

**Eating the Apple: The Impact of Becoming a Clinical Psychologist on
Personal Relationships**

By

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Apple Tragedy

So on the seventh day
The serpent rested.
God came up to him.
“I’ve invented a new game,” he said.

The serpent stared in surprise
At this interloper.
But God said: “You see this apple?
I squeeze and look – Cider.”

The serpent had a good drink
And curled up into a questionmark.
Adam drank and said: “Be my god.”
Eve drank and opened her legs

And called to the cockeyed serpent
And gave him a wild time.
God ran and told Adam
Who in drunken rage tried to hang himself in the orchard.

The serpent tried to explain, crying “Stop”
But drink was splitting his syllable
And Eve started screeching: “Rape! Rape!”
And stamping on his head.

Now whenever the snake appears she screeches
“Here it comes again! Help! O Help!”
The Adam smashes a chair on its head,
And God says: “I am well pleased”

And everything goes to hell.

Abstract

This study represents an examination of the impact of becoming a clinical psychologist on personal relationships from a social constructionist perspective. The research is qualitative as befits the epistemology. Unstructured interviews were conducted with five becoming-psychologists at the end of their internship year, and the resulting data were submitted to a process of thematic analysis.

A study of relevant literature revealed very little information on the personal relationships of clinical psychologists per se. Available literature pertained to training of clinical psychologists and to intimate relationships in general. Themes emerged from the research that reflected themes present in the literature. There is a common theme of unacknowledged needs in relationships, the consequences of expressing those needs and the consequent renegotiation of roles in existing relationships. A theme of desire for greater emotional connection is present, connected to a feeling of no longer fitting into contexts where the becoming-psychologist used to be comfortable prior to training, and consequent feelings of isolation and loneliness become pertinent. Another common theme involves a feeling of being simultaneously observer and observed in interactions, which is evident in a tendency to watch oneself from a third-person perspective and is perceived to involve a concomitant loss of the spontaneous response.

In addition to that which was suggested in the literature, the study suggested that psychologists language needs more readily; relationships with others outside psychology were more successful if the other person was able to language their own experiences and overtly negotiate roles. There seems to be a tendency in the psychologists interviewed to be involved in constant self-examination and examination of relationships, as well as a tendency to take responsibility in intimate relationships. They also demonstrate a conflict between responding with or without awareness (connected to the theme in the literature of constant awareness of process and consequent inability to react spontaneously), a feeling

of being compelled to dialogue around that which was perceived in this state of awareness, and a sense of emotional overload during training that contributed to the sense of isolation alluded to above. Linked to these feelings of isolation there is a tendency to connect most readily with other psychologists.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie behels 'n ondersoek na die impak van die proses van opleiding as kliniese sielkundige op persoonlike verhoudings vanuit 'n sosiaal-konstruksionistiese perspektief. Ten einde getrou te bly aan die gekose epistemologie is die navorsing vanuit 'n kwalitatiewe uitgangspunt aangepak. Ongestruktureerde onderhoude is gevoer met vyf kliniese sielkunde interns aan die einde van hulle internskap jaar. Die onderhoudsdata is vervolgens ontleed deur die gebruik van tematiese analise.

'n Studie van relevante literatuur het daarop gedui dat weinig inligting beskikbaar is oor die persoonlike verhoudings van kliniese sielkundiges. Die beskikbare literatuur het eerder gefokus op die opleiding van kliniese sielkundiges en intieme verhoudings in die algemeen. Die navorsing het sekere temas blootgelê wat ook in die literatuur reflekteer word. Daar was 'n algemene tema van behoeftes wat nie erken word nie, die gevolge indien behoeftes wel uitgespreek word en die daaruitspruitende her-definieëring van rolle in bestaande verhoudings. 'n Tema rondom 'n behoefte aan sterker emosionele verbintenisse was verder teenwoordig. Daarmee gepaardgaande was daar 'n gevoel by respondente dat hulle nie meer inpas by kontekste wat voor hulle opleiding gemaklik was nie en daaruitspruitende gevoelens van isolasie en eensaamheid. 'n Verdere algemene tema was die gevoel by respondente dat hulle tydens interaksies voortdurend die waarnemer en die waargenome is. Daar was met ander woorde 'n tendens om hulle eie interpersoonlike gedrag vanuit 'n derde-persoonsperspektief dop te hou en 'n gevolglike gebrek aan spontane en alledaagse reaksies in interpersoonlike situasies.

Verdere temas, wat nie in die literatuur figureer nie, het ook tydens die navorsing na vore gekom. Die studie het daarop gedui dat sielkundiges meer geneig is om hulle behoeftes uit te spreek; verhoudings met nie-sielkundiges het geblyk meer suksesvol en bevredigend te wees indien die ander persoon daartoe in staat was

om sy of haar ervarings openlik te bespreek en bereid was om toe te tree tot 'n proses van owerhandeling oor die roldefinisies binne die verhouding. Dit het geblyk dat daar by respondente 'n voortdurende proses van self-ondersoek en die ondersoek van verhoudings teenwoordig is asook 'n geneigdheid om verantwoordelikheid in intieme verhoudings te aanvaar. 'n Konflik is ook opgemerk tussen sogenaamde bewuste en nie-bewuste response.

Laasgenoemde sluit aan by die tema rondom voortdurende bewustheid van proses in verhoudings en 'n gevolglike gebrek aan spontane response wat in die literatuur na vore gekom het. Tesame met groter bewustheid was daar 'n bykansse kompulsie om dit wat waargeneem is openlik te bespreek. Dit het verder geblyk dat die emosionele oorlading wat respondente tydens opleiding beleef het bygedra het tot die gevoelens van isolasie waarna voorheen verwys is. Ten laaste het dit geblyk dat respondente vanweë gevoelens van isolasie meer geneig was om verhoudings met ander sielkundiges te vorm.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Welcome to My World

Welcome, fellow wanderers of the path of Wisdom, fellow Questers whose feet seek out the roads rumoured to meander indefinitely towards Blake's Palace of Enlightenment, where visitors behold the beauty of the Ultimate Truth ...

Well... I say truth.... Um, perhaps it would be better if I said 'a truth', rather than 'the truth'... ahem...

Welcome, anyway, to my diatribe. This document represents a truth, my own truth and nothing but my truth, so help me whichever deity may be listening. All punctuations of reality are unashamedly mine, filtered through the glass of my own experience, product of my perceptions of reality as it may or may not be. Yours may be entirely different.

The material that I am on the verge of spouting forth is co-created: I had a hand in it, as did the University and its representatives, my supervisor, the learned souls whose work I have diligently perused and possibly misunderstood, my colleagues, and Terry Pratchett. It represents a reality that is by no means the only one, or, for that matter, any more valid than any other reality.

In studying clinical psychology, the training process includes classes, interactions, eventually therapy and supervision, it is as if we reach for the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The discursive context provided by the training is characterized by congruence, self-examination, emotional awareness, awareness of patterns in relationship and so on (Prentice, 2001). This will be discussed at much greater length in the fourth chapter. In becoming psychologists, we eat the fruit; we are (as the Fairy comments later) banished from the Garden of Eden: our innocence is lost, hence the title. Happily

melodramatic in my poetry, the title fits for me: eating the fruit is both gain and loss, and it is completely irreversible. John Milton puts it beautifully in *Paradise Lost*:

“...Her rash hand in evil hour
forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate:
Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,
That all was lost. Back to the thicket slunk
The guilty serpent, and well he might, for Eve
Intent wholly on her taste, naught else
Regarded, such delight till then, as seemed,
In fruit she never tasted...” (in Williams, 1995, p. 134).

The fruit represents for me the new knowledge that we acquire; the gain and the loss are represented in the ‘evil’ of the deed and in its delicious taste respectively; those who respond to us, those in our worlds, rebel like Nature. This image is melodramatic, I think, but effective, and one that is readily accessible to most people.

The conversations that I co-authored with my colleagues for this dissertation represent a co-created reflection of reality as perceived and expressed by each individual involved, in conjunction with each other individual involved. I have then taken the meaning inherent in the interviews and sifted through it, punctuating for myself for the purposes of this paper what was important and what was not, reinterpreting for myself (as I cannot help doing) what each person meant with the words they used. Thus I created a reality or truth slightly different from theirs, and, as I offer it now to you, you cannot help but interpret it through your own filters, so that your understanding of it will be uniquely your own.

I find my head full of voices as I write this, metaphorically speaking of course. Hermans (1999) declares that much of our thinking is dialogical: “[w]hen someone is involved in a thought process, there is not only a passing thought but also a thinker who observes the thought, evaluates it, corrects it, and responds to it” (p. 67). Frankfurt and Penn (1998) point out that in the moments between conversations one is in conversation with others in imagination, so I have decided to introduce you to a couple of ‘others’ and let them speak freely. More characters could probably have been included in the process, but for the sake of relative simplicity, I think two is enough.

Father Science is a Priest of the Way of the Traditional. Tall and thin, he’s extremely skeptical of this whole social constructionist thing, which is Unscientific and Not Objective. He cloaks himself in the intimidating black robes of Expertise, and he sees himself as a Follower of the Sacred Quest for Absolute Truth. He considers Newton and Descartes prophets, and I have a feeling that he will struggle with the Blasphemy about to be revealed in this paper. His eyes are icy blue, his hair is arctic white, and his long fingers are skeletally thin and tipped with sharp nails for carving the Truth from the vague formless obfuscation of life with surgical precision. His influence is subtle and pervasive, and I suspect that he’ll sneak his ideas into this work more than I intend him to. My would-be protector is the Meaning Fairy.

The Meaning Fairy is totally different. She is chubby and cheerful, although she can be very sharp at times, and may from time to time be subject to mood swings. Her eyes are earthy brown, and her hair is mouse-coloured, and her wand is (by her own admission) a stick. Still, it is her Stick of Office, which is important as it allows others to recognize her as a Fairy, which is vital: she wouldn’t have any powers unless social reality gave them to her, she tells me. She’s not at all beautiful, not nearly as intimidating as Father Tradition, and she says that she thinks his Quest is a wild goose chase. She very rarely speaks in capital letters.

As we begin our journey, they are sitting one on each side of my chair back, reading over my shoulders. His bony sandal-encased feet are resting insolently on my back, and she is humming tunelessly in my ear. I think that this is going to be a somewhat tedious ride, like driving to Cape Town with small children.

The interaction of the Fairy and the Priest represents my self-reflexivity as researcher: they are my reflecting team. They comment on the document that I present as I develop it. In this way they reflect my thinking about my thinking.

I'm not sure what I hope to present with the finished document: is it a dissertation only, an academic outpouring of metabolized literature and research? Is it a personal exploration of my own experience? Is it an exploration of a theme that I find poetically pleasing to consider? Is it merely a piece of writing that it is necessary to write in order to complete a degree that I have been working towards for a good chunk of my adult life? I think it's all of these things, ultimately. What you are about to read is undeniably my own (except for the bits that I found in other peoples' work, duly paraphrased and referenced); it comes from the personal me as much as from the professional or academic me.

The people whom I interviewed completed their internships last year at an accredited institution. They hail from different universities. They are people with whom I have personal relationships, people whom I consider my friends. I have spoken with them often in different contexts about the theme of the paper; it comes up often in conversation with other psychologists; that's one of the reasons why I thought that this work would be pertinent. I'm not sure if I have entirely done it justice; that, I suppose, is for the reader to judge. Throughout the text I have used the words "personal relationship" and "intimate relationship" interchangeably.

Chapter two deals with epistemology; I locate myself within a social constructionist framework, and I trace its development across time, and the evolution of its most pertinent assumptions. Chapter three deals with methodology, essentially: I fit the concept of qualitative research and, in particular, unstructured interviews and thematic analysis, into the broader overarching framework of social constructionism. We turn then to literature; I consider voices around intimacy and voices around psychologists, and lament very congruently the surprising lack of information in the academic domain on psychologists' personal lives. Chapter six represents an integration of the preceding two chapters, and as such is essentially a dialogue between them. My own integration, as in the case of my understanding of the literature as well as my interpretation of the interviews, is implicitly not the only interpretation; rather, it represents a personal understanding, filtered as always through my own filters, and as such may or may not fit with any other reader's understanding. Finally, in chapter seven, I consider the shortcomings of my study (myriad, if one is to examine this dissertation from a traditional, positivistic point of view) as well as its implications as I see them for psychology generally (which feels quite arrogant, actually: how will a little document like this make an impact?).

My style of writing is, I acknowledge, extremely colloquial: I write in a conversational manner, in flagrant disobedience of the Laws of the world of Academic Dissertations. I find that it is easier for me to conceptualize my thoughts in this way, as if I were speaking them, and I hope that one result (apart from unfortunately annoying those Seekers of Academic Truth that may peruse it, surely to be sorely disappointed) will be that it will be accessible, easy to read, and possibly even mildly entertaining at times. It also allows for honest self-reflection; I am able to look at myself and author my description of what I see in language that is natural to me; if words create their meaning in some ways, then this will enable you, the reader, to understand more closely my meaning, in as far as that is possible.

Chapter 2

Social Constructionism: How I Thought About Things

“ ‘ And then, when I was a bit younger than you, a rat turned up in my room and suddenly everything I thought I knew was wrong.’” (Pratchett, 2001, p. 337).

[“Shush,” hisses the Priest. “We are entering the Hallowed Halls of Epistemology. We are about to discuss Truth again. Perhaps this time we can come to the Right Conclusions.”

“The ‘Right Conclusions? I seriously doubt it. Who defines them as Right, anyway?”

“No-one defines them. They just are.”

The Fairy draws a long-suffering sigh. “We shall see.”]

From Traditional to Post Modern

Traditionally psychology has been involved in a quest for an external, objective, measurable Truth (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). In the quest for permanence in an everchanging world, scientists sought to discover constants (Gergen, 1982).

[The Fairy produces a crystal ball. “This will be discussed in more detail in the part about Methodology,” she declares.

“Wasn’t that a declaration of absolute Truth?” retorts the Priest.

“No, it was co-created and context-based. Perhaps she won’t discuss it more later, after all. In fact, it was just an echo or foreshadowing of how things might be.”

“Still sounds suspect to me,” huffs the Priest.]

Gergen (1982) tells us that the main tenets of the “received view” (p. 7) are threefold:

First, the important function of science is to “construct general laws or principles governing the relationship among the classes of observable phenomena” (p. 7).

[“Allow me to explain.” The Priest smiles thinly and magnanimously.

“You are too kind. My little Fairy brain is completely tied in knots,” the Fairy says, her voice dripping with irony, which the Priest completely fails to notice.

“Ahem. Rules that systematically govern specific observables are diligently sought. The pertinent question is “why”, and answers to this question should yield a set of results that reliably predict future occurrences (Gergen, 1982).”

“Ah, yes, says the Fairy scathingly. “Everything becomes clear.”]

Secondly, “the general laws or principles comprising scientific knowledge should be consistent with empirical fact. Scientific investigation is properly concerned with establishing an objective grounding for systematic theory” (Gergen, 1982, p. 7).

[“Basically, systematic observation should form the basis of the laws that science produces (from the first tenet). Such facts should form the foundations of theory.

Theories should be verifiable, and resistant to falsification (Popper, in Gergen, 1982). If they're not, then what's the point?"

The Fairy rolls her eyes, and declines to comment.]

The third premise states that “[t]hrough continued empirical assessment of theoretical propositions and their deductions, scientific understanding can progress. Scientific knowledge is cumulative” (Gergen, 1982, p. 8).

["Yes," agrees the Priest. That means that every time you prove something, it suggests other stuff that should be true but is not yet proven. More research will prove or disprove these new hypotheses.]

"Hang on. There's a similarity here somewhere, I feel... Are you talking about context?" asks the Fairy.

"Yes, but it's not the sloppy kind of context that you look at. It's Objectively Defined context, involving Cause and Effect and other Holy Principles."

"It seems to me," says the Fairy, after some consideration, "that you depend a lot on the stability of relationships between things in nature, and in Psychology, on relationships between people (Gergen, 1982). I agree with Heraclitus: no man, or Fairy for that matter, ever puts his foot in the same stream twice. Some things are predictable, yes, but others are always subject to change. Natural phenomena and social phenomena can't necessarily be measured with the same tape. I have an intuition that this too will be discussed further in terms of methodology."

"I want to talk about this now!" The Priest stamps his foot petulantly. "People are Biological Organisms! They are subject to certain Rules! Their behaviour MUST be predictable and rules apply!"

“Well, Gergen (1982) explains it like this: ‘biology largely serves to establish the grounds and limits of human action. Certain functions must be fulfilled to sustain life, and there are biological limits over performance. However [and this is the important part,] between the poles of grounding essentials and physical limitations there is virtually unlimited potential for variation’ (p. 17). Things are changing in the social sciences. We are beginning to question stuff we took for granted.”]

The societal move towards the questioning of once-reified truths is known as post modernism (Becvar & Becvar, 1996); social constructionism reflects this spirit. Postmodernism rejects structuralist notions, or the conceptualization of the world as being the result of hidden structure (Burr, 1995). It does not attempt to replace more traditional approaches, as to do so would imply the existence of a single, measurable, objective and external truth. An out-of-hand dismissal would represent an attempt to deprive the world of one manner in which we relate to the world and ourselves, and postmodernism makes allowance for the co-existence of a multiplicity of ways of life that are situation-dependent (Burr, 1995); as Hoffman (1990) says, we can’t just deny scientific information out of hand.

[The Fairy smirks. “Both/and, both/and (Keeney, 1983). You’re not entirely wrong. A plurality of stories is encouraged, so postmodernism keeps meanings open to negotiation (Hoffman, 1990). Instead of looking for an overarching system of ‘true’ knowledge, we look at different kinds of knowledge, which operate as more or less self-contained systems. Understanding is necessarily interpretive (Wachthausser in Prentice, 2001).”]

The Priest glares at her and mutters “Condescending idiot.”

“Anyway, rejecting the validity of the modernist perspective would be more of the same: simply changing content is inadequate, as the effect of the conversation

on society remains the same: we assume an external truth in rigidly denying one: we would simply be reifying a different reality (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).”]

Attempting to reverse the realism/relativism dichotomy recreates the structures that made relativism necessary in the first place (Hepburn, 1999). Thus the social constructionist viewpoint does not represent a “new truth”, or an all-encompassing theory that holds the answers to our ontological questions (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Post modernists should bear in mind their own aptitude for intolerance of divergent views.

[“See! You can also be guilty of intolerance!” crows the Priest. The Fairy ignores him.]

There is no “either/or”: post modernism advocates a both/and approach (Keeney, 1983), which allows for an interactive process where continual addition of voices is encouraged.

[“Like us,” comments the Fairy.”]

Social Constructionism: An Understanding

Gergen (1997) offers the following explanation of the contributions of social constructionism: the ideas are innovative, but not totally disruptive; they welcome extant intelligibilities and abilities into dialogue rather than dismissing them out of hand; they are collaborative. Although post modernism appears to be “new”, Aristotle and Plato authored writings that illustrate conflict between divergent views of reality: phenomenological/endogenic, and empirical/exogenic. Plato, from the endogenic standpoint, writes of reality that exists within the mind, while the physical world is composed of meanings created by the mind. Aristotle, however, describes reality as external to the mind: reality is the concrete world

that gives rise to our perceptions (Wick, in Strauss, 2001). This debate has been rehashed endlessly.

The more general framework of constructivism preceded the emergence of social constructionism (Gutterman, 1994). According to constructivism, knowledge is a result of subjective cognitive processes rather than a reflection of objective reality: essentially, what is observed depends largely on the observer (Keeney, 1983), or believing is seeing (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). The difference between this approach and social constructionism is that, while the former focuses on individual cognitive processes, the latter represents a shift towards taking cognizance of social interchange: relationship becomes important (Gutterman, 1994).

[The Fairy strands up and stretches. “I think that this focus on relationship implies that truths are works in progress, where everyone involved in them or affected by them, actively and cooperatively participates in their creation (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1999). This storying of life in relationship gives people a sense of continuity in their lives. Social practices lead to social explanations: beliefs, laws, customs ... all the stuff that makes up reality arises through social interaction over time (Freedman & Combs, 1996). The focus is on processes of interaction between people rather than on what goes on in their heads in the quest for understanding of human experience. We look at how these interactions occur; there is a focus on process (Burr, 1995).”]

Postmodern social constructionism has several features, according to Burr (1995), which include the following: anti-essentialism refers to the notion that the social world (including people) is a “product of social processes”, as there are “no ‘essences’ inside things or people that make them what they are” (p. 15).

[“It’s my turn to explain,” smirks the Fairy. “There can’t be any definable or discoverable, permanent nature in the world of people, because the nature of the

world exists according to how we perceive it (Burr, 1996). Neat, comfortable solutions like the ones you seek are not always possible, because we hold meanings unfixed, and accept multiplicity, conflict and variety (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1999). So no one has the monopoly on truth. Because there aren't any absolute truths, there can't be one objectively known reality." The Fairy glances at the horrified face of the Priest, and ignores him. "We interpret stuff knowing that no interpretation is really true because tons of different interpretations are possible: the same 'facts' are retold from different perspectives which each have their own meanings (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

The Priest sulks.]

"Anti-realism" refers to the notion that knowledge is not a direct perception of an external measurable reality, but is rather a construction of our own perceptions of reality as a culture of society. There is a circle of meaning in which there is movement from part to whole and back, as people construct their realities together as they are in the process of living them (Burr, 1995).

["So," continues the Fairy in just as irritatingly a didactic manner as the Priest employed earlier, "we get all knowledge from seeing the world through some lens or other, in the service of some ideas and values rather than others (Burr, 1995). So there's no all-important, privileged point of view for comprehending, because history and language are both limits and conditions to understanding (Wachterhauser in Prentice, 2001). We're unavoidably prejudiced by our own experience, which we need to watch, in case our pre-experiences close us, as is so demonstrably true in your case, to the descriptions of others, leaving us ensnared in attempts to validate our theory at the expense of others' stories and therefore their identities (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992)."

"Aren't you in the process of doing that to me?" asks the Priest innocently.

“Oh no,” says the Fairy, confidence oozing from every pore, “you see, we are engaged in a dialogue, which takes away the need to protect, promote or convince others of our point of view (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). I’m not trying to change your mind, I’m just offering you alternative lenses through which to examine your experience.”

The Priest is unconvinced.]

Another important feature of the postmodern social constructionist approach is the emphasis on historical and cultural specificity of knowledge (Burr, 1995). All explanations and forms of knowledge are bound by time and culture, and cannot thus be taken as absolute descriptions of human nature.

[“Absolutely!” squeals the Fairy.

“Did you just say ‘absolutely’? What happened to your claim that nothing is absolute?” The Priest smirks at his cleverness.

“I mean,” replies the Fairy icily, “that this fits with my own understanding of experience and reality, which is not to reify my own understanding in any way. Ahem ... Gergen (1985) says that the ways in which the world is comprehended are social artefacts, products of historically situated exchanges or interchanges between people. So societies build the lenses that their people use to look at the world: values, beliefs, labels, customs, and so on that occur in our social realities are constructed by people who belong to that specific culture, in their interactions between generations and in their day to day contact (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992)

Following this course of logic, the observer is as much a part of the observing system as is that which is observed. In psychological terms, we are inextricably linked with those with whom we interact: we cannot hope to be objective

observers (Keeney, 1983). That which is observed is influenced by the very act of observation. The place of the observer in the system is influenced by how he observes, and which epistemological lens it is through which he chooses to filter that which he sees.

As part of the observing system, the observer cannot be objective, and Keeney (1983) points out that if objectivity as a concept is meaningless, the concept of subjectivity also falls away. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) describe an intersubjective reality, one that is neither objective nor subjective but is created in relationship, and is inseparable from the observer. Varela (in Strauss, 2001) also sees this perception of reality, like Keeney, as neither subjective nor objective, but as an appreciation or understanding of participation. According to Gergen (1997), detached observation shifts to poetic activism.

The metaphor of literature underpins the social constructionist perspective (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Actions and relationships are conceived of in terms of organized attempts to make meaning out of personal experiences. These efforts can be likened to the authoring of a story that each person writes about himself, where experiences are organized selectively on the basis of themes which structure and give meaning to the person.

Narratives give meaning and purpose in life to people in all cultures. Forms taken by stories can include anecdotes, myths, movies, plays, fables, poems ...

[“... theses ...” interjects the Fairy,]”

... and so on. Stories constitute the basic structures used by people to make sense of their lives: social constructionism emphasizes the textual structure of day-to-day life, especially how people evolve meaning in the diverse events of their everyday experience (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

Reality is, as mentioned above, constructed by participants: it is not external, measurable and objective (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). In our attempts to make sense of inner and outer experience we try to formulate coherence and meaning from events, and in order to achieve this we turn to stores of themes and attributions provided by our culture. All these constructed meanings rely on the minds of those who use them for their existence.

[The Fairy is reading intently. “ It seems like we keep coming back to this point: no single understanding of reality is more “real” or valid than any other, and everyone participates in revising, editing and continuing the stories that they share. Social constructionism allows for myriad realities, which are in a constant state of renewal (Gergen, in Strauss, 2001): ‘conceptualising from within a social constructionist perspective requires that you suspend the need for security that flows from allowing for only one perspective and instead relate in a way that opens up the psychological conversation’ (p. 10).” She looks pityingly at the Priest. “That would be very scary for you.” He turns puce with rage, and is rendered temporarily speechless.]

Contexts of meaning can be seen as narrative in form, as they link past, present and projected future, and involve movement in relation to goals (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Alternatively stories could involve interrupted movement in relation to goals: the form may emphasize blockage, and chagelessness (Gergen, in Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Themes that occur in many cultures include the use of a journey as a metaphor for life, the concept of retribution after injustice, struggles between light/good and dark/evil, and so on.

In the storying of our lives, language plays an important role. Burr (1995) considers language a precondition for thought: the ways in which we think, and the concepts and categories that provide a framework of meaning for our thinking, are provided by our language.

[The Priest has fallen asleep. The Fairy marches over and kicks him. “Wake up! This, in my humble opinion, is important! From a post modern, social constructionist point of view, language refers not only to words, but also to writing, vocal inflections, pauses, gestures, and so on – to all our communicative signs (Freedman & Combs, 1996)!”

“Including that kick you just gave me?”

“Yes! The way we understand the world comes from other people, not from objective reality. We arrive into a world where things like conceptual frameworks and categories already exist in our cultures, and all people acquire them as they learn to use language, so these concepts and categories are reproduced every day by all the people who share a language and a culture. So what’s considered real is constructed, because it is made by language, and it draws on the discourses in culture. (Michael, in Prentice, 2001).”

Language itself is a form of social action: meanings are negotiated and forms of knowledge are produced in everyday interactions between people (Burr, 1995). Reality is maintained and organized through language, as well as being experienced and constituted by it, as we engage in conversation and dialogue.

[“Language is just a way of expressing ourselves,” sighs the Priest.

“You’re right – it is that, but it’s also more than that. It’s a way of constituting our beliefs and world, it’s a way of constructing our realities (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). In storying, we make sense of experience by putting our experiences together in a particular way, so as to make a coherent account of ourselves and the world (Freeman & Combs, 1996). So our realities are brought forth in our language, and are kept alive in the way we tell what we tell. Language isn’t neutral or passive – people talk ‘with’ each other. Whenever we speak, we offer a new reality. Each time we do, we legitimize the distinctions that we speak from. We

should be careful not to forget that there are, however, other equally valid points of view. 'In agreeing on the meaning of a word or gesture, we agree on a description, and that description shapes subsequent descriptions, which direct our perceptions toward making still other descriptions and away from making others' (p. 17)."]

Stories and Personal Meaning

As the Fairy has mentioned, people use the telling of stories as a basic method to create, sustain and share meaning (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). The stories themselves, as well as the act of their creation, link and lend meaning to experiences. The creation of narratives involves the evolution of coherent sequences that organize the events of peoples' lives into meaningful wholes with purpose, structure and direction. Truths can't exist independent of mind: the world may be out there, but descriptions of it are not (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Individuals and groups construct personal stories about their own lives that assist them to understand their own identities, what they are moving toward, and how they cope with experiences such as pain, joy, success and failure (Geertz, in Becvar & Becvar, 1996). These stories have functions that include the organization of actions and events around certain values, and explanation of choices in terms of unique histories, goals and intentions. Each person brings with him stories from his past as well as an interest in the stories of others.

["In fact," the Fairy butts in, "there's a subtext in all literature that says that life is all about telling ourselves stories about life, and of enjoying others' stories about life, and of living our lives according to these stories, and of making new and more complex stories about stories – and that this story making is not just about human life, but actually constitutes human life (Freedman & Combs, 1996)."]

Stories reflect plots and themes that echo some cultural values (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). A story's plot shows the listener/reader how the participants

struggle to make sense of experience. As the narrative progresses the characters try to comprehend the significance of their experiences and to express the values that underlie their roles. Instead of a simple sequence of cause and effect, participants usually use later experiences in reflecting on earlier ones, deriving meaning retrospectively, coming in this way to understand their value.

["Foucault, in Liebrucks (2001), says that discourses systematically form the stuff they speak of," says the Fairy.]

Meaning emerges from the efforts we make to understand the values underlying experience (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). We consider and assess alternative interpretations and select one that seems to offer the most sensible interpretation. Other people in similar situations may select different interpretations according to their cultural and personal situation.

The functioning of a group depends on coherent, integrated meaning patterns, shared by all members (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Our families, for example, transmit the previous generation's themes through telling stories about family members, which socializes children into the themes and interpretations that are available. Members who bring divergent values or themes may introduce conflicts or inconsistencies in the merged story.

Each of us develops a framework of meaning, and all of us draw on values, themes and plots offered by our subculture and culture (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

Another important assumption is the idea that "themes and clusters of assumed reality (cultures) cannot be controlled from the outside" (Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 28). Only participants in the creation of a particular meaning system have access to it in terms of change: outside experts are unable to effect change in a system of which they are not part.

The assumptions of social constructionism can thus be summarized as follows: stories transmit meaning, and their creation formulates coherent sequences (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). They shape one's identity, and organize values and explain choices. They are themselves organized by themes and plots, and they involve choosing from alternative interpretations. Group functioning depends on shared meanings, which cannot be controlled by outsiders. Emphasis in this model is on meanings rather than actions, on collaboration rather than expertise, on mutual creation of solutions to problems.

Research and Social Constructionism: Contradiction in Terms?

Traditionally, research is equated with rigorous, responsible science of the positivist-empirical tradition (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). I did in fact consider using this quantitative approach for my dissertation, but I found that it was incompatible with my personal epistemology, for a number of reasons. First, though, I will briefly discuss the traditional approach.

["Ah!" says Father Tradition. "There is much merit to this. Listen carefully!"

The Fairy sighs eloquently. "You are not the first critic of social constructionism (Stam, 2001). In fact, you are in good company."

"Be quiet. I am trying to see what's going on here. Pay attention!"

The Fairy sighs again even more heavily, and mutters to herself, "Prepare to enter realms of boredom unexplored hitherto."

The Priest pretends not to hear.]

The word 'science' conjures up pictures of experiments, cause-and-effect relationships, replication of results, variables, hypothesis testing and so on (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). This science evolved from the work of Descartes, Newton and Bacon. Since the seventeenth century, physics has been used as an example of an 'exact' science, and it has been reified as a model for all other sciences. From this perspective, "existence is premised on matter, and the metaphor used to define the material world is that of a machine. Like other machines, the so-called cosmic machine is assumed to consist of elementary parts, the discovery of which will provide knowledge of the machine's operation. Understanding thus requires a focus on reductionism, and for centuries the mechanistic and reductionistic views of classical physics have been presumed to be the correct descriptions of reality" (p. 312). Traditionally, psychologists too have framed their methodologies, theories, interpretative and explanatory theories in terms of cause and effect (Harre, 2002).

The key assumptions of the Newtonian model of research can be summarized as follows: claims of knowledge are based on that which is observed; replication and control are vital, especially relative to determining cause/effect relationships; cause and effect are tied to the assumption of time as absolute; reality is external to and independent of observers; experimentation must be free of subjective judgment; theories are tested by observation; the goal of scientific activity is theory: the activity of science is to test theory; reality is static, constant and absolute; and mind transcends reality, which is independent of mind (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). As John Dewey (in Gergen, 1982) puts it, "the conceptions that had reigned in the philosophy of nature and knowledge for two thousand years ... rested on the assumption of the fixed and final; they rested upon treating change and origin as signs of defect and unreality" (p. 1).

[The Priest is jumping joyfully up and down. "Yes! Exactly! Gergen (1982) says..."]

“Gergen!” yells the Fairy. “I thought he was on MY side!”

“Nevertheless, he tells us that science – my kind of science, that is – seeks permanence in the flux of life. There are lots of reasons for turning away from the ephemeral towards the permanent. The Greek philosophers were right: accepting the Heraclitean idea that everything is in constant flux is tantamount to nihilism. If the world is constantly changing, then how can we have cumulative knowledge? Truth would be constantly changing! Plato and Aristotle found permanence in the notions of ‘pure idea’ and in the distinction between ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ respectively. Even Shakespeare sought immortality and thus permanence for himself and his subjects through the creation of verse (Malan, 1997). In finding permanence, we can control destiny! We need to find, document and explain the permanence that hides in the ever-changingness of life. That is what we should be doing in this research! We should be looking carefully for undeniable ways in which the MA Masters course affects intimate relationships in all students! Carnap (in Gergen, 1982) says that systematic scientific observation reveals regularities in the world – we should be Seeking Regularity. More Subjects! We need more Subjects!!!”

“Oh, pipe down. Three exclamation marks is a sure sign of trouble, to my mind anyway. We do NOT need more subjects. What we need is...”

“Sh! Read this! It’s like poetry! Or even better, it sounds like Truth!”]

The development of scientific psychology corresponded with the zeitgeist of the late nineteenth century (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Much energy was expended in the attempt to apply scientific methods to social sciences. Wilhelm Wundt founded a laboratory of psychology in Germany in 1879, which is generally considered to be the year of psychology’s birth. Cattell (in Becvar & Becvar, 1996) asserted in 1892 “psychology will gain greatly in clearness and accuracy by using the methods and conceptions of physics and mathematics” (p. 313).

The natural sciences methodology and assumptions represent for many the only means by which to make valid knowledge claims (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

Objectivity seems essential for the study of human beings, as it was for the study of matter: a unity between natural and social sciences was assumed. Subjective judgments and sensations were considered untrustworthy because they could not be observed and so had become confused forms of knowing: “Descartes’ world of the mind” (p. 313).

[The Fairy has been paging through Gergen (1982), and she suddenly jumps up. “I knew it! Listen to this: ‘Research in the sociobehavioural sciences largely relies on a highly delimited set of systematically constrained experiences. In contrast, outside this arena, wars, revolutions, international allegiances, economic spurts, national and domestic policies, religious institutions, cultural heroes, aesthetic movements, intellectual insights, value commitments, marriages, loving relationships, family ties, personal beliefs, and so on all wend their rapid and disordered way through consciousness, and slip into the quagmire of memory’ (p. 2). See? He’s saying that not everything can be explained scientifically, or at least by the positivistic methods of Natural Science!”

“Yes it can!” the Priest snaps. “We just need more hard work. We’ll figure it all out eventually. We need more time, more funding, more effort! The alternative is completely unscientific!”

“Not according to Liebrucks (2001). He says that just because psychology isn’t a natural science doesn’t mean that it is inferior or even unscientific, as you so readily avow. He says that the difference between genuine psychological research and natural scientific research is not that the latter is exact and the former is not, or that the latter gets to the real explanation of things and the former interprets around the point. He says that language-analytical methods (such as the one employed in this paper) are just as exact as the methods

employed by natural sciences, and at the same time, there is a strong element of interpretation in the natural science methods. He says that the main difference is not whether or not the methods are scientific, but the kind of phenomena being studied, and the perspective taken. Thus psychology will be ‘unscientific’ as long as it tries to squash that which it studies into a conceptual framework designed for something entirely different.”

“Nonsense,” the Priest replies coolly. “I reiterate: we need only more time and resources, before the secrets that we seek are revealed to us.”

“Gergen (1982) says that there’s reason to be suspicious about that,” says the Fairy smugly. “It seems that you don’t pay enough attention to context. Lady LeJean in Terry Pratchett’s Thief of Time (2002) had it right: “ ‘... there is ... there is so much context to being human, I am afraid...’ ” (p. 332). The research itself is situated in an unfolding and constantly changing matrix of accidental relations. Stam (2002) tells us that academic stuff doesn’t “occur in splendid isolation but [accompanies] social change in multiple forms” (p. 574), and Mather (2002) says that we should look at interpersonal relations over periods of duration. You can’t divorce the people in this study from where they come from, who they are, their relationships ... you can’t pretend they’re not people! They are able to generate alternatives for themselves all the time. Gergen (1982) says that they can think of different means for achieving a given end, alternative ends that can be reached with the means that they’re using, and they can find totally new means-end combinations entirely, all of which means that their behaviour is very hard to predict, although it is, in essence, limited by their biology. ”

“Gergen (1982) also says that the Pillars of Science are “Mighty Oaks” (p. 3)! They are sturdy and powerful, and most of all reliable! We need to climb them all the way to the top, and from that vantage point we will be able to see exactly what rules govern the effect of becoming a psychologist on personal relationships.”

“You’re not listening. He’s going to challenge that Mighty Oak thing in a minute. Stop taking things out of context! I just warned you about that!”

“It’s just because the human sciences are new that we haven’t been all that successful in working out the rules. Look how well the natural sciences have done!”

“Rubbish!” snaps the Fairy. “Looking at human activity is older than natural science. So why is it that natural sciences have been so much more successful in finding constants and rules that apply all the time? It’s at least partly because you let your research inform your questions and not the other way around. You ask questions to which you can get definite answers (Gergen, 1982).”

“Exactly! We should definitely reconsider the Research Question behind this paper. Perhaps we can introduce some Scales, some Statistics ... Russel (in Gergen 1982) says that we should look for a mathematics that applies to people as exactly as the mathematics of machines.”

“Yes, but Russel wrote in the fifties. We need to move with the times...”]

Recently there has been a move away from this concept of value-free science (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). There has been a shift more towards the inclusion of the observer into the system that is observed, a shift away from the search for an external, measurable absolute truth. As Liebrucks (2001) puts it, “‘The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology’ calls into question the very possibility of objective knowledge and claims that psychology should refrain from attempting to uncover laws purportedly governing our experience and behaviour. Instead, Gergen proposes, psychology should study the discursive practices by which we ‘construct’ the world and ourselves” (p. 633).

["Hah! The Powers that Be will not be pleased about that," whispers the Priest.]

Still, this move away from traditional science means that we must demonstrate the efficacy of our thinking to our more traditional colleagues in order to function within the context in which we as psychologists find ourselves (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Social constructionism does not look at individuals out of context, but as "people who are in a world of others" (Harre, in Owen, 1992). In academia, for example, rewards in the form of grants, research funding (and possibly acceptance of this dissertation) and so on are meted out for successful, acceptable traditional research.

["Told you so!" gloats the Priest. "My brethren and I are not totally powerless, you know."]

"Clearly," the Fairy sighs. "The dominant discourse is yours to define. Sadly, most journals, for example, demand that there is a statistical analysis of results as evidence of a psychological hypodissertation, which is anomalous (Harre, 2002). We use statistics (or, as I like to call them, sadistics) to find the most likely hypothesis that will explain a certain phenomenon: traditionally, we look for the best correlation between variables, which excludes variation between individuals. In doing this we move psychology away from the study of individuals to the realm of demography." She sighs, and stares glumly at her Doctor Martens. "Such research looks suspect from where I am sitting."]

The act of quantitative research itself is suspect from a social constructionist perspective: "it is as a function of social science research that metaphors assigned to classes of behaviour become reified and viewed as 'phenomena out there' rather than simply as constructs we have invented to make 'sense' of our experience. Thus, to participate in the traditional research enterprise is to be inconsistent with our own perspective" (Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 327).

["Ah," says the Priest. "I have an understanding of your Epistemology now; but what are we going to do with it? What is the actual Research that we are to undertake? How are we going to do it? And anyway, what does research actually mean from this perspective in the first place?"

"That," responds the Fairy, "is next."]

Chapter 3

The Plan: What I Did

“... the universe is, instant by instant, recreated anew. Therefore ... there is in truth no past, only a memory of the past.” (Pratchett, 2001, p. 39)

“... up here in the high valleys around the hub of the world, where the snow is never far away, this is enlightenment country.” (Pratchett, 2001, p. 40)

I asked five of my colleagues to participate in an unstructured interview around how they perceive their intimate relationships to have changed during the process of their becoming psychologists, how their being trained as psychologists has influenced their relationships with those closest to them.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research represents a compromise between the positions discussed in the previous chapter: I am able to submit the required dissertation without compromising my epistemological principles. Qualitative research is often considered in the literature to be the polar opposite of quantitative research (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). However, from a postmodernist perspective, this distinction is not meaningful: any distinction creates a relationship between the two concepts (Becvar & Becvar, 1996), and we prefer to consider the two methodologies as complementary, each of which is useful in relation to context (Keeney, 1983).

[“Don’t feel bad,” says the Fairy, “You’re not completely wrong.”

“Don’t be so patronizing. It is absolute: we are either Wrong or Right. It cannot be both.”

“See? You’re looking for black-and-white answers again. Try to see in shades of ambiguous grey. There’s lots of evidence that points towards the social sciences being a lot less stable and predictable than the natural ones (Gergen, 1982).”

“Evidence? Did you just say evidence? I thought you didn’t believe in the stuff!”

The Fairy looks nonplussed for a moment. “Er... it’s a both/and perspective I guess. Just because I accept social constructionism doesn’t mean I can’t see the merit in your Newtonian approach (Keeney, 1983). In fact, recognition of difference, it can be said, is the key to understanding (Dallos & Urry, 1999). George Kelly (in Dallos & Urry, 1999) says that taking cognizance of difference puts contrasting ideas at the ends of a continuum, but this doesn’t necessarily mean that either position should be rejected, but that an idea only makes sense in contrast to other ideas. But I don’t think the exclusion of any particular model as invalid is really the issue here.”]

The important issue is whether the methodology employed is epistemologically consistent with one’s conceptual framework (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). As I have chosen social constructionism as my epistemology, I have tailored my method accordingly. “The social constructionist approach urges us to abandon the obsession with truth and representation. The phrase “social constructionist” is used to refer to analytic programmes in history and sociology of science that take scientific theories and hypotheses to be the products of their political, economic and cultural milieu. The programs employ a wide range of epistemological views, but their proponents are unanimous in rejecting the idea that science is objective or that it gives us an unbiased view of the real world” (Logino, in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 328-329). My view of the information presented/created in this dissertation is unashamedly my own.

Qualitative research frees people from the constraints of normative social science (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). There is an attempt to understand human experience, and the meaning given to that experience, in great depth. Although it may seek commonalities across human experience, these similarities don't translate into normative standards that form the basis from which people are compared to each other. It is understood that we can only do research on our own representation of the world, co-created in our interactions with others and with the contexts in which we find ourselves.

[The Priest looks offended. "That sounds way too subjective!"

The Fairy looks concerned. "Actually, I wonder if 'subjectivity' is a meaningful way of putting it. Keeney (1983) says that if the term 'objectivity' is rendered meaningless, then the concept of 'subjectivity' falls away. He says that the alternative is ethics, or complete responsibility for whatever you do. Also, whatever research you do, you'll find what you're looking for – believing is seeing, in fact, so, as I mentioned before, you shouldn't let research design inform questions – be flexible enough to bend the method to fit whatever you are looking at (Becvar & Becvar, 1996)."

"Huh," mutters the Priest. "What happened to both/and? Bott (2002) says that postmodernism is undertheorized anyway."]

Questions of interest in qualitative research inform the design of the research, rather than the other way around, where questions are limited to those that fit accepted research protocols (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Design may change midstream, and there is no attempt made to control confounding variables: all variables are part of the context. I have not differentiated between those who participated on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, cultural background,

home language, age, or any of the myriad variables that would influence their responses; these are uniquely and inextricably part of who they are.

Qualitative research also requires that the researcher move out of the role of 'expert' (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). I am a participant in my own research; I acknowledge freely that my own perceptions inform my interpretation of others' meanings in conversation, and that I am influenced by them in a mutual and dialectical way. My version of reality is no more or less valid than any other. According to Owen (1992) qualitative research represents a personal experience methodology, which allows for intimate connection between object/phenomenon and researcher.

["Not an Expert?" quavers the Priest, clutching his Dark Robes of Expertise around him protectively. "But I'll be Naked and no better than a Subject!"

"Exactly! The whole point is that you know as little or as much as the people with whom you work. They are expert in their own lives. They know their own stories or narratives better than you do!"

The Priest sniffs indignantly. "So the ignorant are now on a par with the learned then?"

The Fairy opens her huge handbag and extracts a brightly coloured book. She pages through it briefly. "Aha!" she exclaims. Allow me to read to you from the work of Terry Pratchett (1996): "Ignorant: a state of not knowing what a pronoun is, or how to find the square root of 27.4, and merely knowing childish and useless things like which of the seventy almost identical-looking species of the purple sea snake are the deadly ones ... how to navigate across a thousand miles of featureless ocean by means of a piece of string and a small clay model of your grandfather' (p. 220)..."

“Your point would be?” the Priest interrupts rudely.

The Fairy casts him a withering look. “Clearly, expertise is relative.”

“And what exactly does a NOVEL,” he sneers, “have to do with a Scientific Paper such as this?”

“It’s all down to context, I’ve already told you. The psychologist has lost her mantle of expertise.”

The Priest turns away, sulking. On the edge of hearing, he mutters, “but you seem to be the expert in the whole social constructionism thing. How do you explain that?”]

Specifically Speaking

As the etiquette of research demands a relatively thorough description of the processes undergone, it is necessary at this point to describe my chosen methods in more detail.

[“Yes,” asserts the Priest. “This allows for Ethical Accountability by establishing a position of trustworthiness within the whole process, according to Maione and Chenail (1999). This gives the researcher credibility, and allows readers to evaluate critically the whole project.”]

Context

This description should entail an exposition of the setting within which the research took place, the way in which the researcher gained access to that which he studied, how data were generated and collected, and how this gathered information was processed and analyzed.

I have undertaken this study as part of my MA degree in Clinical Psychology. The people whom I interviewed are colleagues of mine, at the same level of training as am I. They are people with whom I worked for a year, at an accredited internship institution, and they represent four universities between them. They are people whom I would consider friends; under traditional scientific circumstances, I would not be able to use their input for my study directly, as that would represent a breach of objectivity; fortunately, from a social constructionist point of view, I can take for granted that my views on the topic will influence that which I find; I can be sure that the interviews we have will echo hundreds of conversations on the topic that we have engaged in before; and I am in a position to take advantage of the openness that an existing trusting relationship will have on the richness of the material gathered: the things that are relevant to the topic of this paper are very personal; I doubt whether complete strangers would be willing to talk as openly as these interviewees.

Qualitative research can take place from the vantage point of an insider or an outsider (Maiione & Chenail, 1999); mine will be from the 'insider' perspective, by their definition: I am intimately involved with the research process; I interview participants, note their reactions, pay attention to my own responses and so forth, with a view to attaining what I, from my own perspective, understand as the most relevant meaning.

The Case Study Method

Neuman (2000) defines case study research as the in-depth examination of features of a few cases, in this case five, involving varied and extensive data (represented here by the interviews), which is usually, as is the case here, qualitative in nature. In using the case study as research method a few cases are selected to illustrate and analyze one or more issues. As such, the context and the composition of the parts of the case are to be examined. Case studies lead to

the posing of questions around the case or cases, about boundaries and defining characteristics. Usually these questions will help in the generation of new thinking and theory. In fact, Walton (1992) feels that case studies are likely to produce the best theory.

["Huh," says the Fairy, "theory, schmeory. Sounds like looking for Truth."

"We need to talk a little about this whether you like it or not: this research is essentially an in-depth examination of few examples."

"As long as we understand that we are under no circumstances aiming at finding anything absolute. I don't mind about new ways of thinking, about creation of a space for dialogue, but this does not represent an ultimate external reality." She glares at the Priest, who glares back and sulks.]

Unstructured Interviews

I have chosen to use unstructured interviews as my method of data collection. The unstructured interview can be understood as a process with very little imposed structure, where the interviewer approaches the interaction with the intention of discussing a limited amount of topics; he allows his framing of consecutive questions to be influenced by the interviewee's previous answers (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2002; Trochim, 2001). I intend to sit back and allow the interview to take its own route rather than to determine the path it will follow through asking set questions. I do acknowledge that I cannot help but be involved in the process of construction of meaning through the questions that I choose or don't choose, even though it is my intention to follow the lead of the participants, by basing consecutive questions on the preceding answers. My colleagues and I actively construct it as we go along, although I do follow up on cues provided by the participant throughout the process, in order to facilitate my understanding of the interviewee's belief community.

The conversations authored by my colleagues and myself in the interviews represent a form of narrative. According to Michael White, narratives constitute identities, problems and lives, and are not merely representations of them (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Identities and lives are molded by the meanings given to experiences, or the stories that people tell, the language practices that people subscribe to and the type of words they use to narrate their lives, and the positions people occupy in social structures in which they participate, as well as the power relations related to these. Each discussion represents a continuous process of creation of meaning. Each participant will have his or her own set of meanings attributed to the factors in question; these need to be explored in an attempt to make sense of the generation of experience and the construction of 'truth'; this forms an important part of the qualitative research process (Gordon, 2000).

["See?" says the Fairy. "It's all about context, and the different meanings we attribute to things."

The Priest waves a hand irritably. "Tomayto, tomahto; potayto, potahto; context, confounding variable."

"If I didn't know better, I'd think you were acknowledging my perspective."

"WE try to eliminate our confounding variables. YOU wallow in yours (Becvar & Becvar, 1996)."]

Durrheim (1997) suggests that truths and facts are inevitably interpretations that are perspective-bound. They are inextricably linked with the network of socially shared understandings, which forms their backdrop. Objectivity is impossible: reality is constructed in social interaction (in this case, in our conversation). The meaning of events is important, rather than their "truth": I am not as concerned

with whether my colleagues' relationships are 'actually' the way they describe them to be; rather, the way in which they perceive them, and the concomitant meaning they give to events, is important.

["Language is clearly important," asserts the Fairy.

"Really?" says the Priest scathingly. "It's just a means by which we communicate."

"That's what you think (which is, of course, an equally valid reality...). It has an important function in the creation of reality. Morris (in Hermans, 1999) says "[l]anguage exists on that creative borderzone or boundary between human consciousnesses, between a self and an other. It is this responsive interaction between speakers, between self and other, that constitutes the capacity to produce new meaning" (p. 70). This is exactly what happens in the interviews. Language is very important."]

Language has a doing rather than a reflecting function. Austin (in Harre 2002) looks at "'saying as doing" (p. 614): language and speech are seen to be performative and constructive of reality. According to social constructionism meanings are produced by a process of reflexivity (Durrheim, 1997). Instead of presenting an accurate reflection of events, we reflect on a set of actions from within a frame of reference, or discourse. Reflexivity is an endless process, as there is no ultimate truth to lend meaning to our words. This echoes Keeney's (1983) notion of recursiveness, where the observer decides where to punctuate an end (however temporary) to the recursion, in order to make an observation. In this case, when the participants and I felt that the interview had come to an appropriate end, we stopped.

Larner (1998) argues that it is being constituted by discourse that allows for self-reflection, which is what I am essentially expecting from my colleagues, and

which I hope to do myself throughout the process of writing this dissertation. He argues that individuals become themselves by being first responsible and responsive to others. He suggests that, apart from *being* in conversation, people are also moments in between conversations: these opportunities for conversation with self represent conversations with others in imagination – something like the ongoing dialogue between my Priest and Fairy. Thus each individual who helped me with my dissertation is made up of interactions with their intimate partners, their families, the training group, and myriad other interactions in which each individual is continuously engaged. In these interactions, whether you are speaker/writer, or listener/reader, you are participating in the creation of both yourself and the other.

["Exactly!" exclaims the Fairy, reading Hermans (1999) over my shoulder annoyingly. "Each answer gives rise to new questions, as well as reformulating the original question. So every time someone says something in the conversation, it creates new stuff for the discussion, which gets modified and reworked in by other responses. Each new response also opens doors for other tangential discussions, that aren't included in the written piece, but could be just as valuable. Still, any punctuation of the focus of the conversation is valid. We are creating meaning all the time – it's continuously evolving. Meaning-making, after all, is of the essence (Brewin & Power, 1999)."]

Thematic Analysis

The way in which I have chosen to understand the information or knowledge represented in the interviews, is through a process of thematic analysis, as described by Aronson (1994) and Kvale (1996). This involves a process of intuitively analyzing and interpreting data, with a view to understanding each participant's meaning world. It begins after the transcription of the interviews, and is used to identify themes or meaning units.

The construction of themes is systematic, beginning with a process of immersion, which involves reading and rereading of the text in order to become familiar with it (Kvale, 1996). Examples of experiences and meanings are listed, which can take the form of direct quotes, or of paraphrased common ideas. This entails the generation of categories – ways of understanding or interpreting that which has been read are constructed. These constructions represent labels or conceptual categories into which data can be divided. All relevant data are identified and allocated.

These emergent themes are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of the collective experience and meaning (Aronson, 1994). When linked, the themes should form a lucid pattern. The texts are reread, and categories that seem less useful, or that don't seem to fit, are discarded. Kvale (1996) considers this establishing stability of themes, by repeating the grouping process.

["Yes," muses the Priest. "That would allow for more generalisability of the research (Kvale, 1996)."]

Repeated immersion allows me to create a construct, which, in my opinion, best represents the meaning of the specific context and phenomenon. This is achieved through repeated workings of the data until a point of saturation is reached (Kvale, 1996).

After that, a general pattern in the data should become discernable, allowing the merging process to begin (Kvale, 1996). Certain categories are merged into more general headings. Texts are reread, and the list of categories is re-revised. Linking of categories follows this process of checking. The researcher constructs relationships between categories, with a view to generating a holistic picture based on the emergence of the whole pattern.

Next, a pertinent argument for the selection of the themes must be constructed, by relating the themes themselves to relevant literature (Kvale, 1996). In this way, I expand the knowledge base that allowed me to make inferences about the data originally. After this is done, I am able to formulate a meaning or construction of the data, and write this up.

["That," says the Priest, "is the purpose of this paper. The results are presented in detail."

"The reader," asserts the Fairy firmly, "will then make of it what he will."]

Finally, appropriate feedback must be given to the participants, as well as to the University of Pretoria. The University will receive a written document in the form of this dissertation; the participants will be given verbal feedback, which will include an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research process, the results and implications.

In conclusion, I acknowledge that I have artificially drawn each distinction made. The emphasis is placed on creation of meaningful representations of world, self and experience, rather than on discovery (Raskin, 2001).

This creativity is reflected in the freedom that I tried to allow in the informal atmosphere in which the conversations took place, and in my conscious decision not to explicitly ask for focus on any particular themes, as well as in my introduction of the voices of the Fairy and the Priest. It is not an easy task to explicate the perspective that I will attempt: as Taylor (in Shotter & Lannaman, 2002) notes, "we can't turn the background against which we think into an object for us" (p. 579). It will be difficult to use Language itself to examine that which is created in Language. All I can do is reiterate my knowledge of the artificiality of the distinctions that I draw.

[There is a silence. We have come to the end of the chapter. The Priest and Fairy scroll up and down my work.

“Wait a second,” says the Priest. “Look at this reference list. There’s such a lot of stuff from Theory and Psychology.”

The Fairy has a look too. “Yes, well, it looks like Social Constructionism is itself created in conversation, like the reality that will emerge from this paper.”

“I will have make a mental note to look more closely at some of those articles...”

The Fairy sighs. “Yes, well, do it in your own time then. In the mean time, it’s time to look at literature pertinent to the topic at hand, I think.”]

Chapter 4

Voices around Intimate Relationships and Psychology: What I Read

“To his surprise it wasn’t writing at all, but a careful drawing. It showed a striding figure, except that the figure was not one person at all but made up of thousands of smaller figures” (Pratchett, 1997, p. 209).

[“There’s so little literature available regarding psychologists themselves, and even less that pertains to their intimate relationships,” comments the Fairy.

“Well, we need to do some kind of Literature chapter, otherwise we may as well write a novel,” says the Priest crossly.

“I know, I know, you’re right. What we can do is this: we can look at literature that is relevant to a study of personal relationships in general, followed by a brief look at literature and voices around psychologists themselves, and then to apply it to the rest of the study.” There is no objection from the Priest, and the Fairy thinks for a moment.

“You know,” she says, “This presents a difficult task: how to use all this pertinent information, and be epistemologically true. A paper like this should ideally be couched in the language of your epistemology. I mean, from the social constructionist perspective, any information can be used, so it’s fine to use stuff from different perspectives, but it’s hard to keep re-languaging it to fit into a document like this, where your language is always expected to reflect your mindset.” She is quiet for a moment. “I don’t think you need to change the language that dramatically, actually. We can just understand that in order to try to be true to the meaning intended by the author (if that’s even vaguely possible) we’re going to use lots of the language presented in the sources themselves. Social Constructionism is a metatheory: it overarches our thinking about what we

are writing anyway. So the language used in this chapter may stray from the social constructionist lexicon somewhat.”]

Voices around Intimate Relationships: Discourses of Relatedness

Intimate or personal relationships are central to our lives (Brehm, 1992).

[But what exactly are we dealing with here?” asks the Priest. We need a Definition. “ He thinks for a moment. “According to Brehm (1992) herself, definitions of relationships are characterized by mention of three main aspects: behavioural interdependence, or an experience of mutual impact that is strong, enduring and diverse; need fulfillment; and emotional attachment, which implies feelings of love and affection. These relationships vary according to various factors, including intensity, commitment, emotion, sexuality, gender – lots of things have an impact. We need to define this for ourselves.”

“Well,” says the Fairy, you’ve just done a pretty good job of that anyway, so I don’t think we need to formalize it really. This project focuses on experience in a qualitative way; every person involved brings their own values, beliefs and personal experiences to bear on their own definition of personal or intimate relationships anyway; thus there can be no single definitive ... er ... definition (Brehm, 1992).”]

Intimacy in Psychological Discourse

Josselson (1996) argues that psychology “understands the self better than it understands connections between people” (p. ix). She understands much of her patients’ anguish to be related to dissatisfactions with their connections with others in their lives, and she raises an interesting point: we encase relationships in the language of pathology: we talk about “dependence” and “co-dependence”. We have no language around adult love in an intimate relationship that does not

connote sentimentality, and create embarrassment. She suggests that our last cultural taboo is love.

[The Fairy is reading eagerly. She stops for a moment, digs in her handbag and extracts a crystal ball. The Priest rolls his eyes in exasperation, but says nothing.]

“The taboo thing is interesting,” she says. “I predict that when we look at the interviews, speaking the unspoken will be a thing that comes up, that has a particular impact on becoming-psychologists in their personal relationships.”

“Well,” says the Priest, “you hardly needed a crystal ball to tell you that; you just had to look at the interviews.”]

How we think about love is, however, central to our conceptions of ourselves and to our perceptions of our lives in terms of meaning, and yet we all think about love differently (Josselson, 1996). Our culture teaches us ways in which to relate to others (Green, 1978): our perceptions of love are different; the meanings that we ascribe to intimacy are not identical. In our effort to bridge the differences of meaning between us, we run out of language: we have no adult language of relatedness (Josselson, 1996). We speak in the terms of infancy: we desire containment, holding, nurturing, to be caught: how can we language our need for each other in adulthood? Possibly, in our culture, which is geared so strongly towards independence, it is too embarrassing to think of needing someone, and when we do, we are forced to language it in the words of our babyhood, which are shaming to use as an adult.

[“Crystal ball or not,” says the Fairy, “I suspect that the language used in the interviews will reflect that.”]

We seek intimacy and relatedness; others offer us “wholeness in the face of our incompleteness” (Green, 1978, p. 24); we live within webs of connection

(Josselson, 1996). We desire connection to others; even though the divorce rate steadily increases, people are as willing as ever to marry, and many who do divorce remarry (Brehm, 1992). Yet until recently psychology has focused on the intrapsychic, on the self (Josselson, 1996). We have words like self-esteem, self-image, self-control; we value individual achievement and independence. When psychology began to move away from an exclusive focus on the intrapsychic, theorists such as Fairbairn (1952) recognized our desire for relationship: he suggested that we as human beings seek “objects”: the language itself renders the others whom we seek unimportant except for how they pertain to our reworking of our own intrapsychic landscape. Psychodynamic theorists who considered relatedness were marginalized and seldom taught (Josselson, 1996).

["I wonder," says the Fairy, "if the ways in which becoming-psychologists seek intimacy, and what they want emotionally from relationships, will stand out as themes in the next chapter."]

Such work did help to legitimize the study of relatedness to a point, and theorists such as Johnson and Greenberg (1994) trace a movement of psychological interest away from exclusively intrapsychic towards and understanding of relatedness: we are recognizing more these days the power of the social context, or the relationships within which the individual finds himself embedded. Still, there remains in individual therapies a tendency to focus on infantile relationships: traditional theorists are interested in the impact of early experience on the development of the self (Josselson, 1996). Early concrete experiences of being held, fed and so on form the basis of later development, but later cognitive capacities enable us to interpret our experiences. Thus our capacity for and experience of relatedness become richer and broader, and the need for relatedness does not disappear with age. After all, even adult emotion is most evident and powerful in intimate relationship (Johnson & Greenberg, 1994). Bowlby (in Josselson, 1996) asserts that the notion that adult need for others is a

sign of regressive dependency needs is present in modern psychology. He believes that it is a very dangerous idea. But then, how do we talk about feelings of love without seeming sentimental and “mushy-headed” (p. 4)? It is through speech that we try to bridge the gaps between us, try to describe our inner experiences to one another: how do we language love without being naïvely poetic?

Reaching Out of Hands: Need for Relationship

[Interesting heading,” comments the Fairy. “Reaching out hands is another metaphor. We reach out our hands to pluck the apple from the forbidden tree, as well as reaching out metaphorically for others in supplication when we desire intimacy.”]

Josselson (1996) suggests that we experience ourselves through relatedness. We use language of contact when we speak about emotion often: we feel “touched”; we feel “held” when we are connected psychologically to others; we often touch them physically to communicate feeling. We talk about ourselves in spatial metaphors as being “close” or “distant”. In some ways the physical and the psychological can be seen as metaphorically interchangeable: our “limited language of relatedness requires that we rely on metaphor to grasp its various phenomena” (p. 6).

One way in which our efforts to be connected to others can be understood is in terms of what Josselson (1996) describes as various “primary ways in which we overcome the space between us”. They imply “actually or metaphorically, a way of transcending space, of reaching through space (or being reached) and being in contact with one another” (p. 6). As we grow, our ways of connecting become less physical and concrete, but no less important. Each dimension of relatedness has its own course, channel and origin, according to her understanding.

["Great," says the Priest. "I love it when things are broken down into objective bits like this. It makes life so much simpler. Here, then, is the Truth."

"No, it's not that. This is her truth. We can engage in dialogue around it, but it's not objective."]

Holding is our first interpersonal experience: it suggests trust and security (Josselson, 1996). We need to be contained, bounded and grounded throughout life. Attachment is next: our ability to attach to others structures some of our most important experiences in life, including our experience of loss. Our attachments are often central to our existence. We are also pleasure-seeking: our capacity for passionate experience organizes experiences in different manners and according to different levels of intensity. We also connect through eye-to-eye validation: we overcome space through eye contact; we find ourselves in the eyes of the other. Idealization and identification are ways in which we link to powerful others and strive to be like them or to control them. Companionship is also available to us: it is a form of mutuality. We move in harmony with someone, in a way that is the product of both people: an emergent "we" exists in the space between us. There is an experience of embeddedness: we have a role and a place; we are part of, we belong. Finally, we take care of others, bridging the gap through care and tending. We hold others, symbolically or actually, in our arms. We seek our own fulfillment sometimes in the fulfillment of others (Green, 1978).

These dimensions of relatedness emerge simultaneously, often independently (Josselson, 1996). They are not, however, reducible to separate pieces: they overlap, shading into one another, although each has its own coherence, its own center. Thinking in such terms enables us to move away from the traditional psychological idea of human connectedness being metaphorically experienced as and rooted in "good feeding" (p. 8).

How love is expressed and to whom we show our love is culturally bound (Josselson, 1996): we are the products of the discursive communities in which we find ourselves.

[“Yes,” agrees the Fairy. “Shared reality, shared language, and so on.”]

Social traditions and mores influence the rituals and forms through which we relate, but the processes are discernable (Josselson, 1996).

[“See? She IS saying that what she proposes is real.” The Priest looks proud of himself.

“Read a little further,” suggests the Fairy. “She acknowledges that there are naturally other ways in which to describe a multidimensional space (Josselson, 1996). And even if she were to present this as an absolute truth, it doesn’t mean that we have to accept it as such. We can incorporate it into our own stuff; my perspective does not advocate the exclusion of any assertions, even if they are presented as objective and final: they represent valuable information anyway.” She thinks for a second. “Sometimes,” she adds.]

Holding Hands Now: Relatedness in Today’s World

We have an understanding that relatedness to others leads to self-fulfillment (Josselson, 1996); Giddens (1991) says that in our modern, more emotionally aware society we search for the “pure relationship” (p. 477). This is a relationship in which external criteria are irrelevant, where the relationship exists for the rewards that both parties obtain, where trust relies on a process of mutual disclosure. Thus the modern response to an unfulfilling relationship is to leave in search of a new one (Josselson, 1996). The pure relationship is continued only for its own sake, in so far as both individuals deem it satisfactory enough to stay in it (Giddens, in Jamieson, 1999). The type of intimacy implied here involves

self-disclosure, equality between partners, and a sense of equal contribution to the partnership. The uncertainties and new social conditions inherent in late modernity could be understood to heighten individuals' senses of their own limitations and creativity in the process of authoring themselves and their social world; traditions are being swept away.

["Hmm," says the Fairy. "I'd expect psychologists to be more emotionally aware than others." She consults the crystal ball again, ignoring the Priest's mutterings about the relative merits of divination in general. "I think that will play a role in the next chapter too."]

Jamieson says, "the phrase 'narrative of the self' emphasizes the ongoing process of self-construction" (p. 478); in modern life, personal relationships are sites where we are able to explore freely and construct our understandings of ourselves. Pure relationships ideally create security and psychological stability, which resonates with the trust in caretakers implied in an untraumatized childhood (Giddens, 1991). But there is a tension between maintaining this trust and the knowledge that this relationship is voluntary, and only lives as long as its ability to fulfill both partners; Giddens proposes that the consequent fragility of the relationship is a facet of the more profound openness and intimacy of the relationship: with openness comes risk. For him, intimacy and closeness imply a "democratizing of the interpersonal domain" (p. 479): negotiation is key. Dialogue between partners in relationship is seen to create a stable sense of self and of the relationship, keeping at bay a sense of chaos, in spite of the fragility of a socially constructed world (Jamieson, 1999).

To Hold or Let Go: Autonomy vs. Connectedness

David Morgan (in Jamieson, 1999) has postulated a twentieth century shift in marriage from institution to relationship; however, in spite of increased emotional awareness, career is often still understood to be more important than

relationships; financial rewards and personal achievement are important. Josselson (1996) speaks of social critics and sociologists being “alarmed by the radical individualism of American culture and the concomitant overvaluation of the self” (p. 12).

[“ ‘Overvalued’? I wonder who is the judge? Is the individual necessarily selfish and inherently morally ‘wrong’? Is it bad to leave an unfulfilling marriage, or should one rather stay out of respect for the institution itself? Is there a limit to one’s right to happiness?” the Fairy muses.]

Lewis (2001) concurs: “[f]or the most part, academic commentators have decided that what happened to the family during the last quarter of the century is problematic” (p. 5). She speaks about people having become more “selfish” (p. 3): she quotes Swidler as one of the first to suggest that relationships have become more individualistic and less committed, as a result of personal growth encouraged by the “therapeutic movement” (p. 8).

[“Actually,” muses the Fairy, “apart from the fact that I’d love to know why therapy causes bad marriages rather than bad marriages causing therapy, there seems to be a conflict between this notion of the individual and the ideal of relatedness. Most people in our society will say that they marry for love (Lewis, 2001): it involves the forging of a new, joint identity, co-authored by the partners. But it looks like that pull toward intimacy is sometimes strongly countered by individual desire and the pursuit of individual happiness. Skolnick (1991, in Lewis, 2001) argues that individualism is at the core of romantic love, and may well lead to adultery rather than monogamy as one searches again for one’s perfect match. Society attaches a high value to both individualism and intimacy; it gets confusing. I think society expects us to be individuals within a socially sanctioned relationship, but the degree to which the drive toward independence and the fulfilling of one’s own needs is selfish, is unclear. This is going to play out in

interesting ways in our analysis of themes, I suspect: guilt around going after your own needs, and so on. ”]

In spite of our need for connectedness and our desire for the ‘pure’ relationship (Giddens, in Jamieson, 1999), from a psychological point of view, the dominant narrative is one of separate individuals adrift, following their course of autonomy and independence (Josselson, 1996). Again, the self is emphasized. Our society values self-reliance, self-awareness, and self-expression. If we pay homage exclusively to these reflections of separateness we deny our dependence on each other.

[“So it makes sense again that we have no unpathologized language for adult relatedness,” interjects the Fairy. “And look how easy it is these days to live without connecting: there’s T.V. and radio for entertainment, the Internet for shopping and even pornography ... it’s strange. And we are so impressed with ourselves as we incorporate these innovations.”

“I wish,” sighs the Priest, “that you wouldn’t generalize like that without any statistics to back it up.”

“Never mind statistics. These sentiments are part of our story as a society. I don’t have thoughts in a vacuum.”

“Oh, really,” sneers the Priest. The Fairy ignores him.]

The relational institutions that remain (including the family) begin to feel the strain of carrying the relational needs that we have but feel ashamed to admit (Josselson, 1996). We have grown to expect huge amounts from our existing relationships: we want our needs met, but are reluctant to acknowledge them. In fact needs can be seen as egotistical and selfish in themselves, as well as embarrassing (Lewis, 2001): we risk being rejected by those with whom we are in

relationship. There are myriad notions of what a relationship should provide, of what one is entitled to expect (Johnson & Greenberg, 1994). Meanwhile, we move away from contexts that would have met our needs in alternative ways, such as friendships and so on: no one has time for them any more. Always, we experience conflict: we want to be seen as independent, strong in our individual right, but we long for contact and warmth.

Josselson (1996) speaks of her clients as coming to therapy to seek relief from relationship-related distress. Finding that openly needing from people is too risky, they ask what can be changed in order to remove the need. They bring with them their various solutions to the problems of their own needs: we are desperately trying to need others less, and finding it tremendously difficult. Johnson and Greenberg (1994) see the social or relationship context as one within which unhappiness can be generated. They postulate a demand for “therapeutic intervention, to help couples conjure up closeness from distance, intimacy from alienation, connectedness from isolation, empathy from aggression, and respect and equality from power struggles” (p. ix). Existing therapies, according to them, focus on relationships in terms of behaviour and insight into behavioural factors: the therapeutic interest in affective facets of relationships (and by implication the acknowledgement of needs discussed by Josselson) is more recent and relatively unresearched.

[“Well, that’s not surprising. Maybe we’re finally moving towards allowing ourselves to feel, to be needy, and so on. It makes sense that newer therapies are going that way.” She is silent for a moment. “Actually,” she says, speaking slowly, staring at her hands: she is thinking aloud, proposing an idea new to her, “perhaps psychology is like the internet: a socially acceptable way to get one’s needs met without inflicting one’s desire for connectedness on those in one’s family or social circle.”]

We allow ourselves to be distracted from that for which we yearn, pursuing instead the life that we think we should have, goals we don't really want to achieve, gods in whom we do not really believe (Person, in Josselson, 2001). Because we need relatedness, we are vulnerable to rejection and exposure of our neediness in a context where neediness is frowned upon: it is dangerous to stop chasing those alien goals, worshipping those absent gods. We focus on ourselves, which is at least a distraction; we read self-help books in the hope of being able to fulfill all our own needs, all the time. We are vulnerable in this regard: "what we need most we cannot control" (p. 14).

["Why is it such a dichotomy anyway?" demands the Fairy.

"What are you talking about?" asks the Priest peevishly.

"Why have we created the polarization between autonomy and connection? I think it's because we've made them mutually exclusive (Josselson, 1996). You can be invested in individual stuff, and praised for it, or interested in others, which is like being weak and pathetic."

"They are opposites: of course they are dichotomous."

"No. Josselson (1996) says 'action takes place only within a relational matrix; the self is realized through others; development concerns both maintaining our ties to others and differentiating from them', and she also quotes Gilligan: 'we know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others, and ... we experience relationship only insofar as we differentiate other from self' (p. 15). Valuing the interpersonal doesn't mean you necessarily exclude creativity and competence: being connected doesn't mean you abandon yourself as individual. I suppose that the challenge lies in finding the balance. With the focus in clinical psychology training on relationships, this is for sure going to be evident in our analysis. In the interviews people tended to see things in a complex way, holding

seeming opposites like these in mind simultaneously: it will be interesting to see what it leads to.

“And anyway, we choose our partners. We don’t just form long-lasting relationships with the first person we meet. That’s according to who you are as an individual, I think (Brehm, (1992).”]

Brehm (1992) refers to the rule of homogamy in interpersonal relationships: we like people who think like we do, who share our values and beliefs, who match us intellectually, emotionally, and even in terms of physical attractiveness.

[“I thought opposites attracted each other,” sighs the Fairy. “It’s such a romantic notion.”

“No, it’s a myth,” says the Priest, reading over my shoulder. “Apparently it can seem that way, though. If, for example, you have a submissive wife and a dominant husband, they look like they are opposites. But actually, they are like-minded: they have agreed between them that one should be submissive, nurturing, caring, whatever, and the other should be aloof, dominant, powerful and so on. They are similar: they share beliefs and expectations.”]

Intimate relationships benefit from clarity around expectations: we need to be aware of the expectations that we bring to the relationship, as well as those brought by those with whom we are in relationship; we collaborate in authoring new scripts when we enter into relationship with others (Sager & Hunt, 1979). A couple’s uniqueness starts with their selection of each other and with what each of them brings to the relationship. A subtle interplay is required for both people simultaneously to be able to respect each other’s individuality and enjoy a context within which both can grow, and simultaneously remain connected and in accord.

[“What happens when one of you is more aware than the other, or when needs change, as they do in the process of becoming a clinical psychologist? Again, this is pertinent to our own research.”]

The ideal relationship is difficult to attain. It seems that it would be a relationship of equality and intimacy, love and care expressed physically by doing and giving as much as by speaking and negotiating, by holding and respecting, a process of mutual discovery and enjoyment (Jamieson, 1999). Also, we want the freedom to explore our individuality without threatening our connectedness, the freedom to have our own needs met, and the opportunity to meet those of our partners (Josselson, 1996). As Josselson (1996) suggested, we have high expectations these days, and when we feel that we are not fulfilled, we leave.

Letting Go of Hands: Leaving Relationships

Vaughan (1986) suggests that the process of uncoupling starts with a secret, with one partner's nurtured but unspoken feeling of discomfort in the relationship. She conceptualizes the process of uncoupling as the converse of the construction of a shared sense of self and world-view through dialogue in relationship. It is interesting to note that most of her respondents' stories are characterized by a withdrawing of one partner while the other often has no suspicion of loss until the secret is told. She writes of couples who wanted both to institutionalize their relationships and to feel intimate and equal within them; possibly in the compromise there lies most value.

In the chaos around a breaking relationship, loneliness is key. Moustakas (1996) says that “loneliness is an experience of being human which enables the individual to sustain, extend and deepen his humanity” (p. ix). Loneliness, which seems to be the opposite of connectedness can be, according to Moustakas (1996) an instrument through which we can experience new beauty and

compassion, which makes possible deeper companionships. He asserts that no one who has felt lonely can fail to be touched and changed by the experience.

["Loneliness and a sense of disconnection," says the Fairy, "comes up in the interviews too, as part of the impact that the process of becoming a clinical psychologist has. This is also going to come up in future chapters."]

Voices around Psychologists and the Process of Becoming a Psychologist

There is precious little research on psychologists themselves (Viljoen, Beukes & Louw, 1999): it seems that the old ways of understanding apply here, with us as Psychologists firmly Outside the Box.

["Exactly as it should be," sniffs the Priest.]

Of the small amount of extant literature, I found none pertaining directly to the impact of becoming a clinical psychologist on intimate relationships. What information I have found that is relevant pertains mainly to training, and to the psychologist's self in training, for the most part.

We exist as beings within context; we are relational creatures. As psychologists, we can punctuate various groups for which we have membership: we belong to families, we are in partnerships or marriages, we are members of social groups, we are members of the community represented by other psychologists, we are members of the group in particular in which we trained, we are connected to our various university communities and so on. We create our realities through our storying of our interactions, through social practices, through the scripts that we live and negotiate. In the process of becoming a psychologist, through the training process, we are engaged in a process of negotiating and renegotiating rules and meanings; we are often exposed to an ongoing evaluation and

commentary on ourselves, and the awareness of this process is heightened in the training context (Prentice, 2001).

["Hmmm," says the Fairy. "Awareness shifts stuff. This is definitely going to be explored in our analysis."]

I Am That Which I Study: Eating the Apple

Prentice (2001) recalls feeling in his training "confused and unsafe" during training (p. 57): the context of training itself seems to be intensely unsettling, characterized by scrutiny, by being observed by trainers, and observing yourself: you become both the 'studier' and the studied. Prentice (2001) hypothesizes that the process of training clinical psychologists at various universities creates intense psychological discomfort.

New theories and views promote an examination of existing philosophies: trainees experience their personal belief systems as being exposed to construction and reconstruction (Prentice, 2001): reworking of a personal philosophy is inevitable when one is confronted with new theories, new ways of considering and thinking about human behaviour, and confronted with debates and issues that need to be examined with a view to resolution. New psychologists find themselves wondering whether the 'self' as therapist can be set apart from the 'self' as non-therapist. Andolfi (1979) writes of the importance of the personhood of the therapist in the therapeutic context; the therapist's use of self is an important element of therapy; thus trainees must be open to self-examination. It is a difficult line to draw, perhaps impossible: who am I as therapist, and can I be not-therapist in my interactions apart from psychology? Real (1990) says that as the only behaviour that is controllable by the therapist is her own behaviour, she will use herself, as the only tool available. Psychologists in training inevitably struggle with personal issues around self as therapist (Blokland, 1993). There seems to exist a tension between conservation and

transformation of the self as a result of the training (Prentice, 2001): in what ways am I changing, and how do I remain autonomous, how do I preserve the parts of me that are inherently myself? Therapy appears to be a way of being (Blokland, 1993), rather than a way of thinking.

[The Fairy is starting into the crystal ball again. “Yes,” she asserts, “it does.” The Priest waits for her to elaborate, but she is being mysterious, and says no more.]

During training there seems to be a focus on intrapersonal change (Blokland, 1993; Prentice, 2001): intrapersonal change influences and changes interpersonal interactions; the effects of this will be felt in all contexts. Internal change will probably lead to external change: where rules of interaction become explicit, as they do through examination during training, they are open to negotiation; it is impossible to unknow knowledge of this kind (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Van Deventer (in Prentice, 2001) asserts that psychology “broaches two domains of discourse, one in which the subject belongs to psychology as its object of study, and another where the discipline of psychology belongs to the subject as a topic of discussion” (p. 107): the study of people who behave, by a behaving person, leaves the observer the observed.

Loss and Gain: Personal Impact

In this process, the self was seen as a work in progress, moving in an endless cycle of being defined and redefined (Prentice, 2001). Durkin (1987) asserts that systems die if they do not grow, and that pain accompanies growth; training never really ends for the therapist; rather, it is an ongoing process, a way of life (Blokland, 1993). Keeney (1983) asserts that change cannot occur other than in a context of stability, and that stability evolves out of change. Prentice (2001) hypothesizes that in a context characterized by lack of stability, the training will be experienced as destructive. Most of Prentice’s (2001) interviewees agreed that the process of becoming a psychologist had resulted in losses for them,

mainly in that their memberships in social groups had felt threatened and in some cases withdrawn. Blokland (1993) reported that some of her interviewees described the process as simultaneously rewarding and painful: personal growth was rewarding, but losses were also experienced.

[The Fairy, again with her crystal ball in hand, is nodding emphatically. "That's something that everyone agreed on in the interviews."]

Prentice (2001) reports that most of his interviewees reported feeling isolated and lonely, as if they were no longer members of the social groups to which they had belonged before; contexts within which they had been able to share meanings were less accessible; it became difficult if not impossible to share with members of their social groups, which they linked to the strong focus on interpersonal and intrapersonal change. Blokland (1993) also speaks of loneliness resulting from the process of becoming a psychologist. She does, however, make allowances for the intense connection that was felt between members of her training group: possibly this represents a context within which we can feel understood and connected.

["As in the interviews, where everyone spoke openly and freely. It seems like other people don't know who psychologists are – it's almost as if psychologists confuse other people. It's hard for people in the process of becoming a psychologist to connect with their old friends, hard for them to explain themselves to their families. It's so odd that people find it so hard to understand," comments the Fairy.

The Priest looks excited. "Guess what I've got! This is an empirical study that agrees with you totally!" He's waving it in the air. "Rosenthal, McKnight and Price (2000) studied public perceptions of psychology, and they found a large discrepancy between perceptions and reality. The divergence was apparent in all areas, including who psychologists are, how they are trained, what it is that they

do, and where they work. They also suggest an urgent need for further study in this area.”

The Fairy looks amusingly conflicted, her desire to reject empirical research out of hand mollified by the realization that in this case it says what she wants it to say. “Ok. Thank goodness I am a Social Constructionist Fairy, and can encompass all epistemologies within my overarching metatheory,” she says smugly. “Anyway, there’s evidence all around us of that. Look at movies: in Silence of the Lambs the psychiatrist (again, used synonymously with ‘psychologist’ in the vernacular, demonstrating lack of understanding) is seen as strange, brutal, terrifyingly insightful, able to penetrate to the heart of personal secrets without permission and with deadly accuracy. In Anger Management the therapist is seen as pretty much crazy himself, unpredictable, unprofessional, indisputably other. Still, he eventually successfully manipulates his client to change. In Sixth Sense the psychologist is seen as caring and kind, but his wife perceives him to have put her second to his career; he is elite anyway, upper class, drinker of good wine and liver of an affluent lifestyle. Alex Delaware in the series of novels by Jonathan Kellerman is also a member of the upper class, with a taste for fine food, obscure music, also enjoying an opulent lifestyle, although as a character he is more accessible than most, probably because Kellerman himself is a psychologist. Psychologists are often represented as other, not the same as everyone else. Maybe they can only connect properly with other psychologists, as was suggested above.”]

This sense of connectedness between members of the psychological world can be understood in terms of a feeling of community (Blokland, 1993). New psychologists experience that community as being different from their own; at first they feel lost (Prentice, 2001). Their efforts to fit in with the new community, however, lead them to feelings of estrangement from their own.

["That makes sense," says the Fairy. "They speak a new language; their views of the world are characterized by different scenery. Hardly surprising that they feel set apart from their old contexts."]

Dialogical Evolution of a Therapist

Transformation, including the changes implied in the process of becoming a therapist, occurs in the process of reality change, and as such must evolve through dialogue (Martin-Baro, in Prentice, 2001).

["Just as we evolved meanings dialogically in the interviews," comments the Fairy.]

Self reflection brings about a dialectical process of behaving and learning about behaviour. Revised meanings in turn influence what is held as real and meaningful, and shift focus from some aspects to others. Again, interpersonal change as a result of this process is inevitable. Previous ways of interacting become obsolete in the new script.

In the process of transformational dialogue there was also a focus on personal history and disclosure: personal histories were experienced as "psychologised and pathologised" (Prentice, 2001, p. 88). We naturally revisit our history, reinterpret it, revise previously attributed meanings; we are temporal beings, and our history informs who we are, as well as vice versa. It would appear that as history informs our definitions of ourselves, it is necessary that we examine our histories in the process of becoming clinical psychologists; the risk lies, according to Prentice (2001) in feeling forced to disclose, and in the consequent psychologising: pathology may be seen where there is none.

The process of evolving personal philosophy is important in the process of becoming a psychologist; self-reflection is closely related (Prentice, 2001). Self-

reflection broadens psychological discourse, which increases one's knowledge of oneself. There is, however, a paradox inherent in the observer becoming the observed: Ruesch and Bateson (in Prentice, 2001) tell us that to assume a class can be a member of itself would confuse levels of abstraction; the self-reflecting person needs someone else against whom one can make out the "peculiarities of the self" (p. 119). We seek out others in order to understand ourselves; we give meaning to our realities in interactions (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

["It's like being in therapy," the Fairy says, having reread everything we've written so far. "Blokland (1993) says that the becoming-therapist is involved in processes of change that are very similar to the client in therapy. There's a focus on transformation of old stuff, on re-evaluation and self-transformation."

"Self-transformation?" demands the Priest. "In therapy, it's the therapist that changes the client, not the client that changes himself, or what would be the point?"

"No, the therapist creates a context in which change is possible (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Efran and Lukens (1985) say that it's about creating an environment in which self-change is possible. The responsibility is not solely the therapist's.

"Anyway, it's like therapy in that it's a search for new meaning, and it's in the search for meaning that healing occurs (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988)."

"Doesn't sound like trainees feel very healed in a process like this."

"Well, the term 'healing' is relative. Blokland (1993) understands it in wide sense of transformation and growth, and is at pains to point out that it doesn't mean that the preceding state was pathological. She says that the experiential, kind of therapeutic aspect of becoming a psychologist is way more important than the

academic stuff, which represents only one aspect of the process. It's not just about acquiring knowledge and skills; it's a way of being. She says that the transformations were also often experienced as unexpected. Her interviewees spoke of having both lost and gained. We have looked at losses above; unlike Prentice (2001), who had only one respondent who cited gains, she found perceived rewards to include an acceptance of self, including one's shortcomings. They also included an ability to be 'touched' by clients, to be in real relationships with clients where they could gain something as well as giving.

Bugental (1990) puts it beautifully. He says that clients 'have invited me to be with them as they searched deeply within themselves to discover what they sought most dearly, as they struggled through agony and soared on joy, as they confronted fears and mustered courage for their intimate journeys. There is much that these, my teachers, have taught me – much that powerfully changed my own life' (p. xi): he's acknowledging that clients had an impact on his life as well as vice versa. He also acknowledges the stuff that is without words. He says, 'whatever I say can only point clumsily toward the endless more that is beyond verbalization. I point, not with a precise single index finger but with an awkward elbow – or perhaps, with my right buttock. And that necessary but inexact appendage always directs attention back of where we are currently looking. Not only can I not say all; neither can I say what we are immediately recognizing. Words lag behind vision.'

The Priest looks shocked. "That is very inappropriate. Nevertheless, I think that we have rummaged around in other work for long enough; it's time to look at what we've got ourselves. Let's try," he sighs theatrically, "to make something out of this hopelessly qualitative and unrepresentative pile of interviews of yours."

The Fairy looks quite excited. "Alright. We can set it all out according to the themes that present themselves. It can be quite creative, really, acknowledging

always, of course, that this understanding represents only one of myriad equally valid understandings, as does this particular reading of the relevant literature.”

“Well, we are not doing too badly, convention-wise: we have an epistemology, methodology, literature study, and now we move towards the research itself, which is deplorably unscientific. Still, not a bad compromise, I think. Let’s get started.”

“Yes,” agrees the Fairy. “We’ve seen lots of places where I’m suspecting stuff here will be reflected in our analysis. We need to do the analysis quickly, and then bring it all together again in Chapter 6.”]

Chapter 5

The Experience of Eating the Apple: What I Found

“... Wizards had found Chaos, which is Kaos with his hair combed and a tie on, and had found in the epitome of disorder a new order undreamed of. There are different kinds of rules. From the simple comes the complex, and from the complex comes a different kind of simplicity. Chaos is order in a mask...”
(Pratchett, 2001, p. 373)

“Telling one’s story is a re-presentation of experience; it is constructing history in the present. The re-presentation reflects the teller’s re-description and re-explanation of the experience.” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992, p. 37). It is stories we consider now, looking for meaning and understanding, seeking not an ultimate, generalisable truth, but rather an instant of comprehension, an experience, a tableau, a moment in time that makes sense, but which is understood to be far from objective and tangible, far from absolute.

[It’s been hard work so far. The Fairy is swaying slightly from the effort of constant engagement, and the Priest has his head in his hands. They have spent hours with me going through the interviews, thinking about themes, mentally fitting and refitting the information into itself.

“That,” moans the Priest, “was like trying to do a jigsaw puzzle where all the pieces are square, and you have no picture to work from. I am exhausted, and all for naught. This is SO unscientific. There is no guarantee at all that the way in which you have organized these bits is the Right Way.”

“Of course not,” the Fairy replies, too tired to be vehement. “This is one of myriad ways in which these pieces can be shuffled, and as such it is as valid an

understanding as any.” She looks at the Priest expectantly, waiting for a rebuff. He says nothing. He has fallen asleep.

“Well,” says the Fairy. “Now what? We have argued and blustered, read all the interviews, read them again, looked for themes, revised themes, reread the stuff and re-revised our thoughts. I think, at some point, we should write something down officially.” She winks at me conspiratorially. “Now is a good time, while he’s asleep.”

We both look at the Priest. He snuffles in his sleep, mutters something like “scientific reliability...” and wriggles into a more comfortable position. It seems safe to start the chapter, free of Scientific Input ...

“I think,” suggests the Fairy, “that you should include your own experience; psychology, and social constructionist theory in particular, is nothing if not self-reflexive. Let’s put in little boxes with handwriting in them – makes it more personal and fun. ”]

In this chapter I include liberally my own personal experiences. These reflections appear in text boxes, in a different font.

[“Wait,” says the Fairy. “There’s a slight problem, I think: in an exercise like this, it’s easy for the voices of the participants to be blurred together. I think we should look at them individually first, briefly so as not to compromise confidentiality, in order to give each of them a voice of their own.”]

Eaters of the Apple

D is 37 years old, mother of two boys, aged ten and four. She has been married for fifteen years, and had no thoughts of leaving her husband during the process,

which is not to say that she did not experience significant turbulence in her relationships with her family members, as is reflected in her interview. H is 25 years old. His partner lives in the United States at the moment, which creates stresses of its own. At the time of the interview, they had no plans to separate. F is 26, and her last relationship, albeit not a long-standing one, broke up during the coursework component of her training, an occurrence that she attributes at least in part to the process of becoming a clinical psychologist, as is reflected in her interview. She found that the impact extended to various other relationships as well. She is currently involved in a new relationship, and has been for some months. K is 25, and her four-year relationship ended in her M1 year, which she also attributes at least in part to the impact of the training. She experienced various effects in her relationships with her family and friends as well. She began another relationship during her internship, which also ended, as she discusses in her interview. T is 35, and has been married for two years. She has found that the process of becoming a clinical psychologist has had a profound impact on her relationship with her husband and family. I ended a nine-year relationship in the second half of my internship year, and I also experienced changes in other contexts, as I will discuss in this chapter.

Biting the Apple: Awareness

From the moment when the Fruit of Knowledge touches your tongue, your eyes are opened. Psychology affords us a 'second sight', an ability to perceive patterns in relationship that we hadn't been aware of before. In her interview K says, "I think the most obvious [way in which becoming a psychologist affected my relationships] is the ... amount of awareness, insight, that you have into the patterns of the things that happen between you and the other people." Suddenly the rules of the games we play with each other are revealed in crystal clarity, and we are confronted with the knowledge that they have been there all along. K puts it succinctly: "... I lived the first twenty-odd years of my life, you know, in pure ignorance, I think, of what was actually going on in my relationships."

When psychology training enters our lives we suddenly begin to learn a new language and resulting new way of perceiving the world. The discourses therapists in training are involved in with their peers seem to center around themes such as congruence, relationships, needs, awareness of self and others and the evolution of a new self: the psychologist self. The new language inevitably seems to impact on the discourses in which a fledgling psychologist is involved outside of the formal context of psychology training. One major implication is that previously unquestioned discourses and relationships with significant others suddenly fall under the searchlight of this new awareness. In some cases an awareness of certain themes or processes in these discourses and relationships that existed prior to psychology training seems to be confirmed or strengthened by the new linguistic distinctions provided by psychology. It is as if psychology training brings an acute edge to the observational abilities of the therapist in training. This enhanced awareness is both exciting and frightening. It is exciting in that it serves as confirmation of previously inexpressible observations of certain, often uncomfortable, aspects of relationships with significant others. It is frightening in the sense that this heightened awareness clearly shows some of the less than satisfying aspects of personal relationships. The therapist in training is thus left with a dilemma: do I confront this directly through commenting on it, or does the new awareness simply remain part of my own private discourses with myself?

["At the risk of getting lost in content, specifically what 'processes' are we talking about here?" asks the Fairy. "For people who are essentially quite different, everyone seemed to have similar stuff..." she nudges me encouragingly.]

Most of the becoming-psychologists whom I interviewed, with the exception of H, seem to have a natural tendency to nurture others, while negating their own needs.

I realized some time during my M1 year that I mother people. I take care of everyone else's needs. In any argument with my husband, where each of us counted for 50%, 25% of my 50 was on his side. There's no winning a 25/75 argument. I wasn't even aware that I wasn't acknowledging my own needs.

["Possibly," muses the Fairy, "This is part of what draws them to psychology in the first place."]

D says, "I'd ignored [myself] my whole life". We seem to be in general in our relationships the caregivers, the copers, those who contain and nurture others instinctively, and the process of becoming psychologists makes this obvious to us, in a number of ways. On one hand, the process of therapy itself can be a teaching for us. T says, "... you're sitting with clients all day taking them back to themselves, what are their needs, telling them to take care of their own needs, and it's like you're sitting in front of a mirror ... you've got this reflecting back the whole time, and you start thinking, well, when am I going to, sort of walk the talk?"

It seems that those whom I interviewed have, with the exception of H, based a large part of their self-definitions on the idea of nurturing and taking care of others. Their stories are characterized by the negation of their own needs and a tendency to put others first, to take responsibility for others and to care for others. Even though there may have been an awareness of this prior to psychology training, the heightened awareness brought about by the development process induced by training brings this facet of their life stories into sharp focus. There suddenly arises an acute awareness of unexpressed needs (which was true for H as well), needs that have never formed part of the relationships that were negotiated with significant others prior to psychology training. This results in a simultaneous process of feeling guilty for suddenly having "new" needs that we expect our significant others to fulfill and a sense of frustration when our

relationships don't seem to be as emotionally satisfying as we would like them to be.

Also, the process of becoming a psychologist is so emotionally demanding that we are left with few resources with which to meet the needs of those with whom we are in relationships outside therapy. This in itself represents a pattern change, and we then become aware of the implications of that shift. D demonstrates this constant and shifting awareness when she discusses her relationship with her son: "... He used to come to me with stuff and I just didn't have the space for him. It wasn't just that it was the time or whatever – the emotional stuff was just so much that I had very little space available at the end. So I actually used to ... I remember half-listening to him, and saying 'yes,' and 'really,' at certain parts but having no idea what he's saying, and he knew that, and I somehow thought he didn't, but he knew that, and then he would start speaking more and more and sharing more and more of his life with [my husband]." Her insight into and thus awareness of the processes involved is demonstrated clearly.

This makes total sense to me from my own experience. People who relied on me were very disappointed; I moved away from lots of friends. My family didn't quite know what to make of me. I simply didn't have the emotional resources to do what I'd always done; and it seems that when you are dealing with issues like this in your personal life, clients come to you that reflect those issues. So I often felt like I did therapy with myself. It becomes hard to ignore yourself after a while.

Once we become aware of our patterns we become vigilant, locked into a state of observing ourselves, unable often to just 'be' in a situation in which we would have responded without thinking before. Once you've taken the first bite, there's no going back. K says, "I think it's happened now, there's something, almost like a little switch, that's flipped, and I can never go back." It's impossible to 'unknow' knowledge.

["Yup," agrees the Fairy morosely. "No spitting that apple out. Worms or no, you'll have to swallow anyway."]

It seems that it applies across all relational contexts; we act and we observe ourselves acting. As T puts it, "it's exhausting". So there's a conflict between conscious and unconscious behaviour, between responding with or without awareness, and in eating the fruit we have lost our innocence, in a sense, lost the spontaneity of the unconsidered response. There's a clear-cut delineation between the therapist before and the therapist after, and there's a sense of having lost as well as having gained. T says, "I was just *being*, and sometimes there's a ... I was happy in that, it's not like I was unhappy in that, and for me that's where the loss is. There's a sadness related to that."

The loss of spontaneity, or spontaneous response, is sad. My third eye doesn't close often. Also, the Inner Bitch doesn't readily shut up, commenting often on the way I am in relationship. In social interactions I'd often see something and wonder whether to comment on it or not, where once I spoke without really considering the impact; now I see things differently, and I don't always know what to do with the things I see. I watch myself, and check myself, and choose my actions much more carefully now.

Yet, even in the open acknowledgement of loss, the gains weigh heavy. The death of naïveté is balanced by the gains that we believe are inherent in awareness, in the knowledge itself, and both ways of being in the world have advantages. Even though the one we have chosen is a more difficult way, the gains in terms of self are greater. Although acknowledging and getting one's needs met is difficult, it is better than not knowing about one's needs at all.

["Chosen," points out the Fairy, "is a relative term. It seems that once the switch is flipped, there is no more choice. You simply are this way. It's way of being, this psychology thing, not only a way of thinking. F says that the emotional turmoil came as a surprise; she was expecting the academics but not so much the

personal stuff. I think it's as T says, too: in therapy you are yourself the tool. How can it not affect the rest of your life? Can you really control that?" She looks through the transcriptions again, quickly. "You know what else no-one seems to be able to stop? They all hold doubles. I mean, they speak of things as being two-edged, as being both good and bad... everything is understood and implicitly accepted as complex, like F saying she's at home with uncertainty and ambivalence. Yup, I think there's no going back.]

The process of becoming a psychologist and dealing with all that that entails is an ongoing one; it's a process of becoming rather than a moment of having become. We move from the original awarenesses to new ones, as patterns shift and change, or stay the same; we move from understanding to understanding, reaching for levels and meta levels, and then moving beyond those. It's a process of integrating, changing, integrating, understanding, and we seem to work with our understandings of ourselves and our relationships endlessly; the nature of our work is self-reflexive; in order to understand that which exists apart from us we look to our understandings of that which we are, and that which we become in relationship.

It's like swimming in the ocean, like being a fish in a sea of relationship. You swim up and down, forward and backward, flowing from one understanding to the next, never totally still, never having 'arrived' at the ultimate goal. And it's like the old saying – you can't cross the same river twice – you also can't swim twice through the same sea.

["The impact that this stuff has on you is also important; you exist in relationships with others; the same way that therapy must have an impact on the therapist as it has on the client, the process of becoming a psychologist must have an impact on you, as a person, which must again have an impact on you as therapist. I think we should definitely look at that a bit later – your relationship with yourself is about as personal as you can get. The before-and-after thing there is also important."]

We find ourselves repeating patterns that we have decided are not useful for us; K says that she realized that in her relationship with a friend of hers, she was playing out the same roles that she had tried so hard to change in her family. We all speak of different contexts where we do the same things, where our story of ourselves includes the same understandings. It's in changing those understandings, creating more options for ourselves, that the challenge lies. It's hard, and sometimes dangerous; there's a large risk inherent always in change. H summarizes it effectively: "I think I became more aware of who I am in relationship to someone else, and ... what I want from a relationship, and what I don't want. I think that's caused growth in our relationship, and ... but also ... a shitload of conflict." It seems that once we see the patterns we are often compelled to change them; once one has bitten the apple, one must chew.

Chewing the Bite: Responsibility

The issue of professional and personal responsibility is a complex one. In relationships often characterized by us taking more responsibility for others than we possibly should, what do we do once the patterns are unavoidable, etched across our awareness like claw marks? Do we give responsibility back? Does that not represent taking responsibility ourselves again, but from a different angle? It's a beautiful paradox: I take control when I give back control.

[The Fairy is giggling. "If you bend yourself into creases like this you will end up looking like emotional origami."]

K and T speak of being less protective of their partners, and D and H speak of reaching a point where they need to trust their partners to contain what happens for themselves. D considers this one of the areas in which the process of becoming a psychologist has had a positive impact for her husband: "I don't actually know if he gains more out of the relationship, but he gains more out of

the person he is. He has greater strength now, he is self-reliant in a lot more ways, he um ... is more self-contained, not completely but he's grown substantially with it. Um ... it's not my responsibility any more, so it's more balanced in that." F agrees in that she realized that she could withdraw from the people around her, and they would survive. She experienced it as a relief.

I've had similar experiences in my own life – I hadn't realized how heavy it felt carrying the responsibility for so much in my relationships, and once I understood that I didn't have to, it was a profound relief, although I don't always manage to avoid it entirely.

["It's an ongoing process; old stuff is not easy to shift." The Fairy sighs in commiseration.]

It seems that responsibility is implied in understanding; you, as the person to whom the rules have been revealed, carry the responsibility of change. And it seems that we can't not respond to the things we see. They are there, in our space; they demand acknowledgement, whatever the consequences. H says, "you say things, but you also know what the effect's going to be on someone else, or the possible effect on someone else, but you still say them because you need to say them". It seems that we, as psychologists in our relationships outside therapy, tend to speak the unspoken. We acknowledge things that are more often left unsaid, things that are hard to say, things that are easier to ignore. K says that there were things she felt that she would never have admitted before; that before she "didn't even know that [she] wasn't allowed to think that far". We become more honest, which again has its implications.

Armed with our new knowledge, our new awareness, we hesitantly attempt to enter into a new dialogue with our significant others. We cautiously try to share our new understandings and perceptions with those close to us, simultaneously holding an awareness of the potential for growth and the potential for destruction inherent in these unfamiliar new conversations. We begin to share our stories,

stories of previously unexpressed needs, of awareness gleaned through training in the hope of evolving a new, potentially more meaningful, connection with our significant others. We experience these new conversations as threatening; so do those close to us. In these evolving conversations they often reflect back to us that we have changed in ways that leave them uncomfortable, that leave them feeling alienated and rejected. It is as if we get the message that we have broken some kind of sacred contract. Instead of building more meaningful connections with others we thus often end up feeling misunderstood and alienated, as if we have somehow wronged by challenging the previously familiar ways of being. It is difficult and often painful to teach one's new language to those who have never heard it spoken before.

The discursive context provided by psychology training is characterized by congruence, the acceptance of responsibility for having one's own needs met, and open, honest communication, which tends to bring into sharp relief the previously incongruent and often unspoken aspects of relationships with significant others, leaving us with a choice: do we simply begin to live two lives, our professional lives as therapists and a private life based on totally different rules, or do we bring our new understandings of ourselves in relationship back home? In most cases it seems that knowing is almost inevitably followed by acting. H tells us that "you need to say them": it is as if we cannot not communicate our new perceptions to significant others.

Not everyone wants to hear what I have to say sometimes. I become scary for people. I had a conversation with my father, who lives on a different continent, about how angry I have been with him; it was hard for him to hear. He was angry with me. And I think I scared the hell out of him. I asked him if he was scared of me, and he acknowledged that he was, sometimes. And I respected him more for it. It's not easy to deal with anger congruently, or with anything else negative for that matter.

Honesty and congruence have consequences. K says, “I feel I can be a lot more honest. Yes, but then it has its repercussions.” H considers honesty a two-edged sword, good in that an open relationship is stronger, but difficult in that there is more conflict too. The risk is that others will be hurt, that we will be hurt, that relationships will be harmed. This was indeed the case with K: her honesty with her ex-boyfriend led to her acknowledging that what she was offered was not what she wanted.

Admitting to myself that my marriage was never going to work was one of the most difficult things I have ever done. Actually telling him, and leaving, was harder still. It's alien to me to be that honest, and to make a decision that feels right for me, knowing that I would cause him pain. I've never really put myself first before.

There seems to be a flip side though: if the relationship can weather the changes, can move toward honesty and self-reflexivity, it can grow stronger. T reports having experienced that in relationship with her mother, where their relationship was positively influenced by her congruently facing the issues between them; D and her husband are much more open, as are H and his partner. It also seems that one of the foci of this honesty is congruent expression of needs.

That echoes what happened with my father. I was honest, and so was he. I started the process by speaking the unspoken, by acknowledging what was between us, and he was able to respond in kind. Our relationship feels much more reciprocal, and more meaningful, now.

[The Fairy is looking thoughtful. “Look at this. It seems like when the partners are able to become more psychologically minded, and are able to respond in kind, there's more hope. It just seems to work easier. And look at the ideas of ideal relationships ... let's get back to that in the next section.”]

Part of becoming a psychologist involves becoming self-aware; this includes becoming aware of your own needs in relationship. Part of the responsibility that

grows out of awareness involves taking responsibility for getting those needs met. That involves change in relationships which have often been defined by giving on the part of the therapist rather than demanding, which is inevitably difficult, not to mention, as K put it, that “even though you throw [your needs] out there, sometimes they don’t even get looked at. They’re still disregarded.”

My supervisor in my M1 year once asked me, “Why is it that you have to work so hard to get from people what you give them automatically?” I had no answer.

Old patterns are very hard to change. Insight doesn’t always help. It seems that we try to change things often once we see them, but are often unable to make an impact: H says, “[the patterns] might not change because it’s not just my choice to make the change; it’s both of our choices”. The risk implicit in all this striving for difference is that relationships that are based on a particular way of interacting may dissolve if that which was offered is partially withdrawn. It’s confusing for everyone; the people around us resist the movement. They feel resentful, rejected, angry, abandoned. Why do we have to change? Why do we have to be like that? And inevitably we understand why they feel that way. D says, “...there’s nothing gradual. Your family goes from, ‘oh, we’ve got this wonderful, caring mommy that’s there forever,’ to, ‘where the fuck is she, and she’s all about her!’” The change is distinct, and confusing and painful.

Those around us see us as selfish, unkind, self-absorbed. When D’s husband called her selfish she responded that she was behaving more like him; he said that that had never been the case before, which made it unfair now. We are in the process of breaking contracts that we had with people, contracts whereby we behave in specific ways, allowing for specific responses. Once they are visible, though, they are open to being given language and negotiated. We become aware of the double standards with which we live, and those around whom they have grown are strongly resistant to change. It’s not a gradual process either, and nor is it comfortable: D says, “I fucking exploded out and there were bits all

over the fucking place. “ We suddenly become round pegs, expected to fit back into square holes.

The other day my mother called, wanting me to come over and take care of my sister, who was upset over something a friend had said to her. When I seemed reluctant, she said, “Why can’t you stop being professional and just be human for once?” I was unwilling to assume my old role; she saw me as unkind and cold-hearted. Where once I would have rushed over, I was leaving them on their own; it was bitterly resented. Interesting how she links my selfishness with profession: she also sees that the changes that she experiences in me are related to psychology.

[“Interesting thing here,” muses the Fairy. “Everyone speaks about how rejected and abandoned their significant others felt. No-one mentions that they themselves may have felt rejected or misunderstood, overwhelmed or whatever. And yet the implication is there. As much as the families and friends and lovers struggled with the process, the reciprocal effect must have been felt. Interesting that no one acknowledges that. Perhaps you guys aren’t as good at seeing your own stuff, acknowledging your own pain, as you thought. It’s all about how guilty you felt for having made them all feel horrible. Again you take responsibility. The labels belong to you, selfish and so on. Only D mentions that there were labels that she fought against, but the implication in her interview is that eventually she saw that the labels were true. Hmm... reifying labels, reifying roles ... interesting.”

She is quiet for a moment. “Actually, with all this agonizing and analyzing, this trying to understand, change, stay the same, become something more, grow as a person, find space for yourselves – it goes on forever – you people are weird.”]

When there is at least a partial willingness from others to engage with us in a new conversation, the relationship we have with them seems to have the potential for changing in positive ways. H and D both report that their partners are now more able to discuss the rules of their relationships; as we have learnt a

new language our significant others, in some cases, seem able to do likewise. They begin to share their stories with us more openly, honestly; begin to take more responsibility for their own needs in relating to us. They are somehow left stronger, more capable of fulfilling their own needs instead of only expecting us to do this for them. We are thus left free to explore new facets of ourselves in these relationships, even to communicate our needs more openly in the hope that they might be met. If those close to us, however, find the new language too hard to understand they tend to react with resentment and blame us for suddenly being different. Our conversations with them become characterized by conflict and a gradual distancing takes place in the relationship. In some cases the relationship even comes to an end because it was unable to weather the storms of newness blowing in so rapidly.

We are the ones who have taken the bite. We chewed it, tasting it, allowing the juices to bleed into our mouths and down our throats, allowing the tender flesh to be crushed, examined, broken down; when we swallow it, when we take all this back into ourselves, what will happen?

Swallowing the Apple: Where does it leave us?

We've seen the hidden, spoken the unspoken; we've moved further than we thought we would; there's a clear split between the old us and the new, psychologised us. We've gone from ignoring our needs totally to becoming aware of them, and finally to doing something to get them met. We've changed patterns, or tried to, that have been in existence for as long as we have. We've named the changes, spoken them, worked with them, accepted responsibility for where we are, refused to give away the blame, refused to slip back into our old ways, although we may do just that accidentally from time to time. We've struggled part of the way up a rocky slope, sometimes with shoes, sometimes with our bare feet bleeding and dusty; we fall sometimes, slip down again; but we can't ever go back. Things are not what they were. We are other.

We have possibly always been a little different. For example, F says that she has always been very aware of her role in relationships. But now it's pronounced. We speak a different language, for example.

["Yes," says the Fairy. "You guys use terms like 'dysfunction', 'alienation', 'cathartic', 'narcissistic', 'integration' – the words you speak set you apart. Possibly the unspoken that you speak is incomprehensible when you speak it."]

F says, "...My boyfriend would say, 'what is this that you called me, shit, stop, what are you talking about – what is congruence and what is this and what is that' – our language sets us apart. And language reflects thought, too – our way of thinking about things, our perceptions, are different. K says that if she wants people who are not psychologists to understand her, she feels that she needs to spend considerable time explaining things to them. Even so, she says that they will only understand to a point. There are people in our lives with whom we can be more honest than others; similarly, there are people with whom we can speak our language with more freedom than with others. We operate from a particular frame of reference, and we are more at home within our own community. F warns that we need to acknowledge that the world is wider than that, though.

So we are left in a world where we are other, where we march to a different drum beat. T says that she finds that at social gatherings, when people find out that she's a psychologist they either ask for help, or become anxious as if assuming she will know things about them that they'd rather keep hidden. In a world where no-one, not even psychologists, can fully define what it is that we do, there's necessarily some confusion around us. F says that as the psychologist she's expected to be the one to cope, to be strong, to be the negotiator if necessary.

I said the eulogy at my grandfather's funeral because nobody else would. I volunteered, so 50% of the responsibility lies with me; the pull to take over, to do what needed to be done, to be the strong one,

was irresistible. But then, I've always been like that. Friends come to me with their relationship problems; they phone for advice, as if somewhere along the line I have been told a precious secret, which leaves me wiser than they are, holding the answers. I don't know the answers. I see stuff, certainly; what to do with that I often don't know. There are no for-sures; I am no less clueless than everyone else. I was like them, though – I thought that once I had finished this degree I would know; what I've done instead is collect more questions.

Language and insight seem to be part of what sets us apart; there are, however, other factors as well. We seek connections, like everyone else; we just seek slightly different ones. We want relationships characterized by mutuality and reciprocity, equality and mutual nurturing. We want flexibility, the space to language our feelings around the relationship with someone who can understand what it is we are speaking about and respond in kind. The most meaningful relationships for us are those where we feel emotionally matched.

[The Fairy snickers. "Bad luck. The world is definitely not peopled exclusively by other psychologists."]

Interviewees spoke of or implied an increase emotional complexity, that they found difficult to get met in contexts outside psychology. We seem to experience ourselves as complex emotional thinkers; we think in terms of greys, of uncertainties; every person in every interview spoke in terms of both/and, in terms of conflicting emotions, in terms of complexity rather than artificial simplicity.

I think we do, to an extent, deny ourselves simplicity. During my divorce, I didn't allow myself to focus exclusively on the bad parts of the relationship; I was unable to go the 'good riddance' way. I was compelled to acknowledge the goodness, to see my own role in and take responsibility for the bad stuff. I think this is healthier, if there is such a thing; but it definitely makes things more complicated.

At least in the beginning, we are, through the process of becoming a psychologist, more likely to see in terms of function and dysfunction, health and unhealth. We do, however, seem to move toward a more integrated, less judgmental way of understanding our world; K puts it beautifully when she says “what I mean by ‘healthy’ [in terms of a new relationship] ... is ‘acceptable to me’”. Finding an acceptance that some things are the way that they are, whether we define them as dysfunctional or not, is a process that takes time.

Knowing the things that we know, speaking the language that we speak, we make connections with our colleagues more readily than with people from any other groups. F calls it a ‘fraternity’; in our need for connection, we seek those similar to ourselves. D speaks of her M1 group becoming closer to her than her family; H and K both speak of feeling supported and understood by peers. Specifically, D speaks about getting her needs met within that group more effectively than she did at home; as our needs become apparent, it is easier to get them met by new friends who understand where you are emotionally, to whom, as K puts it, you don’t have to explain, than to completely reorder your existing social groups. The need to be contained, to be understood, is undeniable. From our new isolation within our existing groups, we seek compatible others; there are precious few of those outside the world of psychology.

[“You know what else is interesting to me?” asks the Fairy. “How you guys speak this all the time, in millions of tea room conversations, in coffee shops, in supervision, whatever, and yet there’s so little literature on it.”]

More alone than before, we look towards a future that is complex and confusing, and yet we feel ourselves to be stronger, to have gained, in this process. H says that he has more faith in himself as a person. D, despite feeling that she has lost immensely in terms of the new distance between herself and her husband, and

between herself and her children, still feels that she has gained herself. Neither F nor H would change a thing about the process.

We've made huge changes in our lives, in our way of looking at the world, we've felt desperately guilty for the impact that we have on others which we cannot deny; we are harsh with ourselves as a rule, and expect more of ourselves than we do of others in terms of responsibility (for example, according to T it would have been her responsibility to communicate better with her husband, not his to be more concerned with where she was in her own process).

The thing where we expect more from ourselves rings very true for me. Others expect more of us too. For example, my husband said that I had failed him, in that I never told him how unhappy I was in a way that he could understand. I had said it to him in as many words; yet he felt that I had failed, the onus having been on me. It was another example of how I took emotional responsibility for us both. I think we as psychologists are probably harder on ourselves than others to start with.

We see ourselves as being involved in an ongoing process, a process of change within ourselves as well as within our various relationships, whereby we move towards a state of balance. There's a feeling of things having been ripped open, of things having changed, been turned upside down, been completely reordered, very fast, things with which we are still working, with which we are still grappling; perhaps we will wrestle with them always. Perhaps there is no final tableau where I am now Psychologist: perhaps the process of becoming is inherent in the career/self that is my way of being. The overriding feeling is one of process, continuity: this is a journey; the path goes on.

"Take it back to therapy," my supervisor advised. What impact does all this have on me as therapist? I don't know. The process of becoming a psychologist involves learning lots of content stuff, which is occasionally useful, although I think the stuff that makes me a therapist comes from sources other than books. I think I've gained a more intimate understanding of how hard it can be to be in relationship; an understanding of the search for connection. I think it definitely makes me more

sensitive to feelings of not belonging, of isolation. I think that in therapy clients may experience something of what we experience as becoming-psychologists: there's an emphasis on looking at yourself, and on relationship, and on change. My own process of change allows me to be more insightful, more sensitive, more containing. In being different I can offer a relationship of difference in therapy. Acknowledging my own strength and the ability and responsibility of others to deal with things allows me to be more confrontational. Language is also restrictive inherently: what I take to therapy is often couched in language, understood in dialogue; but I think that in therapy the unspoken, the unlaguaged, can be just as powerful. I have a feeling that I have learned things here about myself and my work that I can't really put into words. I have lost so much, and gained so much, as therapist and as human being, which must necessarily translate into therapy again. I am not the person I was; I am moving, changing, no longer at home where I was, no longer able to be the old me, looking ever forward along the path that the new me treads inevitably.

[The Fairy looks perplexed for a moment. She is clearly thinking deeply. Eventually she comes out of her reverie.

“If we're using the religious imagery in the apple thing, we may as well take it further. TS Eliot wrote Journey of the Magi about the effect that seeing the birth of Jesus had on the three wise men.” She digs again in her handbag, and produces a dog-eared anthology of poetry. She clears her throat. “Listen to this:

*‘... I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods’ (in Malan, 1995, p. 43).*

“Or, actually, you can take the metaphor of the apple further: you’ve been evicted from an Eden of ignorant bliss, and there’s no going back. It’s as if the lecturers on the first day were like God when they asked whether you wanted to study or not: they said that you shouldn’t eat the apple or there’d be consequences; well, you’ve eaten it. ”]

We pick the apple, get selected (against all odds); we bite the apple, chew and swallow, feel intimately the flow of its juices, are nourished and transformed by its flesh; eventually all that will be left is the core, holder of the seeds that will one day become a new tree. Eventually there will be more hands reaching for apples; perhaps this dissertation represents part of that process, an offering of understanding that may have an impact on someone else’s first bite.

[The Priest is waking up. He yawns, stretches, and moves around. He sees that the chapter is written, and looks utterly outraged.

“Well,” he declares. “At least there has been some attempt at scientific integration according to the structured plan set out in chapter 3. I cannot pretend that I approve of the random bits of poetry, or of the extended and, in my opinion, unnecessary use of metaphor. Still, I suppose there’s nothing for it but to move on. Convention dictates that our next step is to fit these findings into the Literature. We’d better get started.”]

Chapter 6

Birth of a New Voice: Where it Leaves Me

“Do you know the saying ‘the whole is greater than the sum of the parts’? It is an insane statement. It is a nonsense. But now I believe that it is true.’ ”
(Pratchett, 2001, p. 345)

[“This, ideally, represents a dialogue between the last two chapters: we need to look at our own findings and tie them in with stuff that other people have thought,” says the Fairy.

“Yes,” says the Priest. “That’s essentially the point of this whole exercise, actually: this is the important part.”

“Well,” says the Fairy, “I think the other stuff was important too: it’s all a journey, you know; everything is supposed to contribute to everything else.”

“Whatever. Let’s get started.”]

Dialogue around Intimacy

The literature suggests that we are in essence relational beings: we exist within contexts of relatedness (Brehm, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Green, 1978; Josselson, 1996; Lewis, 2001; Prentice, 2001). The interviewees freely acknowledge that they exist within contexts of relatedness: they discuss various relationships that they experience to have been affected by their processes of becoming clinical psychologists. Relationships do indeed appear to be inextricable parts of our lives.

Johnson and Greenberg (1994) see the context of relationship as one in which much unhappiness can be experienced. In keeping with the idea that people experience difficulties and anguish related to relationship problems, all the interviewees expressed experiences of feeling difficult emotions related to relationships in their lives. K spoke of her difficulties with her ex-boyfriend, family and friends; D spoke of her sense of loss surrounding the closeness she used to feel with her elder son and with her husband; T spoke of experiences with her husband and mother; H spoke of his difficulties with his partner; F spoke of difficulties with her family and with her ex-boyfriend.

In keeping with Josselson's (1996) notion that much of this anguish is related to unexpressed or unacknowledged needs, the interviewees acknowledged a change in their own awareness of their needs, and many of the difficulties surrounding relationships were related to this. In many cases there was a sudden shift from a position where needs were not only unacknowledged to others, but unacknowledged to oneself as well. In 'discovering' these needs, it seemed that there was a compulsion at least to attempt to get them met, and often the relationships in which the respondents were embedded did not readily allow for such expression of needs. This raises the question: if our needs or contracts within relationships change, where does that leave us?

["Awareness is key," says the Fairy. "K says that the most obvious way in which the whole process affected her was the amount of awareness she gained, insight into her interactions with others. Awareness of needs is especially pertinent: D, for example, says that she had ignored herself her whole life."]

Our language of relatedness, according to Josselson (1996) is embedded in the language of infancy, and we feel ashamed or guilty when we voice our needs in this way. Respondents did indeed use such language: they spoke in terms of containment, holding, being caught. Most of them expressed having felt guilty about languaging or even acknowledging to themselves the fact that they as

adults needed these things of which they spoke. As Josselson (1996) suggested, the needs themselves are perceived to be almost pathological in some cases: there was a feeling that things would be easier if these needs had remained hidden; there was also a sense that excessive neediness was wrong or unhealthy in some way.

In our need for others we seek out connectedness (Green, 1978). Becoming-psychologists often feel lonely outside the context of psychology; F spoke of a “fraternity” of psychologists with whom she could speak the same language; K and D spoke of being accepted and understood by peers in the psychological community. Our concepts of the ideal relationships, where the conversations led to a discussion of these, revolved around concepts of connectedness, of being ‘met’, contained, held, and able to talk about the relationship: Brehm (1992) spoke of people being attracted to like-minded others.

Josselson’s (1996) eight primary ways of overcoming the gaps between people (as discussed in Chapter 4) are evident to varying degrees in all the interviews, supporting again the need for connectedness reported above. There seems especially to be a tendency to use the last one: we bridge the gap between others and ourselves very readily by taking care of the others in question. Or, possibly, this represents an old pattern that runs as a theme throughout most of the interviews. We care readily; however, we seem to be moving more toward the mutuality she mentions, the feeling of being in harmony with others, where we both nurture and are nurtured. These themes run together and are only artificially extricable from one another; it seems that that is evident in the interviews as well.

["Talking of gaps," says the Fairy, "I think that possibly the process of becoming a psychologist created more space around you guys than there used to be; there's such a sense of loneliness and isolation that comes through in the interviews."]

Johnson and Greenberg (1994) assert that as we mature, our experience and need for connectedness becomes more complex and rich; possibly the experience of the processes of becoming clinical psychologists heightens this complexity and richness. The complexity of thought evidenced in the interviews is demonstrated in the way in which conflicting, complex emotions are brought to bear repeatedly on the situation in question. K suggests that we as psychologists are more emotionally complex than most people; there is a feeling of understanding and knowing more than most about relationships and so on running through all the interviews, and also a sense that this is part of that which sets us apart. Giddens (1991) suggests that our more emotionally aware society engenders a need for what he calls a “pure relationship” (p. 477): it seems that as psychologists we are more emotionally aware than most, and his concept of the “pure relationship” is echoed or implied in the interviews: we seek relationships that reward both partners, where there is a process of mutual disclosure and thus congruence, where there is a process of mutual discovery and containment, and a sense of equal contribution to the relationship. In many cases it appears that interviewees have found themselves (or discovered themselves to be) in relationships where roles were rigid, often where they were cast in the role of nurturer, receiving very little nurturing themselves. Their concepts of ideal relationships reflect a mutuality that seems hard to attain. It follows that for people who are more aware and more complex than most, it will be difficult to find relationships where that awareness and complexity can be matched.

[“Yes,” says the Fairy. “The discourses in which becoming-therapists are involved during training involve themes such as congruence and awareness of needs. This fits.”]

The pure relationship is also risky, however: it exists only for as long as both partners are satisfied. Similar to the Pagan concept of marriage, partners agree tacitly to be together for as long as their love lasts. This reflects the shift

discussed by Jamieson (1999) from marriage as institution to an understanding of marriage as relationship. The risk inherent in so subjectively defined a relationship is seen by Giddens (1991) as heightening individuals' senses of creativity in the process of authoring themselves and their social world. The interviewees speak of risk inherent in congruence; there is always a danger implied in revealing oneself: one risks hurting and being hurt. In the context of an ideal, pure relationship, one risks destroying the relationship if that which is revealed is of such a nature that it affects one of the partners' satisfaction in the relationship as a whole. D, for example, says that her husband, although he could see why she was becoming more aware of her own needs, couldn't see why they should be important now, when they had never been part of their original relationship.

The fact that D and her husband could discuss their relationship at all reflects an increased openness and intimacy: Giddens (1991) refers to this as the "democratizing of the interpersonal domain" (p. 479). Dialogue between partners is seen to create a stable sense of self and of the relationship (Jamieson, 1999). There seemed in all the interviews to be a drive toward self-disclosure in this way. It seems that in knowing we are compelled to share and to try to negotiate; it seems also that it is in relationships where the other partner is open to such dialogue there is more capacity for mutual fulfillment and closeness. If this openness is not present, we are more likely to leave the relationship, as did K, F and myself, which is in keeping with Josselson's (1996) idea that the modern response to an unfulfilling relationship is to leave in search of a new one.

The experience of one's needy self as "selfish" is often suggested in the interviews. It echoes Lewis (2001) when she asserts that most academic commentators are concerned by the growing tendency towards individuality, and that they perceive this to be problematic. She speaks of people being more "selfish" (p. 3), and quotes Swidler as saying that this increase in individualism and consequent decrease in committedness in relationships is often related to

the personal growth encouraged in therapy. If one conceptualizes the process of becoming a psychologist as somewhat akin to therapy, in that new understandings become apparent and so forth, this seems valid here: possibly the drive towards understanding one's needs and getting them fulfilled could be called "selfish", in that in contexts where, as D suggests, her needs had never played a role, those used to having their needs met seem to resist strenuously the change of pace.

[The word 'selfish', says the Fairy, "seems very strong to me. It's all about perspective anyway: if you need stuff, I may or may not see you as selfish, whereas you may just be asking for something you define as justly yours. Is asking for certain needs to be fulfilled in relationship always selfish? I'm not sure.

"Related to the connotations around the word 'selfish', there's a definite tendency, especially in the cases of T and D, to feel guilty for acknowledging needs, and for needing. There also seems to be a concomitant sense of frustration, in that as a flip-side to the guilt thing there's a feeling of frustration when our needs aren't met." The Fairy pages through Chapter 5. "Here, K says, '...even though you throw [your needs] out there sometimes they don't even get looked at.'"]

The tension mentioned in the literature between the desire for connectedness and the desire for individuality (Jamieson, 1999; Josselson, 1996) is reflected in the interviews. Everyone is ambivalent about their newly perceived needs: is it pathetic to want your needs to be fulfilled? Should one be all-caring, giving one's all to maintain a relationship, or should one, as Giddens (1991) suggests, leave if one is unfulfilled? Everyone speaks of gains, especially in terms of self, as a result of becoming a clinical psychologist; the losses are mostly in relationship. The challenge, as suggested in Chapter 4, lies in finding the balance; the interviewees spoke of an ongoing process of integration in this respect. T spoke

of feeling that there was a pendulum, swinging between selfish and unselfish, and she said that she thought it would move toward a central balance with time.

There is often in the interviews a sense of being unable to meet all the demands placed on us, a sense of being unable or unwilling to meet conditions of relationships that were set up before the training process began. What happens to our webs of connection when the rules shift and change (Josselson, 1996)? Because we need relatedness, we are vulnerable to rejection and exposure of our neediness in contexts where neediness is frowned upon. There was a feeling of having abandoned or disappointed or made angry those with whom the interviewees had existing relationships; implied in this was a sense of having been rejected by them in turn. It is inevitably dangerous to need.

Yet it seems that we know ourselves through connection with others (Josselson, 1996): again the challenge lies in balance. Ideally, according to Sager and Hunt (1979) we need to be aware of the expectations that we bring to relationships, as well as those brought by the people with whom we are in relationship: we collaborate in authoring new scripts when we enter into relationship. Awareness is key in the process of becoming a clinical psychologist, and it is in the flexibility of the scripts that we author that we are able to connect. It is a challenge to be able to respect each other's individuality and enjoy a context within which both can grow, and simultaneously remain in accord. The difficulties experienced in relationship by the interviewees reflect this struggle, which occurs in most relationships anyway; the process of becoming a clinical psychologist seems to heighten it. Our experience of our needs have changed, and concomitantly our expectations are different. It is difficult to apply the same script to a play where one of the characters has changed.

Where relationships did end, it seems that Vaughan's (1986) idea of uncoupling, where the partner who leaves moves away from the shared world-view of the couple, is relevant. It is difficult, as reflected in the interviews, to language what

we feel; it is hard to teach our new language to those who have never heard it spoken before. It was in speaking the unspoken that the relationships came to an end: F spoke her process with her ex-boyfriend who was unable to understand; K's eventual acknowledgement to her ex-boyfriend of their differences led to their break-up; my own case was very similar.

["And yet," says the Fairy, "it seems that in the process of losing someone, in the process of feeling utterly alone, as Prentice (2001) suggests trainees feel, which was confirmed by our analysis of the interviews, there is hope: Moustakas (1996) acknowledges the power in loneliness, in that no one who has been touched by loneliness can fail to be changed by it. He also says that in loneliness one can find one's way toward greater connectedness than before. Interesting: all the interviewees felt alone, and there was also a feeling of having grown personally, of having been changed by the process of training, of being more emotionally complex. I wonder if the two are related."]

Dialogue around Psychologists and the Process of Becoming a Psychologist

The process of becoming a psychologist involves a cycle of negotiating and renegotiating rules and meanings; we are often exposed to an ongoing evaluation and commentary on ourselves, and the awareness of this is heightened (Prentice, 2001). This is evident in the interviews: we are easily able to comment on self, to dialogue around meanings and rules that are present and have changed in our relationships; from time to time that evaluation involves a judgmental slant: we consider ourselves selfish, or dysfunctional, or unhealthy. Our awareness of our actions and interactions is heightened; the interviews reflect a greater awareness of process and negotiation after Masters training than before. We speak of a meta perspective: we act and watch ourselves act, and one of the losses that is reported is an inability to just 'be' in some contexts; spontaneous response is often not possible.

Prentice (2001) reports feeling “confused and unsafe” during the process; he suggests that we are under scrutiny during training both by trainers and by ourselves, and it seems from the interviews that it’s difficult to stop watching. Prentice (2001) suggests, as do the interviewees, that this process of the studier becoming the studied can create intense psychological discomfort. This makes sense: if one studies the workings of people, how can one possibly avoid becoming part of that which one studies?

The reworking of personal belief systems seems inevitable with the introduction of new theories and views (Prentice, 2001). Reworking of a personal philosophy is inevitable when one is confronted with new theories, new ways of thinking about human behaviour, and debates and issues that need to be examined with a view to resolution. Our ways of seeing things change irrevocably in the process of becoming clinical psychologists, and one cannot ‘unknow’ the knowledge: as the Fairy said in the previous chapter, there’s no spitting the apple out.

["It's supposed to be academic," the Priest interjects. "This whole process is geared towards getting a professional qualification. We are talking about adding knowledge, and it becomes a huge emotional issue."]

"F echoed your confusion. She said that she was surprised when the academics were, to paraphrase liberally, the easy part. I think it goes back to the thing about the subject of our new knowledge: we are learning about people; we can't possibly not involve ourselves in our field of study."]

In light of this change in understanding, new therapists are often confronted with a dilemma: can the ‘self’ as therapist be set apart from the ‘self’ as non-therapist? Andolfi (1979) writes of the importance of self in therapy; trainees must be open to self-examination from this point of view. Real (1990) says that the therapist is her own only tool. Blokland (1993) speaks of the difficulty in drawing this

particular distinction, and it is reflected clearly in my interviews as well, as well as in my own experience. If you are to be yourself in therapy, how can you not be your therapist self outside therapy? There exists a conflict between whether we language what we see or whether we keep it to ourselves in our personal lives. How do we stop being therapeutically aware outside therapy? Again, we can't just 'be'; what do we do with that which we see? Do we keep it to ourselves, creating distance between our significant others and ourselves, as T, for example, experienced? Or do we language it and try to dialogue around it, even when we elicit rejection and incomprehension in doing so?

It seems that becoming a clinical psychologist requires a changed way of being, rather than merely a new academic or professional acquisition of skills (Blokland, 1993). The interviewees agree. They speak unanimously of *being* different. They speak also of not being able to switch it off, as K suggests. Being a therapist represents such an integral part of your self that it is impossible to 'be' any other way. Prentice (2001) postulates a tension between conservation and transformation of the self as a result of training; it seems that everyone perceives himself or herself to have been irrevocably changed in the process of becoming a clinical psychologist. Interestingly, one could consider from their descriptions that the way in which they have changed is to become more themselves: they are more aware of their needs; more aware of the implications of their actions; more able to contain and deal with emotions and emotional situations.

There is a focus during training on intrapersonal change, which influences and changes interpersonal interactions, the effect of which will be felt in all contexts in which the becoming-psychologist is involved (Prentice, 2001). Internal change leads to external change, and where rules of interaction become explicit, as in training, they are open to negotiation (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). This is again echoed in the interviews: dialogue around relationships themselves becomes possible, even necessary. Rigid rules are made explicit; they become negotiable, and we feel often compelled to negotiate, whether it is risky or not. It is

impossible to delete knowledge: once the patterns are apparent, they stay that way (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Again, the process is irreversible.

According to Prentice (2001), the self in training was seen as a work in progress, subject to an endless cycle of being defined and redefined. All of the interviewees saw their own processes as just that: ongoing. They echoed Blokland's (1993) idea that training never really ends for a therapist, especially if one considers change involving the self as training; it is a way of life.

["Yes," says the Fairy. "Patterns shift and change; we move from understanding to understanding, and we work again and again with our understandings of ourselves and our relationships. In essence, we are improving the tool with which we do therapy." She looks pleased with herself for having thought up this image.

"Well," comments the Priest with an asperity he hasn't shown for a few chapters, "I am not sure that change is always an improvement."]

The interviewees all considered there to have been losses involved in the process of becoming a clinical psychologist; Prentice (2001) suggests that a feeling of having one's membership in social groups withdrawn represented a loss for many trainees. This was echoed in the interviews. Contexts where we were once able to feel understood become less available; we experience a sense of isolation and often loneliness in contexts where we used to feel connected.

["Well, that supports our research nicely," says the Priest.

"Or our research supports that," says the Fairy, distractedly. "The isolation thing is important. The gap between people that Josselson (1996) speaks of is, I think, exaggerated by the process of becoming a clinical psychologist. The language sets them apart; the propensity to see process more readily than others sets them apart; the emotional complexity sets them apart."]

We seek connectedness, instead, with members of our new community. Prentice (2001) speaks of losing the old community in our efforts to become part of the new one; Blokland (1993) makes reference to the closeness she experienced within her own training group. The need for connectedness is clearly evident in the interviews; the ease with which we fit into the psychological community reflects our need to be understood, to have a context within which, as K suggests, we can be understood without having to explain.

T in particular speaks of experiences where, on finding out that she is a psychologist, strangers respond either with withdrawal or with a desire to talk about their innermost secrets. People, as a rule, have very little idea of what psychologists are, and what they do (Rosenthal et al, 2000). This contributes to the feelings of isolation and 'otherness' reflected in the interviews.

Transformation, including the changes implied in the process of becoming a psychologist, happens in dialogue; conversation, including self-reflection in conversation, facilitates a process of change (Prentice, 2001). We talk about ourselves often with other psychologists; criteria expressed for an ideal relationship involve being able to discuss and be understood. We seek out contexts where we can language what we feel, and examine it in the context of others. We seek connectedness in this way; perhaps we want to feel less other. The interviewees speak of being at home with other psychologists. The self-reflecting person needs someone else against whom we can make out the "peculiarities of the self" (Reusch & Bateson, in Prentice, 2001).

In this dialogue, especially as it happens within the training context, there often exists a focus on personal history and disclosure: sometimes trainees feel that their histories have been pathologised unnecessarily (Prentice, 2001). This is also apparent in the interviews: we become aware of patterns existing in our lives of which we have been unaware, and we look back into the past for those same

patterns, sometimes defining them as dysfunctional or unhealthy. There is a definite feeling in the interviews of old relationships having fallen under the searchlight of a new awareness. In some cases, though, awareness existed before training, and was confirmed or strengthened by the new linguistic distinctions provided by psychology.

["I agree with Prentice (2001) about the pathologising thing. I think," says the Priest, "that we have a pertinent quote here: K says, 'I lived the first twenty-odd years of my life, you know, in pure ignorance, I think, of what was actually going on in my relationships.' I think that suggests pathologising, don't you?"

"Not necessarily," disagrees the Fairy thoughtfully. "It could be that she's just talking about seeing things differently without an implicit judgment. Blokland (1993) says that new understandings can be useful without implying previously existing pathology. I think that the feeling of having been pathologised was implied from time to time in our interviews, but that it wasn't overwhelmingly apparent."]

Ultimately, whose responsibility is change? Efran and Lukens (1985) suggest that it is the job of the therapist to create a context where change is possible; is it the job of the becoming-therapist to create contexts for change around her? Is it the job of the trainer to create such contexts? Responsibility in general was a major theme throughout the interviews; it appears that as psychologists we readily assume responsibility for our relationships. Stories are often characterized by a tendency to take responsibility in various ways, and paradoxically, the decision that many of the respondents made to give back responsibility, implies taking responsibility again at a higher level.

I have linked my findings to the existing research; my mouthful of apple tastes similar to those that others have enjoyed. There are, however, subtle differences, too.

["Possibly," muses the Fairy, "there were flavoursome worms."]

What Have I Tasted that's New?

For the most part, that which I have found agrees with the existing literature, with few variances, as discussed above. It seems that this apple tastes similar in most ways to others.

["The point of much research," says the Priest, "is to add stuff to existing fields of knowledge. How do we add to Science with this document?"]

"Well," says the Fairy, "in agreeing with stuff we've already made a contribution. Again, we're not looking for absolutes here; this is just one way in which our understanding of the material at hand may be authored, and our understanding represents one of many possible understandings. It's appropriate, though, to take cognizance of the areas where what we found didn't quite reflect what the literature said."]

In his discussion of his and others' experiences of eating the apple, Prentice (2001) discussed ideas of loneliness, isolation, pathologising of histories, of an ongoing process of evaluation, increased awareness, conflict between self as therapist and self as non-therapist, processes of negotiated and renegotiated self and philosophy, a focus on intrapersonal change and so on. Blokland (1993) echoed some of these themes, and added her own experience of closeness within the group, and of gain in terms of the self. Theorists and authors on the theme of intimacy spoke of oft-unacknowledged needs for connectedness and intimacy, processes of relating, the ideal relationship for an emotionally mature society and so on. For the most part, my research echoes these notions. There are, however, some areas where the existing literature can be fleshed out a little, mainly in terms of the literature related to psychologists and training.

As regards the literature pertaining to intimate relationships, my research fitted neatly. The differences that becoming-psychologists bring to intimate relationships seem to involve a need for a more emotional relationship than the average, which fits with the concept of the pure relationship, and exaggerates it. Giddens (1991) saw society in general as becoming more emotionally adept; psychologists are more adept still. Our intimate relationships do indeed focus on fulfillment of needs (Josselson, 1996), but the awareness of the process seems to be heightened in psychologists. Our needs are similar to those of others; yet we language them more readily, demand more emotional complexity, are more aware of the dangers inherent in honesty, and feel keenly the tension between individuality and connectedness. This latter tension bears emphasis: it is interesting to note that the gains stipulated by interviewees involved a gain in terms of self, with losses involved relationships: in eating the apple and being cast out of Eden, we forfeited our relationship of connectedness with God for a more congruent relationship with ourselves. In experiencing the profound loss in being alone, it seems that Moustakis (1996) had a point: we grew stronger.

The theme of responsibility that came through so strongly in the interviews was not strongly developed in the literature. Responsibility was pertinent in various ways. Most interviewees took much of the responsibility in their intimate relationships, for example, where it seemed that knowledge of existing ways of relating implied a responsibility to change them. We also seem to have a responsibility to be self-reflexive, to consider ourselves in an introspective and hopefully honest way. If in engaging in self-reflection and renegotiation of our beliefs, interrogation of our philosophies and so on, we are making ourselves essentially better therapists, as Andolfi (1979) implies, one could consider it our professional responsibility as therapists to remain aware of the ongoing process, allowing ourselves to be open to stories of difference, allowing ourselves to remain flexible with ourselves, and thus in our relationships with others. Part of being a psychologist seems to involve self-awareness; this, in turn, includes the

awareness and acknowledgement of one's own needs discussed above. Thus it seems in a strange way that we are professionally responsible to be wholly in and aware of our personal relationships, however difficult that is, and it is at times profoundly difficult.

Prentice (2001) spoke of a developing awareness; linked to that is the conflict that emerged between conscious and unconscious or spontaneous behaviour that became apparent in the analysis of these interviews. There is a conflict between responding with or without awareness: in eating the fruit it appears that we have lost the innocence of spontaneous response. Blokland (1993) speaks of therapy as a way of being, and Prentice (2001) speaks of the observer becoming the observed; these two are inextricably intertwined, where this new way of being is characterized by observation, and a concomitant tendency to think before acting.

Prentice (2001) speaks of the observational process being relevant to the definition of self in the training context; he acknowledges that this will impact upon outside relationships. What appeared clearly in the interviews in addition to that was that the observation of self included observation of those with whom we interact, and that that process of observation alone had an impact on the relationships that were under scrutiny, beyond its anticipated effect on the trainee in question. The act of observation changes that which is observed (Becvar & Becvar, 1996); this bears emphasizing.

Part of this observation included, as mentioned above, a feeling of being compelled at least to dialogue around that which we see, a tendency to speak that which was previously unspoken. It is important to note that this relates to the notion of responsibility as discussed above, and contributes to the sense of otherness that becoming-therapists feel. Although it is alluded to in the literature, it bears emphasizing.

It seems from the interviews that the sense of isolation referred to by Prentice (2001) is exacerbated by the sense of emotional overload experienced by some of the interviewees: there was a sense of not having, as D put it, enough “emotional space” to contain and respond to the needs of others. The isolation is thus more than merely the result of those around us not understanding, or of us acknowledging finally our own needs, although all these ideas are intertwined.

["Possibly," suggests the Fairy, "the most important contribution we can make here is in the linking of the process of becoming a psychologist with the literature on intimate relationships; there is meaning in the cross-referencing. Psychology is essentially about relationships, and psychologists' relationships are thus naturally part of their field of study. It's nice to make the links."]

"Well," says the Priest, "I think that's about it. We've looked at epistemology at length, considered methodology; we went on to do some frantic reading of what limited sources are available on the subject, and we considered our own results. Then we mashed it all together ..."

"...Apple sauce?" suggests the Fairy.

"...and now it's time to speak of those things of which it is necessary to speak at the end of a project such as this."]

Chapter 7

Epilogue: What I Still Need to Say

["What is left to say?" asks the Fairy, confused. "I thought that was it."]

"Not quite," says the Priest. "Convention dictates that we examine the relevance of the study to psychology in general, its limitations, and so on. And, being members of a particular community, we are bound by its conventions."

"Wow," says the Fairy, taken aback. "That was almost social construction."]

Prentice (2001) draws a parallel between author, text and reader and trainer, training and trainee, that he says is reflected in the relationship between therapist, therapy and client. If one conceptualizes the process of becoming a clinical psychologist as being akin to therapy, in that old rules become apparent, awareness leads often to change, and emphasis on self reflection, one can assume that many of the aspects of the impact that becoming a psychologist has on psychologists will be echoed in clients' lives as a result of therapy. Awareness of these implications is useful for therapists. It seems that, in having eaten the apple, we become the serpent, offering the apple to others.

These findings will probably be interesting to trainers in the field of psychology. Possibly, an understanding of the possible impact that training may have on trainees will allow them to understand their students more readily, or enable them to offer support from a slightly more informed position.

["Informed?" asks the Fairy. "I think that suggests an external Truth. I think it's better to speak in terms of ... broader understandings, rather than in terms of information."]

One of the themes that were relevant was the experience of isolation, of a feeling of not being understood. This exploration may help becoming-psychologists to feel less alone. Dialogue around ideas is helpful; negotiation leads to change. Possibly in dialogue with this text, new understandings may be reached. Meyerstein and Kompass (1987) suggest that learning is amplified through convergence of training, therapy and cognitive and experiential learning; this text represents to a point a synthesis of the cognitive (in that it is an academic dissertation) and the experiential (as its focus is on experience).

These findings may also be relevant to other processes where there is an emphasis on interpersonal change and introspection. Social workers in training, for example, may find it useful.

Scientifically speaking, there are several shortcomings implied in this study. The sample is small and not representative; it is not my intention that my findings are generalized to other groups, but rather that I offer a new voice in the discussions around themes pertaining to psychology. I am nowhere near objective; my own story is used extensively in Chapter 5, and in conducting the interviews and writing up my results I freely acknowledge that my investigations and understandings are my own, filtered through my own lens of perception and experience.

I found that there was an area that fell beyond the scope of this study where dialogue around certain themes may be interesting and useful. H was the only male in the study, and he was also the only participant who did not speak of or imply a tendency to take care of others before himself; he did not cast himself in the role of the one who contains. From a process-oriented perspective, the rigidity of his role in relationship with his partner was expressed as clearly as the other participants expressed their rigidity in terms of nurturing, but the content differed: I think this may bear further consideration in terms of gender, as drawing distinctions based on gender was not the focus of this particular project.

It is also important to note that the results of this study pertain directly to becoming-psychologists. Psychologists who have been in practice for some time may have different views on the subject at hand. Dialogue around relevant themes from that vantage point would be interesting.

As such a personal piece of work, I found this dissertation both interesting and difficult to write. It is sometimes difficult to confront issues of such a personal nature in academic writing; this dissertation is very revealing of me. In having eaten the apple myself, I have shared with the reader my experience of apple eating. I have bitten the apple, chewed and swallowed, felt the effect of its flesh on my body and soul. I have lived to tell the tale. This, then, is the story of my own expulsion from Eden, of my own loss of innocence, my own folly and wisdom in having reached out in the first place. Perhaps I will plant other trees; perhaps, as I considered in Chapter 5, the seeds from the core that is left in my hand will grow into other trees, and perhaps this dissertation will be the seasoning that sweetens the fruit flesh for others.

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Appendix A: Interviews

D's Interview

J: Has the process of becoming a clinical psychologist had an impact on your personal relationships?

D: Ja it did, it did in that ... um ... in that it changed the way ... I was as a person. Initially in the beginning what it did was ... um ... I used to go to [my husband] and speak to him about M1 the whole time until he actually said to me, fuck, no, this cannot go on. Is this all you can fucking speak about? So there was a very clear message that he doesn't actually want to hear about it. He also found it quite traumatizing, constantly dealing with traumatic stuff, so he'd say, I don't want to hear that story, I don't want to hear this story, so there was quite an amount that I couldn't actually share, because it had to be ... it was too traumatic for him. And I actually needed to share it, because that way it became less traumatic for me. And I felt guilty because now I was transferring the trauma onto him. So it was firstly that also he's just sick and tired of hearing me only speak about me, so in that I stopped speaking and I also traveled through with [a person in my group] every day, and that was a cathartic experience because I could discuss the stuff and offload and she understood it immediately, I didn't have to explain it, which made it easier than telling [my husband] because I didn't have to do the explanation, and then speak about the stuff, but what also happened is ... I then no longer needed to share with [my husband], which ,, um ... it became increasingly like the only people I wanted to speak about stuff with was the group and that kind of thing, and in that, that was my whole life at that moment, so the only person I was sharing my whole life with for close on two years, was the group. The group became my family, became my everything. And I no longer found that the stuff that I got from home, which was the stuff that made me feel good, like I'm a wonderful parent and whatever ... um I no longer needed that stuff and whatever I needed at this time was support and

understanding, someone to share where I'm at, and I couldn't get that right then from him at all, and that's probably exaggerated, that I had very little needs from him at all. And what also happened is I had less space available, so when, um ... one of the effects that it did have and one of the most devastating effects that I do regret and I wish there was a way of changing it was that it created distance with my husband, that was a major effect and it also created distance with my oldest son. My youngest son most probably had a difference as well, because I wasn't that mother he could depend upon. He had an au pair he used to cry for in the middle of the night, which was both comforting and very sad – comforting because it made me feel that he does have someone that he really can rely on when I'm not there, but sad because he'd learned to live without me, and then that the things that I should have done were done by someone else. The distance with my oldest son was the worst of the whole lot... um ... because he used to come to me with stuff and I just didn't have the space for him. It wasn't just that it was the time or whatever – the emotional stuff was just so much that I had very little space available at the end. So I actually used to ... I remember half-listening to him, and saying 'yes,' and 'really,' at certain parts but having no idea what he's saying, and he knew that, and I somehow thought he didn't, but he knew that, and then he would start speaking more and more and sharing more and more of his life with [my husband]. And still today, I mean ... he relies more on [my husband] than he does on me, and the distance there I haven't been able to change, and maybe it's an issue of trust that he doesn't trust that I will be there for him, or whatever it is at some level, but it's still there at the moment, and I don't know how to change that. I don't know if that will change, and I do hope it will. Um ... with regards to ... um ... [my husband], um ... I had less time available for him, and that was very different to the role I'd had in the fourteen years before that. My ... whole purpose in life was to be there to contain him, and the children, and that was what made me special, and irreplaceable, and it was a nice position to be in, so I liked it as well, but ... it just became too heavy. And little, not even big things, little anything was heavy. And ... um ... I became a peripheral mom in so many ways and a peripheral wife, so I didn't

have time to actually ... um ... one of the complaints he had was that I don't even check up to find out how they ... how they're doing during the day or something and whatever, and it was because I was so involved in my life I didn't have time for them. But I'd ignored my whole life ... or me I'd ignored for my whole life, and this was ... like ... not only an opening for me when I was slowly moving out, I fucking exploded out and there were bits all over the fucking place. And I didn't know all these bits, and I didn't know exactly what to do with these bits. And I also ... um ... it was quite ... it was quite amazing to feel the bits, but also ... I had a right. I had a right to be, I had a right to feel, and whatever, and that was almost a fight at home, to like, yes I do have a right, and he saw me as a selfish cow, and, which I reflected back was very much how he acted, and his response was yes, but I'd never been like that. I'd changed the rules of the game at home, and, in that, I think the whole family felt ... abandoned, and I felt that my needs were rejected, and that I had no place to be nurtured at home, which made the distance even more. I also ... um ... felt that I ... I felt selfish in the process, not all the time ... I oscillated between I have a right and actually this is selfish, but only because I looked around and I could see the loss in the other people and I could even see the loss to myself when I saw the distance starting, but I could see how the people felt abandoned, and I kept on fighting the labels like you're a peripheral mother, because I didn't want that fucking label, and what it was, was that I changed from an all-consuming besotted, symbiotic mother-wife and all of that, to maybe a more normalized, and maybe I went extreme initially because the course was ... took so much of me that I had such a little left for them, so maybe I went from I was giving them 4200 percent to suddenly I was giving them 40 percent, and now I'm most probably giving them 60 percent kind of thing, or maybe it's even 50 – 50 kind of thing. So maybe it was an exaggeration in the beginning, but there's no other way I could have done it. I couldn't have actually found me ... slightly. Because my pattern of being without me, or... or nurturing all of their stuff was very strong and far too entrenched from childhood not to be a threat, so the only way I could have done it was by being catapulted into this, but the effects were quite traumatic at that stage, and it's not ... there's nothing

gradual; you're family goes from oh, we've got this wonderful, caring mommy that's there forever to where the fuck is she, and she's like ... all about her all the time, kind of thing, and so ... I think their trust was there initially, and my perception of what they felt – I don't know if it's actually true – was that broke the boundary of trust that I would be there for them like I was, or at all. They felt completely abandoned in the process, and they resisted it, and ... um ... and I did feel guilty at times, when they ... spoke about stuff like ... um ... I'm unsupportive, or when [my husband] spoke about that, and I always .. I internalized it, like, oh shit, I am; and then I'd take all that back to the group and then I'd think oh no, fuck I'm not. And it was like ... it was hard to keep perspective; it was hard to hold on to the me that I'd found, because the pull was so strong from the family, and from me, to be the old person. So it was like ... I was like an alien in that house, I didn't ... I knew the old me in that house and I knew the new me in the group, and I didn't know how to be both of them, so I needed to integrate both the old me and the new me, and that process has been a long process. I'm still integrating it now. I couldn't integrate it in one year; it was completely overwhelming; it was far too much. But in the two years, I felt like a lot had happened, and H said something interesting in my genogram thing, he said that a lot of cans were opened, and it felt like that, like a whole lot of stuff, and there was, like, flowing ends all over the place, like ... the myelinated sheaths of all my neurons were firing off everywhere, and I couldn't didn't know what to do with things, I just felt so ... helpless then, I just felt like I was finding help everywhere, and then, in the end, you know, I now ... had time to actually process, and retape some of the myelinated sheaths to hold the neurons ... in a way that worked for me kind of thing, and ... it's been a process of rediscovering me, and in that, um ... experiencing different ways of seeing ... what a horrendous loss, of ... um ... of possibly [my husband's] health, because I felt that because it was so sudden, and so different from this all-consuming, besotted wife to this completely peripheral – I take his word – person, because it was so sudden the impact on him was quite huge, and he also had quite traumatic things happening that, you know, like his father ... um ... being ill and those kinds of

things, and before, if I was the person that I was I would have given up my M1 completely in order to do it, support him, and I didn't even take off lectures, I didn't do any of those kind of things, and the impact, or the difference for him, or the isolation thing, and I speak about isolation for myself, but the isolation for him of being all alone, was so severe that I think it was involved in actually bringing up his scleroderma. So there is ... guilt attached to that and at the same time I wouldn't ... I wouldn't want to have ... not found me... but if there was an ideal situation I would have liked to have found me gradually, but actually I know that would never have worked. Because I needed to be ... catapulted into the state of whatever in order to actually get there.

J: What would your ideal relationship with [your husband] actually look like?

D: Now it includes me.

J: So more equal, more reciprocal?

D: Ja, very much more reciprocal. I gain much more out of the relationship now. Um ... I don't actually know if he gains more out of the relationship, but he gains more out of the person he is. He has greater strength now, he is self-reliant in a lot more ways, he um ... is more self-contained, not completely but he's grown substantially with it. Um ... it's not my responsibility any more, so it's more balanced in that. Um ... I don't know if he gains anything from me being me, except that he doesn't have to protect me any more, um, although I was all-giving, I was also dependent in a way, I was like, a bit in his shadow, of like, I will do everything for you and whatever, and you will be this huge figure and whatever, so it was ... he was taken from his pedestal to being a nonentity to me, pushed aside, but ... um ... but in that pedestal position he had to ... well, keep the pedestal, and also what he had to do was he had to look after this dependent person in terms of protection and those kind of things, and I think that started long ago, from about the rape situation and the way he was always there, and

that was one of my first attractions to him, and he liked that role. I loved that role. And he lost that role in a way, so he felt like not so much meaning, but it also freed him as in, you know, [D] is not so soft, she can actually sort herself out. What he has gained is respect for me. And actually, he never had respect for me, or he had very little. He loved the person I was, he loved the character I was, he loved my compassion, my caring, my nature, my empathy, all those kind of things, but ... he didn't have respect of *me*, as like, a person who has her own feet.

J: An equal?

D: Definitely not as an equal, whereas now I do have much more of that. That is nice. And it's also nice in my children's eyes, because although I was happy enough in my previous position, happy enough to be, and I've never been subservient, but to be not in the right, kind of thing, um ... it's good for them to see for their own lives, that kind of thing, but um ... and the only way my needs could have been seen is by me finding my own needs. And it's almost like I hoped they would be seen beforehand, seen and ... whatever.

J: Sounds like a process of simultaneously taking more responsibility, and also of giving responsibility back.

D: Um ... I took responsibility for my own needs. Before I was just hoping people would see them and be there for me because I'm there for them, and in essence my needs were fulfilled by me doing stuff for them. Whereas now my needs are fulfilled more directly than my needs were then. By taking responsibility of, this is what I want, I don't know how I could have expected [my husband] to respond to stuff that he didn't know about because I didn't even know about them.

J: it's like you're way more aware of the process now.

D: Very much more, but also, sorry, your previous question – giving responsibility was very important. I didn't realize how much of a weight it was, how consuming it was, and that's why when I didn't have space I couldn't do it, because, when [my husband] had an issue I took it on much greater than I took on any of my issues, and I took it on ... way more than any individual with their own needs would actually take it on, so it was quite a weight lifted from my shoulders when he took on the responsibility, and also /gained respect for him, because I thought like, ish, he can't ever deal with a range of things, and actually he can deal with a whole range of things, so ... in essence, I held him on a pedestal for a whole lot of things, except for the field I was in, and now, actually, he's just a normal human being, and he can deal with a whole range of big things.

J: So, simultaneously less and more?

D: I think so. What was the question you asked just now?

J: Do you see the process more?

D: Ja I do. Definitely. If I think of my brother I see the process substantially more. With my husband too, but with [my brother] I see it, and I see my role both in ... and why I became a therapist and all of that, of the mothering, and containing, and all that thing with my husband, but also with, the way I've done it for [my brother] all the time. I see it, and because I see it that disallows me to actually react just the from-the-gut way I would have, with just helping him. But it doesn't ... I almost can't completely trust that I will just naturally just go to ... um ... to my own needs, or boundaries are being crossed, immediately. If he asks for something I have to delay an answer. Not for long, just for a day or so – I'll get to you tomorrow, I don't know if I'll be able to do your washing, or whatever. And then I think about it and I'm then aware also of the effect that it has on me, I mean with anger and those kind of things; I'm also aware of, oh shame, he really is in a pickle, he feels quite helpless – I'm aware of that. But it doesn't have the

same weight as before. My needs actually have a greater weight. And then I able to actually ... I am able to give him a response that he will see as abandoning and rejecting, and I'm able to let him feel that way, and I feel that it's better for him, better for me, better for my boundaries not to be crossed, and better for him because I think in the long run, me holding him is not going to be helpful, and if he doesn't understand immediately he'll understand later, and actually a letter he wrote the other day, he thanked me for those things. He said that he didn't know that he could actually stand alone and have the strength to do it, and only through my harshness, which he didn't understand at the time, he actually has gained something that he knows forever, that if his whole relationship breaks up with his wife, he knows that he can stand alone. So he gained stuff too. Um ... but even if he didn't I can still do those things, which I couldn't do before.

J: Do you find you can, with [your husband] especially, talk about your relationship more? Sort of ... verbalize the stuff that you feel?

D: Um ... very much so. I felt that we never did so before, because so many of the things I was blind to, and so was he. And now they're out there more, and often they're the same kind of theme. So even though he may disagree or he may feel resistant to the crap I'm saying, or what he perceives as crap, it's still out there. But also he's able to process stuff ... um ... about the relationship with me in mind, me as an individual in mind, which he wasn't able to before. So he will process it even before he's speaking to me. So he comes to me in a different light. He comes to me with me in the picture, as opposed to just him.

H's interview

J: Has the process of becoming a clinical psychologist had an impact on your personal relationships?

H: Yes.

J: How so?

H: Um ... I think I changed a lot in the two years that it took for the Masters degree to be completed. I think I became more aware of who I am in relationship to someone else, and ... what I want from a relationship, and what I don't want. I think that's caused by growth in our relationship, and ... but also ... a shitload of conflict. And, at the same time I think he has changed as well, as a result of the relationship.

J: Your changing allowed him to change?

H: No, I think it's a parallel process: because I changed, he changed, and then I changed again. Um ... it's good and bad.

J: How's it good and how's it bad?

H: How's it good and how's it bad ... good things ... um ... I mean, there's stuff in my history that I didn't want him to know, I'm not going to say it on tape, but I've been able to communicate that, which I would never have done beforehand.

J: So you're saying more honesty, more congruence?

H: Honesty, openness, communication. Maybe straightforward communication instead of ... playing by the rules... um ... At the same ... it's a double edged sword. It's both good and bad.

J: How's that bad?

H: The honest communication?

J: Mm – hmm.

H: You say things, but you also know what the effect's going to be on someone else, or the possible effect on someone else, but you still say them because it's, because you need to say them. I have been called selfish.

J: So with congruence comes a risk?

H: Ja, a big risk. Um ... and I think our communication is a lot ... more open. Um ... I can say when he's irritating me, as well as when things are going good between us. Um ... and the same counts for him. He can say what is irritating him at that point in time. Um ... he picked up on the way I communicate, that's different from the training, because of the training and he started to communicate the same way in our relationship.

J: Ok, so in a way it's a good thing – it seems like your relationship was strong enough to cope with the changes that were happening in you.

H: Ja it is. I think we have a stronger base, but in that stronger base our conflict is greater as well. Because if you say things more open, you can expect a more open response from the other person as well.

J: Ok

H: And sometimes that hurts... um ... which isn't always that nice.

J: How do you find yourself changing, apart from the openness and the congruence in communication, how are you, in yourself, different, as a result of the masters training?

H: In relationship, or just in terms of myself?

J: Both.

H: Both. Ja, it's ... you can't really separate them. ... I think I'm accessible. Um ... I'm also more aware of when ... I've always been a person that connects and disconnects a lot from relationships, and I've always known that, but I've become more aware of when I do that in my relationship with my current partner. In relationship to myself ... um ...

J: It's almost like you have more insight into patterns that have always been there?

H: Ja. I think you can think about it in terms of first order and second order type epistemology. Before masters training everything was first order. You would kind of just react instinctively on what was said in the relationship

J: Mm – hm.

H: Now it's not ... it's still instinct, but it's a level higher.

J: Like a meta-level? You've got meta communication?

H: Ja. You ... it's more ...

J: You're looking at the rules of the game, and once you know the rules you can change them.

H: (sighs) Yes, but that's the thing. They don't always change.

J: Ok, so seeing them ... insight doesn't bring change always.

H: No. They might not change because it's not my choice to make the change; it's both of our choices.

J: Ok, so you're not accepting full responsibility for the stuff?

H: No.

J: Is that something that's changed? Is that a different thing in your relationship?

H: Um .. to a degree, ja. I don't think it's ... it's very different. I think he might have taken more responsibility in terms of our relationship before masters training, and I developed more of a responsibility during masters training, and in the second year especially, during the internship. Um .. there was something else that I wanted to say. Um ... it's not just about the responsibility. I think in terms of ... um ... he used to hold a lot and I would be able to basically do what I want, whereas that's changed to me being able to hold him, and, well he can't do anything he wants but ...

J: There's more space for him?

H: Ja.

J: Ok, almost like um ... like a growing up?

H: Mm. There's ... we had this discussion yesterday where he set two boundaries for me in terms of ... um ... we can do it ... you can either be this cookie person, or you can be this person who can do anything, and I will find for myself a space in between. That's his way of ... being in relationship.

J: Ok. It also sounds to me like you talk a lot about your relationship.

H: Ja.

J: Is that new, or did you always do that?

H: It's actually new. I hadn't thought about that.

J: More meta communication.

H: Ja. We used to talk about shit most of the time, and now we actually ... and that's another thing. I used to avoid talking about the relationship because it was dangerous going there. Now ... I can communicate what I'm feeling in the relationship in the here – and – now.

J: Mm hmm.

H: Um ... and he does the same. And that's something that changed a lot from before training to after training.

J: Was it just the risk that stopped you before, whereas now you're prepared to face the risk?

H: Um ... I'm more able to contain the risk. That's something that changed in me. I got ... I have some ... faith in who I am as a person, in terms of being able to ... contain a situation that might previously have been ... uncontrollable. I also know how far I can go.

J: So you have a sense of your own limits?

H: Ja ... ja I think so.

J: How have your needs in relationship changed?

H: I need someone ... or I need him, I think ... to respect me more for who I am, the relationship to be mutual ...

J: So you need more acknowledgement than you did before?

H: Not necessarily acknowledgement. More um ... yes you are an equal partner in the relationship, rather than ... um ... I'm making all the decisions, um, because I am responsible for holding you, so by default I can make all the decisions. Um ... now it's more ... sorry, I'm thinking about this while I'm speaking ... I do what I need to do in the relationship to keep the relationship together. The thing that we spoke about yesterday was like that. I think I trust him more. We used to do a lot of ultimatums – if you do this, this will happen. And I think yesterday and ... um ... because of processes of training and stuff, I think I've moved to a point where I'm trusting him to do whatever he needs to do for the relationship to continue. Or to end, if it needs to.

J: So it's almost like the opposite of what you were talking about before, where you said that he took more responsibility in that it sounds like you took more responsibility.

H: Mmm.

J: sounds like you've done a lot of role negotiation in this process.

H: Ja, we have, but it's also because we are apart. Um ... the long-distance thing – I don't know if you want to include this in the interview? The distance thing I think was helpful in terms of that, because I had time to negotiate myself, whereas if we were in a relationship – it's like negotiating – we were in a relationship but I had time for myself, more than maybe the usual relationship.

J: Did you find that even with the distance you needed more containment from him than you needed before? Or emotional support, or however you want to frame it?

H: Yes and no. Because I had my friends that provided a lot of emotional support as well. But I do, I think I show my real emotion to him easier, in terms of hurt and stuff, so ja, I do need more containment, especially if you've worked, and had a shit day with 500 clients fucking around in your office

J: has that been a problem for him?

H: Sometimes.

J: How?

H: He can't always contain me. He can't always give me the attention that I want at that point in time, and he will say that.

J: So it sounds like there's gains and losses in this process.

H: How do you mean?

J: Gains in that there's a lot of role negotiation, but losses in terms of safety, losses in terms of, although there's more trust, there's also kind of – no hiding space, if I can put it like that. Everything's out.

H: I wouldn't say everything's out. It's going to take a lot more time to get everything open.

J: Do you see this as a process that's evolving?

H: It won't stop just because Masters training has stopped.

J: Where do you see it going?

H: In terms of myself? In terms of the relationship?

J: Both.

H: it can either be a very nice space to be or a real fuck up.

J: If you could change something in this whole process, either way, whether you want to take it back to the way it was before or change it completely, what would it be?

H: Nothing.

J: OK.

H: I like we .. it's not always comfortable and it's sometimes very stressful and whatever, but I like the gains and I like where we can be when we're not fighting. Thing is, we live apart, far apart for a long period of time. When we get together, we do fight a lot, because it's renegotiation, because we both change a lot in a few months and that's part of the process that was started I think with Masters training and going away and not living together.

J: What makes it more attractive, this new place, than the old place?

H: The honesty.

J: What's attractive about honesty?

H: I don't have to play a contextual role.

J: So you're defined by yourself instead of context?

H: Yes. I can affect the rules, or decide whether to follow them or not.

J: Ok. I'm thinking of other people I've spoken to about this, and a lot of them say there's like an intensity in a therapeutic relationship that you kind of sometimes look for in your outside relationships as well. Do you think that applies here?

H: we actually spoke about that yesterday or the day before. Um ... both [my partner]and I are very intense people. He sees me as more intense than him, and that's something that has been in the relationship from the start. So that's not something new. He does sometimes get tired of it, and I do sometimes find myself looking for ...

J: Intensity?

H: Ja. A lot of times.

J: Would you say you were easier now with his intensity that you were before, that it's easier to contain it or easier to know what to do with it or something?

H: Ja, sometimes, not all the time. It's still a process, really, of learning and ... four years is a short time. It's not that long.

F's Interview

J : Has the process of becoming a clinical psychologist had an impact on your personal relationships?

F: Yes, definitely.

J: How so?

F: Ok, I think the training for me had a big effect on my relationships. By the end my then-boyfriend was ... it was a very confusing time. I was totally exhausted – I felt like I was being pulled apart and I had to put myself back together. I had no space to help the people around me, and I felt bad. My boyfriend was confused, because it was supposed to be academic training and it turned out to be any thing but. ... Yes, and I found I couldn't explain some of the things that were happening because I couldn't understand them myself. So I found that I alienated myself from a lot of people, they felt apart from me, ... so...

J: Like they couldn't understand what you were going through?

F: I didn't understand what I was going through. So ja ... I don't ... looking back I don't think I blame them. I must have looked like shit ... um ... sounded like I'm ... not myself. I can understand why they were very confused. I'm still confused about some of the stuff, but ... I've made peace with the whole training thing.

J: You said your 'then – boyfriend'. Was it the psychology that killed that?

F: (sighs) I think mostly, it was that, but then a lot of other things also. We met prior to my training, but just before I started. By the time I was going into training was about the time we were supposed to be establishing a very safe space, where we could get into some routine, but everything was turned upside down. And of course my father died, and that kind of made it ten times worse.

J: Must have been hectic.

F: Yes, so I don't think we had any chance, looking back. It wasn't going to happen. So I think the training played a big part, he couldn't understand it, but also my father's death. After that I just – a lot of things changed, my priorities, definitely ...

J: And in the internship?

F: I think I'm a lot more calm, a lot more ... normal. I don't think I can ever go back to ever being ... really normal, but I'm more my more normal self.

J: How are you different now from how you were before you started training?

F: Oh, completely. I'm a lot more cynical, I'm a lot more ... grounded within myself. I'm more content now to live with uncertainty. In the past I would need to know why, and sometimes the question is not why it's just the way it is. So I'm a lot more content now to accept uncertainty, to accept confusion as ... confusion, and never really expect to get the answers, as opposed to when I was ... before I started this I was very ambitious, needing to know everything, take on the world, and now ... (shrugs)

J: That went away?

F: (laughs) Yes. I think it was ... stolen from me.

J: How does your being a psychologist now impact your present relationships?

F: How does it not? (laughs) ... I realize the way I speak, first of all ... after so many years of talking this language, and spending a lot of time in this ... fraternity ... I didn't realize that I speak this language.

J: You speak psychology?

F: Ja ... my boyfriend would say, what is this that you called me, shit, stop, what are you talking about – what is congruence and what is this and what is that, and it's like, I'm too abstract, and I'm too ... everywhere... A and B does not really equal C – it's stuff that I wasn't really – that I'm not aware of about myself, but I realize I'm really psychologised, whether I like it or not. It causes some friction.

J: Creates a bit of distance?

F: Ja, but also closeness, in that it forces me to ... really try and see stuff, 'cause I think when I'm with people in this fraternity it's easy to just ... run, and I'm forced to sit and think about what am I saying, and why am I doing that, and ... and is it as important as I think it is

J: It's like you're checking yourself the whole time.

F: Yes, or sometimes, not the whole time, and it's helped to kind of ... get me off the drug, 'cause yes, it's like congruence, congruence, and he asks, to who? What is congruence, why is it necessary, and that relationship forced me to see that it's not this huge thing, and it's like searching for reality and there are so many realities, and the thing is, it forces me to check my thinking, to check my beliefs, and why do I believe what I believe

J: Do you think being a psychologist has that effect anyway, that you're more likely to check processes the whole time?

F: I think it ... well, from the training you do that, but if somebody considers it from a different perspective it forces you to look from a different level, and sometimes it's not comfortable to see that about what we believe, to realize that it's just as fucked up as everything else. So I think that helps, coz I know I do it, but it's more of the same, it's a continuous process of checking

J: Did you find that you became more aware of your role in relationships?

F: I think I've always been aware of my role, but now I'm more aware of the impact of my role on people around me, and the role of other people, and how if I remove myself the system still maintains itself. That's been a good thing to find out.

J: So it's like some pressures were taken off and other pressures were added.

F: Yes. There's always pressure with being the psychologist, it's like you're the same one, you're the negotiator, the one who copes, you're ... everything, and you cannot be ... normal. You have to understand why people get angry, you have to understand a lot of things and be all accepting.

J: You kind of have to be a role instead of a person?

F: Sometimes... sometimes. But I think my family, because most of them I involved a lot in my training, we spoke a lot, especially when my father died, so they understand some of the process, so that pressure is not there anymore. So I have a lot of support from some of them. Some of them I think I alienated a lot, and I just feel it's ... some people you lose, some people you don't.

J: If you had to change something about the way being a psychologist affects your life, what would it be?

F: I wouldn't change anything. Like I said to you, I'm at a point where I'm just ... comfortable with a lot of things, and uncertainty's part of it. So I wouldn't know if I changed one thing if I would change everything else, and I know one thing does have ... like ... a spiral effect. So at this point ... I also found my spiritual self where I have to believe in fate, this is how it's supposed to be, and ... (shrugs).

J: It's like a giving up of control.

F: Yes. And gaining control by giving up control. I'm comfortable with whatever happens at this point. If this is how it's meant to go, it will go, and I wouldn't really want it to be changed. Because I'm comfortable with myself. I'm not happy, I'm not excited, I'm just comfortable... I'm patient, I will see. Maybe five years from now I will tell you about what I would have liked to change.

J: So this whole thing is like a work in progress?

F: I think so

J: Where do you see it going?

F: (whispers) Nowhere. (laughs). Well, I hope not, but by a few years, after everything is said and done, we are in this kind of life, small, kind of community of people speaking the same language, only to realize that there's a whole world out there. We are only this much, a small part of a bigger process, and maybe what we do is not as important as we think it is, that is not clear, but I... from what I've seen this year, and in my first year of training, if there's only a few people that you can ... make a difference in their life then maybe it's worth it and maybe it should be enough, so ... I don't know

J: Do you think your relationship with yourself has changed a lot?

F: (laughs) Yes. I think I am more forgiving of myself, I'm more patient with myself, at the same time as being more ... judgmental of myself, more critical of myself. Everything I am is everything I am with the world, it's my relationship with myself and the world

J: More insight, more awareness ... less control?

F: Yes, more reflection, more accountability, or lack of accountability, where you can only be responsible for so much. So I think I'm more nice to myself now. More loving to myself.

J: Does the change in your relationship with yourself have an impact on your intimate relationship?

F: Yes. I think sometimes people are intimidated by that. It's like ... arrogant, maybe. But I feel it's a very freeing experience, to say, in everything, this is me, I'm not perfect, I'm whatever, but that's enough for me. And the challenge now is, can that be enough for everybody else, or do they want me to change it? So, in my relationship now that's been an issue ... change versus compromise ... sometimes we can be rigid and say this is me, and blah blah blah, and sometimes you need to let the relationship shape you a bit, so it's like finding the balance, and I'm more accepting of myself, and more accepting of other people in everything.

K's Interview

J: Has the process of becoming a clinical psychologist had an impact on your personal relationships?

K: Um ... I must get my thoughts all together. Well, obviously yes. On a whole bunch of relationships. It's had a huge impact. Family, friends, and boyfriend. How, is your next question?

J: Yes.

K: Ok. I think the most obvious thing is the ... amount of awareness, insight, that you have into the patterns of the things that happen between you and the other people. It's what creates a bit of a disturbance, because things that you would have automatically done, or the way you've been for the past however long changes. And so ... um ... That creates problems. I mean, in terms of ... let's say ... ja, family, friends and boyfriend, recognition of my own needs was a big thing. And how I automatically didn't really ... expect them to be fulfilled in these relationships.

J: it's kind of like you had a pattern of negating your own needs for a long time, and all of a sudden you become aware of them, and what do you do with that?

K: Ja. And so it was quite difficult trying to get your needs out there in the relationships, so I mean, I think it caused a lot of resentment with like, family and boyfriend ... interestingly with friends, with some of my friends it started, sort of beginning of my M1 year, where there were friends where I just suddenly decided no, this is not really value-added friendships (laughs), but only recently the closer friendships have been affected. Like with one friend of mine, Sarah. That was more recent, where I suddenly realized, wow, look at this, it's like exactly the same pattern that I had before, that I've been trying to change so hard with my family and now it came out, in the friendship with her. But um ... ja, I think that was a big thing, and then ... it's been difficult for the other people I would say as well, them trying to deal with me, kind of ... the way I've changed.

J: You're more demanding?

K: Ja, I would say more demanding, more assertive with, like, what I think is important for me, and ... but then you also have to deal with the fact that even though you throw them out there sometimes they don't even get looked at. They're still disregarded.

J: So patterns that exist it's bloody difficult to change.

K: Mm-hmm. Extremely. But it's very ...

J: So insight doesn't always help. You see the patterns but disrupting them is a challenge.

K: Sometimes that makes it harder, in actual fact, to be able to see them. Because, you know, you are either going to be explaining all the time, trying to explain to people what's happening, but you give up on that, and you just move along to, kind of, oh alright, this is the way it goes, do I want this or not? Do I want to be in this, is it good for me, or not? And you move out. And, I mean, sometimes it's also a compromise. You then realize, well, this person's not going to change; I've changed. And what's good in the relationship you keep. You kind of compromise. You still have an awareness, ja, of what's there. But um ... no, I think it had a very profound impact on my, just, my own behaviour in relationships as well, just the idea of ... kind of ... the way I've changed in relationships, actually ended a whole bunch of them. That's why it was so profound. They just ... no longer existed (laughs) because of psychology.

J: Sounds like as soon as your needs became apparent them people weren't interested, or as soon as you wanted something in return?

K: That happened in some of the cases, ja. Or it just ... the incompatibility between, like, let's say me and my ex, B, became so blatantly clear. I was no longer compromising to fit in with his needs and how he was, and I think, before, I did it without even knowing, I wasn't aware of my own needs and what I wanted, and so psychology brought that very much home.

J: So it shows up all the patterns and absolutely everything. Do you find that that ... um ... that awareness of pattern the whole time, kind of influences your ability

to just be in a situation, or to just kind of respond; do you find yourself checking yourself the whole time, watching?

K: I think during the course, ja, I was very much watching a lot of the time, and that's still there, but not as badly. I think I've become more comfortable, almost in the 'therapist self', the integration, like, between therapist and old self has started happening, more so in the internship year than in the M1 year per se. Because in the M1 year I became, ja, sort of a very ... hypervigilant, to my own behaviour in relationships all the time. Like, am I doing the right thing, according to, you know, the psychological way of thinking how relationships and ... and, like family patterns and behaviour should be, and, then looking at your relationships and seeing how dysfunctional they are, and dysfunctional, you know, within the family, and ... it ... for a very long time I felt stuck because I couldn't be right, in either one, so it was ... you know, trying to get this whole situation to gel, and I think it did eventually, but ... well, it's in the process of doing so. It's then, coming to terms with what can change and what can't, and you know, it's more about you than changing your environment. It was, for me in M1 year I, for a while, I did try to change my family.

J: Do you find yourself thinking more in terms of function and dysfunction? Health and not-health?

K: Um ... ja, there was that, it did come out in M1. I mean I don't think it meant to come out like that, but I think that would be, ja, my own frame of reference, is it right or not? It's that sort of distinction. And what changed, where they've started merging, is that this is just the way things are; it's not right or wrong.

J: That's where you're talking about the acceptance. Just accept that people are who they are, and that your relationship with them is as it is.

K: Exactly. And my family is as it is. I mean, that's where the relationship with B and I also ended. I mean, he is as he is, I am as I am.

J: And that wasn't good enough for you any more?

K: Ja, and ... and the relationship could never work, because we were as we were. So it was an acceptance of the relationship, me being able to actually look at it for what it is, not what I think I wanted it to be, and tried so hard to make it.

J: What would you want it to be, a relationship for you?

K: Um ... I think in a lot of ways it ... the focus has changed to being more of a mutual thing. That's what I want now.

J: Mutual how? Like a mutual ...

K: As in ... you know, my emotional needs are also taken care of. As opposed to me taking care of everyone else's emotional needs.

J: So like a relationship where you can talk about it as well, where you can ... sort of go meta to the whole process, look at the patterns together and kind of negotiate like that?

K: Definitely. And I think, ja, just generally, with more insight. I would like, you know, a relationship, an intimate relationship. With my family, there you obviously have to compromise. You have to choose them. (Laughs). There, their insight is as it is. No amount of lecturing from me is going to change that. As I have proved, the hard way. So, ja... it's ... it's ... I think their ... it was very hard in the beginning, I would say, the changes. Because it does impact on them so much, that in the beginning it's such a disruption, and the emotions that come out, like there – there was so much anger that came out.

J: It's like all of a sudden you're more congruent.

K: Yes. And that would never have been admitted before. I mean I think having to look at it, that's what the course does, you look at every aspect of your life, like, in miniscule detail, and ... it's allowed. And that is the biggest difference. Whereas, in my family, I didn't even know that it wasn't allowed to think that far. I mean, it's ... so ... just that allowing things to be, you know, as they are.

J: It kind of, opened more, kind of, options for you, like you had more ... possible responses to situations.

K: Mm-hmm. Ja. There were ... whereas before I think the anger would be there, I would just never acknowledge it, it would find some other, you know, way of coming out. Now it's a lot more honest. I feel I can be a lot more honest. Yes, but then that has its repercussions. Me changing, you know, in the system, it's caused a lot of disruption. For all of them.

J: Has your relationship with yourself changed?

K: Yes and no, I would say. Umm ... I think I'm a lot more forgiving than I used to be, but then, I think I'm still harsh in various ways. But I think before, that was harshness without insight. So now I realize I'm being harsh. Now I realize, hell, that's not a very nice thing to think about yourself. I'll still think it, but at least I have the almost ... the other voice, so it's not just, you know, the derogatory voice, but the other, sort of, you know, voice of reason, is also somewhere in there. So, ja, it's kind of ... I think I self parent better, if I can look at it that way. But ... um ... I don't know, I think there was also, like if I think about, sort of, the relationship with B, an intimate relationship, that just ... it was very sad. I think before I've never allowed myself to experience, sort of, sadness, in a relationship as well. So ja, it is that idea of opening up more options, just allowing things to be

as they are because before, I mean, I would have to have been angry for a relationship to end, or you know, someone would have to do something wrong, and this, it was just sad. It was kind of a very sad parting, because, I'd just become more honest, and I could actually see this was never going to work. And ja,

J: Did the way that he responded to you change?

K: Um ... not really. I think he found me frustrating, because ...

J: You were speaking on a bit of a different level?

K: Yes, and it would ... he couldn't understand what it was that I wanted, because I'd been a different person for the 3 years before that. And all of a sudden now there's this person who wants to talk about this, and talk about that, and I think that became very difficult for him, and he was, I mean the strange thing was that he was telling me all along, this will not work, we can't guarantee anything, and I was I think conning myself, no, it can, it will... suddenly I actually got to a level where I saw, from my perspective, this is not going to work. You know, and, because he wouldn't budge. He wouldn't give.

J: The compromise was all yours?

K: Yes.

J: And when you stopped doing that things broke?

K: That's exactly what happened.

J: It's like the relationship wasn't flexible enough to handle the changes.

K: Ja.

J: Did you find that ... when you're talking about ... talking to B, and you spoke like a different person, it's almost like you were speaking a different language. Do you find that the language we speak and the way that we think, kind of isolates you, with people who are not psychologists?

K: Hmm. It definitely does. There are certain friends that you find, because you've been friends for ages, as well, they are more psychologically minded, because I think we've all been psychologically minded before this, but there are limits as to how much you can speak about things. Like with my family I can speak about things to a certain level, and then they don't understand me any more. So I just ... I never talk about, I can talk about general things, but not anything in specific. There are certain friends I can talk to, about... you know, in that sort of psychological language. Otherwise you have to ... explain systems theory before you explain what happened there and how profound it was, whereas with friends who are also psychologists, you can say, oh this happened, and they already know. It can take one sentence, and they understand.

J: It's kind of like, a community of psychologists, where we all speak a similar language, and then the outside world?

K: Ja. And it does leave you feeling quite isolated, I would say, in intimate relationships and in, like, your family as well, but I think I felt that for a while. I don't really feel that any more, because that's a different kind of intimacy that you have with that person, that, you know, it's just really nice when you're with a bunch of psychologists that aspect's also open, you can talk about it, work, which is, it's very nice, but ... ja, I think it's actually a good thing, that they don't understand us – I'd never stop worrying about it and talking about it, you know what I mean.

J: Did you have a boyfriend after B?

K: Yes.

J: How did that look different, the beginning of that relationship, to the beginning of your relationship with B?

K: Well, um ... well I was a complete neurotic wreck, from the moment I met C. (laughs). And I was so ambivalent, I didn't know, and I think I was very scared about getting involved in another relationship where my patterns would repeat, and I think I was hypervigilant, watching for these patterns. Is this another emotional retard that I've managed to pick up along the way? You know, because I think it's something that just has to be acknowledged, when you are in this line of work, you are emotionally more ... grown, if that's a word. Emotionally ... bigger, more complex, than someone else who doesn't have that same amount of insight, and you can choose: you can either have an emotionally superficial relationship with someone or you can find somebody who can match that, and support you.

J: That would be the ideal?

K: It would, and with C I was trying to test for that, see if it was there in the beginning, and it just so was not, so I mean it didn't work, but I think what happened with B, I knew right in the beginning as well that it was not going to work, but I persevered, and there's the difference. And I think it was because I didn't know about my patterns and what I was actually doing. There was the rescuing thing, which was there with B and I think it ... which I didn't actually acknowledge at the time. With C I could see the pull to mommy him. That was there. And there were good aspects as well, that I could see in that relationship, but there were certain things that I realized from the beginning, I can't cope with

this, up front, and I don't want it, that relationship, and I think I just ... I didn't compromise as much as with B.

J: Feel like you were more congruent?

K: A lot more, ja. And less trying to not hurt his feelings.

J: So more kind of with yourself as opposed to taking his perspective.

K: And saying this is what I want. Can you do it? Kind of ... you know step up to the plate or go home, and ... ja, with B I mean it just went on and on and on. Me not getting what I needed. And I think the longer it goes on, the more complicated it gets to leave. But um ... ja. I think, ja, so there's good and bad that's come out of it. I think I'm more nervous to get into a relationship because of the M1 year, um ... and the ...

J: So you're more nervous because you're more open now? It's more risky?

K: Um ... I think I've realized I want to be more open, so yes, it's going to be more risky, but I think there's ... I still doubt ... my abilities to change my previous patterns, so yes they change, but you fall back into them so easily.

J: And there's a drive to change, there's a definite drive in you to change that.

K: Yes. But you still worry that you're going to meet someone and then you're going to stay for the wrong reasons, security, familiarity...

J: So again, you're watching yourself.

K: Ja, there's still that watching in the relationship and ... ja, it's taken a while, I mean I think when, especially like an intimate relationship I think it just evokes a

lot more emotional crap for me, so I become more hypervigilant there, whereas I think with my family being forced to work through all the crap with them a boyfriend is like ... no thanks, that didn't work, you know so ... with the family I feel I watch myself less.

J: Ok, so it gets easier?

K: It does get easier.

J: Do you see this as part of a process, it's like a continuously evolving thing?

K: Oh, all the time, ja, and I think it'll carry on till we die. Sadly. But it's ... I think in a lot of ways it's very liberating, but in a lot of ways you also feel more trapped, because you can't just be, blindly ignorant and live in this blissful ignorance, you know, like I ... it seriously makes me think, oh my god, I mean I lived the first 20 odd years of my life, you know, in pure ignorance, I think of what was actually going on in my relationships.

J: Do you miss that? Would you go back to that if you could?

K: Um ... well ... no, because I feel that things, even though it's really hard, it's more liberating than it is trapping, but it has aspects of both, I think, so does the other one, the other way of being in the world.

J: But this is the way you're actively choosing to be, one particular way rather than another, and you having the option to choose it?

K: Um, no. I think it's happened now, there's something, almost like a little switch, that's flipped, and I can never go back. So I don't think there is a choice, but I think there ... you can choose how you want to live in this new way of being. There are still choices, but you just can't go back.

J: So you can't take the glasses off?

K: No. You can't go back to the former ignorant way of being, no.

J: If there was something about the whole process that you would change, what would it be?

K: Hmm ... my personal experience, from the training, I think we need more in-depth supervision. Most of my growth I would say came from my own personal therapy. The M1 year opened a lot of the stuff that I never would have looked at in therapy.

J: But it was up to you to find something to do with it?

K: Ja. That's basically what it was. And ... I mean I don't know, maybe the time isn't right, you know, like their thing when I asked about a therapist was, no, it happens in the group, the group must contain it and so possibly I wasn't ready for the group to contain a lot of that stuff, you know, but I think that there could have been more growth in the first year had the supervision been less academic.

J: So it would have been nice had there been a bit more emotional support?

K: Ja. I would say so. But then I wonder about myself, would I have allowed myself to be emotionally supported at that time and I don't think I would have. You know the emotional support I chose was peer support. I wasn't ready to have ... like ... a supervisor catch me. Internship year, I think that got a bit easier, and then it's something I sort of ... learnt in therapy.

J: Would you say part of your ideal in an intimate relationship would be somebody who can catch you?

K: Definitely.

J: So that you won't have to hold ... do you find like before, you were playing the containing role, nurturing role, parenting role, like you said, and the ideal would be someone who could parent you back?

K: That would be great, yes, a more mutual relationship. Um ... because it's ja, a very sort of complex issue that, because I find that my own role as parent, I became very resentful with that role in all my intimate relationships, where I suddenly realized, Christ, I'm a frikking parent in everything, and I became very resentful in everything, and I didn't want to parent anymore, and that's something I've become more at ease with, it's that I naturally do that, and I think it's not bad. It's not a wrong thing. I think somewhere I got the message in the process that it's bad to do this, and it's not. But it just has to be reciprocated, you know, for the relationship to be healthy, and what I mean by healthy there is acceptable to me. And I don't think I was getting that in a lot of relationships. And, I think that's with both, it's, yes, it's the fact that you know, the people in my life pulled me into the parent role, and I think because it had happened so long in my family, I naturally assume that role in a relationship. It's 50-50. I'm pulled, but there's also me, who does that, I know. It's secure. I don't know how to be parented, and so that's something I've learnt, through supervision, and like um with peers in the ... subgroup, and through therapy. So it was something, ja, that had to be learnt, a different way of being. And I think it's about acknowledging all the various parts of yourself, you know – there's the child, the parent, the everything, that's still in there.

J: It would be nice to have a partner who could meet you with all those parts.

K: Exactly. Ja.

T's Interview

J: Has the process of becoming a clinical psychologist had an impact on your personal relationships?

T: Most definitely.

J: How so?

T: Um ... I can talk about my relationship with my mother ... and ... it definitely influenced my relationship with her. I think through the process of becoming a psychologist, getting a lot of tools to deal with a lot of things between her and I, to such an extent that I was able to actually sit down and speak to her about it, and about a lot of things, which I think was very cathartic, and it's changed our relationship for the better.

J: It's almost like you got permission to talk about stuff that you'd been sitting with for a while.

T: Yes, and it's also that it enabled me, gave me tools to understand what I was feeling and how, it legitimized what I was feeling, and it, ja, gave me the space, or the courage, to confront what I was feeling, I don't know.

J: You saw the pattern, and it's almost like they had language, like stuff that you'd been feeling, you got the language to express, or the insight into a process that was already happening, and you could do something with it.

T: Yes, and I think especially the object relations stuff spoke very much to me, and um, ja, about mother daughter relationships and stuff like that. It was, I think,

from that perspective it was good. Um... in relation to my husband, it's been ... detrimental, I think. There was a pattern that our relationship worked around, that I lived with, and it worked very well, and through studying to be a therapist my pattern changed, or I became aware of the pattern and changed, or I decided to change it anyway which had rippling effects on the marriage, um, I think I played a very nurturing role in our relationship, and especially this year, doing my internship, you're in a position where you're nurturing I'd say in a way all day long. You're with patients or clients, that are, you need to be there all the time, and when I would get home, I, there would be nothing left, so I've become a little bit more ... selfish, um, which was uncomfortable for me because I'd always negated my own needs.

J: There was guilt stuff?

T: It brought up a lot of guilt, am I being narcissistic, am I being a selfish bitch ... um, and, my husband started feeling neglected, he started feeling that I was becoming selfish, and that I wasn't there for him, and, ja, I think for a long time I held a lot of his emotions, or our emotional stuff in our relationship.

J: So it's like you became more aware of your own needs, and the desire to act on them? However painful it was, or however guilty you felt, you still acted on them?

T: Ja, and it had a big influence on my marriage. Um I think also, um, ... I think in therapy you're sitting with clients all day taking them back to themselves, what are their needs, telling them to take care of their own needs, and it's like you're sitting in front of a mirror...

J: Like doing therapy with yourself?

T: Ja, it is. You've got this reflecting back on yourself the whole time, and you start thinking, well, when am I going to, sort of walk the talk?

J: Practice what you preach?

T: Ja, and it's difficult not to, um ja, and I think the need becomes very overwhelming and eventually you have to um listen to it and respond to it, and I still sit with the uncomfortableness of that, I still feel, am I being too selfish, am I really ...

J: Almost like, do I deserve this?

T: Ja, am I worth it? Ja. Sometimes I wonder if I'm not, if the pendulum now has swung to the complete other side, from being completely negating, all my feelings, and now I've got a bit too selfish.

J: From what you're saying, you're reflecting on yourself the whole time,

T: Ja, and I think that's the whole process, of this, this therapy that we do, it's very reflective, and I think it's healthy, but it's also, it's scary, because you are confronted with yourself all the time. And it's exhausting.

J: I'm hearing that it's not really a choice, like you can't just be. You be and you watch yourself be.

T: Ja. I think in this process I sometimes feel like I've lost a lot. I've lost a lot of .. naivete.

J: Lost your innocence?

T: Ja, it's very difficult just to be now, because it's like you have a set of glasses on that you cannot take off. It's a knowing, that you can't not know. You say things and you have to be so aware of the consequences, or the processes, and it's difficult not to respond to them, it's just, before this I was completely oblivious to all this.

J: You were just behaving, or acting.

T: I was just being, and sometimes there's a, there's a ... I was happy in that, it's not like I was unhappy in that, and for me that's where the loss is. There's a sadness related to that.

J: Innocence is bliss?

T: Ignorance is bliss. And I don't have that any more.

J: Would you change that?

T: Ja, parts of me would like to change it, and parts of me wouldn't ... um... I think I'm a more integrated person now, I am more aware, and the knowledge that I have I would not like to give up, but it definitely has come at a cost, at a sacrifice, which is a loss.

J: It's important to acknowledge the loss?

T: I think so ... I think so. And I think the ending of, these last few months of this year, have been a bit of that. I think in the beginning of the internship year it's very hectic, almost overwhelming, dealing with real people and real lives, and you realize that, or I realized, some of the things that I said, people would take home and think about, and come back and say, I thought about this, and I did

this, and I thought, fuck, what I actually say is quite powerful, you need to be very aware of what you say, and I think for me that was, that was a bit overwhelming.

J: Do you find that that echoed your other relationships outside therapy, that kind of awareness of what you say?

T: Um... in some of my friendships, and in some of my relationships, I don't think all of them, um ... some of my friendships have remained the same, they still see me as, as, you know, the same person that I was, whereas other relationships have, have ... they will take strain, especially if it's a context of, like a therapy, a therapeutic context where there's questions they've asked, they do take what I say quite seriously.

J: You have more authority, kind of?

T: It is like that.

J: Does it feel like real authority, like you do have the answers, or is it just like they expect it?

T: I think people expect it more. I mean, there are time when I think, wow, I've had, like, I can say this from some place of knowing, and there are other times when I think, what the hell am I doing? Because, ja, I don't know.

J: It's like you take a lot of responsibility. It's almost as if I get a feeling like you see the pattern, it's your responsibility to do something with that.

T: Ja. I think I am a very responsible person anyway, and I think what therapy may have done is just, it may have exaggerated that for me. Um ... I think it's that ... I think being a therapist you do have a lot of power, and I think, I think people need to be aware of that. I think to negate that, if you think that you don't,

could be quite dangerous, and I think it's that power that ... that gives me a sense of responsibility. Um ... and I use the word 'power' very carefully. I don't think it's, I don't think I'm almighty or anything like that. I just think that, in a therapeutic situation you need to be aware of it, ja, and kind of work with it, and be careful of how you use it.

J: Would you say your relationships before you became a therapist were characterized by you being nurturing and caring, more than receiving?

T: I think it's part of ... it's who I am. It's my natural way of being, and maybe that's what drew me to being a therapist ... um ... as well as, I think, a lot of my own stuff ... um ... (sighs) ja, and I think ... I'm glad I have those traits, um, but I think that in my own, in my relationships outside of therapy, they probably felt it worse than anywhere else, because I'm needing.

J: Instead of giving, you're taking?

T: I'm taking a little bit, and I'm not giving much, well, not holding as much, or, um, I'm not nurturing as much. I think what I'm asking, like in my marriage, I'm asking for the pattern to change, for my partner to be more equal, as opposed to being a child and I'm the mother, so ... that's what happened in our relationship. And, um ... the dynamic of that changing, of the interaction changing, has caused a lot of um ... problems. And I sometimes wonder if I hadn't done therapy whether any of that would have happened. I probably would have continued being nurturing, because I'd be comfortable to, and I get stuff out of it anyway, it feeds parts of me as well.

J: Would you say you're feeding those same parts now but in a different way?

T: I think so. I think I'm still feeding those parts, but in a different context. And I feed them in therapy. I think because they get fulfilled here, not with all clients but

with a lot of clients, I don't need ... have the need to nurture as much, at home, and that's where the dynamics changed. That makes me feel selfish, I feel guilty, because I decide that it shouldn't carry on like that. But I definitely played a huge role in setting up the pattern first. It's a pattern that I have had in various relationships.

J: Again you take responsibility for it. You say "I set the pattern up".

T: Well ... ja ... maybe I should say I was part of setting the pattern up. My husband played a role as well. But it's difficult for me to allow that.

J: It's almost like you're his therapist, for want of a better word. You had the responsibility, you made the choice.

T: And I'm the one who's seen it, and I'm now deciding to change it. And I feel guilty for that, for the consequences of making those changes, because they are there.

J: If you could change one specific thing about this whole thing, what would it be?

T: Um ... that's a difficult question. What would I change? Probably I wish I had ... communicated better with my husband from the beginning, and instead of just changing, maybe have communicated the changes that I had noticed, and have said, this is how I've been, this is how I see things are not working, and maybe communicating better would have given him the opportunity to understand, and make the change with me, as opposed to have just changed, and expected him to understand the change, and adapt to it

J: What would have made it easier for you in your relationship to communicate those things?

T: Um ... my need to not want to hurt him, it was like a protective thing, ja. I thought I could do it on my own, and I didn't think of the risks, that the relationship was going to suffer, which it did. I didn't think that the changes were going to be that ... enormous. And they still don't feel enormous, but they are. They've had ... they've had a big impact.

J: It's almost as if you wanted to keep the professional and the personal separate.

T: I wish I could have. I think in therapy, being a therapist, that's one of the sad things, that you can't keep your work and your personal life separate, because it does ... the boundaries enmesh, because you are the tool in therapy, and you carry that with you all the time.

J: It's almost like the therapeutic relationship is another intimate relationship where ... you take stuff out of it and you give stuff into it as well.

T: Ja, you do. Definitely you do. And when you're involved in lots of different intimate relationships, although they're on different levels of intimacy, it's almost impossible for it not to have an effect on your other intimate relationships outside of therapy. It's not like you're an accountant or something, where you use a calculator and you just add numbers or whatever, and you leave and you go home. As a therapist you are the tool, you carry ... sometimes you carry stuff with you, other times clients evoke stuff in you that is yours, that you then have to carry with you and you then have to try and understand.

J: So does that have an impact on your relationship with your husband?

T: I think so, yes it definitely has. It's made me look at ... um ... ways of interacting with other people, and look at things I've negated for myself. It's made me ... um ... I think it's made me more of a serious person, which is a bit sad as

well. I used to ... I suppose, and I'm hoping that with time it will come back to that, where you can ... I don't know ... see the lighter side of life. I feel like at the moment the balance is off. I work with sadness and heavy emotions all day long, and, um, it almost becomes like a drug. You look for that in other relationships and I think maybe that's also what had an impact on my marriage, the intensity of emotion that I work with all day, I get home and I don't feel it, and it feels like something's missing, and I don't know whether that's a healthy thing or not. That's just how it is.

J: Do you find yourself looking at things in terms of healthy and unhealthy a lot, out of therapy?

T: Ja, I think I do, often, and I look at whether ... ja, whether this is a, I think therapy is a very unique environment, and this is often where I get very confused about therapy. We try and help our clients to be very, to find their sense of self and to not negate their feelings, and to have their needs met, and all those kinds of things, but society doesn't necessarily accept that easily, so there's often a lot of repercussions there, and I think that's the same thing as what's happened with me. I ... you have a therapeutic situation where there's a lot of congruence, a lot of all of that, whereas in an intimate relationship outside of therapy, especially if your partner is not a therapist, or doesn't understand the therapeutic kind of environment, it's very difficult to have that congruence all the time because it can often feel very ... um ... rejecting.

J: Do you find that ...

T: It can feel abandoning; I think my husband felt abandoned a lot.

J: He felt like you'd left him. Do you find that people outside therapy struggle to understand you as therapist, or what it is that you do?

T: I think I struggle with that! (laughs)

J: Do you find that it isolates you?

T: Yes it does. Not with my close friends, I think if you're at a dinner party or something and people are talking, you know, relating to each other and if they say, oh what do you do, and you tell them, there's almost like a withdrawal, like they think, you can read my mind, or people are a bit hesitant, they become very conscious of what they say. There's either that response or there's the response of, oh, and then they give you all their shit, so it's difficult, I don't think it's something ... it's probably something I'm going to change, and just say I work with people and only if I'm pushed, to say what I do. I think in the beginning I was very proud to say, oh, I'm a therapist. It was a sense of achievement for me, I would say it quite ... proudly, but once I've now felt all the consequences of that, I think I'll probably ... probably withhold a little bit.

J: You seem to feel like you're in the beginning of a process still, because you keep talking about stuff in the future, and it's like, um, the balance is off now, but maybe it will get better, or not saying stuff about being a therapist later. How do you see your relationships changing, as your therapeutic self progresses?

T: I think I will find more balance in myself. And I think that will definitely have a ... a more positive impact on my intimate relationships. I think these last two years have been extremely selfish years. Um ... the Masters year and the internship year is very much about yourself. And it's important to know yourself intimately in order to be, I think, in order to be a good therapist, um, if you're going to deal with, um, transference and countertransference feelings, I think you need to be aware of what your stuff is. So I think I have been very self indulgent these last two years, and, um ... I just think maybe there isn't time for the balances.

J: So you'll swing back to a stage where you're not as selfish, if you want to use that word?

T: I think I would like, I'd like the pendulum to sort of come and sort of settle somewhere in the middle. I know it won't settle ever, but there will be times where it will sort of sort of swing slightly at the bottom, but at the moment it feels like it swings big swings from side to side, ja. That's how I feel. I still feel very uncomfortable with being, um, selfish, I in a sense.

J: How will this new balance look different from where you were before you studied?

T: I think my boundaries will be more ... firmer now, and I think I will be ... um ... less willing to negate my own needs, and there will be times when I will negate them, for other peoples' needs, but I don't think it will be something I'll do all the time, because ... there will be more flexibility, less rigidity ... more conscious awareness of what I'm doing, like I'm prepared to compromise on this need for that, or compromise on this for a while until this person's ok, those kind of things. I think it's more just an awareness, a conscious awareness, of myself, and to make those choices about yourself, whereas before it was just an unconscious way of being.