remain busy with what interested him, rather than worry about what others expected. In addition, he seemed able to find others with whom he shared his natural interests and thus found a sense of belonging with them. This seemed particularly true in the Art school context as there seemed to be a sense of freedom of expression and a general acceptance of individuality. However, it seemed as though Mark attempted to conform to others' ways in university as he seemed to feel a stronger need for belonging there. Perhaps the expectations of the norm in this context was so powerful that his subjective experience of belonging to that group was threatened, which according to Fiske et al. (1996) can make people feel anxious.

It therefore seemed that neither Jane nor Mark experienced love or acceptance free of conditions. They therefore did not experience unconditional positive regard, which Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) argues is essential for the development of a healthy individual.

The Theme of Taking emotional responsibility for others vs. Placing their own emotional needs second

Following from the previous theme it seemed as though one of the conditions that Jane needed to abide by in order to feel accepted or loved by others, and therefore not be rejected physically or emotionally, was to consider others' emotional needs whilst placing her own second. It seemed as though Jane experienced little to no space to express her emotional needs in relation to her parents. If she did express her needs, and they were different from theirs, her parents showed extreme emotional discomfort and communicated to Jane that she was responsible for this discomfort. By fulfilling her parents' wishes and conforming to their ways, Jane therefore acted pro-actively in assuring their emotional comfort. Jane was thus often left alone with her emotional needs.

Jane's tendency to place her own needs second, whilst taking responsibility for her parents' (who were adults) and brother's emotional needs perhaps led to Jane being emotionally independent in some ways. Jane seemed independent in terms of her school work from a young age, as she received little or no support from her parents in this regard. This all required her to be responsible from an early age and seemed to lead to her having an early sense of maturity.

Jane's tendency to take emotional responsibility for others, whilst placing her own needs second continued in her later relationships. She became a 'people pleaser,' which assured the emotional satisfaction of others and thus maintained their acceptance and/or emotional support. This made her vulnerable for abuse, which was particularly evident in her first intimate relationship. Although it seems difficult to identify emotional abuse, one needs to consider the possibility of emotional abuse in Jane's experiences particularly with her father, and in her first intimate relationship. Portegijs et al. (1996) argue that abuse in general has been found to be related to emotional problems that include depression and anxiety. In both these relationships she was dependent on their physical

(financial) support, which made it so much more difficult for her to leave these relationships.

As Mark felt blamed for his parents' unhappiness, he attempted to take responsibility for their emotional well-being by placing his needs second and striving for yet higher standards. In this way he attempted to exceed his parents' expectations and attempted to become a 'perfect' person who would therefore not give his parents any reason to be unhappy any more. He continued with his attempts to be 'perfect' by striving for yet higher goals. However, although he managed to gain the acceptance from other adults such as teachers, this did not seem to be so in relation to his peers. The more he achieved, the more he accentuated his difference from them, and the more he became vulnerable to their abusive ways of showing him how different they perceived him to be. This perpetuated his loneliness and contributed to him having to be mostly dependent on himself.

In relation to his mother, in particular, Mark tended to be her emotional support. The emotional responsibility that Mark tended to carry in his relationship with his mother, seemed similar to what Becvar and Becvar (2003) refer to as an 'enmeshed relationship' (as was pointed out before). In such a relationship, the child is likely to become emotionally responsible for a parent, due to the parent's own inability to contain his or her emotions. As the boundaries between people in such a relationship seem blurred, a child in relation to a parent may often feel intruded upon (either physically or emotionally) by the parent. As a child is dependent on a parent for physical and emotional nurturing, it is therefore difficult for the child to set his or her boundaries, differentiate from the parent, and/or voice his or her needs, without facing rejection.

Mark too showed an early sense of maturity. It seemed as though he felt mature from a young age, particularly in relation to his father. In relation to his mother it did not seem clear whether Mark was more mature and his mother therefore leaned on him, or whether his mother's efforts to entrust him with her adult emotions led to Mark having to be more mature sooner. However, it did seem as though he felt at times burdened by his parents' need for him to fulfil a more mature, and even parental role in relation to them. Mark,

similar to Jane, seemed also aware that he at times needed to be there for his sister in a parental capacity, when in fact he was a small child himself, in need of parental comforting.

One can again only hypothesise about the nature of Mark's parents' emotional well-being. Following from the literature, highlighted earlier, about parents with severe psychological or psychiatric difficulties, who tend to either overprotect their children or be unable to provide their children with sufficient protection and emotional availability (Pollock et al., 1995), it may be argued that a parent who is overwhelmed by his or her own emotions is often unable to provide his or her child with the necessary structure and stimulation. Such a child is often left to fend for him- or herself emotionally and even tends to take responsibility for the parent's emotional wellbeing. This seemed to correspond with Mark's experiences. Similar to Jane, Mark too seemed to feel responsible for his parents' emotional well-being. He either experienced emotional distance to the extent that he felt left to 'fend' for himself and be dependent for himself. On the other hand he felt intruded upon which left him feeling overprotected, and responsible for his parents' (particularly his mothers') emotional well being.

The Theme of Being authentic vs. Being inauthentic

In relation to her parents, it seemed as though Jane experienced little or no space to express her authentic self, as her parents appeared to accept her only when she met their wishes and expectations. Being a child, Jane was dependent on her parents, for their love, acceptance and physical care. She therefore needed to deny her authentic self in order to please them and maintain their love, acceptance and physical care. Needing the approval of others, according to Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) is a common need of all humans. It is necessary for people to feel approved or accepted as they need that approval in order to accept themselves. However, this need is so strong that if a person is not accepted unconditionally, he or she may incorporate other's wishes into his or her self concept which may not correspond with his or her authentic self, but will lead to the person getting the approval he or she needs. This seems to link with Rogers' (cited in

Meyer et al., 2003) theory that a person's need for others' approval "can hinder the actualisation process when the quest for appreciation by others is in conflict with the actualisation of the organism's potential" (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 369). In this way Jane's need to maintain her self concept, which incorporated her parents' wishes, seemed to be the overriding focus, at the expense of actualising her full potential. This actual potential of Rogers' is construed as similar to a person's authentic potential or in short the authentic self. Jane tended to lose touch with her authentic self and her authentic self's needs, when she became what her parents wanted her to be in order to gain and maintain their emotional and physical support. She therefore seemed to acquire an 'inauthentic' way of being in relation to them.

Although Jane often denied her authentic self's needs, she did seem aware of them, particularly in terms of a future profession, and expressed this during the interview. She seemed trapped in her current profession, as she remained in a career in which she struggled to be and express her authentic self. However, she gained financial benefits from being in this profession, which in turn gave her a certain degree of material comfort and pleased her critical father. It therefore seemed as though Jane became focussed on actualising her self. This means she maintained her self-concept, which was coloured by her father's expectations and perhaps also material expectations proposed by the dominant voices in society, which value outward manifestations of success. She therefore stayed in this profession at the expense of actualising her true potential. In this way, her authentic self was silenced and was not given 'life'. She became particularly anxious in her work environment and started using medication to control the anxiety symptoms. In a way the medication helped her to continue her inauthentic 'life' in her profession and therefore keep her authentic voice quiet. However, it seemed as though this authentic voice continued to be present, as she remained feeling tense in spite of using the medication. The time in Jane's life (during high school years), when she participated in sport, regardless of her father's (negative) opinion about it, was when she was most true to her authentic self. This is one of the few times that Jane recalled feeling closer to her authentic self. She recalled that she felt happier and "healthier" during that time and also made some valuable connections.

Jane's need to be accepted or feel similar to others, along with sometimes being financially dependent on others and even when she became financially independent, therefore contributed to Jane denying her authentic self and acquiring an inauthentic 'persona'.   In this way she may have experienced a threat to her authentic being, first in relation to her parents, and later in relation to others.   This reminds us of what some object relations theorists may refer to as *disintegration anxiety* (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593).

> This anxiety may derive from the fear of losing the sense of self from concern that the self will fragment because others are not responding with needed affirmation and validation.

It appeared as though Mark was at times more able to remain true to his authentic self, even when it meant that he experienced more disconnectedness and/or isolation from others.   In the German school he seemed to embrace his authentic self and interests even though he was constructed as 'weird' by his peers. In Art school he seemed to experience a greater amount of freedom to be and express his authentic self, as the 'norm' in Art school allowed for the expression of each student's authentic self. It seemed prominent throughout Mark's story that he continued to listen to the needs of his authentic self, by finding ways to reconnect with it when he felt he lost touch with it. Through his ability to remain connected to his authentic self he was able to form some valuable connections, but only with those who shared his authentic interests, such as his friends on the Internet. Perhaps it can be said that Mark was able to remain in touch with his true or actual potential, as Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) refers to it. It seemed as though there were times during which he was tempted to incorporate others' wishes and or needs into his self concept which then left him feeling, what Rogers (cited in Meyer et al., 2003) refers to as incongruent in terms of his 'actual potential'. This seemed evident when he realised during his university years that smoking and drinking did not suit him and he therefore stopped.   Another example is when he realised that being on psychiatric medication prevented him from being who he was authentically, and he therefore stopped using it. He therefore seemed able to listen and respond to his authentic self's needs (or 'actual potential') and allowed these needs into his self concept, even if it left him alienated from others, who tended to be more representative of a norm or dominant voice.

However, in relation to his mother, Mark seemed to struggle to be authentic, as he needed her approval and support. Due to the enmeshed nature of their relationship (as was highlighted earlier), it may be hypothesised that Mark, from a young age could have experienced what object relations theorists refer to as *disintegration anxiety*. This is argued to be present in the early years of development and "may derive either from the fear of losing the sense of self through merger with an object" (his mother) "or from concern that the self will fragment because others are not responding with needed affirmation and validation" (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593). When Mark attempted to set his boundaries with his mother and be true to his authentic needs, he was often faced with rejection and attempts from her to instill guilt in him. Therefore he 'needed' to remain what she needed him to be, in order to receive her approval and love. This, as was pointed out before, is a strong need shared by all humans (Rogers, cited in Meyer et al., 2003).

The Theme of Trust vs. Distrust

Jane often struggled to trust the connections she had with others. It seemed as though her difficulty to feel a consistent degree of connection with her parents, may have contributed to this. Ruben and Mills (cited in Weems et al., 2002, p. 160) state that people who experience insecure attachments with their primary caregivers tend to develop "negative cognitive response styles," and struggle to make accurate interpersonal interpretations and often "display interpersonal distrust...of others." Conflicting messages that Jane received in her relationships with her parents seemed to leave her feeling confused about the nature of her connections with them and seemed to contribute to her struggle to trust her connections with her parents. In addition, Jane, being a child, was dependent on her parents' love and acceptance in order for her to love and accept herself. She therefore tended, in her formative years, to become what her parents approved of. This pattern seemed to continue in her later relationships with others, as she tended to regard others' (for example her peers or men with whom she had

significant relationships) perceptions of her as more trustworthy than her own beliefs about herself.

This theme may also be linked with the previously mentioned theme of 'being authentic vs. being inauthentic'. In a sense Jane struggled to be true to herself. In relation to herself and others, Jane may therefore have been inauthentic. Thus, punctuating from the other party's point of view, it may also have been hard to trust Jane, as she did not show her 'real' self which made it difficult to know who she 'really' was. It therefore may have been difficult to connect with someone who was not 'real' or authentic.

This theme seemed to link with the sense of ambivalence that Mark appeared to have about his relationships. It seemed as though Mark found it difficult to trust others, as the messages that he received from them were often confusing. However, it further seemed as though he too tended to give confusing messages in interaction with others, as he seemed to need to isolate himself by being 'aloof' and critical towards others, on the one hand, and yet needed connections on the other hand. Punctuating from the other parties' point of view, it may therefore have been equally difficult for others to trust Mark, as Mark seemed inconsistent in his attempts to connect. Given the abovementioned argument, Ruben and Mills (cited in Weems et al., 2002, p. 160) state that people who experienced insecure attachments with their primary caregivers tend to develop "negative cognitive response styles" and tend to struggle to make accurate interpersonal interpretations. It may therefore be hypothesised that the confusing messages Mark received in relation to his parents, could have contributed to him relating to others in a similarly confusing manner. Mark often seemed confused about the role he fulfilled in relation to his parents. At times it seemed as though they needed him for adult-like emotional support, thus giving him a message that they were emotionally dependent on him. Yet, by being a child, he was dependent on his parents for emotional and physical care. It therefore seemed as though he was at times fulfilling the role of parent in relation to his parents, and at other times fulfilling the role of child. This role confusion may have left him confused about the nature of the connection between him and his parents.

This also links with the behavioural theories which believe that children model parents' behaviour and acquire their ways of thinking about situations (Haack & Alim, 1991). Therefore one may argue that Mark may have modelled, in his relationships with others, his parents' style of inconsistent connecting patterns which they displayed in relation to each other and towards him.

The Theme of Feeling powerless vs. Feeling powerful

As was pointed out earlier, Jane's father seemed particularly driven and strict. It seemed as though Jane needed to conform to her parents' wishes in order to prevent their attempts to emotionally intrude on her, or instil guilt in her. Although emotional abuse is difficult to identify, in the context of Jane's relationship with her parents, one may hypothesise about an element of emotional abuse in Jane's story. It is argued that children who grow up in environments of abusive, workaholic and/or alcoholic caregivers, may easily feel out of control, powerless, and hopeless which they may internalise and which may predispose them to feel these emotions in future situations (Beck, cited in Yama et al., 1993). Emotional intrusion into the lives of children, who cannot leave the situation because of their dependence on their parents, may therefore be similar to the feelings of powerlessness that children in physical and/or sexual abusive relationships experience. Finkelhor and Browne (cited in Yama et al., 1993) point out that sexual abuse, for example, is by nature an act during which the child experiences physical and emotional intrusion, which naturally creates a situation in which the child feels helpless and powerless. Although Jane did not experience sexual abuse, the intrusion she felt nonetheless left her with similar feelings.

Jane's strong need for others' acceptance and/or financial support often led her to deny her authentic self and her authentic needs. She therefore tended to feel trapped and powerless in her inauthentic self and risked losing the support she had when she was true to herself. It therefore seemed as though Jane, from a young age acquired an 'external locus of control' (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994). A person's subjective perception of his or her ability to be and remain in control in a particular situation, and thus have an 'internal

locus of control', seems important for optimal emotional functioning (Anderson & Arnoult, cited in Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994). The stability of a person's locus of control over time and how wide this range is across various situations has also been found to be a defining matter in a person's emotional wellbeing (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994). Dépret and Fiske (cited in Fiske, Morling & Stevens, 1996, p. 116) define power "as the control over other people's outcomes and powerlessness as the lack of sole control over one's own outcomes." Jane, therefore seemed often to be controlled by others' opinions which often directed her choices and behaviour, which tended to contribute to her being inauthentic. However, when Jane believed in herself and focussed on her authentic interests, for example sport, regardless of her father's or peer group's opinions, she seemed to have an 'internal locus of control', and felt in control of her own outcomes.

In relation to her peers making intrusive comments toward her, Jane seemed to be in a powerless situation. However, when she started taking responsibility for their emotional comfort, by giving them emotional support, she in a way managed to create in them a sense of dependency on her. In this way Jane may have regained a sense of power.

Growing up, Mark seemed to feel powerless in terms of his parents' continuous conflict. Although Mark's home environment was not identified as that of alcoholism, workaholism or abuse, there seemed to be a sense of conflict and instability that may be somewhat similar to families in which alcoholism occurs. As was mentioned above, it is argued that children who grow up in unstable environments may easily feel out of control, powerless, and hopeless, which they may internalise and which may predispose them to feel these emotions in future situations (Beck, cited in Yama et al., 1993).

Mark seemed to feel particularly powerless in relation to his father, as he felt broken down and demeaned by him. It seemed as though he started doing the same to his father, which seemed to give him a sense of power in this relationship. His sense of powerlessness continued in relation to his peers as Mark seemed to struggle to assert himself in relation to his peers. This seemed particularly prominent in the German school, as the structure there seemed to be rigid and demanded obedience to the prescribed norm. Fiske, Morling and Stevens (1996) propose that anxiety's roots may be

found in society when social structures are of such a nature that they "threaten people's core motives" and "basic human needs" (Fiske et al., 1996, p.122). The essence of who Mark regarded himself to be authentically thus seemed threatened. In this regard "structures of social control can make powerless people anxious by threatening basic motives for competence, control and self-esteem" (Fiske et al., 1996, p.115). It seemed as though whenever Mark felt that his core or authentic self was threatened by a larger structure, he regained a sense of power by either achieving higher goals or by isolating himself. This made him somewhat untouchable and seemed to place him in a powerful position in relation to others. It perhaps gave him what Anderson and Arnoult (cited in Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994) refer to as a subjective perception of his ability to be and remain in control in a particular situation, which is important for optimal emotional functioning. In this way perhaps, Mark managed to maintain a sense of internal locus of control, which seems important for healthy functioning (Bell-Dolan & Wessler, 1994). However, these efforts to remain in control, seemed to leave him feeling physically and emotionally drained. He was forced to return to his parents' home, which is the same context that made him feel powerless in the first place.

Mark's panic symptoms seemed more severe during the times that he stayed at home, and this may link with the thinking of family therapy theorists that a symptom is a way of dealing with a relationship and/or relationships in a system (Jackson & Haley, cited in Vorster, 2003). It is often also through this symptom that a person can regain a sense of control in a system.

The Theme of Sensitivity

Jane seemed sensitive both physically and emotionally. Jung (cited in Aron, 2004) argues that about 20% of humans and other living beings have a natural sensitivity about them, which he refers to as 'congenital or innate sensitivity'. Such people tend to pick up on the subtle distressful or threatening cues between people. As children, sensitive people may experience similar childhood events as non-sensitive people, but those who are innately sensitive are likely to develop more depression, anxiety and shyness in response

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to certain life stressors (Aron, 2004). On a physical level, Jane's sensitivity seemed prominent in that she tended to have various physical illnesses as a child. Her proneness to becoming ill seemed to continue into adulthood. She also reported that she was particularly sensitive for "loud noises" from a young age, which according to Aron (2004, p. 356) is one of the indications for sensitivity, apart from someone identifying him- or herself as sensitive. Jane had enuresis into her primary school years, which may be a further indication of a physical sensitivity.

On a more emotional level Jane seemed sensitive for the subtle cues between people. Jung, (cited in Aron, 2004) believes that people who identify themselves as sensitive often function according to strong intuitive abilities. This seemed prominent for example when Jane intuitively felt when she was being cheated on by her first two partners. Her intuitive abilities seemed to transcend to a more meta-physical level. She reported specifically one incident during which she saw something of a meta-physical nature. However, this only happened in her first relationship and seemed to symbolise the fear and powerlessness that she felt in this relationship. She did not recall having another experience like that after this relationship ended.

Mark identified himself as being sensitive from a young age. On a physical level, Mark seemed prone to illnesses when his body became tired and drained. He too had enuresis up until his primary school years.

On an emotional and meta-physical level, Mark seemed particularly sensitive. He seemed sensitive to the subtle dynamics between people, as well as to the impact that people had on him. Such people as children, may also be more tuned in to underlying positive or negative messages from caregivers, which may in turn impact on the interaction between them and their later interactions with others. It is further argued by Perera, (cited in Aron, 2004, p. 351) in terms of 'The Scapegoat Complex', that "[i]ndividuals who are overstimulated by parental needs or who are especially sensitive by nature may perceive both pain and pleasure intensely." As Mark seemed responsible for his parents', particularly his mother's needs, this may therefore account for the intense

manner in which Mark tended to experience occurrences in his life, as well as the intense or somewhat extreme manner in which he told his story.

Mark had strong intuitive abilities, which according to Jung (cited in Aron, 2004) is common amongst people who identify themselves as sensitive. His intuitive abilities later developed into clairvoyant or psychic abilities. As was highlighted before, Mark seemed most content and closest to his authentic self when he busied himself with creative and/or spiritual matters. This may link with what Jung said about a highly sensitive and/or neurotic person, such a person is only said to be ill "because he has not yet found a new form of his finest aspirations" (Aron, 2004, p. 349). Could it be that this 'finest aspiration' thus refers to a 'calling' from the authentic self? Aron (2004, p. 349) further notes Jung's implication that such aspirations are often "unique and spiritual."

This seems consistent with how Jane and Mark both felt different from the dominant norm and how they both expressed a need for higher and/or deeper connections, which may be (as with Mark) spiritual in nature.

Conclusion

The researcher identified themes present in both stories of Jane and Mark, as they emerged through her lens of analysis. Again she acknowledges that another person may choose to highlight different themes or even choose a different language with which to describe the themes highlighted here. In some ways these themes seem to link with previous studies about the childhood and/or later experiences of anxious people. Even though the themes identified here seemed to link here-and-there with the literature, it seems important that these themes be considered in the unique contexts of each participant's life story. Those who work with anxious people in the future therefore also need to consider the emergence of some of the themes noted here within the contexts of those individual persons with whom they interact, and be open to other themes that may emerge in the life stories of their individual clients.

In a sense, the most prominent theme that the researcher felt emerged from this study, and which says something profound about her and her journey, was that of 'being authentic', or remaining true to the authentic self. Although other theorists have pointed to this or a similar concept and perhaps described it using different language, the researcher felt that the term 'authentic self' captures the essence of what all people know themselves to be. She is also inclined to hypothesise about the spiritually predisposed nature of each person's authentic self. In this way the idea of an 'authentic self' seems to link with the existentialist theory of Frankl, which in essence sees all humans as spiritual beings with a freedom to choose and remain responsible for a "profoundly personalised" way of being (Meyer et al., 2003, p. 438). In this way each person may find a unique sense of purpose and meaning for his or her life. Therefore all humans may choose to and perhaps have the responsibility to remain true to their authentic beings. This may in turn cultivate an attitude of rearing children in a way so as to find their authentic selves, as children are by nature dependent on structures that may restrict or oppress the development of their authentic beings.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Each time you complete an act of creation, you focus a life force. And since life begets life, this energy seeks to enlarge its expression through new creation. In the stage of completion, your being is ready for another act of creation.

Robert Fritz

Introduction

The study will be evaluated and its strengths and limitations highlighted. A short summary of each participant's story will be given. The researcher will conclude with suggestion for clinical practice and/or future research.

Evaluating the Study

This study aimed to give 'voice' to two people who construct themselves as anxious and/or have accepted others' (for example medical professionals) constructions of them as anxious. The hope was that through them telling their life stories, rich information would emerge around their unique experiences and meanings. This study was not geared at generalising its findings to a larger population. It was hoped that the information gained from these personal accounts would give others the opportunity to hear the perspectives and voices of those with anxiety, which is so often silenced by the more dominant voices in society (for example the medical voice). This seemed to fill a somewhat unexplored area in the research around anxiety, as most studies, through the researcher's exploration of the literature, aimed at finding particular set reasons for anxiety, in order to generalise their findings to a larger population. The researcher believes that the aim of this study

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was therefore accomplished, as each participant's story was unique and rich with experience and personal meanings.

Themes in each story were identified and discussed by the researcher. This was then followed by a comparative analysis between the recurring themes and the literature. However, the researcher feels that this study generated a richness and significant degree of depth, which allowed for a sense of uniqueness, which seemed to be lacking in the literature. In this way, she hopes that this study will stimulate 'new', perhaps richer avenues in the thinking about anxiety.

The following themes seemed to re-occur in both stories and were identified as common themes:

- Connection vs. Disconnection
- Feeling different from others vs. Feeling similar to others
- Conditional Love or Acceptance
- Taking emotional responsibility for others vs. Placing their own emotional needs second
- Being authentic vs. Being inauthentic
- Trust vs. Distrust
- Feeling powerless vs. Feeling powerful
- Sensitivity

How each of these themes manifested themselves in various contexts and relationships in each participant's story, was highlighted. In each participant's story, these themes were not mutually exclusive and therefore linked with each other. A short summary of each participant's story will now be given to illustrate how the researcher perceived the themes to connect with each other in each story.

Summary of Jane's story

It seemed as though Jane often felt a sense of being *disconnected* from others. Her sense of *disconnection* seemed perpetuated by confusing messages that she received from others. On the one hand, she seemed to experience emotional and/or physical distance and on the other hand, she experienced emotional and/or physical intrusion. Such confusing messages and inconsistent *connections* tended to leave Jane with a sense of ambivalence around her connections. This contributed to her difficulty to *trust* the nature of her connections with others. It seemed as though Jane's need for connection often led her to *trust* others' opinions of her over those of her own. Jane tended to *feel different* from others, which seemed to be an additional contribution to the disconnection she experienced. As she longed for *connection*, Jane strove towards being more *similar* to others and in this way hoped to gain their *approval* and *connection*. In her attempts to find connection and remain connected to others, she tended to deny her own needs for those of others'. She therefore tended to become what others needed her to be and in return she gained their love, approval and/or physical support. In this way Jane seemed to believe that love and acceptance were *conditional*. By attending to others' needs and even *taking responsibility for their emotional comfort*, Jane seemed to gain a sense of *power* when she often felt *powerless*. However, through denying herself and losing contact with herself, Jane seemed to deny her *authentic being* and her authentic needs. In a sense, then, Jane's authentic self was not given a space to breathe and its existence seemed therefore threatened. This seemed prominent in most of her relationships and in many of her life contexts. However, there were times in Jane's life when she felt closer to *being her authentic self*. She recalled that those were the happiest times of her life. During those times, she also made some valuable connections. Throughout Jane's story, her *sensitivity*, both physically and emotionally, seemed prominent. This led her to feel more strongly impacted than others by stimuli and events in her life (for example loud noises or the intrusive comments of others). Jane's emotional sensitivity extended to a meta-physical level and seemed evident in her strong intuitive abilities. This made her sensitive to subtle dynamics around her, which often perpetuated her distrust in relationships and therefore her sense of disconnection. She also recalled an experience that seemed to be of a spiritual nature, and seemed symbolic of the *powerless* feeling she had at that time in her life. Her *sensitivity* also seemed to contribute to her discomfort in

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situations, for example her work environment, in which she felt she could not be an *authentic being*. She therefore seemed *sensitive* for her *difference* from others in some contexts.

Through the interview Jane was able to express her needs in terms of a profession which would fulfil her authentic self's needs. Her authentic needs seemed to incorporate her interest in sport along with a longing to work with people in a meaningful and supportive manner. Perhaps this latter part points to a *sensitivity* for people. By being able to identify her authentic self's needs during the interview, Jane therefore seemed in touch with her authentic self, on some level, although it seemed hard for her to practically live it, as she felt at risk of losing the structure that sustained her.

Summary of Mark's story

Mark seemed particularly ambivalent about his *connections* with others, as well as his need for *connection*. Mark often felt disconnected from others as he felt significantly different from others. Whilst Jane seemed to move towards becoming more similar to others in the hope that she would fit in and belong, it seemed as though Mark tended to embrace his *difference* from others and even highlighted this by purposefully *disconnecting* from them. This seemed to contribute to his sense of isolation, however, it seemed as though he also started to embrace and value his isolation as this allowed him to explore his *authentic self* and reconnect with his *authentic being*. When Mark did this, he seemed able to find other valuable *connections,* but only with people with whom he shared similar authentic interests. In Mark's story, his so called 'weirdness', seemed to go hand-in-hand with his need for creative expression and his spiritual interests. Mark's tendency to embrace his 'weirdness' and therefore his difference, through isolating himself and achieving high standards, seemed to give him a sense of *power* when he felt *powerless*.

In addition, similar to Jane, Mark seemed sensitive both emotionally and physically. On a physical level he too seemed vulnerable for illnesses and on an emotional level, Mark seemed sensitive to the subtle dynamics between people, and the impact that people had on him. However, he also tended to speak to, or about others, in an *insensitive* manner,

similar to the way he experienced others speaking to him. Perhaps this may have been an attempt to isolate himself and thus protect himself from intrusiveness from others. Mark's strong intuitive abilities seemed to extended to a meta-physical level in that he became aware of and developed his psychic abilities. It further seemed as though his *sensitivity* was strongly linked with an ability and need to connect with others and himself on a perhaps more spiritual level.

In order for Mark to remain connected to his authentic being, it seemed as though he firstly needed to express himself in a creative manner, for example through his art. Secondly he seemed to seek connections with others who shared his understanding and need for connections on a more spiritual level. Thirdly, similar to Jane, he seemed to have a need to relate to others in a supportive manner.

Strengths of this study

This study gave the opportunity to two anxious people to tell their life stories. Hearing the voices and personal accounts of anxious people seems to be an unexplored area in the literature. Owen (1992, p. 386) states that "understandings are socially created by a group of believers." In this way a group of believers, particularly those belonging to the medical model, as well as some more traditional schools of thought in psychology, seem to hold strong beliefs about anxiety and its roots. However, the outcomes of many of the studies seemed inconclusive and although they were geared at generalising their findings, they seemed unable to generalise their findings with certainty, as individual differences seemed present. By giving these two people a voice, the reader got a look at the world from the view point of two people who experience anxiety. These two people therefore had a chance to speak and have a voice when anxious people are so often silenced by being spoken for by others.

The social constructionist nature of this study allowed for a co-constructed reality to emerge between the researcher and the participants during the interviews. In this way the researcher was able to bring to the conversation her understanding, questions, and

experiences (both personally and clinically) with anxiety to the conversation. This, in her opinion led to even deeper inquiry, which led to richer information.

By following a qualitative research approach, it was possible to inform the participants about the research aims and process. This is different to the tendency of more positivistic and empirical researchers to give little to no disclosure to their participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The degree of deception often involved in those studies was therefore not present in this study. The participants in this study were fully informed of the nature of the process in which they engaged. They were thus allowed to tell the story in their way, as they were viewed as the experts in terms of their life stories and experiences. Even when the researcher contributed to the conversation, the understanding was there from the onset (as agreed on between the researcher and the participants), that the participants at all times had the option of directing the researcher away from topics with which they may have felt uncomfortable.

Validity was achieved in this qualitative research study. As highlighted in Chapter 4, quantitative researchers equate validity with the degree to which they are sure to gain an accurate account of reality. Quantitative researchers therefore tend to regard "validity threats as nuisance or extraneous variables that can be controlled and eliminated" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 63). Various qualitative researchers however, argue that it is not possible, neither is it necessary to accurately pinpoint and eliminate such outside threats to validity prior to the research. It is often these 'other variables' that make up the contextual circumstances which are of interest to qualitative and social constructionist researchers. According to qualitative researchers it is therefore more important that a study be credible, which means that it "produces findings that are convincing and believable" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, p. 62). The researcher feels she achieved credibility in this study through continuously describing and explaining how she came to her interpretations and conclusions.

Reliability in qualitative research in essence refers to the degree to which the researcher's observations of the generated information can be trusted (Rapmund, 2000). Researchers working from a quantitative perspective focus strongly on the quality and the nature of

the measuring instrument and place a lot of emphasis on how reliable this instrument is to produce the same results when a study is repeated. This seems to be an important prerequisite for research studies conducted from a positivist and therefore a quantitative approach, as these researchers believe that "a stable and unchanging reality exists" and can be measured (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 64). Researchers working from an interpretive and social constructionist framework, "do not assume that they are investigating a stable and unchanging reality and therefore do not expect to find the same results repeatedly" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 64). For such qualitative researchers it is therefore more important that findings be dependable. Therefore hearing the personal accounts from two people who construct themselves as anxious and have been constructed by others (through being 'treated' by medical professional for example for anxiety symptoms) as anxious were regarded as reliable and dependable sources for the purpose of this study.

Dependability was also assured as the researcher aimed to give "rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and developed out of contextual interaction" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.64). In this study the researcher aimed to stay congruent with each participant's context and continually refer back to the text of each interview whilst making interpretations. The researcher also remained aware that her own reality, therefore her own values and viewpoints, may have influenced how she constructed or interpreted each participant's story. She acknowledged this to the reader during the interpretation phase.

Limitations of this study

Following from the above, the researcher acknowledges that her interpretations and practical presentation of the stories were likely to be coloured by her own perceptions and values. In this regard, the researcher's participation in the interviews is likely to have influenced the way in which the interview was constructed. Therefore the interview was a co-constructed conversation between her and the participants, coloured by both the researcher's and participants' realities. In this regard, the researcher attempted to remain aware that the manner in which she spoke and what she said, may have influenced the

participants and vice versa. Linking with this awareness, the researcher also acknowledges that the manner in which she wrote each person's story and the themes that she elicited were also coloured by the lens through which she looked, at those particular points in time. She therefore notes that another researcher may highlight different themes and/or include other themes. Therefore the final outcome of this study cannot be considered to be a reflection of an absolute truth about the lives of anxious people in general, nor about the lives of these participants. It seems more accurate to say that the outcome of this study points to a co-constructed reality between the researcher's personal sources of information (obtained from lived, as well as academic and clinical experience), the theoretical and academic sources that she consulted, as well as the expert sources, namely the two participants, who told their stories.

A more empirical or quantitative voice in the field of Psychological research could therefore criticise this study as its outcomes cannot be generalised to a larger population. However the rich, in-depth nature of this kind of study does not lend itself to the use of a large sample (Rapmund, 1996). As two people who experience anxiety were given an opportunity to tell their life stories, rich information about these two persons' experiences was elicited. There were some similarities between the two stories, but important seemed to be the unique nature in which both described and made meaning of their experiences. Perhaps in some way the richness of these personal accounts could lead future researchers of various epistemological backgrounds on new paths of inquiry.

As this study did not seek to hear the stories of participants who were classified in a set diagnostic category for Anxiety disorders, as stipulated by the DSM-IV-TR classification system, this study may therefore be open for criticism. However, the criteria for participation in this study was that each participant constructed him- or herself as anxious or accepted a construction by someone else of him- or herself as anxious. Both participants sought assistance or understanding from health care professionals around their anxious experiences. In essence this study was geared at finding personal meanings from those with anxiety. Perhaps the very need for different categories (that often seem to overlap in clinical practice) is further indicative of the individual and very personal nature of the experience of anxiety.

Due to the nature and aims of this study, participants were asked to share personal and sensitive information. This in itself highlights ethical questions (Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, cited in Rapmund, 1996; Terre Blanche & Durrheim,1999). However, the researcher attempted to remain sensitive to this by using her clinical judgement throughout the interviews, and at all times, made sure that the respondents were at ease with the degree of intensity and exploration in the interview (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Keeping with the responsibilities of the researcher, as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) propose, the researcher also attempted to prepare the respondents as far as possible for the nature of the interview, and entered into a verbal agreement with every participant whereby they were assured that they could indicate to the researcher what their level of comfort was at any time during the interview. To respect the *privacy* and *confidentiality* of the participants, pseudonyms were used and names and/or places were changed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

A final limitation of this study was that written testimonial validity was not obtained from the participants. As noted in Chapter 4, 'Testimonial validity' points to the validity that is obtained from the participants (Stiles, cited in Rapmund, 2000). In other words the degree to which they considered that the way in which the study was explained to them and the way in which it was conducted was done so in a valid manner. After the completion of each interview, the researcher spent some time with each participant reflecting back on the interview process. The participants were also encouraged to voice any personal gains or personal difficulties during, as well as at the conclusion of the study. However, this short conversation with each participant was not tape recorded and transcribed, and can therefore not be included in the study. Using her clinical judgement, in reflecting back on the process followed during this study, the researcher believes that she remained within the ethically correct boundaries according to her knowledge and abilities. She also believes that she remained congruent to the authentic purpose of this study, namely to allow her participants to tell their life stories, whilst she attempted to remain sensitive to the personal and ethical issues around this.

Areas for Focus in Clinical Practice and Future Research

<u>In clinical practice</u>

For the researcher, the innate sensitivity of anxious people stood out along with the importance of the connection with the authentic self. Perhaps within the context of clinical practice, clinicians (who do not already do this) might focus on exploring with their clients (who report anxiety experiences), firstly those areas and/or those impacts from others that make them feel particularly sensitive. A further exploration could entail exploring with clients their authentic needs and various ways of expressing these within each client's individual context.

This could further extend to assisting parents, in terms of parental guidance, in allowing their children to remain in contact with their authentic beings, whilst still teaching them respect for those socially constructed rules, which aim to protect the greater good of the majority.

The researcher learned the importance of exploring the authentic self's needs and therefore giving air to and life to the authentic being, as it is defined uniquely by each individual, during her supervisory conversations, which were part of her internship training in a clinical setting. Being introduced to the concept of the authentic being, proved to be valuable to the researcher both personally and professionally.

The researcher therefore believes that if a person's authentic self is threatened and/or even smothered, the person may respond with physical signs (referred to by some as 'symptoms') which will symbolically resemble the smothering, or 'fear of dying responses' true to humans. This physical reaction to fearing the loss or even 'death' of the authentic being of anxious people, is not perhaps experienced by those who have developed authentic selves that are consistent with the dominant voices of the world, and who therefore do not feel a regular threat to their authentic beings.

<u>In future research</u>

The above suggestions for clinical practice seem to hold opportunities for future research. A study which explores the relationship between a person's innate sensitivity and need for authenticity, may prove to be challenging yet interesting. In addition, the relationship between these two qualities and spirituality may further challenge such an enquiry, but also open some doors into areas that psychology perhaps needs to venture, as part of its own growth.

Following from the above, one could perhaps hypothesise that a highly sensitive being could be highly aware (on perhaps some intuitive or spiritually developed level) of any attempts from others or contexts in his or her world that try to prevent him or her from continuing the 'existence' of his or her authentic being. Such people may thus be faced with either the option of fitting within a particular structure, as dictated by a particular societal norm or dominant voice, and therefore being 'inauthentic'. Alternatively they may need to detach from those structures that tend to confine them and block the pathways they need open in order to allow their authentic selves to breathe. However, by choosing to give life to their authentic beings they may risk physical isolation, which in a sense threatens their 'physical existence' in a particular societal structure (or family, in the case of a child). Such a person may therefore feel torn between his or her innate responsibility to being authentic and his or her need to remain connected to those in his or her immediate environment.

Future research may thus include an exploration of effective ways in which people may remain connected with their authentic beings, and therefore not feel that they have to sacrifice their authentic selves, and still remain functioning and/or have a voice within a larger socially constructed reality or norm. This kind of inquiry may also be extended to the clinical context that deals with parental guidance. Practical ways in which parents may explore with their children their authentic needs, whilst still teaching them the socially constructed rules that are aimed at facilitating order and safety in society, may thus be explored in future studies.

In addition, the richness of the personal accounts in this study could have stimulated, in prospective researchers, a curiosity for a quantitative inquiry into some of the themes highlighted here. For example a quantitative inquiry around a search for 'typical' authentic needs of anxious people may prove to be interesting. Such a study could explore if anxious people in certain cultures share particular authentic needs or not.

Finally, an inquiry into clairvoyant or so called 'psychic' people and their level of anxiety, may also prove to be interesting.

Conclusion

This study seemed to elicit valuable and rich information around the life stories of two people constructed as anxious. From these two stories the importance and even personal responsibility of remaining connected to the authentic self, and for people to allow others the existence and continued life of their authentic beings, were highlighted. The innate sensitivity of these anxious people also seemed prominent. This appeared to extend to a more meta-physical or spiritual level to a greater degree in both stories. The need of both participants to have meaningful connections with others in a way that allowed them to share their authentic interests, or be true to their authentic beings, seemed important.

Future studies may include inquiries into the relationship between the authentic being and innate sensitivity. This may be further challenged by inquiries into how these qualities may link with persons' spirituality. There also seems to be opportunities for the quantitative exploration of for example 'general' or 'typical' authentic needs (if any) of anxious people. Perhaps, it is through the exploration of the authentic being of each person in his or her particular context, that future research and clinical work in Psychology may find authentic meaning. Future studies may find that remaining connected to the authentic being, allows the soul to breathe, which contributes to emotional health in this physical dimension. Such studies may remind psychologists of their authentic purpose, to consider themselves and their clients as holistic constructions between mind, body and soul.

A Personal Note

At the end of this study, the researcher acknowledges that this journey has led her to a higher place of not knowing. This, she hypothesises, goes along with all forms of inquiry. She therefore echoes and ends with what Fritz states in the following quote:

In the stage of completion, your being is ready for another act of creation.

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APPENDIX A: Consent form

I, _____ hereby give Mari Stanton permission to tape record the interview(s) and to then use the information for the purposes of research only. This research will form part of a Masters dissertation in Clinical Psychology.

In the written product of the dissertation names and places will be changed in order to protect the identity of the participant.

_____   _____

Me. M. I. Stanton   **Participant**

Date: **Date:**

APPEFNDIX B: Interview with Jane

Mari: Would you consider yourself to be anxious?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: How come?

Jane: Because I experienced panic attacks before and I was also diagnosed to be anxious.

Mari: Are you currently receiving medication?

Jane: Yes, I use Cipramil, or actually the new advanced version.

Mari: And since when can you remember that you started feeling anxious or got the first panic attack?

Jane: About 3 years ago.

Mari: Is it something specific that happened or just out of the blue?

Jane: It was out of the blue, not something specific, no.

Mari: And what does it feel like when you get a panic attack?

Jane: It feels that you don't know what is going on because you don't have any knowledge about it, so it feels like you are getting a heart attack or it feels like you are completely disorientated, almost like you are going die.

Mari: And has this impacted on your functioning daily?

Jane: Yes, yes it has. That is why I needed to get help, to get medication, because it almost feels like you don't have control over yourself. Like sometimes I would get an attack on the highway and I would have to stop because I was too scared to be in an accident. So even driving or at work a lot of times I got a panic attack where I had to go home because it feels like my throat and everything would just be pushing in my chest and you get very claustrophobic.

Mari: Have you had any other kinds of treatment for this besides the medication?

Jane: Psychotherapy and that is it.

Mari: All right, I'm going to ask you a bit about early childhood. Where were you born?

Jane: In Gauteng.

Mari: Do you have any siblings?

Jane: Yes I do.

Mari: Are they older or younger than you?

Jane: Younger.

Mari: Is it a brother or a sister?

Jane: A brother.

Mari: And how many?

Jane: Two years younger.

Mari: And just one brother?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: When you grew up as a young child before primary school, what do you remember, what stands out to you?

Jane: Before primary school, I think I was quite lonely. I can't tell you why, but I've got a feeling I was fairly lonely and although my brother was there we didn't always get along very well.

Mari: Did you have a feeling of being sort of by yourself and on the outside?

Jane: Yes, like being almost different or excluded or …

Mari: Or isolated?

Jane: Isolated, yes and different than other people.

Mari: Did you experience this in your core family with your parents and your brother?

Jane: More with other people, but I guess one can say within your family as well. I think my brother and my mother was closer than I was with her.

Mari: And did this make you feel outside in terms of their relationship?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Tell me a bit about your relationship with your mom from a young age.

Jane: I can just remember… My father and my mother are divorced. I can just remember she was always very tense and she always screamed in the mornings and she always screamed at us and she was incredibly stressed out and I think that made me pull back, and that she tried to approach me a lot and she tried to get "toenadering"…

Mari: Make contact with you?

Jane: Yes, but I think I pulled away a lot. I didn't like it when she hugged and kissed me, she likes to hug and kiss me.

Mari: Did you feel it was too much?

Jane: No, she is not overly…, no. I can't explain it. I think I am like that in general with other people as well, but with her especially I feel uncomfortable if she comes too close to me.

Mari: And this has been from a young age?

Jane: I can't say before I was in primary school, but definitely since primary school.

Mari: It sounds to me as if… First tell me when did your parents get divorced, how old were you?

Jane: I was seven or eight. In the year that I turned eight.

Mari: You were already in primary school then?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Okay, we'll get there later. Just tell me, when they were still married and you all lived together, describe their relationship, between your mom and your dad.

Jane: Not very close. I can't imagine there was a very close…but to be honest, my father was away a lot, so I can't remember them being together lots of times. I remember more interaction with us as children than interaction between the two of them.

Mari: And when they were together, was there a lot of silences between them or was there a lot of fighting?

Jane: I would rather say silence. I've seen them fight after they got divorced, but before, to be honest I can't remember any interaction, so I would say silence.

Mari: Would you say silence is a way of maybe describing your childhood and your family life?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Even after your dad divorced your mom?

Jane: Yes, I would.

Mari: Tell me a bit about your relationship with your father, when he was still married to your mom?

Jane: I've got one or two good memories. He used to walk me to school, okay this was again in primary school, but before that maybe…, I remember on Sundays, when he was there, that we would jump on his bed and play, my brother and I, but that is it, that's all I can remember. I can't remember much of him being at home. I don't really have a very emotional, close… I have never had that close emotional relationship with him.

Mari: And with your mother?

Jane: I would always go to her if I was in trouble. She does give very good advice, and I do love her and I do all of that, but I don't know, I can't tell you why I feel uncomfortable with her, but I do, but I still feel close to her. It's strange, but…

Mari: And if you would describe her as a person, what would you say?

Jane: Then?

Mari: Then, yeah, lets just stay with your childhood for now.

Jane: Then, I think very very stressed out and very tense, but more stressed than tense.

Mari: Would you say that as a child you sometimes had to take more of an adult responsibility or that you feel responsible for your mother's emotions?

Jane: No, not really. No not in that sense, being responsible for her emotions, no.

Mari: Do you think that she could not deal with all the demands and that you needed to step in at times.

Jane: Yes, not that I had to step in, but I was scared that she was going to leave it, or something, that she was going to leave or have a breakdown. I remember one day, I don't know what happened, it was a Sunday, and she just went to a grocery store and when she came back she was in a complete state and the family was there, her brother and everyone was there, and we couldn't go into the room and I don't know what was wrong, but she was just crying terribly and nothing happened before that, but I was scared, very scared that something was going to happen with her.

Mari: Did you ever have to take over adult activities or adult responsibilities when you were a child?

Jane: Like cooking and stuff like that?

Mari: Yeah, anything.

Jane: No, no, not in that sense.

Mari: How would you describe your father then?

Jane: Absent. Very absent and very, very stressed. I was very scared of him.

Mari: Did you feel you can only be a certain way?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Otherwise he might condemn you and not accept you.

Jane: Yes. I would always feel rejected and you can only be a certain way because he has a certain view on how one should be and how people should be and what manners are and if you are not like that or maybe if there is a dirty spot on your clothes or if you sit with your knees on the ground instead of on the couch, you know, he would freak out and say…, just completely freak out. I was very scared of doing anything or touching anything.

Mari: Would you feel belittled by him?

Jane: Later yes, later. In school I did. But I can't remember before.

Mari: Did you go to a nursery school at all?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: What age were you when you went there?

Jane: Four.

Mari: How was the nursery school experience for you? Can you remember anything?

Jane: I was also very isolated. I know I was quite kind of ill. I had a lot of allergies and things like that, so I felt a bit also scared the whole time and isolated, like I didn't fit in and the other children were better than me, they didn't want to play with me. So I actually, I don't think I had a lot of friends there, maybe one friend. So yes, I was always very scared and not sure that…, in a concert for instance that I would be doing the right thing.

Mari: Why did you feel that the other children were better than you?

Jane: Well, because of the way the teachers treated children that were very good at something or very…, I don't know, very pretty, or very good at drawing or good at reading or children that they thought were cute and that they liked.

Mari: And what would you do then, as a child, when you experienced that other children do things better. How would you react to that?

Jane: I would pull back. I just pulled back and I felt very isolated.

Mari: Tell me about physical symptoms which maybe started when you were small. Did you have any asthma?

Jane: Tonsillitis, sinusitis and things like that.

Mari: And something which is called enuresis, which is bedwetting, have you had that?

Jane: Yes I had that, though it was during pre-school and also one time at nursery school and that was very embarrassing, because they had to borrow me a panty and everybody laughed at me and the teacher was very angry.

Mari: How did she handle it?

Jane: She shouted at me, she was very angry. My mom was also very angry.

Mari: What did your mom say?

Jane: I can't remember what she said, I just remember that they were very angry.

Mari: How old were you then, can you remember?

Jane: Five, probably.

Mari: And did it ever happen after that again?

Jane: Yes, I think it did, but just at home.

Mari: During the day?

Jane: No, at night.

Mari: When do think was the last time that this happened? What age round about?

Jane: Maybe seven.

Mari: And how did your mom handle this when it happened at home?

Jane: She was very angry, very angry. She'd scream.

Mari: How did you feel then? Can you remember?

Jane: Obviously very bad and very scared and very anxious.

Mari: And what did you do?

Jane: I cried.

Mari: Did your brother have anything like asthma, or bedwetting, can you remember?

Jane: Yes, I think he did, but I can't remember until what age. I remember that he did have bedwetting.

Mari: At what age did you go to primary school?

Jane: When I was six.

Mari: And was it the year in which you turned seven?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Did you go straight to Grade 1?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: What stands out to you in primary school? How did you experience schoolwork as such?

Jane: Schoolwork wasn't difficult , that was fine. I would also say I remember a lot of isolation. Kids can be very cruel, especially if they know that your parents are divorced. They were very cruel and they saw me as an outsider as well. Maybe for other reasons too, that I was very shy and quiet.

Mari: Did you have any friends in primary school?

Jane: Yes, I had one friend.

Mari: Was it the same friend from Grade 1 to Std 5?

Jane: To Std 5, yes and then I made some new friends as well when I became older, maybe Std 3 and 4, I made some extra friends, yeah.

Mari: What stands out to you about that one friend that you had?

Jane: Well, we were friends later as well. The thing I remember is that one day, I think I was in Std 4, she said to me: "Jane," something like "I hate you, you are so pretty" or something like that. I know it sounds terrible, but she said: "Why are you so pretty?" And we were young and I didn't even understand what pretty means. I was like: "Why did she say that?" I wasn't actually aware of…, I mean I never looked at other children and thought: "Oh she's pretty, or she's pretty." I didn't understand where that came from and yeah, there were some big issues with me and her later on.

Mari: Do you feel that sometimes she would expose you or make comments on you or try to break you down?

Jane: Yes, actually, primary school was my worst time, because kids tried to make jokes with me a lot, and they laughed at me and when they did that I completely freaked out, and the more I freaked out the more they laughed. Say for instance, once at a camp, they said something really nasty, I can't remember what it was, and I was very upset and I started crying and they started laughing more and more, I got more upset and they started laughing more and more, so I became completely breathless and I pulled their clothes off the railing and I remember some of the children's buttons tore off. I became completely hysterically when people laughed at me or judged me, or was critical or made jokes and fun about me.

Mari: What would you do? Start crying and become aggressive or …, can you remember.

Jane: I would try and be nice and then they would…, obviously I think I see it as a way of…

Mari: Teasing?

Jane: Teasing and I would become more and more upset. So I wouldn't see the joke in it and I would become very upset and aggressive, yes.

Mari: Did you ever get into trouble with authorities such as teachers?

Jane: No, but my brother had the same problem and he did get into trouble, he threw chairs or something in the classroom, because children did the same to him.

Mari: How did the teachers and you get along?

Jane: We got along very well, I think, very well except for maybe two teachers, two or three teachers, but mostly we got along. I always did my homework and I did quite well in school.

Mari: Tell me about when you went home from school. How did that work? Was your mother there when you got home?

Jane: No, she worked full day, so the domestic worker raised us, well not raised us, but she looked after us, she was a fulltime worker and my mother started studying…, She was a teacher and then she started studying her master's and doctor's degree, so she was also very busy. When she came home she studied.

Mari: Is that what you remember continuously from when you were in primary school?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: That she would come home and study?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: What did you then do when you got home?

Jane: I did my homework and my brother and I played and that's all. Watched TV.

Mari: Did anybody help you with your homework?

Jane: No, I did it myself.

Mari: So you would say that it was quite silent in the house.

Jane: Very silent and I was very independent. Very independent. I didn't have anyone to ask or to help me to do anything. So I wasn't responsible for instance, to cook for the family, but I was very independent.

Mari: Did you feel sort of more mature for your age?

Jane: Yes, I was more serious and mature.

Mari: Would you say that you had fun sometimes or were you more serious about things?

Jane: More serious. More alone, lonely.

Mari: And the relationship with you and your brother, when you were going to primary school?

Jane: It went through bad patches, but it also… I think we…, although kids hate each other when they are little and sometimes fight, I think we had a silent bond, because of what we were going through. I think we both understood that … I think he wanted to be more dependent on me, but I didn't want to allow him or let him come too close to me.

So he was weaker and I was stronger, or at least it seamed so, but he was looking for attention and I was always rude to him. I was quite nasty towards him.

Mari: Would you say he was looking for attention from you only or was he looking for attention from your mom as well, but she wasn't available?

Jane: Yeah, so that's why I would probably be a substitute for that.

Mari: Did you do any activities at school, extra-curricular activities?

Jane: I did gymnastics until Grade 2 when my parents got divorced. And I loved it, but I had to stop because of money and because my mother had to work late, so I think I also kept those things against her, that I wasn't able to do that anymore. And then later only in Std 4 I started doing athletics, long distance running for the first time. But also obviously I could walk to school and back, so it wasn't a question of anyone having to drop me there.

Mari: So it was at school that you were doing this?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Was there anything exciting that stands out to you in your primary school years, either at home or anywhere else?

Jane: Nothing, no. Just, what I can remember is a lot of competition from other kids and specially with one child who always wanted me to go check on the board if she has more stars or more marks than other girls, they were in competition. I was used a lot, because I wasn't competition for her. So yeah, that was the kind of friendship.

Mari: Do you feel you were often used by friends?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: From a young age?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: In which way else?

Jane: At that young age it's difficult to pinpoint, but to make them feel good about themselves the whole time, to go and check their marks and to make sure that they are okay.

Mari: You were sort of taking care of other kids.

Jane: Yes, almost.

Mari: It sounds like on an emotional level you attended to other kids, or they kind of kicked you out to win some emotional support.

Jane: Yeah, maybe they were just giving it to me as a competition.

Mari: Was there ever an experience by you that you needed to perform?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Who gave you that experience?

Jane: My father. He was very strict about reports and marks and being the best at school.

Mari: How much contact did you have with your father when you were in primary school?

Jane: We had to go to him every second weekend; we had to go to him. Or no, once a weekend and… Once a month for a weekend and every second Saturday. And I hated it, I always cried before we went. He was always late coming to pick us up, for an hour or two hours and my mom would have to sit and wait before he would come and then she would freak out because he was late. So it was always a big mess.

Mari: When your mom freaked out what did she do?

Jane: She just screamed and told us how selfish he was and things like that.

Mari: And then when he arrived, what did you do with him?

Jane: Well, we went for breakfast, then he went to work and we played in the house, in the flat, so he didn't really have that much contact with us, even when we were there. We were only there for say a Saturday and then he would go to sleep or watch rugby and then go to sleep and then we were not allowed to make a noise, or wake him up or anything like that.

Mari: There was quite a lot of silence with him too?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Did he get married again?

Jane: Yes, I think I was in Std…, sjoe… He is married 22 years now, so I am 29, so I was 7, no…, maybe I was 10…, Std 2, I think I was Std 2, I was 10 years old.

Mari: And who did he marry, someone that you knew before?

Jane: Yes, it's this woman…, she always went with us to the movies and she was always there when we went to visit him and later I also found out that they met each other the same year that I was born in 1975, so they knew each other long before.

Mari: Did him and her have an affair while he was married to your mom?

Jane: Yes, which I found out later on.

Mari: You weren't aware of it when you were a child?

Jane: No, only when I was 18.

Mari: How was it for you when he got married again?

Jane: I think I was too young to understand the whole concept, but I didn't like her much when I was in high school, but when I was young I think kids always look up to older woman or young older woman, they almost see in them this hero. I think maybe we went home and told my mom how nice she was and how cute and how sweet and I don't think that could have been very nice for her.

Mari: And did your mom react to it?

Jane: I can't remember specifically, but I think she was very silently upset.

Mari: And how was it then when your dad was married to the woman and you and your brother went to visit there?

Jane: Same, very strict. She was also very strict. They are very much the same. Well, when we were very little she would play with us, but later on … I don't think she is really a kid's kind of person.

Mari: So your experience was quite distant and cold?

Jane: Yes, and hard and dynamic.

Mari: It sounds like there were very set ways according to which you needed to behave.

Jane: Yes.

Mari: And it was hard to show yourself.

Jane: Yes. You have to sit a certain way, you have to eat a certain way, you have to talk a certain way, you have to dress a certain way, you have to be everything that they dictate.

Mari: And if you didn't do that, what happened?

Jane: We got into trouble. We were in trouble a lot.

Mari: What did trouble entail, did you get hidings or…?

Jane: Yeah, a lot of times we did.

Mari: Just another question …

Jane: Or we had to go and sit in the room and be quiet.

Mari: Oh, were you locked in the room?

Jane: Yes, in the bathroom.

Mari: Was it sometimes by yourself?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: And how would you deal with that?

Jane: I would hide in the closet and yeah…, just cry.

Mari: Did you try to get out of the room?

Jane: I tried, but I couldn't at all, it was locked so…, and then I just sat there, sometimes it felt like a whole afternoon, I don't know if it was, but it felt very long.

Mari: When you were youngish, a small child, do you remember ever having an experience that you would see something like a ghost, or hearing things?

Jane: When I was very small?

Mari: Yeah, maybe sometime in your childhood.

Jane: No.

Mari: Do you remember feeling very sensitive perhaps to light sounds, sharp lights or maybe feeling on your skin as being very sensitive.

Jane: Yes, actually, the first day I went to school, the teacher phoned my mother and said she must come and fetch me because I can't take the noise. Obviously the children, but I couldn't take it, so I didn't want to go to school because of the noise. I can't take noise, I don't like light. In the evening when I shower or when I get up I like it dark, I don't like light and I don't like noise at all.

Mari: Has your mom ever described you as a baby, what were you like?

Jane: As a baby? Just that I was very allergic, but I don't know about how I was, no.

Mari: Do you remember having any panic attacks or symptoms as a child?

Jane: Yes, I remember one evening watching a movie about…, I can't remember what it was about, but I think God was in the movie, and I completely…, it was about someone dying…, and I completely freaked out and I couldn't sleep the whole evening. It was actually…, it was New Year and I thought the world was going to end and I completely became very hysterical and I cried the whole night. My mother had to sit with me and try and calm me down the whole evening.

Mari: What age were you then?

Jane: About 8, 9.

Mari: And how did you feel about death? Did anybody ever speak to you about it?

Jane: No, nobody spoke to me about it, but I was always very scared of dying, always. I always ask other people: "Are you scared of dying?", always.

Mari: From what age?

Jane: 8, 7, 8.

Mari: How did you become scared of dying, or was it just something that happened?

Jane: I don't know why exactly, but I know that my grandfather died and I saw him just before he died and he was very confused and he couldn't remember us and he was very sick. And my father's wife has cancer for 8 years and I saw her suffering through that and become sick and hair falling out and become pale and white and throwing up and everything. We were there the whole time, every week or second weekend when we visited, she was sick. She had someone looking after her at home so we saw her in that kind of state, so I think maybe that, feeling the sickness around me before you do, so I'm very scared of dying, especially cancer, I was always very scared of cancer and I still am.

Mari: Did you ever feel in your life that you are out of control?

Jane: In general out of control?

Mari: Yeah, lets say during your childhood.

Jane: Yeah, I did. Yeah, but especially when I became mad or angry or… I couldn't really control my emotions when people laughed at me, I couldn't at all, I became hysterical, or when I became anxious I couldn't control it.

Mari: Lets go to your high school years. What stands out to you in high school?

Jane: The feeling of also loneliness, feeling very quiet and isolated and distant, but this was more from Std 6 to Std 8 and I think the happiest that I have ever been was Std 9 and 10, but then I took part in sport and I wasn't so focussed on doing well at school and didn't study as hard. I became a bit more relaxed. I think almost rebellious especially in matric, against my father, but before that I was very disciplined and I worked hard and I was very tense and very stressed, I was always very stressed.

Mari: The need to work hard and be disciplined. Is it something that comes from within you, was it always there or does it come from outside like from your father or others' expectations?

Jane: It comes more from my father and expectations. I think I am someone that likes to do well, but I don't like to be under pressure and pushed. My father always says it takes perspiration to succeed not motivation, so it all boils down to hard work even if you don't want to do it, which could be a good lesson, yes, but also to him it was more about the results as well.

Mari: What happened if you didn't get the results that he wanted?

Jane: It almost felt as if you were rejected emotionally. I can't describe exactly what he did, but it was almost a feeling of him not being satisfied with us.

Mari: And when you felt that he wasn't satisfied, how did he show it?

Jane: He was just very distant and cold and he always said even if we did very well, he said you can do better. So he never said: "Great, that's fantastic, very good." I don't think he ever said that. And he always set ultimatums for instance: "If you get some distinction, I will take you overseas…, or I will buy you a car or I will buy you this and this and this." And if you didn't achieve it, he wouldn't give it to you, obviously.

Mari: And if you did achieve it, would he deliver.

Jane: Yes, he did, but the problem is his expectations were too high, so I rarely actually made his expectations. His expectations were in fact unrealistic and I would tell him that when he would set them and then he would still say you can do it.

Mari: What was the nature of your relationship with your mother just before, when you were in high school?

Jane: I think we fought a lot, but I think it was most female-daughter arguments and so forth, but she always made me feel as if I was not a good child. She would always say I always spoiled the day for her and for my brother. I always spoil every Saturday, I always spoil every day for them, so I felt like it was my fault that they didn't have a good day.

Mari: You speak of them as if they were a unity.

Jane: Yes, that's almost the way I see it. It's the way that she actually put it, because she said: "You always spoil our day."

Mari: What did you do when they said that you spoiled it for them?

Jane: I for instance…, but I think especially that was when she had a boyfriend, they always wanted to go for ice-cream and I didn't really like him very much and I always had to go with. I would ask her if I could stay at home with the maid and she would say, no I can't, and I didn't want to go out. I preferred being alone and she would freak out and say I can't stay at home and I always spoil everything for her and eventually she would cry and tell me that I am like my father.

Mari: And how did you feel about that?

Jane: Very upset.

Mari: So this was when you were in high school, you had to go with her and her boyfriend?

Jane: Oh sorry, that was actually in primary school, I think I get mixed up. But she also said that I spoiled her day in high school. But when I was in primary school it started actually and I think it continued through high school and I felt that she was very strict with me, more than other mothers were with their children, but I think that comes from her relationship with her own mother as well. And she would tell me for instance you look slutty if you wear your hair like this or you look slutty if you wear a short top. Although I think I wasn't very naughty, she behaved as if I was some drug taking, smoking kind of person and my brother was the good one.

Mari: You felt unapproved of for who you are?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: And when you went to your dad, did you go to him often, also in high school?

Jane: Same rules applied. Every second weekend for a day and every month for a weekend.

Mari: And how was that when you got older?

Jane: Even worse. I didn't even want to do that anymore. Because we always used to go with him to run all his errands and then he would work or sleep and we had to be quiet.

Mari: And what did you do when you were there?

Jane: My brother and I played very quietly in our own rooms. He always forced us to eat all our food and I hated that, we always had to eat all our food. He screamed at us if we didn't and we had to sit at the table until we did, but I am not talking about normal portions, I'm talking about if we went to a hotel for instance we went on holiday and we had to eat the starter, the main course and the desert and actually there was a starter and I think another fish and cheese and stuff, cheese and biscuits. So we were completely overfed and he is, or he was, quite obese then and he still has weight problems, very big weight problems. In fact he was just diagnosed with Hepatitis B and diabetes and high blood pressure and cholesterol because of eating habits. When I was in high school I had a problem with eating, because he was so fat, so I didn't want to eat a lot. I ate very, very little, I ate maybe a teaspoon of every dish available, like a teaspoon of carrots, a teaspoon of everything, so I ate minute amounts and maybe Provitas and apples in the day and maybe some yoghurt in the morning, that's all, the whole day. And I exercised

about two hours in the afternoon plus in morning at school and I didn't eat a lot. In fact I was very skinny and I was approached by teachers in the school because they thought I was anorexic and they called my mother in and told her that they thought I am anorexic. I knew I wasn't anorexic although I was very critical about what I ate and I always felt guilty when I ate. I don't know, maybe I was, I don't know. Then my mother bought books about anorexia and I was told that I had to read these books and she sat with me that I ate and my father forced us to eat so much and I just wanted to eat balanced. I don't think I ate too little, but they forced me to eat a lot. Now I actually force food down. I eat all my food on my plate and even…I eat twice the amount other people do, because I feel I have to stuff myself, always. And I think …, I hate it, because it feels like they forced me to eat and I couldn't just be myself and just eat what I wanted. My father is obese and I just wanted to be normal, but now they think I'm anorexic and now they force me to eat like my father. So as a young child of thirteen, I had to eat the same amount as my father and he sat there until we ate all our hotel food, which is exactly the amount he ate.

Mari: It sounds like it was difficult for you to be yourself around him in many ways, and the food was one example of that.

Jane: Yes, but I don't know why it is such an issue for me. I was actually shy of him, because he was so fat. I didn't want anyone to see him, I didn't want my friends to see him. I would always try and avoid that.

Mari: And you sort of maybe felt that you would overcompensate for things in him that made you embarrassed.

Jane: Yeah, maybe that, yeah.

Mari: Do you have the experience of …or when he spoke to you, when he was interacting with you, how did it feel?

Jane: Like I'm being scrutinized and criticised. Very critical and… yes.

Mari: Did you feel intruded upon?

Jane: Yes. You can't do anything without him knowing, or … yes.

Mari: Would he make personal comments about the way you look?

Jane: Yeah. Especially I remember one day, my hair was loose and he said: "It looks sloppy" and "you can't wear your hair loose" and as well as with my clothes and the

colour of clothes that I wear, that I look pale and that my clothes look dull, that I should wear brighter clothes and things like that.

Mari: Do you remember any physical things happening to you, physical symptoms when you were in high school? I mean you ate less and you were concerned about your weight, but were there other things?

Jane: Yes, I had a lot of nightmares when I was very small and through high school and still.

Mari: And from childhood, did you sometimes have a night terror, that you were screaming and someone had to come and help you?

Jane: Yes a lot. In fact that was when I wet my bed as well.

Mari: And did you ever sleep walk?

Jane: No, but I fell out of my bed a lot.

Mari: Any panic like symptoms when you were in high school?

Jane: I can't remember anything now that stands out. Yeah at school, maybe pressure at school and when I got to school especially in the mornings when my mother screamed at us about clothes not being ironed or us being late or that she screamed completely hysterical and she would cry and talk about my father.

Mari: What did she say about your father then?

Jane: I think, about money and that he was selfish and all those kind of things which made me so tense and…, well and that I'm like my father and all those things in the morning before you go to school and when I got to school and someone asked me how I was, I would burst into tears, and sometimes teachers calmed me down or people asked what was wrong and I just couldn't answer them about what was wrong. I was too embarrassed to tell them, but I remember crying a lot at school.

Mari: Did you have friends, how were you with your peers, interacting with them?

Jane: Okay, but the problem is that the friend that I had, the one that made the comments about prettiness when I was, her mother was the same. Her mother and my mom were friends and I used Clinique rather than wash when I was standard four and they always joked about it, and said: "So you think your skin is nice because you use this?" And if my dad bought me something, because he was obviously rich, or more rich than my mother, they would be jealous and make comments, or if I did better in school they would make comments. They were always very intruding and very trying to do things better. I didn't

feel that I should compete but she felt that she should compete with me the whole time and she was very condescending.

Mari: She would minimise you?

Jane: Yes, always.

Mari: And how did you deal with that?

Jane: I just kept quiet, because although she was the one who said: "Yeah I hate you because you are pretty, or you are so pretty," or something like that, when I was in standard three and I didn't even understand what she meant. In high school I remember her saying, you are not really pretty, and when I would swim or come out of the shower, she would say: you are not really actually pretty when your hair is wet, or we discussed you while you were doing athletics this afternoon and, me and some other girls, and we decided that if you cut your hair, you would be ugly. And like your lashes are shorter than mine, and your…, always those kind of comments which I would never make to another child. It doesn't even go through my mind to say that to someone, but they would always count the songs: when I would swim they…, when we came out of the swimming pool they would say: "You are not really pretty when your hair is wet," a lot of times. And I actually thought I was ugly, I didn't even think of myself as pretty. And that is why it is so funny, because I was always shy about my looks because my teeth were not straight, and I had pale skin, and I actually thought that I was very, very average, in fact I thought… yeah, so they were very nasty. Although I already thought I was ugly it did a lot to my self-image that they would confirm that I was ugly, do you understand what I am trying to say? I thought I was ugly and now they would just confirm what I see in the mirror everyday and that pushes you down. You just think you are worthless basically and what your father and your mother are saying about you is true as well.

Mari: What were your father and mother saying about you that confirmed what the kids were saying.

Jane: I would rather say that the kids confirmed to me what my father and mother, the way they treated me, like: "You spoil the day and you are slutty if you wear your hair like this, or you can't dress like that it's ugly, or…" you know, things like that.

Mari: You really started to doubt yourself and who you are?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: You didn't know who you are and how to be?

Jane: Yes. I was shy about my looks and I thought I was very very ugly. I was too shy to speak to people because I was scared they were going to laugh at me because of what I looked like.

Mari: Would you try to do something to compensate for this? Would you believe them, it sounds like you did?

Jane: Yes, I did, because I remember my teeth were for instance very skew, so this could maybe be the reason, but very skew, I'm talking about I had to have an operation where they removed 11 teeth, but I wore braces for a long time. But I remember this mom and her daughter walking passed the library and I was friendly and I smiled at them and they started laughing at me as well. So those kind of things, although it's funny today, it completely freaked me out, I started crying and I was crying the whole evening to my mother that people were laughing at me because I am ugly.

Mari: Did you ever try then at some point in your life just to be what people…, you know tried to be what they wanted or thinking to be a different way it might stop the comments?

Jane: I just tried to be extremely neat and clean when I went to my father and tried to sit right and to do everything right and do my homework, so I was very quiet and very disciplined, it felt like I was in the army or something. So I tried to be like they wanted me to be.

Mari: And other kids at school?

Jane: I just kept quiet and told them how nice they looked and how pretty they are and how nice the things they have are and so I would always try and make them feel good about themselves and boost them.

Mari: Did it work, did it help them or did it make the comments go away?

Jane: I think people maybe in certain… people like it when you boost them, so maybe that is why they accepted or why they were friends with me, I don't know, but it didn't make the comments go away, no. I think when you behave like that, if you are like a doormat people treat you as one. I tried to please everyone and it made things worse, I think, because I wanted to be pretty.

Mari: And with the opposite gender, with boys, how was that?

Jane: I didn't really have a good relationship with them, no. I think the first time I kissed someone was the end of…, or after sixteen. I never really had a boyfriend or anything,

no. Funnily enough they always joked with me, like I was their sister or something. So, I didn't have a bad relationship with them but I didn't have a lot of interaction with them, but if they talked to me it was more like … I think they were nicer than the girls in some ways, they weren't as catty or yeah…

Mari: Would you say that maybe you got along better with the boys than with the girls?

Jane: Yeah well especially later in high school, but when I was young I was shy towards boys, but I always thought they were nicer than girls, if that makes any sense.

Mari: And in Std 9 and Matric, you said those were the happiest two years. Why? Because you said you took part in sport and you didn't feel so isolated.

Jane: I was more balanced as well. I didn't work as hard and I did what I liked. I did sport and I studied a little bit and I did fine and people, I think, were more acceptant towards me. Not the close friends that I had, the people that those ugly comments, still made them, but other children were nice to me. So what I am saying is that young children were nice to me, in Std 6, 7 and 8 and people that I wasn't really good friends with at school were nice and friendly and normal, but the people close to me were really nasty to me. But I started making more friends then, because these people were nice and I thought they were really nice and I was friendly towards them and I did some athletics and I did fairly well, I mean for school and I think that also makes people acceptable, if they do well or if they succeed in things, people accept them.

Mari: Did you feel happy because you did something that others accepted or was it more that you felt you were getting closer to who you really are, being who you really are?

Jane: Yah, I felt…, about the acceptance thing, that made me feel better, but yes, I was closer to who I really was, because I was more spontaneous, I enjoyed athletics because it was not something that my father forced me to do, in fact he hated the fact that I did athletics and maybe that's probably why I enjoyed it so much. He was always saying that athletes look so…, they're so scorched from the sun, they looked ugly and they were dump and stupid and yeah…, so I think maybe that's also why I enjoyed it.

Mari: Was there anything else you did that you felt was something that you liked, just for yourself, subjects or something maybe?

Jane: No, not really, no.

Mari: Did you have any experience during high school, like clairvoyant experiences, like experience something or…?

Jane: I was very sensitive.

Mari: Yeah?

Jane: Very sensitive to what other people thought and the way they behaved and so forth and to peoples feelings, but otherwise, no.

Mari: Were you also sensitive physically, like hearing and vision?

Jane: Hearing and visually, yes.

Mari: And tactile?

Jane: Not that I can think of no.

Mari: What happened after high school?

Jane: I went to university.

Mari: What did you study there?

Jane: Graphic design, but that I also hated, because my mother wanted me to be an artist and my father wanted me to be an academic, so I was being pulled in two directions and I didn't really enjoy it, because I don't think I am that good at drawing, I was okay, but I mean I wasn't brilliant, so I felt a lot of pressure.

Mari: From who?

Jane: From the studies itself, yeah. And then I wanted to stop in April that year and my father said if I do, he will give me 2 months to find work and he was going to stop paying for my studies and he was going to take away all the maintenance that he gave to my mother and I would have to look after myself. So he said I have to finish the year and I have to pass. If I don't then I must say goodbye to everything. So I finished and I passed, but I hated it. And at the end of the year it was very, very bad for me, to get everything finished. Then I started studying normal BA languages, because he said I must study it and I didn't want to study it, but he said that some of the wisest people on earth say that you must study music and languages and everything that's classic first before you can study law. I actually wanted to study law and he said no.

Mari: Is he connected to law?

Jane: Yes, he is, but he didn't think I should study it for some reason.

Mari: What else did you do during your varsity years that stand out to you?

Jane: I was in a relationship that was very bad, with a guy that was a marshal arts guru, or so he thought and he was very much like my father. We lived together, it was my first sexual relationship and it was very, very bad for me.

Mari: In which way was he like your father?

Jane: Critical, hard on people, he thinks he is the best and knows the most of everything and nobody can tell him anything else, and he was very…, it was like a power relationship, where he tries to overpower you or have power over you or manipulate you, so he was very manipulative.

Mari: Was he abusive in any way?

Jane: Emotionally abusive very, yeah, about what he said and the way that he broke me down and by talking about other woman, about big breasts and about we should get someone to sleep with us and about my friends and their sexuality. He was always asking funny questions about sexuality and sex and sexual experiences, other people's sexual experiences. He was always flirting with other woman but very obvious and if I would say anything he would say that I am paranoid. He was always making comments about how he was going to look at other women's boobs when we go on holiday and I would completely freak out. This is the first time I remember completely freaking out and I actually hit my arms against a cupboard so I was blue everywhere and I hit the walls.

Mari: Would you say you felt very powerless?

Jane: Powerless, "magteloos".

Mari: Did you feel you had to be a certain way for him?

Jane: For him, yes. And he had complete control over me, complete.

Mari: Emotionally and physically?

Jane: Emotionally, physically, everything.

Mari: Did you feel very isolated in the relationship?

Jane: Yes and towards my other friends. I don't think they completely understood, I think they saw what was happening, maybe they saw, but I don't think they understood why I couldn't get out of it. It is not as easy in that situation, because this person has complete control over you.

Mari: How did you feel when you tried to get out of it?

Jane: I didn't actually try, because I thought that he was the 'be all and end all', without him I'm nothing and he even said to me: "Jane you were such a wild horse when we started going out and now you are like a donkey."

Mari: When he said that how did you feel?

Jane: I felt powerless again, so I would completely…, almost numb and powerless, I didn't have a voice.

Mari: Did you feel you needed him to provide in a way and that's why you stayed?

Jane: Yes, also financially, because I was working for him, giving physical classes and things and yeah, he was almost like a father figure.

Mari: Did you feel he fulfilled some need or dream, but in return you lost something in yourself?

Jane: Yes, I don't know what the need is that he fulfilled, but it is obviously something, maybe something fatherly, something like that.

Mari: Did you have any panic experiences in you varsity years that you remember?

Jane: The only thing that I remember is with him, completely being very unhappy, crying all the time, feeling very powerless, hitting myself against the wall and becoming very hysterical, but not anxious like panic attacks, no.

Mari: Did you feel trapped?

Jane: Yes, and I started believing in weird things like aliens, because he believed in it, so he completely mind-boggled me. He told me about aliens that they exist and spirits and I started seeing funny things like spirits and he was in the marshal arts as I said, so even that belief made it stronger, or it made the belief stronger.

Mari: Did you have experiences with any spirits?

Jane: Yeah, I saw something in my room one evening just before I went to bed, like a priest kind of figure and once just a black figure surrounding me and pulling my arm away in the other direction and once another…, something that looked like him but just more like a monster kind of thing that was…, when I woke up a few times, I remember this now, something was pushing me down on the bed and I couldn't move my…, I was awake and I was screaming but I couldn't scream, I physically trying to push my arms up but I couldn't, it felt like something was sitting on me pushing me down.

Mari: Did you only have those experiences while you were in a relationship with him?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Did you discuss this with anybody at the time?

Jane: No.

Mari: Not with him either?

Jane: No.

Mari: Did you feel like you had an emotional connection with this guy or he just had an emotional hold on you, you were there for his emotions but…?

Jane: Yes, not him for me, yeah.

Mari: And how did you get out of this relationship?

Jane: He actually left me, because I didn't want to sleep with him anymore, because I got the feeling that he was using me sexually and I didn't want to have sex at all. I was emotionally completely broken down, I was crying every day, so I didn't feel like it and then he cheated on me, actually I started suspecting him, that something was going on and I had that dream about someone and that I knew them, but for some reason I had a dream about them and I confronted him and there was actually something going on.

Mari: Would you say you have strong sensing abilities, maybe a bit of like telepathic abilities?

Jane: Yes I think so, because he also said to me I am too clever. When I confronted him with these things he said I am too clever and its just things that I sensed, its not things that I knew. I just said it as if it was true and I was right about the person as well.

Mari: When in your study years did you have the break up with this relationship?

Jane: I was about 23, in my last year of studies.

Mari: And then what happened after that?

Jane: I started working. Then I was in another relationship with someone who wasn't sure…, he wasn't sure whether he wanted to go out with me and he was also very critical. The same type of person, very much the same. He left me as well. After five months he came back and we were in the relationship again for another 6 months and the same happened; he wasn't sure and he also talked about other girls and his ex-girlfriends and going out with them. There was always the feeling that there was a third person and I'm not the only person, so today as well, I'm very suspicious and very scared that someone is going to cheat on me and I can't trust that someone.

Mari: When you were with the second person did you ever have similar experiences like seeing something or…?

Jane: No, but I was very telepathic or sensed things as well, but I didn't see anything.

Mari: So you felt that you were alone in the relationship?

Jane: Very.

Mari: And did you find that you had to change who you are to stay in the relationship?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: What did you have to change?

Jane: I had to be more perfect and more the way you dress and the way you talk, I can't just be myself, I had to be perfect and like the right music and otherwise he would be embarrassed by me.

Mari: Did you have any panic or anxiety symptoms at that stage?

Jane: Yes, I did. More…, but not as extreme, but I did feel anxious lots of times.

Mari: Can you describe this feeling?

Jane: Just my heart beating, my heart beating very fast and things like that, but being anxious and stressed, but not panic attacks.

Mari: When did the first panic attack start?

Jane: When I came back from holiday one December the year of 2001 going on to 2002, we came back from holiday and then suddenly I just got these physical symptoms. I got very bad heart palpitations and feeling "benoud" claustrophobic and in fact so bad that I phoned my mother and she rushed me to the hospital, because I was convinced there is something wrong with me. I've got cancer or I've got some kind of disease and I was completely freaked out.

Mari: When did you end this relationship with the second guy, how old were you?

Jane: Just after I turned 25.

Mari: And what happened after that, did you start working or did you begin studying?

Jane: I still worked and I changed jobs and then I started panicking. Actually, sorry, I remember this because it was so significant, that's actually when it became really bad, but there was actually another time that I also experienced this. I was working on a project, I worked very long hours and just after that, it was almost as if I coped until just after it, and then I also had these heart palpitations and that's the first time I went to the doctor myself in the day and I said that I think I'm getting a heart attack and he sent me for an ECG and a heart sonar and all these kind of things. And that's when I started to become more scared because I was in doctor's rooms the whole time, and I was at the hospital and I was getting tests done and I was completely paranoid that something was wrong with me. But I know a few times I was also scared at night and my mom took me to the hospital, before that and after that. It was sort of a slow build up and then this happened and then again when I got back from holiday, the same kind of attack happened.

Mari: What kind of job did you do? Was it something that you felt was suited to who you are?

Jane: No, not at all. Computers and it's very technical. You do presentations that I'm scared of and I get those same symptoms and you have to talk in front of people, where I feel exposed, when I have to do something

Mari: What made you decide to go into this job of IT and computers?

Jane: I just landed in it. I don't know, I studied languages and then some information science and then I got a job afterwards. A friend of mine worked for the same company and she gave my CV in and I just got the job and from there it was good money and I continued. So once you've got a certain living standard it is difficult to change it. Sorry, I'm going back now again, but as we talk I remember things. When I went out with this first guy, this marshal arts guy, I also got symptoms of panic when I had to do marshal arts, like when the whole class, he sometimes singled me out and told me I have to do something that he knew I was really scared of, like tumbling or handstands and then rolling over and he knew I was terribly scared of this or jumping over something very high where you get hurt and everyone was watching me and I would cry and I would get, what we then thought was asthma attacks, I thought I had an asthma attack. I did have asthma, exercise induced asthma, when I exercise too hard I get asthma, but I think it was also linked to my fear, so I got these symptoms and people would joke about it as well.

Mari: And what would happen then?

Jane: They would laugh at me and I would run out of the class and cry and he would be embarrassed by me. So, I thought it was asthma attacks, maybe it was a combination sometimes between the two.

Mari: Did those attacks stop when you left him?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: And then at work, it started again when you started working at IT?

Jane: Well later, after two years, suddenly I just couldn't handle it any more.

Mari: What was the work environment like for you and perhaps now also? It sounds that you are doing something that's not really who you are, it doesn't fit with you. How do you experience the whole environment, is it difficult to express who you are?

Jane: Very, you can't be yourself. You have to be very confident and very efficient and very business-minded. You must be more like a man than what a woman would naturally

be, like you can't be emotional or say cute things or just be more businesslike the whole time and serious.

Mari: Do you find yourself being connected to people?

Jane: Yeah, there is actually one, two people that I feel connected with, especially one, more one person, but there are two people that I get along with well and this person is more soft-spoken, very quiet, academic. It's a guy, he's very sensitive and more that kind of person. The people that are very hard and driven and dynamic, I don't get along with as well.

Mari: Is it only recent that you found someone in your work that you connect with, or was there always someone?

Jane: There was always someone.

Mari: Have you had similar experiences of being on the outside in your work?

Jane: Yes, because I don't think it is something that I really want to do. I'm not as technical as some of those people. I don't like being as technical or as sort of standing in front the whole company and presenting, I'm not like that at all.

Mari: How long have you been working now for them?

Jane: Seven years.

Mari: Why do you stay in a job that you don't feel is completely fitting with who you are?

Jane: Cause of the money. Because my father forced us to be financially independent and that is why. I was always forced and it was always drilled into me that you have to be financially independent and that was my whole goal. And now I'm sitting with a job that I hate, but I get the money for it, but now I can't break through.

Mari: Do you feel trapped?

Jane: Yes.

Mari: Do you feel isolated?

Jane: Yes. Other people can't really see or understand why I'm taking it so seriously, because they also don't…, I would say not everybody loves their job, but I tend to feel very tense about it. So I'm still very tense.

Mari: When you go to work do you feel that there is only a part of you visible in the work place, there's a part of you that cannot be shown?

Jane: Yes, I can't actually show it to anyone except for maybe one or two people.

Mari: And what is that part?

Jane: Maybe being more relaxed and alive and feminine.

Mari: What is the job that you would eventually like to do?

Jane: Something like instructing, sports instructing or physiotherapy or something where you teach people or help people.

Mari: What would you say you miss in your job currently, that you would gain in another job that's more of your choice?

Jane: The human element.

Mari: Connection?

Jane: Connection, intimacy and being relaxed and not so technical, maybe more creative.

Mari: After the relationship with the second guy did you have any other relationships that are significant?

Jane: Yes, I am in a relationship at the moment and we have had our troubles especially in the beginning, which has a lot to do with my insecurity about other woman and I think this person hasn't been in a long relationship before so I don't think he is a bad person, I think maybe he just doesn't know how to be sensitive or be in a long relationship.

Mari: Do you feel emotionally connected in the current one?

Jane: Sometimes very and sometimes I just feel tense about my work, I think that it's such a strong emotion; I think it pushes me away from him.

Mari: Would you say that the current one is similar or different to the other two?

Jane: It's different because this person is not as critical. He accepts me for who I am. I can be myself. He is more relaxed; he doesn't try to overpower me. He gives me freedom and space and he's actually very kind and gentle. But sometimes he can be very angry and he seems aggressive. He seems aggressive and that scares me again, so…

Mari: And what happens then?

Jane: We fight. But I'm not as powerless or anything like I used to be. I think the medication is helping a lot as well. But the strongest emotions I think is me being tense and anxious, because of my work, more than relationship problems.

Mari: Would you say the panic symptoms have become worse over the couple of years since you first experienced it when you had been working for about two years or so. Did it sporadically become more?

Jane: Yeah, but the medication keeps it under control. But before I took the medication it did, yes.

Mari: When did you start with the medication?

Jane: About a year ago, a bit more than a year.

Mari: And what, oh yeah you said it was difficult to drive…?

Jane: Yes, and I couldn't talk at work or do anything, I was scared of presentations and talking in front of people and I was always tense.

Mari: Do you feel you can function better now that you have the medication?

Jane: Yes, but I am still very tense.

Mari: What triggers the panic.

Jane: When my boyfriend and I fight or at work if somebody says something. I've got problems at work currently.

Mari: As a last question, what kind of problems?

Jane: Politics and people trying to… well I got very sick in the beginning of the year with tick-bite-fever and I couldn't work because I was getting headaches and people didn't understand it and I became isolated again and they have tried to push me out and they were talking about me and yeah.

APPENDIX C: Interview with Mark

Mari: Mark, do you consider yourself as an anxious person?

Mark: Yeah, I'd say I'm fairly anxious.

Mari: How come, what makes you feel that way?

Mark: Well, I get panic attacks sometimes especially when there are a lot of people around or when I'm stressed and I'm in a hurry to do something or…, yeah.

Mari: If you say you get a panic attack, how does it feel?

Mark: It feels like everything inside me tensing up, especially around my heart. I get very short of breath and if it goes on long enough I actually lose control, like I fall down.

Mari: And does it happen that you feel that you can't breath?

Mark: The first time it actually happened was when I first went home from varsity to my parent's house. I had changed a lot and maybe I just couldn't deal with the stuff that was going down there as well as I used to. I had become a lot softer in a way, I had allowed myself to, I kind of needed to communicate with people, you know, where as at home people just yelled all the time. And then when I went back home I was having attacks like falling down, which was weird, and everybody thought I was pretending and my mom said: "Ag moenie so aansit nie," and stuff like that, until eventually I thought about what was happening to me, these things that happens to me, it never used to happen to me.

Mari: And how old were you when you went back from varsity?

Mark: I think I was nineteen.

Mari: It sounds to me like you felt very alone when you went home, where at varsity you experienced interaction and emotional connection with others?

Mark: Yeah, I think I'm…, I'm not an only child, but my sister usually avoids the situation at home by going to stay at a friends house or she's always somewhere else. So I always pretty much felt like an only child and yeah, my parents aren't really people you can talk to about anything, because they get upset about everything and take everything personally or they start telling you how bad you are and like start condemning you for whatever you are trying to discuss with them, so yeah…

Mari: Did you feel you had to be a certain way to be…?

Mark: Yeah, I used to and I never thought I was, but in retrospect yes, definitely, I think I was always pretty much trying to please everybody and because everybody thought I was so bad, I was always trying to be like really good, you know, better than everyone else. I tried to be like the nicest person and the least aggressive person, because my parents are both fairly aggressive in their own way and yeah, I mean they always have fights and that kind of thing. And I decided that the only way I was ever going to get away from them was if I started working really hard at school and I got good marks, so I could get a bursary to go to a good varsity and then maybe after that I'd like get a good job and I'd like wouldn't have to go back there all the time and need them and their money and whatever. But in a way that was still playing in the whole pattern of like being the best, you know, trying to please them at the same time and trying to make things right, because nothing could ever really be right. And I did and I was the school nerd. I walked away with like every single trophy for every single subject, I did. I got seven destinations. Like for my one subject, which was painting, I actually got a 100% for painting and it was the best anyone had ever before gotton. I couldn't get a bursary and that kind of upset me. But I didn't really need a bursary, because my parents did have money. Yeah, I always wanted to be an archaeologist actually. I've always been fascinated by secrets and ancient things and other cultures, but my parents said I had to do something practical. My mom said: "I did archaeology at college and it didn't help me anything." So I had to do something practical and since I've always wanted to tell stories as well and do something creative they send me to this career counsellor and eventually we came up with the solution that I could be a journalist and I could go into video or television and eventually work my way to film. There wasn't really any film school where you got a university degree at the time; now there are all kinds of options and all kinds of different things to do, but not when I was starting out. So I went to a university in another province and then the next big thing that happened to me was that I had decided…. I went to university pretty much thinking that I was going to carry on as I had at school, but with an unrealistic situation at school, because I mean, I must say my parents supported me in everything that I did. Like if I had to stay late after school to like finish work or whatever, then my mom would come later, she'd arrange that kind of thing. My parents were always very materially supportive of me, just emotionally I don't think they could support themselves, so they never really knew what to do with us kids.

But yeah, I thought I could carry on pretty much the way I had at varsity, so I decided I was going to major in journalism, fine art and drama at the same time. And because all of those had hectic practical components I tried and I did it for about a week and it just became physically impossible to run between all those buildings from pracs or wherever and change clothes and be at the next lecture on time, so I had to drop something and I dropped art. That was the biggest decision I have ever made, because I had just been overseas after matric, I went to visit my aunt in Germany, and I went to London with lots of places to see like art galleries and I was exposed to all this amazing contemporary art, that was happening internationally and I just thought this is what I want to do, this is where I want to be. Then I dropped art and I took sociology instead. And I'm quite glad I did, because sociology is probably one of the best credits I ever did at varsity actually, if I think about it now. Yeah, what was the next big thing that happened to me? Someone once said to me…, someone who like knew me earlier on in varsity and then saw met later on as well, said to me that I had changed and something happened to me, and that I was a nice person beforehand and that something happened to me and then like she didn't want to be friends with me anymore, because I had become all hard and like suddenly I had no time for any friends or like social activities or things like that. I think what happened to me really was that I realised in some way that I needed to be more emotionally communicative with people, but I also realised that the way that I had been living while I was at art school, in a fairly protected environment, I didn't really have a lot of friends at school, so yes, I mean I've always been alone and it's always just been me, this idea of being a single, even though I had a sister, you know I lived with my parents. But I realised that I wouldn't have been able to survive that way in the real world, that's what people were talking about when you leave varsity, you know you're like going to the real world and then things became difficult for me. You have to get a job and pay taxes and all kinds of horrible things. And I did, I got a job with a radio station, to run my own talk show, I put in a proposal and I went to talk to them and I actually made the audition and I actually got my own talk show. And that was like amazing to me and in one way I was so determined still from school, you can do this and you can do that and whatever, that I never really doubted that I could do it, but it was just a surprise to me. But then also working at the radio station, where the people were very corporate and very organised and very like you got to do this, you got to do that neh, neh, neh and were

having this meeting about this now and you know, that was totally knew to me, but to me it became the way that I needed to be. I pretty much became that and because I had always wanted to be the best at everything, I became the best at being organised and the best at being on time for everything and the best at knowing exactly what I was talking about and having all my homework done. Together with that, this idea that I was now growing up and that I was now becoming an adult and I was doing real world things; I was no longer sitting around painting. I took in the idea that I was becoming a man in some way, because at art school I had long blonde hair and I actually didn't care whether I was a boy or a girl, which didn't matter to me. I thought you know, we are in a new era now, I don't have to actually define myself in any way. And then I got out there and realised that, oh my gosh, I'm in a res. with a whole lot of jocks and they think a girl has moved in, and they literally thought a girl moved in, people used to think I was a girl. I guess cause of my voice, I'm just quite small and not like really built or anything and yeah, and then I needed to become a guy as well, it just like started being a really important thing to me. But at the same time I didn't want to be a guy like those guys, because they didn't represent anything to me that I approved of. Let's put it this way, like I would wake up at three in the morning once, when they all came back from their pubcrawl and or I don't know they must have been going, I don't know, someone was drunk and they were screaming and I just remember hearing "we're going for some p—s now" and I thought "Ye….s" you know? I mean, I've been reading all kinds of things when I was in high school and I was pretty clued up about feminine stuff, because my mom is into stuff like that and I just thought: "How backwards are these people?" We are supposed to be at varsity, what's going on here. It was pretty the weirdest experience. I kind of realised that there were people who just…, go on to become an accountant and they probably aren't going to know that much about liberal politics or about arts or anything like that, even when they turn forty of sixty and retire.

Mari: When was it that you had this experience, in which year, how old were you?

Mark: Which experience?

Mari: In the res., thinking you wanted to become a man now.

Mark: That was in my first year, this is when I just got there. My parents literally dropped me off with all my little new age things, like essentials oils that I took with me and all my organic foods and things that I like installed in this horrible res. room, which

no one could ever believe when they came into my res. room that they were in a res. room, because I like hung cloths on the wall, like tied up cloths on the walls, so I didn't have to look at the grotty walls. I rearranged the furniture in sort of a way that no one like ever imagined it was possible and yeah, I just like…, I wanted a place to live, like home, you know, like a place to come back to and that's why after first year I just couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't stay in the res. anymore. It was literally driving me absolutely nuts. I then found a room to rent and obviously I wanted to feel independent as well. The res. was really awful, my health like suffered throughout the year. Because I was working so hard with all my stuff, my varsity work and… because I thought I could do it the way I did at school, you know read everything and like remember absolutely everything you are reading and it took me a while to be able to cope with the fact that I would not know everything about the things that I just read. But you have to speed read it and skim it because it was too much stuff to know, but in the beginning it was all very confusing to me. I tried to do like everything, you know, like perfectly as well as possible and at the same time I'd like to say that I'm not a perfectionist, I'm just doing my best. That was during my first year, that experience. I guess throughout my varsity career, like the final goal was getting into fourth year, because it was really competitive, you had to write motivational letters and do internships during vacation and that kind of thing. So the goal was to get into fourth year and everyone in the class was really competitive that way and that kind of almost felt to me like, you know, I like feel like a grown man, if I could like manage to get into fourth year and then leave and get a job. I thought, you know, if I do really well here, again like I did in matric, I would be able to get a bursary and I would be able to move on to like bigger and better things. Someone will like help me out here, you know. Just you think that they will help bright young things out. Obviously they have all other kinds criteria these days. Not a white male for instance. What happens next?

Mari: You have given quite a summary of your life. I'd like to just go back more to the beginning when you were born in 1980. Where were you born?

Mark: I was born in Germany. My dad is from there and my grandmother wanted me to be born there, so I could have a German passport.

Mari: Is that his mother?

Mark: Yeah, his mother. My mother is Afrikaans and obviously she had to go along with the whole thing, cause I had to be born there. And yeah, we stayed there for 16 months after I was born and then came back here. My mom just couldn't take the coldness of the people and the weather and everything anymore. My dad came from a school here as well, having his own life, away from my grandmother who was very domineering. Then…, I don't really remember my childhood much.

Mari: Before you go on, I just want to ask: Is your sister older or younger than you?

Mark: She's younger, she's two years younger and she was born here.

Mari: And how long has your dad lived here?

Mark: My dad had been in South Africa for more than 30 odd years now. He came here sometime in the late 60's early 70's. Well he's a trained fitter and turner as such. He couldn't really go to school after the war in Germany, there weren't any opportunities. He doesn't even have a matric or anything like that. He did an apprenticeship, but he was always a very creative person and used his welding skills to make sculptures out of machine parts and things like that and then he started selling them and that is when he became a sculpture, which is what he does today. My mom was a schoolteacher in a town in the North of South Africa for a long time. She grew up in Gauteng and she became a school teacher and then eventually she moved back to Gauteng and she went to an art exhibition where she met my dad. She'd also always secretly dreamed of being an artist and I think that's how they kind of connected. In later years in group, which I was subjected to, my mom claimed that they only married because they wanted to have kids and they were at the age where they thought they weren't going to meet anyone else now and they sort of liked each other and they both wanted kids. So if I ask her now: "So why did you marry him if you fight all day long?" Then she says: "Well she thought he would be a good father for her children." So, I think she kind of considered her role in life very much, to raise good children, and that was about it. Maybe her being a schoolteacher as well. It's all about like making sure the next generation gets to be a better example of whatever it is you are suppose to be, you know what I mean. My dad's father died in the war, and he always had this dream of having like this son he was going to take fishing and he always use to tell me stories when I was a kid, like how he had this dream of like having a friend, like a best friend he would hang out with and like he thought his son would be that one day. And to me that always really bothered me, because he was

supposed to be my dad, he wasn't suppose to be my friend, but he used to act in a very immature way anyway. When I say I don't remember my childhood much, I never really felt like a child when I was a child, I was always more serious than everybody else. I remember one of the teachers at nursery school once saying that I was mature, and I knew what that word meant at that age and I quite liked that. I think I almost strove to be mature, a lot of times, I'd be more sensible than everyone else and be more responsible.

Mari: Would you say that you experienced your parents as being more childlike and you needed to be more of an adult?

Mark: Yes, I would say that, especially with my dad. I got along with my dad fairly well until about the age of 7 or 8. I used to call him the word in German, which basically means the old guy who repairs everything, cause when my tricycle broke, then my dad would repair it, and if like any of my toys broke my dad would repair it. He was always working in his workshop with his sculptures and things like that and fixing machines and stuff. When I was about 7 or 8 I put up a poster on the door to my room; I had just learned to read and write sort of, I might have been a bit older like 9 by that stage, it must have been in Grade 1. I could sort of read a bit before that. In Grade 1 I made a poster like with a drawing of my dad, like a no smoking sign thing, like a big red circle around it and a thing around it, and it said: "No parents allowed." And I put it outside my door. And I remember I got such a hiding for that poster cause my dad was so upset about the way that I drew him and he was so angry and he ripped down the poster and I wasn't allowed to stick up anything on my door and stuff like that. But I remember from that day I got really cross with him and I started reading more and more books, which was where I pretty much went for company during my childhood, mostly. I just realised that my parents weren't as bright or as wonderful as I thought they were, which is something a lot of people only realise in their teens, but I already back then. My mother was different. My parents would fight even when I was very young. My mom tells me stories about when I was three and my dad took the plate of food that she cooked and put it down on the floor and called the dog to eat it, you know stuff like that. And she said to me, that she went to a marriage counsellor when I was two years old and my sister had just been born. And the marriage counsellor said to her: "Does he ever do anything where he is not the centre of attention?" And my mom said: "No." And the marriage counsellor said to her as well: "Look you leave now or you stay, because it's not going to change" and my

mom said she decided to stay, because she needed money to raise us and she wanted us to like be bright and brilliant and she had all these dreams for us. So she stayed and we ended up being emotionally crippled in the process, but anyway. Then I went to school…

Mari: Just before you go to the school part, I just want to know if you can describe your relationship with your dad, from a young age to also primary school age, what kinds of things would you do together, if you ever did, what did you wish for in terms of your relationship with him?

Mark: I don't remember wishing for anything much. I just remember from photographs, I sort of construct what happened from photographs really, because I don't remember anything as such. I know that we used to climb trees and eat apricots and he would have funny expressions on his face and things like that.

Mari: Would he get very angry with you at times, were you ever scared of him?

Mark: I don't know. In a way, I may have made a mistake earlier on, when I was talking, I said… about my mom and the marriage counsellor and I said the woman said to me and then I corrected myself and said that the woman said to my mom. In a way I think a lot of my narrative about my father has been constructed through the stuff my mother has always said, about the way that she felt and because I've always been very protective towards my mom, it felt almost like, I don't know, maybe she even had us to protect her from my dad, I sometimes get that idea, that she needed company or something and she thought having kids was a good idea, because whenever she would be crying after they'd had a fight or something like that, I mean who else was there, there was just me. In thinking back it's quite not a fair position to place a little child in, but I always had to be there, like hug her and like have something intimate to say, about things are going to get better.

Mari: It sounds like you were her emotional support.

Mark: Yeah, pretty much and I think though that I developed an anger towards my dad at a very young age which I have only now started to really deal with, but that anger was really my mom's anger. It wasn't so much what my dad did to me himself, it was really more that I felt he was treating her like shit, cause he wanted kids, so he married her and she wanted kids so she married him, but like they kind of almost used each other in that way for the kids and they supported us materially very well as such and my dad always,

my dad did I guess what most fathers would do except I was just too serious and too interested in other things to really want to play games for that long, you know, I mean I reached a certain age where I didn't want to play games anymore and my dad still wanted to play games, because that was what he had always wanted to do when he was young and he didn't have a dad. I don't remember him yelling at me. I don't think he did actually. When I think back I know that the first few years of their marriage weren't bad for us kids, I mean it only got really bad after that, cause I think in the beginning you always think someone's going to change, you know, just give them time whatever and then sooner or later you just kind of change into that person and then the situation isn't going to change.

Mari: Who do you feel was more present, emotionally?

Mark: Oh, that whole absent father thing. I don't really know. I don't think either of them, when I think back really. Because I know I spent a lot of time with my dad in the workshop making things out of clay and like learning how the different machines and things work and you know stuff like that and I know I spent a lot of time in my mom's sewing room as well, where she would be making quilts and batiks and things like that, playing with the wind thread on, "tolletjies".

Mark: From the time that I can remember most clearly, I think that was really the time I spent mostly on my own reading or doing things in the garden, I was always digging up things in the garden and hiding things and I was also very fascinated by Egyptian hieroglyphics and things like that at a young age and secret codes, I loved secrets codes and things like that and I was always like writing stuff in secret languages and hiding it away, liked to know that no one would know what I had been writing and things like that. They didn't know what I was doing half the time and so I always kind of felt like that I was like on my own devices. You asked earlier on about what did my dad and I do together, I do know that like on an early school report it said that it would help if someone played ball with Mark sometimes. My mother brings that up sometimes, you know when she's complaining about all the stuff that he has done to her in her life basically, but he does still support her, I don't know if she kind of realises that. I guess maybe we didn't play ball, I have no idea, cause I can't remember. But anyway….yeah nursery school…

Mari: What age were you when you went to nursery school?

Mark: When I went to nursery school? I think I was about 4. I had a teacher there that my mom became very good friends with and we are still good friends with her to this day. She was very creative. She was a fashion designer and she's studying art and she used to make all these clothes for us kids to wear, weird outlandish stuff and she'd help me…, I would always like dress up in the weirdest clothing combinations, like I'd wear the pink flower hat and like the this and the that. I can't really remember what clothes they were, but I remember them being very strange but interesting clothes. Story time, I use to love story time, we would lie on the floor in the nursery and painting and things like that, pretty much being messy and putting pink and blue and things on paper, I remember that.

Mari: And the other kids, how were you with them?

Mark: What I remember, I had one friend, it was a boy. We use to play in the sandpit and dig up Christmas beetles and things like that. And there was this girl, she had this long blonde hair and I kind of had a crush on her. I quite seriously, I always use to want to hold her hand, I use to go and sit by her and be all shy and things like that. I remember that one day we found a little stapler, like those miniature staplers, in a heap of leaves in the backyard of the nursery school where we weren't meant to be playing, because we were always playing kiss and captures and things like that and like one of the teachers saw us once and made a big thing about it and I didn't know what sexual abuse was at the time, but apparently, like her husband had like sexually abused her child and maybe it was tough being…, like when you are in nursery school you understand about what's going on you know with teachers and their private lives and other teachers are "skinnering" about and thinks you don't understand. Apparently her husband like sexually abused her child or something like that, so she was like always on the look out for anyone who was sexually abusing anyone else. So when we played kiss and captures it was like definitely this big thing, but either way we found a stapler in a heap of leaves and she took it home, cause she said her dad had staples for it and I never saw the stapler again and then I stopped liking her, because she lied to me and she betrayed me about the stapler. I don't really remember much else about nursery school.

Mari: Were you in nursery school in Gauteng?

Mark: Yeah.

Mari: Is that where you grew up, when you came back from Europe?

Mark: Yes, it was just down the road from us. Yeah, we stayed in a house there until I was about 11, 12 at which stage there wasn't a room for my sister, my sister and I shared a room and we were getting older and we always use to fight anyway like mad. She then needed a room and it was too expensive to build onto the house, so we moved to a suburb, where my mother had always wanted to live anyway, because it was more 'upper-class' except our road was a division between this suburb and another suburb and it was quite like 'white trash', so that's where we use to stay in later years. But my dad 'lived' in the suburb that falls under the other area and my mother 'lived' in the one that she likes. You couldn't really get to our house anyway unless you drove through the suburb that falls under the area that my mother did not like. But my mother still to this day puts down on the letters that she writes, the suburb's name and postal code that fall under that area that she likes, even though they always get lost, because the postal delivery comes to the other suburb.

Mari: And then you went to Primary school?

Mark: Yeah.

Mari: Did you go the year you turned 7 or before that?

Mark: Uhm, I can't remember when I turned 7, if it was in Grade I or Grade 0, but I went to a Grade 0, which was like a pre-school thing. I went to the German school and they had a very specific system of education; they started very young and all kinds of things. We were multiplying by twenty by the time we like left Grade 1 you know, that kind of thing, which was a problem for me, because I always had issues with maths, I found math very complicated and I didn't really understand it. I later went to a psychologist and she said I was dyslexic with numbers, but I also used to panic in test situations. I just remember, it was the first time I remember it happening, we were writing a test and everyone had to keep quiet and I didn't understand what the hell was going on with the numbers, they were really confusing me and I remember colouring in the balloons at the bottom of the test, there was this picture of balloons and everything, and wasting my time probably and then eventually wanting to ask the teacher what was going on there, because I was always allowed to ask her before that, and she got very angry and she yelled at me, because I guess I kept on asking, maybe I didn't understand what she explained and then she sent me out of the class and it was the first time I'd ever like been sent out of class you know, even in nursery school you didn't have to stand in the corner

or stuff like that. And I remember wondering around the whole school, it was a huge school, because it goes up to matric even post matric actually, and I was wondering around the whole school and crying and like getting totally lost and thinking like yeah, just now she's going to come and look for me at the classroom and realise that I'm not there and then she will be in big trouble, but that didn't really happen. Eventually I went back to the classroom and she let me back in again.

Mari: How old were you?

Mark: I think I was 7, I think I went to pre-school when I was 6.

Mari: And did you ever tell anybody about that, what happened?

Mark: I think I must have mentioned it to my parents or she must have mentioned it to my parents, I do think they knew about it… Yes I definitely told my mom about that like there was a problem with the test and I didn't know what was going on and I didn't understand the numbers and so on, cause I remember my mom always use to ask when we got home, like: "Wat het julle vandag gedoen?" And then you had to tell her exactly what you did the whole day and most of the days I did bloody well nothing so it was always a very irritating question to answer, but my mom always wanted to know everything that you had done.

Mari: Did you find your mom was quite intrusive in your life?

Mark: Oh yeah, she's incredibly over protective of me and she wanted to know like absolutely everything. When I got older my dad was even more so, he started going through my mail, listening in on the phone, he would like follow me around in the car, things like that. I actually got quite scared of him, but that was later on when I became a teenager and that's when big doubts about my sexuality started appearing and of course then that didn't fit into my dad's little plan anymore.

Mari: Tell met a bit about your friends, sport or other activities.

Mark: I hated sport. Maybe not to start off with, but I never really understood the idea of someone telling you to like do something which doesn't really have a purpose I could discern and when someone said: "Run after the ball and kick it", I was like "why, but there wasn't a reason," it was just like run after the ball and kick it. And everyone else seemed to be doing it, but I still didn't understand why we were running after the ball and kicking it, and besides you got all hot and tired and you felt so funny afterwards and got dizzy and it just didn't make any sense. And I pretty much to this day do not really… I

understand the value of exercise, which I didn't when I was a kid, but even then, it's the same thing as going to the gym. When I go to the gym I feel like one of those hamsters on a wheel, just running in one place and like getting nowhere and doing absolutely nothing, all pointless. So sport was not a good idea. The sport teacher didn't like me. He was this Hungarian guy who apparently was like quite a stud when he was younger, but by the time we had him he had white hair and like red skin from too much time standing by the pool doing swimming galas and he had this whistle, he always used to blow, like one of those little prrrrrrrrrr whistle and he loved using that whistle. Run here prrrrrrrrrr, run back prrrrrrrrrrr, that kind of thing and when you have to do stuff like run to this wall, run back to the other wall, touch that wall and I did resent the poor man quite a lot and probably wasn't very nice to him. Apparently I was always very sort of important, my aunt says that one of the things about me as a child which wasn't really something like a lot of other children at that time. But increasingly children that are born now, quite very often, they are like these complete little people that come out, with this complete personality and my aunt says it seems to her that I had an opinion about everything and I was consistently, almost like a consistent entity, a person who would do things in the same way. I just think that I went to school I must have been quite independent and mature which I guess are two words that were very important to me from a very young age, being independent and all grown up and sensible, and responsible for myself. Friends, yes you asked about friends at school. I had one friend who was basically also my best friend, Oscar. His mother was a schoolteacher. She is an absolute bitch. Everyone was always scared of her. She was also like a very performative person. The first time I saw her was up on the stage during carnival, the German school has this carnival celebration, and she was the clown, but she was like the clown in every act and she came back in a different costume every time, then she had fruit on her head and then she was wearing a purple catsuit, and then she was wearing this and that and she basically like organised most of those celebrations and my mom saw her too when she came to fetch me and she was like very impressed, thinking like whose this woman, she's like all artistic and unique. Then she met her at a parent's meeting of my class and that's when I met Oscar. His family was really creative as well, his mom being an art teacher and his father had a Ph.D. in computers, which at that stage was quite a rare thing to have. He was a programmer and had his own company, but he was also a jazz pianist and

saxophonist. He used to play the sax. So Oscar kind of I guess understood how wild my family was at times and like you know, this whole creative thing, that daddy stayed at home and did something else, he didn't go out with a briefcase and a tie to do some job, that was kind of different.

Mari: Did you spend time with him and his family?

Mark: Yeah, I used to go over very often and sleep over, things like that. I used to like going there. We used to play cannon and stuff like that, we didn't have computer games, we didn't have a computer even. We only got a television when I was four. My parents have always been like weary of technology and things like that.

Mari: How did you experience his parents?

Mark: His mother was quite strict, but she was always very nice to me. I think it was only when I got older and I saw how she was treating him and I saw that it was becoming a big problem that I sort of took a dislike to her, but I always liked her when I was younger. She was quite strict, but she was submissive in some ways and his dad also. His dad was always very jovial and he would like always help us with anything. He was a big man, and he would like drinking glasses of wine, not getting drunk or anything like that, but like being…, you know he appreciated the good things in life and he was always joking and laughing and that kind of thing. He would always help you with anything. I remember once we wrote a song, we did odd things, when we wrote a song about all the animals in Oscar's house, about the dog and the cat and then there was this other cat and then there was this cat that ate vegetables and stuff like that. His dad helped us write down the music, because I had this tune in my head and I just sang it for him and then his dad would help us write it down and we would learn how to play it on the piano. So yeah, I did stuff like that at Oscar's house.

Mari: How would you describe the atmosphere in Oscar's house as opposed to the atmosphere in your house?

Mark: You know, I never realised that there was something wrong at home. It just seemed normal because that's what I knew. Let me just think about Oscar's house. No I didn't experience the atmosphere potentially different than at home, because his parents also had a lot of problems, they never fought in front of me. I very often didn't invite people home on purpose, because my parents would fight and that was embarrassing. They would like kind of keep it down, or they would do it in another room or whatever,

but you would hear them, so what the hell. And my mom never invited anyone to dinner or anything like that. Throughout my childhood, we very, very rarely had anyone come to visit us at home, because my mom would not invite anybody and if my dad invited someone my mom would make sure that she wasn't there, because my dad would always like put her down in company and sort of play himself up and if she told a story he would say: "That is not exactly true" and make her out to be a liar and told the story exactly the same way basically, except that she wasn't privileged to tell it, stuff like that, which my dad has always done with me as well. You know anything you say or do, like he can do better. He would improve on and tell you what you are doing wrong with this and that. He thinks he's just trying to help, he is never going to realise that he is actually upsetting people by contradicting their basic experience of reality. I think the first time I realised that something was really wrong at home was only later, I think I was about 14 or15 and I went away for a week with a friend and his parents to another friend's beach house. I spent time with them and really experienced how it was like to know another family, where people kind of discussed things. They also had arguments and things like that, but they would discuss it and if there were an argument they would kind of like resolve it. My parents tried, bless them, they tried. They went to parent's effectiveness training and all kinds of stuff at our school. We tried having these family meetings like after dinner or whatever and it didn't really work out, because there were these rules, but the people who couldn't keep to the rules were my parents really, if you ask me; there were these rules like you are not allowed to interrupt anybody and you are not allowed to shout and you are not allowed to do this and you are not allowed to do that. Yeah, of course sometimes I broke the rules, but most of the time the meetings were useless, because first of all you discussed stuff that nothing would ever change and also the people even within the meeting would be like really disrespectful and not stick to the rules. So it was like saying OK Mark, today you can chair the meeting, but then they wouldn't respect my authority within that situation at all.

Mari: And how would your parents be with each other in a meeting like that?

Mark: I think my dad never like really liked fighting with my mom or anything like that. It's not something they tried to hide from us. My mom would like say: "Yes, but you did this and this and this to my dad." And then he would say: "No, no I didn't" and "ah, that's

not true" and "actually this is the way it happened" and then I don't know, they'd get into arguments like that.

Mari: Would your mother go for him or would she submit?

Mark: No, I think my mom was naturally…, I think, I don't know, I would say was naturally a very quiet person, she strikes me as very quiet. She's also a very small person, but I think she had to defend herself against my dad sooner or later, and she's really…, yeah, she does go for him, but they go for each other, pretty much. I always felt that it's not…, uhm… I don't know, my dad would always tell us these stories about, yeah, your mom never used to be like that, and she had become all hard and aggressive like later on. My dad actually said that my mom was ill, because in later years, I think she…, I always felt that she went completely mad, like she couldn't take it anymore. Like sometimes you would like look at her and you would think her head was like…., you could say she snapped and you'd realise that somewhere along the line some of those thoughts got lost and what she was saying was not quite making sense anymore and she was talking too fast. What really upsets me is the fact that my mom always shouts at you, she can't actually like talk normally with you. You might start off having a normal conversation and by the second sentence she is screaming at you. And you'd say that: "You're screaming at me, I don't like you screaming at me." And she'd say: "I'm not screaming at you." She literally can't tell the difference anymore. She like can't hear. That really upsets me, cause I feel she should at least realise that she is doing this.

Mari: It was only later that she started screaming like that?

Mark: Yeah, it wasn't like that when I was younger, but I guess it got worse and worse and she got more neurotic as well, the longer it went on.

Mari: Do you remember your mom ever being depressed or sleeping a lot during the day?

Mark: I don't know if she slept a lot during the day really, but eventually she got herself a job. I remember the day she got the job. She was very happy with herself and she kind of said you know this is like something she really needs. I remember when I was younger, I specifically remember this incident because it always made me very uncomfortable in a way, like when she came to my room, and she sort of started talking to me and whatever and then eventually she said: "Ag mamma is net so honger vir 'n bietjie liefde." I gave her a hug and whatever and you know she gave me a hug. You

know as a child it didn't really upset me that much, but when I think back about it now, it's like a really bad thing to say to a child and it's not a nice position to be put in.

Mari: How old were you then?

Mark: I don't know, I must have been about 6 or 7. I think my parent's relationship is functional actually in the way that they are both so used to the kind of aggression they cultivate in each other that they use it to fuel what they do in their careers and in their every day lives and that they need each other in that way almost.

Mari: What does your mom do now?

Mark: She lectures at a university.

Mari: Education?

Mark: No, she worked in adult education for a long time. She teaches like arts and crafts and things like that. She also organises courses, she worked at the art school organising all the courses and then she'd teach as well. Like those recreation centres you know. Then when she did her degree, her art degree, and then when she got her honours they sort of asked her to come in and she is still working at the art school.

Mari: Was your dad okay with her working? Was he ever very jealous of her?

Mark: He used to complain about it sometimes, you know that kind of thing, but it wasn't something I was very conscious of, really, I think he accepted it. My dad is not like your typical aggressive traditional male, you know what I mean, my dad, if I think about it, I'd call my dad a macho hippie, kind of like those hippies with the motorbikes. He always wanted a motorbike, he never got one, but he always wanted a motorbike and he always wanted to play the guitar, two things he never did, but like it kind of defined sort of where I think he would have placed himself within his age group or within the culture at the time when he was growing up. And my mom, my mom's very Calvinistic, in many ways she doesn't realise, but she almost expresses her Calvinism through the idea of feminism. Her art is very about her situation as a mother and whatever. I remember reading some of the stuff that she'd written while she was at University and sometimes I even typed a lot of the stuff up for her, not the more personal stuff, because she never used to give that to me. I remember her writing in one of her artist journals that she was going to raise …, she expected that motherhood was going to be this amazing like wonderful thing, that like a woman's problems are all solved as soon as you become a mother and like you have this natural love supposedly towards these children that you are

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going to take care off, that she really felt betrayed by that whole system and that whole institution that made her think that marriage is going to be the answer to all her problems?

Mari: And how do you feel being the child, her child during this stage?

Mark: Like I said, I wasn't very friendly towards my dad, until very recently. I was always angry with my dad for the way that he spoke to me, the way that he acted, being a jerk all the time, for always doing stuff and then claiming that he had done something completely different. That was stuff that he never claimed responsibility for, and for acting in ways which he could then no longer remember, you know what I mean, 'oh, I can't remember that' or you would always wonder that maybe you were making it all up, maybe you really were the crazy one, you know what I mean, and to an extent I think, cause my mom was always going on about what a jerk he was and you know, they were always fighting. I'd kind of think, yeah, okay he is a jerk, and then he did something that made you even more suspicious of him, you know, just because he does it on purpose. Where as I now know that he doesn't really realise very often what he is doing, he can't help himself, but there is a subconscious part of him which does always come and try to like push all your buttons and find your weak spot and like hit it and then like start telling me how crap you are and this and that, but in normal conversation, without it like being openly aggressive about it, it's always in this passive kind of way putting me down, "ag do you really think you could do that?"

Mari: Do you feel exposed when you are with him, in a group of people?

Mark: Yeah, I feel shone up by him in a way, I remember I don't know if you read "Great Expectations" where the main character goes off and he studies and he becomes quite arrogant and full of himself and when he sees Joe, his stepfather again, who is just this blacksmith, he is really embarrassed by him. But either way I kind of read that at school. When we read that at school I identified with that character and felt really guilty cause I realised I was always embarrassed about my dad and I felt bad about being embarrassed. The German school I went to was very academic and very strict and it had very high standards and everyone there was an achiever. When I finally went to art school in Std 8, I finally got to go after years of crying and nagging and the fact that I didn't have any friends at school cause I felt everyone was being so snotty and I was three years ahead of everybody else. The stuff they were doing in maths, I had already done.

By the time they went to matric, I'd done that stuff, you know what I mean. So yeah, in that way my dad, who's German was like this Bavarian dialect and he'd never really been to a proper school, he had been to like this little village school and had forgotten a lot of the German from being in South Africa for too long and speaking English, he was even an embarrassment within his own community to me and because I was reading stuff all the time and I was learning stuff, you know my level of education advanced quite rapidly to the stage where I would get so embarrassed about my dad that I would start correcting his accent and say: "No you have to say the word like this and you have to do it like that." And especially during my early teens I actually, I discovered I had some kind of power over him in that sense and that he was insecure about that and I would start to deliberately like ripping him off and started turning the tables on him and like making kind of like, just speak in like this really heavy German accent, which he doesn't even have, but like making all kinds of grammatical mistakes and things and like kind of like showing him up almost in a way, and it deeply upset him, because I use to do it in company, I wouldn't care. Yeah, I'd kind of think: well I'm not going to lie about this anyway.

Mari: Tell me, when they would fight, what would you do, would you get involved, would you go away?

Mark: When I was very young, I think I didn't even know what they were doing. I would go away, if it got too loud, sometimes I'd cry then they would tell me to go away. Yeah, I would lock myself in my room sometimes cause I was scared, that kind of thing. My sister would start crying sometimes and I would have to pick her up until she stopped crying. Sometimes she would cry and her face would be all red and I would think, oh come on, please take this thing away, I don't know what to do with it. Just to listen to my mom screaming and the whole crying thing, what do I do with this now. Later on, we would be get in between the fight and I would try to make them realise how childish they were being and almost like play referee. My mother was expecting me to play referee afterwards when she went through the whole argument with me in monologue, like she'd say: "Well, he says this and this is not true and he said that and that is not true and he did that."

Mari: Did you feel torn between them?

Mark: Oh totally, totally.   I remember like one of the things they used to like say in arguments was: "Your child is this and this and this" and then like "your child, no it's your child actually."   "Like your child is this and this and this" and I'd feel why are they fighting about me, what have I done.   Eventually I got to a stage where I remember, this was when I reached about 9 or 10, I remember my parents sort of started to accuse me of deliberately causing their fights and apparently I think I did do that.   I sort of remember like having this sly kind of feeling about it.   I was very clever.   I would go to the one and say like the one had said this and then go to the other one and sort of say no, the other had sort of said this or whatever and then…, but something about me, you know, like a reason why I'd be late from school or whatever and then almost like deliberately causing them fight in a way.   I think I almost found this fun, which is quite disturbing.   At least they accused me of starting their fights where as I remember when I was younger, I always tried to come between them and then later and in my teens as well, just like feeling very responsible in a way for them fighting.   Maybe it was because they were married and fighting and I was opposed to the marriage. It wasn't easy being a teenager and having opinions about things and feeling not heard and also generally like starting to discover this power you had with words and how you could put people down so suddenly and you weren't just a child anymore and you actually had some insight into how their minds ticked.   When they tried to push your buttons you like made sure you were like one foot ahead, you know that kind of thing.

Mari: Did you feel quite out of control when you were younger?

Mark: Then I learned to survive in a way, which I suppose of I was not very proud of later when I realised what I had been doing.

Mari: Lets just go back to the primary school bit again.   When you were in primary school, did your mom work full day?

Mark: No, she only started working when I went to high school.   Cause I remember once in a fight saying to her: "Ag, yeah you were never there and whatever and what do you know about my childhood anyway" and she got so upset.   She said no, she waited for us to be like old enough before she went to work, she wasn't going to be one of those working mothers who's never there for her kids and whatever.

Mari: When you did homework at home, who helped you with it, your mom or dad or did you do it alone?

Mark: Myself mostly, no one really knew anything. Basically I think with the methods they were using at the German school. Like I would show my mom the way I was doing it, you know, I would show her the equation or whatever and she would say no, that's not how we did it in school. Even the signs were different. Like the Germans for some reason use a dot for multiplication signs. In higher mathematics that is what you use. At school you make "sommer" a cross, you know. They were doing stuff like that, so my mom would just get confused with the stuff. She would like try to explain and try to help or she would say go and ask your father. He really considered it his duty to like help me beat this mathematics thing, you know what I mean. My father always said to us the only thing you ever have to be afraid of is a fear. That is a very interesting thing to me later on because I realised he was actually terrified his whole life, he was afraid of being afraid and that's why he could never let himself feel anything or admit to what he was thinking. Yeah, he was saying: "You must not be afraid of maths" and he was going to help me, but he didn't know what he was doing either. He'd like work stuff out wrong and then I'd think no, this and this and on the odd occasion I would get it right. The school had very strange ideas. I remember my mother once saying to me, no, I'm sure your teacher is wrong, when the teacher said: "Bring back the book and colour in all the letters." And my mother would be saying: "No, no this is nonsense I'm sure, why would you have to colour in the letters? You can finish now, go watch T.V." or something. And I would get into trouble the next day with the teacher who said: "Why didn't you colour in the letters?" You know that kind of thing? And I said: "My mom said", and I think the teacher didn't believe me what my mom said, she thought I had just made it up as well, so I think I learned very early on that my parents weren't going to be helpful with my schoolwork, even though they tried and they sent me to extra lessons later on for maths and that kind of thing, because I struggled with mathematics, which went on while I was still in std 6 even then I was going for extra lessons. I tried master maths, I tried the psychologist, I tried the extra maths teacher and it would get better sometimes but then I stopped going to the teacher cause it was expensive and then I like I'd deteriorate again.   When I eventually got to Std 8. I just didn't care anymore, I don't think I ever passed maths, not once. I do remember once getting 100% for a geometry test and then the next test which was algebra and I got like 0% for that and that was like kind of my high and my low of maths in school. It was not something that I could ever master.

Mari: What was your best subject?

Mark: I don't know, you know I never thought…. When I was a kid at school I never thought like I was good at anything. I got teased a lot.

Mari: By who?

Mark: By the other kids and they didn't like me because I was a nerd obviously, but I didn't know I was a nerd and I didn't know like the marks I was getting were higher than other people's marks. They would look through my test and then they would all like run and say like: "Ooh, Mark got an 'A' again." It was only later, a lot later, when a bully on the bus specifically came to show me his German essay that he got 70% for and I didn't understand why the hell he was showing me this essay and then I realised that to people at school I was actually like someway important and people were jealous of me and thought it was quite a thing when they beat me in some way. I just thought I was kind of dumb and small and I was just trying to be the best and make up for everything I thought I lacked. I think my best subject was German, cause I read a lot and I remember my gran sending the Pippy Long Stocking books from Europe, she sent one, it was 300 pages I remember and I literally read it in one afternoon. Even in Grade 1 when we had to go to the library, I would go to the library, I'd get a book, then we would go back to the classroom and sit and then I would pick up the book and read it and then I just finished the book there and "klaar". The teacher would say well don't you want to go back to the library and get another book then and I would be too embarrassed to go back to the library because I didn't really want to, but it was that kind of thing. I just loved reading; I always, always had my nose in a book. My mother's got this nickname for me; she calls me "ouboet," like "oupa kraai," stuff like that. I never felt like a child when I was a child. It was only when I got older that I realised that I missed out somehow on a whole part of my life and I realised I had to reclaim it in order to like be a functioning adult in someway. I never knew how to have fun, because the stuff I did was fun to me, like teasing teachers at school and reading books and finding out stuff in the library was not something really that a lot of other people were interested in doing. You know they actually liked playing football. So I was a bit removed from the world, pretty much.

Mari: Did you feel you were on the outside from a young age?

Mark: Yeah, I think I always felt a bit out. When I look at the school photographs of me it's like sometimes I'm not even looking at the photographer, I look like a Down's child or

a stick child or something, like I'm just not quite there, or I'm looking down or I'm looking somewhere else, just doing something else, like I didn't care about this photograph thing. As I said, when you asked me about my friends, I could only come up with one friend that I had. I did have others, if I think about it now. People always thought of me a bit odd I think, because when people played games, I remember them playing police, police in pre-school and I wanted to be the black woman who answered the phone. Everyone else wanted to be like the cops and the robbers. I almost feel like panicking now, when I think about it, because it's weird; I just wanted to be the black woman who answered the phone and there was this thing with tyres and I got into the thing with the little tyre and I had my phone and I was like organising the whole office. And I was kind of like…, I guess maybe I got it from the maid, cause the maid answered the phone at home, I think that's probably where I got the idea, or maybe I had seen it on T.V. or something like that. But that's the position I wanted to be in, like never mind the cops and the robbers and everyone was running around and shooting each other and falling all over the place and stuff. I was just like going to organise this...

Mari: And how did the kids respond to you?

Mark: They thought I was odd, you know. Like "gee, you're a boy, why do you want to be like this black woman who wants to answer the phone" and at the time there was still apartheid and I wanted to be the black woman, she had to be black, you know, maybe because she was a servant who somehow like did stuff for other people, I don't know. Many people used to make racist jokes at school and stuff like that. I remember doing stuff as well. Like once I drew this…, I made this puppet, like I used to watch Wielie Wielie Walie, and I always wanted to know how they made those pictures move when they were telling the stories, and then I saw in a book, that you could cut like a little slit in the lip, like cut out the face and cut out a little slit and make it bend with the flow, move the top of it. I always loved watching TV4, which was like a black channel, cause they had like cool stuff, from over seas, you know, that didn't show here, I don't know why, but they had all kinds of interesting programs for some reason. So I made this doll and promptly like ran off to show the maid and the guy who worked in my dad's workshop and everyone this doll whom I called Cafarina, she was like presenting this television program called Kaffer talk. And I was…, yeah I mean, if I think about it now it's funny, but they were very, I think Thabo, Thabo was the guy who worked in the

workshop, was very upset and I didn't understand why. I really, really didn't know why they were getting upset.

Mari: I just want to ask you another question. It's more about medical, physical symptoms. When you were a child did you ever have anything like asthma, enuresis which is bedwetting …?

Mark: Yeah, I did wet my bed constantly.

Mari: Until what age?

Mark: I don't know, quite late, maybe 10. I think the last time it happened I remember deciding that it was never going to happen again. I thought I had control over this, why was this happening, I can't let this happen, I'm older now, it was in Std 1. I still remember where the classroom was, they had like these grey safari pants, and I peed in my pants.

Mari: At school?

Mark: At school.

Mari: And did this happen often?

Mark: Well, it happened I think maybe about four times of all the time at school. But it was embarrassing because I had to go to the lost and found place myself, you know the teacher would say go to the lost and found place and get a pair of pants, and I'd have to explain 'well, I peed in my pants' and they would put your underwear in a packet, you know.

Mari: And then you decided one day that it was never going to happen again.

Mark: Well, I just remember that day I was in Std 1 and I thought like peeing in your pants in Std 1 is really like…, I don't know, I think it may also have been a teacher who reacted.

Mari: Always when it happened, or just that one time?

Mark: No, just that one time. I'd think I was probably suppose to be like a certain age now and responsible now and have control over my bladder.

Mari: How did your mom deal with it?

Mark: I don't remember.

Mari: Did she know about it?

Mark: I think so. I would tell my mom everything.

Mari: So when you wet your bed at home, how would she react?

Mark: I didn't get hit or anything. I actually thought it was gross cause it stained the mattress, you know stuff like that, but my mom would just change the sheets.

Mari: Did you ever sleepwalk or have nightmares?

Mark: I don't know if I ever sleepwalked at home, but I remember sleepwalking at Oscar once, it was weird actually. I went to sleep…, he had a bunk bed, and I slept at the bottom, and I went to sleep and when I woke up I was in his parent's bed and my nose was bleeding, I was full of blood. They said that I had come into their room in the middle of the night, around 2 o'clock in the morning, and I got into the bed and my nose was bleeding and I wanted to like cuddle up and stuff like that. They said they just left me there. I wasn't that young then at that stage.

Mari: How old were you?

Mark: I think I was about 10 or 11 or 12.

Mari: Did you wake up then in their bed?

Mark: I woke up in their bed and I was like very confused.

Mari: Were they with you?

Mark: No, no they had gotten up already, or maybe never slept in their room, I have no idea what they did. They basically said to me, look this is what happened and I couldn't believe it.

Mari: Did you sometimes sleep in your mom and dad's bed, or fall asleep there and they would carry you to your bed?

Mark: I think when I was very small, not later. Sometimes in the mornings we'd like crawl in under the blankets and whatever until I was about 8 or 9 but after that not really, cause my parents slept in separate bedrooms after that. My mom stayed in the main bedroom and my dad moved out.

Mari: Since what age did they sleep in separate beds?

Mark: I don't know. I know that the last time my parents slept together was like 12 years ago. My mom sort of, she found out that my dad was having an affair and when she found out she said: "Well, you will never sleep in my bed again."

Mari: Any other illnesses?

Mark: We had scarlet fever, baby jaundice. No, I wasn't a sickly child in that way. My sister was always quite robust and she ended up being a gymnast later on.

Mari: Was there ever alcohol abuse in your house?

Mark: No, not really. As I said my dad always happened every day situation so that when you tried to talk about it, it was almost like you feel like maybe you are making it up. You can't quite put your finger on what is happening but it makes you feel very awful. No, there wasn't. My dad just in terms of acting irresponsibly sometimes would like go and get drunk at a Beer-fest. There was this beer-fest once a year and he would like see all his friends and stuff. Maybe it reminded him of when he was young and didn't have a family or whatever. He would disappear and we would have to go and look for him at one, two in the morning. My mom would say like: "I haven't found him, like you go here, you go there, go where ever." And then he wouldn't want to come home, he would like be sitting with his friends and telling jokes, you know that kind of thing. But no, there was no alcohol abuse in the house. My dad has the occasional drink, but my mom doesn't really drink. I certainly never really wanted to, even when they like said: "taste the wine or taste the champagne." Maybe because I used to work at the beer festival once a year and I had to empty ashtrays and I saw people thrashing each other's faces with bear mugs. I just never thought alcohol was a very positive thing until later on.

Mari: So now, you have told me about primary school up until then. Tell me a bit about the high school you were in. When you started high school and how that was.

Mark: For me there wasn't really the transition between primary school and high school as there is for most people who grow up in South Africa, because the school I went to was the German school and they had an integrated education system throughout. I mean they even had teachers coming from Germany for some of the subjects, that kind of thing. So I just went straight on to Std 6 and it was like the next class after Std 5. Some of the subjects changed like we started doing physics and chemistry which we hadn't done before and things like that. What it was like for me personally I think it was…, it was a time of increasingly greater isolation. What they started doing with us from about Std 2 onwards, is they put us in an A-stream and a B-stream, where the clever kids, supposedly clever kids, would be in the A-stream and the others would be in the B-stream. I had since spoken to a lot of people who got put in the B-stream and deeply resents the fact, today, that all their lives pretty much they thought they were stupid because they got put in the B-stream and I mean a lot of them are very intelligent interesting capable people today. They were expected to be slackers, they were expected to be like the drop-outs

and the bad kids and they pretty much most of them went and lived up to that kind of standard. Where as we were considered the nerds and we were considered the sort of, the brighter kids, the responsible, the good ones, who can get everything like this and have to do extra work as well of course. Of course the kids in the B-stream very much resented us for it as well. My friend Oscar got into the A-stream I think for half the year, cause his mother was a teacher, and after that they decided he just wasn't cutting it with the marks and it would be better for him if he went to the B-stream. I mean after he left, that was pretty much it, I had to find other friends, because even during break you'd hang out with different people. If you were in the A-stream, you wouldn't hang out with people in the B-stream, probably because they didn't like you and they thought that you thought you were something better. I guess in a sense we did, in some way, cause that's the way we were encouraged to think. Even the teachers would speak about it in that way, not openly, but it would be encouraged all the time.

Mari: Did you manage to make any other friends?

Mark: I did make friends. There was a new boy from Germany at the time, John. His dad was the head of Lufthansa in South Africa. He was quite bright and he had all kinds of new ideas from Germany, from his school. He was quite outspoken about a lot of things that no one else then knew about and I just found that interesting. He also sort of started to like me, but I think almost one of the main reasons we got along was because we saw that a lot of the patterns were the same, because both our families were severely dysfunctional at the end of the day. I used to visit him a lot and sleep over. I mentioned earlier on, I went with them for 2 weeks to the sea at someone's house. In some ways it was good for me, seeing his relationship with his parents and his parent's relationship to his other brother, which was in many many ways healthier than what I was used to at home. His father was a very calm, sort of sensible bussiness like man. He was always very nice. He was very well spoken. I wasn't used to that kind of thing. His mother as well, she was kind of like this society wife, who would bake and cook and like having friends come around to the house.

Mari: Did they fight?

Mark: Yeah, they did fight an awful amount as well, but they didn't really do it in the open, you would sort of just realise or I would hear about it when I came around, I would see that they were kind of holding the peace now because there was someone else there.

But my friendship with John was a strange one, because he had these bouts of being incredibly nasty, it was almost like he was a different person sometimes for a while and would just be like really, really horrible and like ignore me and say horrible things to me and start pushing me around and stuff like that. And other times he would be really, really nice. And he did the same thing to his little brother as well. I don't know really, to this day, I think there was something quite wrong with him, but I never really understood until later that the reason I put up with this shit was because that's the kind of thing that my dad would do to my mom, you know, Mr. Jeckell and Mr. Hyde and you'd never really know…., well you kind of always hope that the nice one is going to come out sooner or later and then everything would be fine again. Because you care about this person and you have some kind of dependency on them, it becomes almost part of the friendship, that that kind of thing is going to happen, you know, they'll go on for as long as they think that they almost got you in tears and then it's fine, and then they know they kind of have power over you and they will be nice again.

Mari: Would he be sort of abusive and make comments and break you down and minimise you?

Mark: Yeah, he did say like really, really nasty, almost stupid things, like make jokes all the time. I can't really describe it in a way. It was a long time ago. I remember visiting him in Germany as well a long time after… Oh and the big thing is that it was just like with my dad, it would always only happen when you were alone with the person. He would never do it in front of anyone else. I remember, that's the holiday by the sea, they were going to leave and they were going to move back to Germany after that, and this was like saying goodbye kind of thing. I remember we just had a fight and John was being this absolute asshole to me all the time, being like really nasty. I wasn't speaking to him and his dad said: "Well, okay, fine, you know, you have like two hours to speak to each other and then you might never see each other again, so decide know." But then I went to visit him in Germany a few years later, and it was fine. I stayed with him as well. Everything was fine for like the first week and then after that again it just all got like really nasty and I would think sometimes that he was jealous in some ways, I don't know why, but I do know that his mother always went on about what beautiful German I spoke, cause the German I spoke would come from the German school where they taught pure German like no one in Germany actually speaks it. Yeah, things like that. Yeah, I had

various other friends. All my friends were always loners. My friend Claus, whom I've also known since Grade 1 about, it was a strange friendship, because we never really had that much to talk about; computer games I guess. Then the next big important thing, I think was James. I don't even know how we first became friends, I'm not sure, actually yeah, I think we had a crush on the same girl and I just noticed that he was paying her like a lot of attention and I was more her friend anyway, you know. Anja, she had also recently arrived from Germany. She was the first girl we had ever met who refused to shave her legs or refused to shave under her arms. She had like this long red dyed hair, as in like bright red, punk red and she was very pretty too. I kind of said: "Well I'll chat to her you know and I'll see and I'll find out what's going on." So, yeah, she definitely wasn't interested in anyone our age or even like at our school. She was like dating punk rockers and things like outside of school.

Mari: How old were you then?

Mark: I think I was about 15 or so.

Mari: So that was in Std 7?

Mark: Yeah, Std 7. I think by that time I was also starting to realise that I was definitely probably more interested in boys than in girls really. That's what the whole thing with James ended up being. I think I pretty much fell head over heals in love with this dude, and James, he was pretty much everything that I wasn't. He was like really tall. I think he was the first guy I had ever seen with like a perfect body and it wasn't from the gym or anything. He just like obsessively did karate I think from the age of 7 or something like that. But I only noticed that it was important to me like later on.

Mari: But you said that first both of you had a crush on the same girl.

Mark: Yeah, we had kind of had a crush on the same girl. Or maybe I only noticed that he was paying her a lot of attention, cause she was my friend, I'm not quite sure. I just remember thinking she was really pretty and like, you know she was really cool, or whatever.

Mari: Did you have more of an experience of being in love with him?

Mark: I think later on the more I sort of became his friend and the better I got to know him, I sort of…, I realised like wait a minute, like it probably wasn't about Anja at all, that it was probably more about him. But it was such an unconscious thing really. I think, you know, any relationship sort of develops into something romantic and it usually

starts with friendship or some kind of affection. You don't really know it. And also his dad played in the same band as my dad did. So like I'd see him at band practices and things like that. We would like run off and like do stuff together cause the adults were practising their trumpets and half of them couldn't play anyway and it was just a lot of noise. And his mother was this obsessive like neurotic, controlling freak of a woman who like basically probably only lived to give birth to him and like raise him. Like she was seriously, seriously obsessed with him, to the point actually where she almost seemed jealous of his friends. To the point that I suspected that like there was something very weird actually going on between the two of them. Yeah, I don't think they were having a sexual relationship, but it could have come that close, you know what I mean, that's how obsessed she was with him. And I don't know, I sort of eventually started making passes at him in a way until like, yeah, until eventually I made it pretty clear that like I wanted his body. He didn't really seem to mind, but nothing ever happened.

Mari: But was he interested in you that way or was he interested in girls.

Mark: I don't know, he never really seemed that interested in woman and I don't know what would have happened. You see I went to another school and he ended up having a big fight with his mother and shooting himself in the head. And uhm, well that's the last I saw of him.

Mari: When did that happen. When did you go to the other school?

Mark: Well, Std 7. I went to the other school in Std 8 and I tried to stay in touch with him. I would phone him every once in a while, but you know how school is. You've got schoolwork, you've got other friends. He ended up getting into this weird crowd which I didn't like and I didn't know and they were quite into drugs, and that sort of thing. It was very weird for me, because he'd never really been into stuff like that. You know he was into computer games and war games and stuff like that, but not… I didn't really know how to deal with the whole thing, plus I was trying to adjust to being in this new school and like having all these new people around me and whatever. Yeah, he always wanted to see me whenever I phoned, but somehow it just never worked out. I think I was quite scared of his mother cause I knew by that stage pretty much, you know, like where I wanted things to go and I knew that if she found out, like anything else that would be the death of both of us.

Mari: Did anything ever happen between the two of you?

Mark: Nothing physical happened. We just like spent a lot of time together.

Mari: Did he ever tell you about his feelings or was it always from your side?

Mark: No, he never really ever said anything like that. No, I don't know. There were like moments when we would like sit outside and like stare at the stars and stuff like that and not say anything, you know, and there would be this feeling about it, but it was not something that I think either of us, especially at that age, would have had the courage to be that open about it. Until later on I'd try to be open about it , cause I realised what was going on and yeah…

Mari: Would you think you were a happy person in Std 6 and 7 before you went to the other school?

Mark: No, no, I was definitely not very happy. I wanted to desperately go to another school.

Mar: What was it about the school that you didn't like.

Mark: I didn't have any friends. I didn't have any friends whatsoever. Or at least I felt like I didn't. I had like these loner friends, like one here and one there who kind of were part of the main group of friends anyway, but then when they were with me they would be different people and that would be fine, you know, we'd get along on that level. And I used to get teased a lot. I had a friend, Steve, we went back quite along time, cause in Grade 0, which was pre-school, I took one of my father's lighters, a bright pink lighter that didn't work anymore and it made little sparks and I thought these little sparks were very cool, so I took it to school and we were playing with it and I had never met Steve before, I don't think I had ever really seen him, but I was playing with my friend Annelie and then Steve comes and like showed him the lighter and whatever and then he…, I don't know, he like almost pretended he had been burnt or something and then he ran and called the teacher who was on duty during break and then the teacher came and she took the lighter and she like put it in the envelope and wrote a nasty letter to my father about how I tried to burn down the school or something. I actually ripped the envelope open and took out the lighter before I gave it to my dad, like he wouldn't have noticed. And then I got this long speech at home about how we are not allowed to play with fire and I was not to take a lighter to school, what was I thinking, neh, neh, neh, neh, neh, but I always, always hated Steve from that moment. Later on we ended up being in the same class. The boys on the bus, one of the older boys one day decided I was a "fucking fag"

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before I even knew what either word meant, I think I must have been about 12 or 13. I had no clue what either of those words meant. I was pretty much branded from then on and yeah, then Steve started like leading these gangs, like you know, they used to sometimes run around and hit me with sticks during break and like chase me around the whole school until I found some place to hide. I usually hid in the locker somewhere and the teachers, funny enough, knew this was going on, but like didn't really know what to do about it. I had a teacher coming to ask me once, you know, someone had told him like about the guy on the bus, who then later became the bus prefect, who used to also tease me like all the time and like take away my school work, cause I would go and sit in the bus and start doing my school work, you know, that's how nerdy I was. He would take it away and like pretending to throw it out of the window and stuff like that. And I said to him: "Hey listen" you know like, "if I tell my parents about this or if you try to tell his parents about it, or do something about it, it's just going to get worse. It might be fine for a day or two but I know it's going to get worse, and there's nothing you can do and there's nothing I can do, I guess I'm just going to have to deal with it." I used to go home and cry into my pillow at night for probably like months on end, cause I nagged my parents to take me out of that school and I hated it and I didn't want to be there. It was all just because they thought I was weird. They kept somehow going to the idea that I was weird and it was only when I got to ask that I realised that being weird then meant that I was able to do a whole lot of stuff that they couldn't do. I was the lead part in the school play, you know. I'd have like my work on the exhibition, like this big exhibition thing.

Mari: At art school?

Mark: No at the German school. I'd be like the lead in the school play, I'd have like my work on the exhibition, apparently it was always the best in art class, okay both my parents were artists so that makes sense, but I didn't know that. Apparently I was like the brightest kid in class as well, but I didn't know that. I mean I knew I got good marks but I never compared it to anyone else's. Stuff like that, you know. Eventually what I did at the German school for the last three years is that I spent break in the library, because I knew the librarian would chase them out if they were making a noise and by the time I left I had read that entire library. That's how I got through primary school.

Mari: Or up until Std 7.

Mark: Well yeah, Std 7, or the beginning of high school like in between. And then in Std 8….At the end of Std 7 my sister auditioned for the art school. My mom had taken her out of the German school a year earlier already because the girls were just like the boys, all these competitive catty little brats who basically went out to like pick on anyone who was in anyway weak or sensitive. My sister had done really, really well in the school that my mom put her in and then when I kept on nagging and nagging my mother asked one of my friends, who had also taken her daughter out of the German school at that stage, said to my dad: "Listen like what is your problem actually? Why don't you want him to leave? No because he wants me to like grow up and be a good German citizen one day and stuff like that and not to lose my connection to the country, cause South Africa is such an unstable place to be and who knows how long we are going to be able to stay here and kinds of concerns like that. Eventually I just asked my mom could she please take me for an audition at the art school. And she did, she organised everything for me. I went and at the audition I looked around me and realised how different everyone was and the next thing I knew I was in art school and gradually discovered that I was the top of the class there as well, even in painting and sculpture and stuff that I didn't expect at all, because it was an art school and there were people who had been there from Std 6. I had been going to extra art lessons every Sunday, while I was at the German school. I realised to my horror that the educational standard in South African government schools were so low that the people in the German school were three years ahead in everything pretty much. I spoke fluent French to my French teacher and her mouth pretty much hung open. Cause I had this Parisian accent and everything. I loved French as well, you know I spent a lot of time on it and I guess they taught it to you properly, with their advanced teaching techniques and everything. So yeah, I went to the Alliance Francais for my French lessons and continued that at school, that was bit of a joke. There's this German, obviously, me speaking German and having to do German third language, cause it was the only thing the school offered until matric. Obviously I got a distinction for that as well. And I also dropped maths when I went to Std 8, cause that's where you decided whether you are going to drop maths or not and I had never passed maths before then. And I never really cared much for maths.

Mari: Would you say you fitted better there, were you happier there?

Mark: I felt like happier, yeah. No one cared that I was weird, cause there were so many people there who were so much weirder than I was. There was this girl Mia, with red hair that would stand up on a table in the French class and start doing songs from Annie. There was this guy called Noel who shaved off his eyebrows and kept the dog embryo next to his bed in his bedroom. The people who I'm used to being called 'weird', were so like 'normal', this girl Jeanne who was going to be a prima ballerina and had like this white flaxen blonde hair and these huge blue eyes, you know, kind of like a super model except she was too young to like be a model so everything was like big and disproportionate like a child almost, but like everyone would just like gawk at her whenever she walked passed and she spoke sort of you know in a kind of English very refined voice. There were all these people who were characters in there own right.

Mari: Did you feel more yourself?

Mark: I felt like suddenly I discovered I was a self. I felt like, oh gosh, like I can do all this stuff and like I'm actually …, I didn't realise before that, that I was actually intelligent, like vaguely good-looking. I didn't realise that I could draw or paint really well. It was just like this total resolution to me, you know what I mean.

Mari: So you were happier from that time on?

Mark: Yeah, it was a complete shift and I am so glad that I went, because it allowed me to believe in myself to an extent that I guess in those formative years especially like your teens when you are sort of starting to become a young adult it is really important to be able to have some kind of support. My teachers were really supportive of me and had encouraged what I was doing and the nice thing was that you could see what everyone else was doing and there was sort of a competitive atmosphere like you know, because you could see, okay so and so is painting, okay there's the job that's finished and it's all like lined up and you can kind of see like which one you like the most. Like I like mine the most. Yeah, you can see where you are going and you get a sense of being able to believe in what you are doing. Yeah, you win some, you lose some. I probably would have gotten a better academic education if I had stayed at the German school, but I might have ended up being like an accountant or a plumber or and electrician or something like the rest of them, you know what I mean. And I would have been a boring 9-5 citizen like most of them that I know ended up being. My friend Steve also never finished there. He like left also left, he went to Woodmead, he never actually got his matric, his doing his

matric this year, but that was because he started his own company and made lots of money over the Internet so he didn't really need to have a matric at the time.

Mari: Did you ever have any anxiety symptoms at school or in your teenage years?

Mark: I was a very shy person anyway. Like I said at the German school I would hide away in the library during break. I would also very often go to the library during break at art school simply because there was a lot of people to talk to. You know, everyone kind of had their own little click, everyone had their own little friend that they were talking to and I always felt like I was intruding or I didn't know what to say to people like when I stood there and like sooner or later they started ignoring you if you didn't want to say anything and then you felt even more stupid. So yeah, I'd do that, like go and sit somewhere with a book. There were times, sort of in later years, I think especially during my matric year, at which stage everyone started to become a little frightened of me because I was over achieving like a freak. But I would hide at the top of the school, there was this fire escape, and I would hide like right at the top of the fire escape cause no one ever came there, it was just one of these corners and there was enough light to read as well, and I would just sit there and read like waiting for the next class to start or I would…, if we had a double period, we very often had a double art period with a break in between and I would get the keys from the teacher and lock myself in the classroom and keep painting or do whatever I wanted to do and then unlock when everyone else was about to come back and put the key on the teachers desk.

Mari: So you were quite alone still. Did you have any experience with friends at art school or relationships?

Mark: I had one friend. No, not relationships, nothing. Or actually yeah, I had one friend in the beginning, Tom whom I think at that stage… I didn't want a friend anymore… you know that age? So yeah, we were friends kind of. And I think sooner or later I must have made it quite clear that I wasn't interested in girls in that way and I didn't think he liked that very much. He said it was OK and you know whatever, but like we weren't like good friends anymore after that until eventually we weren't friends at all anymore. Although, he was a really nice guy. And then he had this crazy friend called Hans, who got obsessed with this girl. And I was sometimes friends with Hans as well because Hans was the kind of person who literally did not know like when to stop talking about anything and he would always tell you the truth, he would always tell you exactly

what he was thinking and he was thinking some pretty nasty things. Like he used to call me pizza-face and I'd not really understand it, you know cause I had lots of pimples he just called me pizza-face and he found that funny and like ha ha ha and not really understand that it was an insult, you know that kind of thing. He was pretty screwed up, Hans, but I quite, yeah…I mean Hans was a bit of a bully too, but I enjoyed talking to him, because he would never lie to me, he would tell you exactly what he thought of something.

Mari: Did you have symptoms such as mental problems, or did you have any panic attacks in high school?

Mark: No, not in high school. The big thing that changed my life and happened around this time that I found out about James's suicide, was there was this guy called Allen, that was in my sculpture class. Allen was like…, this tall blonde guy with this big smile and like amazing personality and like…, and he…, I didn't really pay him a lot of attention, but he started paying me a lot of attention and started following me around and he always used to like come drag his easel next to mine when we were painting and eventually I like realised hey, this guy is actually like really hot. And then he started saying stuff, like in conversations there was mad people like Hans like they would be having these conversation about gay people and whatever and this and that I would just keep like really quiet, sort of listen to what was going on. One day Allen says to Hans, like: "I think Mark wants to go out with me don't you think?" And I was like "what?" And I just smiled and kind of kept quiet and then yeah… Allen was really in with the in crowd and everyone thought it was really cool to be Allen's friend, you know that kind of thing. He would also in sculpture, we both took sculpture and painting strangely enough, and then if I was working outside on the balcony and no one else was there he would like come and sit and talk to me and tell me about these gay dating agencies he heard about on the radio and things like that. I just thought, hey cool, someone to share this little thing with, cause I didn't know anyone else that was that way inclined. Yeah, he would keep on doing those kind of things, but then he started from one day to the next, ignoring me, like in public, but then when we were on our own, he'd get like really intense. Like sometimes when we were in sculpture class he would follow me into the back room and start massaging my shoulders and like do weird stuff until eventually like… He had this other friend, Lourens, he was like this dumb Afrikaans guy who was actually so

incredibly good-looking and this other girl Yvonne, who used to like say stuff like, do you think Allen and Lourens are having a thing, like they are so close and they are such good friends and whatever; she would say stuff like that and that would quite upset me of course, because at that stage I was like married then, you know what I mean. And then they would always laugh about me when I came past and stuff like that until eventually it wasn't like just Allen and Lourens, it was all of them, his friends. They would skinner about me and laugh whenever I would come past until eventually my friend Moira said to me, when I was one day like going on about Allen to her, she said like: "Listen Mark, he is fucking up your mind." He was saying so the other day, he was saying to her: "I'm fucking with Mark's mind" and it was like a total shock to me, cause I never really realised until that point in my life that there were people who would actually do that kind of thing on purpose to someone else, just to sort of see what it was like and get off on this departure. I didn't think it was possible. And if I think back about it, I think he was probably like experimenting, you know what I mean. He was probably into the whole thing for a while and then got cold feet and decided OK this is like definitely not for him. Cause then he would like, whenever he saw me, start telling me about the crush he had on this girl Amy who was like the top ballerina at the school, she was actually a total cow, but anyway, Allen thought she was great and I was had to like listen to his stories about Amy. Then he would stop completely. I actually didn't want to believe Moira. And then like a few weeks later he would start again you know, come and like rub my shoulders, when he walked passed me in the passage like rub up against me and do stuff like that and eventually like I said to him: "Listen Allen, do you actually realise that I have the hugest crush on you?" And he said: "No." No he never realised, gosh, you know that's interesting. And I asked: "Well what are you going to do about it?" And he said, oh well he's sorry and then he just walked off. That was a huge crises for me, because by the end of it I didn't know who I was anymore.

Mari: When was this, how old were you?

Mark: I was 15. I had just gotten into art school and then just during that time the whole thing with James happened as well and it was just…, I didn't know what the hell to do anymore, I really, really…, that's when I started keeping a diary, because I had to somehow figure out who this person was that I was, I knew there must be some consistent things that I did and I wanted to hold on to, like something, somehow I guess.

I didn't really have a lot of friends at art school. I was very aloof, so I suppose, so they kept their distance from me, I don't know. But it took me about 3 years before I would stop flinching every time Allen would like come down the passage and smiled at me. During that time I noticed that he had a pattern of doing this with various people. Actually I do know of one other guy that he did the same thing to. He also did it to various girls that he got involved with. He would like get them all excited and make them think like just about that something was going to happen and he would like turn around and walk away. That was his classic way of doing things. And eventually I just started going up to these girls and say like, listen go and talk to so and so, find out a bit about Allen, just before you get too serious, because he's not always what he pretends to be. And it like made me feel maybe a bit better, that I was maybe helping some people that way. Also I had a lot of friends on the Internet at the time. We finally got the Internet and I joined a mailing list for people interested in Native American spirituality and all kinds of weird things I suppose, it was called Inner space. People would send information to this list, or like share details about their lives and that kind of thing. They would share advice and you'd share advice and I ended up getting quite a big head actually after a while. I don't know, people were all like a whole bunch of house wives, who just didn't have a clue about anything in life or I was just very arrogant at that point after like getting through the whole Allen thing and feeling like I could solve everyone's problems in life, but I was very popular on this list in a way. Like everyone was always saying, yeah, ask Mark this and this whatever and I think I just spent a lot of time on the Internet, solving other people's lives for them in terms of nonsense like that. I still have some friends from there that I do write to occasionally, like my friend Alice, who I've been writing to now probably six or seven years. She is in Canada, I've never met her.

Mari: What came out of these connections with the Internet people?

Mark: Well basically, what we used to do, is we'd meditate together at a certain time, it was like everyone would set their clocks so that we'd all meditate at the same time and it would become quite clear to me that there was something amazing happening that we were all connecting in the same way, and I could sort of feel people's presence as such, as all being part of this sort of collective energy in a way, because it was the same time. We would like meditate, like if there was a plain crash or something, for the survivors and stuff like that. It was like praying together in a way. They also talked a lot about sending

healing energy to people or positive thoughts that kind of thing, Healing life as they called it. And I started doing that and I started reading books about that kind of thing too and eventually I realised that when I was sending healing light to people, and I was imaging being there, that I could actually see things, like see what was going on and eventually I started mentioning this to the people, that I saw this and this and this and they would be like, "that's really interesting, cause I was wearing a red sweater that day" and like "I was in my kitchen doing things" and that kind of thing and eventually I realised that in some way I could actually see these things, see what was going on. Then I started...; there were these cards that everyone in this group…, cause it was a native American group, these cards that everyone was using, they were called totem animal cards. The native Americans basically believed that you come into this life with a set of totem animals and two of them stay with you for your entire life, on the left and right side, with a male and a female power animal as such that would stand for two special abilities that you have to guide you through your life lessons and the other one changed all the time. They were kind of like guardian angels, or spirit guides maybe, and I would say, through getting these cards, we got them at exclusive books, cost me a lot of money, but I spent it, through using these cards I kind of came into contact I would say maybe with these energies in a way also, but I also realised…, because these cards in some way predicted the future as such, that when I was doing these readings for people, that all this other information would come suddenly that wasn't in the card, and I would be talking about it, okay this and this and this in relation to this and this and this and I just know somehow that I had to say this and that and whatever. I initially questioned it, I was a bit afraid of it too, but I prayed and I asked for protection and that it would stop and nothing negative ever came of it, there was never anything bad that I would say to people, and so in time I grew to trust and accept it and it has been a very real part of my life ever since. I didn't really understand 100% how it works, but … and I can't tell people what's going to happen, but when I do a reading for somebody I am somehow able to see what the different possibilities are for the future. And I can see people as well in those people's lives, I can describe them physically to them, I can describe to them what kinds of situations and what kind of relationships they have with them and how that is going to affect the future outcome of a situation if they choose to pursue a certain path with that person or choose to pursue a certain course of action. I don't think that the future is set in

any way, I think that there are millions and millions of futures at every single point in time, but it's a bit like quantum physics, the way that a quantum particle, when it is observed will behave in a certain way, mainly in the way that the person that is doing the experiment expects it to behave, where as when it is not being observed specifically it would behave in a more random way. I think at that microscopic level I think our entire world works that way really. I am not making this up. I have had a woman come to me once and I said to her: "Your sister has died, she had breast cancer" and this was all true, and the woman was like gosh, "yes that's exactly what happened, neh, neh, neh..." I said that it was a quick thing, she really know before it was 2 weeks before she died and the woman said: "Yeah…," and then quite surprisingly she said: "Well, is there anyone else?" And I said: "Well yeah, there's this older man and he's like holding out this thing and I don't want to be stupid, but it looks just like the Maltese cross." And she said: "That's my dad, he won the Maltese cross in the war." So I have had moments like that where even me, who is sometimes very doubtful of things, had to accept that I was doing something which was useful to people in some way and which was very real.

Mari: Would you say that you are more like a medium and someone that can sense more than maybe others?

Mark: Traditionally a medium is someone who as such channels spirits, who gives over control of their body even sometimes for another spirit to enter, another consciousness to speak through them. I don't feel that is necessary. I think that, yeah, that is almost sort of the latest developed way of doing it, I just know that I can hear what I choose to hear. If I ask for the information and I would say it at the same time as I'm hearing it, but it is still me, I'm still listening to it. I don't know, I would say that I am…, perhaps psychic is the best word, clairvoyant, because I do believe that it's a mental ability, I don't believe that it's…, I think that it's a mental thing that can be developed and strengthened and it takes a lot of concentration. People who meditate a lot will naturally start having these kinds of abilities simply because they spend a lot of time being able to not focus so much on the external reality and not responding to the external reality with a thousand different fears and emotions and worries which are really unnecessary at any point in life.

Mari: Would you say you had this potential ability even from a young age?

Mark: I think I have always been more sensitive. When I was very, very young, I must have been 5 or 6 or 7, round about that age, I remember walking in the shopping mall

with my mom coming down the escalator and I remember always asking my parents these questions whenever I was in a public space: "What's so sore inside? I don't understand why is it so sore." And they just thought I was being silly and they never really understood what I meant. When I went down the escalator I realised that the pain that was passing through me as such, this feeling and emotions that was passing through, disappeared the further the people went up the escalator and I realised that I was just really picking up maybe the energy field of every person that was coming past and that was the first time that I realised that this weren't actually my own emotions, that somehow I had access to other people's emotions and that I would feel them in that way. It's not a very nice thing initially until you learn to control it. With my ability to pick up people's thoughts or life circumstances that kind of thing, it is something I choose to have access to when I am asked to use it. It is not something that I really use in my own life, I feel that it is an ability that was given to me to help other people, but I think that if I started using it in my own life, I think I would probably start abusing it in some sense. I think it would be almost irresponsible to do. And besides who wants to know what is going to happen in their own future all the time. You just have to be sensible really and you can figure out most of those possibilities for yourself anyway.

Mari: Just to go back…, would you say that the most part of your high school years then until matric you spend alone in the library or on the Internet, getting more involved with….?

Mark: Getting involved with myself as such, very much retreating within myself. I have no problem calling it that, I really was hiding a lot of the time, but at the same time I was also discovering in a strange way how my self was connected to the rest of the world in a very strange way along pathways of perceptions which I had never been aware of to that extent until then. Yeah, I think it was an intense period of solitude, maybe the kind of thing that people who become shamans and healers in other cultures go through as a period of initiation when they get sent into the wilderness and they have to survive on their own for a year or two and then when they come back they are considered ready for initiation. Maybe it was almost that kind of thing that I was forced to be on my own. That and animals. If I think about my best friends when I was a child, I had animals. I had my dog, and I used to speak to my dog all the time and I had the cat. And I could emotionally communicate with them, cause I knew exactly what they were feeling. I

knew what the cat was saying when it was meowing in a certain way, it was a Siamese cat too. I don't know why they are so much more intelligent than other cats, they speak a completely different cat language as such. Their meows that mean certain things in Siamese cat language are different kinds of meows in normal cat languages and there aren't by far as many of them either. I learnt to speak to the cat, cause I knew when the certain kind of meoooouw, when it was very long, that meant where the hell are you, you've got to come know. And that's how I call the cat to this day. It comes from where ever it is, it will come running. When it meows like that also it wants to show you something or it is like sitting somewhere watching a bird, things like that. It's totally for real. People always used to think it was very strange that I was making all these noises, until they realised that the cat was actually listening to me. Yeah, I would say my friends were animals and people on the Internet whom I couldn't see, but I could feel the positive responses or negative responses or people feeling a certain way and that's what really made me feel so aware, that this physical world is such a small part of our experience that we choose to shut ourselves off from everything else because we can't see it, but that we have all kinds of different senses. Like our hearts are… Our heart is a sense organ. It is a complete sense organ on it's own, it can perceive all kinds things, but we just don't developed it in that way.

Mari: Did you ever have any moods or interaction with substances like dagga or alcohol?

Mark: No. In fact, I think that is another reason maybe why I was so intensely talking to spirits and like channelling stuff from my computer and it was like, pretty much a psychic experience, because I never had any alcohol before I went to university actually. I never drank anything. I had maybe taken one puff of a cigarette once and I thought it was so revolting that I never wanted to do it ever again. I certainly didn't smoke dope. I thought it was kind of silly and I didn't really understand why people would want to do that. Until I went to university and I realised that well if I want to have a conversation with anyone or actually like socially bond with anyone I'm going to have to go out and get drunk with the rest of them and then even when you are drunk, it's kind of difficult to talk to people, so I would borrow other people's cigarettes and start smoking as it was something to hold on to and well when no one has anything to say you just like take a drag of your cigarette so your mouth has something to do and it's something to hold on

to, it makes you feel safe. I used to steal other people's cigarettes all the time, and I think I became pretty addicted for a while but I also refused to buy a packet and that's the way I never really developed a habit. I decided I've got to experience this getting drunk thing at least during one part of my life, so I got drunk and I passed out once or twice and that was it. I really hated having someone else to take me home, I hated waking up in the middle of some deserted club at 03h00 in the morning with all kinds of other winos. It's just seevy. It's not something that I find suits me very well.

Mari: Lets talk about your varsity years. It sounds like you felt that if.., you became maybe more fitting with the norm in that setting?

Mark: I realised I needed to find out what the norm was, because I had been so hectically abnormal that, yeah, that if I tried to share most of my experiences with most people that I had met at varsity they wouldn't even have a faint reference to be able to understand what I was talking about, because to them it was like, you know what are the chicks doing and what are the oakes doing and like what's on T.V. tonight and what's your favourite sport. People always used to ask me what's you favourite sport and like I did some swimming maybe when I was younger or some gymnastics, but I didn't have a favourite sport, or your favourite car, people use to say what's your favourite car, I would say well I don't know actually, I've never really thought about that question. Yeah things like that.

Mari: Tell me what did you study, what did you enter for?

Mark: I always wanted to be an archaeologist, and then my parents said: "No, you can't be an archaeologist, you have to make money." My mom said: "I did archaeology at college and it never got me anywhere, so you are not doing archaeology." Because I had always wanted to tell stories, because I had been very good at painting, and at sculpture and because I wrote as well and was probably in a play for every year of my life, cause even after I left the German school I would go back and I would be in the play because there weren't any people there who could act, this career counsellor that I went to said: "Oh." He thinks I should become involved in journalism and television media and that kind of thing. I suppose that is really where the whole dream of making films really came from. It wasn't something concrete that I had ever before that considered, but then I realised that it was kind of perfect and I got this idea in my head that I would want to travel the world making films about, sort of being like an anthropologist. But then I did a

credit in anthropology at varsity and it was the most boring thing that I had ever done so I realised that I didn't want to be an anthropologist. So I went to study journalism and media studies, mostly media studies because that's the only way they could teach you. At journalism you kind of had to teach yourself because you had to go out and do it, but there are pracs and that kind of thing obviously. And drama. I was going to do fine art, I was going to major in journalism, drama and fine art, which of course I couldn't manage because there were way too many clashes just in terms of like getting from one place to the next and changing into your drama prac. clothes and like packing away all your paints and this and that. And then I dropped art because I realised that they were going to teach me how to draw all over again, that was their idea. They criticised everyone, they kind of…, basically I saw the way that they were going to work was by breaking everyone down, they wanted to build them up in their own way and I just spend the last three years of my life learning how to draw like perfect portraits and perfect this and perfect that. I was not about to go like down that road again. Even the history of art classes, I had just come back from a trip to Europe, I had seen most of the stuff that the lecturers were discussing on the early Italian arts lectures that they were giving and they didn't even know what half the names of the paintings were and because I had just been, you know, I knew what the things were called. But you don't even have to know that, you need to know the Bible to know that, you don't need to know what the bloody painting is called because there are certain scenes in the Bible, which constantly recur in Christian art.

Mari: Were you happy in your varsity years? How long was it, four or three years?

Mark: I was…, I cant say I was unhappy, not completely unhappy, but I know that I am not the kind of person that want's to be stuck in one place for a long time and I forced myself to stick it out, because I thought that if I get a degree I'm going to get a good job and I'll be able to earn enough money not to have to go back home. That was the idea of matric as well. I thought I would get a bursary and then I would be able to go to varsity far away and like no one would ever have to see me again and I would not have to see anyone else ever again.

Mari: What were things like at home over high school and varsity times? Pretty much the same?

Mark: It got kind of progressively worse, eventually my mom told me about my dad's girlfriend that he had for 12 years and then things started making more sense to me, why they didn't stay in the same bedroom, why they always had fights about things.

Mari: Did you have to be there for your mom a lot when you were in high school?

Mark: High school, yeah. Even now when I came back after varsity, when I had to stay with them, even then she still expected me to listen to her and…, the worse thing with my mom was actually being in the car with her, cause when she got into the car she was alone with her thoughts and then she starts talking and yelling and like the whole thing starts playing and she rehashes like stuff that happened 10 years ago and when he did this and this and this and that and that and that. She really just wants someone to listen kind of in a way, but you know I didn't know what to do, because it's not my problem and I don't want to be yelled at about it. Yeah, she does expect me to be there for her all the time. She gets very accusing of actually like "you don't care", when I say like "listen enough of this, this is not my problem, this is your problem and daddy's problem and I have absolutely nothing to do with this, so please just leave me out of this", she doesn't actually understand. She says: "But you don't care."

Mari: So she plays on your guilt?

Mark: Oh yeah.

Mari: And then you feel trapped?

Mark: My mother's the queen of guilt.

Mari: Did you then talk back, because you tried to get out, but then the guilt …?

Mark: Yeah, I think that was one thing. With both of my parents I guess I've always wanted their approval in some way, because they always withheld it, you know they'd always hold it just that far away from you so that you just can't like get at it, or feel that you have done well enough. With my mother anything…, my mother's entire life was based on guilt. I mean she sort of…, she was just staying with my dad because she feels guilty that he's ill now with multiple sclerosis, even though like all those years she was telling herself that she was staying there for her kids and she was actually staying there because she would have felt very guilty if she had a divorce and she would have felt very guilty towards us as well. My mother is big on guilt and I've been very big on guilt for that reason in my life and I think coming home from varsity where I was incredibly successful and the top of my T.V. class and thinking I was going to get a really nice job

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when I came back here and then moving back in with my parents and being swallowed up by the negativity and then discovering on top of it that I was ill and having to stay at home and in my room for a long time and developing even a fear of going into public places because I would fall asleep or I would start having severe panic attacks and things like that. I guess losing everything that I had by having to come back in a way has made me…, has forced me to begin forgiving myself for all that stuff and also for all the stuff that my parents have done to themselves, you know ever since they were old enough to speak or whenever and also the stuff that I learned to do to myself from them. I slowly but surely started deprogramming myself because I realised that it was my environment that was messing me up and that I was going to carry that around with me for the rest of my life. I don't think you ever stop doing that. I think I can deal with failure now and I think if you can be successful once in your life you can always go back and do it again.

Mari: So it sounds like you had some distance from your home environment when you were at varsity, you went to a far away varsity and you experienced efficiency in yourself and you experienced a sense of who you are, you were in control.

Mark: Actually it was like the same thing as going to art school but even better, because there was no one telling me what to do, what time I had to be back home, not that I ever wanted to go anywhere while I was at high school anyway, but I have mentioned that my dad used to open my mail and listening on the phone and like hide letters behind his desk that were addressed to me and things like that. And all that shit just stopped. I didn't want to phone them. I didn't phone them. If I wanted to keep the phone conversation short I'd keep it short. And I still remember actually one day when I was in my first year, I sort of started missing them a little bit and I was talking to them on the phone, but I didn't have any money left and they knew what the phone number was and then they would call the tickey box and the people in the res. would like call you know whoever else and then the phone went dead, but I didn't have any money but you know how you can still hear them talking on the other side and they can't hear you anymore cause your money's finished and my mom said: "You have to phone him back, you have to phone him back." And my dad said: "What for?" and he put down the phone. And I just realised actually yeah, what for did I need to speak to them anyway as well. It was no grave loss for me at the end of the day. I mean, yes I would always be grateful for the way that my parents provided for me materially, but emotionally, going to varsity was like a

completely different learning curve and even so I am only now learning even how alienated and emotionally cut off and conservative I was while I was at varsity and how little I actually allowed myself to enjoy anything cause I really thought that if I worked hard enough I was somehow going to get away from everything and ironically I worked so hard that I got so ill that I had to go back to everything and really deal with what the problem was in the first place.

Mari: How long have you been back at your parents house now?

Mark: Almost 2 years now.

Mari: 2 years. And would you say it was only when you got back that you fell ill and that you started becoming anxious and having panic attacks or did it start at varsity already?

Mark: OK. Well its complicated. I don't know and the doctors are the last people who know, that's something I've realised. I have seen more doctors that I can count on two hands and not a single one of them has given me the same diagnosis. In matric, during that last year when I was working towards my 7 distinctions which I finally got and all my bloody trophies that doesn't mean anything anymore, I would fall asleep in the car. When my parents came to school, as soon as I got in the car, get in the back seat, zopp, I would be out, then I would wake up at home around 7h00 at night, it would be dark, I would take my schoolbag and then I'd go to my room and my own bed and fall asleep again and wake up the next morning. Also during school vacations I would stay awake at night and sleep during the day so that I could do my own thing, I could paint, I could listen to music, the phone never rang, you know it was great. I think that was when I started messing up my sleep pattern. After varsity I went on a trip to Europe on my own with nobody. I walked everywhere, I wanted to see absolutely everything there was to see, cause I thought I'm not going to come back here anytime soon, so I've got to see this and I've got to see this and I've got to see this. I planned my life as hectically as I planned everything up to that stage and then when I got to varsity I didn't stop doing that. I got the job at the radio station and then the national arts festival came along and then…, actually at the national arts festival I don't know but I think I had a nervous break down, but I was crazy. I was a technical manager for the radio station during the festival, so I had to get up at five o'clock to set up the radio station's outside broadcasting unit for the whole day and I was a reporter on one of the afternoon shows and a field anchor which

meant I had to run around with the microphone in the streets and like interview people and it would be live on the radio and in the evenings just because I wanted to and I wanted to see the movies for free I was on the movie revue show and I would walk all the way. There's a mountain with a building on it and the films were in this building, so I would walk all the way up the mountain, cause I didn't have a car, and I would then from the tickey box phone through to the studio and sort of revue the film I had just seen. Until half way through the festival…, and I was taking photographs as well, but that was just for me. So half way through the festival I sat down somewhere with my camera and my microphone taking what I thought would be a 5 minute break before the next thing that I had to revue and I was out and I woke up about 4/5 hours later, not knowing where the hell I was, I was just very confused. And I still sometimes afterwards saw people that said: "Oh I saw you at the monument and you were passed out and you were sleeping on the sofa." No one took my camera, thank God no one took the varsity equipment. But something went wrong in my head, I could like feel that I wasn't quite OK anymore and then I went to the varsity nurse I actually took a few days off and I actually went to see a dietician and she said that I had exhausted the entire Vitamin B12 contents of my blood, she had never seen it before, but there was nothing showing up in my blood tests. She did not know how it was possible, cause she said it takes about 3 years, there is a 3 year reserve in everyone's blood. So somehow I did that and then for the rest of that year I slept a lot of times in lectures, I would fall asleep. It was really embarrassing, I would always go and apologise to the lecturer and say, you know I'm sorry, I fell asleep and I will get the notes from someone else, you know and whatever. Then I realised they didn't really care, or they hadn't noticed. That is when the whole sleeping thing began and eventually I was diagnosed with Narcolepsy by a doctor who when I went to see him a second time, he said well the only thing he could put me on is Retalin and Zoloft. Ritalin helping with the tension and would help me keep awake and Zoloft is an anti-depressant. He says your sleep cycle and your eating cycle and your mood cycles are all linked, they all contain the same chemical contents. Basically I went on these anti-depressants, I said I would never ever go on anti-depressants but I did, because I would have to leave varsity or something because I was just sleeping all over the place so I wasn't coping and then I took them for about 2 years. But they didn't really work that well. They helped me with the sleeping, but I started falling on the floor when I laughed too much and then it really

started getting bad when I went home for vacation and I'd have fights with my parents and I would still be standing there and want to like say something like you know: "I can't believe you just said that" and like want to think of something really nasty to say back and I would just fall on the floor. Later on I would be breaking glasses, burning myself on the stove if it happened and stuff like that. It was serious, it was not something I could stop and at first my mom would go like: "Ag moenie so aansit nie" and my dad would laugh at me and my sister would roll her eyes. I guess over the years they have realised that it is a serious thing that I am not just pretending. This cost me my first boyfriend that I had at varsity, it was my second year and I was not in res., so I could do what the hell I wanted to and I couldn't actually have sex without having panic attacks, I would get so exited. Eventually he would like manage to like calm me down enough, but to this day it is a problem, sometimes it just gets too intense, I have to stop, it gets physically painful, it gets painful and I can't bear that much pain and I don't mean anal sex cause I don't actually do that, I still find it a bit repulsive, maybe one day I will get around to it. I eventually ended up dumping Jacques, because I didn't have enough time to see him, this was my excuse. If I think back about it now, I was terrified of my father finding out and that was quite actually…, because we were both really happy and he was one of the nicest people I have ever met. He doesn't really want to talk to me anymore, but I don't blame him. It's just that I was doing this stage set for the arts festival television station that year so I had like my hands full with a thousand things and then after that it was the festival and I was working for the radio station, not as hectically as my first year, but I was still doing all kinds of stuff and I felt like, I almost didn't miss him, and I felt like maybe I didn't really care for him because I didn't miss him that much, because I hadn't seen him at all during all that time and I felt like I was cheating myself with something, but I also realised that at that stage in my life it was very difficult for me to feel anything and that I did really love him and really care for him because he was always so considerate towards me, but it wasn't I guess what I consider love now, not really. But yeah, work was the reason.

Mari: Lets talk about when you felt like you were starting to have physical ailments at varsity.

Mark: Yeah, I was having those problems. Despite being on the medication, cause I still took the medication; the medication made me incredibly irritable and moody and very

difficult to work with or maybe that's just me, I don't know, I just felt that the medication made it worse especially the Ritalin. Also with the Ritalin I would have to take it early in the morning and then take my bath and in the bath I would have the shakes, because the Ritalin would give met the shakes for half an hour to an hour and I couldn't leave the house shaking, so I'd have to take it and then wait. Also with the Zoloft I ended up getting very frustrated, because I felt like I didn't know who I was anymore. I felt like I was this plastic nicety nice person whom everyone else was kind of being plastically nicety nice to because the medication made me feel better so obviously I was being more positive and friendlier towards people even though I wouldn't be that inclined to being friendly towards them, cause I didn't like them or whatever. I felt like it was almost robbing me of my ability to choose in a way and I got bored. I actually got incredibly bored of feeling the same way all the time, because I didn't feel anything else except this kind of not very happy really, but kind of content pose…

Mari: Almost numb?

Mark: Yeah, kind of numb. For my drama major, I ended up majoring in dance theatre which is like, it's a form of acrobatics, you throw people around and you catch them and it's very fast, kind of like in ballet when the guy picks up the women, well in dance theatre the women pick up the guys and they throw them around and do all kinds of things as well. Sometimes when things got too fast I got scared and eventually I started having panic attacks while I was dancing and this was while I was on the medication. So I decided that well, look, if this is going to mess up my dance career, cause at that stage I was seriously thinking of becoming a dancer, I was really good at it, I always had gone to modern dancing when I was a kid, because my mom said I couldn't sit still, so she sent me. When I got to varsity it was a great thing for me to rediscover that and also cause I had never done any sport or anything like that. It felt great being fit, but when I realised that if it was going to mess up my dance career then I might as well go off this medication because by that stage I started suspecting that the medication was doing more harm than good and I then did. I sort of slowly weaned myself off it, this was before my final exam and I still ended up doing very well in my final exam despite me not being on any medication and all of that kind of thing. I stopped being able to sleep. I had trouble sleeping even during the medication, but then my sleeping pattern completely got, you know…, and I got very, very depressed. I never knew before I took the bloody anti-

depressants what depression actually was and I know what it is like now and I understand what people go through when they say they go through depression and why it is really that terrible. I have always been very depressed, I never really wanted to kill myself or anything like that, but there were times, especially during these past two years that I really have wanted to kill myself, it was during those weeks of having this incredible headache and not wanting to get out of bed and not wanting to actually move. It's excruciating, especially if you think about the time in your life when you were the most alive person that everyone knew and that you were doing more than anyone could imagine cramming into one day. I was not on medication for my final year of varsity when I was doing television journalism, but I also by that stage had developed a way of coping with falling asleep and the coping was literally by always being in panic 24 hours a day and that especially was what then put the last knock on my sleep cycle. I didn't really care because there wasn't enough equipment for everyone to use during the day, so some of us had to use it during the night and then we would take turns editing, because the editing equipment was very expensive and the varsity didn't have enough money to buy more editing equipment. And I was having fun, I was having a tremendous amount of fun, I loved it. It was finally what I had always wanted to do, it's what I had stuck those four years of varsity out to be allowed, to finally like get my hands on those cameras and the editing equipment and really do something and I was good at it too. I ended up winning like a lot of prizes. But I was also very awful and very cranky and very bossy and I don't know if you have to be that way to be successful in television, it always just happened to me, but I didn't like it. Then eventually towards the end of that year I burnt out. There came a stage where I was actually doing stuff but I was on total autopilot. I realised my brain was working in almost 10 day cycles where I wouldn't be able to remember what the last production was that we were working on. I would just know that now we were in preproduction for this thing, then we would go into shooting, then we would go into post, what the different steps were for doing all those things and when I did my internship, I did my internship in two different places, I split it up during the vacation, I realised that the people in this television industry are exactly like that, a lot of them. They seem functional and capable when you talk to them, but they are actually like these zombies that run on this sort of 10 week production cycle and literally they can't remember what happened like 10 days ago, never mind a year ago or whatever

because they are constantly in crisis mode. And I realised I was constantly in this fight or flight mode that I was keeping myself awake so that I wouldn't fall asleep, cause I did, I very often fell asleep in the editory, I would sleep on the couch at any opportunity, because I always did feel tired and I realised that it was a problem. I needed to do something about it. And I thought well maybe it is OK if I go home for a while and sort myself out. Then I went home. I was at home for 3 days and after that of course everything started again as usual. I got a lecturing job at a university eventually, because I couldn't go back into the T.V. industry at that stage, because I didn't really know if I wanted to be there. I was offered a very nice editing job at M-Net actually, but I just didn't feel comfortable with that kind of stress at that stage in my life. I wanted to take a break for a while, I just couldn't anymore. The thing at the university ended up being good in some ways, cause I did a diploma in visual art while I was there and it ended up being not so good in other ways because I was doing everyone's dirty work, I was everyone's skivvy, my office was far away from everyone else, I didn't have anyone to talk to, I was basically supervising the computer lab at the correspondence university where no one uses the bloody computer lab and during that year my health got worse and worse and worse, because I was eating at the canteen and the only edible thing there was basically the toasted cheese sandwich. Then eventually I went to see a psychiatrist who wanted to put me on epilepsy medication for the fits which I was still having and they were getting worse and worse ever since I moved in with my parents to the point of eventually the only public place that I could go was work cause I could go and sit in my office all the time. I probably spent the second half of my year there sleeping under my desk most of the time, sadly nobody noticed, because everyone was so busy with their work anyway. It just was not a very positive place for me to work. No one was motivated, no one really seemed to care, I guess it's probably just that specific department but… and also because of the fast pace environment I had just come out of, I expected things to happen in a matter of … like if I say I want it today, then like we make sure it's here tomorrow, where as there if I say I want it will be here today, it probably won't be there in the next 2 months time literally. It took them two months to find the key to my office. I got very depressed. The psychiatrist said I was bipolar. Then I went to see another doctor who said that he was sure all of this sounded like yuppie flu and I had MS and then I thought…, like okay to hell with this…, oh and I went to see another

neurologist in between who made me do a sleeping test and I had an EEG and they couldn't prove anything, there was definitely no conclusively diagnosis of Narcolepsy, it was "let's try this medication, lets try that medication, lets try this sleeping tablet," which actually kept me awake instead of making me sleep, "oh that doesn't work, why don't we try this," …until I got so sick and tired of trying things for that entire year and also experiences where I went to a psychiatrist and I said to her: "Surely your environment has got something to do with the way that your brain functions and the experiences that you have." And she said: "No my darling, it's all chemistry." And she started writing out a prescription with all kinds of hectic stuff that when I showed it to another psychiatrist he said: "This woman is mad." And I subsequently found out that one of my colleagues at work, his mother had gone to see this woman and she put her on medication that you are meant to be on for about 2 weeks, like crisis stuff, and she put her on this medication for 2 years, or for a 1½ to 2 years and she ended up in a psychiatric hospital like for how long. I just went to see a whole lot of people and eventually I said: "The hell with all of this" and I took myself off the medication. It made it worse in some ways but I would sleep before I would drive home, I would make sure that during lunchtime I slept, you know that kind of thing. I just made sure I got enough sleep during the day, the problem was that I would not fall asleep at all at night which made me more stressed, which made me more irritable, which made me more anxious and I was definitely not going near any public places. When my aunt from overseas visited she irritated me so badly one day by like plucking my collar right and like pulling threads off my jacket and things like that. You know something little like that irritated me so badly that I actually fell on the floor in the middle of the mall until there was this whole large crowd around me and it took me that long to be able to get up. Sometimes it takes longer sometimes it's shorter.

Mari: Would you still say you feel sensitive in a crowd such as in a mall, sensing their energies?

Mark: I probably always will. I have been doing things on purpose like going to the gym and hanging out in the steam room, and I must admit I can sit there naked now without having the urge to have a panic attack. Initially I couldn't like even go into the gym, when I went into the gym I used to run on the treadmill even, it was like, oh everyone looking at my body, oh…I am forcing myself slowly but surely to do things which are difficult and which are challenging and I also went away for 2 weeks, I went

back to the university that I studied at for a while to the festival and I stayed with a friend and by the end of those 2 weeks my panic attacks had vanished, but it was not being in Gauteng all the time, not being aware of the crime all the time, having to hear about it all the time, having our alarm go off all the time and not knowing why, seeing that the wires had been clipped again, and my parents. A whole lot of stuff that is combined. I think that all of that has come together not knowing where am I going to live next year. What kind of job am I going to do? What kind of job can I even do? What's my dream in life? What do I want to do with the rest of my life? Do I want to be in a long term stable committed relationship for the rest of my life? Do I want to have serial monogamy as they call it or… there are so many uncertainties I think, in my life at this point and I think that that is what made things get to a head, made things to get as bad as they did especially this last year. It's taken a long time and I think the only thing you can do is to give it time, but I am slowly but surely starting to get my life back.

Mari: Have you been diagnosed with other illnesses?

Mark: Yeah, well, what happened eventually after this whole drama, I took myself off all the medication, I went for along time where I would still be having panic attacks and I would still be falling asleep and things like that. Then eventually my mother heard an interview on the radio with this woman who has treated people for chronic fatigue syndrome by looking for tropical viruses in their blood. And I went to see her and I checked out her credentials. Her father was a chemistry research scientist; she is a research scientist who is published all over the world. She really knew what she was talking about so I took the blood tests that she said I should have and she found mainly Bilharzia, but also a whole other host of small parasitic infections, I think it's a type of Tick–Bite-Fever that somehow, you know doctors these days consider those diseases old fashioned and don't test for them anymore, but somehow, finally being so run down at varsity and during my year working at the university these things had taken over my immune system and I was no longer strong enough to fight it. She mainly treated me for the Bilharzia. Initially she was treating me for the other stuff first and then I started peeing blood so I definitely did have Bilharzia and then she started intensively treating me for the Bilharzia. Basically just with antibiotics but it's a long term treatment. Every month I go to her and get a new prescription for a different set of antibiotics which also target different areas of the body I think, because they can tell by the antibody count in

your body which parts are infected. And I have been detoxing like crazy. Cause I went to a homeopath as well somewhere along the line and he said: "Well, like just fruit and veggies for you and some meat at lunch time and you are not going to eat anything else." And literally like two days within that diet I felt so much better that I decided maybe it was something I should do for the rest of my life. I love ice cream and cakes and stuff like that and chips.

Mari: So it sounds to me like you have been managing it by yourself.

Mark: I have been managing it by myself and it has taken along time, but I feel so much better.

Mari: How do you feel as an anxious person in this world? Do you feel you are isolated just by that?

Mark: You know, I think I might be more anxious than a lot of people, but I think that anxiety itself, I think the whole entire world is built to produce people who are anxious so that they will buy into consumer culture and constantly be insecure enough to want the things that different social institutions are offering them like the state, like the family, like the media, like commercial institutions. I believe that to a large extent our society thrives on the insecurity of anxious people and I think it is human to constantly be uncertain, to fear the unknown, to be anxious. Maybe I am just a more extreme case of it. I think that there are a lot of anxious people out there and maybe just because I am more sensitive to emotions in general, my own as well as other people's, that at times I felt the need to block myself off from it so much that I have really repressed it and it has become a serious problem and at other times it becomes so much to deal with that I couldn't deal with it in any other way except by maybe having a panic attack. Yeah I would say that as an anxious person… No, I don't really know how to answer that question actually, to tell you the truth. Your question was as an anxious person in this world, how do I feel?

Mari: Yes.

Mark: I feel anxious.

Mari: Do you feel you have a voice?

Mark: No, I don't think that there's space for anxiety in the way that we live, I don't think that there is really space to be allowed to express the fact that you are anxious. I think maybe anxiety is one of the few emotions in our society that is extremely prevalent and yet extremely unsociable to speak about, because people don't like admitting that they are

vulnerable, don't like admitting that they are weak. It's not something that people like to think about, anxiety is like a death to a certain extent, no one want's to know that it exists, and it constantly disguised by all kinds of things that you can do about it or things that you should do so that you won't even start feeling anxious, you know what I mean. But it all kind of gears to solve this one problem, and the problem is still there. All those solutions in fact point to the fact that there is a lot of silence about this problem, which I feel that a lot of people have.