

CHAPTER 4

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS BECOMING A PSYCHOTHERAPIST

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a context for my whole life story so that my autoethnographic stories in the Appendix can be better understood. This chapter identifies the golden thread that runs through the autoethnographic stories - my unquenchable thirst for psychology.

I was born on 4 December 1960, as the second child of four siblings born to Edna Elizabeth Marks and Fred Jacob Groener. I have an older brother, Cedric (now aged 45) and two younger sisters Gail (41) and Wendy (34). Cedric, myself and Gail were born in P.E. and Wendy was born in Cape Town.

My mom is the eldest of nine siblings. She would have loved to have become a nurse, but needed to leave school at the age of 14 in order to work so that her family could survive financially. She initially worked as a factory worker and then later as a counterhand in a department store. My dad's biological mother died when he was 11 months old. His father remarried and had 4 sons and 1 daughter from this second marriage. My father was therefore reared first by his

paternal grandmother and after she had died, by a paternal aunt. Dad would have loved to attend university but was unable to do so. He became a primary school teacher after attending a teacher's training college.

I married Ruben Robert Richards in 1985. We have two children, one boy aged 11 and a girl aged 7 years and a menagerie of 3 dogs, 11 fish and 1 cat. We live in a suburb, east of Johannesburg and our house is conveniently situated opposite the school that our children attend.

4.2 MY STORY

My fondest memory of early childhood, prior to forced removals, is that of walking hand in hand with my dad to a nearby stream and sitting under a weeping willow tree. Another fond memory is that of myself, my mom and my older brother (Cedric) going to visit Grandma – myself in the pram, Cedric standing on the step of the pram and mom pushing us.

My next most vivid childhood memory, at the age of 4 years, is that of standing beside the coffin of my 50 year old maternal grandmother. According to my mother, my grandmother had died prematurely as a result of the harsh effects of forced removals of the previous Apartheid regime. Apparently, my grandmother couldn't cope with the threat of being forced to move a second time as a result of the Group Areas Act instituted by the Apartheid government.

Shortly after grandmother's death, the Apartheid government declared the beautiful suburb of Fairview, P.E., an area for the habitation of whites only. My

grandfather and my parents lost their properties and were paid out meagre sums of money, insufficient to serve as a down payment for the purchase of another house in a designated 'coloured' area. My father and grandfather subsequently entered into a financial agreement that enabled my extended and nuclear family to share adequate living space. The financial agreement enabled my dad to purchase a fairly luxurious and spacious double-storey home in an area called Korsten. My grandpa, five of his children (my mom's siblings) including the husband and four children of one the siblings moved into our double-storey house. A total of sixteen members of our nuclear and extended family thus attempted to live in harmony and managed to do so for approximately two years. I have fond and vivid memories of playing with my cousins and siblings in this double-storey house in Korsten, P.E. Then came the devastating rumours that Korsten was also going to be declared a 'whites only' area. My pleasant childhood recollections now give way to sad memories of being separated from my extended family. My father decided to make a pilgrimage southwards, to Cape Town, a place where the majority of the population was classified coloured.

My school career was marked by instability and uncertainty related to the political situation in S.A. My absence from school due to chronic illness exacerbated an already challenging school career. I nevertheless excelled at school. In 1974, I commenced tertiary education at South Peninsula Secondary School, in Steurhof, Cape Town. Each year the threat of the school being closed down hung over our heads since this school for coloureds was located in a 'white area'. White people occupying the area constantly threatened to encourage the

government to close down the school. They seemed to resent the presence of coloured children in their neighbourhood and their remarks of protest gravely affected us. We were constantly reminded by our school principal to behave in an exemplary manner in order to ensure that our school was not closed down and reclassified as a school for white children. Steurhof, the area in which the school was situated, had previously been occupied by coloureds and also suffered the fate of being re-labelled a whites only area.

I had always dreamt of attending university full-time. I had been socialized into believing that full-time university studies enabled one to find a good job and hence live a better life. However, during my matriculation year in 1978, I started realizing that due to my family's financial constraints I would not be able to attend university the following year. My parents were already paying for my brother's university education and couldn't afford to financially support a second child at university. A career in nursing seemed to be the logical option since this would provide me with an immediate income (starting salary of R163, 00 per month) in order to supplement my parents' income, and I would be able to study at the same time. I felt saddened and silenced.

I undertook my general nursing training from February 1979 to February 1982 at Nico Malan Nursing College, a college for the training of coloured nurses. My practical training took place at Groote Schuur Hospital. I hated every minute of my initial months at Groote Schuur Hospital. I despised being told by the sister-in-charge to offer urinals to all the males in the orthopaedic ward on my very first day on duty as an eighteen-year-old student nurse. How they ridiculed my innocence and naiveté. I enviously thought about my matric classmates who

were now at university. I longed to be afforded the opportunity to study full-time at university and pursue the career of my dreams.

I did not, however, even allow myself to imagine what I might have studied, because it was probably too painful to explore the emotional impact that those thought processes might have had on my life. I immersed myself in my work, pledging to care for my patients in the best way I possibly could. Having been an asthma sufferer for the greater part of my childhood and exposed to the health care system on a regular basis, I realized the difference a nurse could make in the life of a patient and therefore made a conscious decision to dedicate myself unreservedly to my profession.

I excelled in my career as a nurse. I did the integrated course in Midwifery (from March to September 1982). This course was described as the accelerated course for those nurses with intellectual capabilities. Thereafter I worked in various intensive care units (ICUs) for approximately one year. I then successfully applied to do a one-year course in intensive nursing science and completed this in March 1985. I silently nurtured ideas as to how I would find a way to escape from the nursing profession. Unfortunately, I only heard of UNISA in 1985 for the first time through a nursing friend's sister who was studying towards a BA degree through UNISA. I immediately decided that I would study my way out of nursing. At that time a lot of my friends also started to pursue degrees in nursing via UNISA. I could not understand why they wanted to stay in nursing. I wanted so desperately to get out of it. At the time (1985) I felt that my

matric teacher was correct in pointing out that I was wasting my potential by pursuing a career in nursing.

My work schedule was structured in 12-hour shifts, alternating night with day duty. I also had two part-time research jobs during my days off from night duty. I hardly had time to attend church. I felt as though there was a growing sense of emptiness within my life that threatened to consume me. I decided to study theology through UNISA and not nursing. This choice was partly due to the fact that at the time my husband was studying theology.

It happened while working in the ICU, and nursing very sick and dying patients, that I started connecting with people on a psychological level rather than only attending to their medical needs and monitoring their progress via high-tech machines. For the first time I started realizing the importance of physically and emotionally touching patients, holding their hands, rubbing their backs and combing their hair as opposed to focusing on the ventilators, pace-makers and other human-made mechanisms that were keeping them alive.

Ironically, around the same time (1989), I started realizing the necessity of treating people holistically rather than in a compartmentalized fashion. While pursuing a Bachelor of Theology through UNISA I had the option of studying one non-theology course. I chose to do Psychology 1 as my non-theology course. This marked the first time that I had allowed myself to dream and imagine what I would enjoy studying. Thus my interest in psychology was thus born in 1989.

Now that I was delving into psychology, it seemed okay for me to start entertaining the conflictual feelings within me. It was around this time that I started feeling a heightened awareness of the discrepancy between what I was learning through my theological studies and what I was practicing as a 'practicing' Christian. I remember feeling torn apart a lot of the time. It was as if I was struggling with the commandments contained within the Bible, which were highlighted, through my theology studies. My favourite scriptural passage (Luke 19:45) was where Jesus unleashed his anger in the temple. I strongly identified with this aspect. I certainly was not going to embrace the text: love your neighbour as you love yourself. In fact, at that time, I wasn't even able to love myself. How could I love myself with my black skin that caused severe restrictions to be placed on me. At that time I was too scared to even attempt to work through the reasons why God had created us with black skins and others with white skins which afforded them lots of privileges. It just didn't seem fair. How could I love a God who had created humankind in an unequal manner? Well, despite these internal debates, I continued to study theology. I took a course in comparative religions because at that stage I felt open to embracing a belief system that advocated a revolutionary religious approach that would allow my anger, in fact, my hatred to be ventilated.

Providentially, in (1989) my husband received a bursary to study in Michigan, USA, and I accompanied him. The move to the USA exposed me to a different environment altogether. The bitter cold probably 'put on ice' for a short while the untoward feelings of racial hatred and envy I'd been nurturing up until then. I

excitedly made enquiries to commence full-time psychology studies but was curtly informed that I was under-qualified to do so.

During this period (i.e. my husband's full-time study in Michigan) I found a job as an unskilled nurse in a nursing home. I encountered what I considered American racism towards an increasing Hispanic community. My complexion seemingly made people classify me as Hispanic. A white American nursing sister shouted at me in front of patients and nursing staff. I felt humiliated and very angry. I called her into a side ward, scolded her, stormed off to the matron, gave one minute's notice and slammed the door behind me. I never returned.

In retrospect I think this is what I'd longed to do in the country of my birth, but knew that it was pointless and dangerous to do so. I felt that in the USA, the land of the free and the brave, I could exercise this action. I enjoyed the momentary power I felt having taken the risk to give vent to my anger in a way such as this. I soon realised though that I would have to control my anger and find other releases for it.

Now jobless and somewhat bored, and disappointed, and lonely, I engaged in a vigorous exercise program, and in this way managed to cope with my anger and hatred.

It was during our stay in Michigan that Mandela was released in February 1990. I longed to be in South Africa (S.A.). We watched his triumphant march out of

prison with tears in our eyes. Mandela's release signaled to me that freedom from racial oppression was to become a reality in my lifetime.

After spending a year in Michigan, my husband, Ruben, then continued his theological education in Switzerland, the most neutral country of all. I was compelled, according to Swiss law, to study as well. This seemed to be rather incongruent with being in a free, independent, and politically impartial country. Nevertheless, I registered as a first year BD (Bachelor of Divinity) student. While delving into full-time theology studies in Switzerland, I continued to study part-time through UNISA. I learnt that the Jungian Institute was situated on the opposite side of the lake to where we were living and studying. I couldn't contain my excitement and asked Ruben to accompany me to the Institute. I remember dreaming, as I walked through the corridors of the Jungian Institute, that one day I would revisit the Institute as a qualified psychologist. On the one hand I felt that this was a pipe dream. On the other hand I started believing that it could be possible. After all, my dad had always drummed into me that one could accomplish whatever one set one's mind to.

Switzerland epitomised a great opportunity for me to have learnt, even if just for one of those two years, to live in the moment. I learnt to just be. I learnt to appreciate the beauty of nature. I particularly enjoyed long walks in the Swiss Alps as well as traveling through the neighbouring countries on a shoestring budget. I also learnt to enjoy life and activities that didn't require monetary input. Most of all, I derived a lot of pleasure from expanding my horizons through studying at leisure.

During my first year of study in Switzerland I chose psychology-related subjects like 'death and dying'. Deep down I hoped that one day my then prescribed book by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross would come in handy when I'd study psychology full-time. During our second year in Switzerland, I gave birth to our first child, Daniel. I managed to attend classes while Daniel was looked after in a crèche. I didn't manage to fulfill the exam requirements at the seminary. I found it extremely difficult to cope with sleep deprivation, the demands of motherhood and full-time studies. I felt ashamed to have failed an exam for the first time in my life.

I only managed to write my UNISA exam. After a long trip that involved navigating my way to another village where a South African embassy was housed, I sat for my UNISA exam. I felt that I was being treated in a contemptuous manner by the invigilator – needless to say, a white South African. I dreaded having to return to S.A.

My transition into becoming a mother and continuing with my part-time studies through UNISA proved to be my greatest challenge up until then. While my part-time studies continued, I had taken a break from full-time seminary studies since I was allowed a period of maternity leave. I therefore chose to focus on my part-time UNISA studies, while trying to take care of my newborn baby. I, who had nursed 15 babies simultaneously in a postnatal ward, couldn't cope with one baby of my own. I felt helpless, exhausted and totally incompetent. I felt I was at the end of my tether. Ruben's mother had died during my sixth month of pregnancy. He returned to S.A. to attend the funeral. On his return he had a lot

of catching up to do with his studies. He was therefore absent most of the time as I struggled to cope with a demanding baby who was suffering from colic and sleeplessness. I constantly prayed for perseverance.

Slowly but surely I started realizing the steps I needed to take to ensure that my needs were balanced with baby's needs. I verbalized my need for help and Ruben started being more actively involved as a caregiver. I started nurturing myself. I took time out to look after myself. I started going to a gym and I went for long walks alone. I would wake Ruben up at night to take his turn at comforting Daniel. Gradually I started rebuilding my strength and my inner capacities. I was later able to be in touch with the 'good' and 'bad' mom within me – the mom who couldn't cope with continual sleep deprivation and was struggling to come to terms with a new role as mother, traversing unknown terrain. This was a very humbling experience for me. During this time I remember thinking that one day, if I were to become a psychologist, I would run a support group for first-time moms. I now realize they may not even feel motivated or have the energy or time to come to a support group.

During our stay in Switzerland (1990-1992), we traveled quite extensively through Europe with fellow seminary students. Due to limited financial resources, we relied on our fellow classmates for accommodation and food. During a brief visit to Austria, I remember thinking – may I feel inspired by the Austrian air that once filled the lungs of Freud.

Once Ruben and I had returned to South Africa in November 1992 with our then one-year-old son, I started feeling less and less optimistic about ever studying psychology. I would always make a point of connecting with people from the field of psychology while working as a research co-coordinator of a breast cancer study. Later, I facilitated group therapy for three colleagues and myself and looked forward to our once-weekly sessions at the psychologist's private practice. I listened very carefully to what she was saying and how she was saying it and told myself that one day I might get there. I then toyed with the idea of getting into psychiatric nursing and doing the psychiatric nursing course, but dismissed the idea because I didn't want to work 12-hour shifts anymore.

Silently I continued to dream of becoming a psychologist. I didn't dare tell anyone for fear that my dream might never materialize and I would be dismissed as a failure. At the end of 1995 I finally wrote my last UNISA exam towards my theology degree (B.Th.). By this time we had relocated to Johannesburg. I then enquired about doing the Psychology 2 and 3 courses simultaneously the following year. I was prohibited from doing so. I was close to tears because by this time I was already 35 years old and felt that time was against me. Around this time I co-incidentally met 2 psychology professors who both encouraged me and urged me to not give up.

In the meantime, I started working for a research unit and had the opportunity of doing a bridging course from a Bachelor's degree to a Master's in Public Health. At the beginning of 1996, I gave birth to our second child in Johannesburg. In 1997 I enrolled for Psychology 3 at UNISA (part-time). At around the same time,

my then employer offered me the opportunity to do a Master's degree in Public Health. I felt torn. I wanted to take up the offer but that would have meant giving up on my dream of becoming a psychologist because I could not possibly do both. I told my employer I would think about the offer.

Meanwhile (1995/ 1996), I became more involved in church work and actively nurtured my desire to do counseling work. I started a counseling commission at our local church. I facilitated an HIV/AIDS training course for laypersons. I was also co-chairperson of our church's National Committee for Social Responsibility. It was during this time that I decided to play devil's advocate and apply for ordination as the first woman within the Baptist Convention. I didn't want to be a conventional minister i.e. running a church, preaching every Sunday, etc., but a minister in my everyday work. After a lengthy process and intense interviews by our African male-dominated committee, I was finally recommended and later ordained.

The following year (1997) I changed jobs and started working for a pharmaceutical company. This job necessitated regular local and international travel. I enrolled to do three honors courses, against the advice of the university and trusted friends.

On the odd occasion when a colleague did encounter my reading a psychology-related book I would minimize it and mask my dream by claiming that I was 'interested' in psychology.

At times like these I felt incongruent but I rationalised it away by convincing myself that I was in self-preservation mode. I needed my job and I couldn't jeopardize it, hence I couldn't disclose my true feelings about my dream of becoming a psychologist.

On one occasion I ventured to confide in a colleague with whom I felt safe enough to do so. When I asked her 'hypothetically' how she thought the company would respond should I apply for one or two days' study leave (to go and write exams!) she said very assertively that I wouldn't be supported because my studies were unrelated to my work. I therefore dismissed the idea of coming out of the closet with regard to my psychology studies and instead applied for annual leave when it was time to write exams.

I felt the urge to get my Honours degree behind me as soon as possible. However, on the home front, life became almost unmanageable, with two young children and a distant husband whose job had taken him to Cape Town for a year. I felt I wasn't coping.

It was during my two years of study towards my Honours degree that I felt I did myself the greatest disservice ever. I pushed myself beyond my limits. I couldn't talk to anyone at work about my study-related stress for fear that should I make a mistake, they would blame it on my divided loyalties. I remember during these two years I was utilising post-it labels to help me keep track of what I had to do, and where I needed to be. I vividly remember a particular night when my son had injured himself. After eventually putting him to bed at 9pm, I then stayed up until

midnight completing a UNISA assignment. I put a post-it sticker on my case, reminding me to go via the UNISA assignment drop-off box to the airport – at 4am in the morning - in order to catch a 6am flight. I lived by my diary and detailed agendas. I needed to remind myself about the names of people I'd be meeting and in which province I actually was. At one point during 1998, I felt a strong urge to give up my part-time UNISA studies because I felt that I was falling apart. I felt tearful a lot of the time, exhausted, irritable and found it difficult to concentrate.

I had the bravery to apply for admission to the Psychology Master's program at three Gauteng universities. During the selection processes in July/August of 1999, I had to manage my diary very carefully in order to get to the selection processes and fulfill work responsibilities as well. I feared that I'd be exposed and fired for going to selections while on duty.

Miraculously I was accepted for a Psychology Master's program at two Gauteng universities. I wept tears of joy. I had finally come very close to realizing my life-long dream. Then the dream nearly slipped away. In December 1999, my younger sister's husband was killed tragically in a car accident. This happened one month before I was due to write my final Honours exams. Additionally, work pressure, family pressures, relationship pressures and study pressures threatened to consume me and render me incapable of doing anything.

I wrote the exams and waited patiently for the results. In the meantime I was provisionally accepted into the MA Clinical Psychology program at UNISA and at

another Gauteng university (hereafter referred to as X). Trying to fit selection processes into my hectic work schedule proved to be quite challenging. I hadn't been informed that the selection process at X would last an entire week. I had applied for leave for only the first two days. I then had to run between work (Randburg) and X for the last three days of selection. I remember having a change of clothing in my car as I stepped from one world into another.

An invitation to the selection process at UNISA was the cherry on the cake. I had applied for annual official leave from work for the initial selection dates received from UNISA. The dates were then changed at the last minute. The revised UNISA dates coincided with the pre-arranged dates of an international strategic planning meeting linked to my full-time job. There was no way that I would be excused from work during the visit of our international bosses. I phoned UNISA and asked for clarity as to when I would be called in for interviews. No one could help me. I then explained my situation and was indignantly told to reapply for admission the following year if the current dates didn't suit me. I couldn't believe what I was hearing! Eventually, and through divine providence, I think, I was able to attend the UNISA selection process as well as fulfil work-related obligations.

By the time I started the Master's program at UNISA at the beginning of February 2000, I was completely burnt out. Additionally I was anxious as to whether I'd passed my Honours exams.

Eventually I got my Honours results in mid-March and could allow myself to begin to feel the joy of having passed, and having made it into a Master's program. The journey had been tortuous, but alas I couldn't celebrate. By this

time there was already so much discontent both in class, and at our practical training site, that the whole experience seemed like a nightmare for me – an absolute anti-climax. To be disillusioned so early in my training was tragic beyond words.

During my Master's training program at UNISA (2000-2001) I reflected on various aspects of my life. One of the main things I reflected on was what it might have been like had I gone straight from school to university. Maybe I might have experienced the joy that seemed to elude me during my training. Maybe 20 years ago I might have had the energy to be jubilant and elated.

It then hit me afresh that studying in the old South Africa would have been very different to studying psychology in the new South Africa. For example, if I had had the choice of attending a university after I had completed my secondary education in 1978, I would only have been able to apply to one university i.e. the University of the Western Cape, reserved for coloureds. When I did eventually meet the criteria for applying for a Master's' program in 1999, I had approximately 15 universities to choose from. I also realized that 20 years ago I would not have had the enriching life experiences I now brought with me into the classroom.

UNISA's training, it seems, is designed to expose trainees to alternate contexts, particularly contexts previously avoided at all costs by whites. In this regard Agape is a unique environment in terms of facilitating that kind of exposure. The context of Agape lends itself to the development of cultural and political

sensitivity for those who come from very different and previously advantaged communities. There were times, though, when I felt that the training program could have been tailored to the specific individual needs of the trainee in order to maximize learning.

Counterbalanced by the non-traditional exposure at Agape was the exposure to the 'traditional' clinical environments. However, having worked as a trained ICU sister in various hospitals, I would have preferred to be placed in a different context e.g. a special school for handicapped children. Nevertheless, working as a trainee psychologist in a hospital did provide me with different and enriching experiences from what I had previously encountered in hospitals as a nursing sister. The therapy sessions were either made up of individual or group therapy sessions, depending on the particular needs of the patients on those particular days. Patients received information leaflets prepared by the UNISA students informing them about therapy options during an initial visit to the hospital. They were then made aware that after their booked pain-relief procedures in an outpatient operating theatre, therapy would be available. These experiences seemed to be empowering for the patients.

My two years of residential study at the UNISA campus in Pretoria was followed by a one-year internship that was very structured. Prior to starting the internship, I attended an orientation program. Very early in my internship (around February), I was made aware of how and when I would be evaluated. I also received a one-page two-sided outline detailing the process of evaluation. Transparency and empowerment seemed to be the guiding principles.

At the end of each rotation, I was expected to hand in a written feedback report to the Head of the Psychology Department and this document would be discussed during the evaluation process.

During my first four months of internship at Coronation Hospital, I felt inundated and overwhelmed, however, despite the difficulties and the demands, I found the entire experience enriching and challenging. Administrative and bureaucratic processes seemed to be a major source of frustration at times.

During my Ward 2 (psychiatric ward) rotation, medical ward consult referrals formed part of my job requirements. Inadequate record-keeping on the part of the referring doctor and ward staff gave rise to some discontent within me because unnecessary time was wasted trying to find the exact location of the patient. However, I found the environment stimulating and the work rewarding. I particularly enjoyed the ward rounds and the multidisciplinary team input.

In the out-patients department, I missed the team support I'd grown accustomed to having in Ward 2. This was probably the loneliest rotation out of the three rotations I completed during my internship, and I suppose it prepared me in some way for the loneliness of private practice. I experienced the weekly HIV/AIDS support group facilitation as draining because of the large numbers. Sometimes up to 27 patients were present. I also found it disheartening at times due to issues raised by group members. For example, some of the patients felt

that certain staff members were discriminating against them on the basis of their HIV/AIDS status.

In short, I experienced my internship year as positive and inspirational. The atmosphere created was conducive to learning and the staff provided a holding and safe environment that enabled me to thrive.

Nowadays, shortly before graduating and being registered as a clinical psychologist, I find myself struggling with various thoughts. I think about how my studies impacted negatively on my relationships with my husband, children and friends. I think about how my studies impacted negatively upon my health. I feel as though I've missed out on a huge part of my life. Almost 20 long years of struggling, watering the seed of a dream of becoming a psychotherapist, nurturing the plant and now waiting for the flowers to blossom, I wonder whether it has been worth it. I ask myself whether I would do it again should I have the opportunity of reliving my life. I sincerely doubt it. But then again, it's always easier to say so with the benefit of hindsight. Last week on Mothers' day (11 May) my 11 year old son gave me a card that read "dear Mom, I know you haven't always been there for me, but you have tried". I wept. I know I will still weep lots of similar tears.

During my internship year (April 2002) I had successfully submitted a proposal to both UNISA and the WITS Ethics Committee to conduct a quantitative study at Helen Joseph Hospital. This study was a comparative study investigating the effects of depression versus traumatic brain injury on verbal memory. For

various reasons, including bureaucratic processes and time constraints, I felt I had no option but to cancel the study.

I then approached Patricia Oosthuizen at UNISA to be my new supervisor and embarked upon a qualitative study. Three months later Patricia informed me that she was resigning and moving to Cape Town. I was devastated. It seemed to me that this dissertation would never get done. Patricia then introduced me to my third supervisor, Beate von Krosigk.

On Friday (9 May 2003) I had my first meeting with my new supervisor after she had read my writings. This process of becoming a psychotherapist seems to be a process that continually unfolds, even as I try and complete this dissertation. The process has created room for stuckness and also for opportunities to move beyond the stuckness.

I firmly believe that my meeting and working with Beate is divinely providential. Beate and I seem to share very similar stories. Also, when I partially read her Master's dissertation the night before our meeting, I felt that there was a higher purpose in our meeting.

Beate intervened and started facilitating a healing process within me that I feel is an absolutely crucial pre-requisite in these final stages of my becoming a psychotherapist. Beate seems to have restored my faith in the discipline of psychology. I reiterate Watson's (1996, p. 26) sentiments that "the quality of the relationship between supervisor and trainee is crucial". My current supervisor

fosters a safe environment for me through self-disclosure and exposing her vulnerability. In so doing, she gives me the confidence that she has both personal awareness and empathy (Watson, 1996). Beate is instrumental in not only nurturing my professional development but also promoting my personal growth (Aponte 1994).

Beate and I are able to connect at various levels. Due to Beate's medical history, she can identify with aspects of my nursing career. Beate's relationship with God and her capacity to have integrated her religious life with her psychology is a model that I have needed to encounter as I trudge the final steps of my long journey towards becoming a psychotherapist. One of my major struggles during my training (that I'm largely silent about in my writings) has been my unsatisfactory relationship with my Maker. I have always been scared to openly declare my allegiance with God. I have experience in not only having been a closet psychology student for more than a decade in my life but I have also been a closet Christian. I have feared being victimized by my psychology colleagues for believing in someone who surpasses human understanding. In the process I have become less of who I am, and I have experienced a nearly soul-destroying deprivation.

Beate has been instrumental in rekindling my love for my Creator. She has also helped me to begin dealing with a number of long outstanding issues that have sapped me and drained me. I finally am able to begin the forgiving process involving my sisters-in-law, my husband and myself. I am also beginning to develop forgiveness towards the Apartheid regime, but above all, forgiving

myself. I am realizing the strength in being vulnerable and relying on help outside of myself. I am thankful towards Beate for allowing God to work through her and in so doing, enable me to begin to integrate my being that has been fragmented and compartmentalized the majority of my life up until 9 May 2003. While I seemed to have been integrating my emotional self, there was a vacuum within the spiritual dimension of my life. Hopefully there will continue to be enriching experiences in store for me. I by no means would want to leave you, the reader, with the impression that I have finally arrived – far from it – I do believe that this part of this journey is beginning to end, and new beginnings are about to begin...and there will probably be different challenges for me to face in the future...

Good supervisors serve as role models for trainees. I am grateful that I continue to encounter good role models, like Beate, on my journey towards becoming a psychotherapist.

May you feel inspired to new beginnings as you retrace with me the paths I have trod thus far... My journey towards becoming a clinical psychologist has been a long, and for the most part, a tortuous journey, but the end is near and a new beginning is already dawning.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter is dominated by a recounting of my insatiable desire and my life-long dream of wanting to be a psychologist. The purpose of this chapter was to

give expression to the processes of becoming a clinical psychologist. In so doing I reviewed my seventeen-year long struggle, and my full and busy seventeen-year long academic relationship with UNISA. The thirst for wanting to become a psychologist has been unquenchable. This chapter, which has traced my journey towards becoming a psychotherapist, serves to provide a contextual framework within which the autoethnographic stories in the Appendix will be made understandable.