SYSTEMS THEORY TRAINING AS A CONTEXT FOR HEALING
– AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this experience to my family of origin – mother, father and sister – the most significant school of learning thus far.
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I would like to acknowledge and give thanks to the following, in no specific order of importance:

My ancestors for preserving and developing the building blocks of the abilities I got given with this life – body and mind.

Members of the 2008 and 2009 training team at UNISA who have, in a greater or lesser way, invested their experience and energy in me by contributing to my academic and personal growth.

To Johan Kruger, supervisor of this study, who instigated my journey of authentic emergence and during which time allowed me to explore uninterrupted without contaminating my process, yet guiding and keeping me grounded during some of my most turbulent times.

Without judgement to all other people who, and circumstances which have, known or unknown to me, shaped the course of my life and impacted on the expansion of my mind.

A special thanks to friends and family who believed in me, when I doubted myself, and supported me unconditionally. Thanks to Ms S Neumann for allowing me to use her photograph in the photoessay.

The various lyrics which form part of my diaries have not been acknowledged in the Bibliography; but from repeated listening I know the words by heart - songs in the public domain.
DECLARATION

I, Werner Johann Wichmann, declare that *Systems theory training as a context for healing – an autoethnography* 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.

Signed:  
Date:
SUMMARY

Title:

*Systems theory training as a context for healing – an autoethnography*

Abstract:

The mini-dissertation explains how systems theory provided a healing context for me in my training as a clinical psychologist over two years. The emergence of my authentic voice is narrated in an autoethnography (five act drama) about what happened. The main theoretical bases for the dissertation are – constructivism to understand the learning and teaching I experienced; learning as a collaborative endeavour and the emergence of my authentic voice with help from more skilled others. Systems theory informs the entire study at every theoretical level. Bowen’s family therapy theory is significant for the differentiation of the self and his *I*-position is equated with the emergence of an authentic voice. Myth, epic narratives, the hero’s journey amplify my interpretation of the differentiation of self. The raw data for the qualitative research were observations, interviews, creative writing, photocollage, a collection of readings, songs and dialogues. The themes emerging from the autoethnography were about obstructions because of the authoritarian nature of my upbringing, life and work. These themes lessened in force in clinical training until my authentic voice emerged in relation to self and as a clinical psychologist. A recommendation from the dissertation is that autoethnography provides a good vehicle for reflection and intense interior scrutiny needed to become a practising clinical psychologist; the autoethnographical exercise could be used by training clinical psychologists more extensively on their journey to maturity.

**List of key terms:** Autoethnography, Systems theory, Voice, Authenticity, Clinical training, Healing, Epistemological shift, Constructivism, Creative writing.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION
The aim of this autoethnographic study is to reflect on how the understanding of systems theory purveyed in a clinical training setting provided me with a healing context. This involved an enhanced differentiation of the self and enabled me to access my authentic voice at deeper levels both in my clinical life and work and in my personal life. The autoethnographic study of my own lived experience of my journey in becoming a clinical psychologist forms a personal story that is the basis for this study and provided the raw data for the analysis of findings (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The mini-dissertation is qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and consists of a biographical description of the highly personal process of clinical training from a systems and complexity point of view (Abraham, 2011). Kuhn and Woog (2011, p. 253) remind us that, “Complexity, in conceptualizing life as self-organizing, dynamic, and emergent, offers evocative metaphors for making sense that are not bound to linearity or certainty.” However, in order to accommodate the linearity and structure required by the study, this chapter is divided into sections that provide a background within which my inquiry can be read. Key ideas that form the outline and contours of the study follow here, and include: Autoethnography, Narrative, Social Constructivism, Systems Theory and Clinical Psychology, Correctional Services in South Africa, Motivation for the study, Aim of the study, and an Outline of the Chapters which follow.

1.2 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY
Cresswell (1998), in approaching qualitative research, reminds writers to make use of their own experience. Since the 1990s autoethnography has become increasingly popular in the social sciences as Ahlander and Bahr (1995, p. 66) indicate:

There is presently a resurgence of interest in qualitative methodologies, including ethnography, participant observation, and the study of family stories and personal narratives. Such approaches
seem appropriate to the study of the moral dimensions of family work. So do any methods that emphasize local and familial perspectives, and encourage close attention to lived experience and the meanings people give to their lives and activities.

Ellis (1998, p. 10) defines autoethnography as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness ... usually written in the first person voice where the workings of the self are expressed both cognitively and emotionally”. According to Richardson (2000, p. 932) this form of study “can evoke deeper parts of the Self, heal wounds, enhance the Self – or even alter one’s sense of identity”. Furman (2007, pp.18-19) says, “Autoethnography has been defined in various ways”. Behar (1996, p. 174) suggests that autoethnography attempts “to map an intermediate space we can't quite define yet, a borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life”. Pelias (2003, p. 372) asserts that autoethnography “lets you use yourself to see culture”. For the purpose of this study, I understand autoethnography as the exploration of the self which is then a vehicle for understanding important cultural and psychosocial realities through narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Against this briefly sketched background of autoethnography, I outline the part of my life pertinent to understanding what follows. I was accepted as one of the nine candidates in the master’s clinical psychology training programme at UNISA in 2008 which meant that I had to resign from employment. Prior to becoming a fulltime student (at 32), I had been employed as a prison warder for 14 years in the Department of Correctional Services in Gauteng. I have turned the personal reflections on my experiences into narratives presented in a variety of styles (Abrams, 1999) for this study. They are based on extensive notes, diary entries, observation field notes, songs, music and used transcripts of interviews, recordings, photos and reflections on my notes. The narrative reflects the painful and exciting course of events and processes which led me to becoming a clinical psychologist. Qualitative methods are used in this study, based on narratives. I analyse my own autoethnography and photoessay to elicit the ideas and themes that emerge from the experiences. Using personal narrative as an autoethnographic study required me to put my story into the context of narrative (literary and dramatic) and the
uses of narrative in contemporary social sciences. The fact that my self is the first person narrator and the person about whom the narrating person is speaking, helped me to create a more holistic and complex sense of self (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 1998). The consequence of this is that I experience an increasingly deeper and more authentic voice emerging through the process of self healing, forgiveness and development. This process was initiated in part by my training in the Masters programme in clinical psychology at the University of South Africa.

A range of ideas which are expanded on in the chapters following this section are mentioned briefly as guiding principles in this study.

1.3 NARRATIVE

In the social sciences over the last two decades there has been an increasing emphasis on the role of narrative, especially in qualitative research (Ahlander & Bahr 1995; Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Cheon & Murphy, 2007; Herman, 2007; Macleod, 2006). Narrative is a fundamental way by which human beings interpret reality, and has been richly researched in recent years, even from a neuroscientific viewpoint (Schiff, 2006; Stafford, 2006). Narrative therapy, based as it is on Vygotsky’s seminal work, has had an impact on therapeutic interventions in clinical practice since the 1980s and has become a valued tool in psychotherapy (Angus & McLeod, 2004; White & Epston, 1990). The value of narrative for constructing our sense of self is crucial for humans and with the advent of cognitive psychology has become increasingly important as neurologists examine what the meaning of self is for persons (Eakin, 2004; Damasio, 1994; Damasio, 2004; Gaugusch & Seaman, 2004; Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1992). Wolter, DiLillo and Kenn (2006) have described how narrative therapy has been successful in externalizing problems in people’s lives in the counselling and therapeutic setting. White and Epston (1990; 1997) suggest that narrative therapy may provide a means of retelling stories with hope, rather than from a ‘problem-saturated position’. When, however, the ethnographer is “simultaneously narrator and narrated in her or his textual representations” (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p. 170) another complexity arises. There is a danger, as Atkinson and Delamont
(2006, p. 171) suggest, that while the narrative gives “access to the private 
domain of personal experience” it might not be thought to need the same 
scrutiny as other qualitative research data. To avoid this problem my 
narrative is analysed through a rigorous narrative analysis. The themes which 
emerge initially are discussed first, and are followed by those themes that are 
deemed to be secondary or inferred by way of further analysis. The issue of 
narrative is more fully discussed in Chapter Two.

1.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM
In terms of an underlying theoretical response to an epistemology suitable to 
describe my learning experience over two years in this study, I was most 
drawn to the social constructionists to describe my academic experiences. 
For social constructivist philosophers (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) 
humans actively create knowledge through interaction with others and the 
meaning assigned to this knowledge constructed depends on the 
interpretation of the participants involved. Secondly, constructivists assume 
we all experience reality differently and especially personally, with our own 
cultural, character and conditional nuances and undertones, with the result 
that we could say our realities are multiple and perspectival (Charmaz, 2000; 
Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Gergen, 1985). Personal narratives are 
a good reflection of all our personal realities, both beyond us and within us in 
that sense. The sense of self when represented in a textual way can also be 
described as articulations of ‘authentic voice’ of the self narrating. However, 
the therapeutic stance which I take is not one in which I stand as an anti-
realist – there is an objective reality (Held, 1995).

1.5 SYSTEMS THEORY AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
Systems theory has become highly significant for me during the two years of 
clinical training. Jiayin (2011, p. 333) reminds us that, “At the present time, 
we can say that in the twentieth century there have been at least five scientific 
discoveries of epoch-making significance: the theory of relativity, quantum 
mechanics, molecular biology, Big Bang cosmology, and systems science.” 
The significance of systems theory cannot be underestimated. As early as 
1935, Tansley, the British ecologist, spoke of ecosystems (Melson, 1980) to
describe the environment of all organisms as a way of clarifying the interdependence of all organisms. In psychology in the environment of family therapy Melson (1980) notes the early development of numerous approaches from McKenzie’s (1924) through Barker (1968), Hsu (1972), Moos (1974), Astin (1968) to the animal ethology approach of Lorenz (1965) and Tinbergen (1951) and Darling and Dassman (1972). Bowen’s approach (1978) is informed by systemic thinking. Vorster (2003, p. 110) writing about the most important contributions of General systems theory to the field of Psychotherapy draws attention to Dreyer Kruger’s idea that general systems theory might be used “as a meta-theory into which most, if not all, other existing approaches could be integrated to create a more workable and flexible eclectic framework”. Melito (2006, p. 346) asks (and answers) the interesting question on systems,

What do a well-functioning family, a good marriage, and a psychologically healthy individual have in common? We may consider all of these to be systems, that is, entities “maintained by the mutual interaction of their parts”.

Further he states (Melito, 2006, p. 347), “Diverse systems may be integrated by identifying ‘structural similarities’ or ‘isomorphisms’ between them (von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 33)”. And he goes on to cite Bateson (1979, p. 12), “It is patterns which connect … ”. That systems theory permeates all levels of psychological debates is evident in the twenty first century. The move from one theoretical framework to another in the activity of psychotherapy which a systems theory base enables was my own experience during training.

The seminal work of Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), the Austrian biologist, underpins systems theory. Dacher, writing about a new model of medicine (1995, p. 188), explains the idea of systems theory in the following way,

... systems theory ... first developed as a modern response to the accumulation of expanding volumes of information and data and an increasing emphasis on microspecialization. Systems, or organizational theory, is an attempt to integrate, to create wholes out of parts. It is in essence a science of wholeness. Its concepts and principles are based on the observation that nature is organized in patterns of increasing complexity and comprehensiveness, and that
these larger wholes, or units, have characteristics and qualities unique to the whole and cannot be identified or accessed through an analysis of their component parts ....

The general systems theory of Bertalanffy (Bertalanffy, 1955, 1968; Pouvreau & Drack, 2007) has had profound effects in almost all disciplines from the human and life sciences to medicine and engineering.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) provides a systems’ analysis description of human development which presents multipersonal systems of interaction which are not limited to a single setting (1979, 1981, 2005). Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) and Swick and Williams (2006) explain this approach as based on the idea of the individual in interactive relationships in different levels of the social context in which they exist. Each of these levels can be seen as interacting with other levels within the ecological system (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). In the model there are five proximal interacting dimensions or systems that have to be considered in understanding a person (Donald, 2002, p. 49), the micro, meso, macro, exo and chrono systems. This model suggested itself as a way of organising the rich data that emerges from an autoethnographic study.

Swick and Williams (2006, pp. 371-373) provide useful definitions of the interacting dimensions or levels of Bronfenbrenner’s system: the microsystem is the ‘immediate environment (physically, socially and psychologically)’; the exosystem is the ‘close, intimate system of our relations within families’; the macrosystems are the ‘larger systems of cultural beliefs, societal values, political trends, and “community happenings”’; the mesosystems are the places of interconnection between ‘two or more systems’; and finally chronosystems frame ‘all of the dynamics of families’ and self-organising units of society across time.

Bronfenbrenner is an important theorist in the field of social ecologies. Bronfenbrenner’s conceptualisation of five environmental systems ranging from fine-grained inputs of direct interactions with social agents to broad-based inputs of culture as a way of describing human development owes a lot to the changing ideas developed in science about systems and especially complex systems over the last forty years. The emphasis on multiple
ecological relational aspects is typical of the changing ideas in thinking about man in relation to his environment.

1.6 THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA
The Department of Correctional Services (for which I worked) is a department of the South African government; it has the function of running the prison system. In the Act (No. 111, 1998 Correctional Services Act) the following is made clear, that it has:

To provide for a correctional system; the establishment, functions and control of the Department of Correctional Services; the custody of all prisoners under conditions of human dignity; the rights and obligations of sentenced prisoners; the rights and obligations of unsentenced prisoners; a system of community corrections; release from prison and placement under correctional supervision, on day parole and parole; a National Council for Correctional Services; a Judicial Inspectorate; Independent Prison Visitors; an internal service evaluation; officials of the Department; joint venture prisons; penalties for offences; the repeal and amendment of certain laws; and matters connected therewith.

It had an enormous impact on my life and my clinical training. Its culture of maintaining the stability of the systems with its fixed patterns of operating in terms of the execution of its primary function requires from its staff complete compliance. It forms the backdrop for all five levels of the interactional ecologies suggested by Bronnenfenner in the previous sub-section. The impact of fourteen years of enculturation in this setting and the formative impact of that experience in relation to my authentic voice and processes of becoming will be explored in this research.

1.7 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY
This dissertation contains a record of my training as a clinical psychologist from an autoethnographic point of view. In order to practise as a psychologist the delivery of a dissertation is one of the requirements.

The profound ‘epistemological shift’ (Keeney, 1979, p. 122) which I experienced and through which a process of healing, transformation, forgiveness and personal growth developed enabled me to write this
dissertation from my lived experience. However, without the academic experience the process would not have been possible – hence my concern with how the learning process happened and how it could be described. Ellis (1998, p. 10) defines autoethnography as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness ... usually written in the first person voice where the workings of the self are expressed both cognitively and emotionally”. According to Richardson (2000, p. 932) this form of study “can evoke deeper parts of the Self, heal wounds, enhance the Self – or even alter one’s sense of identity”. My desire for self transformation and the need to be of assistance to others are linked to the autoethnographic style of inquiry in this dissertation.

1.8 THE AIM OF THIS STUDY
The primary aim of this study is to subject my own experiences by way of narrative to an autoethnographic scrutiny as part of a qualitative research inquiry. The purpose of this study is to serve as a narrative about my therapeutic journey of becoming and developing my authentic voice during my training as clinical psychologist. I aim to demonstrate how my lived experience prior to starting my studies impacted on my academic training and how the amalgamation of these lived experiences and bodies of implicit knowledge brought about shifts in how I view the world and myself. Dell (1984, p. 44) writes that “epistemological assumptions can be either shattering or freeing”. In my case, I aim to show how the epistemological shifts form an interplay between past experiences, immediate situations and therapeutic systems training led to greater personal actualisation, differentiation of the self, increased interpersonal flexibility and enhanced ecologies of well-being and relating. These are useful and important process outcomes for psychotherapists who are required to support people who experience crisis, disease and relational difficulties (Bowen, 1978; Held, 1995).

1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS
Chapter One serves as an introduction to the reader and sets the stage for my study. It is a general background and highlights important issues to appear
later in the study. In Chapter Two I discuss the theoretical basis for the ideas in this study – what kind of learning I experienced, the theories of Systems, Narrative, Bowen’s Family therapy theory, rites of passage and authentic voice. Chapter Three is a discussion of the research design, methodology and the place of autoethnography in qualitative research. Chapter Four is the autoethnography and reports on my raw data in the form of a range of narrative techniques; the styles in the writing are very varied, from ironic quotations and scene headings, including first person narrative, to dramatic dialogue, discursive writing (some of which is provided in raw form in the Appendices). Chapter Five integrates the theory of Chapter Two with the discussion of my findings. Chapter Six concludes to the dissertation.

1.10 SUMMARY
This chapter serves as a general introduction to the study outlining the background to it, and includes a summary of what to understand by the term ‘autoethnography’, a brief introduction to narrative as the foundation for autoethnography, an introduction to social constructionism which underpins my understanding of my own learning process, a description of systems theory to foreground its importance in the Psychology Department at UNISA as I experienced it, a brief paragraph on the Department of Correctional Services as the space in which I acquired much of my lived experience; there is an aim and motivation for the study, and finally, an outline of the chapters to follow in the dissertation.
CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The epistemological explanation of complexity is that reality is spontaneous, irregular, and operating along a continuum from stasis to chaos, rather than inherently stable, orderly, and at equilibrium. (Kuhn & Woog, 2011, p. 255)

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter acts as the theoretical background to this minor dissertation. As with my autoethnography the theoretical bases of several issues are presented from a personal perspective. The chapter is also part of my autoethnography, describing what I understood as the major theoretical ideas I encountered, reflected on and which moulded my thinking (Ellis & Bochner, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2000), although it is not in the same style as Chapter Four. Bowen’s (1978:59) insightful distinction – “distinguishing between the subjective feeling process and the more objective thinking process”, although he refers to parents of his patients, is at the heart of the difficulty in presenting this theoretical chapter as “theory only”.

The organisation of the chapter is as follows: a discussion of how I experienced learning at the university and the theories about learning which resonated with me. I had to examine what that learning might be based on because academic learning has been difficult for me from primary school. Then I expand on systems theory as an epistemological tool from several perspectives as well as in the clinical psychology department and some new developments in it which have informed my autoethnography. African epistemology follows as it is a significant element in the multicultural communities in which the clinical training was done and is the ground of my
experiences. The next section deals with narrative and the transformational arc in storytelling (Marks, 2007). Finally the ideas of Murray Bowen which are important for Family Therapy are considered, as well as rites of passage, transformation, forgiveness, open-endedness and authentic voice.

The path towards becoming a therapist during the two years of training at the university was not clear during the process. Although there was an academic introduction to psychological theories (Becvar & Becvar, 1988, pp. 3-13) in terms of systemic approaches versus older ones such as the psychodynamic views, an understanding developed only in the application of the systems approach in the second year of training and internship. The profound effect the systems worldview had, not only on my activities as a therapist, but on my life, has led me to adopt a systemic approach to the writing up of this dissertation. By this I mean that I looked at the academic writing process as part of the system of experiencing, recording and reflecting on which I have been using my whole life. The autoethnography in Chapter Four is creative, and the Appendices contain material which is part creative, part documentary, part quotations. Each element of the writing up of the autoethnography had its own development and evolution, a directed or an undirected trajectory. It is easier to describe that process than what the autoethnography is attempting to describe – being in the process of developing an authentic voice was very often an unconscious process.

The writing up of this dissertation has been difficult in establishing a distinction between the theoretical framework of the ecological systems foundation which I absorbed at the university and my own theoretical basis from which to write. The reflection on my learning and the teaching at university which I received led me to articulate that understanding as “knowledge is a construct and not an independent reality” (Gergen 1985, 1994). Because this chapter records the bedrock of ideas expressed in the following chapters, in which I describe what I learned and how I learned, I approached the theoretical framework from the discipline of education for adults (Alfred, 2002).
In reading and discussions with educationists about how learning happens I became aware of the philosophical ideas of Symbolic Interactionism, Constructivism and Sociocultural learning. The significance of knowledge as a social and personal construction developed through my dialogue in a community of practice with other adult learners (Alfred, 2002; Burns, 1995a; Burns, 1995b; Held, 1995). I also had worked in a multicultural environment and so felt that due deference to multicultural issues was needed. The introduction to African epistemology was an exciting insight offered through the department which used rituals in a living context at the Agape community psychological initiative in Mamelodi which was hosted by Professor Stan Lifschitz from Unisa. The overarching importance of Systems theory (Melson, 1980) which underpinned the department’s ecological approach to teaching and my new discoveries in Complexity theory (Abraham, 2011; Kuhn, Woog & Salner, 2011; Kuhn, 2002; Woog, Dimitrov & Kuhn-White, 1997) had clearly to be a part of this discussion. Maturana was a constant reference point and his contribution to clinical psychology understood to be profound. Reading in the crossover territory of education and clinical psychology I became aware of Bronfenbrenner’s ideas specifically. Finally, the significance of narrative and autoethnography has become clearer in writing this dissertation and deserve discussion.

The literature which I have read on the theoretical topics of importance to my epistemological shift is reviewed (in a narrative style) in this chapter. The metaphorical transition I experienced in the clinical psychology training as I endeavoured to bring my lived experience into a dialogue with the new insights and attitudes I developed (my own authentic voice) and the deepening experience of myself-as-therapist was the focus of the reading.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Constructivist philosophers (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002) suggest that humans actively create knowledge through interaction with others and the meaning of the knowledge constructed depends on the interpretation of the participants involved. Secondly, constructivists assume we all experience reality personally and differently, with the result that our realities are multiple (Charmaz, 2002; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). Reality for different individuals over a period of time is also different for each person, but this does not imply that there is no extrinsic reality, of course. Barbara Held (1995, p. 203) warns on this theme,

Those participating in the realism/antirealism debate take it for granted that all theories are constructions, an assumption that does not automatically assign anyone to one side of the controversy. However, to then say that the theoretical construction we have just created is the *only* reality we have is to confuse two things: it confuses (a) the linguistic status of the theory itself with (b) the extralinguistic or extratheoretic reality that the theory is attempting to approximate indirectly. That is, the reality under investigation is not itself a mere linguistic construction - a nonreality, if we take seriously the proclamations of postmodernists/constructionists- either as it *exists* itself, or as it is *known* to the investigator. And no therapist I know of treats it as such, despite his or her antirealist epistemological declarations.

The research paradigm for the discussion on *learning* in this study is based on the ideas of Constructivist philosophers. (The paradigm for therapy is different- it is a systemic approach.) ‘Paradigm’ as I understand it in this minor dissertation is an ‘epistemological position’ (Luitel, Settelmaier, Pereira, Joyce, Nhalevilo, Cupane & Taylor, 2009; Niglas, 2001), or set of beliefs about how the world is constituted and hence what meaning can be attributed to it. In describing my path towards becoming a therapist I understood that I had adopted an epistemological position which was not an ecological or systems position at first, but gradually I was adopting another one. So, in suggesting this study’s paradigm or primary epistemological position is constructivist when I reflect on how I as an adult experienced the learning I
did, I am taking the position that knowledge is a construct and I give meaning to that knowledge according to my understanding.

2.2.1 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM, PRAGMATISM AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

The ideas which preceded what is called Constructivism were those of the Symbolic Interactionists. The great importance attributed to language as a key symbol of thought was striking for me. To understand the development of the idea of Constructivism my literature review revealed that the idea is generally conceived as a philosophical understanding of the world embedded in the American Pragmatism tradition. That tradition was inspired by John Dewey (1859-1952), William James (1842-1910), Charles Peirce (1839-1914), Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1921) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) (Prus, 1996). Symbolic interactionism was a key development in sociology (Loconto & Jones-Pruett, 2006). Early sociologists such as Charles Ellwood (1873-1946) and Herbert Blumer (1900-1987) were significant names, along with the more famous Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Mead (Loconto & Jones-Pruett, 2006).

Significant for me about Symbolic Interactionism is its association with the American pragmatism tradition, because that tradition emphasises “efficacy in practical application” (Rescher, 1995, p. 710) and as such is a valuable basis for clinical psychology and family therapy which aims to bring about practical changes in the lives of people.¹ The philosopher who really developed pragmatism was Charles Peirce whose life spanned the nineteenth century.²

As a scientist, the scientific method with its three elements - abduction, induction and deduction - was crucially important for him. By abduction I

¹Rescher (from the University of Pittsburg) has called it a “utility-maximisation" model by which he means that the action is right if it benefits the greatest number of people for the best.
²Charles Peirce died at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and was one of the polymaths of the nineteenth century - a mathematician, logician and scientist, among other things.
understand a kind of guessing when one ‘accepts a conclusion on the grounds that it explains the available evidence’ (Hookway, 1995, p. 1). In bringing this to bear on my development as a therapist, I became increasingly aware that the production of hypotheses which were then tested against facts and the development of the therapeutic relationship was my style of therapy. According to Peirce science itself was a ‘process of sign interpretation’ and his semiotics is significant for this study in terms of interpretation of evidence. Interpreting evidence from the narrative of the client is the process of sign interpretation. Hookway (1995, p. 650) explains that Peirce’s science of signs, semiotics, is ‘a theory of understanding, an account of how we are guided and constrained in arriving at interpretations of signs’; and a sign ‘denotes an object only by being understood or interpreted as standing for an object’. The conceptual framework of the pragmatism tradition emphasised the use of language in human interaction and explored the meaning and the interpretation of human behaviour (Prus, 1996, p. 49) from the point of view of semiotics. The common characteristic of pragmatic philosophers is an assumption that people act towards things in terms of the meaning they have attached to those things.

Pragmatism’s perspective on human behaviour inspired the development of Symbolic Interactionism (Prus, 1996, p.48). Herbert Blumer, the American sociologist, developed Symbolic Interactionism from the work of the sociologist Mead, and that of Ellwood by establishing a clearer and more coherent approach rooted in the interpretive paradigm that could be applied in the studies of human lived experiences (Loconto & Jones-Prueitt, 2006; Prus, 1996, p. 74). Symbolic Interactionism is rooted in the idea that human action is guided by the meaning humans attach to other human beings or things (Denzin, 1994, p. 25; Prus, 1996, p. 67). Hare’s (1995, p. 540) comments on language and sociality (he is speaking of Mead) in a manner that resonates with my understanding of Constructivism: “Essential to this process [of social

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3 Working hypotheses of this kind I discovered were the starting points for the clinical psychologist.
experience and activity] is the role of language as the form of reflexive communication.”

The emphasis on the role of language in my journey to becoming a therapist focussed my attention on the Symbolic Interactionist perspective. As the aim of this study was to generate information on the meaning of the data collected from the participant observer, myself, by analysing the language of my narrative (in terms of the themes expressed), I had to examine the relations between Constructivism and its originating ideas.

2.2.1.1 Constructivism and learning

A constructivist epistemology was chosen to interpret my experience of training and generating and analysing my autoethnography for a particular reason. Because the theory of constructivism posits that learning is a search for meaning, I decided that one of the major results of my training in clinical psychology was the generation of meaning from the narratives I constructed about my life at all its different stages (Hanson & Sinclair, 2008; Morrone, Harkness, D’Ambrosio & Caulfield, 2004; Palincsar, 1998).

To understand what the constructivist theory of learning is, I investigated constructivist epistemology (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003; Morrone, Harkness, D’Ambrosio & Caulfield, 2004). This led to an examination of the founding education father’s work - the seminal work of Vygotsky (1978, n.p.) on learning is the key to constructivist principles in the way he proposes a ‘zone of proximal development’ in the process of learning:

The zone of proximal development [my italics] furnishes psychologists and educators with a tool through which the internal course of development can be understood. By using this method we can take account of not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed but also those processes that are currently in a state of formation, that are just beginning to mature and develop.
Although Vygotsky’s is speaking about children here, what he says can be generalised to adults, I believe. Kozulin (2003, p. 17) explains further:

Vygotskian theory stipulates that the development of the child’s higher mental processes depends on the presence of mediating agents in the child’s interaction with the environment. Vygotsky himself primarily emphasized symbolic tools – mediators appropriated by children in the context of particular sociocultural activities, the most important of which he considered to be formal education. Russian students of Vygotsky researched two additional types of mediation – mediation through another human being and mediation in a form of organized learning activity.

In my training at the university to become a clinical psychologist more capable others in the group (lecturers and colleagues) assisted less capable members of the team to understand concepts which were difficult during their social interaction. I experienced the mediation of formal education, mediation through other human beings and mediation through formal organised learning activities. The social interaction of the team bore directly on the construction of my new knowledge. Morrone, Harkness, d’Ambrosio and Caulfield (2004, p. 21) say:

Much of the recent interest in social constructivism can be linked to Vygotsky (1978) who argued that social interaction promotes development and learning. A central part of Vygotsky’s approach is the role of more capable others, who facilitate the child’s development by ‘scaffolding’ the child within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is the ‘distance’ between what a child can do with help from others (assisted performance) and what the child can do with no help from others (unassisted performance).

Buchanan and Smith (1998, p. 62) commenting on education generally were confident that constructivist principles had permeated many disciplines by the late 1990s:
Although constructivism was a central tenet of Piagetian theory, it has developed into a broad educational framework that other theorists (e.g., learning theorists, information-processing psychologists, and developmental psychologists) now agree upon. The framework is based on the assumption that knowledge is constructed by learners and incorporates Vygotsky's idea that knowledge is co-constructed through collaboration with others. This assumption is supported by cognitive research showing that learners construct their own understandings, that new information must be somehow connected to existing schemata, and that all learning is dependent on prior knowledge.

Lane (2007, p. 159) makes explicit the two key kinds of knowledge construction:

Different aspects of constructivism are espoused by educators, but two of particular importance are personal knowledge construction and social knowledge construction.

He (2007, p. 160) expands on the importance of these two concepts for students (whether they are at school or university):

Personal knowledge constructivism holds that individuals must construct their own knowledge through the meaningful experiences they undergo … . Students are seen as individuals having their own conceptual frameworks, built up over time and varying according to their particular experiences and surroundings. Changing the internal framework of … concepts within a student is a complex task, one that cannot be met by direct (traditional) instruction alone … .

This is the sense in which I experienced the training at the university which I underwent – my internal framework of concepts changed both through the university education and through an examination of my lived experience through that lens.
The following description which Lane (2007, p. 161) gives of a constructivist learning environment is in many senses what my own experience was. The lecturers seemed to:

… (a) create environments where students are allowed to engage in actions and activity; (b) foster student-to-student interaction in and out of the classroom; (c) design activities that will agitate weak … constructs students possess; (d) structure learning tasks within relevant, realistic environments; and (e) bring out several solutions and representations of the same problem.

In this sense the university environment was an enabling one for me. However a further significant element of my sociocultural learning experience was the sense of belonging to a community of practice. Crossouard (2009, p. 77) says of sociocultural learning theories that their proponents “see learning as going beyond cognitive restructuring processes, and instead as entailing the construction of identities through participation in communities of practice”.

A significant development in the experience of becoming a clinical psychologist is that of understanding that one belongs to a community of practice. This is also part of the development of the authentic voice.

2.2.1.2 Systems theory and learning

The ecological systems approach used at UNISA in the development of clinical psychologists can be linked to the twentieth century’s burgeoning ideas about physics (and expressed at first in mathematics) about complexity. In terms of systems theory the idea of complexity is a fairly recent development. Scholars (Coveney & Highfield, 1995; Kuhn, 2002; Wolfram, 2002; Woog, Dimitrov, & Kuhn-White, 1997) seeking to explain the physical world in its complexity, layers, networks and interconnections note that complexity and chaos operate at the minutest and at the grossest levels. The development of ideas from von Bertalanffy’s earliest insights, through
Maturana and Bronfenbrenner to the present reveal the potency of the idea of networks and interdependence for all disciplines. The department at UNISA in focussing on systems theory as a teaching model is at the forefront of current educational thinking (Melson, 1980). Kuhn, Woog and Salner (2011) comment on their use, as university teachers, of complexity theory for the stimulation of students towards epistemological development. They (2011, p. 253) explain their position:

Complexity, in conceptualizing life as self-organizing, dynamic, and emergent, offers evocative metaphors for making sense that are not bound to linearity or certainty. We utilize complexity as a conceptual framework in teaching related to various aspects of the humanities and social sciences … .

Kuhn, Woog and Salner review the epistemological development theories by which students make sense of their adult learning from William Perry and Jean Piaget (1950s), through the 1980s with Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, who worked with women students only, to Kitchener with her idea of epistemic cognition which allows one to think about thinking itself. Kuhn, Woog and Salner (2011, p. 258) extend their review to discuss Salner’s epistemological cognition stages, while reminding the reader of the constructivist stance:

As Perry and later researchers of adult cognitive development … have demonstrated, the epistemological assumptions that people hold about the nature of reality and their role in it vary according to their particular life experiences, including their exposure to various kinds of learning environments.

As Kuhn, Woog and Salner relate adult cognitive development to the process of learning they (2011, p.258) state,

… it is clear that changes in epistemological assumptions are frequently necessary in order for a student to master a body of knowledge. Failure to change the basic view of reality can retard a
student's understanding of theoretical material that is presented in the classroom.

The proposition that Kuhn, Woog and Salner put forward is that the basic view of reality as it is expressed in complexity theory, a development of systems theory, is invaluable in helping students develop cognitively. In explaining the value of their use of complexity theory and metaphors from that domain they (2011, p.261) express an idea about learning which, on reflection, seems to sum up the experience I had at the university:

Viewing the world and experience as complex enables a different engagement. Personal, social, and material aspects may be conceived of and related to differently. There can be more space for “the other.” This way of viewing allows greater richness of experience and freedom for conceiving of future possibilities. From a complexity perspective, we may envisage human society as spontaneously emerging through interactions between self-organizing, dynamic, and emerging entities or systems. The world or reality can be treated as dynamic. This means we can conceive of both the phenomena that we seek to understand or manage, as well as our own processes of perception and apprehension, as responsive to, and generative of changes. Intrapersonal (within the individual), interpersonal (between individuals), and phenomenological self-organization, dynamism, and emergence can be envisioned.

One of the single most important ideas to emerge from complexity theory is that of alterity (Kuhn, Woog & Salner, 2011). In the light of the Other in relation to the learning process, dialogue is of importance.

2.2.1.3 Dialogues and learning

Dialogue implies the existence of another. The value of dialogue in the learning and teaching situation is attested in the literature on the topic. Eun (2010, p.404) says about the relationship between education and development:
The interrelationships among teaching, learning, and development … are based on a sociocultural principle that maintains that development proceeds from the social plane (i.e., the intermental plane) to the individual plane (i.e., intramental plane).

The work of Mercer (2008) and Kubli (2005) in relating inter-mental and intra-mental processes through approaching the teaching-learning experience by using dialogue is the direction in which current practice is going. Mercer (2008, p. 99) says, “Research has also moved us to a better, if more complicated, understanding of how ‘speech’ helps the development of ‘thinking’”. He has distinguished between ‘talk’ and ‘speech’. The opportunity for dialogue or speech rather than mere talk to help thinking became increasingly important over the two years of my training as I moved from listening to active engagement with clients and colleagues. Kubli (2005) emphasises Bakhtin’s dialogical approach to teaching and learning. Or as Eun (2010, p. 405) puts it, expanding on the idea of Vygotsky’s obuchenie:

... sociocultural theories define the essential characteristic of processes of teaching and learning as being interactive. The interactive nature of the teaching and learning process is realized as teachers and students engage in collaborative activities with shared goals and purposes that are constantly negotiated through dialogues.

Kubli (2005), outlines other key issues in the dialogical situation which are noted here as bearing on the dialogical activity in the training situation in which I found myself: Piaget’s ‘egocentric’ speech and ‘inner silent speech’ in their relation to meaning making; individual reconstructions of what others in a group say; addressivity; textbooks and other information sources as scaffolds to learning; and the extraverbal in communication. These matters are taken up in my discussion of the findings in Chapter Five.

2.2.1.4 Multiculturalism and learning
On a larger scale, the idea of the Other in a multicultural setting remains important in South Africa. This study has as its larger setting the multiculturalism of the country. There are several significant facts which are touched on in this small section as it relates to the previous discussions around teaching and learning and points forward to the discussion of African Epistemology. The points are the multicultural university classroom, Eurocentrism and a discourse community which is empowering.

In the formal education setting, the scholar, Alfred (2002, p. 1) speaks about an environment which she calls the ‘adult education classroom’ – what the classroom is like at a university - with the important caveat on Euro-centric models in a crosscultural situation:

Scholars of adult education are beginning to question the extent to which the adult education discourse community empowers some learners and silences others, according to their race, culture, gender, nationality, physical ability, and sexual orientation, to name a few contexts … .

In a post Apartheid South Africa the after effects of the silencing of others remains a powerful idea. This minor dissertation is a description of the transition from mono-culturalism to multiculturalism.

Alfred (2002, p. 1) articulates the question in terms of power dynamics and democracy:

To understand the adult education classroom as a viable site for learning, we must first explore the power dynamics that tend to give voice to some learners while silencing others. So the relevant question is: To what extent can the adult education classroom be democratic in its structure and orientation if it is to hear the multiple voices of community members?
It was the democratic structure of the ecological systems training in my experience which enabled me to think about ‘multiple voices’. The realisation that my own ‘voice’ might have been silenced in the several discourse communities in which I had lived was an excellent insight. Alfred (2002, p. 11) explains the situation in its two extremes – a site of domination and a site of challenge:

If we view discourse as a fluid, discursive space that can be changed and negotiated, then sociocultural theory holds promise for informing a more inclusive adult education. I am suggesting that although a discourse community can be a site for power and domination, it can also foster the opportunity to challenge these hegemonic practices, thus changing the culture and values inherent in the community. The sociocultural view pays attention to the values, practices, and resources inherent in a community and notes how they validate some and marginalize others.

In a community of practice such as the group of clinical psychologists with whom I trained became, the teaching and learning among us as adults with multicultural backgrounds and multiple discourses made our production of meaning and construction of knowledge very richly layered. In terms of the theoretical framework of this chapter, the movement to understanding African epistemology constituted part of my epistemological shift as a clinical psychologist.

### 2.3 AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

During the second year of training my experience of African epistemology had a profound effect on me – a white person engaging at a deeper level for the first time with the idea that African world views could be radically different to those of the West. Mogobe Ramose, Professor of Philosophy at UNISA, writes in his meditation on ‘Globalization and ubuntu’ (2002, p. 643), ‘Motho ke motho ka batho’, the core meaning of which is, ‘to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others’. This is generally what I had understood to be the underpinning of African epistemology – mine was a
simplifying and non inclusive understanding (Bewaji & Ramose, n.d.). It was this theoretical understanding which continued to develop from my previous years' practical experiences at the Agape community initiative

However, further reflection and reading brought a more nuanced view of how to understand African epistemology. My ‘idea of Africa’ was through the prism of my own culture. Valentin Mudimbe (1994, pp. 211-212), the philosopher from Duke University, has called for an examination of the ‘idea of Africa’. He says about this ‘idea of Africa’,

> On the continent, it is conceived from colonial disconnections and articulates itself as a rereading of the past and as contemporary searches for identity. In its prudent expressions this idea presents itself as a statement of a project born from the conjunction of different and contradictory elements such as African traditions, Islam, colonization and Christianity.

The colonial disconnections were well known to me from my work at Correctional Services. But ironically, where Mudimbe (1988) characterises Africans in search of identity against the backdrop of the forced Westernisation of colonies, I found myself seeking an identity. The first hand experience of a ‘contemporary search for identity’ was provided for me as a white South African in a black democracy as South Africa became in 1994. The ‘colonial disconnections’ of which Mudimbe speaks were felt as a discomfort at first hand when I understood something of the colonial past and contemplated my own unreflecting participation in it. To embrace indigenous ways of constructing knowledge, emphasising Africanness was part of my epistemological shift. The understanding that colonisation activities of every sort, from the gross acquisition of land to the minute compulsion to ensure that the colonised share the manners of the colonists, are constructed around the notion of Us and Them became untenable. Colonisation disguises the divide between Us and Them. In South Africa the opposite was true – the divide was harshly enforced by law as Apartheid. I had had only limited experience of Islamic traditions. The rise of Pan Africanism and Pan Arabism
as influences on the idea of Africa were unknown to me at the start of my training.

Further Mudimbe's (1994, p. 212) reminder that the people using the idea of Africanness are engaged in a particular discourse of their own was an added perturbation:

In its [the idea of Africa] operations this idea is also a product of complex and incessant enunciative and practical negotiations between, on the one hand, the polysemic notions of race, *ethnos*, nation, individual and humanity (and thus it can hardly be reduced to an essence) and, on the other hand, those peoples' using, delimiting or dealing with these terms.

The complexity and layers of the idea of Africa and African epistemological assumptions is daunting. As a person ‘using, delimiting and dealing’ with the idea of Africa my view changed from my time prior to training to the present.

An easy way to apprehend the idea of Africa is through a “crossover” of cultures, the mixture of cultures, but it in no way goes to the epistemology of a culture quite different from one’s own. In terms of my sociocultural perspectives it became clearer and clearer that there is a different way of constructing knowledge from the African point of view as compared to that of the canonical western way. Chilisa and Preece (2005, p.659) comment on the first step of the argument (about the colonisers not understanding) that the construction of knowledge from an African perspective is different from the West’s:

The marginalization of local knowledge systems … was established in the colonial times that relegated all things indigenous or from the colonized communities as unworthy, uncivilized, barbaric and superstitious. Systematic efforts to inscribe Western ways of cultural, economic, political and social systems were applied during the colonial times and maintained in the post-independence era. The educational system did not escape the colonial construction of the colonized subjects and their relegation to otherness. Years after the struggle for
independence the content of what is taught, methods of teaching and research remain Western in non-Western contexts.

Such an attitude can completely disguise differences and ensure that there is an absolute silence from voices from another culture. My question was how to redress this issue. However, I came upon Breidlid’s (2008, p. 140) article and read:

This call for re-evaluation of modern and traditional knowledge systems is articulated in Odora Hoppers’ influential book *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems* (2002) as well as by a number of scholars who have done substantial research on indigenous cultures, worldviews and knowledge systems …

An in-depth reading of some of the scholars mentioned here as they approached indigenous and traditional knowledge systems (in education), for instance, Chilisa and Preece (2005), Hountondji (2002), Mwamwenda (1995) and Semali, (1999) began to drive me towards an epistemological shift. An African epistemology reflects indigenous and traditional ways of responding to the world – these include non scientific ways of knowing, orality, metaphysics, and holism. Breidlid (2008, p. 140) expands the idea:

The important contributions of philosophers and theologians like Mbiti … and Idowu …, have exposed the importance of metaphysics and religion in African epistemology whereas the Ghanaian philosopher Gyekye … has analyzed African worldviews and cultures in terms of a tradition–modernity dichotomy.

There has been no attempt to place the main ideas of an African epistemology into my autoethnography and have described them as I understand them because they became prominent in my clinical training. This not because the widespread belief in metaphysics, holism (all things are interconnected in a mythical and non scientific way) and the profundity of the continuing existence of a living oral tradition are not important, but rather that as yet I have no real grasp of what such a theoretical framework would mean.
for this academic dissertation and I have yet to understand what it might mean for my work as a clinician in practice.

2.4 IMPLICATIONS OF MATURANA’S IDEAS FOR PSYCHOLOGY
This section contains a description of the biological basis of knowledge which is Maturana’s valuable gift to psychology. I briefly trace the shift from the Cartesian view of the mind-body loop to current theories about the mind as embodied and consequently emergent in terms of complexity theory. These ideas do permeate my autoethnographic narrative and the approach I use in discussing the findings.

The Chilean biologist, Humberto Maturana’s (b. 1928) contribution to biology and consequently to psychology is immeasurable. Ruiz (1996, n.p.) has the following to say about his work in relation to psychology:

In the area of psychotherapy, the position of psychology until today is that human experience is already built and composed of thoughts, emotions, conscience, sensations, drives, etc. Maturana’s contribution is to show that each conception is a cultural phenomenon and that the therapist as well as the patient can participate in this system.

Ruiz (1996, n.p.) makes the above statement in the context of a fundamentally important idea about knowledge:

He [Maturana] is, to our knowledge, the first biological scientist to suggest that knowledge is a biological phenomenon that can only be studied and known as such. Furthermore, his proposition is that life itself should be understood as a process of knowledge which serves the organism for adaptation and survival. Maturana's work, thus, can be characterized as a unitary and ontological explanatory system of life and experiencing. Ontological because it visualizes human experience from a point of view situated from within itself and not from an external view from the outside.
Maturana and his pupil Varela have gone far to turning the western Cartesian view of Mind and Body upside down. The French mathematician and philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) (1996; 1999) who embodied the thinking from early in the 1500s about the mind-body connection ideas to the late 1900s is usually cited as the authority on viewing the body as separate entirely from the mind. He had developed a dualist version of epistemology which encompassed the idea that the mind and the body are distinctly separate entities. He postulated that in principle one could conceive of the one without the other (Smythies, 1989, p. 82). Later scientific materialists challenged such dualism, believing science would eventually explain the symbiotic functioning of body and mind and indeed neurophilosophy, although unable to explain consciousness sufficiently, has gone very far in unravelling the mysteries of the mind-body loop and consciousness as an emerging property (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1992).

What Maturana’s ideas mean in terms of an embodied mind can be explained as follows. ‘Embodiment’ refers to the concept that the mind emerges from the body’s neurophysiological structures, and language is deeply embedded in the sensori-motor and perceptual structures of the body. Mind and body are a set of parallel structures according to this thinking. The metaphorical basis of language arising from spatial and experiential life enables the exercise of reason and is fundamental to it. The distinction between brain science (Churchland, 1986; Crick, 1994; Damasio, 2004) and the science of mind or cognitive science (Dennett, 1991; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Varela, et al., 1992) should be clarified. Damasio (2004, p. 195) puts the whole problem clearly in his study of Spinoza, thus:

Because the mind arises in a brain that is integral to the organism, the mind is part of that well-woven apparatus. In other words, body, brain and mind are manifestations of a single organism. Although we can dissect them under a microscope, for scientific purposes they are in effect inseparable under normal operating circumstances.
In the period between the 1950s and the 1980s, because of technological advances in terms of non-destructive scanning and a multitude of advanced methodologies, it became easier for scientists studying the brain to reveal what part of the brain ‘fires up’ when the body is engaged in any activity, thought, recollection, imagining, or selfmodification.

The homeostatic state of our body-brain organism is dependent on the mutually interactive neural and chemical pathways between brain and body. This homeostatic state is linked to the well being of the organism and because of the complexity of our organism; thoughts and ideas play a crucial role in the brain’s regulation of the regulatory mechanisms for survival and wellbeing. The ‘images from the flesh’ (Damasio, 2004, p. 195) from the ‘maps’ of the body’s viscera, like gut, heart, muscle are one kind of image. The other kind of images come from the retina and cochlea and the skin and can be termed ‘images from special sensory probes’. Such maps as are formed are foundational to the ‘stream of mind’ (Damasio, 2004, p. 197). The third kind of mental image which is formed is partly bodily and partly to do with the pre-existing contents of the mind. The meshing of these two neural maps remains mysterious.

However, if this view is accepted then it follows that reason is not a disembodied faculty of mind if our mind is embodied. Contrary to this idea are the assumptions expressed by western analytical philosophy, or as Lakoff and Johnson (1999, p. 513) summarise the classic view of rationality when it is based on these assumptions:

- Rational thought is literal.
- Rational thought is logical (in the technical sense defined by formal logic).
- Rational thought is conscious.
- Rational thought is transcendent, that is disembodied.
- Rational thought is dispassionate.
When such a Cartesian view is embraced and for the major part of the last couple of centuries this is what was believed, a terrible dichotomy is experienced in our sense of ourselves. A rejection of this style of thinking leads to a rapprochement of our lived experience. Rather, reason and morality as well as language can be seen as part of our embodied minds and language operates through metaphor in making the abstract experience of our lives concrete. Another way of expressing this understanding became clear to me as I read more extensively about the revolution in thinking about brain, mind and experience. In terms of the mind-body loop it is the self who both experiences ‘reality’ through consciousness, has knowledge of it and takes action as a consequence of it. Not all philosophers have liked to face this problem and Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1992, p. 60) say ironically of some of the great philosophers when they faced the problem:

The usual way is simply to ignore it. Hume … chose to withdraw and immerse himself in a game of backgammon; he resigned himself to the separation of life and reflection. Jean-Paul Sartre expresses this by saying that we are ‘condemned’ to a belief in the self.

The strong belief in a personal self has implications for the therapeutic process as well as the epistemological shift I underwent as a training clinical psychologist (Cheon & Murphy, 2007). These ideas are explored in Chapter Five. What I have understood thus far is that in the languaging of the two apparently conflicting systems, everything arises out of the body-brain-mind feedback loop (current cognitive science), and everything is connected but there is an outside locus of control or metaphysical component to it (African and Protestant epistemology), serves to create a conflict. How one constructs the world is through language, how one experiences the world is described in language appropriate to one’s belief system (Cheon & Murphy, 2007). Maturana’s idea that knowledge is a biological phenomenon has helped me to understand both my own experience and that of the clients I have seen. Maturana’s multiverse - that every person lives and operates from their own world or epistemology – has a sensible biological basis. Organisms do what
they are supposed to do and I as clinical psychologist can only perturb such a
system, without any guaranteed or predetermined outcome.

A striking metaphor which Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1992, p. 217) in
speaking about ‘various forms of groundlessness’, have used to explain the
world as it is experienced by our cognition, and not separate from our
embodiment, seemed a good way for me to understand - ‘organism and
environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another’.

2.4.1 Bronfenbrenner’s system

The idea of complex systems in biological studies benefitted psychology.
Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008, p. 201) explain what a complex system
is,

A complex system is one that emerges from the interactions of its
components. The components can be agents or elements. An
example of the former would be a flock of birds, which emerges from
the interactions of the individual birds that compose it. An example of
the latter would be air currents, moisture, and temperature interacting
to yield a weather system. Complex systems are often heterogeneous,
being made up of both agents and elements.

Urie Bronfenbrenner and his Head Start programme are significant milestones
in the articulation of ideas about developmental psychology (Paquette &
Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner was one of the most significant thinkers in
social ecology. His conceptualisation of three environmental systems ranging
from fine-grained inputs of direct interactions with social agents to broad-
based inputs of culture as a way of describing human development owes a lot
to the changing ideas developed in science about systems and especially
complex systems over the last forty years. To place the biopsychosocial
ideas in an ecological framework about psychological development, the
impact of systems theory is described by Dacher. He, writing about a new
model of medicine (1995, p. 188), explains the idea of systems theory in the following way,

… systems theory … first developed as a modern response to the accumulation of expanding volumes of information and data and an increasing emphasis on microspecialization. Systems, or organizational theory, is an attempt to integrate, to create wholes out of parts. It is in essence a science of wholeness.

Systems theory was based on scientific observation. Dacher (1995, p. 188) explains that the theory’s,

… concepts and principles are based on the observation that nature is organized in patterns of increasing complexity and comprehensiveness, and that these larger wholes, or units, have characteristics and qualities unique to the whole and cannot be identified or accessed through an analysis of their component parts … .

Bronfenbrenner's model of systems which impact on human beings (especially children) consists of several proximal interacting dimensions or systems that have to be considered in understanding a person (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). These systems can be described as macro-, exo- and microsystems as can be seen in the illustration in the figure below (Figure 2.1):
The microsystems are conceptualised as the systems such as the family, the school and the peer group, in which the person is closely involved in continuous face to face interactions with other familiar people. Such systems involve patterns of daily activities, roles, and relationships (Donald et al., 2002). Paquette and Ryan (2001, n.p.) describe it thus:

At this level, relationships have impact in two directions - both away from the child and toward the child. For example, a child’s parents may affect his beliefs and behavior; however, the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of the parent. Bronfenbrenner calls these bidirectional influences, and he shows how they occur among all levels of environment.

A meso-level could be described in Paquette and Ryan’s (2001, n.p.) words,

... this layer provides the connection between the structures of the child’s microsystem ... . Examples: the connection between the child’s teacher and his parents, between his church and his neighborhood, etc.

The wider factors which could impact on a person’s quality of life, and these could be part of the exosystem – such as the health, financial situation,
education and social life. Quoting Paquette and Ryan (2001, n.p.) again they say,

The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structure in her microsystem. Parent workplace schedules or community-based family resources are examples. The child may not be directly involved at this level, but he does feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction with his own system.

On a macro level the dominant social structures, beliefs and values, economy, nationality are factors to consider in an adolescent’s life (Donald et al., 2002).

Lastly (in terms of the bio-ecological theory) the interactions between these systems and their influences on individual development can all be said to be crossed by a developmental time frame (or chronosystem). This is described by Paquette and Ryan (2001, n.p.) as a system which,

… encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child’s environments. Elements within this system can be either external, such as the timing of a parent’s death, or internal, such as the physiological changes that occur with the aging of a child. As children get older, they may react differently to environmental changes and may be more able to determine more how that change will influence them.

The context during different times, for example, a family, or any of the systems in which a developing child is involved, may be seen in a process of development itself (Donald et al., 2002).

2.5 NARRATIVE AND THE TRANSFORMATIONAL ARC

This section outlines my understanding of narrative and a brief discussion of Dara Marks’ ‘transformational arc’ ideas.
2.5.1 Narrative

Schiff (2006, p. 22) provides a useful definition of narrative (although it is in the context of a discussion about narrative psychology):

The word narrative has a broad and a narrow sense. In its narrow rendition, narrative means the study of storytelling proper, including the analysis of specific stories, the study of plot lines, themes, forms of address, etc. Although this narrow definition of narrative is valuable in interpreting lives, it is also limiting. I take narrative in its broad connotation as the act of telling, narrating or showing subjective experience. In such a way, narrative becomes the act of expression in which persons make known the meaning of experiences and the significance of their actions.

The meaning of experiences and significance of actions in constructivist terms arises out of a personal epistemology. In the production of this dissertation the description through narrative means in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five as acts of expression to give meaning to the writing up of past experiences is what I have understood as an autoethnography. However, the dangers inherent in taking autobiographical narratives as more authentic and so more true are enumerated by Atkinson and Delamont (2006, p. 167):

Autobiographical accounts are no more 'authentic' than other modes of representation: a narrative of a personal experience is not a clear route into 'the truth', either about the reported events, or of the teller's private experience. It is one of the key lessons of narrative analysis that 'experience' is constructed through the various forms of narrative.

In the light of this caveat the autoethnography I have produced should be seen as an account or performance (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p. 167). The emphasis on the discussion of the findings in Chapter Five takes this into account by analysing the story in Chapter Four from the point of view of “rhetorical, persuasive properties, and their functions in constructing particular versions of events, justifications of actions, evaluations of others, and so on” (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p.168). Although the constructivist stance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, p. 35) would give credence to the personal
construction of the meaning assigned to the narrative/ account/ performance, there is the need in an academic setting to analyse the autoethnographies from another point of view. Atkinson and Delamont (2006, p.170) advise that this involves:

… the recognition that they are forms of social action, like any other. Moreover, they are inescapably social phenomena. That means more than acknowledging that they are produced and circulated in ‘social contexts’. It also implies the recognition that they are based on socially shared conventions.

Even more significantly our biological makeup, the maps and mental models which are different and the same for all humans will produce very differing narratives. Our personal narratives are also co-authored by significant other individuals. There are innumerable other sources. The subplots in our stories which are unwanted and personally limiting (Cheon & Murphy, 2007; Drewery & Winslade, 1997; Winslade & Monk, 1999) very frequently arise from cultural or political stereotypes that “place people in particular positions or relationships with others and themselves and prompt them to describe the world from particular vantage points” (McKenzie & Monk, 1999, p. 93). Such limiting subplots can exert such power that they can dominate persons’ narratives and compel them to view their world through that lens. Cheon and Murphy (2007, p.7) say, “Narrative therapists suggest that because we are born into and are affected by dominant discourses, they are internalized within us as truths and influence personal narratives.” The complexity of enunciating or performing narratives is further complexified by the act of analysing them (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2005).

In choosing to relate the narrative of my own life and subject it to an analysis I have tried to see that my lack of an authentic voice could be turned around and I might experience a transformation and differentiation of the self.
2.5.2 Transformational arc

Dara Marks’ (2007), ‘transformational arc’ in her book on scriptwriting arises from her interest in myths and storytelling. It has been useful for me to look at it but as I had written my autoethnography as a play and a story, rather than a filmscript, along classical lines, I have only used what has been significant from her materials to emphasise what is important for me. Her deep reading of myth is exemplified in her description of the plot of a script as having an ‘awakening’ moment in Act One (of her three act structure) and a matching ‘death’ moment when the protagonist dies to old beliefs, attitudes, and so on in Act Three which comes before the ‘release’ and ‘renewal’. Or in the words of Hartman and Zimberoff (2009, p. 48) ‘Claiming the Treasure: From Vision to Commitment’. The first and second ‘turning points’, one at the start of the journey or plot, one at the ‘death’ experience are the traditional nodes of importance in the classical drama – conflict and peripeteia as the play moves into the denouement. The renewal moment is described by Hartman and Zimberoff (2009, p.48) as ‘The Return: Transforming Your World’. A further consideration in a tragic story is the so-called ‘hubris’ or ‘fatal flaw’ of character of the protagonist. If my fatal flaw was compliance and being unawakened, then I could describe my acquisition of an authentic voice both as Werner and as therapist, as ‘Return – transforming my world’.

But my play is not one about the protagonist with a fatal flaw. I chose the idea of Dante Alighieri’s (Wilson, 2011) comedic style (La divina commedia 1308-1321) in which the play or story ends well – that is why I call my autoethnography ‘The comedy of Werner Wichmann’ (Dante, n.d.). There is another factor to the choice of Dante as a model – his world was rigidly hegemonic, medieval Italy under the all-powerful Catholic Church, but he had the courage to write in Italian, not Latin. My case is analogous, I write in English not the dominant language of my family, Afrikaans. Further I like the story of why Dante wrote La vita nuova (1295) a new life about his love for Beatrice which I equate in some way with the decision to represent my new and authentic voice as Sarasvati, a lady goddess. The development of
dramatic tension is more slow moving than that of film as this is the first time I have made a sustained dramatic piece of work.

2.6 OTHER THEORETICAL VOICES OF IMPORTANCE FOR ME AS THERAPIST

In this section some of the most significant issues in family therapy which informed me in the two years of clinical training and beyond are outlined.

2.6.1 Bowen’s Family System Theory and Melito’s reflections on systems theory

Murray Bowen’s (1913-1990) Family System Theory that suggests “how the family as a system contributes to offspring’s psychological adjustment” (Peleg-Popko, 2002: 355) was a useful theoretical basis for some of my thinking about my nuclear family as I strove towards higher differentiation scales than my parents display. Skowron and Schmitt (2003) give a useful insight into the use of the Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI) and exercising oneself through the questions provides healing insights. What seemed significant in understanding the theory was that it gave me assistance in the development of my authentic voice. Peleg-Popko (2002:356) expresses the value of the therapy thus:

Greater differentiation is thought to enable one to take I-positions in important relationships, namely, to maintain a sense of self in an intense emotional relationship or in the midst of uncertain circumstances …. It also involves a capacity to decrease one’s own anxiety and to resist being overwhelmed by the anxiety of others …. In the interpersonal realm, differentiation refers to the ability to experience autonomy from others and intimacy with others. More differentiated people tend to have greater autonomy in their relationships without experiencing debilitating fears and anxieties of abandonment, and more intimacy in their relationships without feeling smothered ….
As a therapist in practice the issues of self in therapy are vexed. Cheon and Murphy (2007) give guidance on the need for the self-of-the-therapist in therapy to be considered. In the light of my very frail sense of my own importance, *I*-positions became increasingly possible with the passage of time in the clinical training. Other factors such as ‘emotional reactivity, … , fusion with others, and emotional cutoff’ (Peleg-Popko, 2002:357) were matters for reflection particularly when the writing up process started. Bowen’s theory of ‘triangling’ (Bowen, 1978:78) as I approached my parents and stayed outside their emotional space also led to the emergence of my own voice. The repetitious patterns in my nuclear family of very old habits of interaction started to become clear on reflection (Bowen, 1966,1978) and writing. Certain characteristics such as spousal dysfunction of one spouse became clear in my view of my family as well as the projection of problems to the children. In addition, I saw that Bowen (1978:89) made an observation true for my nuclear family,

... when a family is subjected to chronic, sustained anxiety, the family begins to lose contact with its intellectually determined principles, and to resort more and more to emotionally determined decisions to allay the anxiety of the moment. The results of the process are symptoms and eventually regression to a lower level of functioning.

The other important idea which Bowen (1978:84) has offered to family therapy, namely ‘cutoff’ is described by him in this way

The degree of unresolved emotional attachment to the parents is equivalent to the degree of undifferentiation that must somehow be handled in the person’s own life and in future generations. The unresolved attachment is handled by the intrapsychic process of denial and isolation of self while living close to the parents; or by physically running away; or by a combination of emotional isolation and physical distance. The more intense the cutoff with the past, the more likely the individual to have an exaggerated version of his parental family problem … .
For my own transformation handling my style of cutoff was only gradually accomplished, but knowing what was happening theoretically was valuable. Differentiation of the self as I understand it is a very long process.

Melito’s use of systems theory compels him in the direction of a structural-developmental approach to various therapies based on a reading of von Bertalaffy. Melito (2006, p.347) hopes, once he has outlined the theory of adaptation, to,

... demonstrate how a structural–developmental approach can be used for integrating individual and family structures and processes, integrating certain individual and family theories, combining techniques from diverse approaches, and ordering diverse family therapies in terms of levels of adapting.

2.6.2 Rites of passage

The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep’s book, The rites of passage which was translated in 1960 from the French, is still regarded as a seminal influence and an important source of information about ritual. He (van Gennep, 1960:viii) speaks about “regeneration as a law of life and of the universe: the energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals” as a response to his research amongst indigenous people. This regeneration was accomplished in the socio-cultural world by rites of passage – often expressed as rites of death and rebirth. The clear distinction made between the sacred and the profane is central to the transitional stages in which groups or individuals find themselves (van Gennep, 1960:vii). He (van Gennep, 1960:21) traced three stages in ceremonial behaviour associated with rites of passage: a) Separation – pre-liminal rites; b) Transitional - liminal rites of aggregation and gradual return to stability, and c) Incorporation – post liminal rites.
During such a regenerative process a person is believed to pass through liminal states, also of consciousness. Liminality is a state of segregation. It could be described as a subjective realisation that something meaningful in one’s existence has been extinguished or separated from previous relationships and roles. A liminal period in a person’s life eventually means the crossing of a threshold or margin, a movement of an individual from one mental/physical state of being to another. Stephen Greenblatt, in the catalogue of the exhibition *Rites of Passage*, at the Tate Gallery, London, in 1995, is reported as defining the *limen* as follows: “the threshold or margin, the place that is no place, in which a subject is rendered invisible” (Morgan & Morris, 1995:29).

Interest in modern cultures losing touch with rites of passage and especially in an Afro-American setting gave rise to the founding of such institutes as the Rites of passage Institute in Ohio (*National Rites of Passage Institute*) which aims to bring awareness of the value of such rites and rituals.

Closely related to rites of passage is the hero’s transformation in mythological texts. Joseph Campbell, scholar of world religion (1949) and Mircea Eliade (1963) have treated the idea extensively, Campbell from his ethnographic studies and Eliade from lived experience in Siberian communities. In Hartmann and Zimberoff’s (2009, p. 3) meditation on the hero’s journey they say,

> The first three stages of the Hero’s Journey - preparation, becoming one’s authentic self, and then claiming the ‘treasure hard to attain’ – can be seen in Jungian perspective as confronting one’s shadows, working through the contra-sexual anima/ animus elements within, and encountering what he called the Mana-Personality. The ego/ persona is incomplete and longing for the gift of completion, the shadow is the gift giver, and the anima is the gift.

It has been useful to reframe my own experience of my shadows and finding my authentic voice from the perspective of myth.

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*Limmen* (Latin): threshold
2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to show that the theoretical framework I adopted for this study could only be developed retrospectively – that is, post training in the ecological systems theory which Unisa offered. The reason for this is that the power of such training to effect an epistemological shift was considerable. Embedding this study in the developed systems theory, complexity theory with its powerful metaphors helped to describe the complexities of training, practising as a novice clinical psychologist and writing up the study. The significance which systems theory gives to alterity gave me the chance to discuss the Other as a partner in a dialogical interaction in the community of practice of clinical psychology and emphasise the value of ‘speech’ as against ‘talk’. The dialogues were pursued in a multicultural setting. This gave rise to the discussion associated with alterity, namely, in my case, African epistemology, posited as the radically other than western, Calvinist epistemologies. Reflections on our complex world was shown as the most contemporary development of systems theory. In terms of the complexity of disciplines impacting on psychology there followed a brief review of the most important systems theorists for the discipline, Maturana, his student Varela and Bronfenbrenner. The penultimate section of this constituted a discussion on narrative as part of the theoretical framework of the study. Narrative was characterised as performative and socially enacted. Due attention was given to one of the exponents of transformative narrative enactments of one’s life – Marks. Thereafter the issue of differentiation of the self from Bowen’s theory was discussed, as were rites of passage and Melito’s structural–developmental approach which be used for integrating individual and family structures and processes. The perspective of myth as it points to transformation was briefly mentioned.

The next chapter, Chapter Three is a detailed discussion of my research paradigm and methodology.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION
In this chapter the discussion of the research design and methods used in this minor-dissertation takes the following format: Research Paradigm, Research Approach, Research Design, Research Method and in this last subsection, Collection of data and Analysis of data. The figure (Figure 3.1) below is an illustration of the research design to clarify the steps taken. The central issue being investigated was the emergence of my authentic voice.

Figure 3.1 Diagram to show the research procedures

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM
The general view of the world which we have at any time affects our research. For this reason a brief discussion on the research paradigm opens this chapter. Guba and Lincoln (1994, pp. 107-108) explain that the set of basic
beliefs which we have about the world’s constitution gives us the particular perspective we have – it is our worldview and those beliefs “are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness. If there were, the philosophical debates … would have been resolved millennia ago.” Our worldview is the paradigm within which we build our theories about how the world works: a paradigm is a species of framework within which theories are built. The term ‘paradigm’ can also be named an ‘epistemological … position’ (Niglas, 2001). It fundamentally influences one’s understanding of how things are connected on the macro and the micro scale. When one holds a particular worldview it necessarily influences personal behaviour, professional practice, and also the position one takes about the subject of one’s research.

The study was undertaken within an interpretivist and constructivist paradigm. To speak about an interpretivist paradigm is what I understand to be a way of constructing the world from multiple perspectives (Henning et al., 2004, p. 20). This was a suitable paradigm for this study because I wanted to look at my own experiences which led to the emergence of my authentic voice. There was a process of before and after which was collected as a narrative – but there were many different stages and times in which the narrative was developed, and the same is true of the photo essay. There is a written narrative and a pictorial narrative to describe the world I constructed before the emergence of my authentic voice and after its emergence.

The theoretical ideas underpinning this study are those of the constructivist philosophers. Social constructivists make specific assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning as well as about intersubjectivity. Their key ideas are summarised briefly in the illustration (Figure 3.2) below:
The active creation of knowledge through interacting with other people and the assigning of meaning to that knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) was my experience in training. Also the experience of reality as personal and different (Charmaz, 2002; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002) made me realise that reality is multiple as a consequence. These so-called constructivist ideas (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107), are, the ‘paradigm’ for this research. Social constructivists emphasize the importance of culture and context in understanding what happens in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (McMahon, 1997) and this is what I try to show in my autoethnography.

In presenting the research issues from the participant’s/observer’s/experiencer’s point of view, in this case, my point of view, the inquiry is ‘interpretivist’ (Henning, et al. 2004, p. 20). Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000, p. 368) reminder to researchers was also something which
needed to be considered, namely that in an interpretivist research design, unlike in a positivist one, all the “problems that may arise in a qualitative study” are not necessarily anticipated. The autoethnographical approach fits such a research design. Further, Schwandt’s (2000, p. 192) understanding of interpretivist philosophies settled my decision about the research design, when he says,

… the idea of acquiring an ‘inside’ understanding – the actors’ definition of the situation is a powerful central concept for understanding the purpose of qualitative inquiry.

The table (Table 3.1) outlines in a summary way an interpretivist epistemology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epistemological questions</th>
<th>Interpretivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge based on observable phenomena, subjective beliefs, values, reasons, and understandings, co-constructed, about the way in which people make meaning in their lives, not just that they make meaning, and what meaning they make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of theory</td>
<td>Theories- can be revised, only approximate to the truth, are sensitive to context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory building/testing</td>
<td>Theories are built up from multiple realities &amp; shaped by social and cultural contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of research</td>
<td>Researchers want the ‘meaning’ of phenomena – so they research mental, social, cultural phenomena from perspectives of multiple realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research findings are true if -</td>
<td>Research has been a communal process, informed by participants, and scrutinised and endorsed by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of common sense</td>
<td>Common sense is about powerful everyday theories held by ordinary people &amp; reveals iterative and inductive reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of researcher</td>
<td>Researcher is co-creator of meaning because of bringing own subjective experience to the research while trying to develop an understanding of the whole and a deep understanding of how each part relates and is connected to the whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of values</td>
<td>Values are an integral part of social life – no values are wrong, only different from others’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of research</td>
<td>Unstructured observation, open interviewing, discourse analysis, attempt to capture “insider” knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of my epistemology, as a researcher I co-created meaning from my first unstructured observations - attempting to capture the insider knowledge which the experiences brought. Gradually as I produced the autoethnography, those observations, interviews and analyses of varying discourses fell into shape. In this I was fully aware of my own values. The role of common sense in approaching the theoretical component of my research allowed me to settle on constructivism to a large extent. In submitting my research findings for examination I enable others to endorse them and so the research is communal in that sense.

### 3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The approach to this research is qualitative. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 8) explain qualitative research – “implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured”. With the stress on how I learnt to co-construct knowledge in the context of my clinical training, the qualitative style of inquiry was a suitable one to choose as qualitative research is the means by which the value laden nature of experience can be examined. In using qualitative study the researcher is more interested in understanding a phenomenon being investigated than in quantifying the results (Henning et al., 2005, p. 3). Henning et al. (2005, p. 3) say this is because it gives the “freedom and natural development we wish to capture” of that phenomenon.

### 3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible. Obtaining relevant evidence entails specifying the type of evidence needed to answer the research question, to test a theory, to accurately describe some phenomenon. Research design ‘deals with a logical problem and not a logistical problem’ (Yin, 1994, p. 29). This study is qualitative and is based on the phenomenon of the development of my authentic voice during training. As I chose to use an autoethnography the design of this study
reflects that concern with the details and the value of my experience. In an autoethnography, which is a kind of qualitative descriptive research, the researcher can look intensely at his/her experience pool, drawing conclusions about it in that specific context. There was no attempt to focus on the discovery of a universal, generalizable truth, nor too much consideration of cause-effect relationships; instead, emphasis was placed on exploration and description (Thaller, 1994). How my authentic voice emerged during training was what I explored and described in this study both in a free writing exercise (Appendices A, C, F) and as a reworking of those materials into a drama/script presented as a summary analysis of my findings (step 1). In the next chapter, Five, I discuss the autoethnography as my findings (step 2).

To ensure that I had a rich data base I decided to use a variety of different methods of collecting data (Yin, 1994). In having many sources of data to work from the conclusions drawn can be considered more trustworthy than scanty evidence would provide. I produced narratives or biographies, a photo essay which necessitated the collection of photos from my life which were categorised, placed and labelled with due attention to the visual impact of the materials, the design and the layout. I performed open and closed interviews with family members (purposively chosen) which I recorded. My observations were recorded. I kept a diary and made field notes. Then I tried to make a thematic analysis of the narratives and finally used the emerging themes to produce my five act play.

3.4.1. Sites of the training
The sites for the training were a ‘natural’ one (Yin, 1994, p. 385) at the university, being classrooms and we sat in a circle usually. During the first year of training, once a week on a Wednesday the training happened on site in Mamelodi East at the Agape informal clinic. During the second year all training happened on the main campus at the Department in Pretoria at the university. I worked on a Monday afternoon after regular classes in the free clinic at UNISA (supervised by one of our lecturers and observed through a one way mirror by the colleagues and teachers. Clients knew and gave consent before a therapeutic relationship started. The observing team behind
the one-way mirror formed an integral part of the therapeutic process as their observations and feedback added to a richer understanding of the client as well as the client-therapist interaction. The observing team could ring a bell if they wanted to strategically contribute or ask questions which could add therapeutic value to the therapeutic process. This was a learning experience for the therapist as it heightened his or her awareness to the therapeutic dynamics in its ‘natural’ and real-time therapeutic context, which would not otherwise have been possible.

3.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The data collection was done by myself exclusively. The variety of sources from which I collected data is illustrated in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2 Data collection sources in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of source</th>
<th>How sources were used in this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative essays</td>
<td>Autoethnography from which I derived themes and analysed emotion-narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews (unstructured) with family members</td>
<td>Interviews with members of my family revealed themes in my family history and attitudes which had kept my authentic voice silent. Cultural and historical environments were adjudicated for their impact on my worldview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs from my own and family member albums</td>
<td>Photographs provided a telegraphic way of saying what many words could not. In analysing the photos I chose for the essay I was able to illuminate &amp; identify themes which had emerged in the written materials and in my reflections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary entries, songs, poems</td>
<td>A diary which was not kept on a daily basis but intermittently included songs and poems or important quotations by famous people and pieces of important literature which were striking for me and made general points about my past &amp; my emerging voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual artefacts</td>
<td>The artefacts were conceptual – visual and written down metaphors which I included and most significantly a tattoo on my arm. These expanded elements of the narrative and the essay which I could not articulate in another way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>I kept field notes which contained personal observations throughout the training which sometimes merged with diary entries and provided a less poetic way of looking at my experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative writing workshop outline of play/script</td>
<td>I attended a workshop on Creativity and brainstormed the 5 acts and the scenes for my play/film script</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.1 Autoethnographic narrative/ narrative biography/photo essay
Autoethnographic studies have increased in popularity and frequency in the social sciences over the last twenty years especially in qualitative research (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Herman, 2007; MacLeod, 1998). As a text for data an autoethnography is rich because, as Kleres (2011, p. 183) says, (speaking of narrative analysis) its,

... fundamental theoretical premise is that human experience has a crucial narrative dimension. It is organized along a temporal, sequential order of 'first this, then that', 'befores and afters' … . The idea is that people have specific “narrative” knowledge - the knowledge of how things have come about, a kind of knowledge that has not been abstracted and that is thus only accessible in its narrative form. There is an increasing move towards describing emotions and narrative as an inseparable unit in cognitive terms. Kleres (2010, p. 188) expands on this idea,

... narratives provide us with more than merely the cognitive antecedents of emotions. They grant us access to human experience as it is inextricably meaningful and emotional at the same time. The very nature of emotional experience can be conceptualized as essentially narrative in nature (rather than mediated by narratives) and vice versa: narratives essentially are emotionally structured. Emotions emerge from this as essentially narrative configurations, scenarios or gestalt. Rather than existing as discrete, isolated, reifyable things, they exist in the very sets of narrative elements that make up a specific instance of emotional experience, that is a specific configuration of actors, objects, conditions, actions, events, etc.

It is in this way that I have understood the narrative biography I wrote and it is from this perspective that my analysis of it is done. My autoethnography is an emotion-narrative. Despite describing my life in chronological terms in relation to the past it also is an emotion-narrative. I illustrated it with the photo essay because visuals are easier to read in terms of their emotional content than a long and complicated description of the emotion-narrative of the past. The period described as happening during training is a more direct and interesting narrative and is illustrated by a wider range of emotionally laden artefacts than the other story in the Appendices. Kleres (2010, p 188) says that 'linguistic research about emotions provides a wealth of analytical tools to approach the emotional content of texts'.

The narrative elements of any story relate to each other in certain ways which we can describe. A way of articulating this idea according to Kleres (2010, p.
189) is: ‘To analyze emotions narratively we thus need to ask who acts how to whom and what happens’. There is a further issue of importance and that has significance when the different events in the story are given a hierarchy of importance. So, Kleres (2010, p. 190) says,

By analyzing narrative components and their relations within the story, narrative analysis exactly looks at the antecedents of emotional experience. It shows us which elements make up subjective experience and how they relate to each other, for instance, which are the core events, how are they rendered, how do they relate to which backgrounds, how does an entire episode matter, etc. Then in the larger context of the different genres of stories, namely tragedy, comedy, romance and satire/ironic (Frye, 1961), my autoethnography may be characterised as a comedy. It ends with something new emerging – my authentic voice. Kleres (2010, pp. 190-191) says of comedy,

Comedies are stories of the emergence of something new, which is initially obstructed (e.g. by certain characters in the plot representing an older order). This, however, is a matter of reconciliation; its happy endings do not involve moral defeat. As comedy moves towards triumph over such obstructions, it can thus be said to operate within a much more cheerful, joyous emotional universe than romance. Agency is a further important component of emotion-narrative – who does what to whom. And finally the linguistic and lexical analysis of the emotion-narrative is significant.

3.5.2 Interviews
The interviews I conducted with my family were usually informal and part of conversations about things other than what I wanted to discover directly. I used probing questions and open as well as closed questions. I was able to control the information gathered, by asking specific questions with the aim of eliciting information relevant to my purposes (Pring, 2000, p. 39). Fontana and Frey (2000, p.663) remind researchers that,

We are beginning to realize that we cannot lift the results of the interview out of the context in which they were gathered and claim them as objective data with no strings attached.

The context in which the interview data were collected included socialising at home or whilst driving with family members as we were going about “our business as usual”. Except for my sister my other family members were comfortable participants in the activity of data collection.
3.5.3 Photographs
The photo essay (Appendix H) had the value for me of representing in a highly visual way many things I had not understood/remembered before. The photos I extracted from my family’s and my own albums were chosen to represent key points in my pre-training and post training life as part of a Creativity workshop which I attended because I had a mental block against writing. They largely represent me in relation to other persons, although there are a few which do not represent people. An important one is that of the donkey which forms part of the layered background of the essay. There is one of a pet dog; my property which I sold to fund my studies; objects relating to my father’s life; my tattooed arm. The impact of conceptualising the essay photographically was useful as a step towards writing the drama/script presented in the next chapter, Chapter Four.

3.5.4 Diary entries with songs and poems
Diary entries which consisted of unstructured writing and reflections often included poems, pieces of important literature and words of songs, significant quotations from famous or witty people which were significant either in describing how I felt or what seemed like a new identity emerging.

3.5.5 Conceptual artefacts
Metaphors (Gineste, Indurkhya & Scart, 2000; Indurkhya, 1992; Indurkhya 1992) in the form of writings (my own and that of others) as well as pictures reflected what was happening. Indurkhya (1991, p. 1) speaking about the key role metaphor plays in human understanding suggests that ‘metaphors … form our primary mode of cognition’. Richardson (2000, p. 927) explaining the metaphor of knowledge (as related to the sun, for instance) says, ‘Immanent in such metaphors are philosophical and value commitments so entrenched and familiar that they can do their partisan work in the guise of neutrality, passing as literal.’

Allowing myself to represent through metaphor what I had experienced in the training enabled me to access very familiar and entrenched ‘philosophical and
value commitments' in an effortless way. The way of metaphor is to compare by means of a rhetorical or linguistic shorthand a *known thing* with an *other thing* and encapsulate many different levels of understanding and experience in the resulting image. In Figures (3.3, 3.4, 3.5) below the classes of metaphor and their reflections (Ryan & Bernard, n.d., n.p.) which could be grouped together as a style of schema analysis are illustrated:

Figure 3.3 Yin-yang symbol\(^5\) to show ‘organism and environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another’ (Varela, 1992, p. 192) ©

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\(^5\) Yinyang or tajii according to common understanding: ‘The curves and circles of the Yin-Yang symbol imply a kaleidoscope-like movement. This implied movement represents the ways in which Yin and Yang are mutually-arising, interdependent, and continuously transforming, one into the other. One could not exist without the other, for each contains the essence of the other’. (Reninger, n.d.)
Figure 3.4. The goddess Sarasvati, goddess of speech or the word, ‘vak’: I am a new being, very powerful because I have a voice (Appendix I) (Saraswati, n.d., n. p.).

![Image of a cat and a dog]

Figure 3.5 The pleasures of the animal organism in the lived reality; nearly yin-yang

### 3.5.6 Observations

The next data collection method was observation (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 634). Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 634) state that “observational research is a method that focuses on differences, on the lives of particular people in concrete but constantly changing human relationships”. Direct observation of myself by myself was undertaken and recorded in writing. For the first time I started to read whole books and I kept notes on some of them that were remarkable (Appendix I). A limitation of observation is that the researcher might be selective in his observation and fail to record some aspects of the observation. I was aware of this but did not think of my observations as becoming part of this study at the time of writing. Through writing down my observations it was possible to see things that I might otherwise have noticed or mentioned (Patton, 2002, pp. 262-263). The observation was sometimes an attempt to capture group dynamics in the training at several levels. It was an ongoing process over the period of data collection (two years). My role of researcher was a participant observer watching and recording activities. The observations took place constantly.

Because of ethical reasons, my observation was overt. An important consideration, however, in observation is what Angrosino and Mays de Pérez
(2000, p. 692) have called ‘proportionate reason’, which is encapsulated in the following questions which observers should ask themselves, ‘Will the means used not cause more harm than necessary to achieve the value?’; ‘Is there a less harmful way at present to protect the value?’; ‘Does the means used to achieve the value undermine it?’  The key to undertaking observational research is an understanding that an action is guided by proportionate reason when the observer takes into consideration whether ‘a proper relation exists between a specific value and all other elements of an act’ (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000, p. 693) through experience, intuition and trial and error.  In Figure 3.6 there is an example of the notes/jottings taken / experienced during one of these observations amongst colleagues.  It is expressed as the words of a song because it encapsulated what I observed and experienced:

Everybody's searching for a hero
People need someone to look up to
I never found anyone
Who fulfilled my needs
A lonely place to be
And so I learned to depend on me.

Because the greatest love of all
Is happening to me
I found the greatest love of all
Inside of me
The greatest love of all
Is easy to achieve
Learning to love yourself
It is the greatest love of all

Figure 3.6 Example of a note taken by me by listening and then capturing the lyric that explained the complex experiences which I could not express in my own voice at that point

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS
The data from the narrative essay, photos, observations and artefacts were analyzed in Chapter Five.  Texts, images and expressions, not physical events but the records of them make up the data (Krippendorff, 2004, p. xiii).  The interaction processes in the training and with my family subsequently involved the use of language as a symbol of interaction and through which communication took place (Crotty, 1998, p. 75).  I analysed the use of language to establish the meaning of the data.  When interpreting raw data
the focus was on what the words meant, how language was used and the internal dialogue that would lead to interpretation and give the data meaning (Mouton, 2001).

Interviews were not transcribed. Below is an example of what the results of the training were in the interaction between a family member and me: (Figure 3.7):

At that moment I told him, with my voice cracking and with tears welling up in my eyes, 'I do not get it!'

A long period of silence followed and my father did not respond, he bowed his head, and after some time walked off. Understandably we did not continue our arguments for the rest of the afternoon, nor did he answer me. I left it at that, because this understanding finally put that demon to rest for me.

Figure 3.7: Example of an interview and its results

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THIS STUDY

Trustworthiness with concerns about truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality were considered in relation to the trustworthiness of the study, but as it is an autoethnographic study the concerns were all to do with whether I was being “true to myself” in my data collection activity as well as in its analysis. As this was not a positivist study but one based on constructivist principles, there was no attempt to match internal and external criteria of validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 158). By transcribing verbatim what I and my interviewees said, the truthfulness or truth value of the data was ensured. In terms of applicability and consistency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p. 21), the possibility of other researchers using the findings of this study in other contexts or settings was concerned, is not appropriate. Transferability or applicability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the
assumptions that were central to the research. The person who wishes to “transfer” the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer is. This study represented the personal experiences of the researcher and the findings cannot be generalized. As far as possible the problem of neutrality was addressed by accurately recording participants' voices and responses. There can scarcely be complete neutrality. Hence the presentation of multiple voices and especially mine, the researcher’s.

Since the 1980s when content analysis was not so general in the social sciences but more the business of psychology and communication science, content analysts have had to develop a methodology of their own (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 25; Ryan & Bernard, 2000, pp. 785-786). This methodology includes taking cognizance of issues of credibility and trustworthiness, reliability and validity.

3.7.1 Validity and reliability
Smith and Deemer (2000, p.882) allow five aspects of “validity”, namely descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, generalizability and evaluative. In this study care has been taken in terms of the descriptive validity as the qualitative nature of the research needs to be an accurate representation of what actually went on in my training as my authentic voice emerged. Although the account of what a researcher saw can be valid in principle, as soon as he interprets the data it becomes a matter of “interpretive” validity (Maxwell, 1992). Because it is language-in-relation-to-the world-it-is-supposedly-describing that is questioned in current debates about validity, the researcher used a multiple voicing technique to approach the problem of the omniscient researcher’s single voice. The voices of the other participants in this study have been reflected in the study (Smith & Deemer, 2000, p. 1028).

Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability (Whittemore et al., 2001). My lecturers
will confirm whether my authentic voice has emerged when this study has been examined. During the second year of training there were several instances when it was confirmed.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles in research imply a set of standards which guide researchers on how they should interact with research participants (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). Janesick (1998, p.39) states that “access and entry are sensitive components of qualitative research and the researcher must establish trust, rapport, and authentic communication patterns with participants”. One of the protocols of gaining entry to the research setting and building rapport with the researched included acquiring reassuring my interviewees that the study was limited and the property of the university once examined. I explained the purpose of the research and its processes. So as to ensure ethical standards, I made sure that the research design was appropriate for the study. The limitations of the research methods used were clearly stated and the limits of the information being sought were also stated. Further I attempted to represent issues truthfully and disseminate true information as well as avoid plagiarism.

Other important ethical considerations to be borne in mind during this study included issues of confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity and privacy. Emphasis was put on avoiding any psychological harm, humiliation, embarrassment and other losses that occur when research participants, communities and the researched suffer because consent and confidentiality principles are violated (Babbie & Mouton, 2002).

My family gave informed consent to participate. This meant that the aim of the research had to be clearly communicated so that no coercion was exerted to obtain data (Simons, 1989). The basic rights and dignity of participants were respected – they were reminded that they had the right to withdraw from my interviews or observations without any negative consequences.
Anonymity was guaranteed in instances where the theme of the research meant that private matters were discussed.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the theoretical background to the research design and method were outlined. The research paradigm was discussed, as was the research approach. Then followed the detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis with examples within the body of the text. Issues of credibility and trustworthiness as well as those of ethical research were covered. In the next chapter the data are presented.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION
This chapter is arranged as a presentation of my autoethnographical data to show how my authentic voice emerged in my development as a therapist. The autoethnography is presented as a play derived from the autoethnographic materials in the Appendices A, C and F. Those raw data were approached from several points of view: thematic analysis (Appendix G), narrative analysis and finally the analysis offered in this chapter – a transformation of the data into a play of five acts being the build up and setting the scene in Act One, Acts Two, Three and Four develop the story and Act Five lays out the denouement and transformation of the protagonist. The photoessay (Appendix H) was part of an exercise in the Creativity workshop I attended in August, 2011. The impact, from the selection and development into a single artwork of photographs, on my imagery for the play, was enormous, but it is not discussed in detail. Rather it acted as a focussing lens for the drama. I have used an Aristotelean idea about drama roughly transformed into the script for a five-act play (Deis, n.y. :n. p.).\(^6\) My most compelling experience of a play was a school experience of Shakespeare’s plays. The emphasis in the narrative is less on my family history (which of course is very important and informs the early suppression of my voice) and more on the release from the metaphorical imprisonment I experienced in the family and at my Correctional services workplace.

4.2 THE FINDINGS
What is contained in the next sections are my findings from an examination of what appears as Appendices, before writing my autoethnography as a play.

4.2.1 General observations

\(^6\) Help with the transformational arc drama/script came from a personal communication with Mr J. Kruger (UNISA): Dara Marks (2007). The Workshop on Creativity (Centurion) in August 2011 helped me craft my own play. Thanks to many participants, the ideas and titles of the Acts and scenes were a collective effort.
The raw material from which I originally derived the themes I present is provided in the Appendices (A-I). The common themes which were derived from a process of reading and looking ‘objectively’ or from another angle at my narratives, notes, observations, choice of songs, poems, quotations, excerpts of great literature and reflections were Self reliance, Fear of academic engagements, Enmeshment with my female relatives, Rage against my father's beliefs, Desire to conform, Desire for another ‘way’/new ‘way’ of being-in-the-world. This last theme was about how the emergence of my authentic voice enabled me to experience and live in a new way, unashamedly myself.

At first I tried to put down the themes in an order and tabulated fashion (Appendix G). I also tried to look at the emergence of my authentic voice from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner’s schemata (not reflected in the Appendices). Finally I tried an analysis which was narrative (Appendix A) but provided no freedom to reveal the drama of the events as I understood them in retrospect.

Although two foremost themes were identified in terms of the aim of this research, to show how my authentic voice emerged during clinical training - Obstructions and Emergence of the new - I have used those themes to construct another multi-level text called The comedy of Werner Wichmann (Kleres, 2010, pp. 190-191). I looked at my raw data and realised that like Dante’s Divina Commedia, the story of Everyman’s emergence from the things that obstruct and hinder his development, transformation, individuation or differentiation of self is an old story – a comedy in the sense that all’s well which ends well. From a mythological point of view the Hero’s journey, the journey which is the development of the plot, serves multiple purposes. Hartman and Zimberoff (2009, p. 44) list them as: a) journey as a map to psychological healing; b) sequential stages of that journey; c) the factors affecting each person’s journey; c) The journey as a way of resolving conflicting complexes and healing old wounds (and in this last section, the journey as ego development and an inward journey for spiritual growth). Marks’ (2007, p. 270 ff.) description of Romancing the Stone shows the same
sort of steps and was useful to reflect on. A look at any compelling film, *The Burning Plains*, for example, can be read from the inside as a psychological process. Its success will depend on the perspective of the director and the way the human development resonates with the viewer.

The lexical and linguistic analysis which Kleres suggests is useful for narrative analysis was beyond the scope of my academic training. Consequently, in approaching the problem from the point of view of writing a drama I was able to unconsciously attend to the lexical and linguistic foci in the narratives and record faithfully what was important.

The obstructions I had to overcome were to do with the totalitarian type of rule my father established in our family; the elements in all subsequent activities – school, church, neighbour interactions, post school training and working life – which replicated the early training of my father. From them I invented my reality and from them the clinical training in a systems based epistemology helped me to escape. I had a glimpse of what it might be like to escape from early when I started to excel physically at sport, made my sister my friend and confidante, studied at a tertiary level and then threw myself finally into the clinical training which presented me with a new vocabulary and ideas.

The presentation and discussion of my findings therefore takes the form of a kind of script as if for a play which shows the transformation of myself from the end of my BA Honours to my experiences during internship at a psychiatric hospital in Gauteng as I move to become a clinical psychologist and find myself in the process of differentiation of the self (Bowen, 1978).

The titles of each Act and then each scene are a kind of summary of what happens in the play. They are also an ironic commentary on the action, but the overarching metaphor is dramatic and represents a transformational arc, although not precisely in the Marksian format. Act Three (*Agape / Love in the time of hijacking*) is the climax of the play and the two acts which follow are the consequence of that epistemological shift I experienced. Acts One (*Gaudeamus igitur juvenes dum sumus*) and Two (*Systems rulz ok*) lead up to
the climax and represent the obstructions of my life. Act Three also contains obstructions but already contains the new voice which was emerging. Act Four (Taboo tattoo) shows the consequences understanding and applying systems theory to my own life and the actions I took. In Act Five (Amongst the nursery beasts), the denouement of the play, my authentic voice has emerged.

4.2.2 The Comedy of Werner Wichmann

Personae dramatis

Werner Wichmann  
His Father in several disguises  
Counsellors  
Different teachers  
Friends  
Writers & thinkers & singers

ACT 1: GAUDEAMUS IGITUR JUVENES DUM SUMUS7

Scene 1: It is by going down into the abyss that we recover the treasures of life. – Joseph Campbell

Set variously in Springs, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Werner Wichmann’s childhood and mind

2001-2005

BA in Psychology through UNISA by correspondence in 2001 – done, finished, signed and sealed with the Alma Mater’s own red stamp. Hooray! All the time I continued to live at home with my parents and to work for Correctional Services as a prison warder. I was immensely proud of what I had accomplished. It was the first time anyone in my immediate family had graduated from university. My father, mother and my sister were present at the graduation ceremony. Acknowledgement from the fruits of my labours motivated. I’d continue my studies – I was on a quest to change my life for

7 The opening words to the Latin academic song sung at graduation ceremonies – “Let us rejoice while we are in the prime of our youth … ”. Most people don’t know it’s an old drinking song from the time of the institution of the universities in Europe in the 11th century. It’s not a bit serious and sombre. I like it because my name Wichmann, means student in old German (private communication from a medievalist scholar).
me. I kept Marcus Aurelius’ words in front of my imagination, “Waste no more
time talking about great souls and how they should be. Become one
yourself!” This was a time of hope and confidence as the world seemed to be
opening up to me.

I enrolled for a BA Honours in Psychology and completed this in February
2005. I applied and went for the interviews held in 2004 at UNISA and WITS
already in preparation for the Masters degree. I wasn’t accepted at UNISA. I
was placed on the waiting list at WITS in the event of a candidate forfeiting
their position. My disappointment was extreme, despite it being my first
experience of Masters degree interviews. The sense of not being good
enough was a poignant reminder of the days at school when my sister and I
had suffered through my father’s embarrassing religious mania which left us
feeling very unworthy in comparison to other children.

Then in January 2005 I received a call from WITS that there was an opening
for me to do my masters in Counselling Psychology and that I could start
despite still having to write my final Honours exam at UNISA in February
2005. I grabbed this opportunity with both hands - only a few applicants ever
got the opportunity to be accepted for this course. - I still had to pass my final
exam at UNISA, was expected to start my Masters degree in Counselling
Psychology at WITS and had to get a bursary or alternatively resign from
work. Being predominantly self-reliant, I had saved enough money during my
working career to pursue my lifelong dream of full-time studies in psychology
at university. What to do? The horns of a dilemma … . I extended my leave
from work after writing my last exam paper at UNISA in order to start the
course at WITS in the interim, whilst waiting for my UNISA results. I was
allowed on the proviso that I pass the last paper, which meant that I didn’t
resign from Correctional Services in case I failed the paper or that my
expectations of this new endeavour would prove to be unattainable. My
excitement of this once-in-a-life-time opportunity came crashing down within
the first few days of attending full-time classes. The shock of this new
environment completely overwhelmed me – formalities of academia and its
language, English, the student culture, it was so different from my protected
distance education experience. This event constellated the recollection of the terror of academia I felt in my early school years.

ACT 1 Scene 2: Give me my nap!
Set in Johannesburg at WITS University
I went back dutifully every day to WITS sick at heart and fearful. My recollections of other brushes with fear-provoking academic life were all expressed in my summing up of my earliest school years. I had written about it:

I first started primary school in 1982, a few days after turning 6. Starting school was a huge shock to my system, considering that I had no pre-school exposure to a schooling environment. I felt sad and lonely being at school, away from my mom and sister. The smell of the little black boards and chalk till this day remind me how much I disliked school. I cannot recall much of what I learnt that first year of primary school. However, I do recall that I would promptly pack up my stationary and make my way to a play corner for a nap while the teacher was busy lecturing. This was my usual ‘nap time’ when I was at home and intended keeping to this routine to protect myself.

There was the terrible paradoxical battle waging inside me – I wanted to study psychology and I wanted to become a therapist, but cast down as I was, there seemed no way to go forward?? Nothing but obstacles! Although the studies through UNISA had been in English, the lectures suddenly face-to-face were terrifying in English. The work at the prison despite the early anxiety about being with dangerous characters as a warder didn’t seem as scary as this. I had nightmares. I seemed to be close to achieving a breakthrough from the old life to a new one and then I couldn’t handle it. I didn’t have the courage. My self worth was at an all time low.

It looked like I needed to keep the routine of the nap-time – back to mindless prison work because I was too scared to face the demons and try something new.

ACT 1 Scene 3: Back to prison
Set in Springs, Johannesburg, Margate,
I knew I wanted to be a psychologist but maybe I had set my expectations too high! I was in despair. The last day of my first week I went back to WITS, having already experienced enough to throw in the towel. I felt like my body was a donkey I was driving and driving and it was too stubborn to move. I remembered what the family story was:

I recall a story my father told me of how he watched his father beat a donkey to death one day. They were working and his father lost his temper with the animal, resulting in him beating the animal to death in front of his children. Another story he shared was how his father would send him on a 5km run to go and fetch a box of matches from the farm house. From what I understand, my father was very much the underdog.

After what felt like I was driving for years through all the experiences in my life up until now in my mind, I arrived at WITS and announced to the course co-ordinator that I didn’t wish to continue with the training. I’m not sure if I told her the truth about what I was feeling or if I found another excuse. She tried convincing me to reconsider, but it was over for me. I failed myself, not even waiting for the first evaluation or exam.

A few weeks had passed before I got confirmation that I had passed my exam at UNISA and completed my BA Honours in psychology. It disgusted me and reminded me of my failed WITS venture. I felt undeserving of this degree and stupid, not celebrating or sharing the news with anyone. For the time being I was sick of studying, as it did not improve my circumstances and I wrecked the one opportunity to do so in psychology. Instead of facing my demons or continuing with psychology as a profession, I decided to consider other career options. I consulted a career counsellor at WITS and tested for aptitude. The answer came back – PSYCHOLOGY! What kind of paradox? This was Campbell’s abyss, but I could not see any treasures in front of me.

I felt despondent having to return to the Correctional Services but it offered me financial independence regardless of the fact that I was a hard and reliable worker. The prison work had served me well over the years by allowing me the opportunity to further my studies, without having to be dependent or reliant on anyone. The rigid routine and military style discipline...
of prison was easy for me, because it only required obedience and not having
to think much for one self. Conforming to authority was second nature to me
as it resembled my obedience to authority at school and at home. I applied
for promotions at work and positions in the private sector which were more
stimulating and senior but I was blocked on every side.

Then came the news of the BA Honours graduation from UNISA. In a rage
against myself and academia, I opted for a golfing holiday with members of
the local prison golf club to Margate at exactly the week of the graduation. I
felt no desire to attend it, maybe as a form of unworthiness, self-punishment
and ridicule. My sister had moved out of home so my one sure confidante
was not available to talk to. I felt sad, despondent and very, very angry. The
thing that eluded me, a kind of golden age that I could make possible if only I
could be a psychologist, was telegraphically expressed in my recollection of
what life was like before my father’s brother had come to stay in our childhood
house. Here is that recollection:

Our household routine was pretty well run up until this disruption. We
had a cooked dinner around the dinner table at a set time, and had to
go bath and get into bed by 20h00. My father on occasion made time
to play with us as children. We were dutiful Christians who attended
the Dutch Reformed church or Sunday school every single Sunday.
My mother never joined us at church. But the standard procedure was
either a wholesome family lunch on Sundays or a braai at my aunt’s
house - my mother’s sister’s home. We loved these get together’s as
this implied fun, laughter and a general good time. We especially loved
my aunt’s puddings and cakes as she was a stickler for the high tea
event after dinner. Their home was the ideal picture of a healthy family
environment.

Remembering that lost era, I went back to Correctional Services with a BA
Honours in Psychology and no hope. I continued to work until I felt ready to
apply for the Masters programme in 2007. A blessing - another opportunity,
being selected to start in 2008 at UNISA!

**ACT 2 SYSTEMS RULZ OK**

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*Rulz ok:* ‘A slang phrase appended to a word (usually a noun), to form a rhetorical
question, which denotes superiority (ie. so-and-so Rules, OK?). It sometimes
appears without a comma or question mark, but always appears with the informal
Scene 1: Mr Switzerland
Set in Springs, Pretoria and Nomansland

2008 - 2009

Getting the call to be interviewed for one of nine places for the Masters Programme in Psychology at UNISA was like having an angel descend. I was terrified and exhilarated! Soon enough I discovered that my previous style of interaction, keeping silent or asking others to open up and speak wouldn’t work in the new context. The lecturers seemed to use a kind of one-upmanship or manipulation on us and with my deficit in the use of language, it was unpleasant for me. I was learning a new jargon but I couldn’t do anything with it.

The same lecturer who expressed concern about my anxiety gave me the nickname of ‘Mr. Switzerland’ during our group therapy. This name came about from my interactional style in group sessions (and definitely in other settings). What he meant was that I kept revealing my inability to take a stance or face confrontation. I knew this name was an amplification of my usual style of interaction and intended to be harsh feedback in a light-hearted fashion. It was funny for a few seconds after I heard it initially, and then it hit me! I realised what a style like that meant.

What were the patterns repeated in many contexts and in most of my relationships with others? All the ancestral patterns, endlessly repeated and not serving anyone – silence, obey authority, do as you are told, don’t think so much. Why couldn’t I comfortably speak my mind? Did I have things to say? Yes I did! I felt sick. Then it hit - I feared the reaction of others about my opinion or similarly that my opinion was not worthy of being voiced. Why had I chosen to remain voiceless for such a long time? I imagined being gagged. I had dreams about stories the prisoners told about voicelessness. I thought about my father who had taken the route of a crazy religion so that he would

"ok" as opposed to "okay". The phrase's first recorded use was in 1975, but it is rumored to have originated as early as the 1930's among the Glasgow "Razor Gangs". Rival gangs were known to tag each other’s turf with "(gang name) Rules, Ok?" during disputes over territory as a part of gang warfare.’ (Urban dictionary)
have a voice and how pitiful his voice was. I remembered my mother’s voicelessness and complete passivity. All of us scared to be confronted by criticism or disapproval or feeling guilt for speaking out against what we thought were the conventionally or socially accepted norms. Added to this was the very real terror of bringing into the open things from my past family experience that I did not want to face or speak about. Again nothing but obstacles in my way and imprisonment by way of silencing, now even in my own self.

**Scene 2: Thrilling realizations**

*Set in Nomansland of my mind*

Systemic principles suddenly began to have a form and shape and meaning for me. They couldn’t be reserved for psychology and be excluded from how I looked at the rest of the world in all other contexts. Here was a way of thinking, an application of a system which amalgamated my lived experiences with academia and gave me a new way of being and seeing. And this process just never stopped evolving.

The long journeys to and from Springs to Pretoria and back again left time for reflection. One of the fellow students was equally excited about process and travelled with me. In the insulated and private space of the car we could talk about ‘Systems theory’ – we understood it, we could apply it, and we could go far. We could set up a practice together later. It would be a huge white space with light streaming in. People would be overjoyed to come to us. There would be systems thinking not only reserved for human behaviour, but applicable to every context that describes a relational connection, like politics, economics, sport, nature, simply everything. These principles didn’t need be memorised nor did they become outdated, they were universally applicable and freely flowed as ways of seeing and describing. It was like learning to ride a bicycle. At first you have to focus or remember to pedal, balance, steer and so on. Once you have mastered the cycle you can do it without even thinking about it. You become one with your bicycle. When you’ve mastered cycling you can do tricks, track or road racing, mountain biking, any other activity that involves you riding a bicycle. It was a dazzling realisation.
I would apply systemic principles to describe and understand in everyday life. That meant that I wouldn’t psychologise or pathologise everything around me, but there was simply no way I could not see everything around me from a systemic principles point of view. I’d liberate myself from emotionality and the irrationality that comes with it. What Nietzsche said was true, ‘The higher we soar, the smaller we seem to those who cannot fly.’ I began to write down the most encouraging sayings, reams of them. What I was listening to in music gave me hope. There was hardly time to read but everything confirmed my new understandings.

**Scene 3: Revelation**

*Set in my very interior*

I had the feeling that what was going on inside me must be evident to everyone until November came and I opened this card:

![Image of a card with a quote by Juan]

**Figure 4.1 From Juan**

I saw my position in the world, not only having been a naïve participant but now I was being called on to also be an observer of myself in different contexts and relationships. This transformation had to start with myself. I thought I’d changed but it was first order change. Did I really have to wait
eighteen months to get to grips with the transformation? Anyway, Juan’s actions spoke louder than words and there was the evidence, ‘Reveal more of yourself’. I’d been a passenger and really quite untrue to my potential self – nothing authentic about me. Cast down again (as usual) and rather gloomy. So I think things change, yet their stay the same … .

ACT 3 AGAPE / LOVE IN THE TIME OF HIJACKING

Scene 1: A golden haze with pain shot through

Set in Mamelodi East

2008

AGAPE was one of the first unconventional training experiences during the training at UNISA. AGAPE was the name of a community ‘clinic’ in Mamelodi (what was known in the olden days as a ‘township’) on the outskirts of Pretoria. It was started by one of our lecturers at UNISA over 20 years ago. Mamelodi’s residents were predominantly black Africans. The purpose of AGAPE, on one level, was to provide psychological services to the residents in the area. Some of our referrals were from general practitioners, schools and word of mouth, although most people who joined literally intended to pass through the premises. The piece of land we used was next to the YMCA community hall in Mamelodi East and was not fenced off, but open to anybody who wished to enter. Another function of AGAPE was to give us, training psychotherapists, the experience of a micro eco-system which was part of the greater macro system of Mamelodi. This meant not only to learn and practice ‘therapy’ or observe what goes on there, but also to be part of the collective experience that is AGAPE. There is no absolute distinction between children, adults, whites, blacks, experts, students, therapists or patients, there are only people with names from different backgrounds who collectively belong to an open system which constantly changes its organization with the constant ebb

$^9$ Agape means ‘selfless love of one person for another without sexual implications (especially love that is spiritual in nature)’. (Free Dictionary) It was ironic that while the training clinical psychologists were in service to voluntarily helping the people at the centre called Agape, I was hi-jacked by people not full of ‘selfless love’ but full of rage. The reference to Love in the time of cholera (1988) by the Colombian writer Gabriel Marques was a play on the word coler, rage or hatred or the sickness ‘cholera’ in Spanish. Hi-jacking induces rage and hatred at the hi-jackers from so many people, but I simply felt grateful to be alive after the hi-jacking.
and flow of different people entering and exiting. So AGAPE without its people is just an empty space of land in Mamelodi East. What made AGAPE were the people and the experience that each individual brought with him or herself, which explains why each visit to AGAPE was always different from the previous one.

Our ‘waiting room’ or ‘reception area’ was usually under the enormous blue gum tree which could be entered from any 360 degree angle. The ‘consulting rooms’ could be anywhere on the premises wherever there was relative privacy as it had no walls to hang our many qualifications to prove to ‘patients’ that we were qualified ‘experts’. The ‘consultation rooms’ were not always furnished with expensive furniture or classic Freudian couches, but could be anything ranging from a tree trunk, rock, concrete slab or plastic chair – we had variety.

The first people to arrive at AGAPE would start carrying plastic chairs from the YMCA community hall and place some under the blue gum tree and the bulk of them under the thatched roof in the shape of a spiral. Our day officially started with the Ndoro round about the time when the last toddlers and pre-school kids were dropped off at the crèche adjacent to AGAPE, which was about 9am (plus or minus 15 minutes) because here African time prevails and not absolutely enforced by father-time. The Ndoro was a routine ritual proclaiming that our work day was welcomed and it involved passing around of the ‘talking stick’. Anybody was free to join the Ndoro. The ‘talking stick’ worked its way around from the centre of the spiral to the outside and gave all attendees the opportunity to say anything they wanted, whether a simple welcome greeting, a serious concern, a poem, often a song. Some people chose to hold it in silence, which also ‘spoke to us’. People were free to sit anywhere in the spiral, so all seats were of equal significance. Sometimes the ‘talking stick’ could be passed around for a second or even a third turn; there were no fixed rule. After the Ndoro the students and lecturer would meet for a quick informal discussion about the day’s agenda, clients who were to be seen, lunch arrangements or any other business. Before we went about our business, we collected cash from whoever was able to offer to buy food with.
Sandwiches were usually the staple diet and were sometimes complimented with extras like cheese, cold meat and fruit depending on how much money was available. We always made a tentative estimation of how many mouths to feed, nothing was ever certain or concrete and one had to mostly ‘feel’ how much was enough. Preparing the lunch was a collective experience; all hands that were available assisted. The children usually enjoyed helping and I noticed how the process of participation was way more important than the final product. I had seen how a simple task like making sandwiches had significant therapeutic value as it created a sense of acknowledgement and belonging.

When the sun was at its highest point we usually announced lunch time. Thanks was given for the food by way of prayer (of any denomination and language), song or short messages from some of the people. The students usually served guests to AGAPE first, after which they helped themselves. Any leftover food was taken home by some of the visitors.

The Learning, from this experience, was what couldn’t be taught academically only, but learnt from or about people and life situations. It is much safer and controlled to learn about generalized human behaviour when it is ‘out there’ than sitting in front of a living being and appreciating the complexity and ambiguity. Then I understood that generalized or normative ‘knowledge’ of human behaviour can close our minds to other possibilities of complex human behaviour. Sitting there in the open every Wednesday at any time in any weather helped me to learn to ‘see’ process. It taught me that beyond psychology, pathology, diagnosis and mental functioning we’re all human beings. I recalled the dehumanising effect of imprisonment on people’s liberty and how it resembles societal (and many mental health care professionals’) expectations of ‘normal human behaviour’. I reflected on the way Correctional Services, as a State implemented kind of rehabilitative therapy, had operated with the human condition and if it could be done differently. AGAPE was more or less like a little look into some lost golden age.
We didn’t refer to clients/visitors of AGAPE in terms of diagnosis or problems. I only realised this very important lesson when I started my internship at a psychiatric hospital two years later. Our ‘therapy’ at AGAPE did not consist of a particular paradigm, theory or technique, but was any means of communication and connection. As process information was revealed, we could formulate a working hypothesis based on the client’s descriptions or narratives, possible interventions could be attempted. Sometimes we spent hours talking. Drumming, singing and acting were rich and moving alternative vehicles for ‘hearing people’s authentic voices’. The wealth of the gestural language, the tragedy of many of the tales, the incomprehensibility of the vernaculars, all of this gave an air of the surreal to some days. It was a pleasure to prepare food or making arts and craft together. It was all in stark contrast to the prisons in which meals were a completely different matter ..... 

Then I was hijacked and my car was stolen at AGAPE; amid all the beauty, a stark representation and reminder of our current society and culture in South Africa. “Grateful to be alive” was my response like most people’s who have our beautiful constitution in South Africa and live amongst the violence - a memento that life for me is a privilege and not necessarily a right. I was shocked, scared, angry and inconvenienced for a while. So sometimes I don’t have any control over a situation or my immediate response to it, but I get to decide what to make of it and the direction of the ensuing course of action to follow. Phew! I was born onto this world naked and without ownership of anything, including conscious awareness, followed by gradual ‘ownership’ of feelings, mind, relatedness and possessions up until the point I exit this life once again.

Do I ever own anything if everything of mine is only mine until I give it away or it is taken from me? – life’s gift.

**Act 3 Scene 2: Reflecting on the babe-in-arms**

*Set in the therapy rooms in Benoni*

2009
I started seeing a developmental psychologist in Benoni for anxiety – not for the hijacking. She asked unsettling questions. I blurted my parents’ story out:

I was born on the 30th of December 1975 in Boksburg on the East Rand. We’re two children from the same biological parents. My sister is one year younger than me, born on the 30th of December 1976. My father is from a German-Afrikaans background. His family was raised Dutch-reformed. He is one of identical twins and they had an older brother. My father was identified as the black sheep in his family and had a poor relationship with his father. My father left home having only completed standard 7 (Grade 9) in school. He started an apprenticeship as a painter and made it his career. In my experience he was mostly emotionally unavailable. My father and I could never really have a conversation, but the only time we engaged well was when we worked together or had to deal with a crisis of some sort.

My mother was from an Irish-Afrikaans background. She’s the oldest of three children. She went to a Catholic school, even though she was not a practising Catholic. She went to Catholic school because her father insisted – he’d been raised Catholic. She struggled in school and on advice from her mother left school after completing standard 8 (Grade 10).

My parents got married under difficult circumstances because of their different cultural and religious backgrounds. My mom was from an English background. My father on the other hand, was from a staunch Afrikaans Dutch Reformed upbringing with the earlier input of German farmers who’d come out to Namibia a couple of centuries earlier. Most of the issues around the parents’ marriage resulted from my paternal grandmother’s background, and her anti-British sentiments. Her parents were Boer prisoners in the Anglo-Boer war, from a faction of Boers that had trekked to the outer reaches of the Northern Cape to establish a new life. She’d been granted a scholarship to become a teacher and back in the late 1930s during a time of strong Afrikaans cultural revival. She governed her life based on her Dutch reformed principles. My paternal and maternal grandmothers did not approve of the marriage.

During my mother’s pregnancy with me she was under a lot of stress. Firstly because of the in-laws’ disapproval of the marriage and secondly the resulting discussions about which religious denomination in which the children would be raised. Shortly after my birth my parents moved to Kathu, a small town established around the Sishen iron ore mine, in the Northern Cape Province. My mother was at this stage removed from her family, her extreme dependence on her father and her mother was very ill with cancer.

The psychologist I saw took the developmental stages of my life very seriously. The ten-year old I had always been, was hiding behind the grown
up exterior and he had his time cut out to do a lot of reassuring. My heart broke when I held ‘baby Werner’ in my arms as I realised his plight from another perspective; that of being an observer and not only as the participant.

Hey, what about all those people of 10 years old at AGAPE who were 40, 60, 27 and 93? Masquerading as grown up, but still children. No one to help them … where do you get money from if there’s not even funds for food? And my parents – maybe 10 years old and about 14 but over 60 by chronological years. I started seeing double – old or young faces on old and young bodies and inside a complex of ages. Nothing simple about development, like it doesn’t go in a nice straight line.

**Act 3 Scene 3: Rituals of learning**

*Set in 10,000 BC and the present*

Reflecting on the AGAPE experience had me thinking about the many different ways of doing therapy rather than what’s considered as conventional – no labels, community life and issues, connecting with people and not with pathological labels, improvisation and creativity, finding ways to connect, learning process, becoming aware of myself as participant-observer. It kept coming home to me that it’s not necessarily the uncooperative or stuck client in many instances, but the inability of therapists to be different because they impose their epistemology or they anticipate change for the client. I mean that theory is a great foundation to get to understand, like a map. It is never the actual territory the territory presents with its own unexpected surprises, which calls for the person exploring to resort to his/her wider range of possible repertoires, even looking beyond maps and geography. Derek Bickerton (2009) *Adam’s tongue: how humans made language, how language made humans* comments about the field of biology, but from my point of view applicable to psychology too:

> What makes interdisciplinary work so hard is that any academic discipline acts like a straightjacket, forcing you to only look in certain directions, blocking other perspectives from view. It takes a good deal of conscious effort, plus a lot of soaking yourself in other people’s literature, to overcome this state of affairs.
Bickerton captures the freedom that systems theory (mind the irony) as a meta-theory offers. It presents itself as a theory to be accepted in the discipline of psychology, yet does not act in such a narrow minded or constricted way, if applied according to its principles! This is a very liberating way to incorporate my wider repertoire of options which I have accumulated in my previous occupation and other contexts involving living and non-living scenarios. Models can be adopted from other disciplines to widen my angel of view. Rituals are one such less formal approach to human appreciation and understanding in a meaningfully symbolic way.

Hallo Maturana! The penny dropped - be respectful of another individual’s position - organisms do what they are supposed to do and that I can only perturb such a system, without any guaranteed or predetermined outcome! My willingness to fully immerse and participate in the training, not shying away from many difficulties in the programme began to make sense. I was hungry for feedback.

I fell into a reverie thinking about what things were like 10,000 years ago. Who were the experienced people whose opinions I could have respected and trusted? What were the systems like long ago? Were they open? Where’d Maturana’s great idea come from – Biology. So did that mean in the earliest times societies were open? Like his systems which he observed and participated in as a mammal. What’s the connection? Am I like people long ago who didn’t read? Since I didn’t love reading, I compensated in my search for knowledge by watching documentaries, movies and talking to people about their experiences (especially from older people with years of wisdom/wisdom to share). Was that why I loved the tradition of rituals? Because I was harking back to an oral tradition, a preliterate position, an era when things were different and non-scientific thinking was ok?

The Ndoro, was my introduction to a new world of rituals. Rituals have been part of human behaviour for as long as it can be traced back. Our modern rituals seem a bit gutless in the face of science – we’re living by rational means. The ritual-like practices like graduation ceremonies, inaugurations,
funerals and other religious practices hadn’t a lot of appeal for me. I saw how we participate in many forms of rituals on a daily basis and of course rituals are also a useful intervention in some systemic, and other, approaches, but I was searching for something. What about body paint? Hey! That was something to be thought about.

ACT 4: TABOO TATTOO

Scene 1: Dis die gevoel van iets moet breek, dis die ingeboude vrees/ Ek’s gebore met 666 op my kop getatooeer/ Ek probeer net vasklou aan wie ek is -Fokofpolisiekar

Set between the East Rand and Pretoria on the road somewhere in the late afternoon in traffic

Late 2009

It was September 2009 and my training was coming to an end. By now I was well on my way on my journey of self-discovery and emergence. A few days earlier I had performed a ritual by going back to my childhood home to confront and lay to rest the demons of my childhood, at their place of birth. The idea of this ritual originated a few weeks earlier after I disclosed absolutely every piece of recollected details about my ‘family secret’ to my friend and colleague in training. I had been driving with him to and from university for well over a year and we had shared many stories of ourselves and discussed many other conceivable and inconceivable topics. The nature of these discussions usually ranged from humour, foolishness, philosophy, music, books, movies, religion, and life out there, to deeply personal and heavy emotional experiences.

Suddenly I was compelled to speak out about the heaviest secret I had been carrying for most of my life. By now, awareness of my role in my family had risen to another level and I decided not to be a player in this ‘game’ for much longer. I realised that it had actually never served my needs to keep his abominable religious fundamentalism a secret, apart from protecting him; hence my ‘contract’ had expired and it was time to try my hands at something
new or different. This wouldn’t have been possible if I had not been able to see process.

What liberation from the old prison! My friend was nonplussed. But following this disclosure, I had moments of regret and even fear for this act of ‘treachery’. Up until now I had never imagined this stuff could cross my lips. What eased this anxiety was the bond and absolute trust I felt in confiding in my friend and knowing that I was doing the right thing for me. The sense of relief was just impossible to describe. I stopped feeling like a liar and a fake, as I felt that there was nothing greater than or anything left about this secret to be told. I felt the need to commemorate this event for being truthful to myself in a significant way and for it to serve as a permanent reminder to me. Many days had passed since this confession and I had not figured out how to do it.

ACT 4 Scene 2: “Look! There goes a guy with a tattoo on his forearm; but then again it’s not that unusual”.
Set in Boksburg Mall, not too upmarket 2009

I was reminded of my colleagues in training and realised that that five (me being the sixth) out of the eight trainees in our group had tattoos. In 33 years I’d never contemplated a tattoo. I was familiar with tattoos since my former human resource supervisor at Modderbee prison was a part-time tattoo artist and eventually resigned to pursue tattooing and piercing as his full-time occupation (Jakes from Superior Tattoos and Piercings in East Rand Mall, Boksburg). Although I only appreciated the visual artistic quality of other peoples’ tattoos, I never had any reason, interest or desire in acquiring one myself. Further how did I fit the profile of ‘those people with tattoos’? Anyway what symbol was I willing to commit to for the rest of my life (without possible regret)? After all (based on my prejudice and naivety), tattoos were synonymous with prisoners, gangsters, pirates, hardcore or troubled people, etcetera. Surely they had to have some cultural-specific significant meaning. Didn’t intoxicated or irresponsible people regretfully do it?
Then I threw caution to the winds. I’d get a tattoo – taboo or not – it was my body paint, my statement, etched into the skin, my living self would carry the cathartic events of the last two years as an honour. In many traditional cultures scarification, be it with ink and needles or whippings from a stick, on the bodies, were seen as a form of beautification and usually involved some ritualistic rite of passage for the person involved or sometimes even their next of kin. So why not me? I’d been thinking about deep history ever since the Ndoro stuff. My other rational self said, “Come on, from a western tradition, you know that mutilation of peoples’ bodies, like prison numbers, lashings on the bodies of slaves and even excessive tanned bodies which suggest common crop workers, aren’t symbolic of liberation or something to be proud of.” I’d become accustomed to the interior struggle. At least this time it didn’t leave me feeling like a worthless lump. I said clearly to myself, “My tattoo represents the scarification akin to that of someone who has successfully returned from an initiation ritual and is hailing the beginning of a new life from a different or informed perspective within a Western orientated society!”

Apart from the layers of concrete, abstract or symbolic meanings I have for my tattoo, a significant consequence of this scarification led to a raised awareness and respectful view towards one of my old fears – intolerance of difference.

**ACT 4 Scene 3 The Rape of the Lock (or what?)**
*Set in Jakes’ tattoo shop in Boksburg*

**22 September 2009**

“So, what do you want on the forearm?” “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread”, and that was the fatal step taken. I know it’s a famous quote by popular satirist Alexander Pope¹⁰ and he meant it ironically about the chap who steals a lock of hair from a lady he admires, but one of our lecturers often used the words in the everyday sense, ‘...where angels fear to tread’ when describing the emotional and psychological intensity involved or required in a therapeutic context or figuratively when speaking of our intra-psychological hell. My process of healing and change fell well into this category.

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¹⁰ Alexander Pope (1688-1744) satirised the beau monde of eighteenth century England.
There’d often been moments when it was hard to tell when I had reached the toughest part, moments when I thought it couldn’t get worse, but it did and continued indefinitely. It felt exhausting, confusing, lonely, frightening, and with no end to this anxious madness! Change is desolate and cruel. I felt nobody (including deities) could rescue you from the pain or walk the journey on your behalf, nor does death offer you its kind hand of reprieve.

It was Tuesday afternoon, the 22nd of September 2009, after we ended the week early because of public holidays and the training at UNISA would only commence on the following week Monday. Although I mentioned my idea to my close friend, I opted to go on my own so as to savour the experience privately. I left the University straight for Jakes’ studio. We had finalised the design and details about my tattoo a week ago. He was most eager to assist me and I was fortunate to only pay half price for his very professional and acclaimed artistry!

Although I knew he’d resigned from prison when a shop became vacant in East Rand Mall, we never really kept in touch. We worked very closely for a number of years at prison and we enjoyed the brief engagement. The process was started by him. It was a real ritual. He selected music to work to so he didn’t have to make conversation while working. That way he keeps his focus and attention. Then he shaved off my arm hair (the rape of those locks). He placed the traced paper with my tattoo on the smoothly cleaned surface. He confirmed one last time that the design was how I wanted it to be. Then he opened up two sealed packets with sterile needles to be used for my tattoos. The first part was outlining the tattoo with multiple deep penetrating needles, followed by the shading with different specifications using multiple shorter needles. It was painful at different stages and on different areas on my arm. The closest I can describe it as being is being scraped with a sharp object, just before the point of lacerating the skin. The pain sometimes became unbearable, but once he started with some lines he could not interrupt it in order not to harm the quality of the piece. Not having to speak was a great time to reflect and the natural pain endorphins made it trans-like.
When he finished, my arm was swollen where the tattoo was, but it looked unbelievably beautiful and luminous. He gave me the instructions to look after it for a period of about two weeks. From his experience he had deduced that the pigment of the ink is enhanced or preserved when the tattoo is covered with an moisturising anti-bacterial ointment and then wrapped in cling film. When it is left open to dry the tattoo makes scabs, which could make the colour irregular or have a faded look to the design.

My tattoo looked like this; ‘Where Angels Fear’. Although all of what I said before about change and my tattoo at the time, little did I know then that it was only the beginning of my suffering which would last well into the following year during my internship. I had of course to think about location and size of the tattoo. That got me thinking about the function it served with other people. My reason for getting a tattoo had nothing to do with beautifying my body or making an intentional public statement. It served as a beautiful reminder of being true to myself; and that’s the reason for having it done on my right inner fore arm, easy for me to see nearly all the time. It would not have served me if it had been on my back, forehead or under my armpit. I was aware that not everybody would appreciate, respect or care to understand the significance of it, which meant that it could also potentially be unbenefticial to me in future. A rich reminder to myself that I didn’t ever want to be silenced again. I would have to tolerate difference. I could speak my mind. I had integrity. I had authenticity. Suffice to say the tattoo has been a very useful tool to get a meaningful conversation going, especially in cases of very closed or rigid minded individuals. My tattoo is part and parcel of me, just as my gender, race, ethnicity, mind, or any other features of me may unintentionally be offensive, indifferent or significant in another’s’ opinion (based on their world views). I have noticed that the meanings of my tattoo aren’t stagnant. My initial meanings for assigned to the tattoo have evolved to include new and emerging ideas, which will likely continue.
After my tattoo was completed I went over to friend to show him. It felt good to share these moments with him. He took me for a celebratory drink at their local pub. It was like the celebration after some ritual event.

ACT 4 Scene 3: Saturn meets the child he didn’t devour (courtesy of Goya\textsuperscript{11})

Set in an unlikely restaurant on the East Rand

\textit{Night of 22nd September 2009}

Later that evening I invited my father for supper, just the two of us. I told him that there was something I wanted to show him.

I’m not sure if the dinner invite, meaning free restaurant food on me, was a way of softening my blow or a peace offering. But I think it had something to do with rebellion, revolution, a dark struggle between Saturn the devourer and his eldest child. It was my celebration of coming out of the proverbial (politely-do-not-give-a-fuck-about-opinions-unless-it-serves-to-aid-me) closet. This doesn’t mean I’m indifferent to constructive feedback. I didn’t feel angry, sad or resentful, but rather like a load has been lifted from my shoulders, proud and content. There was still a deeply ingrained remote concern about his usual disgusted response to my likings, as he’d exhibited towards my taste in music or fashion as a teenager. It always left me feeling ashamed and embarrassed about myself.

Now when we sat down I had the sense that this revelation to my dad was more a statement rather than seeking his acknowledgement or approval. One consolation was that my tattoo was permanent and irreversible, which I found cruelly pleasing and humorously funny at the same time regardless of his opinion.

\textsuperscript{11} Francisco Goya (1746-1828), painted \textit{Saturn Devouring his Son/ Saturno devorando a su hijo} during 1820 – 1823. It is one of the so-called ‘dark paintings’.
He ordered something rather ordinary but I couldn't eat too heartily. It seemed like I should choose the right moment to tell him. I remembered that every weekend he used to get private work to make extra cash. We'd always been struggling financially. My father had always done private work like spray painting cars, sign-writing, paintings, painting homes, making security gates, fixing up or maintaining of property to get extra cash. I'd always been free labour in this for him and had often to wake up early on a Saturday to help sand down vehicle body parts, or mow the lawn and do the garden work that he couldn't ever do because of his private work. There was often a conflict of interest. Now he was unemployed. I'd seen him broken and beaten down by his own crippling decisions. Leaving after 47 years of service – flying high in his own business only to fail dismally and have to go back to his old job. Finally to be retrenched … .

All this ran through my mind then I showed the tattoo. He said it was nice, but I recognised the tone and knew the meaning was similar to what he thought about my mother's hair style after she'd gone for what I thought was a decent and very pricey hair cut and colouring. Now I'd become aware of my contribution in this ugly family game, so I anticipated his indifferent response. I didn't expect any acknowledgement, nor did he even bother to criticise it. He did not care to know if it hurt or how it was done, he was much more interested in the restaurant menu and showed a keen interest in his 'Caribbean Pirates Platter'. My father's indifference or ambivalence confirmed my belief that he did not care about anything other than himself or his ideologies (or at least did not know how to convey care or acknowledgement in others); it was bittersweet, since it felt good to know that I was no longer dependant on his interest or approval but mostly proud of expressing myself unashamedly and unconditionally.

That night I dreamed of Goya’s painting of Saturn eating his children¹²:

¹² Goya, Saturn Devouring his Son/ Saturno devorando a su hijo (1820 – 1823), oil on plaster, 57 1/2 inches x 32 3/4 inches, 146 cm x 83 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid Spain
Figure 4.2. Saturn devouring his children (Goya, n.d., n.p.)

Then I listened to Gloria Gaynor – *I am what I am*:

‘I am what I am
I am my own special creation
So come take a look
Give me the hook
Or the ovation
It's my world
That I want to have a little pride
My world
And it's not a place I have to hide in
Life's not worth a dam
Till I can say
I am what I am
...
Who whoooo etc.
I am

I am I am I am useful
I am I am I am true
I am I am somebody
I am as good as you’
...

**ACT 5 INSIDE THE CUCKOO’S NEST**\(^1^3\)

\(^{13}\) The film, *One flew over the cuckoo’s nest*, was based on Ken Kesey’s (1962) novel of the same name. The title was based on the rhyme *Vintery, mintry, cutery, corn/ Apple seed and apple thorn / Wire, brier, limber lock / Three geese in a flock / One flew East / One flew West / And one flew over the cuckoo's nest.*
**Scene 1: ‘It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it’. Aristotle**

At the psychiatric hospital everything and everyone seems like it’s pathologised! My friend and I began with that observation. It was soon apparent what was going on from our new trainees’ point of view. A theory is used to formulate a client’s ‘pathology’. The formulation determines the treatment plan. By formulating a client’s ‘pathology’ the therapist introduces ideas that were not introduced by the client. Further it was amazing that a theory that was originated many years ago and thousands of miles away on another continent and foreign culture is used to describe people in South Africa today.

How can that be reasonable that we don’t take into account the background or experiences of this person in Africa in front of us? By applying the same theory to many people, we felt that it was tantamount to saying there was nothing unique about all of them. They were all reduced to the same phenomena. Then we got it – we thought. It is important for people to be the same in order to make ‘accurate’ projections. To make generalized projections, means one has to presume to know. If people do not conform, it makes it difficult to ‘know’ them. Because knowing is so important at the psychiatric hospital they have to give something a name that fits into a generalized category. I didn’t realize, but I fell into a symmetrical communication trap. The more some of my colleges tried to advance and push their psychodynamic agenda, the more I retaliated by pushing my systemic agenda. I got caught in the rubber fence! This endless and futile battle got me nowhere, other than that I only recited my own beliefs to myself. My psychodynamic depression was my own doing. This realisation was difficult to stomach, but I managed to appreciate the lesson and humour in this unoriginal, but nonetheless useful lesson.

**ACT 5 Scene 2: The nursery beasts**

*Set in Children’s Ward – Psychiatric Hospital*
Freud called them ‘nursery beasts’ and Christ says, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me’. Who are they, the children? I mean.

The bio-psycho-social team and nursing staff raised concerns about the children in the ward presenting with inappropriate sexual talk and touching. This wasn’t uncommon, since some of the children admitted were sexually abused or previously exposed to sexual behaviour or discussion. The team decided to have a group meeting with the children to educate or remind them that relationships or sexual behaviour is not allowed. After the meeting some of the treating team members went straight to the activity room to talk to the children. One girl was disruptive and made it difficult for the speaker to talk.

This poor child was diagnosed with ADHD and mental retardation, but was also sexually molested by one of her close relatives. The speaker suggested that one of the nurses escort her away from the group meeting so we could “commence with proceedings”. It struck me how the ‘intellectually challenged’ children were treated at the ward. All children who were admitted received psychological therapy except the children diagnosed with mental retardation. Mental retardation was diagnosed after an IQ test. This was the norm and even the case when there were few children in the ward.

So, what’s the difference between the emotions, tears and suffering of a sexually abused ‘high functioning’ child and a child diagnosed with mental retardation?

I don’t think there is a difference. I asked if “the little ostracised child will also be informed” and said, “If she did know before that she was different in a bad way, she must know now”. I felt sad, frustrated and angry when I said this in a sarcastic manner. The person who suggested that the child be removed from the meeting formally requested to speak to me a few days later. I gauged that this was about what I had said. However, it turned out very positively, because she said she was feeling bad about what I’d said and realised the impact it might have had on the girl. We spent some time talking
about the strong messages our subtle statements and behaviour send out to those around us.

**Act 5 Scene 3: ‘Aw dubul’ibhunu’**

*Set at the Psychiatric Hospital during a critical thinking discussion group*

There was a group of us interns. Interns have to attend, not everyone else only if they’re interested. The topic of this discussion came about the singing of a controversial struggle song, ‘Aw dubul’ibhunu’ (*Shoot the Boer*), by the African National Congress Youth League leader, Julius Malema, which coincided with the alleged murder of a right-wing leader, Eugene Terreblanche, allegedly by two black males. Topics are suggested by the discussion group members and previous topics included Quantum physics and multiple realities, the Church of Satan’s doctrine and Psychology as a hypocritical profession. But the topic on Racism attracted a much smaller audience than usual with 9 interns, only one community psychologist and the facilitator. The group comprised of 1 Indian Male, 2 white Afrikaans males (self included), 1 black Zulu lady and 7 white females from Afrikaans and English speaking backgrounds.

It was apparent that this topic was either one which people wanted to avoid, or one that they were tired of discussing altogether. The Indian male, who usually was very participative in discussions, remained quiet and reserved and mainly listened to what was said with little input. My white Afrikaans male colleague felt that he represented white Afrikaans culture. He argued that the song was offensive to him and akin to media speculation that the song contributed to the murder of Eugene Terreblanche. I don’t get it - Mr. Malema’s singing of this song isn’t equally interpreted by different groups – I mean racism’s still rampant in our current South African society. So, I rejected the idea of group representation, despite it being the norm. The focus should shift. Why did I, white, Afrikaans male *have* to be identified with all other white male Afrikaners from here to 1652? (“Ek probeer net vasklou aan wie ek is.”) The Zulu community therapist felt that the white culture was
not showing enough remorse for the wrongdoings of the past and they ‘just
don’t get it’. She felt very much the victim on her racial group’s behalf. The
subgroup of Afrikaans and English speaking females were all of the view that
they were no longer apologising for the sins of a previous regime. They were
in fact tired of apologising as their generation had nothing to do with the past.
They also still felt that there was a preconceived expectation that they should
feel obliged to apologise and show remorse for something they’d nothing to
do with, purely because of the colour of their skin or their heritage.

I kept thinking about Frankl’s book *Man’s search for meaning* on the topic of
‘The Existential Vacuum’, which I found very appropriate to our discussion
group on this topic. I looked up his words,

> The existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth
century. This is understandable; it may be due to a twofold loss which
man has had to undergo since he became a truly human being. At he
beginning of human history, man lost some of the basic animal instincts
in which an animal’s behaviour is embedded and by which it is
secured. Such security, like Paradise, is closed to man forever; man
has to make choices. In addition to this however, man has suffered
another loss in his more recent development inasmuch as the traditions
which buttressed his behaviour are now rapidly diminishing. No instinct
tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to
do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead,
he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does
what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism).

So, ‘How much remorse is enough remorse? And also, if you are not
expecting to “get it” then why try so hard for me to do the impossible
according to your account?’ Huh! And I’ve got the German surname too …
certainly a racist father, but none of those things automatically drafted me into
any agreement with a preconceived label.

All through the debate I was furiously arguing ‘I am what I am, born white and
born a male, and raised Afrikaans. This is where the statistics end. I am not
responsible for actions or opinions of the past. I see the good and the bad
attributes of all cultures. I can see how western thinking developed this
country and laid its foundation for what became the economic hub of Africa. I
also acknowledge the blood spilt on African soil by English, Boer, Zulu,
Xhosa, Bushman or whatever nation lived on this soil in the past. What’s important to me is that in 1994 corrective measures were taken. We live in a South Africa that has the most liberal constitution in the world. Another interior struggle … so much for multiculturalism …’.

The next day, I went to the Department of Home Affairs, stood in the queue for 4 hours and appeared very appreciative and subjective to the racist clerk who sarcastically remarked on my white male demographics. Without entertaining his subliminal invite for conflict, I got my new passport application processed without too much delay by playing the hand of one-upmanship - by playing underdog in this situation. Race seems to stay an issue in South Africa.

Another battle amongst the interns - ‘Should prostitutes be allowed to raise their own children?’, with specific reference to female prostitutes. The topic came up when one of my fellow interns mentioned a patient she was seeing who is a prostitute. She described how this patient had a child who makes tea and coffee for her waiting clients. Surely we just have to work with an imperfect world, use the knowledge of what’s better for raising children in such an environment, and in so doing create a sensible caring environment for your children. I buried my head in my hands. There are so few answers.

I remembered what Joseph Campbell had said,

We’re in a free fall into future. We don’t know where we are going. Things are changing so fast. And always when you’re going through a long tunnel, anxiety comes along. But all you have to do to transform your hell into a paradise is to turn your fall into a voluntary act. It’s a very interesting shift of perspective ... Joyfully participate in the sorrows of the world and everything changes.

I had no idea then how valuable these words would prove, when I had to face the next two years!

4.5 CONCLUSION
In the presentation of my autoethnography which is a summary and dramatic resume of my free writing in the Appendices and the photoessay, what started
off as a difficult exercise was eased by having a formulation (the five act play) that gave a focus to the writing. The use of many different registers and possible vocabularies was enabling. The narrative, when compressed into five acts, became a way of separating the chaotic materials which had been collected. Amplifying and abbreviating those materials was easier to do once the format had been conceptualised. When the writing of the autoethnography is considered from a systems point of view, the many elements of the system finally coalescing into the dissertation, with their own micro-systems, evolutions and developments, the complexity of the process becomes clear.
CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an analysis and discussion of Chapter Four’s data which was presented as an autoethnographic play script. It was composed from the material presented in the Appendices and the photo essay. Those narratives of my life, which I constructed to show how my authentic voice emerged during the clinical training, from being silenced and imprisoned to openness, are the raw data of that chapter. When I investigate that narrative from the point of view of the theoretical basis I set up in Chapter Two, the salient ideas which come to mind are the following: Constructivism (how I experienced learning in an academic setting and the shock of thinking about it), the importance of Dialogues to the process of differentiation of self, Multiculturalism and African Epistemology, Systems theory in practice and the value of Narrative as a therapeutic device and as a central tenet in the construction of the Self and its differentiation. The unusual experience of writing an autoethnography/ play was one of the other significant reflections for this chapter. This chapter is arranged around those ideas.

5.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM, MATURANA AND MY AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

If one takes the position of the constructivists in relation to reality, the assigning of meaning to our lives is individual and idiosyncratic. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.35) say humans assign meaning to their lives and we all experience reality differently and individually. My experience of academic life was assigned a very negative meaning, for instance, as is evidenced in this passage which I wrote in my autoethnography about WITS. It was my view on the whole world of academic activity:

My excitement of this once-in-a-life-time opportunity came crashing down within the first few days of attending full-time classes. The shock
of this new environment completely overwhelmed me – formalities of academia and its language, English, the student culture, it was so different from my protected distance education experience. This event constellated the recollection of the terror of academia I felt in my early school years.

This very negative response was a repeat from when I first went to school. I wrote in one of the earlier versions of the autoethnography:

"Starting school was a huge shock to my system, considering that I had no pre-school exposure to a schooling environment. I felt sad and lonely being at school, away from my mom and sister. The smell of the little black boards and chalk till this day remind me how much I disliked school. I cannot recall much of what I learnt that first year of primary school. However, I do recall that I would promptly pack up my stationary and make my way to a play corner for a nap while the teacher was busy lecturing. This was my usual 'nap time' when I was at home and intended keeping to this routine to protect myself."

Part of developing my own voice has been to construct a different reality in relation to the academic world and to reflect on what it has meant to learn as an adult. The freedom to read, write and learn in a new way, not like the little unsupported 6 year old only became possible after training when the voice that was my own and authentic was released or came into being. I have represented that voice metaphorically as the goddess Sarasvati, vak, voice (Sanskrit) because it seemed as if it were a development so different from my everyday life that it could only belong to the gods (Figure 3.4). There was also the sense that the masculine and feminine elements of the psyche had been harmonised in the clinical training process (Hartman & Zimberhoff, 2009).

Another incidence of the assigning of meaning to the world and actions in an individual way was the exercise of the tattoo. This is what I wrote in the autoethnography:
My reason for getting a tattoo had nothing to do with beautifying my body or making an intentional public statement. It served as a beautiful reminder of being true to myself; and that’s the reason for having it done on my right inner fore arm, easy for me to see nearly all the time. It would not have served me if it had been on my back, forehead or under my armpit. I was aware that not everybody would appreciate, respect or care to understand the significance of it, which meant that it could also potentially be unbeneficial to me in future. A rich reminder to myself that I didn’t ever want to be silenced again. I would have to tolerate difference. I could speak my mind. I had integrity. I had authenticity.

It was a richly layered action, a ritual, a mark of initiation, an action which is congruent with the world I had worked in – prison – for 14 years. As a rite of passage to a differentiated self and as a hero on a journey I was in the second stage of van Gennep’s Transitional period – engaged in the liminal rites of aggregation and I would only gradually return to stability. It was exactly that world of Correctional Services which had provided the foundation for the possibility of studying and moving towards the development of my own voice. That was ironic. The irony that the tattoo phrase came from one of the most cultivated, snobbish and bitingly satirical English poets, Alexander Pope, gave an extra layer of ironic meaning. Satire and parody are genres of literature and film which I love. As I began to read with ease and pleasure after a lifetime of being unable to do so, language became an important focus.

The issue of how one constructs the world through language and how one experiences the world through the descriptive possibilities which language provides was brought home to me in Bickerton’s (2009, p.12) book, Adam’s tongue. How humans made language, how language made humans, when he says, “language is the key to what it means to be human”. And significantly in thinking of myself as a therapist I took into account what Cheon and Murphy (2007, p. 7) say about the self and language in therapy,

... therapists have a responsibility to reflect on the dominant discourses that influence them so that they do not unknowingly
participate in subjugating discourses that affect their clients. Since we are born into those dominant discourses from infancy, we think we are part of the ever-present stories. Therapists are no longer immune or safe from the influence of the dominant discourses; they are also subject to being captives of cultural privileged truths and imposing them on their clients. If left unexamined, these “truths” will oppress alternative stories, unnecessarily blame people for their problems, and result in a sense of hopelessness for the future. To avoid this, narrative therapists take a purposeful effort to examine the influence of larger cultural discourses on their own narratives and preferred truths. Critical reflexivity on how their discourses influence therapy becomes a continuous part of the self-of-the-therapist exploration.

Of course the language used is appropriate to one’s belief system.

Maturana’s idea that knowledge is a biological phenomenon was the opening of a new understanding for me. It has served to illuminate my own experience and that of my clients. Especially, Maturana’s multiverse - that every person lives and operates from their own world or epistemology – has been the reminder that ours is a biological base. We are first organisms, then mammals, then humans. Those organisms do what they are supposed to do. As a clinical psychologist I can perturb such a system, but there is no sure outcome according to a predetermined plan. This is what I have understood from the complex of Constructivism, Systems theory and the importance of language for humans. It is Varela, Thomson and Rosch (1992, p. 217) who encapsulate our biological selves (our embodiment) and the world as it is experienced by our cognition (our minds) as, “organism and environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another”. The beautiful picture I used of two cats in a basket, black and white, like the ancient Chinese ideogram of Yin and Yang, in Chapter Two is a visual representation of this understanding of the theories I have used in this study (Figure 3.2). My own animals lying in a similar way bring home that fact to me (Figure 3.5).
In visualising myself as part of a range of systems and as a system myself, Maturana’s ideas about systems have had the most profound influence. Bowen (Bowen, 1978; Peleg-Popko, 2002) speaks of the systems of the family and how that system is itself embedded in the larger systems of one’s culture and so on. As there are adaptations in the systems, in my autoethnographic record of my actions in the ‘triangle’ of my parents and myself, for instance, there is great disturbance at first and then a gradual return to a place of equilibrium. The oscillation from equilibrium to disequilibrium and once more to equilibrium which is essentially what chaos and complexity theory teach, is how I have interpreted what Kuhn and Woog (2011: p. 255) say of reality, “spontaneous, irregular, and operating along a continuum from stasis to chaos, rather than inherently stable, orderly, and at equilibrium.” That has been the experience of my development over the last three years and again in writing this dissertation in its mini-system.

5.3 MULTICULTURALISM

In the process of moving from an undifferentiated self towards a differentiated one, one of the factors which could excite a strong response from me was that of our multicultural setting in South Africa. The conflict which I experienced in terms of understanding multiculturalism had two extreme forms, one to do with discussions at the psychiatric hospital and it took this form:

All through the debate I was furiously arguing, “I am what I am, born white and born a male, and raised Afrikaans. This is where the statistics end. I am not responsible for actions or opinions of the past. I see the good and the bad attributes of all cultures. I can see how western thinking developed this country and laid its foundation for what became the economic hub of Africa. I also acknowledge the blood spilt on African soil by English, Boer, Zulu, Xhosa, Bushman or whatever nation lived on this soil in the past. What’s important to me is that in 1994 corrective measures were taken. We live in a South Africa that has the most liberal constitution in the world. Another interior struggle … so much for multiculturalism …”.

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Reading the unpublished work of Kim (2010, pp.3-4) about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave a new perspective on marginality and the understanding of how extensively the past impacts on the present. My desire to dissociate myself with the system of apartheid, although I had lived through its declining years, brought me to the realisation of the systems which are the larger ones, political, economic, and cultural. In addition my father’s blindness to what he wished to ignore was repeated in my own stance.

This kind of experience was offset by the profundity of another set of multicultural experiences around the ritual, Ndoro and the direct experience of an African epistemology lived out – holism (everything is connected), orality, the presence of the metaphysical and the complete dignity of a non scientific way of understanding what life was about. This I represented in my description of AGAPE:

Our day officially started with the Ndoro round about the time when the last toddlers and pre-school kids were dropped off at the crèche adjacent to AGAPE, which was about 9am (plus or minus 15 minutes) because here African time prevails and not absolutely enforced by father-time. The Ndoro was a routine ritual proclaiming that our work day was welcomed and it involved passing around of the ‘talking stick’. Anybody was free to join the Ndoro. The ‘talking stick’ worked its way around from the centre of the spiral to the outside and gave all attendees the opportunity to say anything they wanted, whether a simple welcome greeting, a serious concern, a poem, often a song. Some people chose to hold it in silence, which also ‘spoke to us’. People were free to sit anywhere in the spiral, so all seats were of equal significance. Sometimes the ‘talking stick’ could be passed around for a second or even a third turn; there were no fixed rule.

By the time I had reflected on the multiplicity of levels of my own rituals even to the extent of the tattoo, I had some new information to integrate in my multicultural world:
The Ndoro, was my introduction to a new world of rituals. Rituals have been part of human behaviour for as long as it can be traced back. Our modern rituals seem a bit gutless in the face of science – we’re living by rational means. The ritual-like practices like graduation ceremonies, inaugurations, funerals and other religious practices hadn’t a lot of appeal for me. I saw how we participate in many forms of rituals on a daily basis and of course rituals are also a useful intervention in some systemic, and other, approaches, but I was searching for something. What about body paint? Hey! That was something to be thought about.

An insight which only began to dawn on me about African epistemology, after I had been reading about myths and rituals in cultures other than African, was that the way that the West during the Enlightenment had separated everything scientifically, but according to rather mechanistic principles, was only a first step to transformation of medieval ideas (Micale & Dietle, 2000). That transformation was from thinking that the Creator was responsible for everything including any systems, evolution or development (medieval) to one which embraced progress in everything and evolution. Yet those old worldviews, medieval and indigenous, posited an interconnection between everything, as in current African epistemology. The gradual capacity to see that even in worldviews a systems theory is enlightening and gives insights into what I as Werner and I as therapist would need to understand better, was mind blowing. Then came the next insight, with a new vocabulary and huge scientific strides the systems view of interconnectedness returned to its properly significant position in thinking. Jiayin (2011, p.332), speaking of the impact of his book about evolutionary pluralism says,

Systems philosophy, in my understanding, is a new type of synthetic philosophy based on the scientific achievements of the twentieth century, using concepts, models, principles, and laws derived from systems science and assimilating the best of Eastern and Western philosophy.

5.4 SYSTEMS THEORY IN PRACTICE
Putting systems theory into a context which was usable for myself meant first becoming aware imaginatively that I had understood what its possibilities were and what it means (Kefalas, 2011; Morrison, 2010). In the autoethnography I describe my learning process at its inception:

There would be systems thinking not only reserved for human behaviour, but applicable to every context that describes a relational connection, like politics, economics, sport, nature, simply everything. These principles didn’t need be memorised nor did they become outdated, they were universally applicable and freely flowed as ways of seeing and describing. It was like learning to ride a bicycle. At first you have to focus or remember to pedal, balance, steer and so on. Once you have mastered the cycle you can do it without even thinking about it. You become one with your bicycle.

The stage of applying systems theory is revealed in my reflections from the period at the psychiatric hospital when I had my internal quarrel with the psychodynamic therapists:

How can that be reasonable that we don’t take into account the background or experiences of this person in Africa in front of us? By applying the same theory to many people, we felt that it was tantamount to saying there was nothing unique about all of them. They were all reduced to the same phenomena. Then we got it – we thought. It is important for people to be the same in order to make ‘accurate’ projections. To make generalized projections, means one has to presume to know. If people do not conform, it makes it difficult to ‘know’ them. Because knowing is so important at the psychiatric hospital they have to give something a name that fits into a generalized category. I didn’t realize, but I fell into a symmetrical communication trap. The more some of my colleges tried to advance and push their psychodynamic agenda, the more I retaliated by pushing my systemic agenda. I got caught in the rubber fence! This endless and futile battle got me nowhere, other than that I only recited my own beliefs to myself. My psychodynamic depression was my own doing. This realisation was difficult to stomach, but I managed to appreciate the lesson and humour in this unoriginal, but nonetheless useful lesson.
Then came the further realisation of myself in a system called the universe and multiverse. This followed the hijacking of my car:

So sometimes I don’t have any control over a situation or my immediate response to it, but I get to decide what to make of it and the direction of the ensuing course of action to follow. Phew! I was born onto this world naked and without ownership of anything, including conscious awareness, followed by gradual ‘ownership’ of feelings, mind, relatedness and possessions up until the point I exit this life once again.

There was a full circle of realisations.

Do I ever own anything if everything of mine is only mine until I give it away or it is taken from me? – life’s gift.

In terms of the role as a psychotherapist, systems theory was tremendously valuable during the AGAPE phase:

Another function of AGAPE was to give us as psychotherapists in-training the experience of a micro eco-system which was part of the greater macro system of Mamelodi. This meant not only to learn and practice ‘therapy’ or observe what goes on there, but also to be part of the collective experience that is AGAPE. There is no absolute distinction between children, adults, whites, blacks, experts, students, therapists or patients, there are only people with names from different backgrounds who collectively belong to an open system which constantly changes its organization with the constant ebb and flow of different people entering and exiting. So AGAPE without its people is just an empty space of land in Mamelodi East. What made AGAPE were the people and the experience that each individual brought with him or herself, which explains why each visit to AGAPE was always different from the previous one.

The most compelling example of systems theory in action was my transformation from being Mr Switzerland, the neutral observer to a person with an authentic voice or as a person who takes an I-position (Bowen, 1978). As Morrison (2010, reviewing Robertson’s book) says of Indra’s net: alchemy and chaos theory as models for transformation,
Robertson also draws attention to the notion held by many depth psychologists, that alchemy was more than a crude form of chemistry; it was a reflection of the alchemist’s psyche. Robertson also gives an overview of the development of Chaos Theory over roughly the last century. Robertson’s survey of these two traditions serves to demonstrate their multitudinous points of intersection. The purpose of the chapter is to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that, while alchemy may be regarded by some as a cultural artefact, the concepts and ideas that informed it are re-emerging through the modern sciences of Chaos Theory and cybernetics.

The experiences of the training and then writing up the transformation gave the impression that gold had indeed been turned out after an alchemical process of a deep kind.

From the point of view of the hero’s journey, those elements which seem most appropriate to discuss in this context are what Hartman and Zimberoff (2009, p. 48) have listed as follows:

Within this basic formula for the human capacity for storytelling, the Hero’s Journey can be seen to always involve these five phases:

1. The Call: Identify the Ego, the True Self and the Soul
2. Preparation for our Journey: Confronting the Guardians
3. The Journey: Becoming Your Authentic Self – Generating New Visions
4. Claiming the Treasure: From Vision to Commitment
5. The Return: Transforming Your World.

If I examine my autoethnography from this perspective my call happened early when I decided to study. This is Marks’ (2009) ‘awakening’ in the transformational arc. The preparation for the journey was difficult and taxing - waiting to get into the UNISA programme. Then followed the journey which has been described in sufficient and dramatic detail of the clinical training.
The claiming of the treasure is a longer process and includes my writing up, waiting for a job, waiting for graduation. It will come I believe and when I return from the journey I will transform my current world.

Moving from the most ancient system of describing transformation (mythological) to the most current - Jiayin (2011: p. 323) sums up my current understanding of systems theory in relation to my social development:

Systems philosophy defines a social system as based on and evolved from an ecosystem and as a self-replicating and self-creating system that is compounded by man and engaged in man-production, material-production, and information-production. At its center is a cultural-information pool formed by recording and depositing the mental creation of its members over the generations. In a social system, the culture-information pool constitutes the “genes” that produce civilization, just as biogenetic genes produce a phenotype.

It was my experience in the clinical training that the “culture-information pool” drove my evolution in a way that enabled my authentic voice to emerge. My differentiation of self according to Bowen theory has been set in motion and I have the opportunity to break old inter-generational patterns and emerge transformed.

5.5 NARRATIVE AND REFLECTIONS ON THE WRITING PROCESS

In reflecting on the writing process and the production of the autoethnography, I was very much influenced by the Creativity workshop which I attended in Centurion during the latter half of the year. A further strong influence has been King (2008, p.280) in his discussion of creativity and lived experience when he says,

There are several phenomenological methods in psychology, with important differences between them … . What they have in common is an interest in describing lived experience in close detail\ and the use of
procedures that move the analysis from concrete and specific to more abstract analytical categories.

King’s study of his creative activity helped me to understand what I was doing. Here are his words (2008, p.280) about the two parts of the process as he reflected on his creative work:

In the present study, I employed a version of the template approach (King, 2004) that consists of two main stages. In the first stage I developed a set of descriptive themes relating to key features of the account I produced, and remaining close to the specific details included in the text ... In the second stage I identified more abstract themes that integrated key aspects of the experience in question across the main themes defined in Stage 1.

My first stage was to decide, from what had been freely produced, which vignettes of my life, ‘a set of descriptive themes relating to key features’, I would choose to present in the play. The photo essay helped me in this as I had to make very specific choices among the photographs. Then in the second stage I did what King describes as his process of identifying the more abstract themes and integrating the key aspects of those experiences in relation to the first stage. However, he starts with a piece of writing which is already a poem; I had a very loose set of writings, quotes, songs, and so on – not yet formulated. These had to be turned into a photo essay and then a five act play. This creative integration gave me satisfaction which was not so much to do with extrinsic or intrinsic social factors. King (2008, p.283) further develops this idea by referring to other creative writers,

What matters, from Kelly’s perspective, is not the apparent source of the validation, but the ability of the person to engage in successive processes of loosening and tightening in the construing. In an account of her writing process, the poet Anne Stevenson (1996) describes how, in one case, a suggestion by her husband helped her toward finishing a poem. Elsewhere she refers to testing poems “by reference to what could be called an inner ear” ... . Both examples seem to be readily
characterized as “tightening,” and there seems to be no sense in which intrinsic and extrinsic factors operate differently.\textsuperscript{14}

It was in writing the play that I felt even more strongly how my own authentic writing voice had emerged as I tightened the writing (harking back to what I recollect as a difficult time - reading and learning about Shakespearean plays at school). The validation for my voice arose out of the rewriting first from raw data (themselves rewritten continuously), then through several versions over two years, interaction with many persons, writers, scholars, editors, creative writers until the last drafts. Marks (2007, p.178) whose three act script seemed too far from my experience at first (limited to Shakespeare and movies) for my conception of what happened to me nevertheless gave valuable insights later into what the transformation was when she speaks of “plot, character and theme”, and I applied this to my understanding of my writing.

5.6 SELF

Looking back on the autoethnography, I understood I had moved from ‘resistance’ to ‘release’ (Marks, 2007, p. 270). The plot was basically summed up in this phrase, but the release was twofold – as myself, Werner, and as a therapist. The resistance at the outset was to a transformation but by the time I received the Switzerland message my fear and trepidation (Marks 2007, p.272) was beginning to show as a shift in confidence which would move me to the moment of enlightenment. My ‘death’ was the hijacking incident, what Marks has called the ‘second turning point’ and a transformational moment (Marks, 2007, p. 323); then the drama moves to a climax/resolution.

As I strove with issues such as being an Afrikaner, becoming a therapist, moving from a prison warder to a psychotherapist, from my difficult family roots to a new sort of growth which exhibited a move away from being stuck and exercising rigid defence repertoires, I oscillated between the sense of being overwhelmed and suffering from extreme anxiety. This process of Bowen’s type of differentiation was extremely chaotic for me personally. So many of my rigid repertoires of response had to be encountered, brought to consciousness and dissolved – from being overwhelmed with anxiety – ‘emotional reactivity, fusion with others, and emotional cutoff’ (Peleg-Popko, 2002, p. 357), I had to take I-positions. The monoculture of my home, town, the Correctional Services environment, an Afrikaner standpoint, were suddenly viewed as one small system in a huge multicultural system, South Africa. The discrete viewing to the incorporation of multiple views and perspectives, after years of enduring the rules based to other ways of organising, was experienced as an opening up. This open-endedness of experience is part of taking an I-position. Only after I had moved from avoidance and safety (Switzerland position) to participation, or from playing nice, to a fuller way of engaging did I realise fully that other (different) histories, rules, viewpoints and implicit agreements that make up each system, person, family and culture could be accommodated without me imploding. Then it became clear that the therapist competencies I had sought had been growing. These are beyond simple linear rules, dogmatic applications, and implicit self-imprisonment and limitation of self and client systems (Cheon & Murphy, 2007). As Marovic and Snyders (2010, p.46) say (although they are referring to supervisors of novice therapists),

Synthesis of the professional and personal selves is a slow, lifelong process of attaining maturity which generates self-confidence, continuing self-evaluation, competence, creativity, and personal liberation.

Further the emergent quality of my authentic voice, developing awareness could not be enclosed and precisely described as a recipe for someone else. The interrelated web of people and meanings means that my
autoethnography is merely a start on the reflective process – the story continues – as I become and create a more authentic, meaning-filled, participatory space for dialogues and encounters which do not have final answers or solutions, just emergence.

The narrative arc from being stuck to release as imagined and constructed in the dissertation revealed the value of Greenspan’s (2003) dark emotions as a goad and ground for healing and a way forward towards forgiveness (Enright, 1991) through a variety of steps and setbacks. The process on reflection was messy, full of disjunctures, chaotic, often experienced as overwhelming and anxiety-provoking; The obstacle of not-knowing, the need for openness were not simply grasped, but embracing them led to finding a new solid ground (Scharmer, n.d.) in which deep-seated beliefs changed, and I had the sense of my transformation into a therapist.

The autoethnographic reflection as a written document was significant for me as it was a way of overcoming one of my dreaded obstacles writing; it dissolved many of the areas of myself which had been hidden and of which I felt ashamed. Putting them down on paper, compelling myself to organise them and review them gave me a different perspective as practitioner on the problems clients bring – dreaded, unseen, shadows, dragons, unresolved issues, whatever name one may give – and have to face. My own differentiation and development was aided by the writing of the autoethnography.

5.7 CONCLUSION

As I was beginning to take I-positions, deal with emotional cutoff, fusion, emotional reactivity, my self as Werner and self-as-therapist emerged from the process. For training clinicians, the several paths and directions in which
an autoethnography can take one are an extremely valuable aid to the journey towards maturity.

The integration of the theoretical basis for this study as a way of reflecting on the autoethnographic play and the subsequent discussion were the basis for this chapter and also a pointer forwards to more developments.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The five chapters which are the dissertation about how clinical training from a systems perspective at UNISA enabled me to achieve an authenticity and a sense of healing and forgiveness were composed as a response to the imperatives of the university’s academic requirements. The end aim of the autoethnographical reflection was to achieve a certain maturity. In the Introduction I gave a very brief overview of what was to come in the dissertation.

Chapter Two outlined the key ideas about me as an adult learner. The ideas of Symbolic Interactionism, Constructivism and Sociocultural learning which I proposed were the basis for understanding my educational process in which I had been engaged over the two years of training were outlined. I had a great need to reflect on my experience in academic life. The primary importance of attributing meaning to experiences from a personal perspective was significant for me as it enabled me to write my autoethnography with conviction. Learning as a search for meaning enabled me to reflect on the course of my own learning from childhood to the present, but particularly as it pertained to the clinical training experience. The understanding of the important role of others in constructing learning experiences (Vygotsky’s ZPD) became clear through reflecting on the processes of education as I wrote up the autoethnography. The central role of systems theory from its earliest development to the present in providing a worldview which is in keeping with the “scientific temper” (Scientific temper, n.d., n. p.) first advocated by Jawarhlal Nehru and subsequently taken up by others, has been an important part of my “healing”. Further, the significance of dialogue and the Other, especially as I start a clinical psychology career, cannot be underestimated as the therapist is constantly in a dialogue with clients. The impact of understanding what African epistemology can do towards illuminating other
worldviews was valuable and an object lesson after fourteen years of incomprehension in my previous working life. The issue of narrative was discussed from the point of view of its being performative and socially enacted in accordance with a constructivist understanding. Research on narrative facilitated the writing up of the autoethnography.

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology and methods with an emphasis on the qualitative nature of the research, but with a focus on the need for credibility. For that reason the Appendices were included in the dissertation so that the materials could be examined at first hand. The idiosyncratic process of writing the autoethnographic play took the form of collecting many disparate pieces of writing, quotations, photographs, and images and then through the intervention of a workgroup on creativity allowing myself to write. The inclusion of the photo essay is also for the sake of credibility.

Chapter Four is a presentation of the autoethnography with its five act structure, each with three scenes. Into it I have placed quotations and images as appropriate. The research behind the titles of acts and scenes was a new departure for me as I had been afraid that this style of writing was not “academic”. Chapter Five was a review of the autoethnography – in its raw state as presented in the Appendices and photo essay and its formulated state – according to the principles outlined in Chapter Two’s theoretical positions and leading to a deep reflection on my differentiation of self as Werner and as therapist.

Three main ideas are my general conclusion about my clinical training – liberation, trust in self and the surface has only been scratched. The unveiling of my authentic voice as part of my work towards self-differentiation and maturity gave me a sense of liberation from many of the things I felt bound me. Although trust in myself is growing daily, I experienced it first in the
clinical training. It was a revelatory experience. Finally I am aware that the process of maturing and becoming myself is a life-long journey. I was happy to scratch the surface of the realisation in the clinical training. My impatience about almost everything has been tested in the slow writing process, but the opportunity to reflect has given me some insight into what patience might mean.

Recommendations:

There are three major recommendations:

- The more extensive use of an autoethnographic style of writing up after clinical training to encourage reflection and growth.
- The use of brainstorming on the creative value of drama/film script style writing as an aid to masters students who have writing block.
- Discussion in greater depth at the conclusion of the training before writing of a drama or a film script after the style of Marks’ (2007) “transformational arc” recommended by Mr Kruger as a way to engage with people’s stories and narratives in a poetic and aesthetic way of self-exploration and autopoeisis.
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APPENDIX A

Emotion-narrative/autoethnography

Life story prior to training – setting the stage

Relationship with father – I experienced my father to be emotionally detached from me and my family – I cannot recall him explicitly saying that he loved me or anyone in my family. He showed love in doing things for us, but was very uncomfortable with intimacy or emotional topics. The only time I saw my dad crying emotionally was when he received news that his father had passed away, but it was a combination of sadness and anger which disturbed me. His outburst was remnant of their poor and distant relationship, much unresolved stuff over many years, as I interpreted it. My father spent very little quality time with me and my sister when we were young. My memory of him was of always working most of the time and very hard, which explains the few leisure times we spent as a family. Work was not to get away from us, but because of financial necessity. My fondest memory of him was of him getting paid for a private job then we always had a lovely braai that evening, which we all enjoyed. Not only did working with my father mean that I could earn pocket money or that we could spend time together or learn trade skills, but that he also implicitly taught me to be a hard worker. Also not to take short cuts or to be unfair to casual workers who sometimes helped. My father generally demonstrated good values like honesty, responsibility, fairness and humility. Although he smoked for many years until he fell ill about 8 years ago, he abstained from alcohol and as a result we grew up in a home without alcohol. He furthermore never violently assaulted my family members or any other person as far as I know. Physically, this of course does not include the odd hiding when my sister and I were young. I do not have regrets about it in any way, or recall an incident of severe trauma as a result.

The story of my training as a therapeutic context
Early in the first year of my training, before Mr. Switzerland, our trainees did an experiential exercise in an epistemology lecture. The trainer told us one of his life stories about his right of passage. In one of the snippets the trainer explained that he entered a mystical cave on his own, only armed with a battery operated torch light. When he entered a very deep part of the cave, where it was pitch black, his torch went out. He stopped the story and asked each of us what we think happened. This was an unusual lecture, as we did not attentively scribble down everything the lecturer said, but listened to a story. We all had an opportunity to say what we think happened, and was grouped according to similar explanations or views of this incident; this was my introduction to epistemological views and differences. My response was to first check what was wrong with the torch, maybe shake or lightly bash it to get it working again. From hearing myths previously, I also knew it had something to do with the mysticism of this place. My reasoning was to first to sort out the obvious - this is what I have learnt from my dad. For instance, when my car did not want to work, I’d check the battery cables, petrol, perished pipes, and loose wires and so on. My practical lived experience had been demonstrated by this exercise. My thinking was not to ascribe a supernatural explanation to an incident, the cause of which might be a simple operational glitch. Well, it ended up that I was alone in my group of practical or rational thinking. All the others opted for an irrational explanation of this story, although I am not sure if they honestly felt that way or felt hinted to said so (as with time I noticed that there were far more rational/linear thinkers than myself in the group). This was me thinking everything but, systemically and more linearly in terms of the way I view the world. Being grouped on my own I thought that I was wrong in my response, which did not help self confidence, being the only person different. None the less as was brave to honestly speak my truth and not the socially appropriate edited or give the favourable explanation.

Showing my patterns – Mr. Switzerland, my styles of interaction in 2nd year group therapy which was not only about learning to do group therapy, but to actually be in the group (another experience to be put in the shoes of a client, to feel the vulnerability, ease or difficulty to disclose and trust other group members, what was useful and less useful e.g. first year the facilitator was
more passive while in second year shared to see process and share it by making me aware served more useful than waiting for me to realise it. Non judging accommodation of lecturers – this meant that I could freely express my opinions, however mad it may have been. I have learnt to be tolerant of opinions, because considering that people intent to be honest and not intentionally deceitful in sharing their views, means that any opinion that could be perceived offensive was as a result of misinformation or lack of better experience or knowledge. Such ‘mistakes’ were not frowned upon, but encouraged to elaborate and explain my statement. The effect was that I would reach a point till I questioned my own view. There was not a strong emphasis on correcting me, but for me to be allowed to find other ways of viewing an original argument. This helped me to get more confident in my own views, that my opinion or views have some place in the discussions, albeit a rough diamond. Where I was ‘wrong’ the corrections I received came from lecturers who cared about my development and growth, it never felt as if they imposed inferiority, guilt or harbouring ill feelings towards me. This boost in self confidence, I only realised after training, is vital to the energy and conviction I bring to the therapeutic room. Low self-esteem does not help when clients sometimes depend on us having to be strong enough to hold their intensities. Clients gauge if therapist can bear hearing and sitting with heavy emotional content and feelings. Therapist confidence is a vital component to the therapeutic climate and effect of the intervention. Agape experience – taught me a different way to conventional therapy, e.g. no labels, community life and issues, connecting with people and not with pathological labels, improvisation and creativity, finding ways to connect, learning process, becoming aware of myself as participant observer e.g. it is not the uncooperative client, but the inability of therapist to see a way to take an unconventional approach to connect which could make a difference – taking responsibility for my part in the therapeutic relationship while still respecting the client’s free will to shift or remain the same. This taught me to be respectful of another individual’s position (Maturana – organisms do what they are supposed to do and that I can only perturb such a system, without any guaranteed or predetermined outcome).
My willingness to fully immerse and participate in the training – I did not shy away from many difficulties in the programme, my approach was to take the feedback from these experienced lecturers (whom I did not perceive to have malicious agendas; hence I respected and trusted their observations and opinions dearly), I was an open system hungry to take in as much as I could from this great opportunity I have been given as student. I think this stems from a long ingrained belief that I have some academic deficit, which started with me starting school too early / that I was not emotionally school-ready. Since I did not love reading, I compensated to gain knowledge by watching documentaries, movies and talking to people about their experiences (especially from older people with years of wisdom/'wisdom' to share. Again this served me well, in terms of motivating me to become ‘smart’ or educated.

APPRECIATION AND APPLICATION OF RITUALS:
Agape, and specifically the Ndoro, was my introduction to a new world of rituals. Rituals have been part of human behaviour for as long as it can be traced back. Modernisation and specifically western sciences has dispelled and ‘proofed’ many of those ancient practices to be taboo. We are living in a ‘rational’ society, with little space for beliefs that cannot be scientifically proofed. Although many ritual-like practices like graduation ceremonies, inaugurations, funerals and other religious practices are still widely practiced today, very little tolerance exists for anything different from such norms. Only towards the end of my second year of training did I really see how we participate in many forms of rituals on a daily basis. Rituals are also a useful intervention in some systemic, and other, approaches.
Agape has rekindled an appreciation for rituals, even for me as a westernised Caucasian in the 21st century, which was practised by my very own ancestor’s years ago. Although this may be a stereotype that rituals are more readily practised by many native Africans in my country of birth, it was refreshing for me to participate in this unconventional ritual – having a talking stick, visiting my childhood home and getting a tattoo.

A small story all about change
A metaphor for journeying:

A young man living in his beautiful native paradise became restless and felt the need to explore the world beyond his comfortable existence. This idea had been simmering for some time, before he came to this decision. He was grateful for the life he lived, but deep down knew that there was perhaps more to be made with this life. Possibly this idea was fuelled by boredom which he experienced in his perfect existence, where everything made sense and everything was predictable or maybe he became curious about the unexplored. The people were perplexed with his contemplation to leave their perfect village and they could not understand his choice, since everything here had always been well. There was an unspoken rule about village life, that nobody should question the ways of the tribe. As a young child many folktales were told about people who went against the rules of the village, and how they were abolished into no-man’s-land. This was a scary and desolate place where no person wants to be sent to and it was associated with everything that goes against the tribes long established traditions. The boy did not feel the need to justify his decision, nor did he intend to offend his village or hurt the loved ones who cared and protected him through all these years. He realised that one must sometimes speaks ones truth silently. Whether the villagers would respect his choice was obviously not up to him to decide, but will be expressed none the less based on previous instances. Some people even screamed madness and stupidity, even though it was not verbally expressed. He quietly retreated and questioned himself, but this was something he had to do for himself and he could not simply reject this unusual and unexpected desire. To lessen the pain for his loved ones and avoid causing a hullabaloo, he left unannounced early one morning while it was still dark without their permission or blessings.
He only knew the world he lived in, where nobody bothered to care what else existed out there. Therefore there was no specific destination in mind, and he was about to enter the proverbial abyss with only his intuition to guide him. Since he did not know where he was headed to, apart from having to cross no-man’s-land, he only pack the bare essentials and took all of his lived experience to survive on. After all, if you do not know what to expect, you can not know how to prepare. All he knew was that his ‘utopia’ lay beyond no-man’s-land.

No-man’s-land is unfamiliar and lonely, but most disturbingly it messes with your head. Everything in front of you is new and unknown, whereas the only familiarity to be found in no-man’s-land is that which was passed and left behind you. There is safety and comfort in knowing, while the unknown offers you fear, anxiety, isolation and no guarantees. There is a constant and much stronger seductive pull to the known and familiar in comparison with the unknown and uncertain. He felt, since he hasn’t been away for too long, the worst that can happen is that the boy returns home faced with mild apprehension and critique, for betraying the comfort of his native paradise for some unknown destination. He knows he will be accepted back, for he was loved dearly by most in his village, never harmed anyone and always did what was expected of him. The lure of this familiarity makes him turn around and consider returning, but it engulfed him with a sense of self-deceit in every fibre of his being. The boy experienced this need to return home for many months into his journey, especially at times when he became overwhelmed by feelings of isolation, uncertainty, fear and even moments of madness. However, every time he decided against it and continued his pursuit into the unknown. He tames his wondering mind by appreciating the beauty of the baron landscapes, spectacular thunder storms and never-
been-seen fauna and flora. He appreciates his surroundings in this here-and-now moment. His eyes open to welcome many, before, unseen marvels of creation around him. Food and water is scares in no-man’s-land, and his supplies are running low. He is forced to quickly learn how to survive of the land, learning from the indigenous animals and birds. They teach him about edible plants and berries, as well as where to find water. This is all new to him and he fails many times before succeeding in his first kill. By fending for himself the boy discovered that this journey has introduced to him, to the comings of a man. He has been gone for so long that the comfort of his home became a distant memory, besides he loved his independence and freedom. He feels and appreciates every experience of his growing pains toward manhood.

The young man also values the rare encounters with other travellers on their pilgrimages through no-man’s-land, usually towards different ‘utopias’. He and such travellers would make camp together and all shared in whatever they had to feed their bodies. Most importantly the boy listened with great enthusiasm about their expeditions, which gave him more encouragement to continue with his quest. Much of the other travellers’ experiences resonate with the boy. Most significantly, he learnt from their wisdom. The young man started to realise by sharing his story that he also possessed experience from his journey which reciprocally quenched the thirst of the travellers’ curiosity for knowledge.

Eventually after many more months the young man reached his destination. ‘Utopia’, in all its glory it was more beautiful than he could ever have imagined. This was a different world from where he came from. It was filled with interesting people from different cultures, amazing sights, sounds and aromas which he has never before experienced with his senses. The young man spent a few more months experiencing and
absorbing as much as he could from this spectacular destination. By now he has become a widely experienced and fully fledged wise man, and there was nothing more left to soak up from this place. The man felt pleased, but also a strong need to share his newfound knowledge with others. “After all what is happiness if not shared or knowledge if not used?” he thought to himself, which haled the return back to his native village.

On his way back home he felt that ‘Utopia’ is in some way starting to lose its allure which initially appealed so strongly to him. Nevertheless thankful for the insights and knowledge gained from his visit to ‘utopia’, he started to question the existence of another, perhaps the real ‘utopia’ which would have a continuous charm. Still somewhat disillusioned about this realisation, he eventually arrived back home.

The wise man’s arrival was greeted with mixed reactions. Some were very happy about his safe return and welcomed him with open arms, whereas others were angry, hostile, hurt, sad or indifferent because of his journey. He realised that by following his heart and listening to his inner voice, inevitably not everybody will approve of his thoughts or deeds. Where something carries someone’s approval, somewhere else it carries another’s disapproval. With this understanding he had an epiphany! Utopia is not a place or a destination, but a journey that resides within oneself. You are in utopia when you dare to be brave, sometimes do the unconventional, but always follow your heart and listen to your inner-voice. Where some things are lost or given away forever, many more opportunities are presented to you for the taking. This process allows for doors to be opened from a world of limited possibilities to a universe of endless opportunities. By doing so, you will find a bigger library to search for the answers to your truth.
My story starts with being made aware of me from an outsider’s perspective. I respected the facilitator’s judgement and gifted ability to observe process. Furthermore, I felt that the feedback came from a place of care, interest and commitment in giving me the best training available. I trusted the context of my fellow students and the facilitator, which enabled me to make myself vulnerable and uninhibited in my group participation. At this time the ‘switch’ has not yet come on for most of our group to observe process at such a level. Even though I could not see myself as an observer being a participant, this valuable feedback resonated with me. I could have opted to reject this information, but as mentioned earlier I vowed to immerse myself in this training programme. This meant that I had to sometimes hear the things I do not really wanted to know about myself. However, this is the gift of committed lecturers, not to ignore this but to show their commitment in making us aware of ourselves (participant-observer). I am aware that it is sometimes necessary to reject some feedback, but at other times to be open to hear.

Still battling with a relative poor self-esteem and constant worry about my progress or ability to succeed academically in this course, I thought long and hard about this. I recall mentioning to my friend and colleague in the course that I do not want to be the way I was described – afraid of confrontation, not to speak my mind, to be a fence-sitter. It evoked feelings of a weak character, someone without a backbone. This highlighted my fearful nature, which I had unknowingly perceived as avoiding risks because of my responsible nature. It served me well over the years to be overcautious; however I comfortably avoided life too by only picking the parts I could control in lieu of other areas which could offer potential growth. The seed had been planted, Pandora ‘s Box had been opened and this idea about who I am coincided with finding a topic to do research on. By this time a started to become more aware of myself in relationship, trying different ways to feel what I intuitively need to do, but also operated in some contexts according to my old ways e.g. my intimate relationship. I was living in two worlds, playing the part that so many people became accustomed to (the old me) and testing the waters by expressing and experimenting with my intuitive, feeling, emerging new self.
I gradually heard from people close to me expressing that I am different, seem depressed, are withdrawing and even questioning if I’m taking substances. It was as if nobody could understand, because I was shifting in the presence of people who knew my old self and whose needs I served well. Much of these experiences happened non-verbally or implicitly, only on few occasions were the non-verbal processes verbally expressed. Not speaking my mind during this initial stage, was due to my lack of confidence and faith to allow myself to be different. I constantly feared losing everybody around me and to be left abandoned and lonely, in case this search for my authentic self backfired. I have not yet become accustomed to the idea that loosing relationships, in lieu of being one’s authentic self, are an inevitable outcome. Nor did I believe in the prospect of new emerging relationships that would be born out of this process. I found that my close friend and colleague in the group had a better understanding of my process and because our friendship only started in the training (he didn’t have a reference about me that stretched for years), he accepted my emerging self more easily. Furthermore he was present in most contexts during training; hence his observations about me in such context provided valuable feedback, which I considered in addition to my experiences in such contexts. It made sense that the very close people in my networking circles would not be as open, since they knew and loved my old self for a long time. More importantly I assumed responsibility for betraying them in our relationships; since I am the one disturbing the ‘balance’ it always had by redefining the longstanding relationships. I felt in part guilty of messing up things by the emergence of my true self, yet I cannot pretend or act ignorant much longer by letting it remain dormant. During this initial phase of transition I have apologised so many times to my loved ones for the inconvenience and worrying I cause by my unstable, confused, and unpredictable state of being. Of course these apologies were because of my guilt for changing from, what appeared to be working relationships with my loved ones, and in doing so reassured the others that the problem was not with them. Furthermore, I had an overly concerned interest in others’ feelings at the const of my own congruency. Where in the past I comfortably avoided conflict/confrontation I surely made up for it now that a have to face rejection, hurting loved ones, speaking my mind, pushing some people away. This offered very little
comfort, since they must have gradually noticed me ‘slipping away’. I had to come to terms by being congruent in what I say, think, feel and do, which meant that I can no longer please or be in agreeable with everyone...Mr. Switzerland was on his way out. The effect of this unsurprisingly brought our intimate relationship of 5 years to an end. It was a different story with my family of origin, since I didn’t have an extremely close or emotionally enmeshed relationship with my parents and were relatively independent the redefinition was much less traumatising on me. I have experienced what I have seen many times working in prison, that your family, however much you disappoint them, generally always sticks with you. It is therefore not too surprising that I managed to continue having a relationship with them, albeit redefined. Another vital variable in my freedom to shift as I perceived it is that I was financially and otherwise independent, and therefore did not need ‘permission’ to change. What also allowed my shift was that I have always been relatively stable in my character and traits, which meant that this shift was not merely an impulsive trend, but likely perceived as something aimed at being more pervasive. Regarding the group dynamics with my fellow trainees, again because of the short time we had spend together the impact of my perceived shift was mutually less significant – with little emotional interests invested, not as much as significant family members or my girlfriend. I experienced the group to be individually attending to their own personal issues. The only time we were pushed to comment on our group interaction and individual processes were during the group therapy slot. Taking a stance was till now my biggest fear, which was furthermore not surprising why for as long as I can remember been generally a very anxious person in most contexts of my life. My solid fear of failing to approve, not to disappoint was starting to crumble. Apart from the guilt I felt for the pain and confusion I cause around me, there was a sense of achievement for allowing my intuitive self to be voiced. However, I knew the journey only started.

The times when I unknowingly or unintentionally regressed back to my former self was usually short-lived. Again, since the cat had been out the box and since I started to listen to my intuitive voice and started to feel more – I would knowingly do something to break that habit. The only reason that I did feel fake for not changing was my strong sense of guilt conscience which has
been part of my being for such a long time. This is again the dangerous gift, because guilt that if felt for my father's religious views and strong authoritarian obedience was now channelled towards the deliberate decision to voice and live my authenticity.

Saying all of the above, I do not intend to be another Jesus, Muhammad or Buddha in any way. I am human and forgive myself for sometimes going against all which I intend to be. I am capable of lying, stealing, hurting as well as being honest, trustworthy and kind. I am capable of the full spectrum of what I constitute to be human nature. I therefore do not preach or aspire to be another religion or cult. Nor am I unrealistic about my flaws. What guides me is my conscience, and the commandments I have chosen to be the best human I can be. This is not necessarily compatible or comparable with other people / society / religion. It is about my virtues / values which is respectful of the community including its differences I am part of. By listening to my intuitive voice, I can correct my behaviour, seek forgiveness or even review unrealistic expectations for myself. There is a sense of control in my thinking, after all the only person I can have control over is myself, and that which I choose to be or not.
APPENDIX B

2009 GROUP PROCESS

This document is a summary of my interaction within a group context during training. I have compiled much of this from my diary entries, in so doing the original scripts have not been included for this exercise so as to protect the identity of other individuals concerned and not to reveal some of my personal and private thoughts (unrelated to this discussion).

The second year of training started off with the news that one of our clinical psychology trainees had dropped out of the course. This was the scary realisation that haunted me for most of the first year of training. It took me the greater part of first year of training to truly believe in myself and my potential as a psychotherapist, in spite of amazing support and encouragement from our lecturers. The evaluation and feedback from the training staff was most helpful in identifying key problem areas, coupled with their acknowledgement that I was willing to work hard on myself. I gradually started to believe that I would see things through.

By this time the group dynamics and structure had revealed itself by means of the repeated sequences, patterns and coalitions from the previous year of interaction within the group. However, there was a twist to this status quo. Intimate-interactions-within-our-group-gone-wrong had the result that there was a shift in the group dynamics. It was inevitable that I too, despite not being directly involved with these incidents, became part of this process by association. Two major camps emerged from this incident, based on the leading characters involved, of which my friend was one. I sensed, be it on account of my own anxieties or subtle implicit external messages that I had to choose sides. Since my mission for this year was to work on myself, and considering that I had workable relationships with all my colleagues and intended to keep it that way for me, I decided to continue having the same style of interaction with everybody. The solid relationship with my friend was
of such a nature that each of us was (naturally) entitled to our personal choices, and further respected the other's independence. Had it not been for this mutual understanding and definition of our relationship, the outcome could have been very different. My conclusion is that the heaviest variable in any equation, involving oneself in relationship with anyone or anything, is meeting one’s own needs.

Apart from working on my self-confidence and -belief, I had become comfortable with the fellow trainees by starting to reveal more of myself. I had started to risk more in terms of group participation and voicing my ideas during lecture discussions. This, in my experience, was largely because the facilitators ensured that the trainees were not thrown to the wolves; hence a fine balance between allowing us to perturb each other or question different views and at the other end not to break us down or scar our vulnerable self-esteem (maybe just mine). Saying this, I did not feel equally comfortable to share some of my deepest thoughts and feelings with all the group members, however this is what group participation is like. When people are randomly put together for a greater collective cause, there is no guarantee that everyone will fit with each other. My motivation, based on the critique on my participation in the first year, was to use this feedback constructively in developing myself. This sometimes meant taking a leap of faith, in spite of circumstances or odds, to potentially reap the rewards of my own labour. To a greater extent this is what being proactive is like, by not waiting for the world to change before shifting yourself.

As mentioned earlier, I was fortunate enough to have met a great friend and colleague in our training group. Although I can carry myself in a group context and think of myself as a team player, I prefer more intimate interactions with individuals. It was therefore inevitable that I truly learnt self-disclosure in my friendship with this colleague, since before I started training I had been a closed book to most. As a result our friendship extended beyond the university training context. Whereas my ‘Mr. Switzerland’ style of interacting in the first year was to be accommodating to everybody (relating to my fear of not being rejected or upsetting to people), this second year was about being
more congruent with what I thought and felt within myself. Having an opinion, by being authentic, meant that someone, somewhere would be offended or indifferent to such views. This was not about being right or wrong, good or bad, or even being provocative; simply being true to one’s own voice.

My appreciation of the group experience is immeasurable. For all of my tertiary education, up until master’s training, I had studied on my own through correspondence. This meant that my knowledge and arguments were never challenged, and that hardly any major shifts in thinking were possible. Feedback from and shared experiences with my fellow trainees and trainers challenged many of my academic and personal views. This process of knowledge generation and testing is what higher education is all about, to challenge even established academic norms. The training group became a unique family extension. I do feel a special connection with most of the individuals I trained with, which I think happens in any relationship or collective experience where one makes oneself ‘vulnerable’ by exposing parts of one’s deepest, private and intimate details of self. My end of training ritual, as part of African Epistemology (class), will best illustrate my gratitude and appreciation of this experience. As part of two lectures on termination (in therapy and other life events), our last assignment for African Epistemology was to perform a collective ritual (by including all eight trainees and two lecturers) in which we depict our reflections on the two years of training with an awareness of terminating/ending/concluding it. We (trainees) were free to collaborate in a ritual, but all elected to individually conduct a separate ritual:

It was a pleasantly warm day early in summer of 2009, and rapidly headed towards the end of the year. The formal training has virtually come to an end, with the exception of preparing for the final exams which heralded the end of two years intensive psychotherapy training. Our group nominated a lecture’s property, a small holding with beautiful natural settings just outside Pretoria, to be the venue for the rituals. We were seated in a circle on a lush green lawn under a large shady tree. Some of my colleagues have already performed their rituals before it was my turn. The mood fluctuate minutely based on the rituals already performed but was predominantly heavy, typical of endings.
Before my ritual started I pulled a small plastic bag of sand, about two tablespoons full, from my backpack next to me and emptied its contents into my hand. I allowed a few seconds of silence to prevail before I said in a deep unusual American accent, ‘Like sand through the hour grass, so are the days of our lives’, adopted from a daily soap opera with the same name (in italics). It was intended to be humorous, and some did chuckle whereas others were somewhat perplexed. I clarified this opening by mentioning that my ritual will take on a slightly light-hearted tone, but omitted to say that it will make sense at the end of ritual. Then, proceeded with my ritual by passing the small heap of sand to the person seated on my right and to continue passing it in this anti-clockwise direction, until what was left of the sand returned to me. As this proceeded I continued: ‘The sand represents me and symbolises how this group contained and supported me through tough times during this journey. The skin particles from your hands that releases into the sand, represents the seeds of your experiences and wisdom that was sowed and eagerly awaited in my ravenous but fertile mind. Many of the seeds have started to germinate and the others will remain dormant until the time is right. Harvesting of the crops will continue long after we have parted ways’. The care and caution my colleagues displayed in not spilling the sand was reminiscent of how well they took care of me, and it was beautiful to see. I poured the sand into a little vial to keep as a memento of my enlightened training experience. This was the first part of my ritual in acknowledging the group and their valued contribution to my healing and growth. The final part of the ritual pays homage to significant people (alive and ‘living-dead’, friend and foe) not present at this gathering as well as circumstances which have, knowingly and unbeknown to us, groomed and shaped our lives as we know it. This toast to the gift of life also doubled for ‘after tears’. ‘After tears’ refer to a celebration after a burial, in honour of the deceased person’s life, and often includes the consumption of alcoholic beverages (sometimes homemade). After this explanation I reached for a quart of Hansa Marzen Gold (750 millilitres of a locally produced Pilsner) from my backpack, my favourite lager! This is when everybody got the light-hearted part of my ritual. I continued to explain the light-hearted part in that they bared witness to the many tears I have shed over the last two years and that my joy is not to defeat the sorrows usually associated with endings, but
rather to celebrate that which ‘was’ (and will continue to ‘be’). Only one person in this group completely abstained from alcohol; hence I suggested to those who do not want to drink to pour a little bit on the ground as a toast. I took the first sip and passed the bottle on in the same fashion as the sand. Despite enjoying my favourite beer and all having a good laugh, my eyes welled up with tears of joy and fulfilment as I thought to myself ‘I HAD MADE IT!’
APPENDIX C

AN UNEXPECTED TALK WITH MY FATHER (LATE SUMMER 2009)

Since I started this process of self-exploration and healing many new discoveries have come to my conscious awareness. One of the many profound epiphanies was to see my position in my family of origin, and how I unknowingly participated in a game which I never intended or aspired to participate in. Our family’s economic difficulties were in many ways the glue that held us together. Coming from a trans-generational mind set of struggling and difficulties, this way of connecting too was automatic to my family of origin.

I vividly recall the numerous times during my training that I, implicitly and explicitly, I expressed gratitude for my upbringing and for those family values which have been instilled in me. One of my female lecturers reminded me, on this topic, that I needed more to acknowledge my own abilities and how I had chosen to deal with circumstances than to give credit where it is not necessarily due. I realised how imbedded my pattern of protecting my family truly was. For years I had protected the family secret about my father’s disgusting political and religious convictions, out of fear, guilt and shame. I was fearful that if people were to find out that, they might treat me with the same hatred and disgust as what such beliefs advocate, without recognising that I am completely different. Guilty by association; since the proverb says, ‘The apple does not fall far from the tree’, ashamed to be associated with such a person, but even more so for saying this about my wounded father. It is he who has taught me other amazing qualities and who worked very hard to provide for his family under difficult circumstances (this inconsistency was the issue that had me torn between love and hate for my father). This all meant that I consumed a lot of energy by masterfully keeping appearances so as not to let my guard down and reveal the secrets. Also it was not surprising that I was always very curious about other people or topics, since even a thought of focussing on myself made me anxious. The stuff I could talk about or disclose
was usually trivial and ‘out there’. This explains why being politically correct (i.e. ‘Mr. Switzerland’) and likable was valuable to me as I feared rejection. At that time I did not ‘see’ how my participation in the family game changed my behaviour. I faced rejection by people whose company I enjoyed and longed for versus being accepted by my father with his disgusting ideologies.

It was a pleasant summer Friday afternoon and I decided to make a braai. It was earlier this year, having already completed my internship and I was in the process of finishing this research. I offered to prepare enough meat for my parents so they could also enjoy supper with me. My father joined me as I was standing around the fire, waiting for the wood to burn into coal before I could cook the meat. I poured us something to drink. Our interaction was not any different from our usual way of relating, mostly quiet or trivial. Then my father started speaking about the thousands of white people living in informal settlements and the social decay that goes with it: abuse, illiteracy, addiction, unemployment, etc. The fact that he had been unemployed for the past 11 years. I did not say anything, as I did not want to kick a dying horse. He went on to vent his anger at the world, politicians, religion, educated liberals, and the list went on. At this point I had heard enough and drew his attention to how privileged he still was despite being unemployed. He had a roof over his head, food to eat and private medical aid (thanks to his son and wife, although I did not mention this part). Suddenly, although not completely unrelated, amidst our fierce arguments my father’s incongruence jumped to mind. The love – hate inconsistency mentioned earlier, was one of the issues I could not get a grip on during my process of healing. On the one hand, my father’s hate-filled religious and political ideology deserves no explanation or justification. But most painfully for me to comprehend, on the other hand, was the person who lived by example; hard working, law abiding, full of integrity, honourable, responsible, loving (as best he knew), humble, to name but a few of his virtues. These are the values I had been exposed to as a boy growing up into a respectable man, despite circumstantial hardship. I loved and respected my father for these values, yet he thought and spoke about hate, discrimination, injustice. At that moment I told him, with my voice cracking and with tears welling up in my eyes, ‘I do not get it!’
A long period of silence followed and my father did not respond, he bowed his head, and after some time walked off. Understandably we did not continue our arguments for the rest of the afternoon, nor did he answer me. I left it at that, because this understanding finally put that demon to rest for me. I love him for giving me life and the good qualities he (implicitly and explicitly) taught me, but for the rest I do not have to associate myself with. I have absolutely no interest, in this one life, to pursue the mission of changing my father, or anyone else, if they do not see reason to.

I got the paradox of the term ‘Family Therapy’; - that therapy for families is not about having a happy, merry family life and trying to keep it together at all costs, but about individuation and cutting THE TIES THAT B(L)IND us when we need to. The same in my opinion goes for some other forms of societal arrangements, e.g. nationality, culture, religion, ethnicity, to name but a few.
APPENDIX D

Excerpts from literature

The Renaissance poet in the 13th century, Dante Alighieri wrote his Commedia in 3 parts – Inferno, or Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. It was his interior journey. I felt like he did about the middle of my life being like a journey starting in a dark forest – scary and unknown.

_Inferno: Canto I_

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
Which in the very thought renews the fear.

The other journey poem that made me understand that some other people have also started a journey in the middle of their lives and found it terrifying was the Roman poet Virgil who wrote the poem the Aeneid and had one of his main characters, Aeneas, go to Hell.
Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. – Alexander Pope

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit. – Aristotle

What one has not experienced one will never understand in print. – Isadora Duncan

We’re in a free fall into future. We don’t know where we are going. Things are changing so fast. And always when you’re going through a long tunnel, anxiety comes along. But all you have to do to transform your hell into a paradise is to turn your fall into a voluntary act. It’s a very interesting shift of perspective….Joyfully participate in the sorrows of the world and everything changes. – Joseph Campbell

Formal education will make you a living. Self-education will make you a fortune. – Jim Rohn

Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, they are the only ones who ever have. – Margaret Mead

It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not to worship what is known, but to question it. – Jacob Chanowski

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. – Melodie Beattie

We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them. – Kahlil Gibran

Write the bad things that are done to you in sand, but write the good things that happen to you on a piece of marble. – Arabic parable
Gratitude turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity.... it turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. – Melodie Beattie


Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow. Melodie Beattie

Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dare believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance. Bruce Barton

All personal achievement starts within the mind of the individual. – W Clement Stone

You’re only as young as the last time you changed your mind. – Timothy Leary

Thought is the blossom; language the bud; action the fruit behind it. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Of all the unhappy people in the world, the unhappiest are those who have not found something they want to do. – Lin Yutang

Don’t compromise yourself. You are all you’ve got. – Betty Ford

The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life. – Muhammad Ali

First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do. - Epictetus

Let’s face it, few of us get a childhood that doesn’t damage some part of our spirit, but as we age, we can heal ourselves. – Laury Ravenstein

There are two ways to face the future. One way is with apprehension; the other is with anticipation. – Jim Rohn
I value a “don’t know “ attitude highly, because it’s ambiguous, and fosters a “beginner’s mind” in which there are more possibilities than “expert’s mind.” – Theresa Bayer

If I perceive in another person mainly the surface, I perceive mainly the differences, that which separates us. If I penetrate to the core, I perceive our identity, the fact of our brotherhood. – Erich Fromm

It is by going down into the abyss that we recover the treasures of life. – Joseph Campbell

I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious. – Albert Einstein

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies, for the hardest victory is over self. – Aristotle

A person needs a little madness, or else they never dare cut the rope and be free. – Nikos Kazantzakis

Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric. – Bertrand Russell

It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it. – Aristotle

I began my education at a very early age – in fact, right after I left college. – Winston Churchill

The higher we soar, the smaller we seem to those who cannot fly. – Friedrich Nietzsche

I am the only person in the world I should like to know thoroughly. – Oscar Wilde

Better to be without logic than to be without feeling. – Charlotte Bronte

Lend yourself to others, but give yourself to yourself. – Michel de Montaigne

We must turn away from work that replaces experience and pleasure with explanation. – Darby Bannard
History never looks like history when you are living through it. It always looks confusing and messy, and it always looks uncomfortable. – John W Gardner

Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him. - Aldous Huxley

A man can fail many times, but he isn’t a failure until he begins to blame somebody else. – John Burroughs

Every path you take educates you and leads you to the next. – Martha Sturdy

Confronting your fears and allowing yourself the right to be human can, paradoxically, make you a far happier and more productive person. - David M Burns

You can’t be afraid of stepping on toes if you want to go dancing. – Lewis Freedman

There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it. – Alfred Hitchcock

The fear of becoming a ‘has been’ keeps some people from becoming anything. – Eric Hoffer

Whenever anything negative happens to you, there is a deep lesson concealed within it, although you may not see it at the time. – Eckhart Tolle

The only thing I fear more than change is no change. The business of being static makes me nuts. – Twyla Tharp

The only constant in life is change. – Unknown

Waste no more time talking about great souls and how they should be. Become one yourself! – Marcus Aurelius
APPENDIX F

My life story:

Emotion-narrative

I was born on the 30th of December 1975 in Boksburg on the East Rand. We are two children from the same biological parents. My sister is one year younger than me, born on the 30th of December 1976.

My father is from a German-Afrikaans background. They were raised Dutch-reformed. He is one of identical twins and they had an older brother. My father was the black sheep in his family and had a poor relationship with his father. My father walked away from home having only completed standard 7 (grade 9) in school. He started apprenticeship as a painter and made it his career. He has mostly been emotionally unavailable in my experience. My father and I could never really have a conversation. The only time we engaged well was when we worked together or had to deal with a crisis of some sort.

My mother was from an Irish-Afrikaans background. She is the oldest of three children. My mom went to catholic school, even though she was a practicing Methodist. She went to Catholic school on the assertion of her father, who was raised Catholic. She struggled in school and on advice from her mother left school after completing standard 8 (grade 10). She was the eldest of 3 biological siblings and one adopted child.

My parents got married under difficult circumstances due to their different cultural and religious backgrounds. My mom was from an English background and has a Catholic – Methodist upbringing. My father on the other hand, was from a staunch Afrikaans Dutch Reformed upbringing. Most of the issues resulted from my paternal grandmother’s background, and her anti-British sentiments. Her parents were Boer prisoners in the Anglo-Boer war, from a faction of Boers that trekked to the outer reaches of the Northern Cape to establish a new life. She was also granted a scholarship to become a teacher and back in the late 1930’s, this also happened in a time of strong Afrikaans cultural revival. She governed her life based on her Dutch reformed principles.
My paternal and maternal grandmothers did not approve of my parents’ marriage. During my mother's pregnancy with me she was under a lot of stress. Firstly because of the in-laws’ disapproval of the marriage and secondly the resulting discussions regarding which religious denomination the children would be raised. Shortly after my birth my parents moved to Kathu, a small town established around the Sishen iron ore mine, in the Northern Cape Province. My mother was at this stage removed from her family, and her mother was very ill with cancer.

In 1981 my family moved to Springs on the East Rand when I was 5 years old. I didn’t have many significant memories of my early childhood prior to this age. I spent most of this time period at home with my mother and sister. My father worked during the day and after work he usually either had private jobs to do or rested. I usually helped him if I finished with schoolwork. My sister and I befriended our neighbour’s kids. They were also one son and one daughter. The son was the same age as me, but a year later in school with my sister. The daughter was 18 months younger than my sister. My earliest memories of our neighbours were that they were extremely competitive and our shortcomings were often weighed against their strengths. I remember that we were often compared to our neighbour’s children, without our parents defending us in any way. Their parents were very involved with their children’s schooling, sport activities and cultural activities, whilst our parents were seldom around to support us in any sport, school or extramural activity. Their son was the “blue eyed gem” of the family, and we were often in play or sport activity with him, so that he could defeat us to his glory. The daughter was closer to us in camaraderie as she was also found lacking and not as amazing as her sibling. I am of the opinion that the growing up years was very much influenced by our neighbour’s perception of us and their constant measuring their children as more capable and more prestigious than ourselves. Looking back at these experiences I did in some way contribute to my feelings of inadequacy, specifically academically, and feelings of low self esteem. We lived next to them from 1981 to 1993. They were our social outlet. I recall that we used to go to athletic classes with the neighbours, till one day when my sister outran the neighbour’s son, and we were promptly
informed that we can no longer get a lift to the athletics club with the neighbours. This ended the athletic interest for us as and our parents were not willing or able to drive us to and from the club. My mother never got her drivers license till this day.

Another memory that prevails is that of us getting involved in an incident with the neighbour’s kids. On one such occasion my father was busy repairing and rebuilding our home. The neighbour’s son started throwing me with clods of earth and needless to say I reiterated with the same. It ended up in an argument in which the neighbour’s came to their son’s defence, whereas our parents instructed us to refrain from playing outdoors and to apologize to the neighbours. My sister and I received a healthy dose of spanking as a result.

I first stated primary school in 1982, a few days after turning 6. Starting school was quite a huge shock to my system, considering that I had no pre-school exposure to a schooling environment. I felt sad and lonely being at school, away from my mom and sister. The smell of the little black boards and chalk till this day remind me how much I disliked school. I can not recall much of what I learnt that first year of primary school. However, I do recall that I would promptly pack up my stationary and make my way to a play corner for a nap while the teacher was busy lecturing. This was my usual ‘nap time’ when I was at home and intended keeping to this routine. I also only had one friend in my first year of school. However I often befriended the outcast children as acquaintances, although they were more interested in my lunch. As I moved to higher grades words like “difficult” and “do not know” aptly described learning for me and school was not fun, but a fearful and anxiety provoking experience. I vividly remember my intense anxiety the previous evening before writing a test the next day. I would usually curl up with stomach cramps, be restless and worried all night. The unknown and unfamiliar made me anxious and fearful.

Despite my aversion towards academia, I always attended school and was obedient to teachers and rules as my parents told me. I received a certificate for 100% school attendance throughout primary school. I feared teachers and never challenged authority. As a result teachers always had praise for my good manners and obedience, which made my parents proud and reinforced this behaviour in me. This was also the ideal for the political system at the
time – good citizens do as they are told and never question authority. Schools back then were segregated on racial grounds. In sport and other activities ‘white’ schools competed against each other. I never questioned or wondered what children from other races did, apart from knowing that they were in townships (which were on the outskirts of ‘white’ towns and suburbs. I was a naive child back then and only knew life this way. I was surprised to be elected deputy head boy in Standard 5 (grade 7), and till this day do not know on what criteria this was based.

Every weekend my father would be lodged into private work to make extra cash. We struggled financially. My father did an array of private work like spray painting cars, sign-writing, paintings, painting homes, making security gates, fixing up or maintenance of property etc to get extra cash. We were of course free labour in this for him and were often required to wake up early on a Saturday to help sand down vehicle body parts, or required to mow the lawn and do the garden work that was unattended by my father due to him being involved in his private work. There was often a conflict of interest as I felt compelled to help my father, but my interest in sport was a burning ambition as well. The result was that more often than not, I would be able to go to a rugby game, at the cost of an argument as my mother did not drive and my father was occupied by work over weekends. This had a two fold implication. Whenever I did well on the rugby field, it would be my teammates’ parents congratulating me, with my parents absent and no form of praise and recognition for achievement. In 1986, I played the rugby game of my life and this was the first time I ever felt exalted and a success. As always, I got a lift to the game with my friend. I played the position of flank. We played against a regional team, and the game was intense. At one point in the game I made a choice to tackle what can be described as an Os Durant of sorts. I had blind rage and courage, and performed a text book tackle that had the crowed roaring and in a couple of seconds I was elevated from an average Joe to the hero of the day. I did not want to leave the field and wanted to experience this moment forever. Acknowledgement from my best friends parents were also a
highlight in this experience as my own parents were oblivious to my achievement as they were absent. When I came home after a good game, in good spirit, I was often faced with a frustrated and cursing father that demanded I change my clothes and come and help with the job at hand. My mother was very much the martyr and showed her comfort by cooking an exceptional meal or baking cookies or treats for us.

Working with my father was one of the only ways for us to be in a relationship. It also had some perks for me as when we had to work away from home, I was always keen on the adventure of where we would work and the change in scenery. This working also taught me to be some sort of a DIY expert and I value this. We seldom had money for take-aways etc, so working off site also include this little perk as well as seeing how the “other side” lived as often we would work at a private business or home for the wealthy.

Holidays were the standard drive up to the Northern Cape to my grandfather’s farm and later my uncle’s farm. The ritual for holiday perks was as follows. We had to service the bakkie, change the oil, filters etc and pack the toolbox should we experience a break down en route. We always had a second hand car, or an old car so I gained a lot of experience in minor servicing and repairs of cars. We also had to tend to the garden and make sure that it was 100% pristine as a passage to holiday time. I prided myself in how I tended the garden, often inviting my parent to come and see my handy work and expecting some form of praise. More often than not, this did not happen satisfactory. I recall in my matric year, close to the prelim result time, I had a tough time with anxiety with academia, and had a little bit of a breakdown episode on one such occasion where I really needed them to acknowledge the hard work I put into my studies. When this did not happen, I broke down in tears one afternoon and proclaimed to my parents that they do not appreciate what I am doing. Nothing happened.

My interests growing up, aside from sport, was a love for animals. I had owned dogs, parrots, pigeons and loved spending time cleaning out cages, letting out the doves for a fly around and playing soccer with my best Jock. Jock also had an exceptional long life. He was born in 1987 and passed in 2002. He was in many ways the last remnant of my childhood. I think I spend more time with Jock then any other personality or friends.
A couple of random, but significant events, stand out from my childhood. I recall that my father on occasion would come up with some sort of plan to make money. One such event was when he painted a portrait of King Sobhuza II from Swaziland. The Swazi king passed away in 1982 and my father painted his portrait in 1986. He then had many copies of the painting printed that they wished to sell to the Swazi nation. It was not implemented as the Swazi family claimed ownership of the painting and all was lost. My father still holds resentment to this day of this event. The conflict here was obviously a western mind not having any understanding of the African concept of ownership and pride. Soon after this event there was another upsetting experience for the family. My mother subsequently found a job at a video store, and not being able to drive, she made use of the bus service. This entailed a bit of a walk from home to the bus stop. On one such a day, she walked to the corner of our street, passing a gardener along the way. As she got to the corner she was attached by two black men that robbed her of her handbag. I dare not ask my mother of what happened in detail, but from what I recall one of the attackers dragged her to a woody section of the plot of land that was owned by a farmer and sold to a golf course developer. The gardener she saw along the way came to her rescue and frightened off her attackers. I recall that she was in a severe state at that point. This event proved to be a significant influence on my father’s political beliefs.

My father is one of an identical twin as I mentioned before. His father was a successful farmer. His brother, the eldest of the twins, was very much the apple of his father’s eye. My farther, in many ways, was the unwanted and unexpected twin. Back in those days I am sure you only found out at birth if you were to have a singleton or twin birth. From what I know, my father played out the role of the unwelcome and unwanted child in his life, and only found companionship in his twin brother. They had an elder bother, that was the first born and were perceived as having special needs as far as his father and siblings were concerned. He was often excused from hard work, due to his special situation. My father was therefore one of the twin that was forced to work his fathers farm, sometimes very gruelling hard work with no pay and empty promises. I recall a story he told me of how he watched his father beat a donkey to death one day. They were working and his father lost his temper.
with the animal, resulting in him beating the animal to death in front of his
children. Another story he shared was how his father would send him on a
5kms run to go and fetch a box of matches from the farm house. From what I
understand, my father was very much the underdog. And his only
acknowledgement was through his elder twin brother who seemed to have
more of his father’s approval. One day my grandfather shared with my father
that he is selling is farm to buy a farm for his older twin brother in Upington.
He felt cheated and left out. His twin brother enjoyed the privilege of running
his own farm, his children enjoyed lavish holidays and wealth whilst my father
was struggling to make ends meet for his family. As a child I remember how
we would get to the farm holiday time to be overwhelmed with stories of how
our cousins went on such and such a school trip and enjoyed such and such
extravagances that we never had the privilege to as children.
One day, my uncle, his wife and his two children pitched up at our home in a
small truck, with some belongings and we were informed that they are now
going to live with us. They lost the farm and my grandparents went to a small
town called Deben to settle whilst they had no where else to turn except to my
father for a place to stay.
Our household routine was pretty well run up until this disruption. We had a
cooked dinner around the dinner table at a set time, and had to go bath and
get into bed by 20h00. My father on occasion made time to join us swimming
in the pool and had some interest in us as children. We were dutiful
Christians that attended the Dutch Reformed church or Sunday school every
single Sunday. My mother never joined us at church. But the standard
procedure was either a wholesome family lunch on Sundays or a braai at my
aunt’s, my mother’s or my sister’s home. We loved these get-togethers as
this implied fun, laughter and a general good time. We especially loved my
aunt’s puddings and cakes as she was a stickler for the high tea event after
dinner. Their home was the ideal picture of a healthy family environment.
They seemed to have risen above their raising as she was always studying
and has a PhD and her husband a successful chartered accountant. They
have 4 kids, all of whom grew up to be tertiary educated. The eldest has a
Doctorate in Theology, the second is a GP, the third is the rebel with her
B.Hons in English and the last born is currently studying medicine. This all
changed remarkably when his brother and family moved in with us. By that
time my maternal grandfather passed away and my sister and I had our own
bedroom and space. My maternal uncle and aunt has always been my role
model with regards to the fruits of a good education. They have played a
significant part in what I perceived to be success and motivation.

The status quo of our lives changed in 1986, when my father’s brother came
to live with us. By that time my maternal grandfather passed away and my
sister and I each had our own bedroom and private space. I was 10 years old
and my sister 9. My male cousin was 13 and my female cousin 12. The
result of their move was that my sister had to give her bedroom up to my
uncle and aunt, and all 4 children were moved into my bedroom. We lived in
an average 3 bedroom house with one bathroom. My sister and I shared my
bed, whilst my cousins each had their own beds in the room. My parents had
their own room. Mornings were a nightmare as you had 8 people scrambling
to use one bathroom and prepare for the day ahead. I remember that slowly
but surely our normal operations in the home was interrupted by the 4 other
family members. Our eating patterns were disrupted, instead of fixed meal
times as a family together, the result was eating whenever you are hungry
and then bread, fries and unhealthy food combinations became the norm. My
mother did not work at that stage, but was forced to find employment as the
burden of the extra mouths to feed became too much. I recall an argument
where my mother wanted to move out of the home to go and stay with her
sister. Our lives were falling apart as I saw our parents arguing more and
more, and my uncle and aunt did not make an attempt at first to find
alternative employment. More to this was that our female cousin was an
exceptionally bright child, a straight A student that we felt inferior to. His son
was another matter altogether. A rebel and down right wicked at times. He
often bullied and troubled the other children around them. Our routine of
going to church fell to the wayside. We spent no more time together as a
family and the news broadcasts became a commentary field for my father and
his brother in support of their beliefs. Also remember that back in those days
the major political players were the National Party, the Conservative Party and
the rise of far right movements such as the AWB. I recall my father went to
some of the Conservative Party meets and instead of healthy family
communication we had continuous commentary on how the country was falling apart and how racial divide was a God sent and should be kept. Before my uncle came with his family to live with us, he was exposed to some sort of sect religion in Upington, which he carried with him into our home. The base of this religion can be traced to the United States. The religion was formed by Dan Gayman in the United States. Dan Gayman teaches that his congregation and supporters are the true chosen people of Genesis and God’s creation. Adam, Eve and Jesus were white, homosexuality may be punishable by death, interracial marriage is forbidden, and nonwhites are subhuman and soulless. They further have a belief in an apocalyptic struggle between white Christians and the international Jewish conspiracy. Gayman conveyed several of his central ideas in “The Two Seeds of Genesis 3:15,” a booklet often cited in Identity circles; it argues that Anglo-Saxons are descendants of Adam while the Jewish people originated in a sexual union between Eve and Satan. He concludes, logically, that Jews have stolen the Christian Israelite “inheritance.”

1. (http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/gayman.asp?xpicked=2&item=gayman)

He wrote in 1991: “Please, dear Christian Israelites, how have the Jews managed to steal their heritage from you….What we must understand is that the Jews have good mental ability, and being guided by their father, the Devil, they have managed to carefully expunge from the Bible major truths upon which they have been able to fool the world into believing they are the true Biblical Israel.”

1. (http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/gayman.asp?xpicked=2&item=gayman)

The impact of this religious belief had a long lasting and devastating implications on our lives. The first was in the social context. The result of my fathers acceptance of this religion was that we were ousted from the Dutch Reformed Church, and was subsequently taken to many other churches where my father tried to evangelise his new found religion. This resulted in us being manoeuvred around my fathers agenda regarding religion. On a social context, this resulted in elimination of family ties and friends. I was extremely nervous about introducing my father to other people and absolutely panicked when I got social invites from friends. I recall an incident that will explain this. I had a good friend in high school who asked me to stay after school with him...
as he wanted very much for me to meet his mother. We had a really great friendship and in normal circumstances most people would be comfortable meeting friends’ parents. I was struck with anxiety and fear. I never spoke of my father’s religion to anyone, not even my best friend at school. I was therefore really worried that his mother may want to meet my parents. Almost everywhere my father went he could only speak about his religion and on many inappropriate and embarrassing occasions enforced his beliefs into most social contexts. As mentioned, we cherished time spent on Sunday’s at my aunt’s home. On one such a Sunday, we finished main course, and was looking forward to the customary high tea after the meal. My father apparently had an argument with my uncle’s brother and we were summoned to pack up and leave. This was one of the many social scenarios that were to follow. The result was that we were ostracised from making social connections and having a healthy span of teenage interaction with people of the opposite sex as well as friends on a home base level.

My father’s strict beliefs also carried through to what we listed to. I remember how as a teenager I started listening to hard rock and metal music, and how my father had plenty to say about this abominable rubbish we were entertaining. What once was a need for us to have parents interested in our schooling, became a blessing in disguise. I recall how on some occasions my father would give me some or other biblical passage to pass onto a teacher that he had a conversation about on his religion. This was in the early days, when I was still in primary school. I later appreciated the fact that my parents no longer attended parent’s night at school, although I longed for things to be normal. My father became a social embarrassment. Even at the shops where he did sign writing jobs or performed some maintenance work, he would start preaching his version of the gospel.

Even though his brother and family stayed with us for less for a year, it became clear to me that my father divorced his family and married his religion. This left me with a cautious regard for faith and religion. Religion to me, to this day, is a tool people use to manipulate and support their own agenda’s.

Throughout my schooling years, I withheld myself from social context as much as possible in fear of embarrassment my father and his religious beliefs may
cause. One platform my father also used to evangelise was when he joined the police reservists, which in those days was a nice playground for racial hatred and indifference. My father's approach to the topic was very much dictatorial. He could not have a conversation with anyone opposing his beliefs. Even to this day, if he speaks to anyone of his religion, you can see that the audience is dumb struck with disbelief and his aggressive tone and body language. Needless to say, he does not have much of an audience nowadays and confides himself to his study where he relentlessly types up doctrines of his own beliefs. No one in the family entertains his sayings and this frustrates him immensely as he has no audience, not even at home.

All through our high school years my sister and I became each other's best friend. We both felt ashamed of our father's beliefs and considered ourselves social outcasts in a way and felt silenced and imprisoned by our father's beliefs. We used to go to school every day, as normal children do, and we did not mention our father's religion to anyone. The social stage was changing and the church and state proclaimed neighbourly relations, acceptance of all under God and government, whilst at home we had the episodes of my father arguing with the news reader on TV. This was usually followed by lectures from my father on how society is misled and how there is no future for us in this country. How sorry he felt for us as we had no future at all. My sister and I have not and did not go to church for a number of years by the time we started realising that my father's beliefs were "not normal". But, we knew that we should avoid getting involved in discussions about religion with my father, for we have many a time been labelled by him as the anti-Christ and "devils spawn" for having a difference in opinion. My mother tried in her own way to show that she was not interested in his ideologies either, but he seemed determined to preach to someone. I guess he reckoned he would preach to an unwilling audience at home, since he could no longer find any audience aside from his brother that shared his beliefs. It was roughly around the age of 15 or 16 that both my sister and I became acutely aware of our parents faults. More often than not, an argument would ensue as my mother got tired of listening to my father's comments on society and South Africa and its demise. In more ways, this also affected our perception of the world. We
were embarrassed by our father, but dare not challenge him on any of his beliefs as we had first hand experience of his temper and his manner when he fervently started preaching his gospel. My sister and I confided ourselves to my room to watch TV or listen to music so that we can block out my fathers commentary. In plain language, we tied to live around him and not with him in our home. We had no voice in my father’s presence.

As mentioned, we have always been struggling financially, so as matric approached I realised that there is not much hope for me to be a full time tertiary student, even though I had university exemption. Second to this, I also had no idea of what I wanted to become and what avenues would be open to me to explore. My closest schoolmates had the financial means to go to technicon or university, whereas my parents could not afford to send me for tertiary education. It was 1993 and the social demographics of the country were dramatically changing. Nelson Mandela was released in 1991, the Nationalist Government was on a downwards slope and my fathers ever present commentary of the country going down the drains left me with little hope or prospects as a white male to make it in the new South Africa. In 1992 compulsory military service for school-leavers came to an end, and thus most of our generation were looking at going to University after school or finding employment.

I found myself applying and being accepted to the Department of Correctional services. I pitched up for enrolment on 10 January 1994. This started a new and exciting chapter in my life. Firstly, this meant leaving my home and for the first time ever entering unfamiliar turf. I grew up in a very protective household, and I never spent time away from home. Now, as I got onto the bus at Modderbee prison, heading to Kroonstad where I was to attend 6 months of basic training, I was not sure of what lies ahead. For the first time I got onto a bus with black people. I found myself surrounded by white acquaintances from a questionable rough-and-tough background, as well as black colleagues from completely unfamiliar and unknown background. In 1994, at the dawn of a new South Africa, I think both black and white people were confused as to what lay ahead. 1994 was an historic year.
What I loved most about being employed was the financial independence. I realised that I can make a living on my own. The ridged routine and military style discipline also made the transition easy as I did not have to do much of my own thinking. Conforming to authority was an easy path to follow as in many ways this was a repetition of my obedience to authority at school and at home. I did however explore the unfamiliar space of social interaction with my peers on weekends when we had weekend pass. My father was miles away. I formed very strong friendship bonds with a group of friends. With the training and its challenges, we all had a collective experience of physically and mentally challenging situations. The military style training from the previous administration still prevailed, that of breaking down and rebuilding ‘exemplary’ prison wardens, but it connected all of us [black and white] in comradeship. Finally, I also started participating in normal age appropriate social events such as going to night clubs, occasional use of alcohol and enjoying the liberties of youth. I had a lot of catching up to do and I intended on doing this well. During our basic training at Kroonstad, we were deployed at various prisons around the country due to rioting by prisoners and strikes by members of POPCRU (police and prisons’ civil rights union). The prisoners wanted the right of being able to vote in the first national free and fair elections in 1994. Furthermore, the focus on discipline and respect for authority during basic training was somewhat contradicted by the excessive drinking, partying, lack of self-respect and poor role modelling demonstrated by some of warders after they have completed basic training. I realised that a constant iron fist is the only way the top officials expected to instil self-discipline, like constant parenting without letting go. This was how people were taught not to take ownership of their own lives, hence why people become dependant sheep of authority; in my view, a very popular approach to harbouring nationalism and patriotism of the ruling administration. After all, how can one then bite the hand that feeds you? After restoring order to such prisons, we returned back to Kroonstad to complete the rest of our basic training.
Whist I was at college for basic training the drama at home continued. When I went home for weekend pass my father informed me that he resigned from his work, to invest his pension fund into a transport business venture with one of his friends. My sister was in her matric year, and she was “left behind” whilst I only just started a new chapter in my life. This business only lasted eight months. Not only did my father loose his entire pension fund with this failed business venture, but he had to beg his previous employer to reinstate him. He had lost all his years’ of service and at the age of 47 started anew. My father was devastated and broken like i have never experienced before. It was sad and painful for me to see my father so emotionally hopeless and depleted, and i felt the need to be strong and hold things together, albeit due to my own anxiety and uncertainty. In a profound way i needed my father to be strong, even if it meant that he could annoy me with his arrogant and confident religious conviction. This was the first time i got scared by the thought of him not being around anymore. My father had a strong resentment towards life and the world, which also silenced his religious convictions for some time. He never fully recovered from this knock, and somehow regressed in his maturity about reason. He blamed everything around him for his misfortune, God, politics, people, country, Satan, etc. He felt that the world owed him, that it was unjust and that he was a victim of life. This new theme was also introduced in his commentary on social events in the country and in his evangelistic approach to the topic of his faith. How the “system” corrupted and how it deprived honest while folk of success. He always acted the victim, and for all his losses, there was always someone else to blame. The one Biblical passage that I knew was the one about how the sins of the fathers will visit on the children and the children’s children, to the third and fourth generation. I was petrified to think of how my punishment for my father’s sins would visit me. I initially entertained this thought, but soon rejected it. There was no way I would sacrifice my life for my father’s beliefs. My sister shared this view and we both discussed on many occasions how we intend to live our lives differently. Since my sister and i were in high school we vowed to change in our generation, i suppose as every generation likely intends when things were not ideal or could have been different. The most obvious way at the time for us to change was being educated. Although this is not necessarily
an absolute, my maternal aunt Marina (having a PhD) modelled or demonstrated how she has elevated herself, and consequent family, from her family of origin. We both encouraged one another to continue with tertiary education. I have also learnt how or what not to do, hence there are much to be learnt from any situation or person. Instead of blaming external factors for circumstances, although it does impact, we intended to take control of our own destinies as much as we had control to do so. In many ways our [sister and i] experiences in our family of origin, however unpleasant or blemished some moments were, are the greatest and most valuable gift our parents could have given us - me and my sister’s lives bear testimony to breaking some generational patterns. In a way, we needed to find our own voice....eventually. I think we understood and encouraged each other in the best way we knew how. No one else could relate to our circumstance. No one else would understand. My sister also studied part time and graduated with a B.Com in Tourism Management, part time through Unisa.

After completing training basic training in June 1994, I was placed at Modderbee prison, which meant that I moved back to live with my parents at home. Everyone in my family contributed financially to pay for the bond and living expenses. The first six months at Modderbee I worked shifts and performed normal guarding where one interact with prisoners, man tower posts or escort prisoners to court or external hospitals. Early in 1995 I applied for a more intellectually stimulating position in the HR department at Modderbee. On alternate weekends I still worked in the prison. In 1995, when South Africa hosted the rugby world cup, I passed my first promotional examination at Technicon South Africa and in 1996 I enrolled at Unisa for my undergraduate BA general degree. I had Psychology and Criminology as two of my major subjects. Working full time and studying part time was the only way I could educate myself further, and the result was once again that I lapsed into a routine of little socialization and a focus on my work and studies. I simultaneously enrolled for further promotional exams at Technicon South Africa in order to gain promotion at work. In spite of this routine, I did occasionally manage to seek pockets of socialization or other activities to somehow balance my life.
I lived under the same roof with my parents till 2001, when my father and I built a flat on the property for myself. At this stage, my sister was still living at home and worked in the travel industry. I enjoyed the privacy of living in my own flat, away from my father’s pessimistic and negative energy. This afforded me the opportunity to create and habituate my own living environment according to my needs and preferences. My home was a kind of neutral zone for my mother and sister, who would come and visit me in my flat for a cup of tea and a chat often. My sister moved out of home in 2003. She moved in with a homosexual male friend Parktown North, Johannesburg. I recall how this upset my mother and father. I was the only one that helped her move and I recall that my mother did not speak with her for a couple of months. She had turmoil’s of her own, including a bad car accident in November 2004. Eventually she ended up in an unhappy marriage. But she had the courage to divorce him and moved back to my home town. At first living in the main house with my parents, and 6 months later, finding a place of her own for herself and her daughter.

My father was retrenched in 2002. This brought new financial strain on the household. My mother still worked......

I completed my BA in Psychology in 2001. I was immensely proud of what I have accomplished and it was the first time my immediate family was present to see me get recognition. My father, mother and my sister was present. I then enrolled for my BA.Hons. in Psychology and completed this in February 2005. I applied and went for the interviews in 2004 at UNISA already in preparation for the Masters degree. I was not accepted. In January 2005 I received a call from WITS that there was an opening for me to do my maters in counselling psychology at WITS and that I could start this whilst I was waiting or my results of the February 2005 final paper. was not selected In 2005 I also applied at UNISA and WITS for my Masters. I was accepted at WITS, whilst completing the last of my BA.Hons. It was a particularly stressful time in my academic career as I had the despondent news of not being accepted at UNISA. I went to WITS whilst still waiting for my UNISA results. I was allowed under the premise that I pass this last paper, but in the interim could start training as a counselling psychologist. The pressure of academia
reminded me of my anxiety at school with academics. I felt, and soon found myself overwhelmed.

Thinking systems
As mentioned in the introduction I intentionally did not include systems theory and principles in a formal theory or literature section separate from my experiences. Systemic principles in this story cannot be only reserved for psychology and be excluded from how I look at the rest of the world in all other context. The application of systems thinking once amalgamated with my past experiences inevitably became a new way of being and seeing, although this process is forever evolving. Systems thinking is not only reserved for human behaviour, but is applicable to any context that describes a relational connection, e.g. in politics, economics, sport, nature, etc. These principles need not be memorised or become outdated, but are universally applicable and freely flows as way of seeing and describing. Initially systemic principles had to be learnt before it became an extension of me. This process took nearly two years to apply, but has by no means being mastered. It’s like learning to ride a bicycle. At first you have to focus or remember to pedal, balance, steer and so on. Once you have mastered to cycle without even thinking about it, you become one with your bicycle. When you have mastered cycling you can apply it to doing tricks, track or road racing, mountain biking or any other activity that involves you riding a bicycle.

I apply systemic principles to describe and understand in everyday life, which does not mean that I psychologise or pathologise everything around me. There is no way I cannot see everything around me from systemic principles or even resort back to my former way of seeing. It is like opening Pandora’s Box. For this reason systems thinking is an experience and not merely a recap of theory out there which can be used at random. However, I can still apply ‘other’ ways of seeing, but it is done knowingly for the most part. This was illustrated during my internship at a psychiatric hospital when I was exposed to other paradigms and implicitly forced under the pretence of practical exposure to formulate ‘psychopathology’ by using psychodynamic terminology, projective tests and theory. I was able to do this using psychodynamic terminology and theory. Aristotle could not have said it better.
“it is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it”.

Abovementioned reminds me of a psychological ward round in which I had to present a client. This ward round is only attended by psychologists and therefore less attention is given to biological aetiologies. After reading my report and invited the patient into the interview, my colleges asked me about my therapeutic approach. One of the more senior psychologists (8 years at this hospital) asked me which therapeutic paradigm I’m working from. It was difficult to answer, because I used object relations, psychosocial developmental theory, cognitive angle and systemic formulations to describe the patient’s current state of being. Of course I jumped and answered that I work systemically. On reflection it came to me that I could not tick any one of the boxes that exist in psychological literature, because I did not follow any one particular paradigm exclusively. I recalled that one of the basic systemic thinking principles is a ‘both-and’ approach. Therefore my ‘paradigm’ was the only one in the world namely, WERNER JOHANN WICHMANN WITH NEARLY 35 YEARS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE AND A FEW YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE WHICH HAS SEEN, HEARD, TASTED, SMELLED AND FELT TOO MANY EXPERIENCE TO RECALL OR MENTION, yet still in the making. I am my paradigm, there is no other. I am the amalgamation of all that I know so far. For the first time I felt in my being what Whittaker was talking about, using yourself, your intuition, academic and lived experience.

Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed were walking, talking and living examples of what they preached. They did not live a different example to what they preached. I am by no means comparing myself to these Holy people, but this is what systemic thinking is for me. It is my opinion that many therapists are two different people, the one being a beautiful flawed human being and the other a therapist aspiring for perfection.

During my internship I felt that my way of working was constantly challenge by people who predominantly ascribed to a linear or first-order cybernetic way of understanding. I was regularly required to write reports in which therapeutic formulations and interventions had to be motivated. It seemed easier to resort to a different paradigm with a simple theory to use as a template with all
patients, which in my opinion seemed to be the norm in my experience during my internship. I resisted the easy way out and firmly believed in working systemically. Having to explain or describe a second-order cybernetic way of working in a first-order way would mean confounding different logical levels.

To overcome this problem I regularly resorted to a practical and concise reference book by Professor Charl Vorster in which he revisits the contributions of the major role-players in respect of general systems theory and expands the ‘Interactional View’ first introduced to South Africa by Professor George Wiehahn in 1974. Some of my trainers at UNISA were respectively trained by Wiehahn and Voster. Surely my sentiment is expressed in honouring the names of some of the South Africans who dared to break away from the long established norms in the field of psychology, by importing general systems theory to our shores. I am immensely proud and grateful to have been introduced to this new epistemology. It is for these reasons that I will summarise some of the basic systemic principles verbatim from ‘general systems theory and psychotherapy: beyond post-modernism’ by Charl Vorster (2003).

Genogram
As part of our training we were introduced to genograms. Some of the themes that came to my attention were poor father-son-relationships, religion, and intolerance to difference e.g. ethnicity (Afrikaans-English), opinion, just being different from the ‘norm’, poor intimacy between husband and wife, education, asocial, family secrets and white elephants. saw so many patterns present in my relationships that scared me. My sister and I were the first in our family to finish high school, and to get degrees. I became aware of many patterns that had to break.

My AGAPE experience
AGAPE (meaning ‘love’) was one of the first unconventional training experiences during my academic training at UNISA. AGAPE was the name of a community ‘clinic’ in Mamelodi (what was knows in the olden days as a township) on the outskirts of Pretoria. It was started by one of our lecturers at UNISA over 20 years ago. Mamelodi’s residents were predominantly ‘African’ people – black people (for better use of a conventional description). The
purpose of AGAPE, on one level, was to provide psychological services to the residents in the area. Some of our referrals were from general practitioners, schools and word of mouth, although most people who joint literally intended to pass through the premises. The piece of land we used was next to the YMCA community hall in Mamelodi-east and was not fenced off; hence open access to anybody who wished to enter. Yet another function of AGAPE was to give us, training psychotherapists, the experience of a micro eco-system which was part of the greater macro system of Mamelodi. This meant not only to learn and practice ‘therapy’ or observe what goes on there, but also to be part of the collective experience that is AGAPE. AGAPE knew no children, adults, whites, blacks, experts, students, therapists or patients, but only people with names from different backgrounds that collectively belonged to this open system which constantly changed its organization with the constant ebb-and-flow of different people entering and exiting. Therefore AGAPE without its people was just an empty space of land in Mamelodi-East. What made AGAPE were the people and the experience that each individual brought with, which explains why each visit to AGAPE was forever different from the previous. Our ‘waiting room’ or ‘reception area’ was usually under the enormous blue gum tree which could be entered from any 360 degree angle. The ‘consulting rooms’ could be anywhere on the premises where you had relative privacy as it had no walls to hang our many qualifications to prove to ‘patients’ that we were qualified ‘experts’. The consultation rooms were not always furnished with expensive furniture or classic Freudian couches, but could be anything ranging from a tree trunk, rock, concrete slab or plastic chair – we had variety.

The first people to arrive at AGAPE would start carrying plastic chairs from the YMCA community hall and place some under the blue gum tree and the bulk of it under the thatch roof in the shape of a spiral. Our day officially started with the Ndoro round about the time when the last toddlers and pre-school kids were dropped off at the crèche adjacent to AGAPE, which equates to 9am (plus or minus 15 minutes) for those who cannot gauge African time. The Ndoro was a routine ritual that proclaimed the welcoming of our work day and involved passing around of the ‘talking stick’. Anybody was free to join the
Ndoro. The ‘talking stick’ worked its way around from the centre of the spiral to the outside and gave all attendees the opportunity to say anything they wanted, albeit a welcome greeting, concern, poem, song, etcetera. Some people chose to hold it in silence, which also ‘spoke to us’. People were free to sit anywhere in the spiral, hence all seats represented equal significance. Sometimes the ‘talking stick’ could be passed around for a second or even third turn, there were no fixed rule. After the Ndoro the students and lecturer would meet for a quick informal meeting to discuss the day’s agenda, e.g. clients that were seen, lunch arrangements or any other obligations. Before we go about our business, we collected cash from whoever was able to offer to buy food with. Sandwiches were usually the staple diet and were sometimes complimented with extras like cheese, cold meat and fruit depending on how much money was available. We always made a tentative estimation of how many mouths to feed, nothing was ever certain and one had to mostly ‘feel’ who much was enough. Preparing the lunch was a collective experience, where all hands that were available assisted. The children usually enjoyed helping and I noticed how the process of participation were way more important than the final product. I started to see how a simple task like making sandwiches had significant therapeutic value as it created a sense of acknowledgement and belonging. When the sun was at it’s highest point usually announced lunch time. Thanks were given for the food by way of prayer (of any denomination and language), song or short messages from some of the people. The students usually served guests to AGAPE first, after which they helped themselves. Any leftover food was taken home by some of the visitors.

So, you may ask what could I have learnt from this experience that academia could not teach me. It is much easier to learn about generalized human behaviour when it is ‘out there’ than sitting in front of a living being and appreciating the complexity and ambiguity. I believe that generalized or normative ‘knowledge’ of human behaviour close our minds to other possibilities of complex human behaviour.

It helped me to learn to ‘see’ process which is very difficult to teach from books only. More importantly it taught me that beyond psychology, pathology, diagnosis and mental functioning were human beings. We never referred to
clients/visitors of AGAPE in terms of diagnosis or problems. I only realised this very important lesson when I started my internship at a psychiatric hospital two years later. Our ‘therapy’ at AGAPE did not consist of a particular paradigm, theory or technique, but was any means of communication that connected people ranging from talking, drumming, playing, singing, acting, preparing food or making arts and craft together.

I furthermore only realised the next year when I started seeing my personal therapist for anxiety that psychotherapy is very expensive and for many people not even an option. So many people who visited AGAPE did not know what psychology was. There is a desperate need for our facilitation in impoverished communities, since most qualified psychologists I know enter into private practice and do not even consider charitable services. From my experience working at the same prison for 14 years, there was only 1 clinical psychologist who performed her community service for 12 months during my employment.

Unconventional style of training

They practiced what they preached, First-name basis, arrangement of ‘class room’, dress code was personal, embraced who they were as a person, worlds apart in unique and different yet taught under one umbrella, boundaries were established implicitly and were differently negotiated for each student. There were no ‘experts’ and ‘students’ but experienced colleagues and experienced colleagues in the making.

Language and communication

One-upmanship/manipulation, language of deficit,
The same lecture who expressed concern about my anxiety gave me the nickname of ‘Mr. Switzerland’ during our group therapy. This name came about from my interactional style in group sessions (and surely in other settings), which was my inability to usually take a stance or face confrontation. I knew this name was an amplification of my usual style of interaction and intended to be harsh feedback in light-hearted fashion. It was funny for a few seconds after I heard it initially, and then it hit me! I realised the severity of such a style and it also got me thinking of how this pattern repeats in many contexts and in most of my relationships with others. Why could I not comfortably speak my mind, because I knew I had things to say? It sickened me to comprehend that I feared the reaction of others about my opinion or similarly that my opinion was not worthy of being voiced. This was a distressing realization; that I choose to remain voiceless for such a long time in order not to be confronted by fear of criticism or disapproval or guilt for speaking out against the conventionally or socially accepted norms. To some extent I knew there were things from my past experience that I did not want to face or speak about.

My psychodynamic depression

My supervisor during the first 6 months and the community psychologist at the ward only worked from a psychodynamic paradigm. I was reminded of the grim prognosis and stats about children not growing up in a utopian context. I could comfortably describe my behaviour from a systemic perspective without feeling bad or depressed. Unfortunately or fortunately I applied psychodynamic to my life history. Jesus Christ knows I it was horrific!! It was at this point that I realised who much respectful it was to describe using systemic principles as apposed to finding the origin of pathology by formulating psycho dynamically. I furthermore realised why Carl Whittaker was not fond of theory. It a common ‘rule’ that therapists do not introduce their ideas into therapy, but only use what the client introduces. Problem; a theory is used to formulate client’s ‘pathology’. The formulation determines the
treatment plan. Hence, by formulating a client’s ‘pathology’ the therapist introduces ideas that were not introduced by the client.

Furthermore it is amazing that a theory that was originated many years ago and thousands of miles away on another continent and foreign culture is used to describe people in South Africa today. It does not take into account the background or experiences of this person. By applying this same theory to many people, therefore suggests that there is nothing unique about all of them. They are all reduced to the same phenomena.

It is important for people to be the same in order to make ‘accurate’ projections. To make generalized projections, means that they assume to know. If people therefore do not conform, it makes it difficult to ‘know’ them. Because knowing is so important they have to give it a name that fits into a generalized category.

I did not realize, but I fell into a symmetrical communication trap. The more some of my colleges tried to advance and push their psychodynamic agenda, the more I retaliated by pushing my systemic agenda. I got caught in the rubber fence! This endless and futile battle got me nowhere, other than that I only recited my own believes to me. My psychodynamic depression was my own doing. This realisation was difficult to stomach, but I managed to appreciate the lesson and humour in this unoriginal, but never useless, endeavour.

I recall another incident where the bio-psycho-social team and nursing staff raised concern about the children in the ward presenting with inappropriate sexual talk and touching. This was not uncommon, since some of the children admitted were sexually abused or previously exposed to sexual behaviour or discussion. The team decided to have a group meeting with the children to educate or remind them that relationships or sexual behaviour is not allowed. After the meeting some of the treating team members went straight to the activity room to talk to the children. One girl was disruptive and made it difficult for the speaker to talk. This girl was diagnosed with ADHD and mental retardation, but was also sexually molested by one of her close relatives. The speaker suggested that one of the nurses escorted her away for the group
meeting in order for us to commence with proceedings. It struck me who the ‘intellectually challenged’ children were treated at the ward. All children who were admitted received psychological therapy accept the children diagnosed with mental retardation. Mental retardation was diagnosed after an IQ test decided so. This was the norm and even the case when there were few children in the ward. I asked myself if there were a difference between the emotions, tears and suffering of a sexually abused ‘high functioning’ child and a child diagnosed with mental retardation. I did not believe so. However, after the meeting I asked if “the little ostracised child will also be informed” and said “that if she did knew before that she was different in a bad way, she must know now”. I was saddened, frustrated and angry when I said this in a sarcastic manner. The person who suggested that the child be removed from the meeting formally requested to speak to me a few days later. I gauged that this was about what I have said. However, It turned out very positive, because she expressed feeling bad about what I have said and realised the impact it might have had on this girl. We spend some time talking about the strong messages our subtle statements and behaviour send out to those around us.

I shall next discuss some, of many other, systemic principles that was significant for me during my two years of formal training.....

‘Seeing process’

Acknowledging lived experience

My tattoo and individuation

**Critical discussion group : Racism**

The origin of this discussion came from the controversial events around Julius Malema’s ‘Aw dubul'ibhunu’ (shoot the Boer) song at the time of Eugene
Terreblanche’s death. A noteworthy observation here is that most of the discussion groups, which varied in topics such as

- Quantum physics and multiple realities
- Church of Satin’s doctrine
- Psychology as a hypocritical profession, which featured twice

Most of these discussion groups had many attendees, ranging from the interns for whom it was compulsory to attend and practicing community psychologists who attended out of free will. But the topic on Racism attracted a very limited attendance with 9 interns and only one community psychologist. The group dynamics were as follows:

- 1 attendee was an Indian Male
- 2 white Afrikaans males, including myself
- 1 lady from Zulu decent
- 7 white females from Afrikaans and English speaking background

It was apparent that this topic was either one which people wanted to avoid, or one that they were tired of discussing altogether. None the less, it should be noted in context of the below discussion as a noteworthy observation on my part.

All in all, the Indian individual, who usually was very participative in discussions, remained quiet and reserved and mainly listened to what was said without offering much input.

My white Afrikaans male colleague was of the opinion that he does represent to some extent the white Afrikaans male culture. He argued that he feels that Julius Malema’s song contributed to the murder of Eugene Terreblanche and that he feels offended by the song. Being a white, Afrikaans male myself, I did not identify with the idea of a uniform representation of any demographical description of people. There are way too many variables within any such demographic. I was indeed offended by his arrogance to speak of himself as a
representative of the Afrikaans male demographic. I fit all the criteria statistically, but having someone box me into a category based on meeting the minimum criteria had me infused with disagreement.

The Zulu community therapist felt that the white culture is not showing enough remorse for the wrongdoings of the past and they ‘just don’t get it’. She very much claimed victims on her racial group’s behalf.

The subgroup of Afrikaans and English speaking females were all of the view that they are no longer apologising for the sins of a previous regime. They are in fact tired of apologising as their generation had nothing to do with the past. They also still feel that there is a preconceived expectation that they should feel obliged to apologise and show remorse for something they had nothing to do with. Purely because of the colour of their skin or their heritage.

Viktor E. Frankl’s book *Man’s search for meaning* Random House Publishers, 2004, p. 111 states the following on the topic of The Existential Vacuum, which I found very appropriate to our discussion group on this topic.

*The existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century. This is understandable; it may be due to a twofold loss which man has had to undergo since he became a truly human being. At the beginning of human history, man lost some of the basic animal instincts in which an animal's behaviour is imbedded and by which it is secured. Such security, like Paradise, is closed to man forever; man has to make choices. In addition to this however, man has suffered another loss in his more recent development inasmuch as the traditions which buttressed his behaviour are now rapidly diminishing. No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism).*

In this context, I can now elaborate on my views concerning this debate. These are views I expressed in this discussion group and some of the below comments were derived on reflection.
Firstly, I think we need to acknowledge that we need to look at these happenings in a system in context. We live in Africa, and not London, France or Germany, hence, we need to acknowledge the African context in our psychological approach to debate. We tend to box people in on a generalisation of race, perhaps a bit more here in South Africa given our history which is riddled with racial such as taught by history books on the Anglo-Boer War, the Anglo-Zulu war, the Apartheid struggle and the Apartheid regime. We are inclined to generalise political matters into a racial dilemma immediately. Subconsciously, survival of a particular culture had to be achieved by suppression of another. Hence, in the back of our minds, we class this into racial issues as you identify with your “own kind” in an argument, which in this discussion group and with this topic was immediately your own race.

In this context, when I heard arguments such as “they are not showing enough remorse and they just don’t get it” I am inclined to ask, “How much remorse is enough remorse? And also, if you are not expecting is to ‘get it’ then why try so hard for us to do the impossible according to your account? With the statement that my colleague represents the Afrikaans-male-group, I had just as much questions on this. I guess since I inherited a German surname, went to an Afrikaans school and I happen to be an Afrikaans male, you could categorise me into my fellow interns group. But, my journey is also my own. I had all of the above, but we hardly any strong Afrikaans family ties or norms. A racist father perhaps, but none of these automatically drafted me into any agreement with a preconceived label.

I am what I am, born white and born a male, and raised Afrikaans. This is where the statistics end. I am not responsible for actions or opinions of the past. I see the good and the bad attributes of all cultures. I can see how western thinking developed this country and laid its foundation for what became the economic hub of Africa. I also acknowledge the blood spilt on African soil by English, Boer, Zulu, Xhosa, Bushman or whatever nation lived on this soil in the past. What is important to me is that in 1994 corrective
measures we taken. That is what is important. We live in a South Africa that has the most liberal constitution in the world. I think there comes a time when you have to let go of the past in order to move forward. I think we should stop feeling responsible for what others have done, and we should stop looking for others actions to justify our opinions. Instead, the only responsibility you have to society is that of playing your part. Doing what you can do and should do. That is how you serve yourself and your society.

Mindedness is an evil in today’s society as far as I am concerned. We are either status minded, racially minded, educational minded etc. In each of these paradigms we evaluate and measure incidences, people and class according to our mindedness. To avoid confrontation or to protest is what we are inclined to do. If someone expects more remorse, then we will support this symmetrical communication by uttering words or remorse, whether we agree or not. Or, we will battle it out in a never ending argument posing a statement only to entice the other party to oppose this statement, falling into complimentary communication. I will use the best resolve, albeit playing a part in one-upmanship inter-action. When I go to the department of home affairs, stand in the cue for 4 hours and appear very appreciative and subjective to the racist clerk that sarcastically remarks on my white male demographics. Without entertaining his subliminal invite for conflict, I get my new passport application processed without too much delay by playing the hand of one-upmanship by playing underdog in this situation. This also reminds me of a statement made by an acquaintance who pointed out the irony of perception. He mentioned that if a white person gets involved in a road rage incident with a black person, the media class this as a racial incident. If two black people are reported in a road rage incident it may be called xenophobia, and if a white person versus a white person gets reported on a road rage incident, it is merely called a road rage incident. This goes to show how we tend to classify a lot of events as a racial issue.

A lot of this came to mind when I did the

**Critical discussion group : Should prostitutes be allowed to raise their children**
The interesting topics that we discussed allowed me to see how my formal training, lived experience and limited experience in the field of psychology have developed me to form my own opinions. The topic was ‘Should prostitutes be allowed to raise their own children?’, with specific reference to female prostitutes.

The topic came up when one of my fellow interns mentioned a patient she was seeing who is a prostitute. She mentioned to us that this patient had a child that makes tea and coffee for her waiting clients. This lead to the theme of whether we think a prostitute should have the right to raise her own children. Obviously, exposing children in such a way to the mother’s profession should not be allowed or entertained. On the topic of should the prostitute’s be allowed to raise their kids, I think the merit of the case should be considered. Raising children is first and foremost about meeting the child’s basic needs. If a mother does this in a way where the children are not directly exposed to her chosen profession, it is certainly still not an ideal situation for the mother and her family. But, instead of casting this in the camp of not acceptable, then I think you are not considering the merits of the case in question. We do not live in an ideal world. It is riddled with socio-economic problems. My opinion is to work with an imperfect world, use the knowledge of what is more conducive to raising children in such an environment, and in so doing create a sensible caring environment for your children.

The first question that came to mind is what qualifies you as an expert to make an opinion or statement that outright bans prostitutes from the right to raise their own children. Most of the interns that debated this question have around 6 years of learned knowledge gained from textbooks and studies in their masters programme in psychology. Another fact to consider is that the average age of the discussion groups is around 25 years old, with me the exception of being 33 years of age. This simple fact made it so easy for me to see how limited an approach to this subject could be. Lived experience is ignored in their reality of this debate. I myself am not or have not prostituted myself in any way, but I immediately wanted to bring to their consideration the fact that a “not knowing” approach would be the most likely approach I would follow. Most people will address this topic based on their lived or learned
knowledge of a mother and child relationship, and immediately, they will close
themselves off to any other medium of insight and opt for the judgemental
argument that a prostitute should not have the chance to raise her own
children. It is so easy to think that the source from experts is the better
source, as they ‘know better’. But, more often than not, learned knowledge
excludes any other sources of information or other opposing ideologies. This
is a trap that one can easily fall into when you have little learned or lived
knowledge, and mostly form opinions gathered from textbooks and so called
‘experts’. I am a firm believer that you should not limit yourself to any
sources, but rather gain an open minded and informed approach. As Aristotle
said ‘it is the mark of an educated mind to entertain a thought without
accepting it’. Hence, I think a healthy balance can be achieved when you look
at the argument from all sources, and the source that carries most value in my
opinion is the actual prostitute that is in a situation where she is exercising her
profession and still takes care of her own children. Again, I think the
approach of ‘not knowing” will provide you with more insight to build the base
for your argument than any textbook. Literature and expert opinion is
certainly a really useful tool in association with a patients lived experience.
The one cannot be elevated above the other, but rather they support each
other in assisting you as the psychologist to analyse your patients lived
experience, and apply sound learned fundamentals in assisting this patient to
build a bridge and to create a reality in which you can take an imperfect
situation and turn it into a workable solution. I am of the opinion that you must
realize that the world is an imperfect place, and that in this you will never be
able to create utopia on this planet. We so easily want to see the world as
black and white, but there are so many shades of grey that exists. You
cannot look at this question with a parochial approach.

Furthermore, apart from this question being approached in a reductionist
fashion, and that each case in question should be viewed on its own merit, it
was still a very controversial issue. My reduced answer to this question was
‘yes’, as long as parenting is good enough to provide for the basic needs of
the children. We are guided by what these basic needs are in the children’s
act. How this act was developed or what it describes was not investigated in
this discussion. I am very much aware of many reasons why a prostitute should not be allowed to raise her children, and many were also echoed by the group. Some of these reasons were that it was not a conducive environment to raise children, moral and ethical issues about a mother who sells sex for money, the children would be ridiculed in school, the example set for the children, separating the living environment from the mothers working environment etc. The majority of the discussion group had the typical societal stance of separating the mother and children. My experience from being in school and having to contend with the issue of my father ‘only’ having standard 7 and being a painter at profession as well as my mom ‘only’ having a standard 8 and working at a video rental store was not the ‘coolest’ thing. Nonetheless I wanted to have them as my parents because I felt that they had their best interests at heart for me and did the best they could or knew. It is far from what we consider the ideal. I am now at the age where I am and think independently, and have identified many ‘wrongdoings’ on their side. Despite all this I am not living a regretful life and value those experiences not only in the profession of psychology, but as my wisdom to guide me everyday. Your parent’s profession can impact on your life in many ways, from the career orientated business woman, the absent father who happens to be a Specialist surgeon. Yes, our parent’s professions may impact on our experience in life in our forming years. But not many children are invited into their parent’s profession directly. Hence, in my opinion if the prostitute can separate her personal life with her family, and provide a sustainable means of survival for her and her family. What then is the base of their argument? Is there a difference between the impact of a socially admired family situation where mother and father are both professionals, giving their children the best they can and expecting their children to excel and perhaps putting excessive demands on their children, versus the prostitute mother that works around her children needs and one that may live right next door to the Specialist Surgeon. Not all prostitutes live in dingy allies with drug addicts as neighbours. yet she has more flexible time to spend with her children
In closing this argument I am of the opinion that you cannot outright reject a dissimilar opinion or viewpoint in reference of your conventional approach. As a psychologist you should learn from your patient’s experience. The views that people in the discussion group harbour on this topic speaks volumes of how people can bring their own opinions into a situation, without examining it from the patient’s point of view. It is important for you to know that your patient’s case or concern is not your stage to perform your own formulated opinions, but rather a stage in which you have to allow your patient to come to a workable solution that is sustainable in the long term. One statement that resounds with me is an intern that commented “Luckily the social worker would have to make the decision on whether the kids would have to be removed”. What a shocking statement in my opinion. It is nothing more than passing the buck. Professionals in training that are all too comfortable with leaving the truly challenging decisions to a third party, instead of assisting the immediate players to come to a resolve.

Here again, I want to quote Joseph Campbell. “We’re in a free fall into future. We don’t know where we are going. Things are changing so fast. And always when you’re going through a long tunnel, anxiety comes along. But all you have to do to transform your hell into a paradise is to turn your fall into a voluntary act. It’s a very interesting shift of perspective….Joyfully participate in the sorrows of the world and everything changes”.

Stats are impersonal, detached and has a very detrimental effect on people. It does an injustice to the lived experiences of people and very little exploration is done on the people who have defied these odds against them. Demartini and miracle man. These people who disprove stats have proved their personal success despite the contrary. I had a list of possible negative outcomes predicted for me, yet has given it the finger. Fuck any stats who try to bring people down and make them believe that they have a poor prognosis of attaining success. Stats are one more way of disempowering people in making them believe it. This is why people need to look around them to see
what is ‘normal’ and why people are intolerant of difference from the norm. Many believe in an ‘objective’ reality where there is only a right or wrong way of being. For a long time I aspired to comply with the crap that wants to inform me of what is ‘normal’ or the ‘ideal’. This was my awareness of how school promotes this notion of ‘the best’, ‘first’, ‘clever’, etc.
APPENDIX G
Common themes in my autoethnography based on categories and patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Recurring patterns out of the text of the narrative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>Results of family circumstances</td>
<td>I was struck with anxiety and fear. I never spoke of my father’s religion to anyone, not even my best friend at school. I was therefore really worried that his mother may want to meet my parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>All through our high school years my sister and I became each others best friend. We both felt ashamed of our father’s beliefs and considered ourselves social outcasts in a way and felt silenced and imprisoned by this. We used to go to school every day, as normal children do, but we did not mention our father’s religion to anyone.</td>
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<td>My sister moved out of home in 2003. She moved in with a homosexual male friend Parktown North, Johannesburg. I recall how this upset my mother and father. I was the only one that helped her move and I recall that my mother did not speak with her for a couple of months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational father-son difficulties</td>
<td>Relationship between father and son which was difficult</td>
<td>My father was the black sheep in his family and had a poor relationship with his father.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>He has mostly been emotionally unavailable in my experience. My father and I could never really have a conversation.</td>
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<td>My father worked during the day and after work he usually either had private jobs to do or rested.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working with my father was one of the only ways for us to be in a relationship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close relationship with mother and sister</td>
<td>Enmeshment with female family members</td>
<td>I spent most of this time period at home with my mother and sister. Starting school was quite a huge shock to my system, considering that I had no pre-school exposure to a schooling environment. I felt sad and lonely being at school, away from my mom and sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity and eagerness for knowledge and learning</td>
<td>Learning from my environment</td>
<td>Working with my father was one of the only ways for us to be in a relationship. It also had some perks for me as when we had to work away from home, I was always keen on the adventure of where we would work and the change in scenery. This working also taught me to be some sort of a DIY expert and I value this.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The first six months at Modderbee i worked shifts and performed normal guarding where one interact with prisoners, man tower posts or escort prisoners to court or external hospitals. Early in 1995 i applied for a more intellectually stimulating position in the HR department at Modderbee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance and Drive for growth</td>
<td>Setting clear goals</td>
<td>Since my sister and I were in high school we vowed to change in our generation, I suppose as every generation likely intends when things were not ideal or could have been different.</td>
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</table>
|                                     |                                     | In 1995, when South Africa hosted the rugby world cup, I passed my first promotional examination at Technicon South Africa and in 1996 I enrolled at Unisa for my undergraduate BA general degree. I had...
Psychology and Criminology as two of my major subjects. Working full time and studying part time was the only way I could educate myself further, and the result was once again that I lapsed into a routine of little socialization and a focus on my work and studies. I simultaneously enrolled for further promotional exams at Technicon South Africa in order to gain promotion at work.

Every weekend my father would be lodged into private work to make extra cash. We struggled financially. My father did an array of private work like spray painting cars, sign-writing, paintings, painting homes, making security gates, fixing up or maintenance of property etc to get extra cash. We were of course free labour in this for him and were often required to wake up early on a Saturday to help sand down vehicle body parts, or required to mow the lawn and do the garden work that was unattended by my father due to him being involved in his private work.

We seldom had money for take-aways etc, so working off site also include this little perk as well as seeing how the “other side” lived as often we would work at a private businesses or home’s of the wealthy people.

I recall that my father on occasion would come up with some sort of plan to make money. One such event was when he painted a portrait of King Sobhuza II from Swaziland.

My closest schoolmates had the financial means to go to technicon or university, whereas my parents could not afford to send me for tertiary education.

What I loved most about being employed was the financial independence.

Most of the issues resulted from my paternal grandmother’s background, and her anti-British sentiments. Her parents were Boer prisoners in the Anglo-Boer war, from a faction of Boers that trekked to the outer reaches of the Northern Cape to establish a new life.

Schools back then were segregated on racial grounds. In sport and other activities ‘white’ schools competed against each other. I never questioned or wondered what children from other races did, apart from knowing that they were in townships (which were on the outskirts of ‘white’ towns and suburbs.

Nelson Mandela was released in 1991, the Nationalist Government was on a downwards slope and my father’s ever present commentary of the country going down the drains left me with little hope or prospects as a white male to make it in the new South Africa.

In 1992 compulsory military service for school-leavers came to an end, and thus most of our generation were looking at going to University after school or finding employment.

For the first time I got onto a bus with black people. I found myself surrounded by white acquaintances from a questionable rough-and-tough background, as well as black colleagues from completely unfamiliar and unknown backgrounds. In 1994, at the dawn of a new South Africa, I think both black and white people were confused as to...
The military style training from the previous administration still prevailed, that of breaking down and rebuilding ‘exemplary’ prison wardens, but it connected all of us [black and white] in comradeship.

During our basic training at Kroonstad, we were deployed at various prisons around the country due to rioting by prisoners and strikes by members of POPCRU (police and prisons’ civil rights union). The prisoners wanted the right of being able to vote in the first national free and fair elections in 1994. Furthermore, the focus on discipline and respect for authority during basic training was somewhat contradicted by the excessive drinking, partying, lack of self-respect and poor role modelling demonstrated by some of warders after they have completed basic training. I realised that a constant iron fist is the only way the top officials expected to instil self-discipline, like constant parenting without letting go. This was how people were taught not to take ownership of their own lives, hence why people become dependant sheep of authority; in my view, a very popular approach to harbouring nationalism and patriotism of the ruling administration. After all, how can one then bite the hand that feeds you?

| Poor self-esteem | My earliest memories of our neighbours were that they were extremely competitive and our shortcomings were often weighed against their strengths. |
| Impact of events which child has no voice to interpret with | I am of the opinion that the growing up years was very much influenced by our neighbour’s perception of us and their constant measuring their children as more capable and more prestigious than ourselves. |
| Poor self-esteem | Looking back at these experiences I did in some way contribute to my feelings of inadequacy, specifically academically, and feelings of low self esteem. |
| Poor self-esteem | I was surprised to be elected deputy head boy in Standard 5 (grade 7), and till this day do not know on what criteria this was based. |

<p>| Practical application of knowledge | The only time we [me and my father] engaged well was when we worked together or had to deal with a crisis of some sort. |
| Protestant value of work | My father worked during the day and after work he usually either had private jobs to do or rested. I usually helped him if i finished with schoolwork. |
| Practical application of knowledge | My father did an array of private work like spray painting cars, sign-writing, paintings, painting homes, making security gates, fixing up or maintenance of property etc to get extra cash. We were of course free labour in this for him and were often required to wake up early on a Saturday to help sand down vehicle body parts, or required to mow the lawn and do the garden work that was unattended by my father due to him being involved in his private work. |
| Practical application of knowledge | Working with my father was one of the only ways for us to be in a relationship. It also had some perks for me as when we had to work away from home, I was always keen on the adventure of where we would work and the change in scenery. This working also taught me to be some sort of a DIY expert and I value this. |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional hyper-vigilance</td>
<td>My father was devastated and broken like I have never experienced before. It was sad and painful for me to see my father so emotionally hopeless and depleted, and I felt the need to be strong and hold things together, albeit due to my own anxiety and uncertainty. In a profound way I needed my father to be strong, even if it meant that he could annoy me with his arrogant and confident religious conviction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion and ethnicity</td>
<td>My father is from a German-Afrikaans background. They were raised Dutch-reformed. My mother was from an Irish-Afrikaans background. My mom went to catholic school, even though she was a practicing Methodist. My parents got married under difficult circumstances due to their different cultural and religious backgrounds. Most of the issues resulted from my paternal grandmother’s background, and her anti-British sentiments. Her parents were Boer prisoners in the Anglo-Boer war, from a faction of Boers that trekked to the outer reaches of the Northern Cape to establish a new life. My paternal and maternal grandmothers did not approve of my parents’ marriage. We were dutiful Christians that attended the Dutch Reformed church or Sunday school every single Sunday. Dan Gayman teaches that his congregation and supporters are the true chosen people of Genesis and God's creation. Adam, Eve and Jesus were white, homosexuality may be punishable by death, interracial marriage is forbidden, and nonwhites are subhuman and soulless. They further have a belief in an apocalyptic struggle between white Christians and the international Jewish conspiracy. I recall my father went to some of the Conservative Party meets and instead of healthy family communication we had continuous commentary on how the country was falling apart and how racial divide was a God sent and should be kept. The impact of this religious belief had long lasting and devastating implications on our lives. The first was in the social context. The result of my fathers acceptance of this religion was that we were ousted from the Dutch Reformed Church, and was subsequently taken to many other churches where my father tried to evangelise his new found religion. This resulted in us being manoeuvred around my fathers agenda regarding religion. On a social context, this resulted in elimination of family ties and friends. Even though his brother and family stayed with us for less for a year, it became clear to me that my father divorced his family and married his religion. This left me with a cautious regard for faith and religion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>My father walked away from home having only completed standard 7 (grade 9) in school. She [mother] struggled in school and on advice from her mother left school after completing standard 8 (grade 10). They [maternal aunt and uncle] have 4 kids, all of whom grew up to</td>
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be tertiary educated.

My maternal uncle and aunt has always been my role model with regards to the fruits of a good education. They have played a significant part in what I perceived to be success and motivation.

My closest schoolmates had the financial means to go to technicon or university, whereas my parents could not afford to send me for tertiary education.

The most obvious way at the time for us to change was being educated. Although this is not necessarily an absolute, my maternal aunt Marina (having a PhD) modelled or demonstrated how she has elevated herself, and consequent family, from her family of origin. We both encouraged one another to continue with tertiary education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A context was created before my birth.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During my mother’s pregnancy with me she was under a lot of stress. Firstly because of the in-laws’ disapproval of the marriage and secondly the resulting discussions regarding which religious denomination the children would be raised.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Intense self-reliance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Longing for acknowledgement</td>
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<td>I remember that we were often compared to our neighbour’s children, without our parents defending us in any way. Their parents were very involved with their children’s schooling, sport activities and cultural activities, whilst our parents were seldom around to support us in any sport, school or extramural activity.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Fear and anxiety of academia</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Starting school was quite a huge shock to my system, considering that I had no pre-school exposure to a schooling environment. I felt sad and lonely being at school, away from my mom and sister. The smell of the little black boards and chalk till this day remind me how much I disliked school.</td>
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As I moved to higher grades words like “difficult” and “do not know” aptly described learning for me and school was not fun, but a fearful
and anxiety provoking experience. I vividly remember my intense anxiety the previous evening before writing a test the next day. I would usually curl up with stomach cramps, be restless and worried all night.

I recall in my matric year, close to the prelim result time, I had a tough time with anxiety with academia, and had a little bit of a breakdown episode on one such occasion where I really needed them to acknowledge the hard work I put into my studies.

I was struck with anxiety and fear. I never spoke of my father’s religion to anyone, not even my best friend at school. I was therefore really worried that his mother may want to meet my parents.

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<tr>
<th>Fierce independence</th>
<th>Social isolation and lack of friends</th>
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<tr>
<td>I also only had one friend in my first year of school. However I often befriended the outcast children as acquaintances, although they were more interested in my lunch.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My interests growing up, aside from sport, was a love for animals. I had owned dogs, parrots, pigeons and loved spending time cleaning out cages, letting out the doves for a fly around and playing soccer with my dog Jock. Jock also had an exceptional long life. He was born in 1987 and passed in 2002. He was in many ways the last remnant of my childhood. I think I spend more time with Jock then any other personality or friends.</td>
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Throughout my schooling years, I withheld myself from social context as much as possible in fear of embarrassment my father and his religious beliefs may cause.

The impact of this religious belief had long lasting and devastating implications on our lives. The first was in the social context. The result of my fathers acceptance of this religion was that we were ousted from the Dutch Reformed Church, and was subsequently taken to many other churches where my father tried to evangelise his new found religion. This resulted in us being manoeuvred around my father’s agenda regarding religion. On a social context, this resulted in elimination of family ties and friends.

I was extremely nervous about introducing my father to other people and absolutely panicked when i got social invites from friends. I recall an incident that will explain this. I had a good friend in high school who asked me to stay after school with him as he wanted very much for me to meet his mother. We had a really great friendship and in normal circumstances most people would be comfortable meeting friends’ parents. I was struck with anxiety and fear. I never spoke of my father’s religion to anyone, not even my best friend at school. I was therefore really worried that his mother may want to meet my parents. Almost everywhere my father went he could only speak about his religion and on many inappropriate and embarrassing occasions enforced his beliefs into most social contexts.

Finally, I also started participating in normal age appropriate social events such as going to night clubs, occasional use of alcohol and enjoying the liberties of youth.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obedience and fear of</th>
<th>Fear</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Despite my aversion towards academia, I always attended school and was obedient to teachers and rules as my parents told me. I received a certificate for 100% school attendance throughout primary</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
authority

school. I feared teachers and never challenged authority. As a result teachers always had praise for my good manners and obedience, which made my parents proud and reinforced this behaviour in me.

This was also the ideal for the political system at the time – good citizens do as they are told and never question authority.

The ridged routine and military style discipline also made the transition easy as I did not have to do much of my own thinking. Conforming to authority was an easy path to follow as in many ways this was a repetition of my obedience to authority at school and at home.

During our basic training at Kroonstad, we were deployed at various prisons around the country due to rioting by prisoners and strikes by members of POPCRU (police and prisons’ civil rights union). The prisoners wanted the right of being able to vote in the first national free and fair elections in 1994. Furthermore, the focus on discipline and respect for authority during basic training was somewhat contradicted by the excessive drinking, partying, lack of self-respect and poor role modelling demonstrated by some of warders after they have completed basic training. I realised that a constant iron fist is the only way the top officials expected to instil self-discipline, like constant parenting without letting go. This was how people were taught not to take ownership of their own lives, hence why people become dependant sheep of authority; in my view, a very popular approach to harbouring nationalism and patriotism of the ruling administration. After all, how can one then bite the hand that feeds you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New descriptiv e language</th>
<th>Courage to tackle the new</th>
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<tr>
<td>Systemic principles in this story cannot be only reserved for psychology and be excluded from how I look at the rest of the world in all other context. The application of systems thinking once amalgamated with my past experiences inevitably became a new way of being and seeing, although this process is forever evolving. Systems thinking is not only reserved for human behaviour, but is applicable to any context that describes a relational connection, e.g. in politics, economics, sport, nature, etc.</td>
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I apply systemic principles to describe and understand in everyday life, which does not mean that I psychologise or pathologise everything around me. There is no way I cannot see everything around me from systemic principles or even resort back to my former way of seeing. It is like opening Pandora's Box. For this reason systems thinking is an experience and not merely a recap of theory out there which can be used at random.

Therefore my ‘paradigm’ was the only one in the world namely, WERNER JOHANN WICHMANN WITH NEARLY 35 YEARS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE AND A FEW YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE WHICH HAS SEEN, HEARD, TASTED, SMELLED AND FELT TOO MANY EXPERIENCE TO RECALL OR MENTION, yet still in the making. I am my paradigm, there is no other. I am the amalgamation of all that I know so far. For the first time I felt in my being what Whittaker was talking about, using yourself, your intuition,
| academic and lived experience. |  |
**WERNER WICHEMANN TIMELINE**

**1947 - 1981**
1. My Parents (wedding day 1 March 1975)
2. Maternal Grandparents (British & Afrikaans origins) on my parents' wedding day
3. Paternal Grandparents (German & Afrikaans origins) on my parents' wedding day
4. Northern Cape Province - Kathu, when mining started (my dad worked as a painter) also Northern Cape where my grandfather had a farm and dad grew up
5. Me & my only sibling, share the same birthday - always close/good relationship

**1981 - 1988**
Moved to Springs & Primary school years
6. Dad - painter & instructor at BIFSA. Moved I from Kathu to Springs. Mom stayed at home raising me and my sisters
8. School - Deputy head
9. Religious Emblem of the Church of Israel
10. Dad tried to use his talents to improve life financially never worked out. King Sobhuza of Swaziland

**1989 - 1993**
Secondary school years
11. Standard 6 my year in High School Springs. Technical High, mainly boys school. Afrikaans, and white only
12. Working for extra money. Got to see different places, learn skills from dad, spray painting cars, sign writing
13. My dad estranged most friends & family, did not support my participation in school activities. Mostly stayed at home
14. Matric farewell - lucky to find a girl to go with, no relationships. Focus on academics - first in family to matriculate
15. Had my Jock as a friend

16. Basic training DCS - no money to study full time. Financial independence 1994: Democracy in RSA first interracial trainee group in Kroonstad, 6 months training.

17. Gained valuable life experience (any which way it comes) - year end function 1996

18. Obtained degree BA & BA Hons correspondence, UNISA. First person in my family to get a post grad qualification


21. AGAPE school 2008 special place in my heart - different picture of psychology (unconventional)


23. Old home revisit - part of ritual 2009

24. Ta'oo September 2009, rite of passage - breaking patterns - liberation

25. Stef my first love, broke up following training. We were engaged.