'Taken-for-Granted Assumptions and Professionalism in IAG practice'

By

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The candidate declares this to be her own work:

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of reflection in Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practice, with particular reference to becoming aware of the role of taken-for-granted assumptions. It is grounded in the literature concerning taken-for-granted assumptions, personal knowledge and reflection in the context of professional practice.

It is a qualitative study evolving through three iterative cycles, with an additional 'pre-cycle' exploring the origins of the research in the researcher's own experience as an IAG professional working with ethnic minority women.

The first main research cycle explored, in dialogue with a co-researcher, how we became aware of our own taken-for-granted assumptions. Subsequent cycles extend the data to responses from practitioners less close to me.

Using the concept of researcher-as-bricoleur, a range of methodologies were employed. In the pre-cycle and first research cycle an auto-ethnograpahic approach captures the researcher's voice and that of a co-researcher. In later cycles a heuristic approach enabled the researcher to focus on the self and engage with her own and other practitioners' experiences of taken-for-granted assumptions. These cycles explored, through written capture sheets, conversational interviews and email exchanges, IAG practitioners' understanding of and engagement with reflection and reflective practice.

The research demonstrated different types and interpretations of reflection and reflective practice. Although practitioners described themselves as reflective and used self-reflection, this was insufficient to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. The research ascertained that assumptions regarding whiteness were difficult to

unearth, and were rarely acknowledged openly. Even less frequent was the sharing of unearthed assumptions with others.

The research revealed that reflective practice has itself become taken-for-granted and does not achieve what it advocates. The need to coach and nurture the skill of reflective practice is emphasised, with one of the data analysis tools – the 'I Poem' – proposed as a reflective tool for enhancing self awareness and assisting practitioners to examine their reflective journals and reveal their taken-for-granted voice.

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1.1 : Overview

In this chapter the research topic of taken-for-granted assumptions is introduced. In order to do this I firstly recall my own experience relating to this phenomenon and the awareness of my own whiteness. Secondly, I explain why this issue is important to me personally and justify why, as a profession, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioners should be considering these issues as significant to our practice. Thirdly, I summarise how my own experiences as the researcher shaped the research question, including how and why the research developed through its different stages. Fourthly, I discuss the development and refinement of the research question, explaining the aim and objectives of the research. I discuss briefly the three literature review chapters and how they were later revised and expanded upon. Lastly, the chapter presents an overview of the plan of the thesis.

This chapter is organised into the following sections:

1:2:   Reflections on my own taken-for-granted experience

1:3:   The relevance of my taken-for-granted assumptions to the overarching research question.

1:4:   The research journey: How my experience as a researcher shaped the research question

1:5:   The process of refining the research question and objectives

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1.2 : Reflections on my own taken-for-granted experience

The present research originated from my empirical practice and my developing awareness of the taken-for-granted assumptions that I held, specifically in relation to my whiteness. To contextualise the origins of the research and the thesis as a whole, this chapter recounts the personal narrative that was the catalyst for my critical self enquiry and which triggered my first awareness of my taken-for-granted assumptions (cf. Box. 1: 3)[1]. Preceding this narrative are two pen pictures, which further frame the narrative, providing supplementary information, including the background to the key actors, Shahida and myself (cf. Box. 1.1 & 1.2), and the situation in which she and I found ourselves[2].

Box 1.1: Pen portrait: Shahida

Shahida (aged 25 years) came to England twelve months prior to our meeting. She had come with her husband, who was here as part of his professional development. They had been granted entry to the UK for two years, and once he had completed his training they were to return to Pakistan. Shahida had been educated to University level in her own country. She had been married for six years and had two small children. Back at home they lived within a family structure, where Shahida had spent little time with her husband, and they rarely made decisions for themselves or their children. Shahida was referred to the European Social Fund (ESF) project by a local outreach worker – she needed support to gain training, voluntary work and/or employment. We had been meeting for several months as client and provider, and as our relationship developed we had shared aspects of each other's lives: family, husband and tales of children. I enjoyed meeting with Shahida. She was very likeable, and she had an inner glow, and seemed to radiate this.

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[1] Throughout the thesis text boxes will be used to present pen portraits, extracts, narratives etc.

[2] Within this story, and elsewhere in the thesis, I have changed the names of the individuals and the places where we met in order to protect their identity

> **Box 1.2: Pen portrait: Liz**
>
> *I (Liz, 44) had been born in Liverpool. I am white. My parents had both worked since about the age of fourteen and classed themselves as working class. We lived in a council house on a council estate, in an area of Liverpool that was predominantly 'white'. During my teen years, the estate experienced high unemployment and drug misuse, and more recently found itself subject to major media coverage due to the killing of schoolboy Rhys Jones. At the age of eighteen I moved to Preston, Lancashire to undertake a Degree. I was the first in my family to do so. Later I married and had two children, returning to education at the age of 39, gaining a Certificate in Education, followed by a degree. Shortly after this, I obtained employment with a national charity to deliver an ESF project in East Lancashire.*

The two pen pictures above give some background information about Shahida and myself, thereby helping to contextualise the following narrative which gives an insight into my journey of unearthing aspects of my taken-for-granted assumptions.

Box 1.3: The beginning of my understanding….

I sat in the same old run down room in the local Community Centre where I had worked for the past few months. That day I had already seen a few of the women who I met there regularly. I remember thinking 'Shahida is coming soon' and how I was looking forward to seeing her, to hear of her progress and what steps she would take next to forward her career development.

She arrived as usual. It was nice to see her. I was eager to see her. Since we had been working together she had attended some of the one day courses I had organised in the Community Centre. I had seen how she had changed, developed and grown in confidence. From this progress we had worked together to secure her work experience. She really wanted to work with children, and we managed to arrange a placement for her in a nursery, at a local after school club and with a school. This time my expectation was that we would look at the next steps, possibly some full time/permanent work. However, I couldn't have been more wrong.

She came into the usual room and sat down. I remember thinking that she did not seem her usual self, and I could see by the expression on her face something was concerning her. We started with our normal catch up, and then she said '…*It has been decided that I have to go back to Pakistan*….' It wasn't her choice to return. She was concerned. She went on to tell me how, whilst in Pakistan, she had also experienced what she described as cruelty from her husband's Grandmother. She was frightened of returning back to a time and place in the past, as since leaving Pakistan both she and her husband had experienced different lives in the UK. She spoke about the people here, who were nice to her and her family. I remember feeling conscious of our differences, or was it me feeling uneasy, of how I could or should respond? I was conscious that here I was, a white western woman, who has been brought up amongst different surroundings, values and beliefs. I realised that my response to her was different to that which I would have given to one of my peers, and may well be very different to my own response in this situation.

[3]*I remember struggling with the conversation. All the time we talked I was conscious of trying to keep the conversation on track. My mind was shouting out: 'Don't go. Talk to your husband. Explain your feelings. Ask him to stand by you.'*

However, I managed to keep the conversation on track and we discussed the reasons for her feelings. I was conscious of my power at this point, and on reflection realise that my response originated partly from the professional part of my being, my professional standpoint. After we had met, I continued to run through parts of our conversation in my mind's eye. On returning home, I recounted the story to my husband, and talked to him about how powerless and moved I had felt that day.

Should I have said anything different? Could I have said to her the things that were going round my mind? Would it have made any difference to the situation for her? Did I say what she expected? Did she want the response that was in my mind?

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[3] Material in bold highlights: my subconscious thoughts and questions during the event.

1.3 : The relevance of my taken-for-granted assumptions to the overarching research question

This section aims to explore why the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions is important and relevant, firstly, to me as a person and practitioner, and to my own journey towards self understanding and improving my practice; and, secondly, as the researcher who wants to better understand how the phenomenon impacts on the profession of Information, Advice and Guidance.

My first awareness of my response to Shahida, my subsequent journal entries and my engagement with relevant literature (Thompson, 2003) all helped me in the process of becoming a more critical practitioner, reflecting on past experiences and thinking more deeply about them to gain greater understanding of the taken-for-granted aspects of myself and my practice. Through the prelude or 'pre-cycle' of my PhD journey I began to question openly my own practice and, as a consequence, I suddenly became conscious that I was a white western woman, living in a western world. This difference between me and my clients had never occurred to me in the past, and the critical reflection highlighted my taken-for-granted assumptions and assisted me in seeing my previously unconscious awareness of the possible power and authority I might have held over others. I described these experiences and insights in my journal as eureka moments and/or 'symbolic growth' (Moustakas, 1990) – where I suddenly had a shift in my perception of the world, altering my world view. The research was fundamentally shaped by my own self critical insights. I began to question how I, as a white western woman, could give advice and guidance to individuals from different ethnic groups, without having any knowledge or thought of how my whiteness and lack of multi-cultural awareness may affect our working relationship and ultimately the guidance I gave – my perceptions of their needs.

My experience of taken-for-granted assumptions is key to this research (Moustakas, 1990). So too is my narrative, specifically my confessional tale (cf. Box 1:3: The beginning of my understanding). I have found that when I have shared my narrative with others, this has been the trigger for them to share their own experiences with me. In doing this they have openly disclosed aspects of their own taken-for-granted assumptions, and one person, referred to as Jane, later became a participant and co-researcher (cf. *Chapter 7: Data set one*). I noted one of Jane's comments, reproduced in Box 1.4, in my reflective journal.

Box 1.4: Extract One from my own reflective journal (March 2007)

Jane said how 'My practice in the past with ethnic women may have done them an injustice and (I realise) that I had indeed worked with these individuals against my own belief systems instead of theirs'

Jane's comments both reinforced my original concerns and helped to validate the research question. Here was another white practitioner working with people from different ethnic groups, who had previously done so with little thought of her own assumptions and awareness of the influence of her own whiteness. I hypothesised that other white practitioners might be doing the same. I wondered if they were aware that they might hold taken-for-granted assumptions. Were they able to unearth or question their own assumptions? Specifically, were they aware of their inherent 'power' resulting from their own 'whiteness'? I further wondered whether the practitioners were aware that their assumptions could have an impact on their ability to interact effectively across cultural, ethnic, class and gender differences.

I reflected on my experience as IAG practitioner in East Lancashire, and questioned the delivery of frontline Information, Advice and Guidance by white practitioners, some of whom may not have held relevant qualifications. Many organisations such as

the Jacymay Trust[4], a national charity, received government funding to deliver projects that had target outcomes in terms of the number of clients seen and placed in education, training and employment. However, some of the practitioners, including myself, who were employed on such projects lacked qualifications for the task, but were nonetheless expected to draw down funding and achieve the projects' promised outcomes. Hence the delivery becomes target driven. Although I lacked relevant qualifications, I single-handedly delivered a European Social Fund (ESF) project worth £125K. My manager and administrative support were based in Liverpool, I worked remotely from home, and no one observed my practice. I became increasingly aware that I was isolated and ill prepared for the work I was to undertake, and furthermore lacked the opportunity to discuss my practice with other professionals. My reflections became more focused and I questioned how both unqualified and qualified practitioners became conscious of their own taken-for-granted practice.

Information, Advice and Guidance professionals are expected to adhere to a plethora of professional standards and codes of practice which in recent years have been reviewed and revised many times. As part of the Department for Education's Education and Skills Bill (2008) local authorities were given responsibility for providing careers guidance in England through Connexions. In anticipation of the changes brought about by the Bill, the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) developed guidance in the form of the Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (2007) which set out the DCSF expectations and outlined what they deemed to be good practice. Each of the quality standards has a number of indicators against them and these were to be used to assess the standard of practitioner and the services' performance. The fifth standard was of particular relevance to my research. It required that 'Information, advice and guidance services

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[4] This is a fictitious name used in order to preserve the organisation's anonymity

promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes', with indicators of success being that:

> (i) services are sensitive to the faith, cultural, and family background that people come from, and

> (ii) stereotypes and limited career aspirations are challenged, for example through the use of positive actions activities, taster sessions, the use of appropriate role models and work placements

Based on my own experience, I had doubts about whether this standard and, in particular the actual indicators, were routinely being achieved by IAG practitioners. Subsequently, I found myself questioning how IAG practitioners are equipped by way of training and/or support to understand and be sensitive to service users' faith or ethnicity. I questioned whether practitioners' training assisted them to use their reflective practice to gain consciousness about their practice in order to shape and transform it (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

It is also relevant to note that, with changing governments come changes in direction and in the provision of guidance to the public. The danger here is that the recommended changes may reflect aspects of the prevailing political agenda rather than genuine improvements at the point of delivery. This may serve ultimately to erode the professional standards of qualified Advice and Guidance practitioners (Watts, 2003).

The qualifications prescribed for IAG practitioners have been the subject of much criticism over the years, specifically in relation to how they do not equip practitioners to use reflection, and, even less, how practitioners might begin to unearth their own taken-for-granted assumptions. Thus, the Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG) has been criticised for 'lacking a practical dimension' (McGowan *et al,* 2009). The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) (2009) noted

that NVQs have undergone many revisions since they were first developed in the 1990s. However, despite these revisions, the NVQs were still criticised for failing to give practitioners the necessary underpinning of theoretical knowledge (McGowan *et al*, 2009). The concerns relating to both NVQ and QCG qualifications were of significant relevance to the present research. In particular, whilst it is noted that both qualifications include aspects of reflective practice, I became concerned as to the degree to which these qualifications actually equipped practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. Nonetheless, reflective practice was certainly advocated. Thus, Life Long Learning UK (LLUK) (2009) emphasised that reflective practice should be engaged with through continuing professional development (CPD) and become part of practitioners' 'mindset' throughout their professional life. Additionally, Cedefop (2009) stressed how frameworks are there to support and remind IAG practitioners that we all hold our own personal philosophies and world-views: social, cultural, economic and personal circumstances, and personal values. It is, therefore, seen as each career guidance practitioner's responsibility to develop high levels of reflective practice (Cedefop, 2009).

However, whilst the qualifications currently delivered incorporate aspects of ethical and reflective practice, they lack the support needed for IAG practitioners to develop strong reflective practice ability or capacity. Therefore, the goal for this research project is to help IAG professionals become aware of and address their lack of insight and criticality with regard to themselves, their practice and the wider implications for society.

The topic of taken-for-granted assumptions is critically important to the guidance provided by IAG practitioners. It also has wider ramifications for society as a whole and these implications are reviewed within the three literature review chapters (chapters 2, 3 and 4). They also contribute to the discussion in the final chapter of the thesis.

1.4 : The research journey: How my experience as a researcher shaped the research question

On starting my PhD journey back in 2006 I began to question whether the Government's Every Child/Youth Matters (2003) policy would reach those who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), especially those who were from ethnic minority groups, particularly young women. I had worked in East Lancashire with women of Asian Heritage and I had seen first hand some of the barriers they faced – not only the expectations of family, but also the preconceptions held by other IAG practitioners. I became concerned that the relevant policies concerning IAG may not be fit for purpose in that I doubted that they were appropriate for these clients' experiences, and that this was causing dissonance in my practice. I reflected on my own doubts about the relevance and effectiveness of Government policies such as 'Every Child Matters (2003)'. I started to critically reflect on my own practice, recalling a number of past experiences from my time in East Lancashire (cf. Box 1.3). I recorded these reflections in journal entries, in conjunction with my emergent thoughts, which came about through reading literature on anti-discriminatory practice. These journal reflections/recordings were the means by which I started to become more aware of my own taken-for-granted assumptions (Moon, 2004). Through the narrative journal writing I became conscious of the likely significance of being a white woman working as a development officer within the Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) community.

1.5 : The process of refining the research question and objectives

Since the start of this journey in 2006 several factors have led me to revisit my original research question: *'Has the Every Child Matters agenda improved outcomes of those young people aged 16-19 who were Not in Education, Employment or*

Training (NEET)?' It became clear that the underlying issues affecting successful policy outcomes were highly complex and often far removed from the daily concerns of those working as frontline IAG practitioners. I was gradually becoming aware of the importance of issues surrounding – for example - race, culture, 'taken-for-granted' attitudes and the impact of my own whiteness on the outcomes of the role I had in fulfilling the aims of the Jacymay Trust (cf. *Section 1:3.*).

Thus, along the journey of becoming more self-critical, my research question was reframed. This was triggered partly by my reviewing of the National Quality Standards (2007) developed to assist organisations in their delivery of IAG. At the time, the standards incorporated the promoting of equal opportunity, celebrating diversity and challenging stereotypes. I questioned how organisations were going to ensure that practitioners would understand and be sensitive to service users' individual faiths, when it was likely these same practitioners were unaware that they held taken-for-granted assumptions. My research question therefore shifted from a focus on the 'outcomes' of the service to an explicit focus on the 'practitioners' who were delivering that service. Specifically, I was asking: *'How do practitioners gain awareness of their taken-for-granted attitudes, assumptions and prejudices?'*

However, I was also interested in how this awareness relates to and/or manifests itself in practice. Does it or could it lead to a greater understanding of difference (between self and clients; between self and other practitioners)? I also wondered how the qualifications we engage with as professionals equip us to undertake this journey towards achieving high levels of personal reflectiveness (Cedefop (2009) (cf. *1:3:*). This became the overarching focus of my study and it led to a further, and final, reframing of the research question: *'The role of reflection in Information, Advice and Guidance practice, with particular reference to becoming aware of the role of taken-for-granted assumptions'.*

1.5.1 : Overview of research topic

Taken-for-granted assumptions, and specifically those concerning whiteness, is a topic that is relatively unexplored within the field of Information, Advice and Guidance, despite the fact that a number of aligned helping professions (mainly in the United States and a few in the United Kingdom), have highlighted concerns relating to this as a phenomenon (Ryde, 2011). The main research issue addressed in this thesis is the question of how reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity can assist IAG practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of self. Several specific supplementary questions are addressed, including:

- Practitioners lack of awareness regarding their taken-for-granted assumptions.
- Training and professional codes of practice as barriers to identifying and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions.
- The 'I-Poem' as a tool for promoting reflection that unearths taken-for-granted assumptions.

The research itself has developed through a number of iterative cycles. In the preliminary or pre-cycle phase I began by focusing on empirical observations of my own practice (cf. *Chapter 1: Box 1. 3: The beginning of my understanding*). The first main cycle of the research (cf. *Chapter 7: Data Results: Data set one*) sought to test my thoughts and fears in dialogue with an ex-colleague, Jane. The aim was to understand how the co-researcher and I became aware of our own taken-for-granted differences, and how our journey of awareness developed. The second cycle (cf. *Chapter 8: Data Results: Data set two*) aimed to extend the data by including the responses of practitioners who were less close to me. The starting point for this expansion was the analysis and discussion from the first cycle which had ultimately concluded that it is difficult to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions and that it is even more difficult to change our assumptions and stereotypes. The third cycle (cf.

Chapter 9: Data Results: Data set three) sought out a further group of practitioners with a view to testing the results from the data analysis of research cycle two and, specifically, evaluate the role and usefulness of the 'I Poem'.

Whilst a significant review of relevant literature was completed early in the research process, as I progressed through the analysis and findings presented in chapters 7, 8 and 9, it became necessary to review, revise and expand on that which was already written. Chapter 2, the first of the literature review chapters, includes a discussion of taken-for-granted assumptions and whiteness. This chapter had largely been written early in the research process, but subsequent modification led to the addition of a section on the concept of categorization. In addition the discussion of whiteness became more focused on practice implications for white practitioners. Along with the concept of categorization, the concept of personal knowledge - how it is formed, and how it impinges on professional knowledge – emerged as an area of the literature that warranted attention. An examination of this topic therefore forms the basis of the second literature review chapter, *Chapter 3: Personal Knowledge and its role in professional practice*. The final literature review chapter (i.e. *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice*) had, like chapter 2, been drafted early in the research process. It, too, was subsequently revised and expanded.

1.6 : Plan of the thesis

Previous sections in this introductory chapter have strived to communicate the dynamic, evolving nature of the present research. However, whilst the research experience is far from a step-by-step linear process, this is the form in which, for the sake of clarity, a thesis needs to be written. The chapter ends, therefore, with a summary of the structure of the thesis. This is designed to provide the reader with a clear pathway through the research, even though, in the process, it may make the research seem tidier and more straightforward than was actually the case.

Chapter 1: Introduction introduces the research topic by way of my own narrative. It explains why the research topic is important and justifies researching the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. It describes the refining of the research questions, the aims and objectives of the research, and provides a plan of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice discusses the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice. It brings together literature from three different fields: taken-for-granted assumptions, categorization and whiteness. It provides definitions and explanations of these three concepts and then discusses why they are important to professional practice within the field of Information, Advice and Guidance.

Chapter 3: Personal knowledge and its role in professional practice discusses 'Personal Knowledge' - how this type of knowledge is constructed, how it contributes to taken-for-granted assumptions and to our professional practice. It also addresses the issue of why it is necessary to question our personal knowledge, and its impact on professional practice.

Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice discusses how the terms reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity are used on an everyday basis. It considers the lack of clarity and layers of complexity relating to the terms and definitions, and how this causes confusion in discussions on reflection. It explores not so much how these approaches directly improve our practice, but, rather, how they help us to unearth parts of ourselves that we have taken for granted, a process which might, in turn, contribute to improving practice.

Chapter 5: Methodology discusses the methodological framework underpinning the research design.

Chapter 6: Methods: The research design and the research process recounts the research procedure; that is, the steps taken to collect and analyse data, and the rationale behind them.   This chapter focuses on what was done and how the research evolved through three iterative cycles.

Chapter 7: Data Results: Data set one discusses the methods of analysis and the findings from cycle one of the research.

Chapter 8: Data Results: Data set two discusses the methods of analysis and the findings from cycle two of the research.

Chapter 9: Data Results: Data set three discusses the methods of analysis and the findings from cycle three of the research.

Chapter 10: Discussion of research findings presents a summary of the findings for the three cycles of the research and discusses them in more depth. It also considers the limits of the present research study, the implications of the research for training, practice and society, and also how the research can be developed and extended 'post PhD'.

1.7 : Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research topic by way of a personal narrative that recounts my insight into the existence and significance of my own taken-for-granted assumptions when working with young ethnic minority women. It has touched on why the research topic is important for me as an individual, a researcher and a practitioner. In so doing it has aimed to justify researching the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. The chapter has also described the refining of the research question, briefly summarised the aims and objectives of the study, and provided an outline of the thesis structure.

2   : TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED ASSUMPTIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

2.1 : Overview

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice. In order to do this, it brings together literature from three different fields: taken-for-granted assumptions, categorization and whiteness. The chapter considers each of these in turn, including the definition and explanation of each concept, and then discusses why they are important to professional practice within the field of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). It is argued that taken-for-granted assumptions are associated with the power and privilege that come into play in the role of the practitioner. These phenomena are difficult to examine as, on the surface, taken-for-granted assumptions may not appear to exist and are therefore invisible, certainly in relation to whiteness (Kincheloe *et al,* 1998).

Much of the research in this chapter originated in the US and in the fields of counselling and psychotherapy, which are aligned with the IAG profession. This suggests a gap in UK-based research generally, and a further gap relating to how these phenomena are addressed within the current IAG standards and training of the profession. This is of particular relevance to the hypothesis of the present research that white practitioners may have given little or no thought to their own taken-for-granted assumptions and may be unaware of the assumptions that they hold. Specifically they may lack awareness of their inherent 'power' resulting from their 'whiteness'. This may blind them as to how they interact with their clients and colleagues across cultural, ethnic, class and gender differences.

The sections included in this chapter are as follows:

2:2: The nature of taken-for-granted assumptions

2:3: Categorization and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted assumptions

2:4: Whiteness and its role in professional practice

2:5: Implications for training

2.2 : The nature of taken-for-granted assumptions

One very important aspect of motivation is the willingness to stop and to look at things that no one else has bothered to look at. This simple process of focusing on things that are normally taken-for-granted is a powerful source of creativity.

Edward De Bono (1992, p. 46)

Chapter 1 of this thesis documents how the present research came to address taken-for-granted issues relating to my own practice and how this raised subsequent questions about practice and the IAG profession as a whole: How do practitioners become conscious of difference (Weiler, 1995) and of taken-for-granted assumptions, and what are the implications for clients, practice and wider society if practitioners are not conscious of how that might affect their practice?

Weiler (1988) discusses Freire's 'belief in the power of individuals to come to a critical consciousness of their own being in the world' (p. 17). Holland *et al,* (1995) discuss Freire's concept of conscientization and define this as 'coming to a consciousness of oppression' (p. 27). However, the present research is aimed at the unknowing oppressor, rather than the oppressed. It is aimed at practitioners who are unwitting oppressors because they are unaware of their taken-for-granted assumptions. It is

interesting to debate how such practitioners become conscious of their own power, and how they can then be enabled to make changes to their practice and benefit the wider society. Lago & Haugh (2006) suggest that changes of such magnitude generally originate from within the oppressed groups themselves and come about because they are fuelled by injustice or the current powerlessness of minority oppressed groups. However, the tide is turning and in more recent years a number of scholars have called for dominant groups, i.e. whites, to take responsibility for social oppression (Todd & Abrams, 2011). The question is to find the driver or trigger for this particular change given that, as 'white' people, we do not experience the same level of oppression or injustice.

The literature relating to discrimination and anti-discriminatory practice gives context to the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. It will be considered through the framework of Thompson's (2012) description of how discrimination operates on three interconnected and mutually reinforcing levels: the personal, the cultural and the structural. This he describes as the PCS model (see Figure 2.1). 'P' is the personal or psychological level – where thoughts, feelings, views and attitudes of an individual exist; 'C' is the cultural level, which focuses on the shared ways we see the world; and S is the structural level, the network of social divisions that make up society.

The PCS framework for analysing discrimination is a key element of this research and, as such, is revisited at the end of this chapter and at the end of the subsequent literature review chapters 3 and 4. At each point the diagram is populated with concepts from that literature review chapter which have particular relevance to the PCS model of analysis.

Figure 2.1: Thompson's (2011) PCS framework for analysis of discrimination
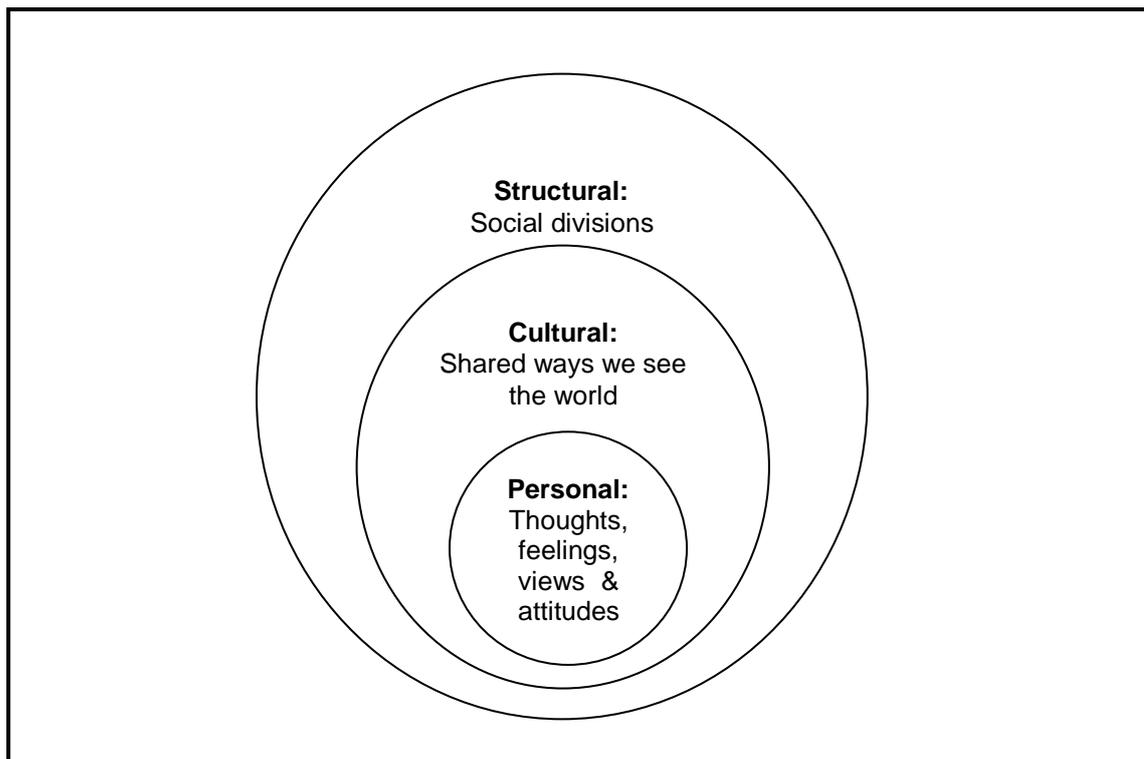
Thompson (2012) explores and emphasises how important the cultural level is in relation to the concept of discrimination and oppression, and how interactions through humour and language assist in excluding or marginalizing individuals, thereby reinforcing the concept of 'us-them'. Language and humour are important facets especially when challenging discrimination. As Applebaum (2006) argues: 'If the language we use structures reality, influences behaviour, and shapes thoughts, beliefs, and feelings, it is important to be alert for language drawn upon in the service of antiracist discourse and research that might actually reinscribe different facets of social in justice' (Applebaum, 2006, p. 345).

Thompson (2012) draws on the work of Berger & Luckmann (1967) to add further explanation of how discrimination is embedded in everyday life, thereby becoming taken-for-granted and resulting in discriminatory assumptions becoming invisible. Berger & Luckmann (1967) highlight 'commonsense knowledge' which they say is

'knowledge of others' and is shared with others through 'the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life' (p. 23). Van Holthoon & Olson (1987) also make reference to shared knowledge, describing it as 'knowledge that all of us can take for granted that we are the same and that we share similar knowledge in all practically relevant respects' (ibid. p. 249). Eraut (2001) links this to professional groups, pointing out that professionals, whether novice or experienced, have already acquired a great deal of knowledge from the cultural setting in which they grew up. Importantly, Eraut (2001) stresses that this knowledge needs to be critically controlled, arguing that in order to do this practitioners need to develop a 'greater awareness' of how knowledge (specifically personal knowledge) is used in practice (cf. *Chapter 3: Personal knowledge and its role in professional practice*).

Eraut (2001) further notes that practitioners also need to understand and re-examine how 'impressions' or taken-for-granted assumptions can contribute to or distort the professional knowledge that they use in practice (cf. *2:3: Categorization and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted assumptions*). In his discussion of taken-for-grantedness, Thompson (2011) emphasises the 'negative side' of this phenomenon, arguing that when practitioners hold their culturally-based assumptions to be true they 'see the world from within the narrow confines' of their own culture, so they may then go on to project their own 'norms and values on to other groups of people' (ibid. p. 28). As discussed in chapter 1, the present research began with the hypothesis that a number of 'white' practitioners who work with individuals from different ethnic groups may do so without any thought of how their own whiteness might blinker their practice. (This is discussed further in Section *2:4: Whiteness and its role in professional practice*).

Page *et al* (2007) stress how 'negative perceptions and images of minority ethnic groups' (p. 3) can affect the professional relationship between service user, client and professional. Similarly, on reviewing the literature on minority ethnic parents and

childcare provision, Box *et al* (2001) noted evidence from The Children and Parental Service indicating that staff had 'ambivalent attitudes to race, which influenced their treatment of black and minority ethnic children and their parents' (p. 6). They emphasised that there is a need for 'training to help staff to respond more positively to minority ethnic families' (p. 12).

The phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions holds similarities with notions of 'colour ignore-ance' which are described as 'sincere fictions' (Feagin, 2001). Feagin argues that people are sincere in their belief that they do not discriminate against people of colour, a similar scenario to those who take-for-granted their own whiteness (this concept is discussed further in Section *2:4:1: 'Whiteness' and its meaning*). Applebaum (2006) discusses how such misguided sincerity and ignorance is dangerous. It is dangerous for society, because such ignorance could prevent 'white people from interrogating their own assumptions about race and thus leaves the normative assumptions about whiteness unspoken and unaddressed' (p. 347). In this way, whiteness has the capacity to go unnoticed (McIntosh, 1988), at least by those who are white, if not by those who are not (Ryde, 2011). King (1991) emphasises how enabling others to be critical is of crucial importance, asking her students direct questions about being racist, not '…to prove her students are racists….' but to engage their '…uncritical and limited ways of thinking' (p. 342).

In order to understand further the origins of these assumptions, Thompson (2011) argues that our 'world-view' and 'our thoughts, actions and interactions pass through the filter of one or more ideologies' (p. 33). These ideologies are our own systems of beliefs. As human beings, he argues, 'we rely on a set of assumptions that underpin, guide and constrain how we conduct ourselves' (p. 33). This 'set of assumptions' becomes 'habits of belief' (Billig, 2001, p. 217-18) which, in turn, reinforce taken-for-granted assumptions. The way people behave becomes the norm; the norm which they believe, without question, is right. Practitioners are not immune from this

process, and therefore their beliefs play a part in how they construct their identity and see themselves (Thompson, 2011). The 'habits of belief' and/or taken-for-granted assumptions are routinely reinforced through everyday life: 'through taken-for-granted thoughts, feelings and actions which both reflect and reinforce existing social relations and divisions' (Thompson, 2011, p. 47)**.** Habits of belief then feed into social structures of society, including those of power and domination (Donald & Rattansi, 1992). This leads to greater divisions within society, with those who hold the power also gaining rewards from the power they hold, including wealth and advances in technology etc (Ryde, 2011). Such processes potentially increase the 'us and them' distinction between IAG practitioners and their clients. Eraut (2001) acknowledges the need for us to examine and have greater awareness of our own taken-for-granted assumptions if such assumptions are not to distort practice, including the provision of advice and guidance.

Taken-for-granted assumptions relate not only to race and whiteness, but can also encompass disability, class and gender. Whilst the immediate focus is on race, the whole idea of challenging ignorance embodied in the form of taken-for-granted assumptions is central to the present research. Without this challenge we will maintain rather than transform the taken-for-granted *status quo* – that is, individuals' assumptions, prejudices and behaviours (Kemmis, 2006).

2.3 : Categorization and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted assumptions

2.3.1 : Introduction

The previous section outlined how social groups, through experiences and knowledge, develop shared belief systems including taken-for-granted assumptions or beliefs, which have a bearing on professional practice. It also stressed the dangers associated with not questioning our assumptions. However, shared belief systems

can also serve positive functions. Thus, Frost (1980) argues that without these shared assumptions life would be bewildering and incomprehensible as we would have no frame of reference. Similarly, Thompson (2011) proposes that our belief systems are our frames of reference and our 'world-view', underpinning and guiding us through everyday life. This section introduces the process of categorization as an inherent cognitive mechanism through which our brain manages and orders the masses of information it receives and processes (Reid & Bassot, 2011).

2.3.2   : Categorization

The concept of categorization is derived from Allport's (1954) insightful work into the 'psychology of prejudice' and remains core to current theories relating to stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (Fiske *et al,* 1998). It has been fundamental in understanding how 'adaptive cognitive and motivational process' (Dovidio *et al,* 2005, p. 71) can be instrumental in the development and maintenance of prejudice. Focusing on social categorization, Allport (1954/1979) writes: 'the human mind must think with the aid of categories.... Once formed, categories are the bases for normal prejudgement. We cannot possibly avoid this process' (p. 20). Ultimately, the function of categorization is to promote cognitive efficiency and preserve cognitive resources through taking cognitive shortcuts rather than questioning every observation (Fiske *et al*, 1998).

Allport (1954/ 1979) outlines five attributes of categorization:

1. Informed by experience, the human mind forms large clusters of information (categories) that steer 'daily adjustments' and are used to make sense of the world.

2. Human beings continue to use familiar categories 'as it is the easy option' (ibid. p. 21) and, where possible, new information is assimilated into an existing category.

3. The human mind identifies 'related objects' whereby an event or experience has a 'cue' that brings the 'category of prejudgement into action'. Categories linked to negative attitudes or beliefs tend to dominate our responses mainly because these are deep rooted in our own cultural values and beliefs. Categories are linked to 'what we see, how we judge, and what we do' (p. 21), irrespective of whether past judgements have been right or wrong.

4. Categories are both ideational and emotional in characteristic. For instance, we see a tree and identify it as such. Despite the concept of a tree being derived from our experiences of hundreds of kinds of individual trees it has essentially one ideational meaning – a tree. Attached to a category could be an additional feeling, of like or dislike. This is its emotional aspect. To relate this to the present research an example of this process is seen in *Chapter 7. Box 7.3* and *Chapter 9. Box 9.21b* when both Jane and Carol talk about their views concerning young women with children.

5. Categories can be rational or irrational. Rational categories are based on facts, i.e. scientific laws, whilst irrational categories form without evidence and are intensified by emotions and feelings. Irrational prejudgements can disregard contrary evidence and be resistant to change. This is due to our 're-fencing' device, which acknowledges new information but acts as a barrier, stopping new information from being absorbed. The categories and prejudgements we hold are 'approved and supported' by friends, family and associates. We find comfort in others holding similar categories. We do not contradict them, and hence the categories we hold will maintain the status quo (Allport, 1954). Thus, the status quo is generated by our culture, the culture we inhabit. However, there are two situations where the 're-fence' device will not preclude new information.   Firstly, if an individual has a 'habitually open minded' mindset and is continually suspicious of labels, categories and sweeping statements, then new information

will not be precluded. Secondly, new information will not be precluded when the individual identifies a self-interest and can see that something is to be gained from accepting the new belief.

During the late 1970's and 1980's Allport's (1954/1979) conclusions on the normality of prejudice and stereotyping and Tajfel's (1970) insights into categorization of people into groups were researched further in the U.S., thereby expanding theories on stereotyping as a by-product of human cognitive processes (Fiske *et al*, 1998). Allport's (1954) and Tajfel's (1970) research and subsequent research focused on the concepts of 'them and us', or 'in-group' and 'out-group', and how this encourages individuals to stereotype people into groups and compare and marginalise people who are outside their own group. Whilst this research is important, as it reinforces the idea of shared dominant group normality, for present purposes the main focus is on how or whether, in relation to prejudice, categorisation is an unconscious automatic response; what aids this categorization; and how it links to taken-for-granted attitudes and beliefs.

Fiske *et al* (1998) noted how fifty years of research confirms the deep rooted nature of prejudice, and how current thinking maintains that 'automatic categorization and automatic associations to categories are the major culprits in the endurance of bias' (p. 364). He notes that in the decades since Allport carried out his work, further research has unanimously concluded that human beings have the tendency to categorise each other. Furthermore, and concurring with Allport's findings, it is also concluded that categorizations are made rapidly and, apparently, automatically. Fiske, Gilbert & Lindzey (2010) further comment that whether categorization is automatic or not, it still holds many ramifications for judgements and assumptions made by people. Both of these factors – categorization and the automaticity with which this can happen - have implications for IAG practitioners and for society as a whole.

2.3.3   : Memories assist judgements

Fiske *et al* (1998) discusses the role of memories in the process of categorization, concluding that retained memories assist the efficient processing of information, but may also 'contaminate' any new information or 'data'. His research demonstrated how memory bias sustains stereotypical beliefs, and how this then reinforces taken-for-granted assumptions, ensuring that they become even more deep rooted. Both cognitive limitations and long term memories result in human beings preferring to bypass the individual and their particular characteristics and, instead, order their thoughts based on social categories such as race, gender and age (Macrae *et al,* 2000). We are only surprised, argues Macrae *et al* (2000), if someone acts or behaves differently from our expectations. This confirms the part memory plays in how we categorise people.

The role of memory in categorization is relevant to the present research, as is the evidence which confirms that memories assist our judgements. Memories start to form at an early age and therefore, if reinforced, may factor in the prejudgements we make and the taken-for-granted assumptions we hold.

2.3.4   : Automatic verses controllable categorization

Many writers (e.g. Devine, 1989; Macrae *et al,* 1997a, 1997b; Spencer *et al,* 1998; Bargh, 1999) have contributed to the debate on automatic categorization, questioning the conditional or unconditional aspects of automatic categorization. Fiske *et al* (2010) raise the issue of whether researchers have overestimated the extent to which category activation is controllable, with Bargh (1999) believing that previous research has been overly optimistic about our capacity to control the 'cognitive monster' of automatic stereotype activation. Whilst this debate is still unresolved, the evidence does suggest that automatic categorization is strongly implicated in how our minds process information. Lippmann (1922), Allport (1954) and Van Knippenberg *et al* (1999) conclude that a lack of motivation, time, cognitive capacity, and cognitive

overload result in categorization becoming more stereotypical. Even if practitioners have 'good intentions and effortful thought' (Bargh, 1999, p. 362) they are still unlikely to be able to control automatic categorization.

2.3.5 : Personal values as a dominant category

The present research is focused on our taken-for-granted assumptions and how we unearth our attitudes and beliefs. The previous discussion concluded that as human beings it is easier to use the categories we already hold rather than develop new ones, and that these may be resistant to change, despite evidence of their limitations.

It is important to note that our personal values are not merely a category on a par with other categories, but may be the category that we hold most dear and which we live by (Allport, 1954/1979). As a dominant category, our values are resistant to change irrespective of whether there is evidence to support them (Allport, 1954/ 1979). This places our values and beliefs, possibly founded on irrational thoughts or evidence, in a powerful position, capable of overriding rational categorization or thoughts. Furthermore, as our values are linked to 'feelings' (cf. *Section 2:3:2: Categorization*); it could be argued that any negative prejudice might be an impulse or a reaction that arises from our beliefs and values, reinforced through automatic categorization (Allport, 1954/1979). More recently, Macrae *et al* (2000) discuss the neurological bases of beliefs and values, identifying the neocortical system as holding people's generic beliefs. It is proposed that these beliefs are accumulated gradually into the neocortical system through repeated exposure to events. Since human beings' perceptions of the world need to be stable, the neocortical system that holds our beliefs, expectancies and norms is 'highly resistant to modification or change' (Macrae *et al,* 2000, p. 94).

2.3.6 : Control as a dominant category

The question arises of what can facilitate a change in the dominating nature of a category and how we might utilise this when making judgements in day to day life.

Earlier, in the discussion of Allport's (1954/1979) 're-fencing' device, it was noted that the device has the ability to decide not to preclude information. This happens when the individual perceives a benefit from the change of classification of a category. The evidence concludes that in this instance an individual can suppress the dominant nature of a category. Therefore, whether the category is activated or not can depend on external personal motivations and goals.

Fiske *et al* (1998) discuss the concept of the 'motivation tactician' – the ability to shift cognitive processing from a careless quick thinking style to a more thoughtful and measured style, depending on the degree of motivation. He also notes that recent work in this field links categorization with situational goals, and focuses on interaction within a given social context. Rothbart (1985) notes two models that could account for why individuals might modify their categorization of others. Firstly, he notes the Bookkeeping model, where change is guided by the gradual amassing of more uncomfortable than comfortable experiences. Second, is the Conversion model, where the individual experiences a devastating and powerful discrepancy between what they think they know and what they encounter. Strack and Hannover (1996) emphasise how it is paramount for individuals to be aware that they have these perceptions or assumptions in the first place.

Macrae (2000) echoes this, arguing that if individuals cannot even contemplate that they may have these thoughts, then they are unlikely to make any changes to avoid their prejudgements. Knowing is key. Once an individual is aware, then a number of strategies can be adopted. One strategy involves making adjustments that are in opposition to what the initial reaction might be. The other, more difficult, strategy

relies on the individual attempting to stop or control unwanted thoughts (Wegner, 1994). Macrae (2000) notes how this approach means that in order to stop the thoughts it is necessary to continuously keep in mind what those thoughts are. This runs the risk that instead of suppressing the thought, it becomes more likely to trigger a dominant thought or category. Utilising either of these two approaches can be stressful. Categorization is affected by motivators, time and the individual's ability to control unwanted negative categorizations.

2.3.7   : Application in professional practice

In recent years there has been a significant amount of research and discussion in the U.S. that considers the implications of the processes of metacognition for the professional practice of psychology, notably counselling psychology. Metacognition is the process of thinking about thinking. More specifically, it involves the process of accurately analysing one's cognitive processes and understandings, and effectively applying this insight to particular situations (Flavell, 1976). In sum, metacognition involves knowing what one knows and how best to accommodate and respond to this knowledge.

Metacognition features in the American Psychological Association's (APA) (2003) set of guidelines aimed at steering professionals through changing social and political contexts, and detailing the knowledge and skills needed to meet the requirements of government policies, of changing global markets and of individual clients resulting from changes in U.S society. This work, and, in particular, its application to issues of multicultural counselling, is very relevant to the present research and to the practice of guidance.

The APA (2003) guidelines place significant emphasis on the 'commitment to cultural awareness and knowledge of self and others'. They refer to Allport (1954), Tajfel & Turner (1986), Greenwald & Banaji (1995) and Fiske (1998), reiterating that

categories assist people to make sense of the world in which they live. Throughout the guidelines the points made in the previous discussion are upheld. They also reiterate that categorisation is useful for a number of reasons, 'including speed of processing and efficiency in use of cognitive resources, in part because it appears to happen fairly automatically' (APA, 2003, p. 383). The guidelines also emphasise how categorization tends to occur 'outside conscious processing', and how psychologists need to become aware of and sensitive to their own attitudes. Further, the guidelines stress the need for practitioners to understand their own world views so that, in turn, they can better understand others' frames of cultural reference. Ongoing development of 'one's personal and cross-cultural awareness' (APA, 2003, p. 384) is identified as a mechanism through which professionals might change the categories they use. The guidelines cite Fiske (1998), saying that the automatic bias can be controlled with the right motivation, information and mood. However, this rather sweeping generalisation ignores the points made in the earlier discussion concerning whether or to what extent this is actually the case, and also underplays the difficulties of controlling bias that is largely automatic or unconscious.

In the related profession of career counselling in the U.S., there is research which centres on developing a culturally appropriate career counselling model. Thus, whilst Byars-Winston *et al* (2006), for example, discuss the role of metacognition, they also focus on the counsellors' need for 'context-sensitive career counselling skills and understanding that acknowledge the impact of clients' cultural contexts on their career behaviour' (p. 187). Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) stress how it is critical that clients are understood within their cultural context to help professionals to 'understand how those differential experiences affect development and career choices (or lack of choice)' (p. 188). It proposes that gaining insights into clients' cultural contexts can improve counsellors' multicultural competence. Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) reiterate the APA's (2003) guidelines, and also draw attention to the

negative nature of categorization, stressing that if individuals are not part of the 'in group', but instead are associated with the 'out group', this could result in their being viewed from a negative perspective, reinforcing the effects of categorizations that we may hold of a stereotypical group.

The American Psychological Association (2003) stressed counsellors' need to gain insights into the 'self', and how they may be categorising their clients. Similarly, Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) argue that self-awareness and monitoring of the self are key to gaining insight into personal beliefs and behaviours.   However, Pedersen (1990) acknowledges that gaining this level of insight requires a high level of knowledge, awareness and skill, and encourages counsellors to take the time to understand themselves and their own cultural taken-for-granted assumptions. Kruger and Dunning's (1999) research demonstrates deficits in metacognition skills. Their research investigates how individuals assess their own performance, concluding that those who perform better (i.e. the top performers) tended to underestimate their ability, and those who do not perform well (i.e. the lower performers) were likely to overestimate their skills. Moreover, Kruger and Dunning (1999) note that the lower, or incompetent, performers 'reach mistaken conclusions and make regrettable errors' and furthermore 'their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it' (p. 1134). This evidence indicates how overconfidence can lead counsellors or, indeed, IAG practitioners, into believing that they know or understand themselves and a client's cultural context when in fact they do not. Kruger and Dunning (1999) challenge professionals to question themselves in relation to how effective they are with their clients, with Byars-Winston (2006) suggesting that this can be achieved through the development of metacognition. This, they claim, will enable the counsellor to 'anticipate or recognise error' (p. 193). Likewise, Nelson, Narens & Dunlosky (2004) support the idea that metacognition could be a way to assist counsellors since it 'focuses on people's self monitoring and self control of their own cognition' (p. 53).

Linking this to the earlier discussion suggests that metacognition might enable individuals to examine the categories they hold. Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) put forward the notion that metacognition can be a way of improving 'multicultural competence'. They acknowledge that social cognition research confirms that how counsellors react and respond to their clients depends on their previous experiences (Allport 1954, Rothbard 1981) and on their level of cognitive ability. Stewart (2002) argues that, if metacognition is to be the answer, then counsellors need to engage in ongoing self-reflection that examines their use of categories and also understand how these are in turn used to form judgements. (cf. *Chapter 3: What is reflection, how reflection is used in practice?).* Similarly, Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) see it as essential that 'counsellors bring their knowledge of their personal cultural contexts to the forefront of their thinking during the counselling process' (p. 192). In their discussion, Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) present their 'Culturally Appropriate Career Counselling Model' and identify a number of steps that they claim would assist counsellors (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Culturally Appropriate Career Counselling Model

Step 2: Identify career issues

Monitor: What is the client's cultural context and what are my reactions to that?

How might the client's information be conflicting?

Are there some career issues that I am willing to address more than others?

Are there some issues that I am avoiding?

Step 3: Cultural impact on career issues

Monitor: What are my own thoughts and reactions about the possible impact of cultural variables on career issues?

Are there some cultural variables that I emphasizing more than the client?

Step 4: Goal setting

Monitor: How are my goals appropriate for the client's cultural context?

Are there some gaps in my knowledge about what might be appropriate goals?

How will I respond if the client's goals differ from my own?

Step 5: Interventions

Evaluate: How helpful are my interventions?

On what basis am I determining how helpful my interventions are?

Step 1: Establishing a relationship

Plan: What is my plan for working with this client?

What are my gaps in my knowledge about the client's experience?

What are my strengths and areas of challenge?

What are my initial goals and intentions in working with this client?

Reclarify issues

Step 6: Decision making

Evaluate: What are the consequences of my behaviour or intervention strategy?

How culturally congruent are the counselling outcomes with the client's desired goals?

Whilst the aims of the Culturally Appropriate Career Counselling Model are laudable, it glosses over some of the problems of implementation. Thus, in Step 1: 'Establishing a relationship', it is proposed that counsellors need to examine gaps in their knowledge in relation to the client's context. This may, indeed, be deemed good practice, but it raises two concerns. Firstly, at this point the counsellor may not even have met the client, so must be relying on assumptions rather than experience. Secondly, there is no explicit opportunity in these steps or practice for counsellors to think about their own categorization or thinking. Whilst there is agreement that this thinking is paramount, thinking 'in the moment' is unlikely to be sufficient. Consideration of and reflection on these matters outside the counselling setting is also indicated.

Whilst the section above has noted the importance of metacognition, notably how the process can aid practitioners to think about their own thinking, frequently the concept is used in relation to notions of the self, self reflection, self regulation, and self monitoring. All of these capacities are dependent on professionals' ability to recognise when they lack the necessary knowledge and skills of self-awareness. Kruger and Dunning (1999) argue that if the professional is 'incompetent' and lacks knowledge of their own categorisations, then this itself precludes them from even recognising that this is a process or mind-set that they are relying on. They stress that the various terms such as metacognition, meta-memory and self-monitoring are all underpinned by the assumption that professionals have the ability to judge their own practice. They report on a number of studies concerned with the 'incompetent' and 'unaccomplished' undergraduates, and their findings suggest that incompetent individuals lack the level of metacognition needed to assess themselves accurately. They claim that these individuals have difficulty in recognising their level of ability, and also tend to overestimate their ability, even when shown how 'bad' their performance was in comparison to others. Ultimately, these individuals are unaware

that they lack the knowledge to perform well. More positively, Kruger and Dunning's (1999) studies offered a possible way of enabling individuals to develop their ability to self assess. In their research they provided the group with training in 'logical reasoning', believing that it would assist individuals to be better equipped when it came to self-assessment. The training was successful in that those individuals who had previously seriously overestimated their ability and performance were subsequently more accurate in their assessments of their self and level of ability.

Professionals, whether they are counsellors, psychologists or IAG practitioners, are being steered toward the use of the 'self' and to reflect on and monitor their assumptions (Byars-Winston *et al,* 2006). However, evidence suggests that practitioners who believe they are competent, or believe that their values and beliefs have no links to their practice, may lack the ability to unearth taken-for-granted attitudes. This has implications, some of which are still unknown, for clients, practice and society. Certainly, little is known about the impact of both clients' and counsellors' cultural factors on counselling outcomes (Heppner & Heppner, 2003), despite the fact that ignorance of taken-for-granted assumptions by practitioners could have a great impact on clients and their lives. Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) warn about the dangers of relying on categorization, certainly in relation to the 'in-group' / 'out-group' equation, and how those who are categorised as within the 'out-group' may automatically be seen negatively. They stress that career counsellors should critically consider the implications of not realizing that they had placed clients into a category with negative attributes. There is little doubt that professionals need to understand and challenge their cultural bias formed through untested categorization (Wrenn, 1985). Further, as Pedersen (2001) warns, to 'leave our assumptions untested or, worse yet, to be unaware of our culturally learned assumptions is not consistent with the standards of good and appropriate counselling' (p. 553).

2.4 : Whiteness and its role in professional practice

2.4.1 : 'Whiteness' and its meaning

The first section of this chapter defined and discussed taken-for-granted assumptions, and introduced how whiteness may form one facet or range of assumptions that practitioners may hold. It also discussed how we all rely on categorization to function, acknowledging how the functionality of the brain contributes to and reinforces taken-for-granted assumptions. Ryde (2011) acknowledges how taken-for-granted assumptions, certainly in the form of whiteness, are easy to overlook. She argues that the reason for this is because 'whiteness' is seen as the norm and, as discussed in the previous section, routine everyday life reinforces norms, making whiteness itself taken-for-granted (Frankenberg 2005 & Dyer 1997).

Frankenberg, (2005) describes whiteness as 'a set of normative cultural practices (that) is visible most closely to those it definitively excludes' (p. 228). The normative cultural paradigm is invisible to those who are white because white people live within the walls of a white world in which whiteness is taken-for-granted and seen as the normal way of things. These normative practices are informed or driven by a body of knowledge, ideologies, norms, and particular practices that have been constructed over history (Helfand, 2008) both in the United States and Europe. This does not mean, of course, that this does not exist elsewhere, for example in the Middle and Far East.

In relation to the discussion of whiteness, Kincheloe *et al* (1998) point out that, at the time of their research, American people generally did not really know what whiteness was. However, most agreed that there were links to 'power and power difference between white and non-white people' (p. 4) and further that 'the collective white denial of privilege inhibits questions and public reflection on how being white may

provide benefits' (p. 15). Whilst this commentary was in relation to the general public there is no reason to doubt that it also applies to professionals.

The difficulty in examining this phenomenon has been partly due to whiteness being so invisible and taken-for-granted that it has not been researched. Kincheloe *et al's* (1998) research draws further attention to how or whether people think about their whiteness. They concluded that white people do not usually think about it, and if they do they 'think of it as a positive or neutral category' (p. 296). Similarly, Frankenberg (2005) argues that those who live within the white cultural paradigm usually do not examine it further. This discussion also links to earlier discussions relating to being aware of being the oppressor – positionality may mean people are unable to examine their role as oppressor (cf. Section *2:2: The nature of taken-for-granted assumptions*). Sue & Sue (2008) explains the difficulty of reflecting on whiteness by arguing that white people are socialised and, at an unconscious level, taught a hidden agenda that some people are undesirable, inferior or should be feared. Schütz (1967) adds to this the notion of the 'reflective glance' and how this is tainted by the level of experience held or taken-for-granted, so that the issue is subsequently seen as not needing further examination.

A further explanation for not examining the white cultural paradigm may be that, as white people, we do not question our whiteness because at a sub-conscious level we are aware of the privilege and advantages our whiteness brings (Kincheloe *et al*, 1998). According to Jay (2005), people do not have to be racist to benefit, they just have to be white. Ryde's (2011) research demonstrates that white people see themselves as the norm, see 'others' as having a race, with 'white values and tenets tend(ing) to be taken as the benchmark from which other approaches to life are measured' (p. 95). White practitioners may not, therefore, be aware that whiteness can be a barrier and the factor leading some individuals to be 'overprivileged and others to be underprivileged' (Manglitz, 2005, p. 1246).

2.4.2   : Whiteness reinforced in society

Since the research on whiteness that was carried out in the 1990's, further research has taken place, much of it in America. This means in the UK we are now in a better position to discuss what is meant by the term 'whiteness'. Jay (2005), discusses this concept, not in order to mount 'an attack on people' (p. 100) but because it can help people to think critically about how whiteness 'has operated systematically, structurally, and sometimes unconsciously as a dominant force' (p. 2). Dyer (1997), however, comments that: 'White people create the dominant images of the world and do not quite see that they thus construct the world in their image' (p. 9).

Several commentators make reference to the power of dominant world views. Thus, McIntosh (1988) repeats how in western society white people are privileged and benefit from an 'unearned advantage and conferred dominance' (p. 7). Thompson (2011) comments how: 'Routinized social practices are strongly influenced by, and channelled through, dominant norms and cultural patterns and therefore reflect the status quo' (p. 47). Frankenberg (2005), viewing race as a social construct, says: 'Race, like gender, is "real" in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and a real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals' sense of self, experience, and life chances' (p.11). She also states that 'once a person is in a landscape structured by racism, a conceptual mapping of race, of self and others, takes shape' (p. 69). This, it could be argued, also reinforces how our minds use categorization (cf. Section *2:3: Categorization and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted assumptions*).

Fisher & Ponniah (2003) outline how what happens at a local level can supplement what happens at a global level. They discuss globalization and its manifestation through the 'socio-economic-cultural model', arguing that 'by feeding our senses with particular images, rhythms, aesthetics, we are driven to the use of particular objects, clothes, machines' (p. 213). This idea is similar to the 'feeding' mentioned by

Frankenberg (2005) which maintains institutional racism within an organisation. It is therefore possible that the 'socio-economic-cultural model' maintains discrimination across the world, reinforcing and maintaining whiteness throughout society, especially within the legal, economic, political, educational, religious, and cultural arenas of our world. Helfand (2008), however, acknowledges that whiteness is constantly evolving in response to social dominant forces and as an evolving state it may be a site where changes in professional practice can have a positive impact on the evolving state of whiteness and all that comes with it.

2.4.3 : Whiteness in other professions

The discussion above has highlighted how and why white people are likely to be unaware of their own whiteness and how this could blinker practitioners' awareness of others' cultures and beliefs. The embedded concept of race within a profession, reinforced by the taken-for-granted behaviours of professionals, is documented in a number of professional disciplines.

One notable example is the police, and specifically the findings of The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson, 1999). Here it was noted that: 'Unwitting racism can arise because of lack of understanding, ignorance or mistaken beliefs. It can arise from well intentioned but patronising words or actions' (para. 6.13). Whilst this report does not mention whiteness per se, the references to lack of understanding, ignorance and mistaken beliefs, even in the face of good intentions, could all be interpreted as evidence of taken-for-granted assumptions.

The Macpherson inquiry highlighted what was described as 'institutional racism', and whilst the inquiry struggled to define this fully they agreed on a workable definition:

> 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which

amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people'. (Macpherson, 1999, para. 6.34)

The report comments on the 'disease' of racism resulting from the failure of organisations to address its existence openly and adequately. It is further noted that the 'disease' has also infected other agencies such as housing and education, and that the only way to eradicate it is through 'specific and co-ordinated action both within the agencies themselves and by society at large, particularly through the educational system, from pre-primary school upwards and onwards' (para. 6.54).

In the field of mental health, research by Hackett *et al.* (2006) discussed the issues relating to white practitioners who worked with individuals of South Asian heritage within the National Health Service (NHS). Practitioners were found to be 'struggling to understand issues of culture, ethnicity and religion' (p. 460). There were substantially fewer referrals from South Asian groups than from some other ethnic minorities, and it was noted that there was a lack of culturally appropriate services. This finding resonates closely with the topic of the present research, which has its origins in my work with clients of Asian heritage.

In the USA, Howard (2006), a white multicultural educator and founder of the REACH Centre for Multicultural Education in Seattle, commented on how few teachers of Black and Hispanic heritage students consider the effect their own whiteness has on their professional practice. This observation was made in the light of the introduction of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) Act, which is the American equivalent to the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. Similarly, here in the United Kingdom, Pearce (2003) acknowledged that few teaching professionals examine their own ethnicity and went on to recommend that the teaching profession become more aware of the issues connected to whiteness, and not be afraid to confront them.

The profession of counselling and psychotherapy, which is more aligned to the guidance field, has also questioned whiteness and its effects. Thus, Carter (1995) stresses how important it is for therapists to explore the meaning and significance of their own race and 'to understand how race influences perceptions of self and client' (1995, p. 228). Lago *et al* (2006) also make reference to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the Professional Standards Committee of the American Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development, whose publications are similar to those referenced by the American Psychological Association (APA) (cf. further discussion of the APA standards in Section *2:3: Categorization and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted assumptions*). Lago *et al* (2006) note how discrimination has occurred throughout society and within many professional organisations and they warn their own profession not to ignore the findings in relation to whiteness and discrimination**.** Despite this, they note how often they hear counselling and psychotherapy professionals refute this and say 'how could we be discriminatory or racist?' (p. 201). They add 'without attention to these ethnic inter and intra group phenomena in society and within the self, therapists are in danger of repeating [these] discriminatory patterns' (p. 201). Similarly, Todd & Abrams (2011) stress the need for therapists to examine their own white racial consciousness, calling for the need to 'make visible the invisibility of whiteness' and to bestow the location of 'responsibility for racial justice with white people' (p. 354). Ryde (2011) highlights similar issues in the field of therapy, setting out what she believes are the specific issues facing white therapists, including whiteness as apparent normality (i.e. taken-for-granted) and the association of whiteness with privilege and power.

2.4.4   : The power of whiteness in the professions

Johnson (1972) acknowledges that all professions hold power, and throughout this chapter power has been referred to in a number of ways. This section explores

further the notion of power and white power in professional relationships between practitioner and client.

There are a number of dimensions to power, and many researchers have contributed to the understanding of power within working relationships, be they practitioner to practitioner, or practitioner to client or service user. Freire's (1972) work addressed the role of the educator as a co-teacher with a co-learner, but has been criticized for not addressing the possible issues of power within these relationships (Ledwith, 2005). Similarly, Holland *et al* (1995) point to unaddressed issues of power in relation to a number of dimensions, including race, class and gender. Holland *et al* (1995) and Ledwith (2005) agree that Freire (1972) fails to see the difference in power between the teacher and student or mentor and mentee, and disagree with the claim that they can uncover the same reality, oppression and/or liberty. Whilst also disagreeing with Friere's claims, hooks (1989) does say that without Freire's theoretical insights she herself would not have had the conceptual tools to analyze her own identity. However, the question remains of whether two individuals who come from a different race, gender and/or class can discover the same reality.

Belenky *et al* (1997) discuss 'connected knowers' where the truth is founded in the individual's own experience. They go on to argue that truth is found by listening and empathizing, believing it to be necessary to adopt an impersonal viewpoint to the information in order to truly hear the truth of the 'other', emphasizing that the aim 'is not to judge but to understand' (p. 116). The relationships described above are similar to those between the IAG practitioner and client, and the present research questions why so many practitioners do not appear to fully or critically question their relationship with their client, nor realize or acknowledge the significance of their whiteness or the power this confers. This present research argues that the impersonal stance attributed to Belenky *et al* (1997) can be distorted by practitioners' taken-for-granted assumptions, specifically their whiteness.

This section has highlighted the power differences between teacher and learner, or mentor and mentee, and their similarities to the practitioner-client relationship. The counselling and psychotherapy literature (for example, Carter, 1995) notes the power imbalance between therapist and client and how this is heightened by the client being in need of help and advice. Lago *et al* (2006) emphasize not only the powerful position of therapists and the role of personal power within counselling and psychotherapy, but also consider how the power imbalance is exacerbated when working with ethnic minority clients because of the inherent power that white professionals gain through privilege and taken-for-grantedness, resulting in multiple layers of power. Christens & Perkins (2008) similarly demonstrate that dominant groups, including whites, have access to various forms of power. Thompson & Thompson (2008) warn practitioners of the dangers of ignoring issues of power, namely that it can lead us to overlook the effects of discrimination on people's lives and, as a consequence, to unwittingly reinforce discrimination, thereby becoming part of the problem.

The present analysis points to similarities between counselling and psychotherapy and the IAG profession. Both are helping professions whose practitioners have historically been white and middle class, and who work with clients who look to them for answers. The present research therefore seeks to question how the IAG profession examines the power emanating from whiteness, and to explore whether, because of its taken-for-granted normality, whiteness is actually ignored by professionals. It looks at the issues of whether the profession resorts to silence, and considers the power of this silence and how it manages to keep such issues hidden (Ryde, 2011). Whilst acknowledging that, because of its taken-for-granted nature, the phenomenon of whiteness has been difficult to address in the past, the present research considers it paramount that the issue is brought into the open if the IAG

profession, and society as a whole, are to challenge the existing status quo, in which whiteness and related taken-for-granted assumptions are upheld.

2.5 : Implications for training

This chapter has documented some of the difficulties related to researching whiteness and addressing the impact of whiteness, whilst also noting that other professions are undertaking research and developing policy to help their members question themselves and their practice. The chapter has also established that there are many issues tied to whiteness, and that these are accentuated by the invisibility of the phenomenon within dominant groups. This, in turn, makes it more difficult to reflect on aspects of taken-for-granted assumptions and raises challenging issues for the training of practitioners to question underlying facets of their inner self and their own whiteness.

Nonetheless, scholars agree that training in the meaning and significance of whiteness is imperative (Carter, 1995; Lago *et al,* 2006; Ryde, 2011; Sue & Sue, 2008). Thus, Carter (1995) emphasises the 'importance of training therapists to explore the meaning and significance of their own race and to understand how race influences perceptions of self and the client' (p. 288). Eraut (2001) adds that there is a need for practitioners to have a greater awareness of our own taken-for-granted assumptions (that is, our personal knowledge) if they are not to distort our practice. Ryde (2011), however, confirms that these issues have often been given low or no priority. She notes the complexity of training in white awareness, and how care is needed to help contextualise and understand rather than uphold the issue of dominant power.

Throughout this chapter it has been noted how the normality and taken-for-granted nature of whiteness by white people makes it difficult to unearth and recognise its implicit assumptions and characteristics. This chapter has discussed how members

of a predominantly white profession can share taken-for-granted assumptions which are then implicitly seen as normal. It has also been highlighted how this is reinforced by the functionality of the brain. The question then arises of how training can also assist practitioners to become aware of how the brain functions.

There is no doubt that training should encourage and enable practitioners to challenge their cultural bias (Wrenn, 1985) and that untested assumptions are not consistent with high professional standards (Pedersen (2001). Lago *et el* (2006) agree, saying that it is morally, ethically and professionally incumbent on therapists to be committed to their own training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Ryde (2011) agrees that this type of training should take place within CPD or Continuous Professional and Personal Development (CPPD), if only to promote knowledge and understanding. Although professional codes of practice identify the questioning of these aspects of the self as critically important, the actual training provision is lacking in this area. A poll by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy in 2004/05 confirmed that training in this area was inadequate (Lago *et el*, 2006).

For a number of reasons, training under the banner of 'diversity' training may be met with disregard or resistance, certainly in relation to race (Pedersen *et al,* 2005). Firstly, it can be problematic when practitioners see themselves as 'competent'. Thus, Kruger and Dunning (1999) demonstrated how being or feeling competent can blinker people's ability to critically examine or assess themselves. Secondly, practitioners may think their practice is 'good enough' (Reid & Bassot, 2011, p. 107). Thirdly, resistance may result from the anxiety that diversity training in relation to race might trigger. Thus, Frost (1980) notes how experiential learning strategies can challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and meaning systems, but that it is not uncommon for practitioners to experience anxiety, especially when focusing on the self.

Whilst it can be concluded that reflecting on whiteness is difficult, it is also the case that during the reflective process practitioners can become aware of aspects of themselves that had previously remained hidden (Reid & Bassot, 2011). Thus, Sue & Sue (2008) also acknowledges how, when practitioners become aware of their role as oppressor, they can experience emotions of fear, guilt and at times defensiveness. Ryde (2011) and Sue (2008) agree that during the discovery of self in respect to whiteness, it is feasible that practitioners will experience a sense of guilt and shame. Whilst these negative feelings and emotions can be uncomfortable, it is important to find ways to be open to the guilt, shame and possible fears encountered in discovering the self. Otherwise, practitioners can discount these negative thoughts, claiming that they have nothing to feel guilty about and that they are not racist.

The previous section discussed how uncovering the self can be uncomfortable, bringing feelings of shame and guilt to the surface (Sue, 2008; Thompson, 2009; Ryder, 2011; Toporek, 2011;). However, Lago *et al* (2006) highlights the benefits of acknowledging this discomfort, arguing that it holds huge potential for learning. Nevertheless whilst Sue (2008) agrees that this may be the case, she recommends that the starting point for this learning should be to understand our fears and apprehensions. Otherwise, whilst undergoing training, participants may retreat back into their previously held assumptions, 'finding this new awareness too painful and confronting of their existing attitudinal positions' (Lago *et al*, 2006, p. 199). Establishing race awareness training is difficult, and 'an inherent danger, lurking within this pursuit of white identity awareness, is the reaffirmation (for some) of feelings of superiority over others as a reaction to, defence from, and the pain of their discovery' (Lago *et al*, 2006, p. 211). Alongside this, Toporek (2011) considers why practitioners, despite evidence to the contrary, might retain their assumptions based on disbeliefs, bringing the discussion back to the issue of categorization (c.f. Section *2:3: Categorization and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted assumptions*).

Toporek (2011) notes that training should assist practitioners to move away from guilt, take responsibility, be in an empowering place and help create change. It became a goal of the present research to develop approaches and strategies for training that can facilitate this process.

2.6 : Conclusion

As indicated earlier, the Personal, Cultural and Social (PCS) framework for analysing discrimination is a key element of the present research. This section summarises the conclusions from the subsequent literature review and ends with *Figure 2.3: Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions visualised through the PCS model (Thompson, 2011)* which aims to illustrate the connections between the literature discussed in this chapter and the PCS framework.

This chapter, firstly, critically engaged with a substantial section of the literature relevant to the phenomenon of 'taken-for-granted assumptions'. In particular, it discussed the negative aspects of taken-for-granted attitudes (Thompson, 2011), 'colour ignore-ance' (Feagin, 2001) or 'habits of belief' (Billig, 2001). Secondly, the chapter drew on the literature relating to categorization. It defined and explained this concept, and evidenced how it is an inherent human function or process that guides and reinforces taken-for-granted assumptions. Thirdly, the chapter discussed 'whiteness' as an example of taken-for-granted assumptions. It defined 'whiteness', explained how 'whiteness' can be seen as 'normal' and be invisible in society. It further considered the power and privilege that is attached to this aspect of taken-for-granted assumptions. The dangers of leaving the phenomenon of whiteness unspoken and untested were considered (Applebaum, 2006). The chapter noted how whiteness and taken-for-granted assumptions are reinforced through social structures of power (Donald & Rattansi, 1992), and how it is constructed through comparisons with those who are seen as less fortunate (Manglitz, 2005). The chapter noted how

taken-for-granted assumptions could be a form of racism (Thompson, 2011; 2012), demonstrated by the ways in which many services and agencies engage in 'unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness' (Macpherson, 1999, para. 6.34). Lastly, the chapter discussed the need for and implications for the training of practitioners. It noted how, whilst all questioning of the self is difficult, the challenge of questioning the taken-for-granted, invisible and unquestioned phenomenon of whiteness is made more difficult by the conscious and unconscious resistance of those who are white.

Self awareness (or personal knowledge) and the capacity (or lack of capacity) for effective personal reflection have emerged from this discussion as critical issues in both professional practice and training. These topics are, therefore, considered in more detail in the following two chapters. *Chapter 3 'Personal Knowledge and its role in professional practice'*, supplements the literature discussed in the present chapter. It includes a review of relevant literature relating to knowledge, highlighting how personal knowledge is constructed and the implications this might have for reflection and practice. Then, the final literature review chapter, *Chapter 4 'Reflection and its role in professional practice'*, provides an overall summary of the relevant literature relating to reflection, addressing the major issues and debates, and bringing to the fore the complexity of unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions via reflection and reflective practice.

Figure 2.3: Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions visualised through the PCS model (Thompson, 2011)
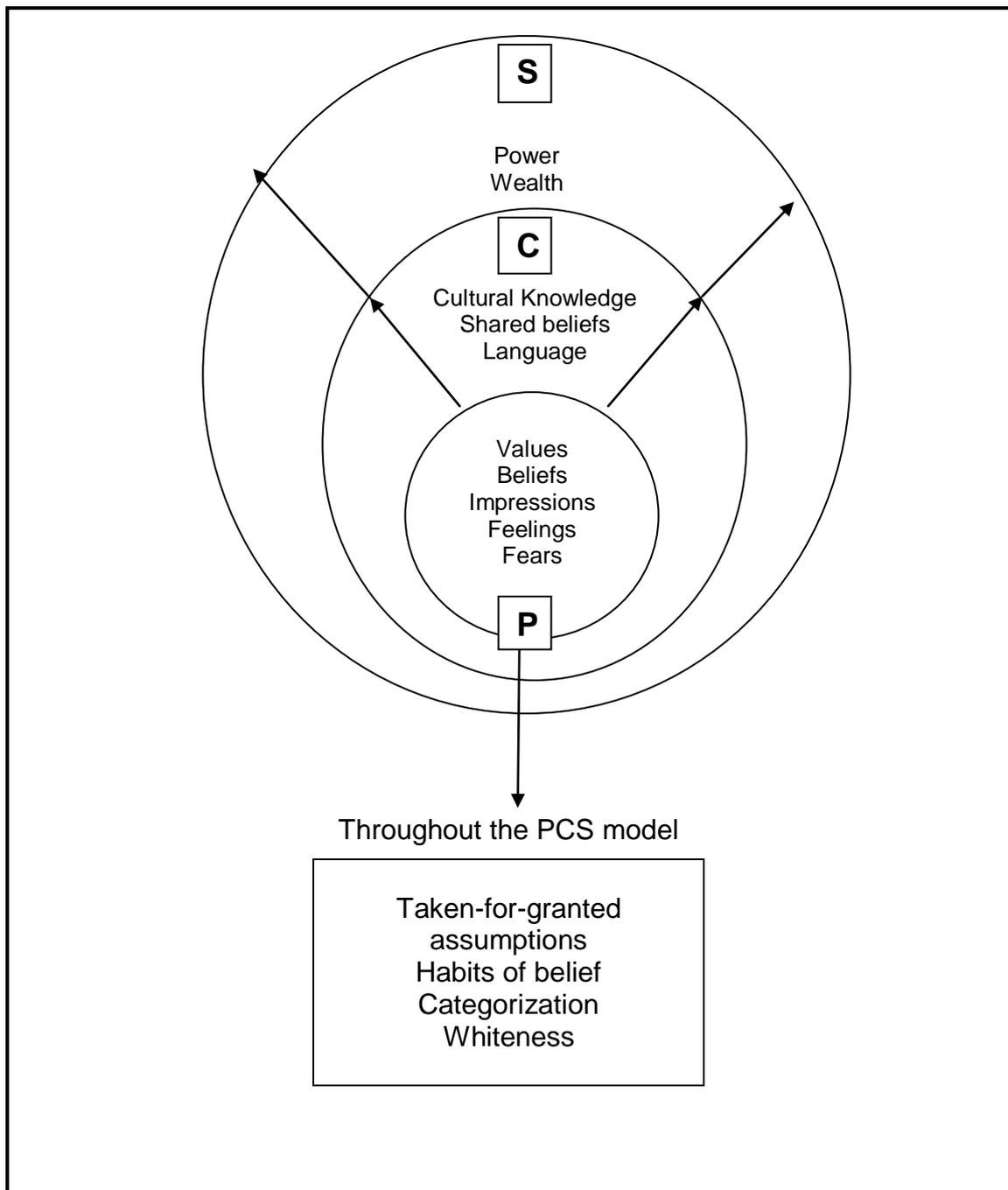
3 : PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND ITS ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

3.1 : Overview

The present research is focused on how practitioners use reflection to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. The previous chapter reviewed the literature on the concept of taken-for-granted assumptions, with particular reference to whiteness, and further considered how categorization contributes to this phenomenon. This present chapter aims to discuss 'personal knowledge' - how this type of knowledge is constructed, how it contributes to taken-for-granted assumptions, how it contributes to our professional practice, why it is necessary to question our personal knowledge, and its impact on professional practice. The chapter is divided into the following sections:

3:2:   Forms of knowledge

3:3:   The role of personal knowledge in professional practice

3:4:   Beliefs and truth as a constraint to professional knowledge

3:5:   Developing self-awareness in order to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions

3:6:   Conclusion

3.2 : Forms of knowledge

There is an extensive literature in relation to the concept of 'knowledge' that traverses several disciplines including philosophy and psychology (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002) as well as applied professional areas (Eruat, 2001). The present chapter touches on several examples of the literature, firstly defining and discussing what knowledge is in

its broadest terms, then briefly discussing different types of knowledge, and lastly focusing on what personal knowledge is and its links to professional practice.

In the broadest sense 'knowledge' is defined as 'information in mind, general awareness or possession of information, facts, ideas, truths, or principles' (Encarta Dictionary, 2012). The theory of knowledge is epistemology, characterised by Pritchard (2009) as a concern with 'what all the myriad kinds of knowledge we ascribe to ourselves have in common' (p. 7). Most philosophers agree that knowledge can be divided into three types: personal knowledge, procedural knowledge, and propositional knowledge. The following section briefly defines these terms and their relevance to the current research.

1. *Personal Knowledge* is knowledge derived from personal experience. It includes personal theories, impressions, memories and interpretations (meanings) that an individual constructs as a result of all types of experience, including social, emotional and spiritual as well as intellectual (Eraut, 1992). This type of knowledge is of particular relevance in the present context, and is discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

2. *Procedural (or Process) Knowledge* is 'knowing how' – i.e. knowledge relating to how to do something. Thus, people who claim to know how to juggle, or how to drive, are not simply claiming that they understand the theory involved in those activities. Rather, they are claiming that they actually possess the skills involved and that they are able to do these things. The practitioners who comprise the participants in the present research can, by virtue of their training and experience, claim procedural knowledge with regard to the provision of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) in relation to careers and career decision making.

3. *Propositional Knowledge* or knowledge of facts – 'knowing that' - is the kind of knowledge to which philosophers give most attention, with Pritchard (2009) defining a proposition as 'what is asserted by a sentence which says that

something is the case - e.g., that the earth is flat' (ibid. p. 3). It includes academic knowledge and is of particular interest to the present research when taken-for-granted assumptions are erroneously assumed, perhaps implicitly, to be 'facts' (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice*).

3.3 : The role of personal knowledge in professional practice

Epistemology and much of the discussion in relation to this field of knowledge has focused predominantly on an 'objective' stance to knowledge (Virtanen, 2011) and, as such, is not the prime concern of the present thesis. Whilst this is the case, it is nonetheless important for the present research to acknowledge the objectively true or false nature of 'propositional knowledge'. The notion that 'propositional knowledge', even if false, may be seen as truth is an area of interest to this research and will be discussed in more detail at a later point. Pritchard (2009) distinguishes between propositional knowledge, and know-how, or ability knowledge, arguing that the former demands a greater degree of intellectual sophistication on the part of the knower than the latter. Furthermore, he states that propositions are seen as true and that the individual believes this to be the case. However, he takes a common sense approach to 'truth', saying that just because someone believes something this does not make it true.

Gelwick (2008) continues the discussion regarding objectivity, citing Polanyi's (1968) claims of 'impersonal objectivity' and view that any type of knowledge 'depends upon the tacit components of personal knowledge' (Gelwick, 2008, p. 19). Polanyi's (1968) work relates to the present investigation in that he writes about the importance of the individual (the knower), and places the person rather than the knowledge in the primary position. He argues that, since knowledge passes through an individual's personal filters to be evaluated, knowledge must have a personal component and

therefore, by default, our knowing is constantly affected by personal meaning systems. Virtanen (2011) agrees with Gelwick (2008), also citing Polanyi and reiterating that the meaning of our knowledge occurs because we apply our own 'personal appraisals and bodily feelings to the object of knowing' (p. 1). When we encounter new information in our everyday lives, it is inevitable, irrespective of how sophisticated we might think ourselves to be, that our beliefs have an influence on our knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002).

Human beings gain knowledge through experience and through social interaction (Eruat, 2001) (for further discussion of role of social structures and interaction cf. Section *2:2: The nature of taken-for-granted assumptions*). It is important for the present research to recognise that, whilst some knowledge gained from experience 'is sufficiently processed to be classified as positional knowledge or process knowledge' (Eruat, 2001, p. 104), much remains at the level of simple impression. Such impressions contribute to professional action, although the ways in which they do so are only partly understood (Eruat, 2001). Schütz (1967) and Husserl (1970), both of whom theorised the theoretical framework of phenomenology, when considering the process of understanding and making sense of experience, discuss how this understanding is created and exists at higher levels of our consciousness, and in so doing becomes a taken-for-granted part of our belief systems, guiding our interpretations and providing order to our lives. Here we see the notion that our 'taken-for-granted' schemas influence the meaning or interpretation we draw from our experience.

Also of interest to the present research is Schütz's (1967) discussion of how individuals reflect on the taken-for-granted elements of their lives. He concludes that our reflection or 'reflective glance' is affected by and limited by, our personal stance at any given time. Taken-for-granted assumptions, by virtue of being taken for

granted or seen as self-evident, can be perceived by the individual as an area of the 'self' that does not need further enquiry.

Professional practitioners already possess knowledge (including personal knowledge) as a result of growing up in a particular time, place or culture (Eraut, 2001). These experiences can be used by 'wise professionals' to make 'good judgements', but they also form impressions which can 'contribute to their professional knowledge' (p. 106). This form of knowledge needs to be critically examined and controlled, and in order to do that practitioners need to develop a high level of self awareness, examine their own taken-for-granted assumptions and understand the part these play in their practice (Eraut, 2001). Both Moon (2004) and Eraut (1994, 2001) note that professionals who hold undeveloped personal knowledge can find the early stages of professional education difficult, with undeveloped or unquestioned personal knowledge likely to 'distort, the development of further knowledge' (Moon, 2004, p. 83). Moon argues, therefore, that the 'self', and the role of taken-for-granted assumptions, need careful attention and consideration.

3.4 : Beliefs and truth as a constraint to professional knowledge

The previous section discussed personal knowledge and the impact this may have on our taken-for-granted assumptions. This leads to three further areas of exploration: first, how the notion of 'truth and beliefs' influences the construction and use of knowledge; secondly, the impact that limited personal knowledge has on the meanings subsequently drawn from reflective activities; and, thirdly, how professionals become aware of their personal knowledge and its limitations. Section *3:2 Forms of knowledge* briefly discussed and defined the term knowledge, noting how some of the information within our minds is based on and draws from truths we hold in the form of 'facts', i.e. propositional knowledge, which is derived from what is

deemed to be true and as individuals we have belief in these truths (Pritchard, 2009). Not only do we have belief in the truths we hold, as human beings we often view our beliefs as a form of knowledge (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Ennis (1994) considers this debate on truths, beliefs and knowledge and concludes that there is evidence suggesting that when these are intensely held for a long period of time then these truths and beliefs do inform the decision making process. Whilst Nisbett and Ross are referring specifically to teachers, this could well apply to other professions. Section *2:3:2: Categorization* discusses how categorises are clustered and how our belief systems also have an organisational structure.

Linked to this, Rokeach (1968) describes how our beliefs, attitudes and values cluster around a phenomenon, describing them as 'attitudes' similar to taken-for-granted assumptions. These he says are reinforced and influenced by other attitudes we may hold.   This relates to the discussion in Sections *2:3:5* and *2:3:6.* Ennis (1994) describes how these attitudes and beliefs come in to play even more when we are using them to assist in making decisions and judgements. Of particular importance to the current research is the evidence that beliefs are a significant factor in the decisions that professionals make throughout their practice and professional life (Pajares, 1992). This has implications for training. During the training of new professionals, in order to maximize effective practice those who deliver the training need to understand the possible impact of belief structures on professional decision making (Ennis, 1994).

Also relevant is Nespor's (1987) discussion of 'existential presumptions', which he defines as truths that are distinctive to the individual. These could be perceived by a practitioner as being beyond his/her control or influence, and an example of this type of belief would include a practitioners' belief about students' innate abilities or characteristics. Similarly, Belenky *et al* (1986) note that 'each of us has a unique perspective that is in some sense irrefutably "right" by virtue of its existence' (p. 222).

Therefore, we are different in the truths we hold, and, because we hold them, they are taken to be true. This is relevant when we examine how individual beliefs are created, and how these beliefs strongly influence the judgements we make and hold a superior position to any factual knowledge we may have (Nespor, 1987). Our belief systems are individually constructed and we do not necessarily seek others' agreement to confirm these beliefs (Ennis, 1994).

Dirkin, (2008) emphasises that presumptions are also held to such an extent that they become fixed beyond disproving and, furthermore, beyond control (cf. Section *2:3:2: Categorization*). The formation of categories, which can be based on irrational thoughts, is similar to that of existential presumptions in that these need not be based on previous encounters or experience and in fact can be idealised concepts (Dirkin, 2008). Frequently, while knowledge often changes, beliefs are 'static' (Nespor, 1987). Mezirow (1990) suggests there has been inadequate attention to the routine ways in which we categorize and interpret reality.

Whilst researchers assert the need to adopt a commonsense approach to the notion of 'truth', it is also the case that believing in a truth does not mean it is true (Pritchard 2009). Researchers also acknowledge that this area is easier to write or theorise about than to translate into practice (ibid).

Ultimately it is unclear where the line is drawn between beliefs and knowledge. Kincheloe & Steinberg (1993) conclude that the boundaries between our knowledge and beliefs are far more intertwined than is realised. Whilst this may be the case, it is important to recognise that existential presumptions do appear to form the foundation for personal and professional belief systems and, furthermore, can significantly influence a professional's decision making ability (Ennis, 1994). Such presumptions need, therefore, to be critically examined and understood by professionals.

In summary, the previous discussion concludes that professionals gain knowledge, including personal knowledge, through their experiences in life. These experiences form impressions and inform beliefs that contribute to professional knowledge (Eraut, 1994). It has been highlighted how truths and belief systems have an impact on the judgements professionals make and that there is a need to explore and examine this form of knowledge, especially considering its role in our professional judgements and the implications of not critically examining our taken-for-granted assumptions (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice* for further discussion on this area). Certainly, Eraut (1992) and Moon (2004) highlight how undeveloped and unquestioned personal knowledge could distort future development, possibly due to an unsteady 'foundation' based on existential presumptions or taken-for-granted assumptions. If professionals' foundational or personal knowledge is littered with existential presumptions or taken-for-granted assumptions this could affect the subsequent meanings drawn on in practice. Limited and uncritical questioning of knowledge can distort reactions and judgements. *Chapter 2: Section 2:3: Categorization and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted assumptions* concludes that the human mind needs to retain information to aid our processing efficiently. Our minds draw on this previous information to make judgements and decisions. Evidence suggests that information is more effectively retained and recalled if it is related to personal experience. Further, feelings and sensations have a deep impact on memory, and this adds to the conclusions that regardless of whether meaning is already implied or gathered, our brains make connections with previous experiences. We draw on this knowledge from other past experiences, meaning that any previous assumptions are included in the meaning making process (Popovic, 2005). Penfield's (1952) research also emphasises that both the form of the experience and the emotions felt during that experience are stored together in the brain, and when we revisit these experiences it is like replaying all of what was experienced, with the emotions and feelings flooding back such that it

is as if the person is in that time and space again (cf. link to emotions and feelings in *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice*).

3.5 : Developing self awareness in order to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions

Chapter 2 discussed the conscious versus unconscious debate relating to categorization, and at this point it is worth considering whether a similar debate exists around the process of acquiring awareness of self and personal knowledge. Certainly, Baumeister (1999) notes the unconscious aspects of knowledge when he cites Freud saying that 'each person has a great stock of unconscious knowledge, particularly about the self, and the conscious self is barred from access to that knowledge' (p. 21). This is of relevance to the current research because of the importance of personal knowledge and how it informs professional judgements. It is worth, therefore, exploring further how we access what is barred or hidden from the conscious self, and how we evaluate this area of our knowledge. Several authors (for example, Winter, 1995; Harvey & Knight, 1996) stress the importance of self-awareness, certainly in relation to professional development. However, Eraut's (1992) emphasis is around the importance of propositional knowledge within the realm of professional knowledge. Whilst this is of interest to the present research because this type of knowledge draws from truths and beliefs, it is not the prime concern.

It is worth noting that within the literature on self awareness the term is defined in different ways in different contexts. However, Carver (2003) notes that the notion of 'self' is deep rooted in the literature of psychology and sociology, and that in the main most of the early theories stem from James (1890) and his discussion of reflexivity, defined as our unique ability to look back at ourselves from an objective stance. The literature in this field tends to use the term 'self awareness' and 'reflexivity' interchangeably, which adds to the confusion. However, for the purpose of this

section of the discussion I intend, in the interest of clarity, to separate out the concepts as much as possible.

Baumeister (1999) claims that the theme of 'self-awareness' was introduced to the field of social psychology in the 20th century by Duval and Wicklund (1972). However, as discussed, nearly a hundred years previously James (1890) highlighted the notion of reflexivity and how individuals have the ability to view the 'self' from a different perspective – hence becoming 'self-aware'. Carver (2003) reiterates James' (1890) perspective on reflexivity; defining self awareness as the ability to be self focused and to selectively process information about the self. Carver (2003) further clarifies James (1890) by proposing that there are two dimensions to consider: Firstly, the self has a 'process' aspect which sees the self as the knower of things; and, secondly, it has a 'content' aspect which can see the self from the perspective of that which is known. Baumeister (1999) adds an additional dimension to these claims by saying that, for the most part, Duval and Wicklund's (1972) view was that 'self awareness' was in fact the 'focusing on some aspect or property of the self and comparing it to some ideal, goal, or other standard' (Baumeister, 1999, p. 4). Whilst the present section considers reflexivity in the context of a discussion on self-awareness, there is a fuller discussion of reflexivity and reflection in *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice.*

3.5.1   : The process of developing self awareness

In addition to exploring the reasons why we need to have self-awareness of taken-for-granted elements of the self, it is important to consider the process of developing such self-awareness. Indeed, Eraut (2001) claims that it is only when individuals have a developed awareness and knowledge of the self that they can be in a position to understand their own limitations, and their strengths and weaknesses. Writing from the perspective of management theory, Eraut (2001) argued that a central concern is how knowledge itself is divided into key tasks and processes. This discussion is of

interest to the present research. Eraut (2001) criticised the ways in which knowledge is conceptualised and went on to develop his own framework in which he outlines six knowledge categories. It is one of his categories - 'control knowledge' - which is of specific interest to my own research as it endeavours to delineate self knowledge. Eraut describes 'control knowledge' as:

> 'self-awareness, sensitivity, self knowledge about one's strengths and weaknesses, the gaps between what one says and what one does, and what one knows and does not know; self-management in such matters in its broadest sense, including knowing how to learn and control one's own learning; the ability to reflect and self-evaluate, that is, to provide oneself with feedback; and generalized intellectual skills like strategic thinking and policy analysis, which involve the organisation of one's own knowledge and thinking' (Eraut, 2001, p. 81).

On examining the category of 'control knowledge', the main criticism is that it is over inclusive, incorporating a vast number of ideas around the 'self' and 'self awareness'. Control knowledge is the means by which we control our own behaviour, and the conduit through which we use the other forms of knowledge we hold. However, within organisations self awareness may be hindered by 'unrealistic, idealized models of managers who somehow seem to have everything organized and under control' (Eraut, 2001, p. 81). Nevertheless, this aspect of management knowledge lacks attention by managers, and there is no reason to think this is not the case within management structures across professional groups (ibid).

We do not automatically gain awareness of the 'self' (Moon, 2004). It requires special effort on the part of the individual and, on a day to day basis, we do not tend to seek out moments that require us to expend extra effort in order to gain awareness of the 'self' (Moon, 2004). Generally individuals tend to probe more deeply if something

significant happens. Then they may stop, noting what needs or warrants further examination, as with the present researcher's 'eureka moments' (cf. *Chapter 1: Introduction* and *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice*). We may be unwilling to put in the additional effort because the self-focused attention might 'highlight emotionally painful self-discrepancies or personal flaws' (Carver, 2003). Since the research of James (1980) through to Baumeister (1999) and beyond, there is a consensus that when an individual focuses their awareness on the 'self' this can generate a number of 'unpleasant' emotions. Therefore, focusing on the self can be distressing to the individual, causing negative feelings, especially if the individual unearths aspects of the self that do not match to their own views of themselves. Yet, this very distress or negative experience could be of benefit and could motivate the individual to change (cf. *Chapter 2, Section 2:5: Implications for training*). Mezirow (1990) proposes that most of the time we are happy to make a 'trade off', in that we will seek relief from any discomfort particularly if an experience does not fit with the meaning structures we hold dear. What is evident is that 'self-awareness' does not happen automatically, and gaining self-awareness requires a conscious, deliberate act, which can be challenging (Pellitteri, 2006).

The literature is clear and notes that for some 30 years there has been a debate relating to how our experiences are changed when we pay attention to ourselves, with differing opinions being held mainly because of differing theoretical starting points (Carver, 2003). The present research notes this debate and recognises that the acquisition of 'self awareness' is neither comfortable nor necessarily an automatic process, and further, that attention directly at the self does appear to affect our perception of a past experience, but that there is uncertainty relating to how individuals change.

The present research also recognises the importance of gaining self-awareness and will, therefore, examine how to help individuals firstly gain 'self-awareness' and

secondly feel more comfortable, confident and adept at doing so. In relation to how we gain 'self-awareness' it is necessary to acknowledge the different theoretical perspectives, as they have an impact on this aspect of the literature. Carver (2003) discusses how those who come from a symbolic interactionist view (for example, Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) focus on the importance of how the self comes about, largely because their stance is that at birth we have no consciousness of the 'self' and that this awareness of self develops through interaction with others. Their argument is that as we interact, we also observe and evaluate others' responses, and that this is usually done through a process of praising and rewarding, or criticizing and punishing. Through this process we become aware of an additional perspective of the world and ourselves. Carver (2003) notes that through this process, we gradually become more able to view ourselves 'from the outside in'. Mead (1934) claims that thereafter, when we reflect, we will do so from the perspective of the other and will evaluate ourselves in the same way as others have done earlier. It is suggested by Mead (1934, 1964) that human beings are significantly affected by the social standards we are exposed to, certainly whilst growing up. Through everyday encounters with a range of people in a variety of settings we learn what kind of behaviour is expected and appropriate. This coalesces into what James (1890) labels the generalised other, a criterion against which we frequently evaluate ourselves. This notion of the impact of the generalised other is seen within the symbolic interactionist view, which stresses the impact of social order, and that what we are exposed to becomes naturally absorbed and internalized. Through this concept of development of the 'self', it is possible to understand how and why younger individuals are influenced by other members of their society. Further, if individuals feel unable to challenge the expectations of the social order in which they live, this could contribute to maintaining the status quo of society as a whole.

3.5.2 : The importance of the salient self

Duval & Wicklund's (1972) research on self awareness was influenced by motivational principles from the 1950's and 1960's developed by Hull (1943) and Spence (1956). Their research develops from the premise that individuals have the ability to be aware of a discrepancy between how they were behaving and their ideal standard of behaviour and that this creates an aversive state: defined as avoidance of a situation or behaviour. Their research highlights the role of the salient self – namely, that which is deemed most important to the self - and how the salient aspects of the self will affect what we feel and how we interpret the world we live in. The effect of the salient nature of self in practice is that if something we see or experience meets our own standards then we are more likely to adhere to them.

The research of Macrae, Bodenhausen & Milne (1998) concluded that the nature of salient self has an impact on how we behave. For example, a person who opposes stereotyping is less likely to stereotype others or accept or condone stereotyping. This finding is important to the present research since it highlights how practitioners' own standards, values and/or beliefs, can affect how they behave, especially if these aspects of our values and beliefs are important to us. The research concludes that salient standards have more control over our behaviour than we are aware of.

Research on the salient self also notes that what is salient can change both the 'self' and 'behaviour' (Buss, 1980). More recent research notes that 'sometimes the behavioural standard is what is salient; sometimes the self as a causal agent is what is salient, and sometimes yet other aspects of the self are salient' (Carver, 2003, p. 183). This discussion is relevant to the present research as our preoccupations and the way we are feeling at a particular point in time may well impact on the way we reflect on the self.

3.5.3   : The benefits of recurring self focus

In the main, individuals do not continuously examine the self. However, Nasby (1985, 1989a, 1989b) discusses how self knowledge can be gained through regular attention to the self. His research focuses on the long term aspect of being self aware and he claims that the more time individuals spend reflecting on the 'self', the more informed view of themselves they will have. As a result, Nasby (1985, 1989a, 1989b), Turner *et al* (1979) and Hjelle & Bernard, (1994) all concluded that those who engage in this process regularly tend to process self relevant information more quickly than those who do not, supporting the argument that practitioners should spend more time reflecting on the self. The evidence suggests that the more we focus on the information about the 'self' the better picture we have of ourselves, and the more readily we will be able to retrieve information from our memory banks, resulting in the individual feeling more comfortable and confident. This discussion will be further developed in *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice*. Also relevant is Duval & Wicklund's (1993) conclusion, based on over twenty years' research, that being more self aware also has the benefit that self aware individuals tend to be more aware of the plight of others (Arkin & Duval, 1975; Duval, Duval & Neely, 1979; Carver & Scheiver, 1981).

3.5.4   : Self awareness and the role of others

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the development of personal knowledge and how it links to professional knowledge. I also pointed out how human beings have the capacity to distort information and resist the absorption of new information. We ourselves edit our own personal and professional knowledge. Self awareness is important, although we may need the assistance of others (such as colleagues, trainers and supervisors) to assist us to unearth and understand the knowledge we hold about ourselves.

However, Shrauger & Schoeneman (1979), in their examination of how we learn about ourselves and the roles others play in this process, conclude that learning from other people is not necessarily the best way to gain knowledge about ourselves. This could be because other people's perceptions of us depend on whether their view of us has been distorted either by the fact that the teller may not have fully communicated all that was in their mind to them, or that the listener may have distorted the information they received when they were listening. Supporting this argument is the fact that often, as human beings, if we hold an uncomplimentary opinion of someone, we often choose to keep it to ourselves, and if the recipient would be reluctant to hear it, we may distort or selectively suppress it, certainly if we disagree with it (Baumeister, 1999) (cf. *Chapter 2 Section 2:3:2: Categorization* for further discussion of how humans are reluctant to process new information, especially if it does not match that which is already retained, whether it be a category conceptualisation or judgement).

How we distort and subjectively select information has a further impact when we examine how individuals self evaluate their abilities. Taylor & Brown (1988) discuss the concept of how individuals overestimate their ability (cf. *Chapter 2, Section 2.3:7 Applications in professional practice*). The literature discusses the process of overestimation, its implications for training and how practitioners can be assisted in evaluating their self knowledge (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

3.5.5 : Unearthing the unconscious self

Having discussed 'self awareness', this chapter now considers two existing specific tools or processes, the Johari Window and journal writing, with a view to ascertaining how they can best be utilised to promote self awareness and enable the person to examine more closely their behaviour or taken-for-granted attitudes. It has been emphasised how it is not necessarily easy to be self aware and, even if we are self aware, it might be that the process of self awareness warrants more attention than

the behaviours i.e. how we act in any given situation. Furthermore, as also highlighted within this chapter, we are our own editors of our own knowledge, and whilst we all may have a vast stock of knowledge about ourselves, this may be locked within the unconscious. In addition, the conscious mind may act as a barrier to accessing such information (Freud, 1964). This point echoes the discussion in Section *2:3*, which notes how our minds will re-fence the categories we hold. This, as well as the fact that we can edit our own knowledge, could further reinforce our taken-for-granted assumptions. This section, therefore, starts to explore alternative models that individuals could use as an aid to developing self awareness and, possibly, also to understand the taken-for-granted parts of the self. These discussions will be developed further in *Chapter 4: Reflection and its Role in Professional Practice.*

3.5.5.1 : A model of the self – The Johari Window

The Johari Window provides a pictorial representation of how 'known' people are to themselves and others (West & Turner, 2010). It is a tool that was developed by Luft & Ingham (1950), initially to explore group dynamics. Since its inception it has been used in many different arenas to explore individual, group and management development (Hughes & Youngson, 2009). The model is widely used in the helping professions, notably education and counselling, for conceptualizing and training self-awareness. This model uses self-disclosure and feedback, and values the importance of good communication (Armstrong, 2006). It is an information processing tool that can represent information (such as feelings, experience, views, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivations) within or about a person (West & Turner, 2010).

The Johari Window, as shown in Figure 3.1, divides the self into four regions or quadrants, with each quadrant representing the information (feelings, motivations etc.) that is known or unknown to the person and known or unknown to others.

Figure 3.1: A simplified version of the Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1950)

	Known to Self	UnKnown to Self
Known to Others	OPEN SELF	BLIND SELF
Unknown to Others	HIDDEN SELF	UNKNOWN SELF
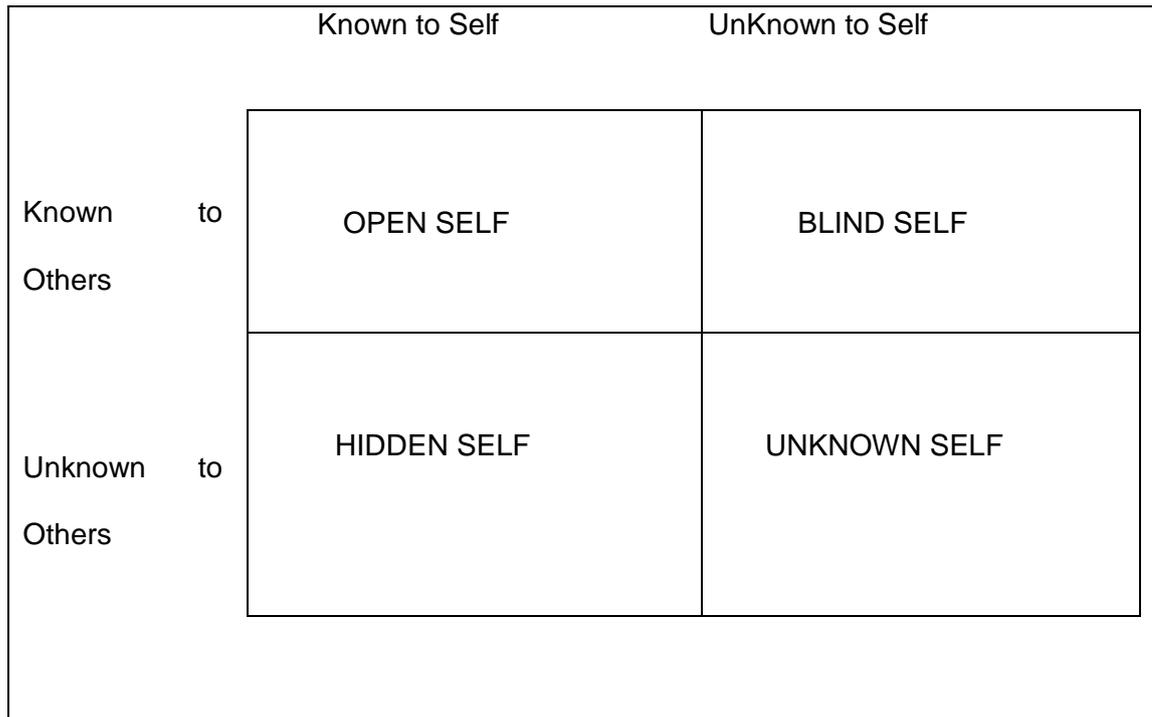
The two axes of the quadrant represent (1) what the person knows about him/herself, and (2) what he/she reveals about him/herself to others. These axes split the window into the following four areas:

- *Open self,* which includes information that is known by the person about him/herself, and that is also known by others through the person's self disclosure.

- *Blind self,* which encompasses information about the self of which the person is unaware, but which others know.

- *Hidden self,* which contains information that the person knows about him/herself but that others do not know.

- *Unknown self,* which consists of that which is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others.

Whilst the diagram above portrays the quadrants as equal in size this is not inevitably the case, and the model is dynamic in that the relative size of the four quadrants can vary over time. This model is particularly relevant to the present research because of the links to the 'hidden self' and the 'unknown self'. Firstly, as West & Turner (2010) note, the hidden self is where we hide our sensitivities, fears and hidden agendas. In this part of the self we store information we know or suspect, but do not want to share with others for a number of reasons. Secondly, the 'unknown self' is the quadrant that contains the aspects of ourselves, including our taken-for-granted assumptions, which are unknown to our consciousness. To unearth these aspects of ourselves we need to be prompted through self-discovery, observation, feedback or some form of mutual discovery (Eraut, 1994; West & Turner, 2010). In order to access and unearth what is within the 'unknown self' it is suggested that individuals need to turn off logic, and focus on the 'underneath' aspects of the self (Burnard & Morrison, 1997). Without open and honest self-exploration about the self it is unlikely that an individual will discover his/her inner self and reduce what exists within the 'unknown' and/or 'blind' areas of self. Self-disclosure is then needed to shift aspects of the self from the 'hidden' to the 'open' area.

Eraut (1994), in noting how self-awareness is acquired, acknowledges the need for reflection (cf. *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice*) and for feedback from others. Brigg (2009) comments on the need to ensure that when exploring these parts of the self we are critically engaging with the unknown aspects of the self rather than just reproducing who we are again and again. Like Eraut (1994), Brigg maintains that feedback and engagement with others facilitates the exploration of the internal and external hidden aspects of ourselves. Many authors, including Eraut (1994), Baumeister (1999), Carver (2003), Brigg (2009) and West & Turner (2010), amongst others, recognize that this can be problematic and acknowledge the possible hazards linked to exploring these aspects of the self,

cautioning the need for sensitivity. The process of unearthing the self can be uncomfortable, emotional, and lead to the emergence of fears. This could result in material that is unearthed from the 'unknown self' taking refuge and hiding in the 'hidden self' (cf. *Chapter 2: Section 2:4: What is whiteness and its role in professional practice*, for a similar discussion).

3.5.6   : The role of journal writing in relation to the questioning self

Because of the relevance of the topic to the present research, this section briefly discusses journal writing as a means by which practitioners can become more self aware. This is a prelude to a fuller discussion and definition of what is meant by journal writing in the next chapter (cf*. Section 4:5:1: Writing as a means of having dialogue with the self*).

Burnard (1997) emphasises how there are many ways to develop self awareness, including listening and talking to others, educational activities, counselling, and writing stories.   Interestingly, he does not mention journal writing in his fairly extensive list. However, both Moon (2004) and Gargiulo, (2005) note the importance of journal writing as a reflective tool to aid the development of 'self awareness'. Progoff (1975) claims that writing a journal helps the users to gain confidence, and that through the process the individual can establish a sense of the self.

Knowles (1993) and Mezirow & Taylor (2011) note how journals, or using historical life events in writing, can assist self awareness. Many have views on how personal journals can aid individuals, with Mezirow (1990) noting that they can also be used to foster critical reflection. Belenky *et al* (1986) and Cooper (1991) discuss the power of the journal writing as a means through which the 'silent' self is enabled to find a voice, leading to a gain in the sense of personal worth.

3.5.7 : 'I' as an anchor to hear the 'self'

Whilst the previous section noted the importance of writing journals, the present research is interested in how practitioners use their journals and whether they do see or hear the voice of their 'self' within their writing. This leads to a consideration of the role of 'I' – the first person singular - in reflective writing.

James (1890/1968) is considered to be the first person who distinguished between the two aspects of self - the 'me' and 'I'. He defines these as 'me – self as object or known' and 'I' – self as subject or knower'. Mead (1934) developed this work further and focused on the dialogic self and proposed that the 'I' and the 'me' are separate, but belong together, as together they make up the whole self. Mead (1934) discusses how individuals use language mainly by way of the first person singular and how this has an impact on how we refer to the 'self'. Winkle-Wagner (2009) recognizes the 'I' as the innermost aspect of the self and, furthermore, an aspect of the self that no one, including ourselves, 'can ever completely and infinitely know' (p. 29). Brook & DeVidi (2001) add to the discussion of the use of the 'I' by focusing on how the first person in statements is used to express feelings and emotions. Whilst their discussion centres on a denial that self-awareness involves any perception of the self, they acknowledge that the use of 'I' does anchor reference to the 'self'. Furthermore, Shoemaker (1968) proposes that the use of 'I' can be a way of 'finding oneself in the world' (p. 555).

It has been suggested that paying explicit attention to the 'I' when returning to reflective journals and learning conversations could help individuals to hear their own voice and could provide an additional means through which they can then deconstruct behaviours and reconstruct meaning (Candy *et al*, 1985). Further, it is suggested that focusing on the 'I' could assist individuals to deconstruct their personal knowledge and, by way of the reconstruction of self, possibly transform their understanding of who the 'I' is within the cultural milieu (Clift *et al,* 1990).

This section has touched on the literature around the dialogic self, and the use of 'I' and 'me'. The present research is specifically interested in the importance of the use of the 'I' and first person singular as a means by which individuals can hear and unearth aspects of the self.

3.6 : Conclusion

This section begins by summarising the conclusions from the literature reviewed in this chapter and ends with *Figure 3.2: Chapter 3: Personal Knowledge visualised through the PCS model (Thompson, 2011)* which aims to illustrate the connections between the literature discussed in this chapter and the PCS framework.

This chapter, firstly, engaged with the relevant literature in relation to the concept of 'knowledge' and presented an overview of forms of knowledge. Secondly, it defined and discussed personal knowledge in relation to how it is constructed and influenced (Eraut, 2001). Further, it was noted how personal knowledge can impact on taken-for-granted assumptions and the implications of this for professional practice. Thirdly, the chapter noted how interpretations of truth affect our belief systems, and highlighted how professional knowledge is inevitably influenced by personal values and beliefs (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002). The latter part of the chapter defined and discussed the complexity of the concept of self awareness. It noted how our personal knowledge consists of both conscious and unconscious knowledge, and how we may be unable to access our unconscious self (Baumeister, 1999), thereby hindering our ability to be self-aware. It noted the difficulties that arise from this and how the process of becoming self aware can lead to discomfort (cf. also *Chapter 2: Section 2:5:2: Implications for training*). Finally, it recognized how difficult it can be for practitioners to develop self-awareness, due to the changeable nature of the self. It touched on the role of other people, how the process of using others to aid discovery of the self may be flawed by the possibility of misinterpreting information or through resistance to

giving information about the self. The Johari window, with its recognition of the 'blind', 'hidden' and 'unknown' aspects of the self, was identified as a model and an approach that might aid our discovery of the self. The final section of the chapter considered the role of journal writing in relation to questioning self.

The following chapter, *Chapter 4: 'Reflection and its role in professional practice*, supplements the literature discussed in the present chapter. It provides an overall summary of relevant literature relating to reflection, addressing the major issues and debates, and bringing to the fore the complexity of unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions via reflection and reflective practice.

Figure 3.2: Chapter 3: Personal Knowledge visualised through the PCS model (Thompson, 2011)

Throughout the PCS model

Personal knowledge
Shared knowledge and belief systems
Taken-for-granted schemas
Self-awareness
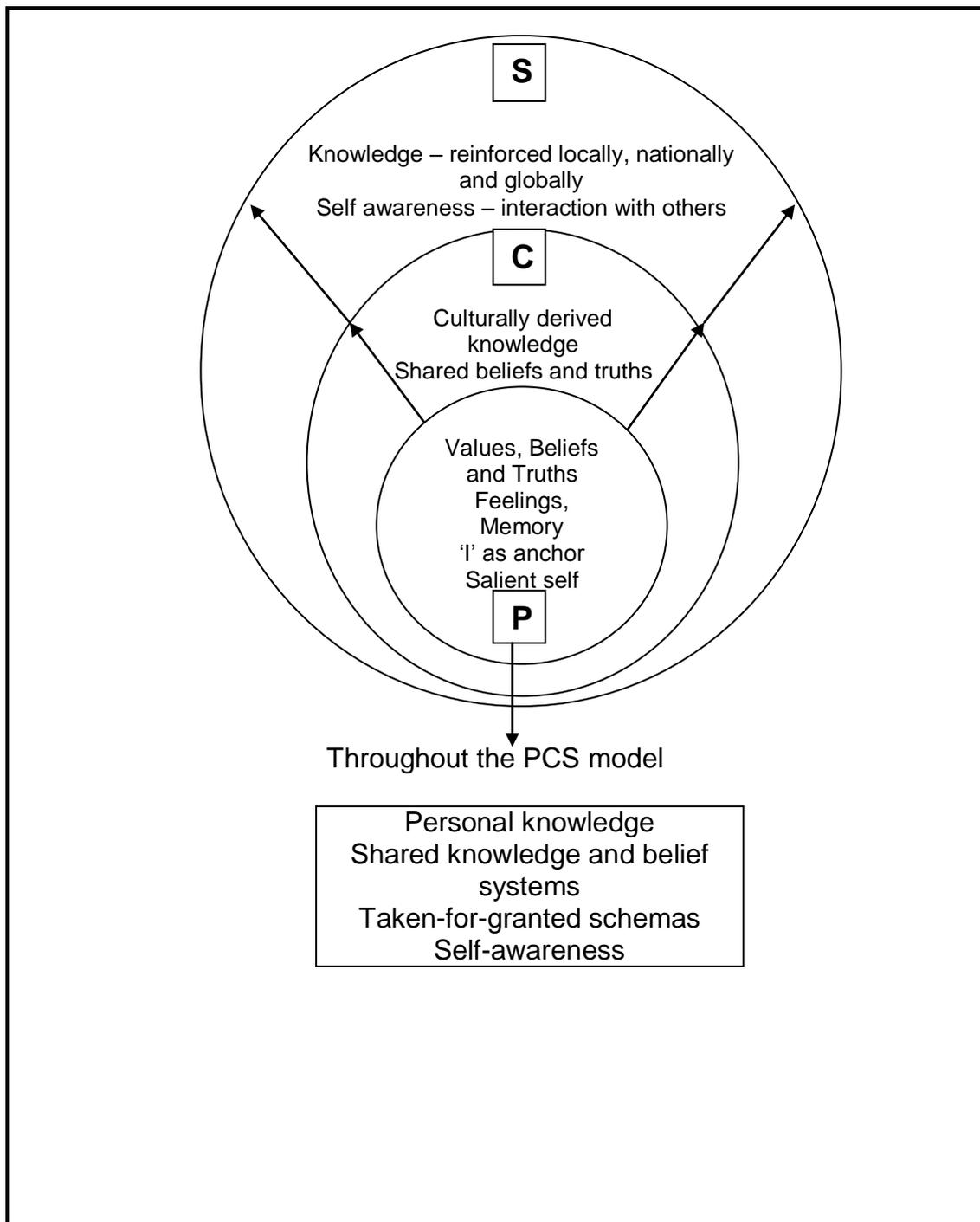
4 : REFLECTION AND ITS ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

4.1 : Overview

There is an extensive literature devoted to the field of reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity. There are many definitions, explanations and interpretations of these terms (see, for example, Eraut (1994), Johns (2004), Moon (2004), and Bolton (2010)). These can vary depending on the disciplines from which the research originates (Moon, 2004), and the range of sources includes education, teacher education, nursing and psychology (Moon, 2004; Gidman 2007). Many accept that thinking about the word 'reflection' can bring to the fore a number of understandings (Moon, 2004; Procee, 2006). This, indeed, could be part of the problem when reflection is prescribed in training and qualifications – the term can mean different things to different people. The issue of clarity around the meaning and use of reflection will be discussed throughout this chapter.

The present chapter touches on all of this literature, but focuses on how the terms reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity are used on an everyday basis. It discusses the lack of clarity and layers of complexity relating to the terms and definitions, and how this adds to the confusion and discussion on reflection. Whilst acknowledging its importance, the present research aims to explore not so much how different approaches improve our practice, but, rather, how they help us to unearth parts of ourselves that we have taken-for-granted, a process which might, in turn, contribute to improving practice. This chapter will explore how reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity assist us in this endeavour. It will consider how a lack of understanding of these concepts could impact on the ability of practitioners to use these approaches and it will further examine what might help or hinder their application in practice.

The chapter is organised into the following sections:

4.2 : Defining reflection

Two distinct approaches to defining reflection emerge from reviewing the literature on reflection as a professional practice:

1. The practitioner identifies a problem and re-thinks this in order to improve practice.

2. The practitioner focuses on the self and the lived experience in order to better understand life and practice.

The first approach ties reflection to the examination of a problem, with Lindeman (1945) suggesting that true learning only occurs when it is linked to an associated problem. This point is reiterated by Mezirow, (1991), who notes how reflection is central to intentional learning and problem solving. Loughran (1996) argues that reflection, when used purposefully, enables users to respond to 'problem situations'. Through the vehicle of reflection we can 'untangle a problem, or make more sense of a puzzling situation; reflection involves working toward a better understanding of the

problem and ways of solving it' (Loughran, 1996, p.14). In sum, this perspective argues that, on the whole, reflection comes about in response to an awareness of something not being right (e.g. a problem with practice) (Eraut, 1994).

Reynolds & Vince (2004) expand on this, explaining that learning mainly involves problem solving: namely, utilising ideas and theories in order to make sense of the experience and the learning. Applying a common-sense approach, Moon (2004) comments that 'we reflect on something in order to consider it in more detail' (p. 4), and agrees with Lindeman (1945) that this adds to the process of learning. It has a purpose. The evidence suggests that this notion of using a problem to aid learning and reflection has its place. It appears that focusing on a 'problem' adds a dimension of reality, thereby helping the individual to link practice with theory.

The present research has evolved from empirical observations of my own practice, and the starting point was reflecting on 'problems' or, for me, what I have described as 'eureka moments'. However, there is a need to encourage practitioners to go beyond waiting to identify a problem. The present research recognizes that practitioners need to be proactive, self-regulating professionals who do not necessarily wait for feedback from colleagues or clients before they act (Byars-Winston *el al* 2006). In order to challenge the status quo and/or improve practice, practitioners need to question the taken-for-granted aspects of their practice through continual self-regulation, and to acquire tools to aid this pursuit.

The second approach to reflection mentioned above is more akin to phenomenology and the notion of lived experience and how this can contribute to knowledge. Dewey (1933) provided the underpinning theories relating to reflection from this perspective, noting that it should be seen in terms of reflective thought, by definition an 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusion to which it tends' (p. 9).

He stressed that knowledge is not a fixed state, but is more about an ever-increasing and evolving relationship of experience. He discusses how in everyday experience 'knowledge is being developed and as a result it becomes … an active, working aspect of life' (Dewey, 1922, p. 59). Ultimately, reflection should be used to generate knowledge. Gidman (2007) notes that whilst this is the case, two major theorists, Dewey (1933) and Habermas (1971), adopt different philosophical stances, with Dewey focusing on the process of reflection, through which we make sense of the world and promote effective education, whereas Habermas (1971) focuses on the acquiring, developing and consideration of knowledge, through which one can promote the empowerment of an individual. Both of these approaches are very different to what was described by Lindeman (1945), Mezirow (1991), Loughran (1996) and the notion of problem based reflection.

A commonly accepted definition of reflection suggests that it is a 'process of creating and clarifying the meaning of experience (present or past) in terms of self (self in relation to self and self in relation to the world)' (Boyd & Fales, 1983, p. 101). This definition links the process of reflection to meaning, and more specifically the notion of 'self in relation to the world'. This thinking links to Thompson's (2012) personal, social and cultural dimensions of self (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and its role in professional practice*). Boyd (1983), however, states that the ideal outcome of reflection is to change your perception of the self and the world. This point will be returned to later.

Bolton (2010) adds further to the discussion and definition of reflection, saying that reflection results in an in-depth consideration of what happened, who was there and the feelings generated. In her opinion this also means 'reviewing or reliving the experience to bring it into focus, and replaying (it) from diverse points of view' (ibid. p. ixx). Furthermore, Bolton advocates looking for what might be the 'innocent' and 'irrelevant', on the grounds that these aspects might prove to be key to the enquiry of

'self'. This is of interest to the present research, as it is possible that taken-for-granted assumptions could be identified by searching out the 'innocent' and/or what might be deemed 'irrelevant' aspects of practice. Boud *et al* (1985) offer a generic definition of reflection as an intellectual and affective process which enables individuals to engage with and explore past experiences, gaining new understandings which will assist in the realisation of their worth. Johns (2009) suggests that reflection is a way of seeing the 'powerful' aspects of self, by which he means not only the power we hold as the professional, but the powerful inherent traditions we hold as beliefs. He sees reflection as 'a window through which the practitioner can view and focus on the self within the context of her own lived experience in ways that enable her to confront, understand and work towards resolving contradictions within her practice between what is desirable and actual practice' (ibid. p. 9). In reality, this may prove difficult to achieve (cf. *Section 4:5* below).

In summary, the above section considers how reflective thought should entail the examination of any belief or supposed form of knowledge (Dewey, 1933). Habermas's focus is more related to knowledge and its development as a way of empowerment. Boyd & Fales (1983) definition encourages the practitioner to look at the experience in terms of the self and the world in order to focus in. Bolton's (2010) discussion also encourages practitioners to review and relive experiences to enable them to focus on aspects of their practice, and within this she directs them to look at the incidental and irrelevant or taken-for-granted aspects. These perspectives are very important to the present research if practitioners rely on existing personal knowledge drawn from the self whilst make judgements with or about client's world-views.

Boud *et al* (1985) encouraged practitioners to explore their experiences in order to gain new awareness. Ultimately, we need to see the 'powerful' aspects of self - which could also be inherent and therefore taken-for-granted – using reflection as 'a

window' to examine the self (Johns, 2009). These definitions of reflection encourage practitioners to go beyond the process of reflection. As argued by Reid (1993), this second type of reflection involves more than focusing 'on the head'. This aspect of reflection is more in keeping with the present research, which is aimed at practitioners going beyond identifying a problem. It focuses, instead, on practitioners looking at the 'self' and their place in the world, in order to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of themselves. This definition of reflection is more akin to 'reflexivity', described by Bolton (2010) as:

> 'a way of standing outside the self to examine, for example, how seemingly unwittingly we are involved in creating social or professional structures counter to our espoused values. It enables becoming aware of the limits of our knowledge, of how our own behaviour is complicit in forming organisational practice which, for example, marginalise groups or exclude individuals' (p. xix).

As part of becoming aware of the limits of knowledge, practitioners need to be aware of the limits of their personal knowledge. Developing knowledge relating to personal knowledge of the self and others' world views will benefit practitioners in practice. This links to the discussion in *Chapter 3: Personal knowledge and its role in professional practice*. Ultimately, reflection needs to be a way of thinking and an ongoing aspect of practice (Bolton, 2004). However, what is unclear at this point is how practitioners can identify this aspect of the self. What tools or approaches might best enable them to see the self clearly without it being hidden? (cf. *Chapter 3.5.5.1: A model of the self – the Johari Window*). Johns (2004) describes reflection as a sacred place where practitioners can explore their experiences. Whilst this might be the case, practitioners need an amount of time to switch off from the day to day aspects of work and to internalise their focus on the self. The achievement of what practitioners might identify as a 'safe space' (Reid & Bassot, 2011) where

practitioners can explore the depths of their experience and taken-for-granted 'self' will be discussed further later in this chapter.

So far, this chapter has outlined two themes relating to the definition of reflection. Potentially there are many more. Johns (2004) warns not to take definitions relating to reflection at face value, arguing that many practitioners latch onto theoretical definitions and struggle to apply them to their own experiences. He suggests using the definition creatively to guide our use of reflection. Furthermore, Bager-Charleson (2010) emphasises how there are several types of reflection which enable practitioners to cope in a professional world.

What is evident is that reflection is something that all human beings do in order to make sense of the world. Boud *et al* (1985) recognize that this is an important aspect of human enquiry and that as human beings we all recapture experiences. We think about experiences, we mull them over and we evaluate them. However, this does not identify the distinguishing aspects of the process whereby we discover taken-for-granted aspects of ourselves. In this context, we need to know what makes practitioners notice specific aspects of their everyday reflections. Eraut (1994) highlights how these reflections are triggered by some kind of awareness that either something does not feel right, or, in the professional context, an aspect of practice has not gone as planned (here we see reference back to the notion of a problem), and how this in turn triggers some level of reflection. However, there is no clear indication of what level of reflection this is.

Boud *et al* (1985) stress that it is the 'working with experience that is important in learning' (p. 19) rather than simply going through the process of reflection. It is what is done with the reflection that matters. Kemmis (1985) and Reid (1993) discuss the active process of reflection, noting how this involves reviewing, analysing and evaluating experiences, utilising theoretical concepts and/or any previous learning.

Moon (2004) argues that to be useful reflection needs to be guided by a purpose (Dewey, 1933; Hullfish & Smith, 1961).

Reflection as a word, a term and an approach, appears itself to have become 'taken-for-granted'. Often the notion of reflection is mentioned as though doing this alone will aid or validate a course of learning, with little regard to how, if or in what way it will facilitate the learning, or even whether the learner will be able to engage in reflection. This observation is not new, and different researchers have commented on how, whilst reflection is on everyone's lips, often the process of reflection is used in an unreflective manner (Bengtsson, 1995). Gidman (2007) is also critical of how the notion of reflection has been uncritically 'adopted wholesale' within professional education. It has become largely unquestioned, and has achieved the status of a slogan, catch all phrase or buzzword (Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Thompson & Pascal, 2012). Thus, Moon (2004) notes how 'many applications of reflection in educational and professional situations are guided by assumption or guesswork' (p. ix). Furthermore, whilst many advocate the notion of reflection, there is often no warning, firstly, that reflection can be challenging (Van Manen, 1995; Thompson & Thompson, 2008) and, secondly, that it needs to be undertaken with a critical mindset (Clark *et al*, 1996; Thompson & Thompson, 2008). Ultimately, the danger is that 'reflection' becomes so taken-for-granted that it will become an 'empty, meaningless phrase' (Kinsella, 2010, p. 5).

4.3 : The nature of reflective practice

As with the concept of reflection, reflective practice has been extensively discussed in a number of disciplines by numerous authors (Moon, 2004). However, many agree that Donald Schön is the recognised leading theorist in relation to reflection and reflective practice. His work, specifically *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), was crucial in developing the theory and practice of reflective professional enquiry as a

means of enhancing professional practice. Schön, in turn, acknowledges that he was influenced by Dewey and, in fact, was reworking and adapting Dewey's theory on reflective thought.

Schön (1991) writes about the technical aspects of knowledge, recognising limitations on its use in practice and arguing that it does not equip professionals to cope with 'divergent situations' (p. 49):

> 'in the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution . . . in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern' (Schön, 1991, p. 42).

When practitioners are in the 'swampy lowlands' of everyday practice where it is hard to apply technical aspects of knowledge, Schön (1983) encourages them to seek out a different way of thinking – one that is 'implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict' (p. 49). He encourages professionals to think beyond the technical aspects of knowledge, to widen their horizons and to encompass a wider breadth of inquiry that includes the social aspects (Bager-Charleson, 2010). In his later work, Schön highlighted the theory of 'framing': a set of boundaries is placed round the experience, within which the user will select particular aspects to examine (Schön, 1998). The notion of framing is similar to Thompson's (2011) PCS (Personal, Cultural and Social) model – which helps users to search for and examine themselves and the worlds within which they exist by using the personal, cultural and social paradigms as a framework or boundary (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice*).

Schön (1994) describes reflective practice as 'a critical assessment of one's behaviours as a means towards developing one's own abilities' (p. 7). It could be argued that some of the later definitions of reflective practice have lost the critical aspect in relation to examining self behaviours (Thompson & Thompson, 2008). Schön's (1994) definition calls for a critical exploration of the self, whilst others define reflective practice as a way of 'think[ing] about things that have happened to us and seeing them in a different way, which enables us to take some kind of action' (Jasper, 2003, p. 2). Here Jasper is stating a simple approach to reflective practice that does not aid practitioners to really understand reflective practice. Freshwater *et al* (2004) say that for them the use of reflective practice enables practitioners to think about how they practice and develop an awareness of how their practice is structured. Bager - Charleson (2010) discusses the stages of reflective practice and, similar to the discussion in *Section 4:2 Defining reflection*, argues that the process starts by noticing something is wrong, that is, by identifying a problem, and then taking what has been noticed through the stages of making sense, making meaning and working with meaning. Bolton (2010) says that by using reflective practice practitioners can learn from a given experience or a sequence of experiences about the self, significant others, society and culture.

Clift *et al* (1990) are clearer on the different perspectives of reflective practice which they derive from their own studies of reflective practice. They describe three perspectives of reflective practice in teacher education: (1) the instrumental mediation of action: (2) the deliberation among competing views of teaching, and (3) the reconstruction of experience. Briefly, the first of these perspectives involves individuals using their reflection to enable them to be thoughtful. Knowledge is seen to be gained via external sources, for example, research findings and theoretical foundations of education. In the second perspective the individual reflects on particular events in context – comparing and deliberating between competing views

of education in order to test out and examine actions. In the third perspective, the individual uses reflection to reconstruct an experience and through this process gains new understanding of action situations and the self as teacher in terms of the cultural milieu of teaching (namely, the physical or social setting in which practice occurs and develops (Clift *et al*, 1990).

Whilst all of these discussions are of interest to the present research, it is the last of the three which is of particular relevance, mainly because it includes reflection as a means to reconstruct experience in order to inform our understanding of the situation, the self and cultural setting, and our taken-for-granted assumptions. However, it should be noted that the perspectives discussed are in relation to the teaching profession. Nevertheless, Clift *et al* note that the source of knowledge for reflection is not only found in the context or setting, but in the application of personal knowledge. They offer guidance to assist practitioners with how they might improve their reflective practice. Practitioners, they suggest, need to see it as a time to 'recast, reframe, and reconstruct past understandings in such a way as to generate fresh appreciations of the puzzlement or surprise inherent in practice situations' (Clift *et al,* 1990, p. 26). They further note that through this perspective the practitioner's knowledge, including personal knowledge, is used to transform practice. Whilst this perspective does include the use of personal knowledge, as in a number of other areas of the literature, it discusses the transformation of practice in a simplistic or logical way. There is no mention of the struggle that is often inherent in transforming one's own practice.

Clift *et al* (1990) discuss reflection in teaching, but the discussion seems well placed within this section on reflective practice. They discuss how reflection can be used to reconstruct taken-for-granted assumptions, and draw from Habermas's (1971) Critical Theory. This perspective is driven by the goal of emancipation, and encourages the practitioner to 'identify and address the social, political and cultural conditions that

frustrate and constrain self understanding' (p. 42). Clift *et al* (1990) acknowledge Habermas's (1971) and Van Manen's (1977) discussion of critical theory and the disagreement between them in relation to 'self reflection' and the different levels of reflectivity. Whilst their discussion goes much wider than this, Van Manen (1977) draws attention to the need to pull away from and question further the 'deliberative rationality' of formulating norms, roles and knowledge about possible ways of life undistorted by repressive forms of authority, privilege and the vested interests of exploitation' (p. 222). This requires one to reflect on the underlying assumptions, norms and rules that constrain and shape one's practice. It is only through a process of reflective reconstruction of taken-for-granted assumptions that one can be emancipated from the norms we take for granted, which in itself is essentially a *critical* process. Grimmet *et al* (1990) and Clift *et al* (1990) all discuss how reflection shapes and restructures the personal knowledge of the practitioner, and how this results in them understanding their own cultural milieu in which they practice. Berger & Luckmann (1967) also note how personal knowledge is the social reconstruction of reality and how it is only by uncovering previously taken-for-granted assumptions that practitioners can understand or transform the personal, social, cultural and moral aspects that could impinge on their practice.

Kinsella (2010) discusses the need to encourage reflective practice, implying that without this encouragement practitioners would not participate in practices that might enable them to rethink their 'dominant, taken-for-granted epistemological assumptions of professional knowledge [and] technical rationality' (p. 6). Whilst I agree that practitioners need to rethink their professional knowledge, it is of paramount importance that they also rethink their personal knowledge which is the foundation of our professional knowledge (cf. *Chapter 3: Personal knowledge and its role in professional practice*).

Both Dewey and Schön make reference to artistry. Dewey (1958) briefly discusses the artistry needed in work and practice, saying:

> 'The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged. The difference between such a worker and the inept and careless bungler is as great in the shop as it is in the studio'. (p. 5).

Dewey's work seeks to encourage the practitioner to be artistic in practice, and here he is meaning in the light of everyday conflicts and experiences (Dewey, 1958). Schön, similarly, talks discusses 'pro-fessional artistry' (1987, p. 27) - 'a kind of knowing (that is) ... inherent in the practice of professionals (Schön, 1987, p.13). This reference is to the competences needed on a daily basis in order to deal with the challenges professionals face in practice. It is echoed by Thompson & Thomson (2008) when they discuss the need to avoid technical rigidity and to develop theoretical and research-based knowledge that can deal with specific situations in the 'swampy lowlands' of practice.

This interpretation of artistry by Dewey (1958) is compatible with the concept of the professional as bricoleur, using the tools at his or her disposal to ensure the job (whatever that might be) will be done to the best of their ability. The concept of the bricoleur is defined and discussed further in *Chapter 5: Methodology.*

Schön (1987) discusses how this artisan approach has been lost in the desire of professions to be seen as professional. The artistic approach has been sacrificed to a systematic, more scientific approach. Furthermore, even the word 'professional' has become problematic as it has given practitioners 'a barrier to retreat behind to keep distance from or detachment from' the other, be that patient or client (Johns, 2006, p. 44).

In the course of the discussion in this chapter there has been reference to seeing the word 'professional' from different perspectives, and *Chapter 3: Personal knowledge and its role in professional practice* discussed how we construct knowledge. However, practitioners are human beings, and many are probably unaware of how they construct knowledge and reality. Yet, Schön (1983) maintains that if practitioners are aware that they themselves 'actively construct the reality of their practice' and that there are a number of positions, frames or lenses that may be available to help them, then they can begin to see the need to challenge previously tacit, or taken-for-granted, frames of reference (p. 411). Schön (1983) reviews the various tacit frames that inform professional practice, noting that 'at any given time in the life of a profession, certain ways of framing problems and roles come into good currency' (p. 409). Currently there is a greater awareness than ever of discrimination and inequalities. It is high on the agenda of most organisations who, on the whole, are striving to adhere to government policies such as the Equality Act (2010). It is imperative that as practitioners, we re-examine our own world views and taken-for-granted assumptions (Schön, 1987).

The term reflective practice and its definition raises parallel issues to that of the term reflection. Thus, when Ghaye & Ghaye (1998) asked 50 educators what reflective practice was, the result was a number of different descriptions and/or definitions. Their answers ranged from negative interpretations of reflective practice, including 'navel gazing' and the latest 'bandwagon', to more positive interpretations such as 'learning from experience' and 'personal growth'. This confusion does not just relate to these specific practitioners, but is widespread and rife amongst practitioners and educators alike (Kinsella, 2010).

Whilst Schön was an influential thinker, some (for example, Bengtsson, 1995; Procee, 2006) are critical of his lack of clarity, certainly in relation to the concept of 'reflective practice'. Nonetheless, reflective practice has been adopted by many

professions, including teaching and nursing (Moon, 2004; Procee, 2006; Thompson & Thompson, 2008). Eraut (1994) argues that Schön does not have 'a simple coherent view of reflection but (sees it as) a set of overlapping attributes; and that he selects whichever subsets of attributes best suits the situation under discussion' (p. 145). Furthermore, Eraut notes that on the whole there is little distinction between the different forms of reflection that are being referred to by Schön, and therefore this adds to the 'confusion' and 'weakens' the theoretical interpretations of the work. Many researchers, educators and practitioners have acknowledged the confusion relating to the theoretical and practical understanding of reflective practice, and whist this adds to the challenging nature of applying theory to practice, it is without doubt that reflective practice is challenging to undertake (Van Manen, 1995; Kinsella, 2010). However, the consensus remains that the goal of preparing reflective practitioners is a worthwhile endeavour (Loughran, 1996). Further, Gustafson & Bennett (2002) concluded from their research 'that reflection does indeed result in enhanced learning' (p. 11).

4.4 : Reflexivity

The previous sections have defined and explored the concepts of reflection and reflective practice, and some of this discussion has noted the importance of the 'self' and the context that the self is operating within. It was questioned whether Johns (1998) was discussing reflective practice or reflexivity when he stressed how practitioners could use reflective practices as a 'window' to examine the self. Commonalities in definitions around the subject have added to the complexity of its understanding of reflective process (Reid & Bassot, 2011).

Whilst the attempt to define reflexivity does pose similar issues, there appears to be more agreement in the definition and explanation of reflexivity than there is with regard to reflection and reflective practice. It is generally agreed that reflexivity

comprises the ability to think about our own assumptions and, thereafter, monitor our own actions (Cunliffe & Jun, 2002). The starting point of reflexivity is being aware of the personal, social and cultural contexts within which we live and work, and realising that these aspects of our lives impact on our interpretation of the world (Etherington, 2004). This thinking is similar to Thompson's (2012) PCS model (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice*). Reflexivity is seen as a means by which we question our own assumptions, values and beliefs, and our taken-for-granted assumptions, thereby enabling us to understand the complex world in which we live (Bolton, 2010).

Reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity should not exist just within a box, closed off to the world. We need to be open with our own narratives, to be able to hear the real self and how we see our version of reality within the personal, social and cultural paradigms of our lives. With this in mind, there needs to be a greater drive to realise that through the process of reflexivity practitioners should be considering how they are thinking within the wider dimensions of the personal, social and cultural perspectives (Freshwater *et al*, 2004). Bolton (2010) stresses the importance of reflexivity as it is the means by which practitioners become aware of some of the limits to their own knowledge. Whilst the importance of reflexivity is noted, it is also noted that it is not necessarily easy to achieve, and is in itself a skill (Etherington, 2004).

Bolton (2010) offers guidance on how to become a 'reflexive thinker', which begins by stressing the importance of being able to 'stand back' from our values and beliefs. She acknowledges that this can be difficult, saying we need to 'somehow' separate ourselves in order to look at our taken-for-granted, or as she terms it, 'habitual' experience. To assist us in developing the capacity to take this view of ourselves, Bolton suggests that we involve others in dialogue. Whilst this may well be a valid suggestion, there might be barriers and limitations to doing so, as practitioners would

need to be honest and feel safe with the process and the dialogue with others (cf. *4:5:2: Physical and environmental barriers*).

The focus on 'standing back' and/or separating one's self highlights the need for practitioners to address the ways they think as practitioners – that is, to use metacognition or 'thinking about thinking' - in order to enable them to have knowledge of their own thoughts and the factors that influence their thinking (cf. *2.3:7: Application in professional practice*). This standpoint is endorsed by others in related fields, including Byars-Winston *et al* (2006) who stresses how it is 'essential counsellors bring their knowledge of their personal cultural contexts to the forefront of their thinking during the counselling process' (p. 192) (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and its role in professional practice*). However, there are still questions concerning whether counsellors or, in the case of the present research, IAG practitioners are equipped to bring this knowledge to the fore. Johns' (2011) Model for Structured Reflection (MSR) may be a way to assist practitioners. He claims that his model is designed to guide practitioners to access the depth and breadth of reflection needed for learning through experience. In brief, the model begins with the individual 'Looking in' – finding a space to focus on self, paying attention to thoughts and emotions, and writing these down. Then, 'Looking out' begins by describing the situation, identifying significant issues, and thinking through the responses and consequences for all involved. As part of this latter phase of the MSR individuals need to address their own feelings about the situation, and question ethical actions and factors, whether personal or environmental. Individuals also need to consider: What knowledge informs my behaviour? Is there a link with previous experiences? How could I handle a similar situation differently? How do I feel or think now, and am I better equipped as a result?

This model is used as a pathway to peel back the layers of an experience, thereby enabling the individual to reveal aspects of the experience or the self. Whilst this

model starts with what lies on the surface, a question arises as to how practitioners reach the deeper levels discussed by Johns (2011). How do they identify the taken-for-granted assumptions they may hold and where is the evidence confirming that individuals using the model do actually get to the depth and breadth of reflection needed?

4.5 : Factors that help or hinder reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity

Ordinary everyday reflection is not the same as that needed to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions, and many in the field identify a number of key elements that can assist practitioners to undertake the level of reflection needed. The first and most important element of this journey is that practitioners understand what they are being asked to do, and secondly that they know how to do it. The reason for this is that evidence suggests that if we do not understand we are unlikely to complete the task at hand.

First it is necessary to recognise that reflection is difficult. It is a skill that not everyone possesses (Holm and Stephenson, 1994; Gustafson *el al,* 2002), with Bowden (2003) making the point that critical reflection cannot be developed overnight or in an instant, but 'requires hard work and involves much personal challenge' (p. 29). Moon (2004) stresses that often reflection is promoted without appreciation of the difficulties that individuals may experience. She adds that in order to help practitioners to reflect, in her word, 'purposefully', there is a need to foster and/or coach students (practitioners) towards this end.

The above discussion proposes that reflection is a skill, that it needs to be purposeful, and that practitioners need support via coaching to acquire it. Other evidence shows that reflective practice is not only difficult to do, but equally that it is difficult to encourage or promote deep reflection among learners (Gustafson *et el,* 2002).

However, there is no clear and agreed account as to what is deemed deep reflection, and possibly this is an area that needs further examination, as the term adds further confusion and lack of clarity of meaning.

4.5.1 : Writing as a means of having dialogue with the self

There may be a number of explanations for the specific difficulties with reflection and reflexivity faced by practitioners, but one factor could be that practitioners find it difficult to confront the taken-for-granted parts of themselves or to be sufficiently honest with themselves (Reid & Bassott, 2011; Ryde, 2011; Sue & Sue, 2011). In considering why practitioners may struggle, Johns (2006; 2011) comments that when we 'hold the reflective mirror up' it is 'not always kind, especially if we create false impressions of ourselves' (p. 40). If this is then done through the vehicle of writing, this can add to the struggle and be confrontational. However, the act of writing can be helpful, enabling the writer to begin 'to loosen the self from its ego bondage' (Johns, 2006, p. 40). Gully (2005) agrees, stating that one way in which she starts to explore the self is through the process of journaling (cf. *Section 3:5:7: The role of journal writing in relation to questioning self*). Journal writing is seen as a means by which practitioners can have a voice through which they can express their thoughts and feelings (John, 2006). In all, journaling acts as a mirror: we can see our self in relationship to a given experience, thereby positioning the self within the context of that experience.

Writing can be a means to explore the self, capture experiences and aid self awareness (Moon, 2004; Bolton, 2010). In numerous professions trainees are encouraged or required for professional development or the attainment of qualifications to engage in a form of reflective writing. Often the language describing this is interchangeable. Some may describe it as a log – that is, a simple record of events. Others describe it as a diary which contains everything – including self confessions. It might also be called a journal - a record of events, including thoughts

and/or feelings (Bolton, 2010). Whilst these may, indeed, overlap, a reflective practice journal should be the place where practitioners write about practice.

> A journal can be used for analysis and introspection. Reviewed over time it becomes a dialogue with yourself. Patterns and relationships emerge. Distance makes new perspective possible: deeper levels of insight can form (Holly, 1989, p.14).

Through the process of journal writing, Gully (2005) records her evolving self as a human being and this starts with the 'I', the self, the opening up of the self. This links in with the discussion in *Chapter 3:'Personal Knowledge and its role in professional practice'*, which notes the importance of journaling, gaining confidence and gaining a sense of self (Progoff, 1975) in the process of enabling the practitioner to find a voice or hear a voice that had previously remained 'silent' (Belenky, *et al*, 1986). Ultimately practitioners' reflective journals are the cornerstone of their reflective practice, as the collection of thoughts, feelings and experiences chart their own personal journey (Bolton, 2010).

4.5.2 : Physical and environmental barriers

Evidence of the difficulties experienced by professionals with reflection can be found in many disciplines. Thus, Gustafson & Bennett (2002) studied the promotion of reflection with military cadets and reported on the issues that emerged. They cluster the variables that affected the reflection process into 'learner characteristics' and 'environmental and reflection task characteristics', concluding that their findings are consistent with other research in the field. Within learner characteristics, they identify the learners' skill and experience both personal and professional as factors that influenced the difficulty of reflection, alongside the learners' knowledge and motivation, and also the security felt by the learner. A lack of security, added to the inability to reflect honestly, emphasised the difficulty with reflection and reflective

practice. With regard to the learner's knowledge, Gustafson & Bennett (2002) found that the ability to reflect on a topic was limited by the amount of prior knowledge held on that topic. This finding links to the discussion by Blum & McHugh (1984), who propose an interactional theory of reflection, arguing that the interactions in which people engage could limit their ability and/or capacity to reflect. Basically, they stress that whilst limited knowledge, and this includes personal knowledge, does not prevent an individual from reflecting on an experience, instead it limits the ability to construct and interpret meaning, hence the extent of reflection achieved.

Gustafson & Bennett's (2002) research highlights how both motivational factors and the availability of time contribute to learners' ability to reflect. Eraut (1994) criticises Schön for not considering time in his discussion around reflective practice. Heath (1998) acknowledged that time was an issue, saying that time constraints make it difficult to attain deep reflection (whatever that might be) and, furthermore, that it takes time to develop the skills and ability necessary to gain such levels of reflection. Reid & Bassot (2011) note that limited time means 'the scope for reflection is limited' (p. 104), and moreover, so too is the depth of the enquiry. Thompson & Pascal (2012) remind practitioners that the busier we are, the greater is the need to find time to be critically reflective. Ultimately, practitioners need time, whether time spent during the learning phase and/or within CPD, to assist them to understand what 'reflection' is and how to benefit from such practices in practice.

Gustafson & Bennett (2002) expand on the issue of security and feeling 'safe', saying that in order to reflect at such a deep level learners need to feel 'absolutely safe' and believe that they will suffer no negative consequences. Reid & Bassot (2011) reach a similar conclusion when they highlight the need for a 'safe space' and a 'still point'. Thompson & Pascal (2012) further concluded that without space for reflection, 'there will be no scope for critically reflective practice' (p. 320), making it difficult or nearly impossible for practitioners to achieve a level of reflection where the depths of their

experience and taken-for-granted 'self' can be explored. Bolton (2010) suggests that in order to explore parts of the self, reflection 'needs to be undertaken alongside open discussion with peers' (p. 12), and Reid & Bassot (2011) cite Etherington (2004), who suggests that through conversations with others we can 'co-construct new meanings in response to their critical reflections and our own' (p. 29). However, as highlighted above, practitioners need to feel that there will be no negative repercussions to such exploration, and this may be compromised if the issue or topic is seen as taboo or not 'politically correct' by their peers.

Ultimately, whilst the notion of creating such safe spaces may seem easy to achieve in theory, in practice the opposite may well be the case (Johns, 2006). Bolton (2004, 2010) does offer guidance on how practitioners can achieve sufficiently safe, or safe enough, spaces, arguing that there is a need for a facilitator or mentor who can provide the environment and boundaries needed for such reflection. Similarly, Reid & Bassot (2011) conclude that the supportive environment of supervision is a place where practitioners can think about negative past experiences. Bolton (2010) says that in this space 'practitioners can be brave enough to stay with uncertainty and self doubt, thereby gaining confidence in and authority over their thoughts, feelings and actions' (p. xx). Gustafson & Bennett (2002) discuss environmental factors, and include not just the physical environment, but also the interpersonal environment, which can add to the difficulties learners feel. The last cluster of relevant variables identified by Gustafson & Bennett (2002) centred on the reflection task characteristics, and within this area the items that were identified as important were the tools used to aid this reflection, the quality of feedback and, finally, the consequence of reflection. They conclude that the quality of feedback and interpersonal dialogue did have an impact on the individual, and, thereby, on the level of reflection and enquiry achieved.

4.5.3 : Role of feeling and values on levels of reflection

The previous section discussed the physical and environmental barriers that are known to help and/or hinder reflection. It has been concluded (Gustafson & Bennett, 2002; Reid & Bassot, 2011) that a 'safe space' and a 'still point' help the practitioner to achieve a level of reflection where the 'depths' of their experience can be explored. Bolton (2010) adds that in a 'safe space' practitioners can be brave enough to explore the self and make relevant links to thoughts and feelings.

Reflection and reflective practice have already been discussed in some detail. It has been established that reflection is a skill and that some practitioners may not have the ability to achieve and/or engage in higher levels of reflection. Throughout the literature review chapters the notion of feelings, values and beliefs has been discussed in relation to the topic of taken-for-granted assumptions. The present section draws on these discussions to give particular attention to the role of feelings and values in professional practice and their impact on the level of reflection achieved.

Chapter 2 discussed the concept of categorization and the importance of personal values on the categories we hold as practitioners. The literature warns that values and beliefs can be based on irrational thoughts or evidence; they are powerful, can override rational thoughts and can inform our judgements (Allport, 1954/1979).

Chapter 2 also explored the role of feelings in relation to whiteness. This literature clearly noted how the unearthing of taken-for-granted assumptions can evoke strong feelings and emotions, including fear, guilt and discomfort. Lago *et al* (2006) emphasise that practitioners should identify and scrutinize their feelings in order to understand what lies behind a given feeling, thereby enhancing the learning experience. Sue & Sue (2008) recommend that practitioners should pay great attention to their feelings and emotions, and should particularly aim to understand

and unpack their fears or other emotions that might block the delivery of an unbiased and non-stereotypical service. It is important to realise that feelings also have a deep impact on our memory – emotions and memories are stored together in the brain, with the result that when we recall an experience, feelings flood back (Penfield, 1952). This is important, emphasizing how feelings break through our consciousness and suggesting a close link between our emotions and cognition (Bruner. 1990). Moon (2004) notes that an emotional state or feeling can be both a prompt to engage in reflection and a product of reflection.

This chapter has noted how many theoretically oriented authors stress the need to pay attention to feelings (Bolton, 2010; Johns, 2011). However, Moon (2004) is critical of the lack of attention in the literature to the role of emotions in the reflective process, saying that reflection is discussed and described primarily from a cognitive perspective, with little or no attention paid directly to the role of emotions. Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985) address the need explicitly to attend to and connect with both helpful and obstructive feelings in more detail. Thompson & Thompson (2008) also stress the importance of examining this aspect of ourselves, arguing that whilst thinking is important, equally so are feelings. They conclude that becoming a critically reflective practitioner requires us to think critically and examine both what they term critical depth (i.e. our feelings and values) and also critical breadth (i.e. taking account of power and the cultural and structural dimensions of self within the world). As discussed in Chapter 2, emotions can be unearthed as we progress through the cycle of unlearning old values and beliefs, and we need to pay particular attention to this aspect of the self (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). If practitioners are ignoring their emotions, then they are failing to examine a significant dimension of their practice (Thompsons & Thompson, 2008).

Chapter 3 discussed how values and beliefs inform the decision making process (Ennis, 1994). Our values and beliefs guide how we behave (Thompson, 2011), and

this inevitably has an impact on our practice. Beliefs and personal knowledge are intertwined (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993; Nisbett & Ross, 1980) and it is crucial that we use this knowledge when we reflect, looking beneath the surface in order to gain an understanding of how our assumptions influence a given situation (Thompson & Thompson, 2008).

Also relevant to the present discussion is the recognition of how personal knowledge informs our professional knowledge (Eraut, 1994). It is not unreasonable to conclude that our personal belief systems can significantly influence our professional practice (Ennis, 1994). Thompson & Thompson (2008) acknowledge that our values and beliefs are shaped by how and what we feel, with the result that thoughts, feelings and values all significantly influence our practice. Thompson & Pascal (2012) argue that through in-depth questioning of their feelings, values and beliefs, practitioners can 'move beyond taken-for-granted assumptions' (p. 322), a viewpoint of significant importance to the present research. In order to achieve a higher level of reflection, practitioners must critically examine all aspects of themselves - including their feelings, values and beliefs – in the context of the culture and social structure in which they live.

4.5.4 : Enforced reflection

Further to the discussion above concerning the physical and environmental mechanisms that help or hinder reflection, whether that be via a 'safe space' or dialectic feedback, it is important to recognise that if practitioners are pressured to reflect then this may well have negative implications (Hulatt,1995). Cotton (2001) draws attention to the limited coverage in the literature relating to the negative aspects of reflection. She warns that encouraging practitioners to explore their 'private thoughts' in what might be seen as public places puts the individual in a vulnerable position, and the content of their reflections could be used in evidence

against them (Hargreaves, 1997). Further, the lack of acknowledgement that, as individuals, we all have our own traditions and interpretations of the world we live in, results in individuals being socially controlled or humiliated for sharing this within their reflective practice.

Cotton (2001) highlights the moral and ethical questions around ownership of such shared information regardless of confidentially and trust in professional relationships. In the light of this discussion it is easier to see why supervision of professionals can be difficult and, for some, threatening. Pryce (2002) also notes that in nursing the reflection process has failed to take into account the practitioners' cultural contexts, and therefore has failed to accommodate the means by which we as human beings construct our own, culturally informed reality. The problem is that, as discussed earlier in this chapter, reflective practice has become taken-for-granted and has at times taken an approach that is naïve and/or adopts a romanticised view of reality which 'fails to acknowledge the ways in which reflective accounts construct the world of practice' (Taylor, 2003, p. 244).

4.6 : Reflection within standards, qualifications and frameworks in IAG

Throughout this chapter I have discussed and highlighted how reflection and reflective practice and reflexivity are not always natural or inevitable processes. I have pointed out how the language used to describe reflection, deep reflection adds to the lack of clarity when practitioners, trainers are defining the term. Practitioners' ability to reflect is influenced by prior knowledge and by other obstacles such as limited time, limited safe spaces, and worries about disclosing the hidden parts of the self. At the end of the previous section it was noted that practitioners need to understand how their personal knowledge informs their professional practice and the judgements they make. Therefore, it is concluded that the Information, Advice and

Guidance (IAG) profession, as with other professions, needs to be clearer when referring to reflection within its standards, qualifications and training.

However, before examining the qualifications undertaken by IAG practitioners in order to ascertain the extent to which qualifications assist practitioners with this endeavour, it is worth briefly reviewing the demographics of the profession and the level of qualification attainment. The UK Qualification Strategy for Career Guidance Trends Business Research (2009) reported that in 2007 over 26,000 people worked in careers guidance in the UK, with the majority of these (21,370) practising in England. 73% of practitioners were female. The report also noted how the career guidance workforce is ageing, with increasing numbers of practitioners aged 50-59 and fewer in the 25-39 age brackets. Despite ethnicity data being suppressed, the authors of the report were also able to ascertain that a large proportion of IAG practitioners where white and that the limited diversity of the workforce presented challenges - particularly where services worked with diverse client groups. It was also concluded that whilst, as a profession, IAG practitioners were on average more qualified than in some other occupations, 30% of the IAG workforce were only qualified to NVQ Level 3 or below.

The above gives a picture of the IAG workforce as, typically, being white, predominantly female and mainly older. This is consistent with my experience. Because of this and the developing awareness of my own taken-of-granted whiteness, alongside my concerns about how practitioners used their reflection and/or reflective practice, I spent time examining a selection of the literature relating to the standards, qualifications and training of IAG practitioners. At the start of my research in 2006, and over the subsequent years, I questioned whether the qualifications and training available could support practitioners to learn how to engage in reflection that would enable them to unearth their taken-for-granted assumptions. Since 2006, the qualifications available have changed – partly due to

civil servants controlling the requirements for Careers Guidance practitioners in the government funded services (Lewis, 2012). More recent changes in government have had a further impact on the qualifications and the profession in the form of the introduction of the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) Level 3 NVQ Certificate in Advice and Guidance (2010).

Regardless of the changes this section will briefly outline the common qualification routes and the criticism of such. The first common qualification is the Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG), a route which has been 'criticised for its lack of an applied (practical) dimension' (McGowan *et al*, 2009, p. 29). At the time of writing this thesis, practitioners were additionally required to complete 4 units of the NVQ Level 4 in Guidance; however, this has subsequently been replaced by the Institute of Career Guidance Certificate in Professional Practice. The existing United Kingdom framework for the training of practitioners was outlined in a 2009 report produced by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). This report documents how NVQs have undergone many revisions since they were first developed in the 1990s but how, nonetheless, they have been 'widely acknowledged as failing to provide practitioners with an understanding of underpinning theory', thus 'inhibiting the development of practice' (McGowan *et al*, 2009, p. 29). Consequently this led to the work of Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and the launch of the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) Level 3 NVQ Certificate in Advice and Guidance. Since the launch of the Level 3 NVQ, the pre-existing Level 4 qualification has been deemed not fit for purpose and, therefore, the sector has developed a Level 4 Diploma in Career Information and Advice. Additionally the sector has seen the development of the Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance, with the range of qualifications delivered by a number of providers - e.g. The Open University - all of which are part of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Whilst many of the NVQ qualifications and the QCG address practical and theoretical issues along with

notions of ethical and reflective practice, questions remain about the degree to which they equip practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. LLUK (2009) emphasise that reflective practice should be engaged with and become part of the practitioner's 'mindset'. It should not only occur during training, but should also be an underpinning rationale for continuing professional development throughout professional life.

Cedefop (2009) reviewed trends and patterns in training provision for career guidance and identified some competences as being 'transversal', also termed foundation competences, suggesting that these should underpin and cross-cut all work tasks. The report notes that the framework can only remind practitioners that both they, and their clients, hold their own personal philosophies and world-views and, therefore, it is the responsibility of each career guidance practitioner to develop high levels of reflective practice. The report acknowledges that the framework cannot fully explore these issues. The Cedefop (2009) report recognises that both the service user and the practitioner bring their own social, cultural, economic and personal circumstances, and personal values and attitudes, to the process. The report also notes that the competence framework can stress these points and it is each practitioner's responsibility 'to develop high levels of personal reflectiveness' (p. 71). However, during 2006-2010 the qualifications that were delivered did not have a strong emphasis on reflection and reflective practice nor on the foundation competences mentioned above. The end of 2010, however, saw the launch of the Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development. Throughout this qualification there appears to be a strong drive to equip candidates to understand spiritual, moral, ethical, social and cultural issues (QCR, 2010). This new qualification includes a mandatory module Unit 2: 'Reflect on and improve professional practice' which evaluates theories of reflective practice and aims to develop a 'critical understanding of reflective practice, its role in the development of effective practice and how to

determine the need for continuous professional development and the impact that this has on own practice' (QCR, 2010, p.1). Whilst these changes were needed and are aimed at equipping practitioners with the underpinning knowledge needed to practice, there is still the issue which has been discussed throughout this chapter of whether reflection and reflective practice are merely 'buzz words' and taken-for-granted, simply concerned with ticking another box, or whether as professionals we adopt reflective practice as part of our own personal ethos.

4.7 : Conclusion

As with the previous two chapters, this section begins by summarising the conclusions from the literature reviewed. It also includes *Figure 4.2: Chapter 4: Reflection visualised through the PCS model (Thompson, 2011)* which aims to illustrate the connections between the literature discussed in this chapter and the PCS framework.

This chapter, firstly, critically engaged with a substantial section of the literature relating to reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity. In particular, it defined and discussed two distinct approaches which emerged from reviewing the literature on reflection: first, where the practitioner identifies a problem and rethinks this in order to improve practice; and, secondly, where the practitioner focuses on the self and the lived experience in order to better understand life and practice. In summary, the conclusions drawn from this discussion are that different definitions and approaches to reflection and reflective practice exist, and that these are influenced by time and place. Reflective activities are not natural to everyone and even those who feel they are reflective may not possess the ability to engage at a higher level. In addition, practitioners themselves need to better understand the reflective practices in which they engage, but this will only happen if there is a wider consensus among the profession as to how reflection should be defined.

It is recognised that Gustafson & Bennett (2002) believe that the question of the extent to which prior knowledge affects the ability to reflect requires further research. Whilst the literature encourages the sharing of reflective dialogue with others, also highlighted is the need to establish a 'safe space' where the practitioner feels safe enough both to engage in deep levels of reflection and share such reflections with others. It also highlighted the difficulties and the ethical risks of encouraging practitioners to engage in reflection that might unearth parts of themselves which had hitherto remained hidden even to the self. Furthermore, a lack of research relating to the contexts of reflection was noted.

On reviewing a small section of the literature on reflexivity, it was apparent that it too faces similar issues and concerns relating to clarification and or definition of the term – although there does seem to be more agreement on what is meant by reflexivity. Reflexivity is seen as the ability to be able to think about our own assumptions, with the starting point of this being awareness and understanding of our own personal, social and cultural lenses. Ultimately, reflexivity is the process by which we 'stand back' and question our taken-for-granted assumptions, thereby understanding the limits of our own knowledge (Bolton, 2010).

The latter part of this chapter briefly examined the qualifications which have been in existence since the inception of this research in 2006. The concerns raised by Cedefop (2009), LLUK (2009), and McGowan *et al* (2009) regarding the quality of the training and the qualifications available were outlined. What is clear is that professional bodies need to be more explicit about what they mean when they require practitioners to use reflection as part of their development or training. Whilst the new Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development has a stronger focus on the need to produce reflective practitioners, there is a still a need for clear and consistent definitions of what is meant by reflection and reflective practice, and these should be set out in codes of practice, or ethical guidelines and training resources.

It is equally important for practitioners to understand that reflection is a means by which they can develop their personal or professional knowledge in order to inform the judgements they make in practice. The lack of clarity among professionals, and the lack of awareness of the nature of reflection among practitioners, does not help the profession or those seeking guidance from the profession to be secure in the knowledge that practitioners possess high level reflectiveness (Cedefop, 2009).

Figure 4.2: Chapter 4: Reflection visualised through the PCS model (Thompson, 2011)
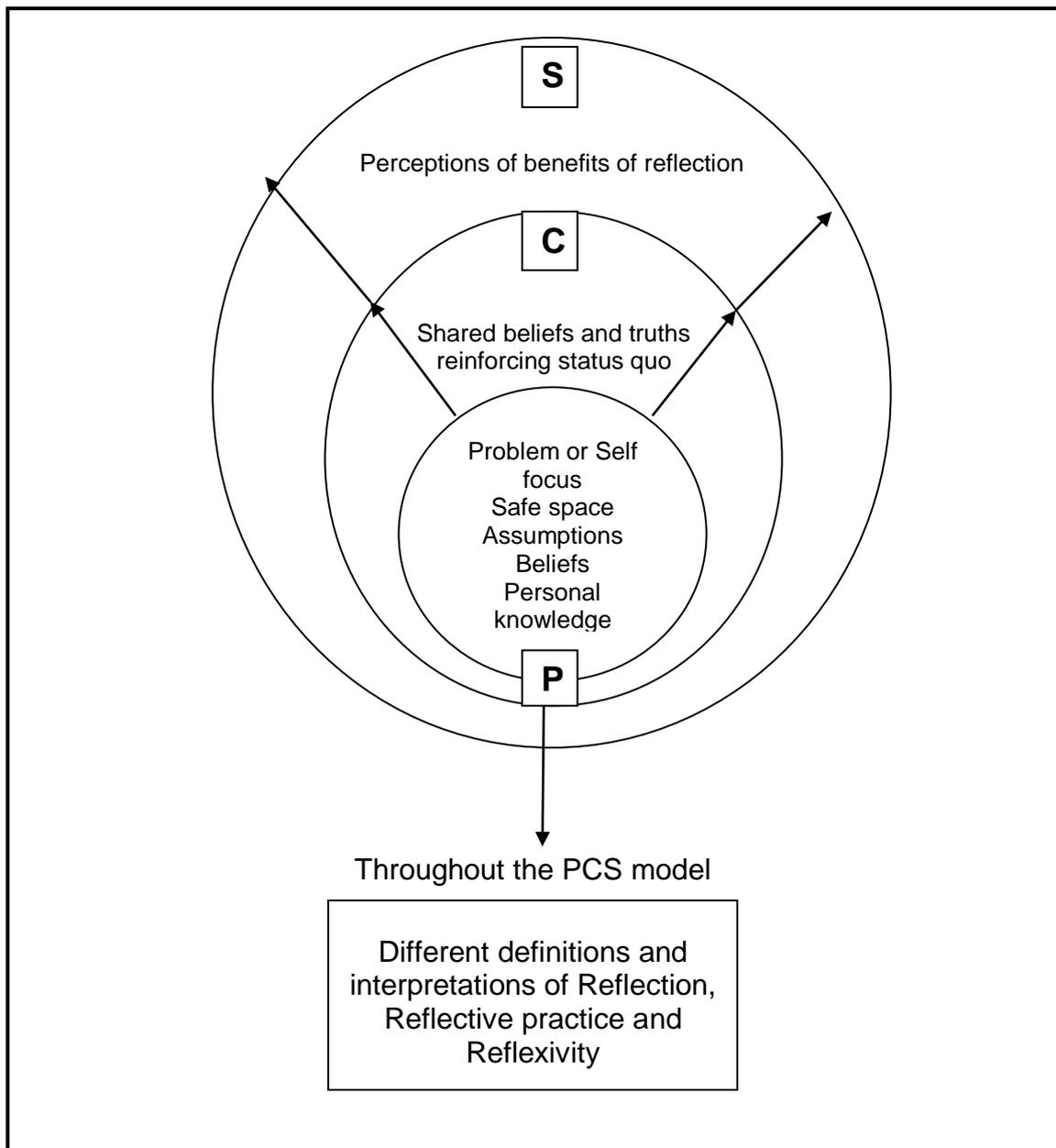
4.7.1 : Research implications of literature reviews

This chapter and the two preceding chapters have presented an emergent, wide-ranging synergy of literature designed to contextualise the present research. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice* discussed the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions and linked this to the literature from the field of categorization and whiteness. *Chapter 3: Personal knowledge and its role in professional practice* discussed how personal knowledge is constructed, how personal knowledge contributes to taken-for-granted assumptions, and its impact on professional practice. This present chapter, *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice* has discussed relevant literature relating to reflection, highlighting the major issues and debates that are central to the present research.

Whilst the subject matter of the present research is very complex, it is evident from the three literature reviews that it addresses a topic that needs to be researched further and not shied away from. The breadth of the literature presented in the three review chapters supports the complexity of the research topic.

Taken-for-granted assumptions are just that: taken-for-granted, and, given that human beings rely on categorization to function (Allport, 1954), assumptions are reinforced, as discussed in the previous chapter. Whiteness is seen as normal, and is not only invisible in western society but is also associated with power or privilege. As whiteness sits within taken-for-granted assumptions, it becomes unseen and unchallenged, despite its links with forms of racism. This has implications for the present research in that, if whiteness is taken-for-granted, this could prove difficult to study. Hence the methodologies and methods employed for this research.

Personal knowledge impacts on the taken-for-granted assumptions held by individuals, and personal values and beliefs inevitably influence and again reinforce assumptions. This aspect of knowledge can be embedded within the subconscious,

thereby hindering a person's ability to access these parts of the self. It can be difficult and painful for practitioners to develop self awareness, and involving others in the process of unearthing taken-for-granted aspects of self may be flawed due to the misinterpretation of information or through resistance to giving information about the self – that is, the taken-for-granted self may remain hidden from others and unknown to ourselves.

What is outlined above positions the complexity of the topic being researched – mired by the different definitions and interpretations of reflection and reflective practice. This is further compounded by the difficulty of unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions. Again, this leads to the methodologies and methods chosen by me as the researcher to assist me to further explore, address and understand the research question.

4.7.2   : Research aim

The aim of the present research is to explore the lived experiences of practitioners in relation to taken-for-granted assumptions. It seeks to understand how these assumptions manifest themselves, how practitioners unearth their own assumptions, their awareness of such and the impact on practice. It strives to understand and explore how reflection and reflective practice is defined by IAG practitioners and the profession as a whole. Further, the research aims to understand how reflective practice equips practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. It also seeks to ascertain whether the 'I Poem' can assist practitioners to unearth their taken-for-granted voice within their journal writing, and use this as a starting point to challenge and change their assumptions and practice.

4.7.3   : Research question

The overarching research question this thesis sought to answer is how reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity can assist IAG practitioners to unearth taken-for-

granted aspects of self. Underlying this were several specific supplementary issues which include: Firstly, practitioners' lack of awareness regarding their taken-for-granted assumptions; secondly, training and professional codes of practice as barriers to identifying and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and thirdly, the 'I-Poem' as a tool for promoting reflection that unearths taken-for-granted assumptions.

Having set the scene with the introduction and the three literature review chapters, the following chapters move onto the empirical aspects of my research. The next two chapters - *Chapter 5: Methodology* and *Chapter 6: Methods: the research design and the research process* – address how the research was carried out, and why it was carried out in this way. Firstly, *Chapter 5: Methodology* incorporates the exploration of a number of methodologies. Central to this investigation was the selection of an approach that would best fit the needs of the research, its participants and, ultimately, the intended audience of the research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Then, *Chapter 6: Methods: the research design and the research process* recounts the research procedure; that is, the steps taken to collect and analyse data, and the rationale behind them. It focuses on what was done and how the research evolved from one stage to the next.

5 : METHODOLOGY

5.1 : Overview

This research has emerged out of my own experience, my reflexive inquiry and the acknowledgement of my own taken-for-granted attitudes towards difference. The literature review (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice*) discusses why examining our assumptions is important. The precise focus of the research has changed and developed in the course my PhD journey, and will continue to evolve. As a result, the approach and methods considered and adopted to address the research have not been fixed or static, but have evolved as my thinking and the research itself unfolds.

This methodology chapter incorporates the exploration of a number of methodologies with a view to unearthing a methodological approach that would support the evolving research goals. The chapter is organised into the following sections:

5:1:   Overview of chapter

5:2:   Paradigms - Postmodern Approach/Social Construction

5:3:   Choosing Qualitative Research

5:4:   Summary of chapter

5.2 : Paradigms & Ethics

5.2.1 : The Postmodern Approach/Social Construction

As part of the research process it is paramount to define the paradigms or world views (Patton, 2002) within which the research sits as this determines the underlying assumptions and intellectual structures on which the research is based (Kuhn, 1962, 1970). Denzin & Lincoln (2011) acknowledge that whilst methodologies are interwoven and genres are blurred, choices must be made and these choices should

be driven by the needs of the research, its participants and the intended audience of the research study.

The present research sits within the interpretive paradigm, adopting the view that there are many truths and multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It is primarily a qualitative project that draws on the perceptions, views and interpretations of individual research participants. The trigger for the research stemmed from my developing awareness of the significance of minority ethnic status in the professional-client relationship, and I was drawn to the postmodern perspective as a framework in which I would be able to encapsulate the complexity and nuances of this relationship.

Wilson (1997) notes that the postmodern worldview grew out of the humanities tradition. It questioned modernity's trust in science and technology and encouraged a second look at our lives to further question if our lives' were better as a result of the gadgets, toys and other technological applications we all now possess.

Postmodern as a term is used in different ways, and became established as a movement in our society during the latter half of the twentieth century (Etherington, 2004). The postmodernists question how knowledge and truth are perceived and therefore, believe they should critically examine assumptions about these truths and knowledge (Wilson, 1997). The postmodernist believes that 'knowledge is socially constructed' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 107). The postmodern paradigm views the world through a humanities lens and as such its orientation is to appreciate and interpret meanings rather than predicting or controlling knowledge (Wilson, 1997).

In order to appreciate and interpret meanings relating to taken-for-granted assumptions within a postmodern paradigm I sought out voices, stories and narratives of human experience and used these to assist me in expanding on the existing range of understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through this process I became the story teller, hence engaging with methodologies such as auto-

ethnography, which facilitated the engagement of my own first person and reflexive accounts (cf. *Section 5:3:4: Auto-ethnography strand).*

The postmodernist invites marginalised voices to be heard (Wilson, 1997). However, in the case of this research I encouraged expression of the dominant voices, i.e. a western voice (Etherington, 2004). In this way I hoped to be able to identify the hidden voices of taken-for-granted assumptions and whiteness as characteristics of the voice of dominance.

The present research also draws on social constructionism. Whilst social constructionism can be seen as part of the postmodern movement, it further challenges notions of truth and reality (McLeod, 1999). Thus, Berger & Luckmann (1967), major proponents of the social constructionist position, argue that knowledge, including taken-for-granted common sense knowledge of day to day life, is derived from and maintained by social interaction. Furthermore, as we act upon this knowledge it becomes reinforced and more taken-for-granted, which is an area with which the present research is concerned.

As with the postmodernist view, social constructionism invites us to explore how meanings and identity are created, whether through language, stories, or as a way to start to think about how we know what we know, or do not know, as the case may be (McLeod 1999). Etherington (2004) notes that, similar to postmodernism, social constructionism encourages individuals to see the worlds we have created socially and, furthermore, asks that we challenge the socially shared 'grand narratives'. However, social constructionism aims to pull apart fixed beliefs about power, and, as with the present research, invites alternative ways of thinking about or indeed reflecting on such issues. Both social constructionism and postmodernism believe in the role of stories and the story teller (ibid), and therefore I aim to appreciate and

interpret meanings from my narratives and those who have engaged with the research (cf. *Section 5:3:6: Listening to the voices within*).

This section has outlined how paradigms were chosen on the basis of what would best fit the needs of the research, its participants and ultimately the intended audience of the research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The next section draws together discussion and debate on the ethical considerations made throughout the research, in order to demonstrate that the research adopts a critical perspective. It considers the following issues in turn: bias, rigour and reliability, power, insider/outsider perspectives, and, last but not least, trustworthiness and authenticity.

5.2.2 : Ethical Issues

Ethical issues permeate this research, both in terms of the nature of the research question and the manner in which the research is conducted. The identification and challenging of taken-for-granted assumptions is presented as a core professional issue and something that needs to be addressed if professionals are to practice in an ethical fashion. The present research is located within interpretive and critical paradigms and I drew on discussions of criteria and issues that would ensure it was conducted in an ethical manner and that its conclusions would be valid (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Etherington, 2004; Patton, 2002).

- *Bias.* No research is completely objective or value free. On the contrary, bias is ever-present – all researchers, all people and all reports have bias (Stake, 2010). Therefore, I recognised that, as a researcher and as a white western woman, I have preconceptions and biases of my own (Lester, 1999) which influence how I see and interpret the world. As a researcher it is important that I recognise and acknowledge this bias, thereby promoting the transparency, authenticity and trustworthiness of the research (Etherington, 2004). I have adopted methodologies with this in mind. Thus, I rejected phenomenology due

to the notion of 'bracketing off', and embraced heuristic research in order to bring to the fore my personal experience and insights, including my biases (Patton, 2002). I sought guidance (Merriam, 2003; McIlveen, 2008) on how to acknowledge my bias, my vulnerable self, my values and my beliefs. The confession of my bias in practice, specifically my taken-for-granted assumptions, became an integral part of the pre-cycle and cycle 1 of the research.

The issue of bias is also fundamental to the topic addressed in this thesis. I am arguing that if IAG practitioners are unaware of the taken-for-granted assumptions that they hold, then this will render them unable to give unbiased guidance to their clients. Developing strategies to reduce the likelihood of this occurring is the key goal of the research.

- *Rigour & Reliability.* In order to dispel suspicions that findings are shaped by nothing more than the researcher's predispositions, qualitative research processes and analysis need to be explicit and rigorous (Patton, 2002). By adopting heuristic research, I have adopted a systematic approach (outlined in chapter 6) that allows for critical examination and inclusion of the researcher's own perspective. I observed my own self dialogue and that of others, including via in-depth conversational interviews (Craig, 1978) with co-researchers. As a heuristic researcher I enhanced rigour and reliability by returning repeatedly to the data, constantly checking and questioning the significance of the data collected and the approached used – namely, researcher-as-bricoleur (Barrineau & Bozath 1989). I employed strategies to ensure the data collection and analysis was reliable, including the use of overt, systematic and replicable research procedures such as Colaizzi's (1978) seven-stage process of analysis, and NVivo's methodical, systematic

process for recording the data, thereby providing a secure audit trail (Bazeley, 2007). Overall, Maxwell's (2009) seven point checklist was used in order to confirm the validity of the research.

In sum, I utilized a range of strategies to ensure that the data collection, analysis and interpretation was reliable, dependable, transparent and defendable, and not reliant on 'data analysis fairies' (Thorne, 2000).

- ***Power.*** As a white IAG practitioner I am in a position of power in relation to my ethnic minority clients as a result not only of my professional role, but also my membership of the dominant white cultural group. My realisation of this led to a crucial turning point and focus of my research. I have considered the role of power, specifically the power I and other IAG practitioners may hold in relation to their role as an unknowing oppressor (Holland *et al*, 1995). As I unpicked the fabric of everyday life uncovering aspects of power and culture (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005), I realised that we hold powerful taken-for-granted assumptions stemming from our whiteness, and I became aware of the power that such assumptions can bequeath. Mechanisms that might sustain such assumptions, notably IAG codes of practice, became a focus of my research, as did mechanisms for unearthing and challenging them, notably the 'I Poem'

  As a researcher I am in a position of power in relation to the determination of the research topic and the collection, analysis and reporting of the research data. I have sought to manage this power through maximising the transparency of the research by detailing as explicitly as possible all phases of the research, by being open with participants about the nature of the research and the requirements of their involvement, by placing the research in the public domain through publications and conference presentations, and by engaging in discussion with 'critical friends'.

- ***Insider/Outsider perspectives.*** I am a member of the key target group for my research, namely, IAG professionals (in particular, white IAG professionals working with ethnic minority clients). This helps to give me an insider perspective on the issue of taken-for-granted assumptions and their impact, and is something I have developed through the use of auto-ethnography. In the interest of comprehensiveness, I have employed other methodologies to give me access to perspectives at different positions on the insider-outsider dimension. In collaborative work with one participant (Jane) I have acted as both participant and observer (Patton, 2002). Then, through data from other case studies and from capture sheets completed by participants less close to me I have been able to argue the case from a more detached, outsider perspective.

  Merriam (2009) discusses the issues relating to the inside/outside perspective debate and notes that whilst, as researchers, we might ideally want to be able to get inside the perspective of our participants, this is not fully possible. Patton (2002) argues that whilst being an insider accentuates access to the participant's view, the researcher still needs to be aware of also being an outsider. He acknowledges that the challenge is to combine participation and observation. The benefits of this are that as the researcher you can be better equipped to understand the setting from the insider perspective, while also being able to describe it 'to and for outsiders' (Patton, 2002, p. 268). I have addressed this challenge through the methodologies and methods I have employed as the researcher-as-bricoleur.

- ***Trustworthiness and Authenticity.*** I have taken great pains to ensure that the findings of my research are trustworthy and a fair reflection of the

participants' perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I have striven to demonstrate this and to earn the confidence of the reader by truthfully recounting my research journey and faithfully reporting the data (cf. chapters 7, 8 & 9) (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Trustworthiness is derived from validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and is concerned with the credibility of the research. In order to promote validity, in the pre-cycle I shared my own auto-ethnographic narratives, and to aid transparency my confessions of taken-for-granted assumptions were shared with co-researchers and participants (Mcilveen, 2008). During all of the data collection and analysis phases I asked co-researchers (notably Jane, Becky and Diane) to review and respond to their own data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

I used a range of strategies in order to promote the credibility of the research, including prolonged engagement with a number of research participants, persistent observation, constant monitoring of my own understanding of the research findings, and member checking throughout the three research cycles to ensure that I was presenting an authentic representation of the participants' positions (Etherington, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The thesis openly discusses the choices made throughout the study, thereby enhancing and establishing the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research process (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998).

The above section has drawn together the discussion and debate relating to the ethical considerations made throughout this research, thereby helping to demonstrate its critical perspective. The issues it addresses are interwoven throughout this chapter. The next section explores the methodologies that nestle under the qualitative umbrella in order to establish what might further assist in achieving the overall research goals.

5.3 Choosing Qualitative Research

Qualitative research cuts across disciplines and encompasses many perspectives (Stake, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In the history of qualitative research there have been simultaneously overlapping trends and developments of thinking, some in conflict with each other, meaning that qualitative research has been interpreted differently at different times in its history (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative research aims to understand individuals and seeks individuals' perspectives. Stake (2010) notes that qualitative researchers by nature prefer a close-up view of a phenomenon. I have, therefore, adopted this postmodern approach in order to better understand how people interpret their experiences and construct their worlds (Merriam, 2009). I believe that adopting this approach provides a method of analysis that enables me to hear the individual's point of view and world views relating to the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions.

The field of qualitative research is associated with case studies, life stories, interviewing, focus groups and observations (Bryman, 1992; Thorne, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln; 2011). The product of these approaches is the capturing of data that has a rich description of the phenomena under enquiry, which can come from conveying the researcher's (i.e. my) understanding as well as that of the participants (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). (cf. *Section: 5:3:6: Listening to the voices within*).

Part of the reason for choosing a qualitative methodology lies in the fact that it can give me, as the researcher, a more personal role. The qualitative researcher makes use of personal experience (amongst other things) and thus becomes involved in the process of self-reflection. Qualitative social researchers reflexively explore everyday lives, and in order to do this 'we must continually confront questions of the nature and assumptions of the knowledge we are producing, and who we are producing it for' (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998. p. 4).

This research study includes the professional and the personal spheres of myself (as both practitioner and researcher), the co-researcher and all the other professionals who contributed to the research. Ribbens & Edwards (1998) warn researchers of the consequences of engaging with dominant academic and public concerns, in that the voices that are less visible or vocal in more personal aspects of life are frequently lost. Thus, the danger is 'that the voices of particular groups, or particular forms of knowledge, may be drowned out, systematically silenced or misunderstood' (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998, p. 2). Whilst this research is focused on taken-for-granted assumptions about how practitioners reflect on the personal and private aspects of self, it is important to acknowledge that we need to hear these aspects of self in order to unearth the most hidden parts of self.

The field of qualitative research recognises that I, as the researcher, can be the main instrument of the research (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Merriam (2009) discusses the role of the researcher as the primary research instrument, particularly in relation to data collection and analysis. She notes that this has its advantages in that the researcher's presence in and closeness to the research can facilitate understanding and enable the researcher to respond spontaneously to and clarify the data and analysis whilst working with it. However, Merriam (2009) also notes the limitations of such an approach, namely, the influence and impact of any bias the researcher may hold. Merriam's advice is to identify any biases and monitor their role in the research. I am aware that my own enquiry was the starting point of this research and, therefore, that any biases I hold might be highlighted in the research and will have influenced the pre-cycle of the research. This feeds into the rigour and trustworthiness (ibid) of the qualitative research and is an area of discussion that recurs throughout this chapter.

Blanche *et al* (2006) highlight how there has been much debate around the best methods to employ for research process and design. They note the arguments for

and against fixed or flexible methods. Thus, a fixed approach may hinder the flow of the research, whilst a flexible approach could be seen as an excuse not to have frameworks in place to support research. Yin (2010) acknowledges the relevance of this debate and, whilst not taking sides, discusses Maxwell's (2009) seven point checklist which can be used to combat threats to the validity of the research. I strove, therefore, to address Maxwell's checklist of factors in my own research, as indicated below:

1. ***Intensive long term [field] involvement*** – In the case of this research this was achieved via the 6 years of the research and the three cycles of the data collection process.

2. ***Rich data*** – The long term involvement enabled the collections of field observations and interviews resulting in detailed and varied data. I drew on qualitative, verbatim data as well as quantitative ratings.

3. ***Respondent validation*** – I used member checks to gain feedback from practitioners.

4. ***Search for discrepant evidence*** – I compared my perspective with that of a key co-researcher (e.g. *Chapter 1, Section 1:3: The relevance of my taken-for-granted assumptions to the overarching research question*). I also picked out examples (e.g. *Chapter 9, Section 9.3.6: Table 9.5 (Response 2)*) to test rival or competing explanations.

5. ***Triangulation*** – I collected evidence from different sources, i.e. field observations, capture sheets and interviews.

6. ***Quasi–statistics*** – I have used numbers within the reporting of the data collection, by way of rating the role of the steps and the 'I Poem' (cf. *Chapter 8,Section: 8:4 The Capture Sheet data - Data set two - Part two and Chapter 9, Section 9: 4: The capture sheet data - Data set three: Part two*).

7. ***Comparison*** – I compared the results across the different cycles, which included data from different settings, groups and events.

(Maxwell, 2009, pp. 244 -245)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue for a more flexible approach to qualitative research design, and stress that some designs cannot be delineated in advance, but must 'emerge, develop, unfold' (p. 225). Similarly, Polkinghorne (1991) acknowledges the fluid nature of qualitative research and Blanche *et al* (2006) argue that frequently qualitative research is 'open, fluid and changeable' (p. 36), and, therefore, an iterative process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2010). In my own case, recognizing the iterative nature of the research process has enabled me to go back and forth, adjusting the data collection and research questions accordingly (Mack *et al*, 2005). It is also important to recognize that the research process is often influenced, consciously or not, by the researcher's 'own personal, political and theoretical biographies' (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 122). The researcher may not at the time be aware where these influences derive from, with the result that for the researcher the process can feel 'messy, confusing and uncertain' (ibid, p. 121). I can certainly relate to these statements, and for further discussion of this see *Chapter 10, Section 10: 6: Final words and 'what next?'*

Flick (2002) notes that qualitative researchers frequently use multiple methods. This aids triangulation in that different approaches are used to gain an understanding of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives. Indeed, Stake (2010) argues that researchers who want to design good qualitative studies must triangulate data from different sources. The present research strives to do this through its three data collection cycles. Whilst adopting this approach, I intend to be open about the choices made throughout the study, thereby enhancing trustworthiness in the research process (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998).

Ultimately, it can be concluded that qualitative researchers use a wide range of approaches with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the phenomena in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), consistently choosing what they believe will work (Howe, 1988).

In order to further justify the utilisation of a wide range of approaches, the following section discusses the concept of the researcher-as-bricoleur as a way of maximising the exploration of the research questions.

5.3.1 : Embracing the researcher-as-bricoleur

The previous section proposed that qualitative researchers search for a perspective that will best assist them to understand the phenomenon under investigation. This section, therefore, aims to explore the notion of 'what works', and to justify the choice of tools and techniques for the researcher-as-bricoleur (Howe, 1988).

Specifically, the present section aims to explore the different meanings of the term *researcher-as-bricoleur*, and discuss the different types of bricoleur that are specified throughout the literature in the qualitative field. Following this, the chapter will examine what the literature has to say about the additional notion of bricolage, its definition and the current debate surrounding the use of such a method. Lastly, the chapter considers how adopting this methodological approach will assist me in my iterative research process.

Denzin & Lincoln (2011) have been discussing the *researcher-as-bricoleur* for nearly 20 years and predominantly they have cited Levi-Strauss (1966) who defines 'bricoleur' as a 'jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person' (p.17). His contribution is noted by other authors who recognise that the researcher-as-bricoleur has been a major theme of their scholarly writing (for example, Crotty, 1998). Buttressed by this external validation of what appealed to me at a pragmatic and emotional level, I was drawn to employ the methodology associated with the

notion of the bricoleur as 'quilt-maker', and have embraced a variety of strategies, methods and materials in my research.

There is a growing body of literature related to the notion of researcher-as-bricoleur, and I recognized that embracing the concept of a 'Jack or Jill of all trades' or a 'do-it-yourself'' type of researcher meant that I would need to be resourceful and multi-skilled (Crotty, 1998). I realise that it is also important to acknowledge that there are some criticisms of the concept of 'bricoleur'. Thus, Halstead, Hirsch & Oakley (2008) argue that whilst such a stance may mean that researchers have a broad overview of approaches, it can also result in their being a master of no particular methodology. Halstead et al (2008) further suggest that the researcher adopting such an approach may not work to the highest standards, so that the finished research might be 'a bit on the rough side' (p. 49).

Other academics, however, distance themselves from the connotations of unprofessionalism linked to the notion of researcher as handyman, and make reference to the intellectual associations of bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1966). Levi-Strauss makes reference to the notion of mythical thought or reflection, which is generated by the human mind and comes from personal experience and pre-existing ideas in the imaginer's mind. The mythical reflection described by Levi-Strauss is achieved when individuals allow their minds to wander freely and, as a result, can explore areas of thought that might normally be discounted due to fears or traditional constraints. The products of such reflection, he says, 'can reach brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane' (ibid, p. 17). I am interested in the concept of mythical reflection, firstly because I am aware of being open to similar lines of reflection, and secondly, because I want to understand how practitioners use their reflection to unearth their taken-for-granted assumptions.

Whilst Halstead *et al* (2008) have some criticism relating to the bricoleur, they do agree with the concept of bricoleur as an 'intellectual handyman'. They also note that a researcher employing this approach is able to confront his or her day to day life - apprehending, ordering and drawing meaning from the world, so that in a sense 'bricolage represents everyday thinking' (p, 49). They acknowledge the unpredictable nature of human beings and life, and how we play our part as bricoleurs. Such an approach, therefore, should be well suited to the use of stories and narratives. Although the stories and narratives may be 'messy text', they will afford insight into people's real life experiences and come together just as a quilt makes up a picture as a whole from many smaller ones (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Denzin & Lincoln (1995) also claim that the researchers who employ this type of inquiry 'form better interpretations of on-going social life' (p, 349).

Despite numerous overlapping definitions of the researcher-as-bricoleur, the general consensus is that someone who employs this approach uses whatever strategies, methods and materials they have to hand. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) outline five types of bricoleur: the interpretive, methodological, theoretical, narrative and political bricoleur, which will be briefly discussed in turn.

Firstly, and predominantly, they describe the interpretive bricoleur as a researcher who understands the interactive nature of the research, is open to 'choice' depending on the context at a given time, and is led by the iterative nature of the research. It is also understood that this process is shaped by personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. The interpretive researcher pieces together narratives from personal histories to make up a complete picture of the 'quilt'. As an interpretive bricoleur myself, the interactive nature of the research was within all three cycles of the study. Thus, for example, in the pre-cycle and first cycle, the personal histories of the self and another were captured via an auto-ethnographic approach to

hearing the different voices and different perspectives of myself (the researcher) and the co-researcher.

Secondly, Denzin & Lincoln (2011) move on to the role of the methodological bricoleur, who is skilled at multi-tasking, performing numerous diverse tasks as and when needed. As a methodological bricoleur I have included the methods of narrative accounts, interviewing, transcribing and analysis, despite this process not always happening in the most linear fashion. I have used interviews, emails, written comments and ratings. Thirdly, Denzin & Lincoln (2011) discuss the theoretical bricoleur who is widely read and knowledgeable about interpretive paradigms. This type of researcher acknowledges the interwoven nature of paradigms. As a theoretical bricoleur I note the blurring of paradigms and that the choice of such is often driven by the needs of the research participants and the intended audience of the research. Fourthly, they discuss the narrative bricoleur, who is aware that everyone, including the researchers, tell stories, and notes that these stories are told within specific paradigms. I have embraced the role of the narrative bricoleur and the use of stories, which formed the pre-cycle and cycle 1 of the research.

Lastly, Denzin & Lincoln (2011) discuss the political bricoleur, who is aware that the research and findings from such research could have political ramifications. As the political bricoleur, I acknowledge the role of power, certainly relating back to the research phenomena of taken-for-granted assumptions, whiteness and the power that such assumptions can bestow on, in my case, the client.

Aside from the above, Denzin & Lincoln (2005, 2011) describe an additional type of bricoleur, namely the critical bricoleur. This bricoleur 'stresses the dialectical and hermeneutic nature of inter-disciplinary inquiry, knowing that the boundaries that previously separated traditional disciplines no longer hold' (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 683). I have embraced an approach where the 'research eclecticism' (Lincoln, 2001, p.

694) worked with the iterative nature of the research to shape the methods employed. I believe that, ultimately, this is at the heart of the notion of the researcher-as-bricoleur. In the 21st Century the term bricoleur is seen as involving researchers using methodological strategies as and when needed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, I adopted their methodological thinking as the research situation unfolded through the three iterative research cycles.

The discussion above has centred on the researcher-as-bricoleur, and how such a researcher engages in bricolage. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) propose that the interdisciplinary feature is central to the notion of bricolage, arguing that it is critical for qualitative researchers to push to new conceptual boundaries. Kincheloe (2001) agrees that bricolage means being interdisciplinary and utilising multiple methods, but warns that this approach can act 'as a magnet for controversy in the contemporary academy' (p. 680). This is mainly because some scholars, researchers and academics see such an approach as superficial and can lead to new researchers failing to give time to understanding the 'disciplinary fields and knowledge bases from which particular modes of research emanate' (Kincheloe (2004, p. 50).

Kincheloe (2001, 2004) also warns that the approach could unknowingly expose our own social location and personal history. However, as a *critical* bricoleur, I am not concerned by any such exposure and have embraced my own position in 'the web of reality' in the pre-cycle of the research, which came from exposure of my own taken-for-granted social location and personal history. Kincheloe (2011) notes that researchers adopting this approach need to be aware of the many contexts they may work within.

The researcher-as-bricoleur respects the complexity of the lived world; and this is demonstrated by my engagement with a heuristic methodology. As the-researcher-as-bricoleur, my role is to unearth and question the complexities of the lived world,

therefore unearthing or 'uncovering the invisible artefacts of power and culture' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 317). This is imperative to the present research; it aims to uncover practitioners' own personal artefacts of their own world views in the form of taken-for-granted assumptions.

The section above has defined and discussed the researcher-as-bricoleur who engages in the field of bricolage. Whilst there has been criticism of the approach there is also an overall consensus that employing such an approach enables researchers to actively construct their own research methods and deploy the methods during the field-work and interpretive phases, thus acting as methodological negotiators in the spirit of Levi-Strauss (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

5.3.2   : Action Research to Phenomenology

In my document to support the transfer of my registration from MPhil to PhD (Bradley, 2009), action research was discussed as the methodology of choice. This stemmed from my belief that as the primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge for people in their day to day lives, it would be an approach that would meet the needs of the research. Furthermore, action research is consistent with my wider goal of contributing to practical knowledge that will evolve and improve the 'well-being - economic, political, psychological, and spiritual - of human persons and community' (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 2).

Action research, or what is also known as participatory action research, is a form of research used by practitioners in order to solve an immediate problem. Often used by an individual, it operates from the first person; it is a form of self-enquiry, whereby the practitioner is critical of the self and his/her own practice (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Reason & Torbert, 2001). The aim of action research is to improve and lead to greater social justice (Cardno, 2003). It is emancipatory by nature and is used to help others to 'unshackle themselves from … the constraints of irrational, unproductive,

unjust and unsatisfying social structures' (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998, p. 24). The key aspect of the approach is not only transforming consciousness but also changing practice. It adopts the view that 'transforming consciousness (ways of viewing the world) without necessarily changing practice in the world' is not enough (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 144).

However, despite having valid reasons for choosing action research, and having undertaken a substantial literature review of the methodology, on revisiting the research questions and aims I came to the conclusion that it would not be the best approach. The key reason for rejecting action research as an approach was that its main goals were no longer those of the present study. My main goal had become that of understanding other practitioners' experiences - their lived experiences and how they used reflective practice to uncover (or not) the unconscious assumptions, prejudices and taken-for-granted behaviours they might hold. Ultimately the present research was aimed at understanding how practitioners used reflection to gain self-awareness rather than explicitly changing their practice. Whilst changing the practitioners' practice may be an outcome of the research, at this point I wanted to understand practitioners' understanding of taken-for-granted assumptions. It is possible that beyond the completion of this thesis, within what might be a new phase for the research, an action research methodology will be adopted to work with a group of practitioners.

This was a critical decision in the research journey and, as a consequence, I took six months to review the methodology and research design. The next section of this chapter will discuss the further methodologies that were considered and adopted.

5.3.3 : Phenomenology

In the six months following my rejection of action research, I reviewed the literature relating to a range of different methodologies. In doing so I was initially drawn to

phenomenology, which is essentially qualitative and overlaps with other approaches (Lester, 1999). Originally I was attracted to the methodology because it involves studying a phenomenon, such as taken-for-granted assumptions, with the researcher's role being to provide a rich description of the lived experience of those experiencing the phenomenon (Finlay, 2008). A core figure in the development of phenomenology is Husserl (1970), who describes the main focus of this form of research as investigation that focuses on the 'life-world'. This is defined as what we experience pre-reflectively, without the use of categorization or conceptualization, and often includes what is taken-for-granted (Husserl, 1970). He stresses that the inquiry for this type of research is grounded in the lived experience. Finlay (2008) elaborates the notion of the lived world further by describing it as the day to day world in which we live and exist. Our worlds are full of complex meanings and, whether we realise this or not, they form the backdrop to how we act and interact. I realised that this methodology recognizes the complex nature of the world we live in, and would enable me, as the researcher, to research the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. The main reason for this is that phenomenology acknowledges the commonplace and/or taken-for-granted aspects of life, the very topic that I wanted to explore. The choice of methodology was further justified because it also stresses that, since they go unnoticed, we rarely take into account the taken-for-granted aspects of our worlds (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

However, on exploring the literature further it was noted that phenomenological approaches discuss the 'bracketing off' of the self and the need for the researcher to 'leave his or her own world behind and to enter fully … into the situation of the participants' (Wertz, 2005, p.172). This raised some doubts about the approach, and from further examination of the literature I became aware that bracketing off required the researcher to suspend any presuppositions and focus on the phenomenon itself (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

However, some academics in the field have questioned whether it is possible for the researcher to begin the research process without preconceptions or bias (Lester, 1999). Also, I was aware that the present research had evolved from insights into my own practice, and therefore I did not want to lose sight of the fact that I was part and parcel of this research. The notion of 'bracketing off' therefore became a reason for rejecting the phenomenological approach.

Fortunately, the answer to my dilemma also lay within the literature. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) agreed that phenomenology encourages the detachment of the researcher, with the result that it can lose the person, but proposed heuristic research, a variant of phenomenology, as a methodology that 'retains the essence of the person in experience' (p. 43). This was felt to be vital to the present research study, which is founded in my own inquiry into my practice. I concluded that the heuristic approach would enable me to focus on the self and to fully engage with my personal experience and insight relating to the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. Heuristic research became, therefore, a central pillar on which my methodology rested.

However, before further discussion of heuristic research as a chosen methodology, the next section explores the use of auto-ethnography in the pre-cycle stages of this research.

5.3.4   : Auto-ethnography strand

The previous section discussed why I was drawn to phenomenology and why it was rejected in favour of heuristic research. This research study was iterative in nature and was designed to have a number of research cycles, including the pre-cycle to the research. The pre-cycle emerged through my own reflexive practice, therefore a method was needed that would incorporate my own narrative tale, and celebrate the

depth of insight that this brought – hence the attraction of ethnography/auto-ethnography.

This form of inquiry utilizes the researcher's own autobiographies, explaining dimensions of personal experience through which we can understand our own social and cultural, behaviours, thoughts, and experiences in relation to others in society (Chang, 2008; Muncey, 2010). This approach recognises that any aspect of the research is intertwined with who the researcher is and what they bring to the research process (Muncey, 2010).

Etherington (2004) describes how auto-ethnography has been used within a number of disciplines, including sociology and education. According to Ellis & Bochner (2000) it is a type of story writing that invites and engages the reader in the cultural experience of the researcher. This resonates with my own experience, where I am inviting the reader into the cultural experience of my taken-for-granted 'whiteness'. It is seen as a reflexive means that enables the researcher as practitioner actively to embed the self and, by way of personal autobiographical account, to explicate in this case the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions (McIlveen, 2008). What is contained within the stories is used by the researcher to illustrate the phenomenon under investigation, sometimes to evoke or even provoke. In the case of the present research it is used to remind practitioners of the types of taken-for-granted assumptions that may be invisible (McCaskill, 2008). Auto-ethnography is seen as having some limitations, particularly when its focus is on a single auto-ethnographic account, due to the limits to generalising research findings/data from one voice. However what the single account can bring is the stimulus to open up discussion with others in the field or practice – as occurred in the present research (cf. *Chapter 1:2: Reflections on my own taken-for-granted experience – Box 1.3: The beginning of my understanding….*).

Further criticism of the approach relates to the researcher's self being the only source of data although, as Ellis (1991) notes, 'who would make a better subject than a researcher consumed by wanting to figure it all out?' (p. 30). Nonetheless, I chose not to base the present study only on analysis of my own experience. Rather, I used this as a starting point from which to broaden out the research in order to encompass the experience of other professionals in the field. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the auto-ethnographic approach and the role of these in the rationale for adopting the role of the bricoleur and using additional methodologies to facilitate the engagement with other practitioners' voices through the heuristic methodology.

Atkinson (1990) suggests that researchers keep separate the personal aspects of themselves and the ethnographic spheres of their research, on the grounds that this makes the 'account of fieldwork simpler and more straightforward' (p.110). However, he notes that a way to strengthen the authenticity of the research is to incorporate the fragmented texts or narratives of all those involved. Coffey (1999) comments that using these fragments opens up the voice of the co-researchers. Furthermore, adopting this approach and including my experience as the researcher allows me to examine specific dimensions of my personal experience in relationship to being a member of a specific group or groups, in my case as a white careers adviser (McIlveen, 2008). Through adoption of these approaches, the intention is to inform the reader of my own experiences relating to taken-for-granted assumptions and to be faithful to my interpretation of this and other participants' accounts, hence establishing trustworthiness and authenticity (McIlveen, 2008).

I chose to embrace this approach. The research has emerged from my own practice and I did not want to remain silent. In addition, I believed that the research would be enhanced by the openness, trustworthiness and authenticity of the researcher by revealing my vulnerable self, my personal narrative and confessional tales. The reader will then be able to learn about the values and beliefs I hold, thereby adding to

the transparency of the research (Etherington 2004). Throughout this journey both the co-researchers and the reader will know my story and read my confessions, and therefore will not assume that I, as the researcher, know everything about them whilst they know nothing about me (Bloom, 1999).

The fact that auto-ethnography is written in the first-person voice and often appears in a number of forms including, for examples, short stories and poetry (McCaskill, 2008) is a further justification for adopting auto-ethnography as a methodology. It validates sharing with the reader the 'I Poems' extracted from my narratives and those of other practitioners (cf. *Section 5:3:6*). In addition, there is agreement (Ellis, 2004; Etherington, 2004; McIlveen, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) that, as in the present case, the auto-ethnographic researcher will use a combination of sources of data, some in the form of diaries and journals and others such as stories in the way of confessional tales and interviews. Using data from multiple sources enhances the research and aids triangulation. The analysis of the data involves producing meaningful narratives that enhance authenticity further, enabling the 'reader to deeply grasp the experience and interpretation of this one interesting case' (McIlveen, 2008, p. 15). To add to the trustworthiness and transparency of the narratives, the research and the subsequent analysis, I returned transcripts to participants, asking them to edit anything they were unhappy with and to verify that their meaning had remained intact - an approach known as member checking (Etherington, 2004). As the auto-ethnographic researcher, I intend to share the narratives and extracts of transcripts with other practitioners to enable them, as the reader, to learn lessons relating to their own practice (McIlveen, 2008).

Whilst the auto-ethnographic approach focuses on the personal experience of the researcher or individual, it does so whilst looking at the lived world through the equivalent of a wide angle lens, looking outwardly from the self and focusing on the social and cultural structures that influence the personal experience. Looking

inwardly I will be 'exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations' (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). Heuristic research embraces a similar concept (cf. *Section 5:3:5*), namely that of the inward-outward focus used to gain a deeper insight. However, heuristic research also acknowledges how the social and cultural aspects of one's experience are encapsulated, and this is of interest to the present research as it ties in to the taken-for-granted aspects of the lived world.

5.3.5   : Concepts and phases of heuristic research

So far this chapter has discussed and justified, albeit not without criticism, qualitative research, phenomenology and auto-ethnography with a view to addressing how I would be assisted in answering the research questions by these approaches. Throughout this thesis I have acknowledged how the research emerged out of my own self enquiry, and this was the main reason I was drawn to a variant form of phenomenology, namely heuristic research. The term heuristic comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, which Moustakas (1990) defines as meaning 'to discover or find' (p. 9). Patton (2002) summarises it as a variant of phenomenology which 'brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher' (p.107).

Moustakas (1990) describes Heuristic research as 'a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis' (p. 9). This links with the notion of the bricoleur and the development of methods to get the most out of the investigation at hand. The process starts with a personal challenge, that is, personal questions relating to the self and the world we live in that the researcher wants to understand (ibid). Furthermore, Moustakas (1990) noted that through the process heuristic researchers will challenge, confront and even doubt themselves, but with persistence will gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question.

An earlier section of this chapter discussed how methodological paradigms were chosen. The present section explains that I have chosen heuristic research as part of my bricoleur tool-kit on the grounds that such a methodology will assist in examining the research question. Firstly, this is because by adopting the heuristic approach I can include some of my own extraordinary moments of sudden awareness (cf. *Chapter 1: Introduction*), which is what the research emerged from. Similar to Moustakas (1990), I found myself immersed in 'unexpected moments, in the midst of a crowd of people, in response to a word or phrase in conservation' (p. 91), within my own personal space, in discussion in my own mind, self reflecting and analysing the situation, which is where this present research began. Moustakas (1990) refers to the term 'symbolic growth' (p. 99), which he defines as 'a sudden dramatic shift in perception, belief, or understanding that alter one's frame of reference or world view' (p. 99). This accurately captures what I experienced (cf. *1:3: The relevance of my taken-for-granted assumptions* to the overarching research question).

Secondly, Moustakas (1990) noted that the heuristic researcher must have first-hand personal experience of the phenomenon under investigation, which is the case of me as researcher. Unlike phenomenology, the research must have autobiographical connections to the researcher. Furthermore, Moustakas also states that co-researchers who are part of the study must share similar experiences of the phenomena. This justifies the inclusion of the participants who were chosen as case studies.

Moustakas (1990) outlines six phases of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, exploration and, finally, the culmination of the research in a creative synthesis. Although these are written in a prescribed way, Kleining & Witt (2000) emphasise that research itself is not necessarily a linear process and therefore despite the six phases being outlined

below in a specific order, as a researcher-as-bricoleur I engaged creatively with them and vacillated between the phases in order to achieve 'what works'.

1. ***Initial engagement*** with the research topic - This initial stage is where the researcher discovers or finds a topic, theme or question that exists within them. The researcher spends time internally searching for and exploring through self dialogue concerns that call out to him or her. These concerns need to hold important social meanings and have personal compelling implications for the researcher. This is part of the process whereby the researcher searches inwardly for that which is unspoken. At this point the researcher needs to allow his or her intuition to run freely.

2. The ***Immersion*** phase - Once the researcher has discovered the question, she then lives and breathes the question, in all hours of her day awake or asleep (Warren, 2008). This is where the researcher finds herself in Moustakas's (1990) 'unexpected moments' as mentioned earlier. These moments might arise at work, at home or, for me at least, whilst driving my car. Through this process I came to know the question intimately. I strove during this phase to be constantly open to anything that might contribute to the raw data. This might come in the shape of people, places, meetings, various types of literature, in fact every aspect of my life. Every encounter held possibilities for understanding the phenomena.

3. The ***Incubation*** phase - At this point the researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated focus on the question (Moustakas, 1990). In this phase the question is released to the inner tacit dimension, allowing it time to develop, thereby tacit knowledge and intuition can play their part to aid further clarification (Warren, 2008). Moustakas (1990) describes how whilst we are in this phase we are likely to have sudden moments of realisation - he uses the

analogy of losing your key and once you stop looking for it you remember where it is. This is similar to my experience. These moments have been called 'eureka moments', and I captured them in my NVivo reflective journal.

4. *The **Illumination** phase* - During this phase reflectiveness is essential. The question that has been incubating in the unconscious mind emerges or breaks though into conscious awareness (Moustakas, 1990), opening the researcher to a new awareness or a modified awareness of the old understanding (Warren, 2008). Moustakas (1990) notes that capturing what emerges during this phase can be the key to creative discoveries and 'add something essential to the truth of an experience' (p. 30).

5. The ***Explication** phase* - This phase leads to the researcher fully examining what has been brought into the conscious mind in order to gain further understand of the different layers of meaning. To do this the researcher must attend to her feelings, thoughts, beliefs and judgements, as this will be the basis for understanding further conversations with others (Moustakas, 1990). Therefore, it was imperative for me to probe these aspects of myself through the process of indwelling, self-searching, focusing and self-disclosure (Warren, 2008). At the end of this phase Moustakas (1990) says that the 'researcher explicates the major components of the phenomena' (p. 31) and is now ready, like a quilt-maker, to pull them together into a whole experience.

6. The ***Creative synthesis*** - This is the point where the researcher knows all the data personally, all the parts, qualities, themes, meanings and details of the experiences as a whole. However, the challenge for the researcher is to take the parts of the 'quilt' and through her own tacit knowledge and 'intuitive powers' (p. 31) meld them into some sort of creative and coherent whole. The products of this phase usually take the form of stories, narratives, verbatim

quotes and poems – and, in the case of this research, the 'I Poems'. Moustakas (1990) notes that the researchers' role here is to move beyond the data itself, allowing them to move inward to where the essence of the phenomenon is realised.

The section above has outlined the six phases of heuristic research. Earlier in *Section 5:3: Choosing Qualitative Research*, I noted the role of myself as researcher being a main instrument of the research (Merriam, 2009; Stake; 2010, Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Further, I noted the need to acknowledge my biases and monitor the role they may play in the research. This does not mean that I cannot be passionate or fully immersed in what I am doing. Rather, through the heuristic methodology I can be all these things and also 'be engaged in meaningful research experience' (Craig, 1978. p. 20) that is open and trustworthy. A further justification for the choosing the heuristic approach is its reputation for being rigorous. This rigor 'comes from the systematic observation of and dialogues with self and others, as well as in-depth interviewing of co-researchers' (Craig, 1978. p. 20). Notwithstanding this, the heuristic research methodology also encourages the spontaneous creation of new methods, the ability to change methods as and when needed, which is also part of the researcher-as-bricoleur methodology (Barrineau & Bozath 1989).

After the change of methodology discussed earlier in this chapter, I sought to discover an approach that would best assist in the study of taken-for-granted assumptions of both myself and other practitioners. Further, I wanted to embrace a methodology that would utilise the strengths of my reflective personality trait. Engaging with heuristic research has enabled me, as the researcher, to acknowledge and quantify how entering six specific phases of the heuristic process has felt more comfortable, in that I naturally engaged with this kind of approach, and my whole hearted involvement benefited the study.

5.3.6   : Listening to the voices within

Whilst the previous section of the chapter has discussed my rationale for choosing heuristic research, this section will discuss the search for a method to assist me to unearth the voices within the data.

Throughout the six phases of heuristic research outlined above, and throughout the several years of this research journey, I have been engaged in self dialogue. This has resulted in a rich description - an autobiographical account of my experience of taken-for-granted assumptions relating to 'whiteness'.

Alongside these accounts are those of co-researchers (Jane in cycle one, Becky in cycle two and Carol and Diane in cycle three), plus additional sources of data from practitioners who attended conferences. Craig (1978) outlines what the heuristic researcher needs to do to analyse transcripts and refine emerging themes and patterns – namely, personally organising the material, clarifying patterns, integrating generic meanings for oneself, and refining all of these. However, these strategies are far from detailed or clearly stated guidelines as to how to carry out these tasks. Similarly, Moustakas (1990) gives guidelines for data analysis which are vague in parts and which I felt were difficult to follow. The reasons for this lack of clarity could be due, at least in part, to the acknowledgement that writing about the theoretical and practical aspects of data analysis has its difficulties (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Furthermore, some researchers 'gloss over' how they analyse their data, to avoid criticism concerning whether or not they have done it in the 'right way' (ibid). Also, as a researcher, the way we analyse data will be affected by who we are and our world view, and we need to acknowledge that 'there are probably any number of other ways in which they could be interpreted' (Ribbens & Edwards 2008, p. 122). Thorne (2000) agrees, seeing the data analysis phase of the research as the most complex and fraught with mystery, where often researchers make claims about the conceptual categories as though they emerge overnight, with the researchers waking up to find

that the 'data analysis fairies' had completed the analysis for them. Certainly, the issue of the lack of clarity and the mystery of data analysis fitted with my experience as the researcher (cf. *Chapter 10: 6: Final words and 'what next?'*).

Because of the above criticism, I sought out additional methods that might provide a firmer foundation on which to base my analysis. Thorne (2000) discusses a phenomenological approach developed by Colaizzi (1978) and Giorgi (1985, 2000, & 2008). Both had rendered a phenomenological attitude into a set of manageable steps that assist with the process of data analysis (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009). On reviewing the steps I felt Colaizzi's (1978) seven-stage process, whilst similar to that of Giorgi (1985, 2000, & 2008), offered an approach that was more explicit in its detail and also recognised that researchers need to be flexible with the stages. Further, Colaizzi's seven-stage process came from a phenomenological methodology and is therefore compatible with the heuristic nature of the research. I concluded, therefore, that it would add to my tool kit as a researcher-as-bricoleur (cf. *Section 5:3:1*).

Colaizzi's (1978) seven-stage process of analysis occurs as follows:

1. Read through all material in order to acquire a feeling for it, and make sense of it.

2. Return to each interview or set of data to extract phrases or sentences which directly relate to the phenomena under investigation.

3. Try and spell out the meaning of each significant statement – known as formulated meanings.

4. Repeat the above and create the aggregated formulated meaning into clusters of themes.

5. Integrate the results of all of the above into an exhaustive description of the topic under investigation.

6. Attempt to formulate the exhaustive description of the investigation into a statement.

7. As final validating step, return to each set of data, asking participants about the findings so far.

Whilst the above process addressed my concerns regarding the process of data analysis, I also wanted to find a method that would enable me to open up the narratives and transcripts in order to hear the different aspects of the voice and the person behind the voice. Such a method was found in the work of Mauthner & Doucet (1998), who discussed Carol Gilligan's voice-centred relational method of data analysis (Gilligan *et al,* 2003) commonly used to analyse interview transcripts in qualitative research (Woodcock, 2010). It is recognised as an emergent method in the field of social research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Mauthner & Doucet (1998) used the method under Gilligan's guidance and supervision, later developing their own version of the method for their own particular research needs, a common practice for many researchers.

The voice-centred relational method, also known as the Listening Guide, was originally conceived in the field of psychology by Lyn M. Brown, Carol Gilligan and their colleagues. A method of psychological analysis which draws on the voice, it is designed to open up the 'inner world of another person' (Gilligan, *et al,* 2003, p. 157). The guide gives the researcher a method of analysis that enables the researcher to 'hear the intricacies and various voices in this conversation' (Raider-Roth, 2005, p. 45). In order to hear these aspects of the person's voice the method utilises a number of 'listenings', each of which is 'designed to bring the researcher into relationship with a person's distinct and multi-layered voice by tuning in or listening to distinct aspects of a person's expression of her or his experience' (p. 159). The method also enables the researcher to explore the relationships within the narratives, as well as the person's relationship with their social, structural and cultural aspects of

the world (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Additional benefits of the method are that the technique can enable the researcher to gain multiple interpretive readings from one narrative (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). The method is similar to heuristic research in that it embraces the researcher's own voice, enabling the reader to hear and know who is listening and who is speaking (Brown & Gilligan, 1991). Furthermore the method gives a systematic approach that enables the researcher to listen to and focus on the multiple layers of the voice, hearing the underlying meaning of the individual's experience (Gilligan, *et al,* 2003). The first two steps call for the researcher, working with a transcript of the individual's account, to underline the text using different coloured pens for each listening, i.e. in the case of this research listening for significant statements relating to taken-for-granted assumptions. In this way the transcripts are rendered visual and also add to the validity of the analysis process by representing 'a trail of evidence' (Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller & Argyris, 1989).

The Listening Guide of Gilligan *et al* (2003) comprises four steps: *Step One: Listening to the Plot*; *Step Two: I Poems*; *Step Three: Listening for the Contrapuntal Voices* and *Step Four: Composing an Analysis*. As did Mauthner & Doucet (1998), I chose to adapt the Listening Guide to my own specific needs. Gilligan *et al* (2003) acknowledge that the guide is there to give the researcher a basic framework rather than a precise set of instructions, and it is therefore for the researcher to decide how precisely to use the steps depending on their research study. For the present study I have chosen to use the first three steps of the Listening Guide in Data Set One and thereafter the first two steps to assist in the analysis of the data.

The four steps of the Listening Guide (Gilligan *et al*, 2003) are outlined below.

5.3.6.1 : **Step one: Listening for the plot**

This step has two parts. The first step involves listening for the plot in the narrative, focusing on what happened, what is being told, what is being said in the story and the nature of the social and cultural context. Secondly, the listener then turns attention to his or her responses, making clear any thoughts, feelings or reactions that emerge.

In this first step the researcher begins to get a sense of who the narrative is about, what is happening, when, where, with whom and why. Gilligan *et al* (2003) suggest that the researcher needs to pay attention to the language and/or metaphors that are used, and also to contradictions in the narrative and any areas that seem amiss, missing or not expressed. The researcher listens to the narrative to hear the larger social context within which both the researcher and co-researchers exist. As part of this step researchers also pay attention to their own feelings, thoughts, and emotions. Gilligan *et al* (2003) notes the importance of researchers making clear their own positioning, mainly because the researcher is not and never can be a neutral or objective observer (Keller, 1985, Morawski, 2001). I also believe that expressing these feelings assists the research, first, by enhancing the transparency of the research and, secondly, by capturing internal thoughts and feelings, certainly in relation to the taken-for-granted nature of whiteness. This, in turn could be a step towards unearthing an essential truth (Moustakas, 1990). Lastly, such expression is a key part of heuristic methodology's goal of embracing the researcher's experience: my experience.

5.3.6.2 : **Step two: I Poems**

This step involves further listening, this time with the researcher focusing on the 'I' within the narrative and constructing what Debold (1990) called the 'I Poem'. This has two stages. First, the researcher listens to the participants' first person voice, specifically their use of the word 'I', noting tone, pitch, rhythm and, generally, how individuals talk about themselves. Gilligan *et al* (2003) stress the importance of this

step as the researcher tunes into the individual's voice and listens to both what the person says about them and how they talk about themselves. Secondly, the researcher constructs the 'I Poem'. To do this the researcher needs to (a) underline every first person 'I' within the narrative, along with the verb and any additional words that seem important, and then (b) return to the narrative and pick out each section of underlined text, rewriting each 'I' and accompanying words in the order in which they appear, line by line, so as to create the 'I Poem'. Below is an extract from one of my own 'I Poems' that features in the research (cf. *Chapter 7: Findings*).

Box 5. 1: Extract from 'I Poem' (May 2008)

(cf. *Box 7.5: Significant statements: Reflection*)

> *I remember feeling*
> *I could or should respond*
> *I was conscious*
> *I was a white woman*
> *I realised*
> *I would have*
> *I remember*
> *I was conscious*
> *I managed*
> *I was conscious*
> *My experience 'stuck in my mind'*

Gilligian *et al* (2003) note that often when creating an 'I Poem' it will fall naturally into stanzas. The 'I Poem' may unearth a hidden meaning or perhaps capture a stream of consciousness through the first person voice. In this way the 'I Poem' cuts across the bulk of the narrative to reveal the essence of the voice.

5.3.6.3 : Step three: Listening for the contrapuntal voices

Gilligan *et al* (2003) liken this step to music where different melodic lines are played simultaneously. The goal is not only to hear the different melodic lines, but also their relationships to each other. The aim for this listening is, therefore, to see the narrative in a multifaceted way and see the relationships within what is being said or in the

silent parts of the text. In this listening, the researcher's focus returns to the research question or the phenomenon under investigation. The reasoning behind this listening is that it enables the researcher to pick out 'different strands in the interview that may speak to our interview question' (Gilligan *et al*, 2003, p. 165). This third step entails re-reading the text a number of times and Gilligan *et al* (2003) stipulate that researchers should specify which aspects of the voice they are listening for.

The first cycle of the present research incorporates this third step of the Listening Guide. The rationale for using the third step was that it would assist me in identifying any hidden likenesses across different narratives.

5.3.6.4 : Step four: Composing an Analysis

This step comes into play once the researcher has repeatedly been through the first three steps at least four times. The researcher uses the trails left from the multiple listening (that is, the underlinings and summaries of previous listening) to pull together and synthesize what has been learned through the entire set of listening. In the present research this step was implemented methodically throughout the research analysis, initially unknowingly in that I instinctively used the different transcripts with their coloured underlinings, summaries and/or annotations from the NVivo recording (cf. *Section 5:3:7*) to pull together and inform the meanings formed from raw data (cf. *Chapters 7, 8 and 9*).

This section presents the Listening Guide methodology and how I, as the researcher, chose to use all steps of the voice-centred method in the first cycle of the research. However, I felt intuitively able to adapt the guide to suit my own research purposes, a stance which is supported by Gilligan *et al* (2003) who acknowledged that the Listening Guide provides a basic framework for research and the researcher 'must make decisions with regard to how precisely to implement' (p. 169) the method.

My rationale for utilising the first two steps in conjunction with the last step was that they enabled me to hear how the participants made meaning of their experience of taken-for-granted attitudes. I found that by hearing the layers in the voice, the context within the person spoke and the way they spoke from the perspective of 'I' enabled me to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon of 'taken-for-granted' attitudes to difference, and ultimately of how practitioners gain awareness of them, if indeed they do.

5.3.7   : NVivo

Whilst the sections above have addressed concerns relating to the data analysis, a further consideration was to find a tool that would assist in undertaking the qualitative data analysis. For this I turned to NVivo, a qualitative research software package that enables researchers to manage, shape and make sense of information/data (Bazeley, 2007). Whilst it is acknowledged that 'no single software package can be made to perform qualitative data analysis in and of itself' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 166), packages such as NVivo equip the researcher with a set of tools that can assist with the sorting, coding and arrangement of data. Further, they can assist with analyzing the data, identifying themes and with the overall process of data analysis. It bestows greater rigour on the process of analysis, providing a methodical systematic process and a more systematic process of data analysis and recording of data (Bazeley, 2007). However, whilst this is the case, such tools and packages are reliant on the judgements and decisions of individual researchers, and as we are human it remains possible that errors will be made (Gilbert, 2002).

Given that for this research a vast amount of data was collected through its three cycles, the decision was taken that NVivo could be a storage facility. This would provide tools to assist me in sorting through the narratives and transcripts to pick out 'significant statements' relating to the phenomenon in Data Set One, and also provide

a means by which I could sort and organise the data collected in the subsequent cycles: Data Set Two and Data Set Three.

NVivo offers a number of tools to assist the researcher with the analysis. Below I outline those I used to assist with the present research.

1. ***Starting a project*** - Within NVivo it is possible to create multiple projects, with each one containing a research project in its entirety. The research project begins before the data collection. The researcher can start creating the project with research questions, journal entries, literature and theory, and create a foundation for the project. I utilised all of the latter, I created my own journal within the project – which recorded my questions, concerns and thoughts. This was beneficial for a number of reasons. First, the recording of such data acted as an audit trail for the project (Richards, 2005) and, secondly, the focusing of ideas and thoughts within the project assisted in generating further insights into my research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I uploaded key literature and theoretical concepts such as Thompson's (2011; 2012) writing on anti-discriminatory practice – all of which contributed to the foundation of this research.

There are a number of ways in which NVivo can support a research project and a researcher to make data records. The main functions for which I used the package were:

2. ***Create cases***: This facility enables the assigning of a case node to each individual – in which you can record demographic information. In the case of this research I chose information such as age, ethnicity, and qualifications.

3. ***Import documents***: A range of documents can be uploaded to each case node. Specifically, in the present research the research participants' narratives, transcripts and questionnaire responses were uploaded into the

research project. These could then be revisited, and I could annotate, create memos against 'significant statements', and even link concepts and ideas across the data set.

4. *Annotations:* Similar to making notes in the margin of a page, annotations allow the researcher to record comments, reminders or observations about the specific content in a source or node.

5. *Memos:* Memos enable the researcher to record the ideas, insights, interpretations or growing understanding of the research. They provide a way to keep the analysis separate from (but linked to) the material being analyzed. Furthermore, memos can be linked in order to store insights, interpretations and/or observations.

6. *Coding:* NVivo can also support the coding of data and thereby gather together material based on themes and topics. In the first cycle of this research, NVivo supported the identification of the 'hidden likeness' between myself and Jane, and the subsequent data that was built up contributed to the original coding and helped to triangulate the initial findings. Prior to coding it is possible to either create a tree node or a series of tree nodes that act as a framework for the coding. If relevant, these nodes can be hierarchical – for example Reflection > Deep > Surface> Definition (cf. *7:4: The identification of Nodes*). It is also possible to create tree nodes, as you go along. As the data is reviewed and analysed, 'significant statements' can be dragged and dropped into the relevant node. Further annotations and memos can be added to aid the data analysis process. I used these annotations and memos against any 'significant statements' identified throughout the data collection process and these were further used to link concepts and ideas across the three cycles of the data collection.

7. ***Queries:*** Once the data is within the project, it is possible to run queries to explore subsets of the data. I used this to find specific words or phrases or examine repetition or frequency, e.g. references to 'think' by Jane (cf. *Section 7:5: Significant statements*). Furthermore by using the queries function I could question the data and find patterns within my coding.

5.4 : Summary of chapter

This chapter has reviewed a number of methodologies with a view to ascertaining which might best assist me, as the researcher, to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. The chapter has discussed methodologies such as action research, and how this was ultimately rejected because of its limitations (cf. *5:3:2: Action Research*). It describes how I therefore sought to find a methodology that would assist me in understanding the lived experiences of practitioners and their experience of taken-for-granted assumptions and how I was drawn initially to phenomenology. However, whilst the phenomenological approach incorporates the self-reflection of the researcher, it also encourages the researcher to 'bracket off' the self. As a result, I chose a methodology that would accept and validate the use of my experience and embrace my own voice, as the researcher, within the research. This resulted in the utilization of an auto-ethnographical methodology in the pre-cycle stage of the research and a heuristic methodology thereafter.

Having presented and discussed the rationale for my decisions regarding methodology, the next chapter, *Chapter 6: Methods: the research design and the research process,* recounts the research procedure. In other words, it details the steps taken to collect and analyse data. It focuses on what was done and how the research evolved from one stage to the next.

6 : METHODS: THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

6.1 : Overview

The present research has evolved and unfolded over a six year period, resulting in three iterative cycles. Throughout the research process I have engaged in the process of heuristic research, sometimes consciously and other times unconsciously. This chapter recounts the research procedure; that is, the steps taken to collect and analyse data, and the rationale behind them. The aim of sharing the research procedure is to promote transparency and it is therefore separated out from the discussion of findings (i.e. Chapters 7 - 9). This chapter focuses on what was done, and how the research evolved from one stage to the next. Table 6:1 summarises the research through a timeline that records the key decision points and the research progression from its initiation in 2006 to the submission of the thesis in May 2013.

Table 6:1: Overview of Research timeline

	RESEARCH TIMELINE **– with key decision points indicated in bold -**
2005	Met with a client (Shahida) and experience stuck in my mind
2006	**Began to question the relevance of the *Every Child Matters (ECM)* policy, especially for NEET young women from ethnic minority groups.**
Sept 2006	MPhil Registration: Postgraduate Research Scholarship – University of Cumbria
Feb 2007	**Questioned my own 'whiteness' and explored action research as a methodology**.
Mar 2007	Reflected on my experience with Shahida (cf. Box 1.3: The beginning of my understanding….)
June 2007	Initiated a literature review around topics of taken-for-granted assumptions, whiteness, and non-discriminatory practice.
	Began systematic observation of and reflection on my own practice
	Shifted research focus from *ECM* policy to issue of how practitioners gain awareness of their taken-for-granted assumptions and prejudices.

	Consciously shifted away from action research methodology towards autoethnography and heuristic research
Jul 2007	Planned Research cycle 1. Obtained ethical clearance for the study.
Mar 2008	Met with colleague (Jane) where we shared our experience of becoming aware of taken-for-granted assumptions re our practice
From May 2008	Continued review of the literature and exploration of methodological issues. Collected further data from Jane. **Decided to involve Jane as a co-researcher for this part of the study.** Analysed data from self and Jane. Realised how difficult it was to unearth, challenge, and change taken-for-granted assumptions. **Realised how powerful the 'I Poem' could be and decided to explore this further.** Planed Research cycle 2
Feb/Sep 2009	MPhil to PhD Transfer interview from – amended methodology adopting an Autoethnography and Heuristic research approaches Initiated literature review covering the concepts of categorization, the importance of personal knowledge, and the practice implications of whiteness for white practitioners. **Decided to broaden data base with participants who were less close to me and the research.**
Mar 2010	Collected 'capture sheet' data from delegates attending the National Careers Guidance Show (NCGS).
Aug 2010	Analysed data from NCGS capture sheets. Decided to enhance the depth of the data through the use of an illustrative case study. Collected and analysed case study data from Becky. Initiated literature review of reflection, reflexivity and reflective practice. Also examined the place of reflection in training and professional codes of practice. Planned Research cycle 3, with particular focus on participants' understanding of reflection and the role and usefulness of the 'I Poem'.
Oct 2010	Collected 'capture sheet' data from delegates attending National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) conference. Analysed data from (NAEGA) conference. Identified Carol and Diane as further case studies and undertook further analysis and data collection. Telephone interview with Diane.
Feb 2011	Continued data analysis. Revised and extended literature reviews. Refined conclusions.
Sep 2012	Completed draft thesis.
May 2013	Submitted final thesis.

The sections included in the remainder this chapter are:

6.2 : Pre-cycle of Research

6.2.1 : Emergence of research focus

The initial focus of the proposed research was: '*Has the Every Child Matters agenda improved outcomes of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) young ethnic people aged 16-19 in East Lancashire?*' However, as indicated in the opening chapter, within the first six months I began to question and explore my own practice (cf. *Chapter 1: Section: 1:4: The research journey: How my experience as a researcher shaped the research question*). This initial engagement and questioning was recorded in my reflective journal and involved capturing unique moments, inward thoughts, internal dialogue and questions in pursuit of a topic that resonated with me personally (Moustakas, 1990). Simultaneously, I was immersed in a breadth of literature, initially Thompson (2003) on anti-discriminatory practice, which presented me with my first 'eureka moment' (cf. *Chapter 1: Introduction*). More specifically, Thompson's (2003) definition of, and discussion about, taken-for-granted assumptions led me to identify a phenomenon that I felt I had personal experience of and which also had compelling implications for practice (Moustakas, 1990), certainly in relation to whiteness (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice*). The initial data collection for the pre-cycle of the research

was my immersion (Warren, 2008) in this experience, and it resulted in my first reflective narrative disclosure of taken-for-granted assumptions (cf. *Chapter 1: Section: 1:2: Reflections on my own taken-for-granted experience*). This narrative exploration and self-disclosure altered my frame of reference, and, for the first time, I began to see the implications of my own whiteness (Moustakas, 1990) for practice.

6.2.2   : Expansion to include co-researcher

At this point I was immersed in the literature and in dialogue mainly with myself, and I had written my first narrative. I was exploring the phenomenon through all aspects of my life including home and work. It was whilst at a training day, and in dialogue with another colleague, that I disclosed my own taken-for-granted assumptions. Subsequently the colleague reciprocated and disclosed her taken-for-granted assumptions and experiences, hence the justification for my colleague Jane becoming a co-researcher in this research.

6.2.3   : Ethical clearance and informed consent

During the pre-cycle stage of the research the 'Ethical Clearance for Research with Human Subjects' form was submitted to the University of Cumbria (then St Martin's College) Ethical Standards Committee (cf. *Appendix 1*). Part of this application stated who the participants were, how they would be recruited, and what mechanisms would be used to obtain informed consent, to allow for withdrawal and maintain confidentiality and/or anonymity of participants.

These considerations were of particular importance in the first cycle of the research, as the co-researcher would be disclosing taken-for-granted aspects of self. Therefore, a one page form was designed (cf. *Appendix 2*) which, for the purpose of later recall, will be referred to as an information sheet. This summarised the identity of the researcher and explained the nature of the research, including an abstract. The

information sheet also explained how participants' anonymity would be protected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and invited participants to give their agreement to participate on a voluntary basis, stressing their right to withdraw from the research at any point. Lastly, participants were asked to sign the information sheet to indicate that they gave consent, and this therefore acted as a contract to protect all involved (Patton, 1990).

As the research progressed, unforeseen issues arose in relation to meeting participants face to face. Due to commitments (work, home etc) there was a request to use email instead of a face to face meeting, meaning data being exchanged via the internet. As this was not within the original ethical approval, an additional request was made and accepted for the 'Security of emailed information, confidentiality and or anonymity' (cf. *Appendix 3).*

6.3 : First Cycle of Research

6.3.1   : Overview

The previous section discussed the pre-cycle stage of the research and how the research evolved and developed. The aim of the first cycle of the research was to understand how the co-researcher and I became aware of our taken-for-granted differences (cf. *Chapter 7: Data Results: Data set one*). As the research question at this point was focusing on the process of how practitioners gained their awareness of difference, there was a rationale for deliberately choosing the experiences of Jane and myself, in order to examine similarities and differences within the experience, and to gain a fuller understanding of the phenomena at hand.

6.3.2   : The sample selection

Due to the heuristic nature of the research, the sample was purposeful. Myself and the co-researcher were selected on the grounds that we were both aware of, had experience of, and were concerned about taken-for-granted assumptions and their

impact on our practice (Moustakas, 1990; Roper & Shapira, 2000). The section below will further justify the selection of the participants on the grounds that both of us had specifically acknowledged taken-for-granted attitudes to difference. We shared an intense interest in the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1990).

6.3.2.1 : Identification and selection of participants

This first cycle of the research utilised the narratives of two women, both of whom held an NVQ qualification in Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), and worked as IAG practitioners. One will be known by the pseudonym Jane and the other is myself, the researcher.

The sampling frame criteria for inclusion were:

1. Female

2. White

3. Worked in East Lancashire

4. Gained awareness of taken-for-granted attitudes over a similar period of time

5. **Had developed some expertise in the field**

6.3.2.2 : Criteria for selection of participant 1 (Jane):

Jane's key qualifications for inclusion as a participant in the research included:

- NVQ qualification in IAG

- Experience as an IAG practitioner

- Worked in East Lancashire predominately with women of Asian heritage

- White

- Awareness of own taken-for-granted assumptions about difference

6.3.3 : Initial data collection

As discussed in the pre-cycle section, the initial data collection took the form of dialogue with Jane. Later I reflected on this discussion in a reflective journal.

Additional data came from a series of informal discussions, where we talked about our experience of our taken-for-granted assumptions and Jane agreed she would email her own reflective narrative to me. To formalise this discussion I emailed Jane a summary of what we had agreed. I also provided her with the information sheet (cf. *Appendix 2*) in order to reiterate the nature of the research, inform her of the protocols for the research and gain informed consent.

To summarise, the data collected for this period was:

- Researcher's reflective journals (cf. *Chapter 7: Extracts*)

- Researcher's own narrative (cf. *Chapter 1: Introduction*)

- Email from Jane, including her first narrative (cf. *Chapter 7: Section 7:3:1: Background: Data collection*)

6.3.3.1 **: Data Analysis**

I gathered the above mentioned initial data together, and spent time immersed in the narrative data (cf. *Chapter 5: Section*: *5:3:5: Concepts and phases of heuristic research*).

6.3.3.2 **: Steps of analysis**

Using the steps from the Listening Guide as a framework I systematically analysed the narratives of Jane and myself (cf. *Chapter 5: Section: 5:3:6: Listening to the voices within*).

- Each narrative was saved as a new word document with an adjusted line space of 2.5 and customised margins in order to allow space for highlighting text and making notes relating to the steps from the Listening Guide.

- **Step one: Listening for the plot** - Firstly, I read through Jane's narrative and listened for the plot, highlighting in yellow the key words and phrases that identified plot, trying not to let what I already knew about this narrative from

our earlier conversations bleed through. Secondly, in the phase of **Listening to your own response to the text**, I revisited the narrative listening to my own responses. These were documented within the enlarged margins.

- **Step two: I Poems** - I re-read Jane's narrative, specifically listening to the 'I', and used an alternatively coloured highlighter pen to mark any text starting with 'I', along with a number of the following words. I then transcribed each of the sections of text starting with an 'I' in order to create an 'I Poem'.

- I repeated steps one and two with my own narrative.

- **Step three: Listening for the contrapuntal voices** - This step aided the identification of different elements of the narratives that resonated with the phenomenon under investigation. I re-read both narratives, with the aim of listening for 'hidden likenesses', and marked the evidence for these using different coloured highlighter pens. The decision to focus on the 'hidden likeness' in the narrative came about for a number reasons. Firstly, participating in the research had already helped me to understand how practitioners unearthed their taken-for-granted assumptions, and I wanted to unearth hidden aspects of our experience (Moustakas, 1990). Secondly, unique patterns were picked out from our experiences and these assisted in the identification of similarities or differences in our journeys (ibid). Lastly, the heuristic process is 'a search for unity in hidden likenesses' (Brownowski, 1956, p.13).

- Whilst the use of different coloured highlighter pens is not a part of Gilligan *et al's* (2003) method of identifying areas of the narrative, I found that the use of different colours enabled me to see the overlapping steps emerging.

- The highlighted data were copied and pasted into a specially created table in Microsoft Word in order to see the plot, the 'I Poem' and the hidden likenesses more clearly.

- I created a research project in the NVivo software package, and the data contained in the table was imported into the NVivo project.

- A data analysis journal was created, alongside a research journal. Background literature was imported from articles and books, and the research journals were used to record the process and any reflections on the data or process. I was able to return to these journals and create memos and/or make annotations against any data within the software.

- I reflected on the steps and subsequently modified the Listening Guide. Whilst using the steps I kept a journal which recorded my thoughts and reflections relating to guidance in the Listening Guide. On revisiting the journal, and wishing to refine the effectiveness of the steps for this research, I decided to modify my approach and focus on using the first two steps of the guide. The rationale for this was mainly due to the lack of clarity in the guide on using the third step, so I modified its use to pick out the 'hidden likenesses'. This had been beneficial in the initial data analysis phase whilst working with two narratives. However, I considered that the additional step would be more difficult to use when working with multiple conversational narratives.

6.3.4 : Subsequent data collection

Following the initial data collection and analysis I re-contacted Jane, initially to agree a first conversational interview; this developed into a series of interviews over the six year time frame of the research.

The initial conversational interview utilised Jane's and my own narrative (Etherington, 2006). Interviews started by retelling the initial narratives on the grounds that it would help Jane and myself to return to our experiences and the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. Also, the process of retelling can assist in the emergence of a different awareness of the experience (Speedy, 2008). In this way it can help us to gain a deeper understanding of how our awareness came about (Moustakas, 1990).

Jane and I revisited our 'eureka moment' or 'heuristic turning point' and thought about how feelings, emotions and our awareness changed. Throughout the series of conversational interviews the transcripts and my reflective notes were shared with the Jane. This acted as a 'member check' (Etherington, 2004) and aided further discussion.

6.3.4.1 : Data Analysis

As part of the data analysis process I spent time immersed in the recordings and allowing time for my thoughts to incubate, thereby enabling unconscious growth to take place. On returning to the recordings, a 'summary of interview' was created. This was subsequently followed by transcribing either key areas of an interview or the full interview.

6.3.4.2 : Steps of analysis

Steps one and two of the Listening Guide were repeated in order to identify data related to relevant phenomena. (cf. *Chapter 5: Section: 5:3:6: Listening to the voices within*).

The data collected from the subsequent conversational interviews, alongside data from the above steps, were imported into the NVivo research project. Analysis proceeded through the following sequence:

- Initial key nodes and subcategories were created. Identification was derived from time spent immersed in the literature and data (cf. *Chapter 7: Section: 7:4:1: Identification/modification of key nodes*).

- All imported data (conversational interviews, narratives, emails, journal entries) were systematically reviewed to identify phrases, significant statements and 'I Poems' relating to the phenomenon.

- Simultaneously, based on the significance of statements, annotations and memos were created to capture reflective thoughts or illuminate parts of the text.

- Each coded section was sorted into specific key nodes in NVivo.

- Additional free nodes emerged from the data as coding proceeded.

- 4 key nodes and 14 subcategories were refined and reconfigured into 3 key nodes (cf. *Chapter 7: Section 7:4: Identification of key nodes*).

- Data from key nodes were printed off for analysis.

- Time was spent immersed each node comparing narrative extracts in order to identify common meanings and shared practices. The purpose of this was to extract additional significant statements relating to the phenomenon.

- Time was set aside to retreat from the data (incubation phase).

- Node data were repeatedly re-worked, referring back to the original research question: *'How do practitioners gain awareness of their taken-for-granted attitudes, assumptions and prejudices?'*

- Time was set aside for immersion and illumination in order to allow for the breakthrough of thoughts into consciousness and to facilitate the drawing out of meanings formulated for each statement or group of statements and 'I Poems'

- The formulated meanings were drawn together in order to aid the clarification of initial conclusions from analysis relating to a specific key node, namely reflection.

The conclusions drawn were clustered into three overarching emergent themes and incorporated into an overall discussion of the results in relation to the topic of '**taken-for-grantedness**' (Colaizzi, 1978) (cf. *Chapter 7: Section: 7:4: The identification of key nodes*).

6.4 : Second Cycle of Research

6.4.1 : Overview

The initial conclusions, drawn from the first cycle of research, formed the basis for the second cycle. The second research cycle was aimed at broadening the research and extending the amount and range of data in order to ascertain whether data from a wider group of participants would support the initial conclusions (cf. *Chapter 8: Data Results: Data set two*).

The method for this second cycle of research will be presented in three stages. Part one describes the collection of data from participants at the National Careers Guidance Show (NCGS) in March 2010. Part two presents the data drawn from a scoring system on page two of the capture sheet. Part three is the presentation of a case study.

6.4.2 : Data set two - Part one

6.4.2.1 The Sample selection

As with the first cycle of research, the sample selection was purposeful (Roper & Shapira, 2000). I sought to recruit participants who were practitioners in the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) field. This was based on the rationale that it enabled me to look for further similarities and differences in the experiences, thereby confirming or questioning the initial findings from Cycle 1 – Data set one.

6.4.2.2 : Criteria for selection of participants:

The participants (N=30) were all IAG professionals – specifically: careers advisers, heads, directors or co-ordinators of careers services working in FE, HE or government funded programmes.

6.4.2.3 : Identification and selection of participants

The National Careers Guidance Show (NCGS) is an annual conference specifically aimed at professionals in the IAG field. Offering a seminar at the 2010 NCGS provided me with the opportunity to present and gain feedback on my research from other IAG professionals, and also involve them in further data collection for the second cycle of the research.

Below is the seminar proposal that was accepted by the conference organisers for presentation at the 2010 NCGS:

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

> *'We deliver information, advice and guidance in diverse settings and our clients' backgrounds are more diverse than ever, with migrating populations and large international student populations. The session aims to give some insight into taken-for-granted attitudes, assumptions and prejudices, through the narratives of practitioners. In addition to this the session aims to give practitioners tools to help them unearth their taken-for-granted practices and hence gain a better understanding of both their own and their clients' world-views'.*

I designed the seminar to (1) summarise the research so far, including an account of my own experience; (2) initiate dialogue with the participants relating to reflection; and (3) explore the possible use of the 'I Poem' as a method of data collection.

The conference and seminar form dictated to a large extent the type of data that could be collected. Time would be limited and there would be little or no opportunity to speak to participants individually. Recording the seminar would be impractical, with the multiple voices raising transcription issues. In addition, there might be difficulties in gaining informed consent. I decided, therefore, to gather data through voluntarily

completed questionnaires - termed 'capture sheets' - the completion of which would imply consent to use the data for research purposes.

6.4.2.4 : The design of the capture sheet

A main consideration for the capture sheet design was that it should be explicit and state clearly the reasons for utilising the sheet and the purpose of the document, certainly in relation to informed consent (cf. *Appendix 4).* Alongside this requirement, the capture sheet aimed to utilize any time participants spent waiting and to capture data relating to the phenomenon under investigation.

Page one:

- The top section of page one was designed to capture name, job title, name of participant's employer and email contact.

- This was followed by a statement which informed participants of the purpose of the document.

- The remainder of page one was designed with the aim of gaining further insight into the participants' understanding and thoughts relating to reflection. Thus, a series of questions were created derived from the findings of the first research cycle and the literature reviewed in chapters 2, 3 & 4.

- **Question one**: I wanted to gain insight into what practitioners understood by the term reflection, hence the first question was: *'What do we mean by "reflection"?'*

- **Question two:** I was interested in whether reflection is an appropriate way for practitioners to understand taken-for-granted assumptions, or whether they need to engage with 'reflexivity', hence the second question was: *'What do we mean by 'reflexive'?*

- **Question three**: I wanted to know whether practitioners perceived themselves as reflective, therefore I directly asked the question: *'Are you reflective?'*, and *'If not why not?'*

- **Question four**: I thought that time limitations might affect the capacity or ability of practitioners to reflect, therefore I asked: *'Do you have time to reflect?'*, and *'If not why not?'*

- **Question five**: I wanted to ascertain what tools or approaches assisted the practitioners with their reflective practice, hence the question: '*What do you use to aid this reflection?'*

Page two:

Following analysis of the Listening Guide data during cycle 1 of the research, I had hypothesised that an adapted version of the guide could aid practitioners' reflective practice. Therefore, the next part of the capture sheet was designed to capture data relating to the how the adapted steps assisted the participants to question aspects of their practice and unearth aspects of their own taken for granted assumptions.

The adapted steps were:

- **Step 1:** Listen to the language (key words and phrases)

- **Step 2:** Listen for the plot. As time was limited in the seminar I decided to provide the following information: 'Jane is a white woman, a PA working in East Lancashire with Asian women. Her narrative tells of her developing relationship with a client'.

- **Step 3:** Listen for the 'I' in the narrative. Using Jane's narrative, participants underlined the use of the word 'I', along with the verb and any other accompanying words, in order to create an 'I Poem'. This was written on the back of the sheet.

- **Step 4:** Listen for YOUR own personal responses, making explicit any thoughts or feelings.

This section was designed to guide the participants through the four steps and capture their responses to Jane's narrative. The rationale for this was, firstly, that the analysis was being provided by independent third parties and this could be reviewed alongside my own analysis of Jane's narrative. Secondly, the section was designed to gain insight into how the steps had assisted practitioners in thinking about their own assumptions and their practice. Lastly, the aim was to ascertain how the series of steps aided the participants' reflection, and how the steps may contribute to a framework for a reflective tool.

I designed a scoring system which allowed the participants to rate 'on a scale of 1-5' the extent to which the steps assisted them to question their assumptions and their practice. The scoring tool assisted me to assess the impact of the steps on the practitioners, and the extent to which the steps had assisted them to think about areas of themselves or their practice that they had not previously considered (cf. *Appendix 4 - Capture sheet data set two*).

6.4.2.5 : Informed consent

The capture sheet gave participants the opportunity to request that any of their data be omitted from the research. It informed participants that any data used would be anonymised and asked them to indicate if they would like to receive a copy of their completed sheets (cf. *Appendix 4 - Capture sheet data set two*).

6.4.2.6 : Seminar

Following the seminar, 30 participants returned completed capture sheets. These sheets provided the data for cycle 2 of the research – Data set two.

6.4.3 : Data analysis

6.4.3.1 **: Data set two - Part one**

The data collected from the capture sheets was imported into the NVivo research project. Analysis proceeded through the following sequence:

- A new project was created in NVivo.

- Node titles were taken from the first five questions from page one of the capture sheet.

- Anonymised case nodes were created for each participant to capture additional data - i.e. occupational level or qualification attainment.

- Each capture sheet was imported into NVivo against each case node.

- Each case node containing the participants' capture sheets was reviewed.

- Each participant's response was systematically coded into the respective node.

- Simultaneously, based on the significance of statements, annotations and memos were created to capture reflective thoughts or illuminate parts of the text.

- The content of each node was printed off in order to assist with the identification of emergent themes.

- Time was spent immersed in the data for each of the five questions, looking for repetition of words or themes. These were then used to draw out the overall emerging themes (Moustakas, 1990).

- I retreated from the data, allowing subconscious thoughts to break through and, hopefully, add to the meanings drawn from the raw data.

- The meanings drawn were creatively synthesised (Moustakas, 1990) into conclusions for each of the five questions.

- Time was then spent in the illumination phase where I strove to be receptive to new awareness of qualities emerging across the five questions.

- These insights were then aggregated into interim themes and the conclusions discussed.

The capture sheets contained additional data specifically relating to the steps and the 'I Poem' itself. In order to analyse the additional data the following steps were followed:

- Each of the specific comments was coded to an additional node entitled 'Additional Comments'.

- To aid the analysis of the additional commentary I created a table (cf. *Chapter 8: Data Results: Section 8: 3: Data set 2: Part one - Table 8.3*).

- All the additional node data were copied into the table.

- The table containing additional comments was printed off for analysis.

- Each comment was thematically analysed against how the comments related to, for example, the 'I Poem' or 'usefulness' (cf. *Chapter 8 Section 8:3:4: Discussion of additional data).*

- Time was spent immersed in the additional data to further the thematic analysis (Moustakas, 1990).

- Additional data were reviewed against the aggregated conclusions from the first five questions in order to ascertain if the additional data supported any of the conclusions.

- Time was spent immersed in illumination and explication phases (Moustakas, 1990).

- Due to the time spent immersed in the data, it emerged that there was a need to further explore the 'I Poem' in the next cycle of the research.

6.4.4   : Data set two - Part two

The second page of the capture sheet contained a scoring system specifically relating to the steps and the 'I Poem' itself. In order to analyse the data captured the following steps were followed:

- Each capture sheet was reviewed to provide a sense of each participant's responses.

- The number of participants responding to each question was calculated.

- Each of the questions in the scoring sheet was taken in turn and the data were converted into a graph.

- Each graph was examined in turn to assess whether participants' responses indicated how or if the steps had enabled them to question aspects of their practice.

- The data were cross checked with Data set two - Part one to identify, begin to triangulate (Yin, 2010) and corroborate emergent themes.

6.4.5 : Data set two - Part three

Three of the 30 participants at the NCGS seminar were identified as participants to contact as possible case studies that would further explore the phenomenon and the impact of the 'I Poem' on their reflection.

6.4.5.1 **Identification and selection of participant (1):** Careers counsellor - given the fictitious name Becky.

This participant was identified on the basis of her commentary relating directly to the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions.

- Becky was sent a personalised email, picking out significant statements from her capture sheet – in addition to a set of questions that might act as a prompt for her to further think about the seminar, the 'I Poem and the steps:

    1. Why did it assist you, was it the steps or the 'I Poem' specifically?

2. How did it focus you, what were your thoughts and feelings? Tell me more.

3. Did you think of a past experience? If so tell me about it - when was it, what happened, what were your thoughts at the time?

- Further data was collected by return email.

- A conversational interview took place via telephone.

- Consent was gained verbally to record the interview and use the data as part of research.

- I listened to the recording and created a summary of interview.

- More detailed transcription of specific areas of the recording was undertaken.

- A case study was created using data from the conference seminar, emails and transcripts.

- Steps one and two of Listening Guide (cf. *Chapter 5: Section: 5:3:6: Listening to the voices within)* were used to analyse the data.

- The results were imported into the NVivo research project.

- Conclusions drawn from the case study were compared and contrasted with those from early findings, cycle one, and Data set 2: Part one and Part two.

- The themes and conclusions were drawn together across the three parts of this cycle.

- Time was spent immersed in the aggregated findings, moving through the incubation and illumination phases for each part in turn.

- I moved into the explication phase. Time was spent with the aggregated conclusions from 'Data set one' and triangulating these with 'Data set two', bringing together the two sets of the research findings.

- These were creatively synthesised to inform the last cycle of the research

6.5 : Third Cycle of the Research

6.5.1   : Overview

The aim of the third and final cycle of the research was to find an additional group of practitioners with whom to check out the results from the cycle two data analysis and further evaluate the role and usefulness of the 'I Poem'. The starting point for the third cycle was the analysis and discussion of the second cycle of the research, from which the following emerged as themes: 'Reflection'; the 'I Poem'; and 'Time' (cf. *Chapter 8: Section: 8:6: Discussion of findings from Part one, two and three of data set two*).

This section presents the method for the third cycle of research in three stages: **Part one**: data collection from the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) conference; **Part two:** data drawn from a scoring system on page two of the capture sheet; and **Part three**: the presentation of two further case studies.

6.5.2   : Data set 3 - Part one

6.5.2.1 : The Sample Selection:

As with the previous cycles of research, the third cycle utilised a purposive approach to the sample selection enabling the recruitment of additional participants who were practitioners in the Information, Advice and Guidance field (Roper & Shapira, 2000).

6.5.2.2 : Identification and selection of participants

In the previous cycle I outlined the identification of the National Career Guidance Show (NCGS) as a route to engage with a wider group of practitioners. Following the NCGS seminar I was invited by a representative of National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) to present another seminar at their

conference, *Guidance professionals: Valued and valuable?* due to be held in October 2010 in Manchester.

Below is the seminar proposal that was accepted by the organisers for presentation at the 2010 NAEGA conference:

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

> *Career professionals deliver IAG in diverse settings with clients from various backgrounds. Listen to the narratives of practitioners who have gained awareness of their taken-for-granted assumptions. Learn how to unearth your own assumptions and gain an understanding of world-views you both hold.*

The seminar design was similar to that of the previous seminar (cf. *Chapter 6: Section 4:2:3*), although the focus was slightly different. Specifically, this seminar was designed to: (1) summarise the research so far; (2) gather data relating to participants' understanding of reflection; and (3) gather data relating to the usefulness of the 'I Poem'.

Similarly, the design of the capture sheet was based on that used in cycle 2, although questions 1-5 were refined and developed. This was, firstly, because, from my own evaluation and analysis of cycle two, I was aware that I might be leading the practitioners' responses on the capture sheet by asking 'Do you have time to reflect?' Secondly, the conclusions from the second cycle helped to refine the overall findings at that point in the research (cf. *Chapter 9: Data Results: Data set three: Introduction - Third cycle-data set three*); with the impact that Page two of the capture sheet used the adapted steps (cf. *Chapter 6: Section 4:2:4*) from cycle 2 of the research.

Page two of the capture sheet contained the same scoring system used in cycle 2, referred to in this cycle of the research method as '**a**'. However, in order to gain richer data relating to the usefulness of the 'I Poem', three additional questions were asked

(cf. *Appendix 5: Capture sheet Data set three*). Whilst, ideally participants would use the 'I Poem' with their own personal reflection, time precluded this, and the decision was taken that the participants would use the 'I Poem' with Jane's narrative. An additional scoring system, referred to as '**b**', was therefore added which contained statements relating to the usefulness of the 'I Poem' as a tool for reflection. Both of these were used to enhance the data collected relating to the 'I Poem'.

6.5.2.3 : Seminar

At the 2010 conference of the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) I delivered the seminar, in conjunction with the capture sheet, to two groups. Following the seminars, 24 of approximately 29 attendees submitted completed capture sheets. These sheets provided the data for cycle 3 of the research.

6.5.3   : Data analysis

6.5.3.1 : Data set three: Part one

The data analysis of Data set three - Part one, including questions 1-8 and the additional commentary, followed the same method as that of data set 2: part one (cf. *Chapter 8: Section: 8:3: Findings: Data set two: Part one - National Careers Guidance Show (NCGS)*).

6.5.3.2 : Data set three - Part two

The capture sheet contained two scoring tools (**a**) and (**b**). The process of analysis was as follows:

- It was ascertained how many participants had responded to each question.

- Each of the questions in the scoring tool (**a**) was taken in turn and the data were drawn into a graph.

- Each graph was examined in turn to assess whether participants' responses indicated how or if the steps had enabled them to question aspects of their practice.

- Each of the questions in the scoring tool (**b**) was taken in turn and the data was drawn into a graph.

- Each graph was examined in turn to assess whether participants' responses indicated how or if the steps had enabled them to question aspects of their practice.

- Data from part two was cross checked with data from part one to triangulate and corroborate emergent themes from part one of data analysis.

6.5.4 : Data set three - Part three

The aim of part three was to further explore the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions and the impact of the 'I Poem' on the participants' reflection. In order to identify two further case studies, I returned to the data from the NAEGA seminar and identified those participants whose commentary directly related to the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. This identified 13 possible case study candidates.

- **Case study two - Carol:** Carol was initially selected as a possible case study on the basis of the commentary on her capture sheet. Then, whilst I was immersed in the data from cycle three, it became apparent that Carol had also attended the NCGS seminar in March 2010. This added to the attractiveness of using her as a case study since it provided additional and comparison data.

- Carol, and the 12 other participants who had provided relevant commentary, were sent a personalised emailed. Each email picked out significant statements from their capture sheet; it was hoped that this might act as a prompt for them to think further about the session, the 'I Poem' and the steps (cf. *Chapter 6: Section 4:5*).

- Despite emailing Carol on a number of occasions after the conference unfortunately no responses where received, therefore Carol's case study is solely based on the capture sheet data from cycle 2 and 3.

- One participant responded positively to my email, and this resulted in a further case study - **Case study three – Diane.**

- Subsequent data were collected from Diane by return email and a date and time was agreed for a telephone interview.

- The telephone interview lasted for 25 minutes and, with Diane's consent, was recorded. In summary, this interview, firstly, asked Diane to expand on responses contained in her capture sheet, i.e. specific comments regarding unacknowledged negative feelings; secondly, it invited additional comments relating to how the seminar and the 'I Poem' assisted her reflective practice.

- Time was spent listening to the recording and creating a summary of interview.

- More detailed transcription of specific areas of recording was undertaken.

- Sections of transcript were then used to create an 'I Poem' from Diane's interview.

- Data from conference seminar, emails and transcripts were the basis for both case studies.

- I undertook a cross comparison between case studies from Part one and Part two of this cycle (Yin, 2010) to collaborate or challenge findings.

At this point I was engaged in the explication phase of the research and was immersed in the aggregated findings from parts one, two and three of this cycle. The findings from these were compared with the findings from the previous two cycles. I spent time self-searching and internally using the findings to illuminate the main components of the phenomena under investigation (Moustakas, 1999). This phase also aided the process of triangulation by allowing me to explore the consistency of findings and strengthen the overall findings of the research. Whilst in the explication phase I concurrently moved in and out of the creative synthesis phase, allowing my mind to run free and engage in mythical thought bringing together the findings into a creative 'quilt' that fashioned the findings as a coherent whole (Moustakas, 1999).

6:6: Summary of Method Chapter

This chapter has recounted the research procedure; the steps taken to collect and analyse data, and the rationale behind them. The research has been guided throughout by the six phases of heuristic research (cf. *Chapter 5: Section 3:5: Concepts and phases of heuristic research*). Whilst this chapter has presented the method for the three cycles of the research in what appears to be a very linear manner, it needs to be acknowledged that this was not always the case. Very often several components of the method were occurring simultaneously. In order to illustrate the depth and breadth of the data collection Figure 6:1 presents a visual overview of the range and timings of the various data sources.

The following chapters move on to the findings from the three empirical cycles of my research. *Chapter 7: Data Results: Data set one,* presents significant statements from the first cycle of the research, discussing initial emergent themes and unexpected results. *Chapter 8: Data Results: Data set two*, presents the analysis and findings from Data set two, and includes the discussion of these findings in light of the previous cycle, in order to inform the third and final cycle. *Chapter 9: Data*

Results: Data set three similarly presents the analysis and findings from Data set three, and ends with the presentation and discussion of the overall findings.

Figure 6.1: Range and timings of data collection sources
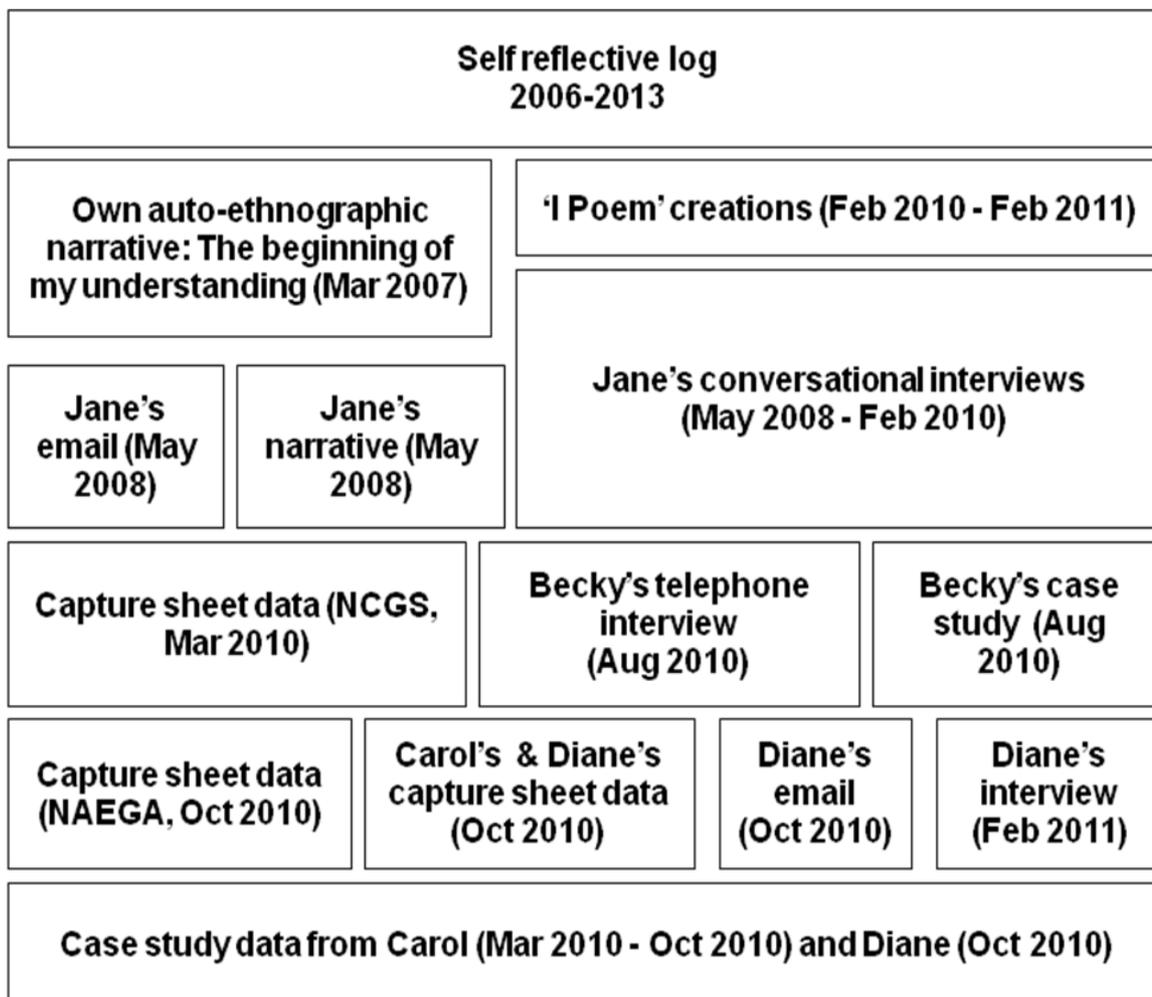
7 : DATA RESULTS: DATA SET ONE

7.1 : Overview

In order to give transparency to the presentation of the research data, the results and findings from the data will be presented in a 'chronicle-like fashion', enabling the course of the research journey to be shown (Chenail, 1995). Each of the three iterative cycles will be presented in its own right in a separate chapter, and once this has been done the discussion will take the reader through a further journey where the results from the raw data are clustered into themes.

This chapter presents the data from the first iterative cycle, and includes the following sections:

> 7:2   Introduction: First Cycle – Data set one
>
> 7:3   Background: Jane
>
> 7:4:   The identification of nodes
>
> 7:5:   Significant statements
>
> 7:6:   Overview of initial emergent themes

7.2 : Introduction: First Cycle - Data set one

Chapter 1 discusses the early cycles of the research and how the research question and objectives were developed and refined. In discussing how the research has evolved, chapter 1 also provides a prelude to this first cycle of the research. The overall aim of the first cycle was to understand how the co-researcher and I became aware of our own taken-for-granted differences. More specifically it aimed to:

1. Ascertain if there were any 'hidden likenesses' in our narrative experiences.

2. What our assumptions were.

3. How our awareness developed.

4. What, if anything, acted as a 'eureka moment' in our journeys.

It was intended that the findings from this cycle of the research would form initial themes that would enable me as the researcher to explore further how we became aware of the phenomenon of taken-for-granted attitudes and prejudices.

This chapter firstly gives a brief insight into my co-researcher and uses extracts from our initial exchanges. The first three boxes (7.1, 7.2 and 7.3) include extracts from Jane along with my statements and reflections, selected in order to provide insight into the initial stages of the data collection. Secondly, the chapter includes a section on the identification of nodes and how these were refined into a number of Key nodes. Thirdly, it presents significant statements that are extracts, or 'I Poems', created from transcribed conversational interviews. These have been selected because they relate directly to the phenomenon under investigation. Fourthly, the chapter details and summarises the meaning drawn from each of the statements. This is labelled the formulated meaning. Lastly, these meanings are drawn into a number of initial emergent themes and the chapter concludes with a discussion of their significance at this stage and how the initial themes will feature in the following cycle of the research.

7.3 : Background: Jane

The co-researcher for this cycle of the research was a white British woman aged fifty who worked as an IAG adviser and had recently achieved her level 4 NVQ in Information, Advice and Guidance. For the purpose of the research she has been given the fictitious name of Jane (cf. *Chapter 6: Method: The research design and the research process*).

7.3.1   : Background: Data Collection

The collection of the data for this cycle of the research began when Jane and I had a conversation in March 2007. I recalled, reflected upon and recorded this first conversation in my journal (cf. Box 7.1). Further data were collected in May 2008 when Jane emailed (cf. Box 7:2) her first reflective narrative (cf. Box 7:3). Between May 2008 and March 2010 a number of conversational interviews and reflective entries were recorded, and these have contributed to the volume of data collected. Due to the large amount of data not all of it can be presented. However, in order for the reader to understand the development and richness of the data, a box structure has been used to present extracts, 'I Poems' or full narrative accounts that relate directly to the phenomenon in question.

After an initial meeting with Jane in 2007, I recorded my reflections from the conversation. Below, in Box 7.1, is an extract from my own reflective journal.

Box 7.1: Extract one from my own reflective journal (March 2007)

'Jane was telling me about her NVQ Advice & Guidance study, and how due to some reading from this she has started to identify that she had been working with Muslim women in East Lancashire, but by her own 'whiteness' started to question whether she had done them an injustice. Obviously this sparked further conversation between the two of us and I went on to discuss my PhD. She is really interested in helping collaboratively with the research, therefore I have asked her to do some reflective accounts from her work'

A year later Jane emailed her narrative and the extract from the email below is used

here to highlight Jane's concerns.

Box 7.2 : Email from Jane introducing her first narrative (May 2008)

Hi Liz,
This is later than I planned it to be, so can I apologise. I wanted to do this last night but I lost my car keys in work and it was one disaster after another - blah, blah. Anyway, I have written a reflective account[5] which I have been so bloody honest in, I couldn't bear to even spell check it! I've just written and sent it to you. I hope that it is helpful to your research and if you do judge me for it, it won't be too harshly! I felt that you needed an honest account, and that is what you have got!
If you need any more help from me (God I hate to say this, but I mean it) just let me know and I shall do my best.

Attached to the email was Jane's narrative, and this is recorded in full in Box 7.3. It

gives insight into Jane's journey of unearthing aspects of her taken-for-granted

assumptions.

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[5] Material underlined was subsequently incorporated into an 'I Poem' and referred back to later.

Box 7.3: Jane's first reflective narrative (May 2008)

I am a Personal Development Adviser within the employment field, worklessness in particular. My role is to enable people to move from where they are to where they want to be. During my employment, I spent a number of years working in the region. This is my reflection of an experience I had working with one particular Asian woman (Pakistani) during that time. My reflection was stimulated by a period of study I was engaged in that had a module of higher level listening skills.

When I first met my client I knew in advance that she was Pakistani from the equal opportunities information I had. I knew her age, address and nothing more. On our first interview she arrived dressed in "western" clothing and spoke in perfect English. She was young, but married with five children. She was depressed and had been hospitalised for her depression after her last child was born. As my helping relationship developed, I noticed that she began to dress more in keeping with her culture and she seemed to feel able to speak to me as woman to woman.

It transpired that her family were still very set in what she termed the 'old ways' though she was proud that her children were 'westernised' and that the girls especially wore fashion clothing. She had suffered a miscarriage sometime between the last two children and told me how her grandmother had blamed her for the loss of that baby. The grandmother was very powerful within the family and had made my client feel totally inadequate as a woman.

When I came to reflect on my own listening skills I found that I looked much deeper at my skills and at my values, beliefs and assumptions.

Firstly, I was surprised at my client's mantle of "whiteness" at our first interview and at my reaction to it. She, on reflection, had assumed a dress code that she felt would be more useful to her when encountering someone in a formal role – so she had effected a change from her norm. Perhaps more importantly, I realised that I had a sense of relief when she wore her "white mantle". It was easier for me to deal with someone who seemed to share a western approach to things. Also, I had looked at her age and was aghast that she was so young to have so many children. It didn't meet my values. This wasn't necessarily related to her ethnicity, but it did relate to how I viewed young women, of any culture, who seemed to do nothing more than be baby machines. What challenged me most with this woman was that I found that my underlying assumptions were that if she was a baby machine, why would she want to have a paid job? Could she do one? She was clearly intelligent, I had academic evidence, but I struggled to understand why she was pursuing a career that might be difficult to enter and did not fit into the roles I assumed she might be seeking.

This made me think about job roles I expected Asian women to be in. I realised that this might be in family owned shops, or sewing or on the other end of the scale; in the medical profession. My client wanted to be in a job role that was not dissimilar to mine and I could only see the barriers of her culture and her family ties. I knew that deep down I was influenced by my assumptions of her role as an Asian woman, in an Lancashire town, with the duties of a wife and mother in a culture that I saw as limiting.

Although I no longer work in that area and this woman is no longer my client, she impacted on me sufficiently to challenge my own beliefs and assumptions about how my whiteness affects my understanding of other groups. It is very thought provoking when you consider yourself to see all people as equals, and you realise that somehow, deep down you do not respond as 'equally' as you thought you might!

7.4 : The identification of nodes

Two approaches were adopted for this stage of the analysis: firstly, Gilligan *et al* (2003) A Voice-Centred Relational Method, and specifically the creation of 'I Poems; and secondly, NVivo software to support the data capture and analysis. A number of categories, known as nodes, were created within NVivo. These were derived from time spent immersed in the literature, and also from the data analysis, where additional nodes emerged out of the data coding phases. The two approaches are discussed in more detail in *Chapter 5: Methodology* and *Chapter 6: Methods: The research design and the research process.*

A full list of initial key nodes and subcategories developed from the first cycle of NVivo analysis is shown in Table 7:1.

Table 7:1: Key nodes from the first cycle of NVivo analysis

Initial Key node 1	Reflection • Deep • Surface • Definition
Initial Key node 2	Assumptions • Fear of political correctness • Prejudice • Stereotypes • Taken-for-granted
Initial Key node 3	Enablers • Eureka moment
Initial Key node 4	Relationships/professional • Awareness of difference • Changes • Education/Training • Emotions Reactions • Questioning own world views • Rapport

7:4:1: Identification/Modification of Key nodes

Table 7:1 details the initial 4 key nodes and 14 subcategories that were developed whilst working with the data. However, immersion in the data and the process of reviewing and writing up the initial analysis, led me identify a somewhat different pattern in the data, and I decided to reconfigure the nodes and subcategories into the key nodes shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Revised Key nodes from the first cycle of the analysis

Revised Key node 1: Reflection
Revised Key node 2: Taken-for-grantedness
Revised Key node 3: Fear

7.5 : Significant statements

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, this section will present significant statements in relation to each of the key nodes, selected because they relate directly to the phenomenon under investigation.

Box 7.4: Significant statements: Reflection

<u>**JANE**</u>:

May 2008 (email)

'*I have written a reflective account*'

'*When I came to reflect on my own listening skills*'

November 2009 (extract from 'I Poem')

> *I thought, I reflected*
> *I remember, I was*
> *I first, I have*
> *I am, I had, I was*
> *I was unsettled*
> *I have asked myself*
> *I feel, I did realise, I think*
> *I knew, I lacked*
> *I recognise, I made*
> *I knew, I don't read*
> *I had, I was*
> *I thought, I was*
> *I was thinking*
> *I don't know*
> *I was*
> *I do reflect*
> *I think, I think, I think, I think, I think, I think*

November 2009 (interview)
'*I do reflect a lot anyway on…, on my own work, because I think…, I think you have to*'

December 2009 (interview)

'*all I got out of it…., well obviously some things to look at and self reflection and stuff*'.

'*this one is the ugly one. The dynamics had changed, so did the power in the relationship - that had changed. I was less in control than I thought I was, because the balance had shifted and I was the one that lacked the knowledge, so that was uncomfortable*'.

Jane annotated this further by saying:

'*but it is only uncomfortable if you…, if you reflect on it*'.

'*I became more uncomfortable because I didn't know enough and that it was it a lack of knowledge....*'

I formulated the following meaning from this raw data:

Box 7.4 includes a number of significant statements from the raw data. What emerged from immersion in Jane's data was a strong sense of Jane's belief that she was reflective and used reflection in practice. Throughout the data Jane refers to reflection, initially in her email (cf. Box 7.2), then in her first narrative (cf. Box 7.3) and also in the subsequent conversational interviews. The extracted 'I Poem' from November 2009 further highlights how she refers to reflection and her belief that she is reflective and '*I think you have to*' reflect (cf. Box 7.4). Jane repeatedly stated '*I think*', suggesting that she believes herself to be reflective. Despite Jane's repeated references to being reflective, it is unclear exactly what she is referring to. It is difficult to determine precisely what she means by being reflective or what type of reflection she is referring to. It is not clear whether the reflection is problem based, self focused, or a more general serious consideration of something.

Jane's references to reflection could be her way of reinforcing her own belief that she is reflective. It is also possible that Jane is using these references to convince others that she is reflective. She claims that she 'has to' reflect and, whilst there is no explanation as to why this is the case, one reason might be that the repeated claims are Jane's way of reassuring herself of being a professional. Also, whilst Jane claims to be reflective, it is unclear how reflective she actually is. It is possible that she is not as reflective as she might like to believe, and is, in fact, paying lip service to the concept because she feels she has to be reflective as a professional practitioner.

In the transcript of December 2009 Jane refers to the experience with her client and how she felt uncomfortable, partly because, when she was reflecting on the experience, she became aware of her lack of knowledge (Box 7.4). This is interesting because, whilst at this point it is difficult to ascertain what the uncomfortable feeling suggests or why she was feeling this way, it could indicate a deeper level of enquiry.

From analysing Jane's statements about reflection I drew the following conclusion:

- Reflection: The analysis concludes that both Jane and I perceived ourselves to be reflective practitioners. However, it is difficult to ascertain both what is meant by reflection and what level of reflection a practitioner is using or referring to. It is suggested that if practitioners feel discomfort during their reflective practice, this might suggest that they are engaging in a critical level of reflection.

The next stage of analysis involved further examination of Jane's, and my own statements, in order to explore the meaning behind statements regarding reflection. Key statements are shown in Box 7.5.

Box 7.5: Significant statements: Reflection

JANE:

December 2009 (interview)

Yeh because I knew things that happened [Liz: So] *yeh but she always stays in my head I don't know why.....It triggered …, triggered thought …, though why she triggered thought I don't know, cause this was before, before my NVQ (Note: similarly this experience happened before the learning, in fact some time before). So, you know, that's why I know it wasn't just …* [Liz: Mine was before] *Yeh but she stuck in my head...'I knew things that happened there where really important'.*

December 2009 (interview)
Jane refers to the experience with her client (cf. Box 7.3) and she says:

'*all I got out of it…., well obviously some things to look at and self reflection and stuff*'.

November 2009 (interview)

'*Yeh it's a bit of a shock when you realise, because you really have to look at yourself, don't you critically*'

LIZ:

Extract from 'I Poem' May 2008

> *I remember feeling*
> *I could or should respond*
> *I was conscious*
> *I was a white woman*
> *I realised*
> *I would have*
> *I remember*
> *I was conscious*
> *I managed*
> *I was conscious*
> my experience '*stuck in my mind*'

I formulated the following meaning from this raw data:

Box 7.5 contains a number of significant statements from the raw data from Jane and myself. From the extracts in Box 7.4, I concluded that Jane believed herself to be reflective, as, for example, in extract December 2009 when she says '*I knew things that happened there were really important*'. The experience with her client '*triggered thought*', although at that point she did not understand why. My own experience was

similar, as detailed in 'The beginning of my understanding' (cf. *Chapter 1: Introduction*). There had been a considerable time gap between this incident with my client and my own awareness of its significance, so I feel it is acceptable to conclude that, my experience '*stuck in my mind*' as Jane expressed it. The 'I Poem' of May 2008 highlights how '*I was conscious*' (cf. Box 7.5). Indeed, we were both conscious of aspects of our practice. Jane articulates her further examination of this experience and says '*yeh it's a bit of a shock when you realise, because you really have to look at yourself, don't you critically*'. At the time of the experiences we did not understand the full ramifications of what we experienced. The realisation came about at a later date with the consciousness that, as practitioners, we had been projecting our own norms and values onto our clients (Thompson, 2003). For Jane the awareness followed a period of study, whilst for me it came about through meetings with my previous supervisor who encouraged me to look more critically at my practice, and through reviewing specific literature, particularly Thompson (2003).

The analysis demonstrated that Jane and I knew that there were issues at play, but that at the time we were unable to understand fully or retain the new knowledge we were gathering. It is concluded that this could be due to limits in our own personal knowledge. In the same transcript Jane recounts how, from her perspective, all she got from the encounter with her clients was '*some reflection and stuff*' (cf. Box 7.4). From time spent with Jane, time immersed in the recordings and the data, it was evident that Jane felt anger, partly due to feeling a lack of control, a lack of personal knowledge and that her time had been wasted.

Jane could have used her experience to develop her own personal knowledge, but appeared unable to do so, possibly because of the current limits of her own personal knowledge. This could also have been due her existing personal knowledge being

what Allport (1954/79) describes as re-fenced[6], with the result that Jane therefore resisted embracing any new information. The analysis suggests that whilst Jane and I perceived ourselves as reflective, the act of reflection does not appear to have enabled us to unearth our taken-for-granted assumptions. Therefore, the findings indicate that our reflective practice did not assist us in being critically reflective, nor in understanding how our personal histories influence our practice (Cedefop, 2009).

I drew the following conclusions from analysing statements about reflection:

- Taken-for-granted assumptions: The analysis concluded that it is difficult to understand the full impact of assumptions and, because they are embedded within our personal histories and knowledge, they are by nature difficult to unearth.

- Reflection: The analysis demonstrated a lack of ability to take self reflection to a more critical level and that unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions can be difficult to achieve. This could be partly due to limits of personal knowledge and knowledge of the 'self'. Whilst unearthing assumptions may be the starting point, it might not be sufficient, and what you discover may be even more difficult to deal with or understand.

The next stage of the analysis involved returning to the data to explore the concept of "taken-for-grantedness", in particular with regard to assumptions rooted in our life histories. Significant statements are shown in Box 7.6 (a) and Box 7.6 (b)[7].

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[6] a 're-fencing' defined as a device employed when a fact contradicts a stereotype (Allport, 1954)

[7] Where a large amount of material is included in a box, for clarity of information, the box format will be split into Box (a) & (b).

Box 7.6(a): Significant statements: 'Taken-for-grantedness'

<u>**JANE**</u>:

December 2009 (interview)

'*It's funny that, because if I think about where I grew up - because it was the late 50s and it was still… People were still able to put them things in the window, we lived in rooms. I was brought up literally in rooms, but they could put signs up in the windows, "No niggers. No Irish".*

Within a number of the transcripts we discuss our upbringing. Jane refers to dating boys with different religious beliefs and to family members from South Africa. She also reflects on living in Moss Side with its significant Jamaican community, and suggests a possible personal relationship. Later in same transcript she says:

'*My Aunty was actually thrown out - my Mum's sister - because she married a Jamaican. This is at the end of the war... erm he was a German Jamaican (laugh) .....erm and she took rooms across the street. We lived next door to my Mum's Dad, and we were in rooms next door to them. They had the whole house, and across the street was my aunty and she wasn't allowed to go into the house. She wasn't allowed to speak to anybody because she married the black fella. Anyway she went out to Jamaica,... erm and he was going back to Jamaica and they bought a farm out there and when her daughter was fifteen - she sent her back over here to become a nurse - a British trained nurse. And 'cause she had a Jamaican accent she had a patois, as kids we took the piss, something rotten. We use to mimic her you know like (Jane actually mimics her accent) (laughs) and we would all be doing it. We were only little like...'*

February 2010 (interview)

We are discussing our experience further and Jane says:

'*I would never of thought of myself as being racist. I would still say I'm not,*' '*I'm not racist. What does that mean?', No, I don't think so*'

Box 7.6(b): Significant statements: 'Taken-for-grantedness'

<u>LIZ</u>**: November 2009 (interview)**[8]

'A big factor in mine is I grew up in Liverpool and ...erm in a family that were predominately orange lodge....And I had a granma who…if I took anyone to her house, she was like, I don't want a papist in my house, erm down to when me and Keith, told her where we were getting married, it was called the Good Shepherd, she was like that's a catholic church....Gran how can two protestants get married in a catholic church it not happening, but that had an impact to who you are.'

I tell Jane**: *'I come from Liverpool, from a predominately white area of Liverpool and in fact there was only one coloured family where I grew up.'***

Later I say:

'Well, I felt I was culturally aware because my dad had Chinese friends and I lived in an Asian community in Preston. But then when I looked at my practice and thought about my whiteness and what privilege that might give me, I thought I had no awareness, not really.'

March 2008 (Journal :Emerging insights)

'I failed to consciously question the impact of my whiteness'.

'I spoke to some colleagues who are white and they too confessed to having similar experiences (this was actually Jane).

I thought about *'white individuals who are working with ethnic groups, with little or no thought for how their own whiteness may blinker how they work'.*

In addition, I thought about Jane's statement that: *'I think the whole question of white professions is … I think it is difficult', 'I don't think there are many people who change'.*

This links back to the mention of the 'status quo' by practitioners and organisations as a whole.

Also within this key node I included some of the literature reviewed early in the research. Highlighted within this node was a reference from Thompson (2003) saying *'world-view'* and how *'our thoughts, actions and interactions pass through the filter of one or more ideologies'* (p. 21), and that *'we rely on a set of assumptions that underpin, guide and constrain how we conduct ourselves'* (p. 21). This reinforces what was emerging from the empirical data: Jane seemed still to be relying on her established set of assumptions, and this does not appear to have been effected by her experience, no matter how powerful that was.

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[8] Bold text is adopted to identify my own extracts and add to the clarity for the reader

I formulated the following meaning from this raw data:

The extracts, included in Box 7.6(a) and 7.6(b), refer firstly, to significant aspects of Jane's background: dating boys with different religious beliefs; family members from South Africa; and time spent in Moss Side mixing with the Jamaican community. She recalls experiences from when she was young, starting with what were the socially acceptable norms in the 1950's, growing up in a white orientated society. Then she moves on to her experiences with her aunt and her cousin. Secondly, I also recall similar experiences, growing up in a predominately white area, encounters with dominant views of religion (i.e. parents and extended family members) and living and working with people from different cultures. The majority of these social interactions and experiences were whilst we were young. This is of interest as the experiences that Jane and I had have featured in the development of our own personal knowledge, and therefore it is possible to conclude that they have contributed to our belief systems. These experiences have impacted on our values and beliefs and our personal knowledge, although they are rooted in old world views inherited from our childhood.

Whilst transcribing, I noted that Jane laughed at a number of points when we are discussing past experiences. This led me to question what was happening at such moments. From working as Jane's colleague, and from our conversational interviews, I was aware that Jane would try to avoid situations when she perceived she lacked knowledge. It could be that Jane's laughter was a defensive mechanism, or an indication of her inability to deal with situations, specifically where she felt unable to cope with difference in relation to how to act (Lee & Stanko, 2003; Glenn, 2003).

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of 'Taken-for-grantedness':

- The analysis of taken-for-granted assumptions provided evidence that our values and beliefs are deep rooted in, or inherited from, childhood and our

social, cultural, personal histories. Furthermore, a lack of personal knowledge could lead to an inability to understand or deal with assumptions or prejudices.

The next stage of the analysis involved returning to the data to explore further the concept of "Taken-for-grantedness", in particular with regard to awareness of race and whiteness. Significant statements are shown in Box 7.7(a) and Box 7.7(b).

Box 7.7(a): Significant statements: 'Stereotypes' and 'Prejudices' Taken-for-grantedness

JANE:

May 2008 (interview)

'*I knew in advance that she was Pakistani', 'I had looked at her age and was aghast that she was so young to have so many children*'

'*I struggled to understand why she was pursuing a career that might be difficult to enter and did not fit into the roles I assumed she might be seeking*'

'*I could only see the barriers of her culture and her family ties*"

'*I view young women of any culture who seemed to do nothing more than be baby machines*'.

'*I lacked a cultural understanding and I recognised I made assumptions that were cultural based on what I knew to be medico stereotypical views*'

(Continued on next page ….)

(Continued from previous page ….)

November 2009 (interview) - Jane recalls a first meeting with a Sikh man

Jane describes the situation and how she '*bounded in and shook his hand'* without any thought of whether this was acceptable due to his religious beliefs.

She goes onto say *'he was so polite'* and *'he shook my hand. Well, he took it. He didn't have a choice because I had flung my hand in his and grabbed it you know. And he was so nice. I was so humiliated …, so humiliated because he was nice about it'*.

In my transcription notes, I noted that Jane laughed at points through this story, most notably when she said how she had bounded in.

November 2009 'I Poem' (extracted from interview)

> *I was unsettled*
> *I have asked myself*
> *I feel*
> *I did realise*
> *I think*
> *I knew*
> *I lacked*

December 2009 (interview)

'…she told me how western she was, because she felt that was the re emphasis she wanted to make that really I couldn't do anything, because in her head, even though she knew it was wrong, the granny and the husband controlled everything, but she lived here, she lived in Nelson, for God's sake you know. I think women should break away (long laugh). I don't understand that cultural pull because I don't experience it; no one can teach me it, I'm sure of that...'

December 2009 (interview)

'Her daughter was fifteen. She sent her back over here to become a nurse British trained nurse and cause she had a Jamaican accent she had a patois and as kids we took the piss, something rotten we use to mimic her you know like (Jane actually mimics her accent) (laughs)'

February 2010 (interview)

'*I would never of thought of myself as being racist. I would still say I'm not,*'

'*I'm not racist. What does that mean?*'

'*No, I don't think so*'.

**Box 7.7(b): Significant statements: 'Stereotypes' and 'Prejudices''
Taken-for-grantedness**

<u>**LIZ**</u>:

March 2008: (Journal: Emerging critical insights)

I noted here how: *'I failed to consciously question the impact of my whiteness'.*
'I spoke to some colleagues who are white' and they too confessed to having
similar experiences (this was actually Jane). I thought about 'white individuals
who are working with ethnic groups, with little or no thought for how their own
whiteness may blinker how they work'

November 2009 (interview)

Here I tell Jane: *'I come from Liverpool, from a predominately white area of*
Liverpool and in fact there was only one coloured family where I grew up'.
'Well, I felt I was culturally aware because my dad had Chinese friends and I
lived in an Asian community in Preston. But then when I looked at my practice
and thought about my whiteness and what privilege that might give me, I
thought I had no awareness, not really.'

I formulated the following meaning from this raw data:

The significant extracts in Box 7.7(a) highlight aspects of Jane's and my awareness,
or lack of awareness, of whiteness and/or difference in relation to the clients that we
worked with. In the extract from May 2008 (cf. Box 7.7(a)) Jane noted that she
struggled to understand. She verbalises her assumptions and notes how she thought
certain roles were open to this client. She also expresses her views concerning
women who have larger numbers of children. Extracts from November 2009 (cf. Box
7.7(a)) highlight Jane's experience with a 'Sikh man'. She describes the situation and
how she '*bounded in*' without any thought of whether this was acceptable due to his
religious beliefs. She notes how the man was polite and shook her hand but, as she
says, he had no choice in the matter. She notes feeling '*humiliated …, so humiliated*
because he was nice about it'. In the transcription notes, Jane laughed at points
throughout this story, most notably when she said how she had bounded in (cf. Box
7.7(a)). Furthermore, Jane's humiliation could be an indication of her awareness of

her lack of cultural sensitivity. However, Jane's statements do demonstrate her assumptions about roles of 'others'. Whilst the assumptions captured during the research relate to ethnicity and gender, Jane's assumptions may be more wide ranging. It could also be argued that the stereotypes she holds could be evidence that Jane is categorising her clients.

Jane openly admits she lacks knowledge (cf. Box 7.7(a), 'I Poem' of November 2009). Whilst it is uncertain what type of knowledge she is referring to, this, and the previous statements, draw attention to her lack of personal knowledge and her cultural naiveté. It does not appear that she herself is examining her unquestioned personal knowledge. This could highlight how her brain or mind is maintaining the categories that already exist. They could be resistant to change, meaning that she is unable to utilise the new personal knowledge in practice. She acknowledges that she does not '*understand that cultural pull',* and furthermore states that *'no one can teach me it I'm sure of that'* (Box 7.7(a), February 2008). Both of these are interesting statements, and whilst Jane's responses doubtless reflect her honest opinion, they do lead to questions about her approach to the experience. If thought about differently, she could use the experience to be more critical of herself and her attitudes, beliefs and assumptions. This in turn could enhance her learning, develop her personal knowledge and possibly improve her practice.

In the transcript of February 2010 (cf. Box 7.7(b)) when we are discussing our experience further Jane says '*I would never of thought of myself as being racist. I would still say I'm not,'* '*I'm not racist. 'What does that mean? No, I don't think so*'. These statements are interesting, Jane appears to be challenging her own thought processes whilst in dialogue, and it is possible that this could indicate contradiction or conflict in her mind. It is possible that as she speaks this sentence she actually questions the concept of being racist and what this might mean.

In the transcript from November 2009 (Box 7.7(b)), I recalled details of my own background growing up in a predominately white area, mixing with people from different cultural backgrounds and how I perceived myself as being culturally aware. However, the final part of the statement is the most significant: I thought I was culturally aware, but of what? Similarly, Jane had mixed with more people from different backgrounds than I had, yet we still lacked the ability to question the assumptions and prejudices we held.

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of 'Taken-for-grantedness', 'Stereotypes' and 'Prejudices':

- The analysis highlights and provides evidence of Jane's, and my own, lack of cultural awareness and furthermore an understanding of our own cultural naiveté. This analysis also indicates that we both had undeveloped personal knowledge, which appears to also be unquestioned.

- The analysis concluded that uncritical statements and acts suggested evidence of categorizing and relying on stereotypical views and assumptions, which appeared to be re-fenced, maintained and resistant to change.

The next stage of the analysis involved returning to the data to explore further the concept of "Fear", in particular with regard to how fear inhibited open and full reflection. Significant statements are shown in Box 7.8.

Box 7.8: Significant statements: Fear

JANE:

May 2008 ('I Poem' from email)
> I have written a reflective account
> I have been so bloody honest
> I couldn't bear
> I've just written and sent it

November 2009 (interview)

'*You might do something with it yourself, but you don't, you're not sharing it with the group, because that would upset the status quo, because they don't all want to know'.* In the same transcript: '*it's a bit of a shock when you realise'.*

December 2009 (interview)

'*I think the whole question of a white professional advisory person...'I don't think there are many people who change when they look at what they're doing'.*
In the same interview: '*I think you get fearful don't you, and fear comes in'.*

LIZ:

October 2009 (journal)

'***(Jane) had been thinking a lot about what happened, and she was conscious at the time who could she speak to. And it was only when I told her about my research that she felt comfortable to tell me about her experience'.***

I formulated the following meaning from this raw data:

The significant statements in Box 7.8 highlight Jane's concerns. Her acknowledgment that she has been '*bloody honest*' and her statement that she could not bear to re-read the text indicate the importance of the issues to her. She notes her concerns and expresses the hope that '*if you do judge me for it, it won't be too harshly'.* Her commentary underscores her worries about being judged, adding to the notion of fear. Her words '*bloody honest*' appeared in the coding, along with extracts from my journals which highlighted my concerns and how 'risky' it felt when I told others about my research. In the transcript from November 2009, we were discussing the issues that might arise from disclosing our concerns to other people, and Jane's response

(cf. Box 7.8) highlights how she felt about discussing this subject with her peers. That we both felt unable to share our experiences is significant for the research, although it is difficult to ascertain whether our difficulty was because of fear of being judged negatively by our peers, or fear of upsetting the 'status quo'. This links back to the mention of the 'status quo' by practitioners and organisations as a whole (cf. Box 7.6).

It appears from the data that Jane was opening up an aspect of herself that she had kept hidden from others. What Jane was allowing us to see/hear was the set of assumptions that guided her thoughts and actions (Thompson, 2012). For Jane, despite her having to deal with difficult and somewhat memorable experiences and gaining new information, there was little evidence of any changes in the categories she holds or in her world views.

In October 2009 I reflected on a previous interview with Jane. I noted Jane's reference to being conscious of who she could speak to (cf. Box. 7.9). Jane only revealed her experience to me after I had told her about my experience and research; this appeared to enable her to feel able to disclose or 'confess' about her own experience. On reviewing additional nodes, 'fear' was emerging in a number of forms. In Box 7.5 Jane noted the feeling of shock, which can be linked to fear or fright, and therefore I reviewed the data and ran a search in NVivo looking for specific words, 'risk', 'fear', 'consciousness' and associated words. The associated words appeared over seventeen times in a number of different nodes. The data highlighted comments by Jane such as '*I think you get fearful don't you, and fear comes in*'. On reviewing my annotations I noted the discussions of fear and its place in maintaining the status quo, and how Jane referred to people sitting on this type of experience and not sharing it with the group. I also noted above how we felt a fear of being honest. Here the fear could be about what we might discover about ourselves. These aspects of fear are of concern, indicating a need to consider the role of fear in maintaining

taken-for-granted assumptions, and to better understand what people are fearful of, be it their own thoughts, telling others, or fear of being judged. These aspects of fear could all impact on the ability to challenge assumptions, therefore reinforcing taken-for-granted attitudes of individuals and institutions alike.

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of fear:

- The analysis concluded that fear inhibited full reflection: the fear manifested itself in varying ways: fear of being honest to self, shock and or discomfort experienced due to being more critical; the difficultly in accepting negative aspects of self; fear of being judged; and fear of upsetting the status quo. The analysis therefore concludes that whilst fear inhibits full reflection, fear could also result in any new knowledge being hidden within the self.

As outlined in the introduction of this chapter, the next section will draw the conclusions from the analysis into a number of initial emergent themes, discussing their significance at this stage and how the initial themes will feature in the following cycle of the research.

7.6 : Overview of initial findings: Emergent themes and the 'I Poem'

This section pulls together the formulated meanings and the conclusions drawn from all of the analyses detailed in *Section* 7:5 above. The three overarching emergent themes that emerged from the data - Reflection, Taken-for-granted assumptions and Fear - are incorporated into an overall discussion of the results in relation to the topic of 'taken-for-grantedness'. The question of how the themes will contribute to the second cycle of the research is also addressed.

This first cycle of the analysis reveals that it is difficult to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions and practices that may be deep rooted in our world views and one or

more of the ideologies that we hold. Both Jane and I had to some extent become aware of some of our own taken-for-granted assumptions. However, despite this realisation and new found awareness, Jane still appears to use assumptions and stereotypes within her practice; this was apparent from the data. The analysis concluded that this could be evidence of Jane's previously formed categorisation, which is often resistant to change and operates automatically (Allport, 1954; Banaji *et al,* 2001; Byars-Winston, 2003). This further raises the question of how we can influence this level where our filters are ingrained and our responses to difference are so automatic that they block any potential influences to the good.

The analysis also suggests that the participants engaged in different types and interpretations of reflection. If this analysis is substantiated, this raises questions concerning issues such as to whether, and how, reflection might improve practice and/or enable us to understand our own and our clients' world views. Differences in understanding may relate not only to practice, but might also relate to how reflection and reflective practice is referred to within training, and to standards and competency frameworks for guidance practitioners. If reflection is insufficiently deep, professionals will not identify and get beyond their own taken-for-granted attitudes. This will then inhibit reflection and have implications for practice. In addition, if practitioners are fearful of reflecting critically to such a level, acknowledging these attitudes and/or telling other practitioners or trainers for fear of being judged, this raises the question of whether and how they will ever understand their own world views.

The second cycle of the research therefore needed to explore further the different types and interpretations of reflection. It needed to ascertain what practitioners understood by reflection or reflective practice and how they used reflection to understand their own world views. This will lead to consideration of how best to assist practitioners to reflect on their own world views without fear of being judged and to see such reflection as a route to improving themselves and their practice. The

analysis also suggested that self reflection may not be sufficient alone to enable practitioners to gain self knowledge of their own ignorance or to unearth their assumptions. The part played by metacognition or thinking about thinking should also be considered, and also what else might assist practitioners to reach this higher level of thinking.

Both Jane and I experienced a critical incident and we knew that there was more at play than we were initially aware of. However, it took time, further study and engagement with others for our fuller understanding to emerge. This, too, suggests that reflection or 'self reflection' may be insufficient to develop the necessary higher level of understanding. Furthermore, it suggests the potential importance of other people, perhaps in the form of supervision or a mentor. Jane's data suggests she still has assumptions to unearth and it may be that this is where supervision could play a part. Initial research suggests that supervision is not common practice within the IAG sector and does not happen in most organisations. However, practitioners need to continually engage in self regulation (Byars-Winston, 2003) and work on their continuing professional development (CPD). There is also a need to develop structured activities in guidance and training which could contribute to assisting practitioners in the process of raising their level of consciousness with regard to taken-for-granted attitudes, beliefs and prejudices.

7.6.1   : Unexpected results - the 'I Poem'

To analyse this first cycle of the research, the voice-centred relational method was adopted to enable me, as the researcher, to work with the text and hear, in relation to Jane and myself, the 'distinct and multilayered voice by tuning in or listening to distinct aspects of a person's expression of her or his experience' (Gilligan *et al*, 2003, p. 159). Whilst the approach has a number of distinct steps, it was one of these - namely the creation of an 'I Poem' - that emerged as an especially powerful tool in

the present research. Whilst analysing the data, I recorded in my journal notes that the approach seemed to be able to cut across the text and unearth what was really being said by the practitioner. I started to consider if it would be possible to develop the 'I Poem' within a framework to use with other practitioners in order to aid their reflection. Interestingly, Jane also felt that the 'I Poem' had an impact. In our session in February 2010, I asked her to analyse my first reflective narrative, and during the creation of my 'I Poem' she said, *'Remind me to do this with some of my own writing'*; adding, '*This is very good. I like it*'. It is important to note here that Jane has had an impact on my own use of the 'I Poem', as my initial versions used much longer line lengths, whereas Jane's were far more succinct. The 'I Poems' above have been developed using this approach. Jane asked if I had analysed her narrative in the same way, which I had. However, rather than giving her my version of her 'I Poem', I asked her if she would like to listen to the 'I' for herself. As she did so she said, '*This is really awful*'. The 'I Poem' appeared to act as a trigger for Jane, as a window, opening up her old thoughts and/or experiences, which may have remained unanalyzed and unresolved. This led me to wonder whether it could help other practitioners to identify and hear their voice more clearly in their writing. Could this trigger be developed further to enable practitioners to gain new self-insight or to develop their own emerging critical insights into their practice? This was the question I sought to address in the second cycle of the research.

As a consequence, the following chapter, *Chapter 8: Data Results: Data set two*, presents the analysis and findings from Data set two. It includes a discussion of these findings in the light of the findings presented in the current chapter, in order to contextualise and inform the third and final research cycle.

8 : DATA RESULTS: DATA SET TWO

8.1 : Overview

The overall aim of the first research cycle was to understand how the co-researcher and I became aware of our own taken-for-granted differences, to ascertain if there were any 'hidden likenesses' in our narrative experiences, what our assumptions were, and how our awareness developed in our journeys. In order to do this the previous section presented significant statements from the data, formulated into a summary of meaning, and concluded with a number of initial emergent themes. The discussion of initial emergent themes formed the foundation for the further exploration of the phenomenon of taken-for-granted attitudes and prejudices in the second research cycle.

The structure of this chapter is as follows:

8:2: Introduction: Second Cycle – Data set two

8:3: Findings: Data set two: Part one

8:4: The Capture Sheet data - Data set two: Part two

8:5: Case Studies - Data set two: Part three

8:6: Overview of findings from Data set two: Parts one, two and three

8.2 : Introduction: Second Cycle – Data set two

The aim of the second research cycle was to extend the research with data from practitioners who were not as close to the research, or to me as the researcher, thereby broadening out the research and extending both the amount and range of the data. The starting point for this expansion was the analysis and discussion from the

first cycle, which concluded that it is difficult to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions and even more difficult to change our assumptions and stereotypes.

As the first cycle of the research highlighted different types and interpretations of reflection, one aim of the second cycle was to explore further what practitioners understood by the term reflection or reflective practice, and how they used reflection to understand their own world views. The analysis from the first cycle also suggested that 'self reflection' may be insufficient to develop the higher level of understanding needed in order to enable practitioners to gain self knowledge of their own ignorance or to unearth their assumptions. This issue will be explored further in the second cycle. The first research cycle provided evidence suggesting that the participants were categorizing or relying on stereotypical views and assumptions, and also that they lacked knowledge or awareness of their cultural naïveté. Therefore, this second cycle of research also aimed to gain data from additional practitioners to ascertain if there was further evidence of them using categorization, and also whether or not they were aware of their cultural naiveté. The analysis and the discussion of the previous cycle concluded that fear, in a variety of manifestations, inhibited full reflection. Whilst this was not addressed directly in the present data collection cycle, it was noted with a view to giving it further attention at a later date if possible.

The initial literature review and research suggested that supervision is not common practice within the IAG sector and does not happen in most organisations. Therefore, this second cycle of the research also aimed to ascertain what methods, tools and/or approaches practitioners used to assist their reflective practice, specifically with regard to gaining awareness of taken-for-granted assumptions.

Chapter 7 discussed the *'Unexpected results - the 'I Poem'*, (cf. *Chapter 7: Section: 7:6:1)* and the initial response to the 'I Poem'. This had prompted further questions about whether the 'I Poem' could contribute towards a tool aimed at promoting reflection. Specifically, it raised the question of whether the 'I Poem' could help practitioners to identify and hear their voice in their writing more clearly than they had done previously. This, in turn, led to the consideration of whether it was plausible that the 'I Poem' could be developed so as to enable practitioners to gain new self-insight or to develop their own emerging critical insights into their practice. With this in mind, an additional element of the second cycle was developed in order to gauge how the steps adapted from Gilligan *et al's* (2003) Listening Guide could assist practitioners with their own journey of discovery (cf. *Chapter 5: Methodology: Section: 5:3:6: Listening to the voices within).*

The data from this second research cycle is presented in three parts:

- In Part one (i.e. *Section 8:3)* the data are presented in a similar way to the significant statements from cycle one (cf. *Chapter 7).* However, since the total amount of data are less overwhelming than cycle one, the full data set are presented here. Each question and its responses feature as the significant statements within a box structure, with meaning drawn from the responses to produce a formulated meaning, which informs the interim discussions of findings. This is supplemented with additional data drawn from participants' comments, and further discussion relating specifically to the 'I Poem'.

- Part two (i.e. *Section 8:4)* presents the Capture Sheet data indicating how the steps and/or the 'I Poem' assisted the practitioners to think about their own assumptions and their practice, followed by an interim discussion of data results.

- Part three (i.e. *Section 8:5)* draws on the data from one key participant in order to explore the impact of the 'I Poem'. This is presented as a key case study.

The chapter concludes (i.e. *Section 8:6)* with a discussion of the findings from Parts one, two and three of data set two; what this means at this stage in the research, and how the findings help to inform the third and final cycle of the research.

8.3 : Findings: Data set two: Part one - National Careers Guidance Show (NCGS)

8.3.1 : Introduction

At the NCGS in March 2010 I delivered a workshop entitled 'Who Do You Think You Are?'. The data for Data set two: part one was gathered from participants who attended the seminar and returned capture sheets (c.f. *Chapter 6: Method: The research design and process*).

Data were collected from 31 participants. Twenty participants were female, two were male and nine gave no detail in relation to gender. Twenty two of the participants indicated that they held an IAG role, thirteen as careers advisers, and three as information officers and the remaining as heads of, directors or co-ordinators of a careers service. Nine of the participants chose to be anonymous providing no details about themselves.

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the next section will present the full data set. Each question and its responses will feature as the significant statements.

8.3.2 : Significant statements: Questions 1 – 5

1. *'What do we mean by reflection?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data

Box 8.1 contains the responses from the 20 participants who responded to the question 'What do we mean by reflection?'

Box 8.1: Responses to capture sheet questions **'What do we mean by 'reflection?'**

1. Deep thought and study or sharing with others
2. Looking back on past events to see how we can improve other events, become better practitioner, person
3. Taking a step back, being objective
4. Thinking about what happens in the past, different circumstances as e.g. life of others, religious and cultural backgrounds, thinking of other options (things that I could have done)
5. Thinking alone - time to think over the big issues, long view perspectives, prioritise needs, think about solutions (both personal, for the institution and the students and employers)
6. Looking back, possibly over an act, task and learning from it. What was good bad, enjoyable, what was the outcome, could it be improved? Etc
7. Self: understanding myself and to look deeper into myself. Client: To feedback to the client what you've listened to them say and enable the client to know you've understood them.
8. Analysing the everyday issues that we deal with (personal, social and cultural backgrounds)
9. The ability to think deeply over or about. Reflect over processes we sometimes take for granted
10. Thinking back about actions./beliefs
11. Time to go back over interview and think of consequence and obligations. What (was) said and done
12. Looking back on a situation, conversation; what went right/wrong; changes for next time; other peoples' perspective
13. Looking back on what you have done - what you did well what you could have done better
14. Consider your own practice in terms of what went well and what could be improved
15. Reflection is being able to look at past actions with a view to changing, understanding the present and future
16. Looking at how and why we work the way we do, trying to understand our working practice and how this affects practice
17. Considering our performance and the outcomes of it
18. In a work sense - to reflect upon the impact or outcome of what my delivery has achieved in a negative/positive way
19. Considering one's own world view, cultural, social & educational background and how this affects the IAG I provide
20. Analysing my own working practices, considering how my own experiences may influence my approach/experience

Through reviewing the data in Box 8.1, and spending time immersed in the data, it was observed that 11 of the 20 responses referred to thinking over, looking back, or stepping back to consider actions and improve practice. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what the participants are referring to, when the say they are 'looking back' or 'stepping back' or 'thinking over', although a number of the participants did say this action was to aid them in seeing what went right or wrong, with a view to changing their future practice. Nonetheless, despite references to events, actions, interviews, and conversations, it is not clear whether the reflection they refer to is assisting them to 'look back' or 'step back' specifically to examine a problem in practice, to examine aspects of the 'self', or whether they are just running the events of the day through their mind. It is also possible that the different types and interpretations of reflection could be an indication that the term itself has become diffuse and diluted in the sense that the term has lost its meaning and clarity.

Six out of the 20 participants to this question offered further elaboration, saying that their reflection involved a closer examination of self or personal, social or cultural perspectives. In the data from these six participants there was a strong sense that their thinking appeared to be at a deeper level. This indicates that they were trying to understand and think more about the role of self. Nine out of the 20 participants made reference to reflection which was task orientated, looking at performance and outcome. This could have been due to the participants delivering government funded projects, which are output driven.

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of question one:

- The analysis of question one provided further evidence that the participants had differencing interpretations of what is meant by reflection. Additionally, the analysis indicates that they also had differencing interpretations of how their reflective practice would improve their practice or help them understand their

own assumptions and world views. The analysis tentatively suggests that the term 'reflective practice' may have become diluted [see point above]. Furthermore, none of the participants mentioned using any particular structure or method to promote reflection.

2. *'What do we mean by reflexivity?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data

Box 8.2 reports the responses from the 17 participants who responded to this question.

Box 8.2: Responses to capture sheet question **'What do we mean by reflexivity?'**

7 participants gave responses indicating they were unsure or did not know:
1. ?
2. ?
3. ?
4. ?deeper, own personal social response
5. Not sure
6. Can't remember!
7. As in 'reflex' action? Reacting to something

10 participants provided explanations of reflexivity by adding the following comments:
1. Improve own understanding and understanding of others (intra and inter).
2. Looking at ourselves, Being aware of personal, social and cultural context, understanding how they impact on the way we interpret our world.
3. Taking time or stopping.
4. Not sure / Deeper thought; acting on ideas.
5. Reacting to the situation either negatively or positively (and) using it to make changes to the future adopting to situations.
6. Performing reflection.
7. Putting thoughts/ethics into practice - own personal responses to ethical issues.
8. Reflexive is reacting to past action, emotions and thoughts and changing re future looking at own personal, social cultural setting.
9. To look and consider how my own experience may impact on my work/delivery.
10. Looking at our assumptions that we take for granted.

Analysis of the data presented in Box 8.2 reveals that in fact only 12 of the 30 participants actually answered the question. Of the 17 who responded to the

question, four answered with a question mark, one of the four following this by adding '*deeper, own personal social response*'. Other participants said '*Not sure*', followed by '*deeper thought acting on ideas*' (Response 5), '*Can't remember*!' (Response 6) and one participant referred to '*reflex action*' (Response 7) rather than reflexivity. Seven of the 10 participants who did offer some sort of definition described reflexivity as involving looking at dimensions of self within the personal, social and/or cultural spheres to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. It can be concluded, therefore, that some of the participants demonstrated a degree of insight into reflexivity. However, the lack of responses, and the uncertainty in the participants' replies, strongly suggests a lack of understanding by participants of what reflexivity is and how it might assist them to unearth the taken-for-granted aspects of self and improve their practice.

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of question two:

- The analysis of question two indicates that there is a lack of awareness of what reflexivity means and how participants could use reflexivity to unearth their own assumptions and gain a better understanding of their world views.

3. *'Are you reflective?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data

Box 8.3 highlights the responses to question three: 'Are you reflective?'

Box 8.3: Responses to capture sheet question **'Are you reflective? If no, is there a reason why?' (N=31)**

Yes = 28 (19 whom provided additional commentary)
No = 2 (both of whom provided additional commentary)

Additional comments from those indicating 'yes':

10 participants who indicated '<u>Yes</u>' added the following comments:
1. I'm constantly working to improve skills and knowledge
2. I go over in my mind every meeting (and) main interaction and reflect on it and how I did at the end of every day
3. Yes, although this would probably be surface level
4. Yes, I am often thinking about issues. I do reflect in some depth - it often become very personal.
5. Yes, scored highly for this on learning styles. Sometimes - too much work - not enough time to eat, let alone reflect!
6. Do reflection, particularly through NVQ and in learning journal: also encourages staff to reflect on IAG practice through case conferencing and informal supervision. Sometimes surface level, but often explore deeper as in work w/a diverse range of clients w/a full range of different needs: I feel the best way for me to be able to help these clients is through reflection and learning so that I feel more confident and better equipped in my role.
7. Yes, as much as possible and if I feel it requires a period of reflection
8. I usually look/reflect upon my practice towards the different gender groups as well as those from different cultural backgrounds/ethnic groups
9. Often
10. I think it is generally surface level reflection as it is mainly to do with performing the tasks required in my job.

9 participants responded 'Yes', but qualified their answer to some degree by adding the following comments:
1. Yes, but not always. When I'm short of time or tired I don't always reflect as much as I should
2. In some ways yes and in others no
3. Sometimes - but tend to do something each year, with same core group
4. In some area's which are probably obvious issues?
5. To some extent
6. Sometimes, have grown more aware in 5 years of working with international students
7. Sometimes, but usually rarely
8. Sometimes - would like to go further (but currently studying QCG, including a unit on reflective practice still to study)
9. But time constraints inhibit this

Additional comments from those indicating 'no':

The 2 participants who indicated 'No' added the following comments:
1. Probably not, but do ask open questions.
2. No.   Brief periods of reflection, but no time to look into depth on issues or thoughts that might arise.

Thirty of the thirty one participants responded to this question. Twenty eight indicated 'yes' as their answer to the question, with 9 giving no further comment. The comments of the 19 who offered further comment are presented above. Ten gave supporting evidence indicating how they were reflective, saying, for example. '*I go over in my mind every meeting (and) main interaction and reflect on it and how I did at the end of every day',* whilst others, who still felt that they were reflective, acknowledged they did so '*often'* or '*largely'.* A number also indicated awareness that their reflection was 'surface level', for example, describing it as '*mainly to do with performing the tasks required in my job*'. Two indicated 'no' to the question but provided supporting comments which are also detailed above.

Overall twenty eight of the participants claimed they were reflective. Nine of the participant's comments referred to 'Sometimes' being reflective. Within box 8:3, there is reference to surface level reflection and reflecting on obvious issues. Also a direct reference to time' as one participant noted: '*Sometimes - too much work - not enough time to eat'.* The references to 'sometimes' are of interest. Within the responses there is some further explanation, with time being mentioned as an issue for some; whilst for others it is unclear why they only reflected on occasions. It may be that a greater number of the participants are affected by time limitations. However, it could also be that either the participants did not see the benefit of reflecting on their practice, or that they lacked a method or strategy for reflection, or alternatively that they feared what they might encounter.

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of question three:

- The analysis of question three demonstrates that whilst most of the participants felt they were reflective, a number were aware that their reflective practice was surface level. It appears that there are different 'levels of reflection' being practiced. The analysis also indicates that for a number of

participants work commitments, whether that be perceptions of pressure or actual pressure, impacted negatively on the time they had to reflect.

4. *'Do you have time to reflect?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data:

Twenty two participants responded to the fourth question 'Do you have time to reflect?'. Nine of these indicated 'yes' and one indicated 'no', but none of these 10 provided any further commentary. Box 8.4 presents the responses from the 12 participants who provided commentary to this question.

Box 8.4: Responses to capture sheet question: **'Do you have time to reflect? (yes) (no). If no, why not?'**

1. Luxury of being full time adviser in an independent school
2. I use my journey home on the tube (40 mins and twice a day) to think (and also to unwind from work)
3. I try and improve my work and adapt to different people and settings-but sometimes, if I've seen a young person who I felt was dissatisfied I'll try and see how I could have improved it
4. Yes and no: At work, not always-because of the environment constantly having to answer phones, attend to students, colleagues etc. Outside work, I do tend to reflect
5. Not as much as would wish: Do assess work at key points to decide whether to change something prob...not looking at core beliefs
6. Most of the time
7. Time is probably the biggest limiting factor-the time to do research about particular issues
8. Limited time to reflect
9. Not always, too many situations are reactionary rather than planned, decided actions
10. Not often, mostly reflect on the 'big' stuff e.g. the options process for year 9 teacher - so much to do
11. Indicated no: Time is too pressured and once you go onto next client than its too late to recap as the thoughts merge
12. Indicated no: Not always

Examination of Box 8.4 indicates that five of the 12 participants who added comments in response to this question indicated that taking time from work to reflect was difficult. From the 12 responses given, two themes were identified. Firstly, the

issue of 'time' was confirmed as a significant issue, with nearly half of those who responded referring to this in their response. The second theme, which came through in four of the responses, was 'reactive reflection' - the kind that you do when you realise something did not work well or in response to feedback from a client.

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of question four:

- From analysis of question four it was concluded that time limitations, mainly resulting from pressures in the workplace, reduced participants' ability and/or capability to reflect. Furthermore the analysis suggests that for those participants who did engage in reflective practice it was more likely to be reactive rather than proactive.

5. *'What do you use to aid this reflection?':* Meaning formulated from raw data:

Box 8.5 summarises the responses to question five, 'What do you use to aid this reflection?'. The right hand columns of the box indicate my analysis of these responses in relation to the themes that emerged from the data.

Box 8.5: Responses to capture sheet question: **'What do you use to aid this reflection?'**	**Dialogue With others**	**Journal Writing**	**Supervision**	**Other-inc training/ reading**
1. Memory, feelings, past situations, discussion with others	*			
2. Discussion and career theory reading as doing MA at UEL at moment	*			*
3. Talking to other colleagues, reading books about other cultures and religions, talk to friends, students and share experiences, compare information with others	*			
4. No specific tools - supportive discussion with colleagues	*			
5. Options of others, notes taken at the time (re-read)	*			*
6. Internet and colleagues, training and study	*			
7. Self evaluation forms, development plans, evaluation questionnaires from students, discussion with peers and with line manager	*			
8. Notes, lists, conversations	*			
9. Through discussion with colleagues about general principles. Through informal communication	*			
10. Discuss and case conference with colleagues	*			
11. Set time aside on regular basis - monthly, debriefing sessions where colleagues get together and discuss careers where would have improved - others can contribute to this	*			
12. I pay to see a supervisor once a month for an hour and I keep a reflective diary which I write in when I realise something is an issue	*	*	*	
13. To dig deeper I find that outside influences will 'prod' e.g. an article on the news that links with what I am reflecting on. Sometimes I will use counselling on guidance literature. Often I go to my supervisor to try to open up whether I am being realistic or limited.			*	*
14. Using a diary to record own observations and explore these. Discussing issues with colleagues	*	*		
15. To reflect more deeply I think you have to study/learn others' points of view (and) even unlearn your own				*
16. I listen to the 'thought for the day' every morning on Radio 4 Today programme. I went on a self confidence course which got me thinking about my own personal values, self belief etc				*

Responses to capture sheet question: **'What do you use to aid this reflection?'** (continued)	Dialogue With others	Journal Writing	Supervision	Other
17. Writing, yoga, motivation		*		*
18. When something comes up, I simply think about things I do not have an aid to help in reflecting				
19. Notes, lists conversations				
20. As above. Reflection can also follow from recording and following up on interactions	*			
21. Writing journal		*		
22. Writing journal, reading papers, articles, news to promote reflection		*		
23. Developing training needs and personal development plans based in reflection				
24. Feedback forms from 1-1 and group work, questioning at end of interview 'Was that useful? How / in what way?'	*			
25. Try to think of individual and respect their choices whether their own or not				
26. I sometimes use materials gathered during training to aid reflection. I also reflect on my guidance interview, and I reflect generally on my own practice when I do my term planning				
27. I read and ? (illegible) and ask questions of my international student	*			*
28. Recently attended training on what it's like to study in ESOL - made me think about how I use language				*

Box 8.5 contains the responses of the 28 participants who answered this question. Sixteen referred to how speaking to colleagues aided their reflection, and a further two of the 28 made reference to supervision and counselling. The data shows that over half of the participants felt that dialogue and interaction with colleagues (whether team members, peers or managers, or supervisors) assisted their reflective practice. It is not clear why they felt this aided them, and it is also difficult to ascertain the extent of their dialogue, what the dialogue contained, and whether it was constrained or inhibited by any of the fears highlighted in Chapter 7. Just under half of the participants additionally noted that reading, listening to items on the radio and training had assisted their reflective practice. All of this suggests that the process of discussion and listening to the viewpoints of others and world views, is perceived by the participants as assisting their reflective practice. It indicates that reflection is being developed through a social collaborative learning space. There is no direct mention of 'self reflection', although this is implied by a number of participants. This raises the interesting question of whether participants recognise at a subconscious or unconscious level that self reflection is limited in what it can achieve.

I drew the following conclusions from the analysis of question five:

- The analysis of question five strongly suggests that dialogue and interaction with others; along with reading articles and journal writing, were all perceived as assisting reflective practice. The analysis tentatively concludes that the participants may implicitly recognise that 'self reflection' is not enough.

8.3.3 : Interim discussions of findings: Data set two - Part one

This section pulls together the formulated meanings and conclusions drawn from the analysis presented as findings in the previous sections. The data fell within one overarching emergent theme: Reflection. This is incorporated into an overall discussion of the results in relation to the topic of 'taken-for-grantedness', with the

discussion contributing to the overall conclusions for cycle two at the end of this chapter.

The analysis from part one of the second cycle provided further evidence that the participants held different ideas about what was meant by reflection and reflexivity. The different interpretations also affected how the participants thought their reflective practice would improve their practice or help them understand their own assumptions and world views. The analysis tentatively suggested that these findings could have further implications and could suggest that the term reflection, or reflective practice, has become diluted. When asked if they thought they were reflective, the analysis demonstrated that the majority of the participants felt they were reflective. Just under half of the participants referred to 'sometimes' being reflective; whilst this could be a true answer, it could also indicate the participant's reluctance to say 'No, I do not reflect'.

Whilst the overarching theme is 'reflection', within this there were a number of subsidiary themes, a key one being time. In participants' open-ended explanations of why they might not be reflective, time emerged as an issue that affected their capacity or ability to reflect. The importance of time was reinforced when participants were asked if they had time to reflect, with a lack of time emerging as a factor that hinders practitioners' capacity to reflect. It is perceived that time is needed to reflect, and that further time is needed to understand what emerges from the reflection and to transform reflection into practice. A second subsidiary theme was reactive reflection. Thus, some participants indicated that even if they did not engage in, or have time for, proactive reflection, reflective practice was used if they felt something was not right in their practice (cf. Box 8.3 & Box. 8.4).

When participants were asked what aided their reflection, the main finding was in relation to 'dialogue/interaction with others', specifically colleagues, peers, line managers and supervisors; with responses indicating that participant interaction

and/or dialogue assisted them to be reflective (c.f. Box 8.5). Once again, time emerges as important, as dialogue with others takes time. It is interesting that the participants identified dialogue as a method that assisted their reflection, since I would question whether the participants would feel confident enough in practice to raise issues, openly discuss aspects of their taken-for-granted assumptions and challenge colleagues.

Although the participants identified dialogue, reading, listening etc as assisting their reflective practice, there was no mention by any of the participants of the use of a particular structure or method to promote reflection.

The next stage of the analysis involved further examination of the additional comments that participants made on their capture sheets. These comments were varied and wide ranging with some directly relating to the 'I Poem', the Steps, the acknowledgement of similar experiences, new awarenesses, the participant's thoughts about Jane's narrative and the usefulness of the seminar as a whole. The data captured are presented in Table 8.1. The columns on the right hand side of each box refer to the themes identified from the data and indicate which responses relate to them.

Table 8.1: **Additional comments drawn from participants capture sheets**	I Poem	Steps	Similar experience	Awareness	usefulness
1. It is v. Clear that prejudices, assumptions and personal first impressions form a large basis of how we talk to and advise others				*	*
2. Very thought provoking and I feel embarrassed			*	*	*
3. Don't think the same as I work with a large number of Asian women and also have lots of Pakistani friends (due to the area where I live and work). Jane is only focused on limits that she believes (assumes) to be there					
4. I can empathise with the adviser, I've felt these feelings before and tried to deal with them			*	*	
5. Very interesting results of 'I poem	*				*
6. I liked the 'I poem' - made me think	*				
7. Changed half way through with language..I reflected....	*				
8. They certainly make you aware of listening the 'I'	*				
9. Lack of understanding of her culture..insufficient guidance to determine her strengths, skills interests'					
10. Jane is making assumptions about her client. She clearly has a very different values/cultural thoughts from her client and using her own 'world-view' when talking to her - it would be very useful for my course on practice.				*	*
11. Yes, already using this - have done a reflection on my own cultural heritage agree it is powerful - I will do some more.				*	*
12. I feel that it is easy to make assumptions about all people-I reflect on this after I have seen clients this then informs my practice for future encounters				*	
13. Her honesty and strengths of her language.					
14. The 'I poem' was really interesting to see how Jane's attitude becomes softer and more compassionate as her understanding of the client's background deepens - more of an awakening to her own behaviour.	*				
15. Thoughts on 'I poem', Good reflective exercise, Something I am aware of but this seminar had made me think that I need to spend more time on reflection and challenging my own	*			*	*

views/assumptions					
16. Very interactive presentation - engaged much! Will pinch the 'I poem' idea!	*				*
17. Very thought provoking and very helpful				*	*
18. Steps - Definitely helps to reflect. Never thought along these lines.		*		*	
19. This was brilliant! It has made me focus on how I can now review my activities with a severely disordered client. Thank u!				*	*
20. Very engaged with this - have worked with Korean boys as an adviser for three years					*
21. The task/outcome was a bit unclear and I left a bit confused					
22. Steps served to highlight the reflective process that the practitioner had gone through. The early stages of the 'I poem' exhibited certainly, I had, I knew etc. The latter stages showed the realisation that was taking place	*	*			
23. Reaction to the case study: Fascinated to see how she changes and challenged herself after 'I reflected' Powerful. I see links to my narrative work with my private adult clients here - how I try to pick up their metaphors and can I do more now? Thank you	*			*	*
24. I do try to ensure I don't make assumptions and upfront in asking students (43 nationalities, 1 British for their views, perspectives/ expectations. I try to understand Russian/ Asian cultures yours on economics and business and work with it to better guide students and raise their self/ opp awareness.					
25. An interesting, important topic				*	*
26. Perhaps reflection on our own context - discussion with neighbour?					
27. It would be very useful for my course/ own practice				*	*
28. I think following the steps could be useful, however I also feel that this is something I already think about in my role, particularly given the diversity amongst my client group		*			

8.3.4 : Discussion of additional data

Table 8.1 includes a number of specific comments in relation the use of the 'I Poem', with 7 participants directly indicating that they had found the 'I Poem' useful and an equal number suggesting that, by itself, the 'I Poem' had helped them to listen to the 'I'. A number of other statements also suggested that the steps (including the 'I Poem') may have helped them to unearth something they had not previously thought of before (cf. Table 8.1, Response 2); for example, one participant states: '*I can empathise with the adviser; I've felt these feelings before and tried to deal with them*' (Response 4). It is unclear precisely what this participant is referring to, but it could be that this reference indicates a lack of personal knowledge and/or awareness, of their absence of cultural naiveté. A small number of participants also stated that they empathise with Jane (cf. Response 4), or have had similar experiences (cf. Response 2), with the latter participant also commenting that they have '*tried to deal*' with their feelings. I am unclear exactly what they are referring to, but it is possible that the participant has struggled, as did Jane and I, to understand their feelings. It is also possible that this participant, and a number of the others, have chosen to keep this new personal knowledge hidden.

Also of interest to this research is the issue of whether the statements are an indication that the participants who have acknowledged similar experiences are providing further evidence that they too have categorised their clients. The statements above could also indicate that the steps and/or the 'I Poem' may have assisted participants to engage with an area of their taken-for-granted assumptions that had previously been hidden.

A number of the participants noted that they had reflected on similar issues before. Despite this, they still indicated that they gained a further awareness of self or assumptions. Furthermore, whilst the participants may have explored some of these aspects of self before, the seminar, the steps and/or the 'I Poem' enabled them to

examine themselves further. A number of the participants (cf. Table 8.1, Responses: 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, 22) made specific reference to the 'I Poem', how it had assisted them to hear their own voice, understand better who they were and what they were feeling. At this stage of the analysis it can, therefore, be concluded that there is further supporting evidence indicating that aspects of the seminar, and certainly the 'I Poem', had an impact on participants; just as it did when used by Jane and myself. Participants who attended the seminar noted how 'powerful' it was to reflect on their own and their clients' cultures, acknowledging that they felt the need to do more of this exploration of the self (cf. Response 11).

The next stage of analysis involved further examination of the data, from the ratings on the participants' capture sheets, in order to explore what the participants felt about how the steps (adapted from the Listening Guide) assisted them to question their own practice. Data captured are shown in Table 8.2.

8.4 : The Capture Sheet data - Data set two: Part two

The introduction of this chapter reiterated how the *Unexpected results - the 'I Poem'* (cf *Section: 7:6:1).* led to the inclusion of an additional goal for the second research cycle; namely to explore how a series of steps adapted from Gilligan *et al* (2003) had assisted IAG practitioners with their own journey of unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions. Specifically, the aim was to gain an insight into how the steps and/or the 'I Poem' had assisted the participants to think about their own assumptions and their practice. I sought to gauge whether the steps had assisted participants' reflection, and, if so, how these steps might be incorporated into a framework to aid reflection. Participants were asked to give feedback on their feelings and thoughts from going through the steps. They were given guidance on the ratings, being asked: 'On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 equals not at all and 5 equals very much, do you feel the steps ….'. This section was only completed by those who submitted capture sheets at the end of the seminar and, of the 31 capture sheets returned, 15 chose to

complete this section. To gain a sense of whether or not the steps had any impact on the participants, the scores have been collated in Table 8.2

Table 8.2: Ratings regarding role of the steps in analysing Jane's narrative

How did the steps: Not at all (1) - Very much (5)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Total
1. Help you question your own assumptions	0	2	2	7	4	15
2. Help you question your own practice	0	2	5	5	3	15
3. Help you think about things you had not thought about before	0	2	5	6	2	15

From Table 8.2 question one, it can be seen that all participants indicated that the steps had assisted them to question their assumptions, even if only slightly. Four scored this as a '5' (very much) and seven as a '4' (also a relatively high score). Two people indicated a medium score of '3' and two indicated '2' (suggesting only slight assistance). In question two, participants were asked to rate how they felt the steps had helped them to question their own practice. Three participants scored a '5', five scored a '4' and a fived scored a '3', strongly suggesting that the seminar and the steps had assisted in some level of questioning. Participants were also asked to rate the extent to which they had thought about these issues before. Table 8.2 shows that 13 of those who responded scored '3' or above and only two people scored a '2'.

8.4.1 : Discussion of the Capture Sheet data results - Data set two: Part two

The analysis of the data suggests that the steps did appear to help the participants question their own assumptions and practice. Further, it also indicates that they engaged with an area of their taken-for-granted assumptions which they had not questioned before, with 13 of the group scoring a three or above in the rating scheme. This suggests that the steps assisted the participants and were of use. It is also possible that other factors, such as Jane's narrative, contributed to the

participants' responses. Therefore, at this point I am unable to determine which specific aspect of the seminar actually assisted participants with their questioning. Certainly, as indicated earlier, the 'I Poem' was commented on by a number of participants, and this, along with the analysis from the scoring tool, does support the conclusion that the 'I Poem' and the steps facilitated this questioning in the participants. This evidence is not conclusive and therefore further analysis needs to be undertaken to determine if the 'I Poem' is effective in its own right, without the narrative, or whether the two need to be used in conjunction with each other.

The next stage of analysis involved further examination of the 'I Poem' in order to answer some of the questions posed above. In Chapter 7, I discussed the impact of the 'I Poem' on my research and reflections, and noted that the 'I Poem' appears to act as a trigger, or as a window, opening up old thoughts and/or experiences, which may have remained unresolved (cf. *Section 7:6:1: Unexpected results - the 'I Poem'*). For the next stage of the research I sought, therefore to explore this same issue by way of a case study beyond myself and my co-researcher, Jane. One of the research cycle 2 participants was identified on the basis of significant statements in the data suggesting that she had found the 'I Poem' insightful and might be willing to discuss this further. The participant, fictionally named Becky, agreed to participate, and this resulted in me undertaking a conversational interview with her, and the writing of a case study (cf. *Chapter 6: Method: The research design and the research process*).

8.5 : Case Studies - Data set two: Part three

8.5.1 : Case study one - Introduction to Becky

Becky is employed as a lecturer based in London. Her students are mainly international students. She lecturers across a number of subject areas including: business, humanities and the arts and recounts that fifteen percent of modules use reflective journaling. As another strand to her career, two years ago she set up her own charity, offering careers counselling and advice. She previously held a basic

qualification in counselling and has now added to this to become a professional counsellor. Becky is white British and lives and works in London.

8.5.2   : Summary and analysis

Becky's capture sheet said '*This was brilliant! It had made me focus on how I can now review my activities with a severely disordered client. Thank u!*' In June 2010 I emailed her asking some further questions and for feedback from the seminar. She responded positively, and commented how she had incorporated the 'I Poem' into her work with clients, saying: '*I can honestly say I more than recall your seminar and the 'I Poem'* ' and '*I have just used both with a new client only this week ... and am reflecting on that seminar*'. In our telephone interview in August 2010 Becky recalls her experience of reflective journal writing, which she has studied and undertaken for many years. She says when she attended the 'Who Do You Think You Are' seminar at the NCGS:

> '*I felt I was doing my reflective journaling wrong. You don't necessarily go back to re-read your journal unless you do post grad study and what I found in that situation, the institution uses some kind of formalised questions for the reflective practice that I found that quite frustrating...you're using someone else's cultural perspective. Whereas (with) the 'I Poem' - here, what I felt at the conference, was "Ooh my god you're personalising this for yourself"…. From the moment you identify the 'I Poem' it is yours. You're actually taking responsibility for where you actually are*'.

She describes how, since the NCGS, she has been using the 'I Poem' in her own journal; she writes her reflection and then creates an 'I Poem' from this and revisits the extracted 'I Poem' to pick out aspects of her voice and taken-for-granted assumptions (cf. Box 8.6). She says '*I personally find it useful for myself*'. She goes on to reflect on how she has also used the 'I Poem' with a client she has been working with (the one referred to on her feedback from the NCGS) and says that, '*It*

has been transformational for this client - to see how it has transformed her', and how using the 'I Poem' has enabled the client to see through the words and identify emotions that were hidden previously in the mass of words in the journal. She recalls how the 'I Poem' assisted the client she was working with and says, '*She didn't realise her emotions, just thought it was words. When you do your journal it's disassociation, when you do the 'I Poem' it's association and ownership*'. Becky felt that journal writing caused a disassociation with the context of the text, but that the 'I Poem' created association and assisted her client take 'ownership' of what emerged. The vehicle for this was the 'I Poem'.

Box 8.6: 'I Poem' from Becky's interview, August 2010

I have used something similar a journaling course
I came across what you were doing
I do my journal
I stop and do an 'I Poem' of that particular one..
I feel if someone is someone is stuck in an attitude or in a culturally repressed
I am seeing the evidence that the ' I Poem' actually moves them one...
I am actually seeing the clients
I am working with getting a personal result and a change of mind set....

Later in the same transcript....

I felt I was doing my reflective journal wrong
I found in that situation
I found that quite frustrating...your using someone else's cultural perspective
I felt at the conferences oh my god your personalising this for yourself
I have to say
I lecture in psychology and a counsellor...
I am doing this with my clients and this works...
I personally am finding it very beneficial for my clients...
I personally find it useful for myself

The analysis shows how the 'I Poem' assisted the participant with a method and/or a process that could be adopted and adapted by herself and her client. This allowed

them to revisit their journals and to be more objective. Using the 'I Poem' also enabled the client to unearth taken-for-granted feelings, emotions and assumptions. The analysis suggests that in this case the 'I Poem' was the vehicle that enabled the client to take ownership of what was written. The 'I Poem' allowed the participant and her client to see through the mass of words and understand what was actually being said by the self, the 'I'. The analysis also suggests that the process of creating the 'I Poem' and then stopping and revisiting it in its entirety further aided the individual with their reflective practice. The findings provide evidence that the 'I Poem' can act as a trigger or a window through which clients and practitioners are able to identify aspects of their thoughts, emotions, assumptions and, ultimately, their hidden self. The analysis from this second cycle supports the initial analysis, adding weight to the conclusion that the 'I Poem' could potentially be an approach of assistance to practitioners in practice.

As outlined in the introduction of this chapter, the next section will draw together the findings from the second cycle data set two, parts one, two and three. The section will then discuss the findings, incorporating the findings from the first cycle data set one.

8.6 : Overview of the findings from data set two: Parts one, two and three

The preceding sections of this chapter have been presented in three parts. Part one presented the data (mainly responses to a number of key questions), with the conclusions being discussed as interim findings. This was supplemented with additional data from participants' comments and a further discussion relating specifically to the 'I Poem'. Part two of data set two utilised a scoring tool to measure how the steps assisted participants to think about their own assumptions and their practice (cf.Table 8.2). This was followed by an interim discussion of data results.

Part three drew on data from one key participant to explore the impact of the 'I Poem'. This resulted in the presentation of a key case study. The following section will now draw together all three parts of the findings from the second cycle of the research and data set two. This will form the basis for the third and final cycle of the research.

The analysis of this second cycle of research reveals different types and interpretations of reflection, reflexivity and reflective practice. It is further concluded that this cycle of the research confirmed that there appears to be a dilution of the term reflective practice. The analysis also revealed that practitioners did not mention the use of any specific model or framework to aid their reflection. Furthermore the reflection that the participants referred to tended to be task orientated and to a lesser extend focused on the self. In addition, participants had limited knowledge of what reflexivity meant and if or how it might assist them in unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions. In cycle two most of the participants felt, as did Jane and I did in cycle one, that they were reflective. However, in this cycle, some acknowledged that their reflection was at a surface level. Part one of this cycle also concluded that time limitations impacted on the capacity and/or ability to reflect, resulting in reflective practice being reactive rather than proactive. The findings from the first cycle of research led to the conclusion that reflection on assumptions and world views requires time. The findings from this second cycle also conclude the issue of time was important for a number of reasons. Time was not only needed to reflect and discuss assumptions with colleagues, but, in addition, it was also needed to understand and develop the new aspects of personal knowledge into professional practice.

The findings from part one of the second research cycle concluded that participants identified dialogue and interaction with others as important factors. In the first cycle the findings suggested that self reflection may be insufficient to enable practitioners

to gain self knowledge of their own ignorance, or to unearth their assumptions. From this finding I hypothesised that at a subconscious or unconscious level the participants might recognise the limits of self reflection.

As discussed previously, the first research cycle identified the 'I Poem' as a powerful tool, and an approach that could assist practitioners when returning to their reflective journals by clearing through the mass of text and helping them to identify the 'I' of their own individual voice. The findings indicated that the 'I Poem' appeared to act as a trigger or a window, with the additional Data set two: Part one data confirming that the 'I Poem' can have an impact on practitioners. Furthermore, the findings suggest that it enabled some participants to engage with an area of their taken-for-granted assumptions that had previously been hidden.

It is apparent that the 'I Poem' could be a means by which clients and practitioners might identify aspects of their thoughts, emotions, assumptions and possibly their hidden self. The analysis from this second cycle supports the initial analysis, and adds weight to the conclusion, that the 'I Poem' might be an approach that could assist practitioners in practice.

Data set two: Part three utilised Becky's case study to examine how the 'I Poem' and/or the steps assisted an individual participant. The analysis supported the hypothesis that the 'I Poem' can be used to aid reflection. The findings concluded that the 'I Poem' provided the practitioner with a method or process that could be adopted in practice. The analysis also revealed that creating an individual 'I Poem', and then stopping and going back through it, further assisted reflection. Furthermore, it demonstrated that the process of using the 'I Poem' can instigate, or act as the trigger, for a change in thinking. The findings indicate that the 'I Poem' can provide an approach that both practitioners and clients can use to review their journals. The initial findings indicate that this approach may enable the user to be more objective and use the 'I Poem' to highlight previously unearthed taken-for-granted feelings,

emotions and assumptions. This raises the question of whether the approach could give the user a focus to build on in order to enhance their knowledge, and possibly, at a later, point to reflect and use this new knowledge to engage in a higher level of reflection. The analysis suggests that the 'I Poem' could assist the user to take ownership of what is written, with the 'I Poem' allowing both practitioner and client to see through the mass of words revealing what was actually being said at a subconscious level by the 'I'. The third and final cycle of the research aimed to further explore these findings.

The analysis and findings from this final cycle of research are presented in the following chapter, *Chapter 9: Data Results: Data set three*. It includes a discussion of these findings in light of the findings presented in the current and the preceding chapters.

9 : DATA RESULTS: DATA SET THREE

9.1 : Overview

The overall aim of the second research cycle was to broaden the research by gathering data from practitioners who were less close to me, as the researcher. Data were collected from participants at the NCGS (National Careers Guidance Show) in March 2010 and are presented in three parts: Part one (cf. *Section 8:3)* included the full data set for each capture sheet question, the meaning of these, some conclusions, and an interim discussion of findings; this section was supported by additional data from participants' comments. Part two (cf. *Section 8:4)* reported and discussed the capture sheet data relating to participants' responses to Jane's narrative and assessment of the value of the steps and the 'I Poem'. Part three (cf. *Section 8:5)* focused on a key participant case study. The discussion from data set two: parts one, two and three, has formed the basis for this third and final stage of the empirical research.

The structure of the present chapter is as follows:

> 9:2:   Introduction: Third Cycle – data set three

> 9:3:   Findings: Data set three: Part one

> 9:4:   The capture sheet data - Data set three: Part two

> 9:5:   Case Studies - Data set three-Part three

> 9:6:   Overview of findings from Data set three: Parts one, two and three

9.2 : Introduction: Third Cycle - Data set three

The aim of the third and final cycle of the research was to seek a further group of practitioners in order to test out the results from the data analysis from research cycle two, and further evaluate the role and usefulness of the 'I Poem'. The starting point for this was the analysis and discussion from the second cycle of the research, from which the following findings emerged:

- **Reflection**: Many of the participants perceived themselves as reflective, although when asked to define 'reflection' they had differing interpretations of what this meant. It was suggested that this might have resulted from the erroneous assumption that the meaning of 'reflective practice' is self evident and shared, with consequent limited discussion of its meaning. In other words, the meaning of reflective practice may frequently be taken for granted by the profession. In the present research the participants' reflection was often task orientated and reactive rather than proactive. Reflection tended not to focus on the 'self', and some participants identified that their reflective practice was 'surface level'. Participants struggled to define reflexivity, or be aware how it might assist them in unearthing their taken-for-granted assumptions. Cycle one found that self reflection may be an insufficient means to gain self knowledge (cf. *Chapter 7: Section 7:6: Overview of initial findings: Emergent themes and the 'I Poem'*). The findings from cycle two - data set two suggested that the participants may implicitly recognise that 'self reflection' is insufficient. The findings from cycle two also revealed that the participants did not tend to use any specific model or framework to aid their reflection. However, the findings concluded that dialogue and interaction with others was perceived as assisting the process of reflective practice.

- **Time**: Research cycle two demonstrated that time limitations had an impact on the capacity and/or ability to reflect, leading to a justification for reactive

reflective practice. Furthermore, the lack of time impinged on, and reduced, the time to reflect, the time to discuss assumptions, the time to understand and make sense of new personal knowledge, and the time to convert personal knowledge into improving professional practice.

- **I Poem:** The analysis and discussion of data set two: part one further confirmed that 'I Poems' can have an impact on practitioners. The findings indicated that the 'I Poem' led some participants to engage with an area of their taken-for-granted assumptions that had previously been hidden. Data set two: part three, namely the case study of Becky, further supported the hypothesis that the 'I Poem' could be employed to aid reflection. The findings from the additional data and the case study concluded that the 'I Poem' could be used when returning to reflective journals, helping to clear the mass of text, enabling the user to identify the 'I' of their own individual voice, and thereby giving the practitioner a method or a process that could be adopted in practice. Using the 'I Poem' can instigate or act as a trigger for a change in thinking**.**

The aim of the final cycle of the research was to test out the findings and conclusions outlined above. Data were collected from a further group of practitioners attending the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) conference in October 2010, and are presented in this chapter. It is the most substantial of the three chapters on the research findings because the amount of data collected was significantly greater than for data sets one and two.

The data are presented in three parts:

- In Part one data are presented in a similar way to the significant statements from data sets one and two. The full data set is presented, with each question and its responses featuring within a box structure. The meaning drawn from

the responses is presented as formulated meanings which are then drawn into a conclusion or conclusions. At key points throughout this section conclusions and interim discussions of findings are presented.

- Part two presents two sets of the capture sheet data: firstly, data indicating how the steps and/or 'I Poem' assisted the practitioners to think about their own assumptions and their practice; and, secondly, how the 'I Poem' in its own right assisted the practitioners to think about their own assumptions and their practice. This is followed by an interim discussion of the quantitative data results.

- Part three draws on case study data from two key participants in order to specifically explore the impact of the 'I Poem'.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings from data set three: parts one, two and three. This cumulative discussion forms the basis for the conclusions of the research that are discussed in chapter 10.

9.3 : Findings: Data set three: Part one – NAEGA

9.3.1   : Introduction

I delivered a seminar entitled 'Who Do You Think You Are?' at the NAEGA conference in October 2010. The data for data set three: part one was gathered from participants who attended the seminar and returned capture sheets (cf. *Chapter 6: Method: The research design and process*).

Data were collected from 24 participants. Twenty one were females; the remaining three gave no detail in relation to their gender. Nineteen of the participants indicated that they worked in an IAG sector, 8 of these were careers/education advisers, 4 were careers team leaders, 3 were careers consultants or counsellors and the remaining 9 were either IAG NVQ assessors, trainers and/or supervisors.

As outlined in the introduction of this chapter, the next section presents the full data set. Each question and its responses feature as the significant statements.

9.3.2   : Significant statements: Questions 1 – 5

1. *'Are you reflective?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data

Box 9.1 contains the responses from 24 of the participants who responded to the question 'Are you reflective?'

Box 9.1: Responses to capture sheet question: '**Are you reflective? If no, is there a reason why?**' (N = 24)

Yes = 21 (4 of whom provided additional commentary)
No = 3 (all of whom provided additional commentary)

Additional comments from those indicating 'yes':
1: Taking NVQ L4 and have adopted reflective practice using the 'Gibbs' model to ensure best practice.
2: Checking with myself constantly if I have provided the appropriate advice and guidance.
3: Yes, but not as much as I could/ should be, because of pressures of time/need to spend time doing practical research/ advocacy for clients
4: Try to be, but not always have time to think about it

Additional comments from those indicating 'no':
1: No, no time. Please don't tell me how to manage my time better
2: Not really. I tend to move on rather than reflecting over the past
3: No - but I can when I have to e.g. on NVQ course, teacher qualification

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On reviewing the data Box 9.1, it was noted that 17 of those who responded said 'Yes' they were reflective, but added no further comment. Four said 'Yes', and added further comment: one noted a model they used to assist their practice, and another stated that they constantly check themselves, but gave no indication of what supports them to do this. A further two, whilst they indicated that 'yes' they were reflective, admitted that whilst they try to reflect, time was an issue for them. Three participants indicated that they were not reflective, and all offered comments as to why this was the case. One cites time as the reason for not reflecting (as did a further 2 who also

answered 'Yes'). Another said they would rather move on than reflect on past events, and although the third said, 'No', they also said they could if they needed to. In total, 21 of the 24 participants indicated that they felt they were reflective. However, it is difficult to determine what they were claiming by this as they did not add additional comments and the previous findings revealed that practitioners employed different types and interpretations of reflection.

Three of the seven participants who added comments acknowledged that time (or lack of it) was an issue. This reiterates the findings from the second research cycle which concluded that time was a factor for a number of reasons. Two participants (cf. Box 9.1) openly acknowledged they did not feel they needed to reflect on their practice. Why they felt this to be the case is unclear, although as one mentioned time, this could suggest that time limitations were partly the reason.

I drew the following conclusions from analysis of question one:

- The analysis of question one provides further evidence that, when asked, most participants indicated that they were reflective. However given the findings from cycle two, and the different types and interpretations of reflection and reflective practice, whilst participants may claim to be reflective there is little evidence to indicate how effective this reflection is in improving their practice.

- As with the findings from cycle two of the research, there is evidence that a lack of time restricts the amount of reflection the participants undertook.

2. *'How do you reflect on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data

Box 9.2 contains the responses from the 23 (out of 24) participants who answered this question. The right hand columns of the box indicate my analysis of these responses in relation to the themes that emerged from the data.

Box 9.2 Responses to capture sheet question: '**How do you reflect on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?'** (N = 23)

	Dialogue With others	Journal Writing or pro forma	Supervision	Self
1: Challenge myself - acknowledge and identify own prejudices and beliefs				*
2: Put myself in the learner situation, follow up at next session.				*
3: Putting myself in the other person's shoes! Asking myself if my views or feelings have changed since my 20', 30's etc – am I more tolerant?				*
4: Quaker				
5: This is an ongoing process. As a trainer who encourages learners to reflect on their own values and beliefs I am constantly reviewing my own values.				*
6: Occasionally write a reflective note after seeing a client also discussing with colleagues-not so much my values and beliefs and assumptions	*	*		
7: I look at positive outcomes of things I do				
8: Think about experience read and think and conversation, talk to others, share ideas	*			
9: Client feedback	*			
10: Talking with colleagues	*			
11: Supervision, CPD group, peer supervision	*		*	
12: Thinking/ discussing work carried out with clients during supervision	*	*	*	
13: By thinking about situations, things, documents, ideas, problems and making relationships between ideas, innovating, creating solutions				*
14: Use Performa regularly - jot down, discuss with colleagues - occasionally think through guidance interactions	*	*		
15: Through experiences. These are times your held values are improved by personal circumstance				*
16: I tend to reflect on my responses compared with others responses. I try to understand why people behave in a certain way.	*			*
17: Think through of felt could have done something better				*

18: Complete interview form with questions about how the interview went - well / poorly what would I do differently. Discussion with colleagues to similar effect	*	*		
19: On my own – Thinking of thro' discussions with others	*			*
20: Review practice, actual interventions, over periods of time. Think about what I appear to be to clients? Learn and modify				*
21: By discussing them with others, by considering on my own (e.g. after encounter with particular individuals)	*			*
22: When discussing others (assessors etc), discussion with colleagues following interviews	*			
23: Talk with colleagues, friend and family-reflect after TV, radio, reading etc-reflect after client, observation, and supervision	*		*	*

On reviewing the data from this question, four recurring themes were identified, and Box 9.2 indicates the themes referred to by each participant. Thirteen of the 24 participants noted that discussion and/or dialogue with others (colleagues, peers and supervisors) assisted them to reflect on their values and beliefs. Four of the participants mentioned that writing things down helped them to reflect on their values and beliefs, using either a journal or a type of pro forma. Twelve of the 24 referred to 'self' reflecting on their own with a view to challenging themselves. Response number 3 provided some insight into how he or she did this, saying it was by *'Putting myself in the other person's shoes!'*. Whilst this is an interesting comment, it is unclear how they actually did this, what thought process they went through, or how they understood the 'other person's' shoes or world view. Response number 21 indicated that they reflected on their values and beliefs '*By discussing them with others, by considering on my own (e.g. after encounter with particular individuals)*'. This statement, along with a number of others (cf. Box 9.2, Responses 6, 8, 12, 13, 17 and 18), further indicates that the participants mainly reflected on aspects of their values and beliefs after an encounter with a client, indicating that their reflective practice was reactive rather than proactive.

I drew the following conclusion from analysis of question two:

- The analysis of question two adds weight to the conclusions from Research Findings cycle two: data set two, part one, that participants perceive dialogue and interaction with others as assisting reflective practice. However, although the Research Findings cycle two: data set two, part one analysis tentatively concluded that 'self reflection' was not enough, it is evident that participants relied on this approach to reflect on their values and beliefs.

3. *'Do you write your reflections down, in either a log, journal or similar?'*:

Meaning formulated from raw data

Box 9.3 presents the responses from the 23 (out of 24) participants who responded to

this question.

Box 9.3. Responses to capture sheet question: **'Do you write your reflections down, in either a log, journal or similar?'** (N = 23)

Yes = 16 (of whom 14 provided additional commentary)
No = 7 (of whom 4 provided additional commentary)

Additional comments from those indicating 'yes':
  1. Use a learner log/diary
  2. Make a note on learner action plan - if some area are unclear/need more explaining
  3. In my job role - via specific case study and through case supervision
  4. Yes, sometimes, actually, fairly regularly using diary and journal, workshops
  5. I tend to use the REFLECT system
  6. Yes: Sometimes, [using] quotes (inspirational), reports for branch/regional committees
  7. Yes, via NVQ 4 reflective account
  8. Supervision notes and my training course (organisation consulting and physiology)
  9. Yes for my research diary. Not for everyday - capture through introducing practice, sharing with colleagues
  10. Yes, but only on twice monthly basis
  11. Usually when something significant has occurred but do not keep it up
  12. Yes - see above (cf. Box 9.2, response 18)
  13. Writing thinking sharing no actual log of all
  14. Yes but don't understand how to deal with fully

Additional comments from those indicating 'no':
  1. No - thoughts when have time to think
  2. No: Verbally, supervision with family
  3. No – tend to just think things through if time
  4. No: Perhaps I should record them!

The data presented in Box 9.3 shows that 17 of the 24 participants indicated that they

did write their reflections down in a journal, a diary, or by way of interview notes after

an appointment. However, in question 2 (cf. Box 9.2), where practitioners were asked

'How do you reflect on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?',

only four of those who responded indicated that they used a journal to reflect on their values and beliefs. This is interesting in that whilst the participants did not identify journal writing as a way to aid reflecting on their values and beliefs, the responses in Box 9.3 indicated that over half of them did write down their reflections. This appears to indicate that the participants did not identify the process of journal or reflective writing as a means to assist their reflective practice. Of interest to the research is why this was the case. Why, if they did not associate this process with aiding their reflection, did they write down their reflections? It could be that, whilst they saw the action or process of journal writing as good practice, this did not mean they necessarily realised how this could then assist them to unearth aspects of their taken-for-granted assumptions. In saying this, however, it should also be remembered that 3 of these 16 did note that they used their reflective journals, in conjunction with a supervisory meeting, to further aid their reflection. Seven participants said they did not write down their reflections, 4 provided further comments, 2 of which implied that a lack of time was at least part of the reason for not writing reflections down.

I drew the following conclusions from analysis of question three:

- The analysis of question three concludes that, whilst most participants claimed to write down their reflections, most of them appeared unaware of how their journal writing could assist them to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. The analysis concludes that whilst few participants engaged in supervision, those who did used their journal writing to aid further discussion of assumptions. The analysis concludes that participants did not perceive journal writing as a way to reflect on values and beliefs and thus ultimately improve their reflective practice.

4. *'Do you go back to these reflections and try and understand what emerges? If so how do you do this?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data

Box 9.4 contains the responses from the 21 participants who answered question 4.

Box 9.4 Responses to capture sheet question: **'Do you go back to these reflections and try and understand what emerges? If so how do you do this?'** (N = 21)

Yes = 17 (all 17 provided additional commentary)

No = 4 (none of whom offered additional commentary)

Additional comments from those indicating 'yes':
1: Re-visit and use it for CPD.
2: Would most likely see learner again for follow up session. Also scenario can be discussed and training needs addressed.
3: Yes. By assessing any negative practice or language and addressing same.
4: Yes, sometimes.
5: Very rarely.
6: Yes it is an inspirational quote. Yes it is customer/learner feedback for my CPD.
7: Yes, in supervision, therapy, notes from both.
8 ('No' was crossed out) Yes, but don't understand how to deal with fully.
9: Yes, but just through further contemplation.
10: Look back at proforma, perhaps at meeting with other careers colleagues.
11: Yes, read over them check where I was then, where I am now.
12: Not in a systematic way.
13: Not as often as I'd like, but do attempt to revisit when possible.
14: Yes, through discussion with others.
15: Sometimes yes - mostly. Do not have a formal structure to do this. Very much a personal thinking process.
16: Sporadically, but at least annually when update CPD.
17: I have a supervisor with whom I discuss my work and thoughts about once a month.

Twenty one of the 24 participants responded to this question. Seventeen of these indicated that they did to some extent return to their journal writings. Ten said yes, they did return to their journal writings, additionally acknowledging that they only did so some of the time (Responses 4 & 15), '*sporadically*' (Response 16), '*very rarely*' (Response 5) or '*not in a systematic way*' (Response 15). These comments indicate that many return to their journal writings intermittently and/or unsystematically. These comments are concerning, and add further weight to the conclusion that reflective practice is more often reactive rather than proactive. Two of the 17 also mentioned that they went through their reflections with the aid of a supervisor. Four said 'No'

they did not go back to their reflections and offered no further commentary. One of the participants originally said 'No' to the question and then changed their mind, saying, *'Yes but don't understand how to deal with fully'* (Response 8). Given the aims of this research, this comment is of interest, and further raises the question of how, in practice, practitioners 'deal' with what emerges during reflection, and whether this indicates a need for supervision in IAG.

I drew the following conclusions from analysis of question four:

- The analysis from question four concludes that a majority of practitioners claim to return to their reflections to understand what has emerged, although on the whole this is reactive rather than proactive. However, this appears to represent a contradiction as the responses to question 2 (*How do you reflect on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?)* indicated that participants did not name journal writing as a way to assist them in unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions.

- There is a tentative indication that practitioners may not know how to understand or deal with what emerges from reflection. This echoes what Jane and I experienced in the first cycle of the research (cf. *Chapter 7*).

5. *'What might hinder you reflecting on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?'*: Meaning formulated from raw data

All 24 participants answered this question and their responses are shown in Box 9.5. The columns on the right-hand side were used to track specific commentary in relation to 'Time', 'Confidence' and 'Support'.

Box 9.5 Responses to capture sheet question: **'What might hinder you reflecting on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?'**

	Time	Confidence	Support
1: Time….need to read more theory about methods of challenging own beliefs	*		*
2: Time restraints and training	*		*
3: Time to do so! Keeping up with challenging trends and more importantly - lack of practice, on a regular basis of providing IAG to people from different cultures	*		*
4: Social class background…importance of reflection, prejudices too…		*	
5: How I might personally feel		*	
6: Apart from time…lack of external prompts, encouragement or requirement for qualification etc. Prompt is usually a feeling of being unsatisfied by outcome, concern re client, emotional/ difficult interview	*	*	*
7: Self confidence (lack of it)		*	
8: Uneasy, scary, not sure I want to know what it says about me…time, energy - it is hard work	*	*	*
9: Time-lack of	*		
10; Time factors and a lack of supervision/ training	*		*
11: Inadequate space, I might make for myself professional space	*		
12: Time, supervision cannot always be regular knowing how to reflect	*	*	*
13: Working in isolation sometimes halts the process of reflection			*
14: Lack of time	*		
15: Issue too close to home which will require too drastic action		*	*
16: Tiredness, lack of organization	*		*
17: Time restrictions - moving onto next task without time to reflect, 'Head in sand' approach	*		
18: Workload-time constraints	*		
19: Time/space for reflection thinking	*		
20:Lack of motivation to do so		*	*
21: Time, perceived lack of! I value it but where does it lie in my other priorities? Employers recognize importance and providing support opportunity to start.	*		*
22: Not recording them			
23: Lack of system, time concerns about practice	*		*
24: Time, energy, too many issue at once, lack of awareness	*	*	*

Analysis of Box 9.5 shows that 17 of the 24 participants, either directly or indirectly, indicated that time or a perceived lack of time hindered their ability to reflect. Four did not actually specify time as the issue, but their comments imply time was a factor. Thus, one says '*Inadequate space, I might make for myself professional space*' (Response 11), another says '*Tiredness, lack of organization'* (Response 16), a third '*How I might personally feel*' (Response 5) and a final respondent said a '*Lack of motivation to do so'* (Response 20). Within the overall responses there were other indicators as to why practitioners may not reflect on their values and beliefs. These included, '*lack of confidence*' and '*motivation*' (Responses 7 & 20)*, '*the lack of system*' (Response 23), that the process may feel '*uneasy or scary'* (Response 8), or that it might raise an *'issue too close to home which will require too drastic action* (Response 15). These latter comments may indicate that the participants lacked personal knowledge, possibly affecting their confidence and motivation.

Although time emerges as an overarching issue, other factors can also hinder the practitioners' reflection and there appears to be a lack of support to enable practitioners to feel sufficiently confident to reflect on these issues, deal with what emerges, and develop their personal knowledge; whether that be via training, CPD or supervision.

I drew the following conclusions from analysis of question five:

- The analysis of question five strongly suggests that perceived time limitations and demands of work impact on a practitioner's capacity to reflect. Whilst this is the main finding from this question, it is also clear that other factors, for example lack of confidence, have also detracted from the participants' ability to reflect. The findings further indicate a perceived lack of support, confidence and motivation. It is possible that a contributory factor to these latter

responses could be limited personal knowledge, thereby affecting practitioners' ability to reflect and unearth their taken-for-granted assumptions.

9.3.3   : Interim discussions of findings: Data set three - Part one

This section utilises the formulated meanings and conclusions drawn from collective meanings which were presented as findings in the previous section. It discusses these findings, with the discussion contributing to the overall conclusions derived from cycle three presented at the end of the chapter.

The analysis from data set three: part one, provides further evidence that most of the participants felt themselves to be reflective. Whilst this might be the case, given the different types and interpretations of reflection and reflective practice, it is questionable how beneficial their reflection was to their practice. Yet again, the participants perceive dialogue and interaction with others as assisting reflective practice. The analysis from the first two cycles of the research supported the idea that 'self-reflection' is not enough. This therefore led to the tentative conclusion that 'self reflection' may not enough to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. On the whole the participants did write down their reflections, although often these were reactive reflections, and they also claimed to return to them in the course of their work. However, when asked how they unearthed taken-for-granted assumptions, participants did not identify their journal writing as a method to assist them towards this end. The findings noted this apparent contradiction and suggested that the participants might not recognise or understand how the content of their journals could be a means by which they could hear the 'I' and unearth aspects of themselves. The findings also led to the conclusion that a number of factors mitigated against the participants being reflective, writing their reflections down and/or returning to them. The practitioners appeared to lack support mechanisms that guided and supported them with the process of unearthing taken-for-granted aspects of the self. It could be that they also lacked the personal knowledge to work through these areas of their

practice. It is also evident that there is little supervision in IAG work. I conclude, therefore, that better provision is needed in terms of CPD, training and more support, specifically a supervisor in practice.

The analysis of data set three: part one also reinforced how time, both limitations of time and the demands of work, impacted negatively on practitioners' capacity and/or opportunity to reflect on their taken-for-granted assumptions. The impact of time appears to affect a number of areas of practitioners' practice, and I conclude that this must certainly be addressed if practitioners are to be encouraged to be more proactive towards their reflective practice.

9.3.4 : Significant statements: Unsolicited responses and Questions 6 – 8

The next stage of analysis involved the examination of participants' responses to the questions on the second page of the capture sheet. These questions asked about participants' responses to Jane's narrative, and invited assessment of and comment on, the steps, the 'I Poem', and the session as a whole.

Data captured are shown in Boxes 9.6 and 9.7. Box 9.6 presents participants' unsolicited responses to their experience of going through the four steps - Listen to the language, Listen for the plot, Listen for the 'I' and Listen for YOUR own personal responses making explicit any thoughts or feelings. Box 9.7 presents participants' invited responses to the question: 'What are your thoughts and feelings, did the steps help you think about a past experience, if so what was this, when was this?' In order to facilitate discussion of the responses, Boxes 9.6 and 9.7 are presented consecutively, with the relevant significant statements being drawn together for the purpose of the interim discussion.

The columns on the right hand side of each box refer to the themes identified from the data and indicate which responses relate to them.

Box 9.6: **Unsolicited responses to experiences of working through the steps**	Similar experience	Honesty	Awareness
1: Reinforcing stereotypes….this controlling			
2: As a trainer I was somewhat horrified that this person working in IAG had such assumptions			
3: 'Baby machine' made me realise I have a similar view of young teenage mums of whatever background - may understand what they may aspire to/ be capable of. I am not so direct and forceful in my description -but perhaps I do feel just as 'aghast'			*
4: Understanding but surprised that she thought she felt relieved that she wore 'white mantle' so she was easier to deal with when you see a client's name it gives an impression of their background.	*		
5: Oh dear - me too! That really works to highlight assumptions, taken-for-granted assumptions, I fell into some ?	*		
6: How easy to think like that - make pre assumptions, I do this sometimes, but no more as I have a friend who is Asian and then guides me and answers questions. I also have a disability so can use my own experience to ensure I am not that judgemental but mistakes can be made due to lack of knowledge.	*		*
7: The white mantle as she says would promote for me a feeling that it is easier to find empathy. I would take her desires more on face value and not question her values I feel - but might question her.			
8: I recalled a long conversation I recently had with a woman I have known slightly for some time, had pigeon holed her due to her age, appearance and where she lived. I had made assumptions about her views, not all these assumptions were correct. People are more complicated than they at times seem.	*		*
9: Dress more in keeping with her culture - adviser seems too worried about appearance of her client and is letting this get in way of helping client relationship. Adviser is being very honest about her own responses - word aghast very extreme response		*	
10: Easier to deal with someone with a western approach can sometimes be unease/fear of saying wrong things or not understanding culture. Assumptions. Can be guilty of making all sorts of assumptions			
11: Struck by: Jane's honesty - I might be quite similar with preconceived ideas, but would not admit as it is not PC	*	*	*

12: Expectations and being aghast - too judgemental. Aghast - v strong emotion. What is mantle of whiteness?			
13: I feel guilty that I too would react with similar horror to so many children so young. I would probably assume that. I could not really understand this women and her lifestyle. I did this session once before, Liz, and found this really helpful to do it again, picking up on more this time e.g. aghast even though an I was implied, not present	*	*	*

Box 9.7: Participants responses to the question: **'What are your thoughts and feelings, did the steps help you think about a past experience, if so what was this, when was this?'**			
	Assisted	**Similar experience**	**Honesty**
1: Yes it helped	*		
2: Yes, a previous IAG interview with a young female (c. 1 year ago) who was researching a career in Forensic science - some aspects of this career posed implications for her faith and culture.	*	*	
3: Lack of familiarity with other cultures leading to assumptions, bored of stereotyped views. The person is trapped within the culture and can't get out.			
4: It is a long time since I have been a practitioner, but when I work with others I can sometimes relate with their examples		*	
5: Thinking re different types of clients - I can see assumptions in work with a young Ukraine male client		*	
6: Stereotypical/blinkered, realising –reflective – empathic – sympathetic -thought provoking	*		
7: Brave to own up to such beliefs. Sympathy with her honesty, sadness for her that she might have thought that she had previously been doing a good job. Reassurance that we all have done it. Her struggle and turmoil was engaging and I wanted it to end positively		*	*
8: Currently I'm only scratching the surface when I reflect	*		
9: The language particularly. The adjectives highlighted some degree of projective identification which I work with a lot in supervision, i.e. the idea of the practitioner absorbing client feelings which are easier to access via emptive language such as used in the narrative approach			
10: Not that I recognise			
11: I did think of 1 student I saw about 3 months ago who is Pakistani and from a close family with young children. Encourages me to think about whether I had influenced our meeting by making assumptions –your narrative did seem a bit extreme	*	*	
12: Conveys a patronising attitude - e.g. perfect English, baby machine. Mindset and language can be instructive - she is making explicit her assumptions and use of language is honest			*
13: Need to explore – assumptions - try and look behind work things, progress of as individual			
14: No - need more time to think about this, recognising stereotypes is not the same as making judgements, or assuming these influence your profession practice			

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15: I worked as an adult guidance practitioner for career Scotland and was involved with giving careers advice to Asian women in a project called 'meridian'. This experience was helpful for meeting people from a different culture and helped me to understand some of the barriers there can be (cultural/family expectations etc)	*		
16: Didn't highlight a past experience			
17: Working with NVQ candidates from different Asian backgrounds I had to carefully monitor my assumptions about their knowledge, experience of life when asking then for underpinning knowledge.		*	

9.3.5   : Interim Discussion of Box 9.6 and Box 9.7

Box 9.6 presents responses from 13 of the 24 participants' to the question 'Listen for YOUR own personal responses, making explicit any thoughts or feelings'. Box 9.7 presents 17 of the 24 participants' responses to the questions 'What are your thoughts and feelings, did the steps help you think about a past experience, if so what was this, when was this?'. Within both of these boxes participants made direct reference to their own past experiences that were similar to Jane's and my own; therefore for the purpose of the discussion significant statements will be drawn from the two boxes.

Reviewing Box 9.6 revealed that six of the participants commented on similar past experiences with clients. Within these comments are references to the barriers the participants perceived, some of which relate to contradictions and/or conflicts between career, profession, faith, culture, and family.

In Box 9.6, four individuals highlight how the steps developed from Gilligan *et al's* (2003) *Listening Guide* had enabled them to realise that they too, had similar thoughts to Jane, by saying: '*"Baby Machine" made me realise I have a very similar view of young teenage mums...I am not so direct'* (Response 3)   and '*Oh dear - me too*' (Response 5) and '*I feel guilty that I too would react with similar horror to so many children*' (Response 13). Whilst these responses are to a question concerning the usefulness of the final step from the second page of the capture sheet, by capturing their thoughts and feelings participants may also share similar past experiences, highlighting that the steps did in fact assist them to think about a past experience and that they have had similar taken-for-granted thoughts. This does suggest that the process had assisted a number of the participants to unearth a past encounter with a client. In data set one of the research Jane and I spoke of our experiences and how they appeared to be retained, even if not resolved. It was the

process of revisiting these experiences, with our own new found knowledge that assisted us, as practitioners, to gain a better understanding of our own assumptions. Therefore, the analysis suggests that the resurfacing of these old experiences could be a starting point for making changes.

In Box 9.6 there are a number of references to 'honesty', as when one response says the '*adviser being very honest about her own responses*' (Response 9). Others make similar observations saying they are '*struck by Jane's honesty*', adding '*I might be quite similar with preconceived ideas, but would not admit as it is not PC*' (Response 11). These references to honesty also appear elsewhere in the data, and can be found in Box 9.7, where one participant describes Jane as being '*brave to own up to such belief's*' (Response 7). At the NAEGA conference this theme emerged in both seminars and through verbal comments. In the second seminar, a number of participants commented on Jane's narrative and how they noted her honesty, although one participant strongly challenged how any IAG practitioner could have such assumptions (cf. Box 9.6, Response 2). Whilst reflecting on the day, and reviewing my journal notes, I noted that at this conference, more so than at the previous NCGS conference, there was a strong emergence around of the sense of being honest. This is reflected in the data, and these references to honesty could be interpreted in a number of ways. Firstly, there is the participants' willingness to admit that they might not always be reflective, and/or that they might experience stereotypical responses to some clients. In data set one, Jane and I identified the fear of being honest not only with ourselves, but also with others. This is of interest to the research, and furthermore, raises the issue of what participants mean when they make reference to 'honesty'. It could be that it is a sign that the participants are opening up hidden parts of the self. Indeed, this theme subsequently emerged from the data gathered in data set three: part one of the research, and is discussed in more detail at the end of Data set three - Part three.

The next stage of analysis involved examination of participants' responses to the questions from the second page of the capture sheet: 'Do you think the 'I Poem' helped you?' and **'**Any further thoughts or feelings in relation to using the 'I Poem''. The data captured from these questions are shown in Box 9.8 and Box 9.9 respectively. The boxes are again presented immediately consecutively because of the relevant significant statements that the questions generated. These statements are then drawn together for the purpose of the interim discussion. The columns on the right hand side of each box again refer to the themes identified from the data and indicate which responses relate to them.

Box 9.8 Participants' responses to the question: **'Do you think the 'I Poem' helped you?'**	Yes	No	Maybe	New awareness	Useful for others
1. Perhaps - lots of negatives in her reflection. Useful to apply same method on own interview notes	*				
2. Made me realise the importance of understanding listening / taking time with clients.	*			*	
3. Re-affirmed 'good practice' that I possess and demonstrate through knowledge and awareness and a continuous need to keep this at the forefront of guidance practice.					
4. It was strengthening. It built 'I'..style, ...by (?unclear) time to be something revealing and memorable	*				
5. I think it would work well with my students!					*
6. Yes - to a certain extent. I was rather confused by the term poem to start with. List of verbs, and the choice of verbs used by narrative is valuable, but more so if linked to context.	*				
7. Made me think about my diverse workforce and some of the problems we encounter could be sympathetically but simply changed to benefit the client				*	
8. Yes - illuminating. Highlights the process which can be spontaneous. Fast or lengthy. That it works both ways - clients have assumptions about us that we also have to be alive to	*				*
9. When I reflect in future, I will question whether I have made assumptions which had influenced the discussion. I deliver telephone guidance so my assumptions tend to be based perhaps on the clients' name rather than what they wear.	*			*	
10. Yes, interesting way of focusing in on assumptions with narrative	*				
11. Not sure - made me read the narrative in a different way - created interest. Think if I had felt more confident re process i.e. was not sure if could leave some of the 'I's out of poem it could have helped more. Distilled the essence.			*		
12. Helped clarify the narrative for reflection. Narrative becomes more reflective as progresses - move from 'knew' to struggled	*				
13. I found the narrative very interesting and was pleased to read what appears to be an honest and open account of a practitioner's experience	*				
14. In terms of stages - don't always have luxury of long term engagement - how do we			*		

get over this. What can help us get behind our assumptions			*		
15. Could be helpful - when reviewing own practice e.g. listening to taped interviews. Raise awareness of my language			*		
16. Thinking about the verbs used gives a good 'snapshot' of the narrative	*				
17. Maybe			*		
18. It focuses on the adviser's own processing of the event. It has made me think that I don't use 'I' when writing my reflective diary as I'm writing in shorthand - it is only implied (as in aghast in Jane's poem). I will try looking for these a creating my own non 'I Poem'! I also wonder if there is a difference in my notes when I put 'I' and when I don't!	*				

Box 9.9 Participants' responses to the question: **'Any further thoughts or feelings in relation to using the 'I Poem'**	**Suggestion of use**	**Awareness assumptions**	**Awareness reflection**	**other**
1. I would like to use this again a tool to self reflect on language use i.e. positive/negative.	*			
2. Made me realise that some language we use can be extremely powerful. It reminded me to listen more and take time during my own guidance sessions.		*		
3. The need to embed this type of awareness' training as an ongoing process particularly if your role/organization is located in a region where multi-culture populations means this type of client is only seen on a few occasions each year etc. Practice makes for perfection and good practice.	*		*	
4. Fantastic how I'd missed the 'inner ??? (illegible)' taking place inside Jane head. The poem shows Jane first observation, the ??? (illegible) Her observation which then take her to attempting to understand her reasons before leading to further action.		*		
5. An interesting approach to reviewing reflective practice	*			
6. It has made me realize that reflection is not just about what went well and areas for development but something much deeper in terms of my fundamental make up. Thank you for this.			*	
7. The I Poem is a safe way of doing something similar to interpersonal process recall i.e. focusing on the critical moment in someone else's work	*			
8. In face to face interactions with clients I attempt to remove the I-myself and attempt (very strongly) to practice my craft by listening to the client and not the I in my head remove the I. Thank you for sharing Jane's narrative, it is informative and provides food for thought.		*		
9. Can provide analytical approach to reflection - highlight emotions and attitudes	*			
10. Don't like the term 'I Poem' - I would try to come up with something that suits me. Reading someone else's narrative - how much time/editing/reflecting she did in the process of this?				*
11. Helpful for getting a summary of the narrative not sure how much it helps me analyze my reflections (unless I was looking at my own narrative) - If I had written a narrative, I think the 'I Poem' could be very useful.	*			
12. A less wordy 'I Poem' may have been helpful and made it more powerful	*			

9.3.6   : Interim discussion of Box 9.8 and Box 9.9

Box 9.8 presents responses from the 18 of the 24 participants who gave answers to the question 'Do you think the 'I Poem' helped you?'. Box 9.9 presents the responses from the 12 who answered the question **'**Any further thoughts or feelings in relation to using the 'I Poem''. As both of these boxes are directly concerned with the 'I Poem', the following discussion will draw from both sets of data.

Box 9.8 shows that nine participants directly stated that the 'I Poem' had assisted them, with a further three implying that they felt it had helped them. In addition to saying 'yes', participants said that using the 'I Poem' was '*illuminating*' (Response 8), '*interesting*' (Response 10), a '*fast*' (Response 8) approach, and that the 'I Poem' helped them to pick out aspects of Jane's voice, giving them a '*snapshot*' (Response 16) of what was within the narrative. Six of the participants noted ways in which they might adopt the approach or how it might be useful in practice, saying, for example: *'Useful to apply same method on own interview (*Response 1), '*It works both ways'* (Response 8) - this is a reference to the fact that both clients and practitioners could hold assumptions and indicates that the 'I Poem' would be useful for both practitioner and client. Another participant said that the 'I Poem' could assist them to '*raise awareness of my language'* (Response 15). These responses confirm that the practitioners had started to think about how this approach might help them in practice.

Within their responses, three of the practitioners indicated that they had also realised that aspects of their practice needed reviewing. One said '*Made me realise the importance of understanding listening/taking time with clients'* (Box 9.8, Response 2). This response was not specifically about how the 'I Poem' helped them as an approach, but rather about how using the approach and attending the seminar had helped them to identify an area of their practice that needed further enquiry. Others

made a similar point, as when one said: '*Made me think about my diverse workforce and [how] some of the problems we encounter could be sympathetically, but simply, changed to benefit client'* (Box 9.8, Response 7). It is apparent that the seminar enabled some of the participants to see aspects of their practice that were previously hidden or missed. This suggests that the 'I Poem' could be the starting point for practitioners to gain an insight into their blind spots, taken-for-granted aspects of themselves, their practice, or that which is hidden.

Box 9.9 presents the responses to the question 'Any further thoughts or feelings in relation to using the 'I Poem''. A number of the participants indicated how they thought the approach might be used in practice. Suggestions included that they could use the '*tool to self reflect on language use i.e. positive/negative*' (Response 1), or how the approach '*can provide analytical approach to reflection - highlight emotions and attitude*s' (Response 9), and it was perceived that the '*"I Poem" is a safe way...*' of '*focusing on the critical moment*' (Response 7). The 'I Poem' and the narrative also helped the participants to think about their practice, as when one said '*...it is informative and provides food for thought'* (Response 8). Unfortunately, it is unclear exactly what is meant by 'food for thought', but it does suggest that the 'I Poem' and/or steps had assisted the participant to think more critically about her practice. A further participant, in her comments about using the 'I Poem', said how it had made her realise '*that reflection is not just about what went well and areas for development, but something much deeper in terms of my fundamental makeup'* (Response 6), i.e. her taken-for-granted world view. My analysis of the data led to the conclusion that the 'I Poem' does assist practitioners with their reflective practice and is capable of helping them to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. Finally, one participant commented on the need for this type of critical enquiry to be embedded in training as an ongoing process (cf. Box 9.9, Response 3).

9.4 : The capture sheet data - Data set three: Part two

In both the introduction to data set two and data set three I expressed the wish to gauge whether the steps and, more specifically, the 'I Poem', had assisted participants' reflection, and, if so, how these steps might be incorporated into a framework to aid reflection. The findings from data set two: parts one, two and three, whilst not conclusive, did indicate that the 'I Poem' and the steps facilitated participants' questioning of their practice and, thereby, some of their taken-for-granted assumptions. Furthermore the findings indicated that the 'I Poem' presented users with an approach that enabled them to unpick the reflective narrative and see through the mass of text.

Therefore, the aim of data set three was to undertake further research in order to determine whether the 'I Poem' can be effective in its own right. Participants were, firstly, asked to use a scoring tool to rate their perception of the steps along with Jane's narrative. Specifically, they were asked the extent to which the steps helped them to question their own assumptions and their practice, and whether the steps helped them to think about things they had not thought about before (that is, question their taken-for-granted world views). The scores from these ratings are shown in Table 9.1, and give a sense of whether or not the steps had any impact on the participants. Secondly, the participants were asked to rate their perception of the extent to which applying the 'I Poem' to Jane's narrative had assisted them to identify something they had previously missed, see through the mass of text and words (i.e. unpicking the narrative), help them to become detached from the emotion or feelings, and take ownership of what emerged. The scores for these ratings are shown in Table 9.2, and give a sense of whether or not the 'I Poem' had assisted the participants.

Table 9.1: Ratings regarding role of the steps in analysing Jane's narrative

How much did the steps (concerned with Jane's narrative): Not at all (1) – Very much (5)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	Total
1: Help you question your own assumptions	2	2	4	9	2	19
2: Help you question your own practice	4	2	5	7	2	20
3: Help you think about things you had not thought about before	1	6	8	5	0	20

Referring to Table 9.1 question 1, it can be seen that 17 of the 19 participants answering this question responded with a '2' or above, indicating that the steps assisted them to a greater or lesser degree to question their assumptions. The responses to question 2 show that 16 of the 20 participants responded with a '2' or above, indicating that the steps assisted them to question their own practice to at least some degree. In response to question three, which asked the participants to identify whether the steps had assisted them to identify previous unquestioned aspects of their practice, 19 of the 20 participants scored '2' or above, which strongly indicates that the steps in conjunction with Jane's narrative did assist the participants to unearth a taken-for-granted aspects of their practice.

Table 9.2 reports the responses of the 12 of the 24 participants. All 12 participants scored all of the five statements. These scores have been collated in Table 9.2 to give a sense of the ways and extent to which the 'I Poem' assisted the participants to revisit their reflective writing.

Table 9.2: Ratings regarding role of the 'I Poem'

How did the 'I Poem' (with Jane's narrative) help you to : Not at all (1) - Very much (5)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	total
1: Analyse your reflections	2	3	3	3	1	12
2: Identify something you had previously missed	1	3	4	3	1	12
3: See through the mass of text/words	1	2	2	5	2	12
4: Detach from the emotions or feelings	1	3	3	4	1	12
5: Take ownership of what has emerged	1	3	1	5	2	12

Table 9.2 presents the data collected from the participants about utilising the 'I Poem' with Jane's narrative. It is difficult to ascertain the full potential impact of the 'I Poem' as the participants did not use it in conjunction with their own reflective narrative. However, despite this, half of the practitioners (12 responses) completed this section of the capture sheet. Ten of these indicated that the 'I Poem' had assisted them to analyse their reflections (question 1); 11 that it had helped them to identify something they had previously missed (question 2); 11 that it had helped them to see through the mass of text/words (question 3); 11 that it had helped them to detach from the emotions or feelings (question 4); and11 that it had helped them to take ownership of what had emerged (question 5).

Although the numbers are small, these findings do indicate that the 'I Poem' assisted the practitioners, most notably in relation to helping them see through the mass of text and identifying aspects of the narrative previously missed. They also indicate that the 'I Poem' assisted them to detach from the emotions and take ownership of what emerged, although this data could be somewhat misleading as they were not questioning their own self or their own narrative.

9.4.1   **: Discussion of the capture sheet data results - Data set three - Part two**

The analysis of data set two - part two (cf. Table 9.1 & 9.2) suggested that the steps did appear to help the practitioners question their own assumptions and practice. It also suggested that the steps enabled some practitioners to think about areas of their taken-for-granted assumptions that they had not engaged with before. The data in Table 9.1, and the subsequent analysis, further supports the conclusions that the steps assisted practitioners to (1) question their own assumptions, (2) question their practice and (3) think about an area of practice that they had not engaged with before. The steps were used in conjunction with Jane's narrative, which was chosen because Jane writes explicitly about the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions. At the NAEGA conference there were a number of comments in relation to Jane's narrative. One participant, who was a trainer, objected to Jane's narrative and conveyed her horror (cf. Box 9.6, Response 2). However, elsewhere in the data there is evidence that other practitioners may have been empowered by Jane, her honesty and ability to open hidden aspects of herself to others (cf. Tables 8.1, 9.6, 9.7 and 9.8), which appeared to act like a confession (Etherington, 2004) giving the participants 'permission' to admit to their own taken-for-granted world views. This will be further discussed at the end of data set three.

Data set three - part two aimed to ascertain the impact of the 'I Poem' in its own right. The analysis indicated that many of the practitioners benefited from using the 'I Poem', despite it focusing on Jane's narrative rather than their own. The full potential impact of the 'I Poem' may have been underestimated since if the practitioners had been reflecting on their own 'I Poem', based on their own reflective narrative, then the impact may have been even greater. Whilst the analysis from data set three - part two is not conclusive, it is proposed that these findings, alongside those from the other data sets, support the overall conclusions. This will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

The next stage of analysis involved further examination of the impact of the 'I Poem' as a tool to aid reflective practice in order to supplement the inconclusive findings about the potential impact and use of the 'I Poem'. I sought to explore this issue by way of two case studies from this third research cycle. The participants, fictionally named Carol and Diane, indicated their interest in participating via the capture sheet. The case studies are drawn from data collected via the capture sheet, email exchanges and, for one participant, a conversational interview (cf. *Chapter 6: Method: The research design and the research process*).

9.5 : Case Studies - Data set three-Part three

9.5.1   : Case study two - Introduction to Carol

Carol is a self-employed careers consultant and an NVQ assessor. Her company was founded in 2000. She has a Post graduate diploma in Counselling, and further notes that she has a psycho-dynamic counselling qualification and career development skills (having been working in this field since 1999). She is well-established as an Information, Advice and Guidance provider. She works with Next Step and other educational and advice organisations to provide Open College Network training and tailored training for advice and guidance staff and clients. In addition to running career counselling sessions, Carol is an Open University Associate Lecturer on 'Open to Change' and a regular CV adviser, an Affiliate Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) and a Member of NAEGA (which specialises in Adult Guidance). Carol believes strongly in continuing professional development.

Carol attended both of the conference sessions that I presented and, therefore, completed two capture sheets. The first capture sheet was obtained via the NCGS conference in March 2010. Page one of this capture sheet is presented below in Box 9.10a. Carol did not complete the set questions on page two of the capture sheet, but

added comments as shown in Box 9.10b. Box 9 10.c reproduces the 'I Poem' that Carol created from Jane's narrative. With regard to the second capture sheet, derived from the NAEGA conference in October 2010, Boxes 9.11a and 9.11b present pages one and two of Carol's capture sheet from this conference. Further data was collected from Carol when she responded to an email invitation just after the conference.

Box 9.10a: Carol - Page one of first capture sheet (October 2010)

You can complete this section either whilst you're waiting for the session to start or when we come to it in the presentation.

What do we mean by 'reflection'?

(No definition given)

What do we mean by 'reflexive'?

(No definition given)

Are you reflective (yes) (no)
If no, is there a reason why?

Yes, I am often thinking[9] about issues. I do reflect in some depth - it often becomes very personal.

Do you have time to reflect (yes) (no)
If no, why not:

(No comment given)

What do you use to aid this reflection

I pay to see a supervisor once a month for an hour and I keep a reflective diary which I write in when I realise something is an issue. To dig deeper I find that outside influences will 'prod' e.g. an article on the news that links with what I am reflecting on. Sometimes I will use counselling or guidance literature. Often I go to my supervisor to try to open up whether I am being realistic or limited.

---

[9] Material underlined was subsequently incorporated into an 'I Poem' (cf. Box 9.11c)

Box 9.10b: Carol – comments on using the steps (October 2010)

Fascinated to see how she changed and challenged herself often 'I reflect' Powerful. I see links with my narrative work with my private adult clients here-how I try to pick up their metaphors and can I do more? Thank you.

Box 9.10c: 'I Poem' from Carol's capture sheet (October 2010)

> *I am often thinking*
> *I do reflect*
> *I pay to see a supervisor*
> *I keep a reflective diary*
> *I write in when I realise*
> *I find that*
> *I am reflecting*
> *I will use counselling or guidance literature*
> *I go to my supervisor*
> *I am being realistic or limited.*
> *I see links with my narrative work*
> *I try to pick up their metaphors*
> *can I do more now ?*

The data contained in Boxes 9.10a, 9.10b and 9.10c contributed to the analysis and findings presented in *Chapter 8: Research Findings Cycle 2*. This was the complete set of data for Carol until she attended the NAEGA conference in October 2010. Carol's data was chosen for a case study because she had attended the two seminars approximately six months apart and I wanted to explore whether there were any differences in her data. The following section presents the data captured via her attendance at the second seminar, with pages one and two of the capture sheet being displayed in Boxes 9.11a and 9.11b respectively.

Box 9.11a: Carol - Page one of second capture sheet (October 2010)

Are you reflective *Yes*

If no, is there a reason why?

(No comment)

How do you reflect on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?

Talk with colleagues, friends & family

Reflect after TV/radio/reading etc

Reflect after client/ observation/supervision

Do you write your reflections down, in either a log, journal or similar? *Yes*
If no how do you capture your reflections?
(No comment)

Do you go back to these reflections and try and understand what emerges? If so how do you do this?
I have a supervisor with whom I discuss my work & thoughts about once a month.

What might hinder you reflecting on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?
Time, energy, too many issues at once, lack of awareness.

Box 9.11b: Carol - Page two of second capture sheet (October 2010)

Step 1: Listen to the language (key words and phrases).

Step 2: Listen for the plot: Jane is white woman, who is a PA working in East Lancashire with Asian women. Her narrative tells of her developing relationship with a client.

Step 3: Listen for the 'I' in the narrative, (using Jane's narrative) underline any 'I' along with the verb and any other accompanying words to creating an 'I Poem' (write this on the back of these sheets).

Step 4: Listen for YOUR own personal responses, making explicit any thoughts or feelings.

I feel guilty that I too would react with similar horror to so many children so young. I would probably assume that. I could not really understand this women and her lifestyle. I did this session once before Liz and found this really helpful to do it again, picking up more this time e.g. 'aghast' even though an I was implied, not present'. (This section was crossed out)

To be completed after steps tasks:

In this section can you give some feedback on the your feelings and thought from going through the steps

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 equals not at all and 5 equals very much do you feel the steps:

How did the steps (with Jane's narrative):					
Helped question your own assumptions	1	2	3	4	(5)
Helped question your own practice	1	2	3	4	(5)
Helped you think about things you had not thought about before	1	2	3	(4)	5

What are your thoughts and feelings, did the steps help you think about a past experience, if so what was this, when was this?

Working with NVQ candidates from different Asian backgrounds I had to carefully monitor my assumptions about their knowledge, experience of life when asking them for underpinning knowledge.

Do you think the 'I Poem' helped you? *Yes*

If yes or maybe explain further: *It focuses on the adviser's own processing of the event. It has made me think that I don't use 'I' when writing my reflective diary as I'm writing in shorthand - it is only implied (as in aghast in Jane's poem). I will try looking for these and creating my own non 'I Poem! I also wonder if there is a difference in my notes when I put 'I' and when I don't!*

In Box 9.11b Carol discloses her guilt and horror of having similar feelings to Jane. This statement also indicated that Carol, like Jane, was categorising her clients. However, Carol had, at a later point, crossed out this section of writing. I am unsure why she did this and due to her lack of response to my follow-up request, this unfortunately remains unanswered.

Box 9.11b also contains the scoring tool which asked participants to indicate the extent to which they felt the steps had helped them to question their own assumptions, question their own practice and help them to think about something they had not thought about before. Bearing in mind that Carol had attended the seminar in March 2010, where the same narrative and 'I Poem' were used, at the NAEGA October 2010 seminar she still scored very highly, scoring '5', '5' and '4' respectively. This strongly indicates that the steps and Jane's narrative greatly assisted her to question her assumptions and practice, and to unearth previously taken-for-granted assumptions. It is interesting to note that she scored so highly even though she had attended a similar session only six months' previously and this is a point of discussion that I will later return too. Unfortunately, Carol's data from the first capture sheet in March 2010 was incomplete and therefore there is no scoring data to compare and or contrast.

In Box 9.11b Carol states that the steps and Jane's narrative assisted her to recall a past experience when she was working with clients from different Asian backgrounds and how she '*had to carefully monitor my assumptions about their knowledge, experience of life when asking them for underpinning knowledge*'. This statement is interesting. Whilst it is unclear exactly what Carol is saying here, her use of words '*I had to carefully....*' resonates with connotations of her forcing herself to monitor her assumptions, which could indicate she would not choose to do this otherwise.

In Box 9.11b Carol indicated that she perceived that the 'I Poem' had assisted her to focus on aspects of the narrative, and furthermore she realised that she did not use 'I' when writing her reflective diary. She explains that she writes '*in shorthand - it is only implied*'. As a result of attending the seminar she also questions her approach to her own reflective writing and whether using the first person within her writing would have had any impact on the process or outcome.

Despite emailing Carol on a number of occasions after the conference unfortunately no responses where received, meaning that a number of questions remain unanswered. None the less, the analysis shows how the steps and the 'I Poem' assisted Carol to disclose and unearth previously hidden assumptions. The analysis of Carol's responses/data indicates that the repetition of the process assisted her in gaining a higher level of understanding or engagement.

Carol is a qualified professional who is a career counsellor, NVQ assessor, supervisor and lecturer. She perceives herself to be reflective and employs a supervisor to assist her to question her assumptions. The analysis concludes that there are similarities between Carol and Jane. Both appear to categorise other individuals and have some awareness of taken-for-granted assumptions, and world-views through events, reflection, and training; yet their taken-for-granted assumptions still appear to be present and not fully challenged. The analysis concludes that the seminar, steps and 'I Poem' all contributed to assisting Carol to unearth or re-unearth taken-for-granted assumptions, and possibly identify a 'blind spot' in her perception of herself. Whilst this could be the first step to changing her practice, the analysis does tentatively suggest that the process of unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions might be easier than actually using this new personal knowledge to change practice.

Whilst the data are not specific to the 'I Poem' in its own right, the analysis does conclude that the 'I Poem' helped this practitioner to question her own process of

reflection and journal writing. It also suggests that the 'I Poem', either on its own or as part of the steps, was able to assist this practitioner to re-examine assumptions, feelings and emotions.

9.5.2   : Case study three - Introduction to Diane

Diane is a self-employed Career Development Professional and NVQ Assessor and Verifier with 13 years' experience in a wide range of careers and educational guidance settings, working with both adults and young people. She is qualified as an assessor and internal verifier, has 8 years' experience of assessment and internal verification of the NVQ in Advice & Guidance, and the new QCF qualifications in Advice & Guidance & Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) at Levels 3, 4, & 6. She has been heavily involved in the design and delivery of quality assurance programmes for Next Step and the National Careers Service. She is also involved in research project work for the IAG network and for universities local to her area.

Diane completed one capture sheet from the NAEGA conference October 2010 and the data from this is presented in Boxes 9.12a, 9.12b and 9.12c. Further data were collected from Diane when she responded to an email invitation just after the conference (cf. Box 9.13) which resulted in a conversational interview (cf. Boxes 9.14a and 9.14b).

Box 9.12a: Diane - Page one of capture sheet (October 2010)

Are you reflective (*No answer indicated*)

If no, is there a reason why?

Try to be but do not always have time to think about it.

How do you reflect on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?

Think through if felt could have done something better

Do you write your reflections down, in either a log, journal or similar? (*no*)
If no how do you capture your reflections?

No - tend to just think things through if time.

Do you go back to these reflections and try and understand what emerges? If so how do you do this?

Not in a systematic way

What might hinder you reflecting on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?

Time restrictions - moving onto next task without time to reflect. 'Head in sand' approach.

Box 9.12b: Diane - Page two of capture sheet (October 2010)

Step 1: Listen to the language (key words and phrases).

Step 2: Listen for the plot: Jane is white woman, who is a PA working in East Lancashire with Asian women. Here narrative tells of her developing relationship with a client.

Step 3: Listen for the 'I' in the narrative, (using Jane's narrative) underline any 'I' along with the verb and any other accompanying words to creating an 'I Poem' (write this on the back of these sheets).

Step 4: Listen for YOUR own personal responses, making explicit any thoughts or feelings.

Dress more in keeping with her culture - adviser seems too worried about appearance of her client and is letting this get in way of helping client relationship. Advisers being very honest about her own responses - word aghast very extreme response

To be completed after steps tasks:

In this section can you give some feedback on the your feelings and thought from going through the steps

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 equals not at all and 5 equals very much do you feel the steps:

How did the steps (with Jane's narrative):					
Helped question your own assumptions	1	2	3	④	5
Helped question your own practice	1	2	3	④	5
Helped you think about things you had not thought about before	1	2	③	4	5

What are your thoughts and feelings, did the steps help you think about a past experience, if so what was this, when was this?

Conveys a patronising attitude - e.g. perfect English, baby machine. Mindset and language can be instructive-she is making explicit her assumptions and use of language is honest.

Do you think the 'I Poem' helped you? (yes/ no or maybe)If yes or maybe explain further

Helped clarify the narrative for reflection. Narrative becomes more reflective as progresses - move from 'knew' to struggled.

Box 9.12c: Diane - Page three of capture sheet (October 2010)

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 equals not at all and 5 equals very much do you feel the 'I Poem':

How did the 'I Poem':					
Helped you analyse your reflections	1	2	3	(4)	5
Helped identify something you had previously missed	1	2	3	(4)	5
Helped you see through the mass of text/words	1	2	3	(4)	5
Helped you detach from the emotions or feelings	1	2	3	(4)	5
Helped you take ownership of what has emerged	1	2	3	(4)	5

Any further thoughts or feelings in relation to using the 'I Poem':

(No comment.)

Any further comments:

(No comment.)

Analysis of Box 9.12a led to the conclusion that Diane did acknowledge that time limitations restricted her ability and/or capacity to reflect. She highlighted how she felt the use of language was honest, she noted Jane's honesty, and I speculated whether this acknowledgment of honesty might suggest that Diane herself would struggle to be so honest. Throughout data set three the reference to 'honesty' emerged on a number of occasions and this finding will be discussed in more detail in chapter 10.

The data analysis of Box 9.12b concluded that whilst Diane does not write about any one past experience on the capture sheet, the scoring of the steps does indicate that the process of going through the steps assisted her to question her own assumptions and practice; and to unearth an aspect of her practice that she had not previously thought about before.

In Box 9.12c, Diane scored the use of the 'I Poem' despite not being able to use the 'I Poem' with her own narrative. On analysis of these scores, and the data on the capture sheet, the conclusions suggest that the 'I Poem' helped her to unpick the content of the narrative and see through the text. She scored highly on how she perceived that the 'I Poem' assisted her with the narrative (cf. Box 9.12c), indicating that the 'I Poem' helped her to analyse the reflections.

A few days after the seminar I emailed Diane asking her if she would be further involved with the research, share her experience of using the 'I Poem' and clarify some of the points within the capture sheet. Her response is presented in Box 9.13.

Box 9.13: Follow-up email from Diane (October 2010)

'Yes I will definitely try this approach and feed back to you. I think that the workshop as a whole helped me think about the process of reflecting on practice and the process of bringing to the surface sometimes unacknowledged negative feelings towards certain client groups. I know I can have these negative feelings but am not always honest about them to myself. Writing things down might help!'

The analysis of the scoring tool indicated that Jane's narrative in conjunction with the steps and 'I Poem' did assist Diane to unearth something previously hidden. She highlighted further her '*negative feelings towards certain client groups*', which suggests that she does, or has been, categorizing others. However, at that point it was unclear exactly how the 'I Poem' had benefited Diane and what it assisted her to question. The email data gave more insight into what Diane was thinking about and how the narrative, steps and 'I Poem' raised her awareness of the limitations of her current reflective practice, including her unacknowledged or taken-for-granted (negative) assumptions.

Following the conference and email exchange with Diane, a telephone interview was undertaken in February 2011 (cf. *Chapter 6: Method: The research design and the research process* for further details of the summary of what the interview covered, how long it lasted etc). The conversation was recorded with Diane's permission and later transcribed. Boxes 9.14a and b, include significant extracts from the interview that are relevant to the present discussion.

Box 9.14a: Extract from interview with Diane (February 2011)

LIZ: It was really interesting what you said about how the workshop helped you to think about your process of reflexivity and reflection on your practice and also the process of bringing up to the surface some of these as what you described as unacknowledged negative feelings

DIANE: *That is right, yes.*

LIZ: Have you used the 'I Poem'?

DIANE: *I have actually recommended it to some of my NVQ candidates and …, because one of the units in the NVQ 16 which is about evaluating your own practice. And, erm, through that candidates have to reflect on their own practice obviously, and make judgments about the way they performed their practice that could be a positive difference, and maybe things that they could have done better as well. So what we encourage candidates to do is to write reflective accounts about what they have done. I have actually sort of suggested the 'I Poem' as an alternative way of doing that...*

LIZ: Have they done that? How has that gone?

DIANE: *I have had a couple of candidates who have used it and they have actually found that it very useful, the idea of it. They perhaps hadn't thought about reflecting on their experience in that way before - actually writing it all down, and then it helped them, as I say. You know it does help to if you put things down on paper, makes things more real. So if you have those sorts of feelings - you know when you confront a client perhaps you don't fully acknowledge them, as I said. It is almost like a cathartic process writing things down. And then you can look at how you can actually go about challenging those…, the assumptions that you make about clients that you don't always acknowledge...*

LIZ: So the 'I Poem' has helped a number of them then.....

DIANE: *Yes it has. I think when they use the word 'I', (it) kind of …, it makes you take responsibility for your own actions and feelings rather than not, if you see what I mean?*

Box 9.14b: Extract from interview with Diane (February 2011)

LIZ: Had you any thoughts of why maybe you feel that you're not always honest with yourself about some of these feelings?

DIANE: *I think it is probably because …, because as advisers we tend to assume that we are fully sort of tolerant and fully non-judgemental you know - because we work to all the codes of practice, you know. We do, but… (laughs). So, you know, we…, you have a view of yourself as a certain kind of person and most advisers would probably say that they come into the category of being non-judgemental and tolerant of others people you know. Then … So I think that they feel what you get where you make assumptions about certain people are ones that just (coughs) come in without our bidding necessarily...if you see what I mean.. You're not necessarily controlling them, they say things and feelings that you may not be able to talk about....*

Liz - Reiterated Jane's comments (cf. Box 7.8): Where Jane acknowledges that you might realise these aspects of your taken-for-granted assumptions, but not share these thoughts with anyone, is that something you have felt?

DIANE: *Yes. I think the…. You would be wary of sharing it because you …, you might not want to admit to that or … That narrative of Jane's - it was very brave because it was fully honest ... A lot of people were maybe a bit shocked.*

LIZ: For you, as an assessor, do you feel that those trainees who used the 'I Poem' with their narrative, that it assisted them to get to a deeper level?

DIANE: *I think it did, yes, because sometimes people aren't used to actually [engaging in] the process of reflecting on their practice. They haven't really done it before because they haven't had time, and so it is a useful tool for them to actually use. They have an actual tool to use, and not just sort of writing things down on paper.*

Boxes 9.14a and 9.14b include significant extracts from the transcript relating to Diane's use of the 'I Poem' within the training she delivers to NVQ practitioners. She noted that a number of the trainees were new to the concept of reflection and reflective practice and were not accustomed to reflecting on their experiences in this way. She believed that the trainees found the 'I Poem' tool useful and that they had not thought about their experiences in this way before. Diane expressed the view that it is the first person writing in the 'I' that assists the individual to take responsibility for their own actions and feelings.

Box 9.14b highlights significant extracts from the transcript relating to the references to 'honesty'. Diane shares her thoughts about why as a profession we do not share

the 'negative feelings' she refers to. On analysing the data from Diane, not only is it suggested, as in the previous cycles, that we as practitioners might not be honest with our self and others, but also that, as we have a code of practice to adhere to, this enables some practitioners to claim they are *'fully sort of tolerant and fully non-judgemental'*. This is an interesting insight into what practitioners may actually feel. It is unclear if this is just personally felt by Diane, or a feeling she has gained through her own empirical practice. Diane also made reference to IAG practitioners being a '*certain type of person'* who saw themselves as not having taken-for-granted assumptions. However, the present research concludes that in reality many IAG practitioners do hold taken-for-granted assumptions.

On analysing Diane's significant statements in Box 9.14b, there is an evidence of categorization of others. She noted that *'you make assumptions about certain people'* and that these '*come in without our bidding'*. This is interesting as Diane's comments could be seen as evidence of automatic categorization.

9.6 : Overview of findings from data set three: Parts one, two and three

The preceding sections of this chapter have been presented in three parts. Part one (*Section 9:3)* presented data (mainly responses to a number of key questions) concerning participants' involvement in reflection. The conclusions were discussed as interim findings. Part two data *(Section 9:4)* sought to measure the benefits of Jane's narrative, the steps and lastly the 'I Poem' in order to supplement the findings from *Chapter 8: Research Findings Second Cycle*. This was followed by an interim discussion of data. Part three *(Section 9:5)* drew on data from two key participants to explore the impact of the 'I Poem'. This resulted in the presentation of two key case studies. The following section draws the three parts of data set three together and

presents the conclusions that form the basis for *Chapter 10: Discussion and 'What next?'.*

This final cycle of the analysis reveals that the practitioners who participated in the research perceived themselves as being reflective. However, it is debatable to what extent their reflective practice assisted them to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of their practice, given the different types and interpretations of reflection and reflective practice.

Data set three led to a number of conclusions in relation to what is perceived by participants as aiding their reflective practice. Firstly, it was concluded that dialogue and interaction with others is perceived as assisting reflective practice. Secondly, it was concluded that the participants can be aware, possibly at a subconscious level, that 'self reflection' is limited when it comes to unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions. Thirdly, whilst the findings demonstrated that many practitioners write down their reflections and claimed to return to them, it was concluded that these are frequently reactive reflections. The research found that the practitioners did not identify their journal or reflective writing as a means by which to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions, and did not appear to recognise or understand how the content of their journals could be a means by which they could hear the 'I' and unearth aspects of themselves. Lastly, the findings led to the conclusion that hearing another practitioner's confession of taken-for-granted assumptions assisted the participants to open up hidden aspects of their own taken-for-granted self.

Data set three also led to a number of conclusions on which factors can be indentified that contribute to practitioners' inability or capacity to be reflective. Firstly, it was evident that a lack of time, limitations of time and/or demands of the workplace, whether a perception or reality, had an impact on the participants' capacity and/or opportunity to reflect on their taken-for-granted assumptions. Secondly, the data

demonstrated a lack of perceived support mechanisms (for example, tools, training or supervision) to guide practitioners through the process of unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions. Thirdly, it was concluded that reflection and reflective practice is limited by how 'honest' we as individuals can be, how open we are to what we think and what we are prepared to share with others. Therefore, whilst the findings conclude that dialogue is seen as assisting reflective practice, this itself could be limited by our honesty. Lastly, due to a number of participants being open to their taken-for-granted assumptions, the findings do indicate that some of the participants did categorise both their clients and others.

Data set three aimed to explore further the question of whether the steps and/or 'I Poem' assisted the practitioners to think about their own assumptions and their practice. The findings led to the conclusion that Jane's narrative used in conjunction with the steps and the 'I Poem' did have had an impact on a number of the participants, although to what extend is uncertain. Whilst a number of participants acknowledged and highlighted similar thoughts and experiences to Jane and myself, it is also possible that some of the others decided to retain such information within the hidden parts of themselves.

Throughout this chapter consideration has been given to data relating to the 'I Poem' in data set three part one, part two and the two case studies in part three. A final aim of this third cycle of the research was to examine further whether the 'I Poem' in its own right assisted the practitioners to think about their own assumptions and their practice. Evidence from data set three does substantiate the conclusion that the 'I Poem' is a beneficial tool to aid reflection and reflective practice for both practitioners and their clients. Practitioners could visualise how the 'I Poem' might be used in different situations, such as going through interview notes to hear aspects of the self. The conclusions are that the 'I Poem' is a user friendly, non laborious and non time

intensive tool that can assist users to go through their reflective narrative and identify previously hidden aspects of the self.

The final chapter of this thesis, *Chapter 10: Discussion and 'What next?'*, summarizes the findings for the whole of the present research study. In addition, it discusses the implications for practice, outlines some final thoughts and considers how the research could be developed and extended in the future.

10 : DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

10.1 : Overview

The three previous chapters presented the three cycles of the research and each chapter concluded with an overview of the findings for that given chapter. The present chapter summarises these findings in order to set the scene for further discussion. Within this chapter, and within the whole thesis, there are elements of repetition, but this is inevitable in view of the way the research has evolved, with each research cycle building on the previous one and leading into the next. The repetition also provides an audit trail for me as the researcher, and for the reader.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

> 10:2: Summary of findings
>
> 10:3: Discussion of findings
>
> 10:4: Implications for practice and society
>
> 10:5: Conclusion
>
> 10:6: Final words and 'what next?'

This research and thesis have aimed to question the role that reflection played in assisting practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions, and the summary of the findings will be presented with this as the predominant focus. The summary has been organised around the three main categories that emerged through the data analysis: Reflection, which contains multiple subsections; Taken-for-grantedness; and the 'I Poem'.

10.2 : Summary of findings

10.2.1 : Reflection

The research concluded that it is difficult to ascertain what practitioners were referring to when they used the term reflection. This is largely due to the different types and interpretations of reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity evidenced, firstly, by the practitioners themselves and, secondly, by the profession as a whole. The research concluded that it is questionable whether the reflective practice that practitioners referred to actually assisted them to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of their practice. Whilst they generally described themselves as reflective, this was not at a self regulatory level in that they did not themselves actively monitor their reflections and reflective practice. Practitioners frequently referred to reflection as a task orientated tool, rather than a tool to assist them in unearthing taken-for-granted attitudes or beliefs. There was little or no knowledge of reflexivity, despite this being a means through which practitioners could explore 'self' and their place in the world in order to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of themselves. Reflection was often driven by feedback or critical incidents in practice. In other words, it was reactive rather than proactive. It is possible that this was a result of time limitations. Many participants recognised that reflection ought to involve more than noting 'what went well', but acknowledged that their reflection was limited, with some practitioners admitting that their reflection was superficial and not sufficiently critical to unearth taken-for-grantedness.

10.2.2 : Inability or lack of capacity to reflect

10.2.2.1 : Reflection

Reflection was limited by the practitioners' own inability to be open and honest with themselves and others. They felt unable to deal with and understand what might emerge from a more critical level of reflection, unable to be sufficiently critical, lacking in confidence and unable to accept what might emerge via a more critical level of

reflection. Reflection was limited by the practitioners' own lack of knowledge of the self and by their cultural naiveté. This impacted on their ability to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions, and if they did manage to unearth aspects of their assumptions their inadequate knowledge bank resulted in an inability to construct meaning from their observations.

10.2.2.2 : Self-reflection

Self-reflection was not enough. The research concluded that many participants relied on self reflection which was limited due to a number of factors. Firstly, the participants' lack of personal knowledge restricted their capacity to reflect and/or construct meaning. Secondly, they lacked the ability to be sufficiently critical and/or objective to enable them to identify or question existing blind spots and, due to these taken-for-granted blind spots, they did not or could not see their own assumptions.

10.2.2.3 : Time

Time itself was a limiting factor. Time pressures in the workplace, whether a perception or a reality, had an impact on participants' capacity and/or opportunity to reflect. As a result, practitioners lacked the time and the space needed to reflect. In addition, the limitations of time also restricted the time available to discuss issues with others. For changes in practice to occur, practitioners need to go through a number of steps: recognition, discomfort, resistance and acceptance. The reality is that each step in the process of change can be time consuming and require more time than the practitioner has available.

10.2.2.4 : Fear

Practitioners' fear limited their reflection and reflective practice. The fear was evident in a number of guises, including fear of being open and honest with the self, and a fear of telling others of their taken-for-granted assumptions, including those surrounding their concept of whiteness (cf. *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted*

assumptions and their role in professional practice: Section: 2:5:1: Implications for reflection).

10.2.2.5   : Professional stance

Adopting a professional stance at times limited and/or hindered reflection and reflective practice. Some practitioners perceived themselves as immune from holding taken-for-granted assumptions. There was the perception that professional codes of practice and ethical standards precluded practitioners from being judgemental and holding taken-for-granted assumptions. This perception prevented practitioners from digging deep within themselves in order to unearth their own assumptions, values and beliefs.

10.2.2.6   : Tools and/or processes

There were a lack of tools and/or processes to support reflective practice. Participants did not appear to utilise tools or processes to assist their reflective practice. They used journals to capture thoughts and feelings, but lacked any method or strategy for annotating these and exploring further what was within their journals. Whilst practitioners kept journals, they did not identify their journal writing as a tool that assisted them to unearth their taken-for-granted assumptions.

10.2.3 :Taken-for-grantedness

Taken-for-granted assumptions are difficult to unearth because they are deep rooted in childhood experiences, social interactions and life experiences. They are 'reproduced through the cultural paradigm of everyday life' (Bradley, 2011, p.19). The assumptions held and categories utilised by the practitioners involved in this study largely operated outside of their consciousness, and were often automatic and resistant to change. There was little or no understanding of the role that categorization plays in taken-for-granted assumptions.

Those who became aware of taken-for-granted assumptions felt it was difficult to acknowledge this aspect of their thoughts and themselves. The research suggested that this was due to the negative connotations attached to the assumption or assumptions derived from, and inherent within, their past life histories. Whilst acknowledging these aspects of their own thoughts was difficult, it was even more difficult to disclose these thoughts and feelings to other people. The research concluded that the participants were limited in their ability to change their taken-for-granted assumptions because these were deep rooted and the acceptance of new information was difficult. Therefore, old assumptions remained in use in practice. Changing assumptions is difficult and each of the stages that a practitioner needs to progress through may represent a challenging struggle that for some could take years to achieve.

10.2.3.1   : 'I Poem'

The research demonstrated that the 'I Poem' is a potentially beneficial tool, for both practitioners and their clients, which can facilitate reflection and reflective practice. Furthermore, the 'I Poem' provided the practitioners with an approach through which they could unpick the narrative in what they were reading, see through the mass of text and hear their own voice, thereby enabling them to recognise and accept taken-for-granted aspects of self. When used in conjunction with Jane's narrative (cf. *Chapter 7: Data Results: Data set one*: Box 7.3: Jane's first reflective narrative, May 2008, and *Chapter 1: Introduction: Section 1:2: Reflections on my own taken-for-granted experience*: Box 1:3: Liz: The beginning of my understanding….) the 'I Poem' assisted participants in identifying and unearthing similar past taken-for-granted assumptions in themselves and in thinking about their own assumptions and their practice. The confessional nature of the narrative enabled practitioners to verbalise their own thoughts and gave them license to think and talk about areas of their practice that might be seen as taboo or as not politically correct.

It became apparent that the 'I Poem' could also be used in other situations, for example, when going through interview notes, to hear aspects of the self. It is a user friendly non laborious tool which is not time intensive, but which can nonetheless assist users to go through their reflective narrative and identify previously hidden aspects of the self. Hence, the rationale for using the 'I Poem' (cf. *Section 10:3:4: 'I Poem'*).

The next section of this chapter discusses each of the three main foci of the research findings: Reflection, which contains multiple subsections; Taken-for-grantedness; and the 'I Poem'. Throughout this section of the chapter the findings will be linked to the literature reviewed in chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the thesis.

10.3 : Discussion of findings

Each of the three themes that made up the main research findings will be discussed in turn. To reduce the amount of repetition I have cross referenced the material using section numbers. I then discuss the findings and link them to the relevant aspects of the literature cited in chapters 2, 3 & 4. Finally, the research's original contribution to knowledge is outlined.

10.3.1 : Reflection

Section 10:2:1 discussed the findings relating directly to reflection. Whilst Bolton (2004) acknowledges that 'reflection is a state of mind' (p. 3) and, moreover, that it should be a continuing element of practice, this was not evident in the present research. To a large extent the practitioners' reflection and/or reflective practice was limited by a number of factors, especially their ability or capacity to continually reflect on their practice. The research found that practitioners' knowledge in relation to reflexivity was limited and that, on the whole, what they referred to as reflection was task orientated rather than as a tool to help them unearth taken-for-granted attitudes or beliefs. Nonetheless, *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice*

notes that theorists describe reflective practice as a means by which practitioners can learn from past experiences (Bolton, 2004). However, the present research finds that this may not be the case. The practitioners who participated in the research study did not profess to see their reflective practice in this manner. They were more interested in the task and less in themselves, the 'significant other' or 'society and culture' (Bolton, 2004). It did appear that they recognised that aspects of their reflection could be a means to search for questions never asked before (Bolton, 2004), although whilst this reflection may have been used to gain some immediate knowledge, practitioners (and I include myself in this) were not gaining a deeper understanding. This would have required the 'reflective processes' to go beyond the initial perceptions and draw greater meaning from them (Clift *et al*, 1990). Therefore, the conclusion I have drawn from this is that reflection does not necessarily achieve what its advocates wish it to achieve.

Reflective practice has itself become taken-for-granted (Bradley, 2011). It is spoken of as if we all know what it is and how to use it within our practice. However, the reality is that it cannot be assumed that this is an element of our practice that we are all able to engage with. It is evident that learning to reflect is not easy. It requires skill and it needs to be fostered and coached (Holm & Stephenson, 1994). This will be discussed further in *Section 10.4* – the '*Implications for practice'* section of this chapter.

The research participants demonstrated little or no knowledge or understanding of reflexivity, although *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice* discussed how reflexivity could be a means by which practitioners explore 'self' and their place in the world in order to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of themselves. Reflexivity has the potential to provide a mechanism that could assist practitioners to stand outside the self to examine our unwitting involvement in the creation of the social or professional structures of our world (Bolton, 2010). If they were then

reflexive, practitioners could also use the 'I Poem' to help them identify the 'self' and be more objective (cf. *Section 10:3:4: 'I Poem'*). (For further discussion, cf. *Section 10:6:1*, and also *Section 10:6*).

10.3.2 : Inability or incapacity to reflect

Section 10:2:2, and its subsequent subsections, noted a number of factors that impacted on the ability of practitioners to reflect. There was an inability to be honest with oneself and others. Yet, the confessional narratives created by Jane and myself enabled the practitioners to voice thoughts and feelings of their own and allowed them to verbalise and write them down. Some of the practitioners acknowledged aspects of themselves which they had not engaged with before, which had been taken-for-granted and hence that had been a 'blind spot' in their practice. Discovery of their 'blind spot' could enable the practitioners to begin questioning what might previously have been unquestioned. This is important to the present research because frequently the world we live in, including our practice, can remain unquestioned and, given the choice, many practitioners and/or professionals are unlikely to critically question taken-for-granted aspects of self (Eraut, 1994). Nonetheless, it is only when we stop and question these aspects of our world and practice, that we are able to see and/or identify what we taken-for-granted.

In *Section 10:2:2:3* it was demonstrated that a lack of time contributed to practitioners' inability and/or capacity to reflect. This resulted in practitioners identifying a lack of time and space, both physically and/or psychologically, as a particular issue. However, insufficient time could also have had impacts of which the practitioners were unaware. The research also concluded that there was evidence of categorization by the practitioners, which could result from a lack of time, with practitioners becoming more stereotypical as result of cognitive overload (Lippmann, 1920; Allport, 1954; van Knippenberg *et al,* 1999). The research acknowledged that to gain a greater and more sophisticated level of awareness requires high levels of

personal knowledge, awareness and skill, and that practitioners need time to achieve this (Pedersen, 1990). Indeed, practitioners may need a substantial amount of time, possibly years, to move and/or navigate their way through the stages of recognition, discomfort, resistance and acceptance, in order even to attempt to change practice.

It is apparent that the practitioners who participated in this research perceived a lack of time within the workplace. There could be a number of reasons for this. Certainly many practitioners are working in environments where there are significant performance targets and this adds to workplace stress. They tend to see numerous clients, one after the other, with little time to think, let alone reflect. Any proposed tool to aid reflection needs to be time efficient and take account of the practitioners' concerns in relation to time and work-life balance (cf. *Section 10:3:4: 'I Poem'*).

Section 10:2:2:4 highlighted the impact of fear on reflection and reflective practice. The practitioners were often guarded about being open and honest in relation to their assumptions about their views, beliefs and/or 'whiteness'. Even those who already knew they held assumptions kept them within the 'hidden self' (cf *Chapter 3: Section: 3.5.5.1: A model of the self - Johari Window*), perhaps demonstrating that they were too ashamed or embarrassed to admit to them. However, it is also apparent that through participating in the research a number of practitioners become aware of a 'blind self', which had previously been hidden from their self and from others. Fear had an impact on practitioners' ability to be open about aspects of themselves. Certainly in relation to the topic of 'whiteness', the literature discussed in *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice,* notes that our fears can be linked to the role we may play as the oppressor, which could explain why practitioners experience feelings of fear, guilt and, as seen within the research, aspects of defensiveness towards the topic of taken-for-granted whiteness. What is apparent is that leaving issues such as 'whiteness' unspoken reinforces the status

quo and has implications not only for practice but also for society as a whole (cf. *Section 10:4*).

The research found that many of the practitioners were unable to be sufficiently self-critical in their reflection to identify taken-for-granted areas of their practice. *Section 10:2:2:2* discussed the findings relating to self-reflection and how ultimately self-reflection is not enough. A contributory factor to this may have been that practitioners struggled to understand or deal with what might emerge during their reflective practice. This adds further insight into why their reflective practice was not sufficiently critical; namely that, by themselves, they were unable to deal with what emerged. Discovering the 'self' is known to be difficult (Pellitteri, 2008; Moon, 2004; Eraut, 2001), and this can be exacerbated by any feelings of guilt or shame, and/or by fears of what might be unearthed. In addition to these feelings, practitioners may have lacked the ability to reflect. They also lacked the knowledge to critically examine what emerged. Thus, their self-reflective practice was superficial. One key outcome of this research is, therefore, to stress the need for practitioners and the IAG profession to recognise these hidden feelings or indicators and to see the benefits in reflecting on these aspects of the self. There is a need to recognise that some professionals question the usefulness of considering their taken-for-granted assumptions when they cannot change society on their own, and that we need to encourage them to think differently and to realise that without doing so they themselves help to maintain the status quo.

Ultimately, the reflective practice was restricted by the inadequate personal knowledge the practitioners held, alongside cultural naiveté, resulting in an inability to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions and/or an inability to construct meaning. This is important. *Chapter 3: Personal knowledge and its role in professional practice*, discusses the implications of undeveloped personal knowledge in the early stage career development. However, a concern emerging from the present research is that

although most of the participants were not newly qualified IAG practitioners, there was nonetheless evidence of undeveloped personal knowledge. This raises the issue of the extent to which this resulted from limitations in the practitioners' early career training (cf. *Section 10.4.1*).

Chapter 3: Personal Knowledge and its role in professional practice, noted the impact of unquestioned personal knowledge and how it can distort the practitioners' future development. The very nature of their limited personal knowledge can have an impact on the meaning practitioners subsequently draw from their reflective activities. Therefore, the lack of personal knowledge affects the ability to reflect, by limiting the level and the criticality of the reflective practice in which the individual engages (McHugh, 1984). This is evident in the present research. The practitioners identified themselves as reflective, but did not necessarily realise that their reflection was limited by themselves and their personal knowledge, which in turn limited their ability to interpret and construct meaning from their reflections. This situation was evident in the first cycle of the research when Jane and I were reflective, but our own personal knowledge was limited, and we were unable to construct the interpretation needed to better understand the impact of our assumptions.

Cultural naïveté was evident through actions and remarks. There is little evidence at present as to the impact of practitioner or client world views on careers counselling outcomes (Heppner and Heppner, 2003). Therefore, this is an area that could be explored in future research. *Section 2.3:7: Application in professional practice* discusses the research of Stewart (2002) and Byars-Winston (2003) and their argument that counsellors (which could include Information, Advice and Guidance practitioners) need to accept their own cultural naïveté. Whilst the literature may note this, the participants in the present research did not realise that their own personal biographies and personal knowledge could, through their reflective practice, assist them to reconstruct themselves. This could be the means by which they appreciate

who they are and their personal knowledge. In return, they would thereby improve their understanding of the cultural milieu; that is, the physical or social setting in which their practice occurs and develops (Clift *et al*, 1994). I concluded, therefore, that, as a profession, we need to acknowledge that Information, Advice and Guidance practitioners should be aware of their own and their clients' cultural contexts, because if this is ignored it could have critical implications for practice and society as a whole (cf. *Section 10:4*).

Whilst the previous section considered the impact of limited personal knowledge, I will now discuss the journey to further awareness and the transformation of practice. It is recognised that 'self awareness' is ever evolving (Dewey, 1933) and as practitioners we can continually add to our own 'knowledge bank' through further experiences and training. This then enables us to revisit a previous experience, reflect on it and construct new meaning. However, the present research found that once practitioners did manage to construct new meaning, this was only the starting point. In fact a far more difficult transition was still to be faced, in the shape of changing practice.

The literature discusses the transformation of practice in a simplistic way, and does not highlight the struggle practitioners may experience along the journey to such transformation. The present research finds that neither reflective practice nor transforming practice was a straightforward or linear process. Some practitioners constructed new meaning for themselves, but bounced back and forward between this (Boud *et al*, 1985) and attempting to change practice and struggled to achieve long term changes. I would suggest that the reason for this lies in the fact that dealing with uncertain knowledge is difficult and the development of reflective judgement involves a number of stages. It is suggested that if people cannot cope with uncertain knowledge they will not be capable of achieving the highest stages of reflective judgement (Moon, 2004; King & Kitchener, 1994).

The present research found that some practitioners recognised that they held assumptions which had an impact on their practice. They struggled to accept their assumptions and furthermore struggled to go beyond the recognition stage. There are a number of possible reasons for this, some of which will feature in the next section of this chapter. However, one reason could be linked to the need for a period of time to deal with acknowledging the feeling of uncertainty that this experience produces (cf. *Section 10:2:2:3*). It is difficult to deal with uncertain knowledge (Eraut, 1994; Moon, 2004) and therefore some practitioners may not feel equipped to undertake what might feel like 'jumping out of a plane'. The confidence needed to take this 'leap of faith' to transform the self and practice is enormous. This could exacerbate any difficulties or fears experienced by practitioners.

Section 10:2:2:5 found that the professional stance of practitioners limited and/or hindered their ability and/or capacity to reflect. Practitioners believed that they adhered to a plethora of codes of practice and/or ethical standards, and it appeared that in some instances this precluded them from even reflecting on taken-for-granted assumptions, values and beliefs. It appeared that the practitioners saw themselves as working within professional standards and some then used this to proclaim that they themselves were non-judgemental. Their professional stance acted as a barrier, or even a protective film, that prevented them from thinking they had assumptions and taken-for-granted thoughts. Ultimately, they thought and assumed that they were of a good enough standard (Reid & Bassot, 2011) and that the issue did not warrant further critical enquiry. As Eraut (1994) points out, professional knowledge and ethics is a difficult area of knowledge to handle because it includes 'personal habits and professional traditions, and digging them out is difficult, painful and usually unpopular' (p.47).

Our assumptions influence our professional stance, thus adding to the difficulties practitioners experience when trying to unearth their values and beliefs – especially

when assumptions and knowledge are shared with other practitioners (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Thompson, 2012). The result is that practitioners can find it easier to hide behind their professional stance for fear of what they might discover about themselves and/or of upsetting the status quo.

The present research found (cf. *Section 10:2:2:6*) that there were a lack of tools and/or processes to support and facilitate reflective practice: Coupled with this were fears of reflecting and issues relating to time. It was evident that time was an issue, but also that the practitioners did not have the tools to assist them to return to their reflective journals and, even if they did return to their writings, they did not identify this as a means of unearthing aspects of their taken-for-granted assumptions. Therefore, it can be concluded, firstly, that practitioners need to be trained in how to gain maximum benefit from their reflective practice and journals (cf. *Section 10:4*); and, secondly, whilst journal writing has an important role in relation to self-awareness and is recognised as a powerful resource (cf. *Chapter 3: Personal Knowledge and its role in professional practice*), there are a lack of tools that can enable practitioners to annotate or unpick their journals. It is suggested that practitioners would benefit from having a tool that could assist them to see through the mass of text in their journals and hear their own reflective voice. The present research proposes that the 'I Poem' (cf. *Section 10:3:4*) is capable of fulfilling this function.

10.3.3 : Taken-for-grantedness

Taken-for-granted assumptions, specifically 'whiteness', remain hidden. This is due to the fact that as members of one particular group (e.g. white), we become so immersed in its assumptions and values that we do not even notice them. They are part of our everyday life and thereby are taken-for-granted (Thompson, 2012). The negative aspect of this is that 'we tend to see the world through our own cultural lens

and project our own standards and values and beliefs on other people' (Bradley, 2011, p.19).

At the start of this research I speculated that some practitioners (and I included myself in this) did not question their taken-for-granted assumptions and, indeed, were unaware that they held such assumptions. The research findings supported this supposition and provided evidence that only a proportion of the practitioners who engaged in the research had explored their taken-for-granted assumptions before. Even fewer had shared their unearthed assumptions with others. The research goes on to conclude that unearthing assumptions is difficult and that the difficulty experienced by practitioners is a contributory factor in why IAG practitioners may not engage with the phenomenon of taken-for-granted assumptions.

There is no doubt that categorization exists. There are several reasons for this, with the main one being that by using categories the brain can be more efficient on a day to day basis. However, it is also evident that categorization is the precursor to stereotyping. Our values and beliefs are part of our personal knowledge; they are pre-eminent in the hierarchy of categories and become fixed beyond control. As we make judgements in practice, we construct meaning by drawing knowledge through our own personal lenses. Thereby, the beliefs, values and categories we hold, including our negative assumptions, contribute to and inform the judgements we make in practice. This distorts practitioners' reflective glance (Schütz, 1967) such that practitioners are unable to identify taken-for-granted assumptions when engaging in reflective practice. Categorization is difficult to control, and requires time and motivation. Even if we have this at the forefront of our minds, the likelihood is that categorization will still encourage stereotypical thoughts (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). The question is then, if as human beings we naturally categorise others and this is uncontrollable, what can be done? (cf. *Section 10.6*). In *Chapter 2: Taken-for-granted assumptions and their role in professional practice*, I acknowledge that

'knowing is key' and, therefore, that practitioners need to be aware that categorization is part of the brain's function. We need to train practitioners to understand what categorization is and to be able to identify it. Practitioners need not to be frightened of negative thoughts attached to categorization, but to confront and harness these thoughts, and, thereby, question their own thinking. A recommendation arising from the present research is, therefore, that practitioner training includes discussion of concepts such as categorization - what it is and how it might impact on their practice (cf. *Section 10:6 Final words and 'what next?'*).

Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice, discusses the use of meta-cognition (i.e. 'thinking about thinking') by allied health professions such as counselling. It discusses the call by other professions to encourage their members to better understand their own as well as their clients' world views, in the attempt to help these practitioners understand and possibly change the categories that shape their thinking and the judgements they hold. However, there is little recognition in the relevant literature that this might be difficult to achieve. Whilst they acknowledge that self awareness is crucial, the literature has also noted that when asked, professionals often lack the ability to accurately estimate or self evaluate their level of competence (Kruger and Dunning, 1999). Ultimately, both practitioners' lack of ability to self evaluate and their insufficiently developed skill to analyse gaps in knowledge have an impact on their ability and/or capacity to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions, and, more specifically, whiteness.

When it characterises the dominant culture, whiteness, as a taken-for-granted assumption, can easily be overlooked and this makes it more difficult to reflect on. In Kincheloe *et al* (1998) research in the US, the white respondents acknowledged that they did not know what whiteness was. This could be the case in the UK, with white people being unaware of the white cultural paradigm. This should not be taken to imply that practitioners in IAG are knowingly racist, but it suggests that this type of

enquiry is crucial if we are to help professionals think about the role they play as part of a white dominant force in society. Certainly the literature notes that there is a lack of consideration in relation to whiteness. Some discussion does appear in the US and in some aligned professions in the UK, but there is little research in relation to whiteness in the field of IAG. Other professions, such as counselling, are encouraging their practitioners to explore their own race. One risk of this is that practitioners may feel they are being accused of being racist. They may respond to this defensively and avoid, consciously or unconsciously, questioning what assumptions might lie within the hidden area of their self. There is no doubt that as a profession we hold power, certainly when others turn to us for advice and guidance. However, little is known of the impact of this on clients' career choices. As with a number of other professions, there is a power imbalance and added to this imbalance is the power dimension relating to being white. This will be further discussed later (cf. *Section 10:4:1 Implications for training* and *Section 10:6 Final words and 'what next?'*)

The literature notes that whiteness is a challenging topic, even more so when it is taken-for-granted as this makes it more difficult to reflect upon. Hence, when we use our reflective glance it is tainted by the fact that whiteness and taken-for-granted assumptions are invisible. Tools are needed to enable practitioners to see and hear their own voice, and, I would suggest, this comprises a further justification and rationale for the use of the 'I Poem'.

Contributing further to the inability or incapacity to reflect is the fact that the inevitable challenge of discovering the 'self' can be exacerbated and complicated by feelings of guilt, shame and fear of what might be unearthed. It is imperative that as professionals we recognise these feelings and see the benefits for ourselves and our practice in reflecting on these aspects of ourselves. There is a need to recognise that whilst some professionals wonder why they should bother, as they cannot change

society, we need to encourage them to engage in this aspect of reflection. Without this, such unquestioned aspects of our taken-for-granted selves maintain the status quo.

Whilst training is imperative, there is a lack of specific training in this field, and this will be discussed further later in the chapter (cf. *Sections 10:4; 10:5* and *10:6*).

10.3.4 : 'I Poem'

This chapter has summarised the findings of the present research and discussed each of them in turn. Throughout, I have focused on how unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions is difficult and the reasons behind these difficulties. The research concluded that practitioners lacked a process or tool to enable them to critically analyse their own reflections. This is the rationale for the 'I Poem' - a tool to assist practitioners by giving them a starting point to begin questioning themselves, specifically in relation to their reflective journal writing.

The research found that 'I Poems' assisted the practitioners to think about their own assumptions and their practice. By using the 'I Poem' practitioners could also imagine how they might use the tool in different ways to hear aspects of the self. It is a tool that is not laborious; it is relatively quick to implement; and it can assist practitioners to go back through their reflective narrative, turn off their logic (Burnard, 1997) and identify previously hidden aspects of the self.

Using an 'I Poem' can draw attention to people's self statements which, in turn, enables them to explore how they speak about themselves and others. In effect, the 'I Poem' enables practitioners to 'see the wood from the trees' and to identify as important what might otherwise have been overlooked or seen as 'innocent' and 'irrelevant' (Bolton, 2010) emotions and negative language. It can also help to bring into awareness implicit, taken-for-granted elements of the practitioners' world views that were previously hidden within their writing.

The discussion has highlighted how practitioners' ability to reflect was hindered by their inability to be open and honest. A further strength of the 'I Poem' is that it gave practitioners an approach which felt 'safe' and which they could use within the workplace. The research found that lack of time contributed to practitioners' inability to reflect. If practitioners are to be persuaded to engage with a reflective tool, that tool must not be time consuming to use. This is a further rationale for the use of the 'I Poem'. An 'I Poem' is quickly constructed, there is no lengthy process to follow and it is suitable for using in the workplace.

Previous sections of this chapter have discussed the difficulties practitioners experience when engaging in self enquiry and the lack of tools to support them. I have proposed that the 'I Poem' can be part of the solution through being the means by which practitioners can unearth their taken-for-granted assumptions. The 'I Poem' provides a tool or approach that enables users to return to their reflections and begin to identify taken-for-granted assumptions and blind spots which can then be subjected to a more critical examination. However, it needs to be stressed that the 'I Poem' is not the whole solution. There is also a need to make changes to practitioner training and to encourage lifelong CPD, which, in turn, could improve practice and have a wider impact on society as a whole. The following section will discuss further the implications of the present research for training, practice and society.

10.4 : Implications for training, practice and society

The findings from the present research have implications for practitioners' training, their practice and for society. This is important in relation to, firstly, the quality of guidance clients receives, and secondly, the impact that guidance has on clients' career choices. Practitioners' values, taken-for-granted assumptions and stereotypical views of the roles of others may distort the guidance given. The quality of guidance and the impact of practitioners' guidance need to be further explored,

and as a profession we need to understand that our assumptions about others have wider implications on society as a whole. Unwittingly we may be unaware of the power of our position and how the assumptions we hold we may influence others' life choices. In addition, as we ourselves play a part within the personal, social and cultural dimensions of the world we live in, if we leave these aspects of ourselves untested, and behave as though our race is unimportant, this legitimises the elimination of the cultures and histories of marginalized groups. Furthermore, it keeps taken-for-granted assumptions, including those relating to whiteness, invisible (Applebaum, 2006). We need to understand that, by not testing this aspect of our self, we are feeding the assumptions and stereotypical views of others, which in turn reinforce the status quo, helping to maintain discrimination across the world (Frankenberg, 2005).

At the start of this research, the research questions emerged from enquiry into my own experiences as an IAG practitioner. I began to question whether other practitioners had unearthed taken-for-granted assumptions, and whether and how their reflective practice had aided them in this endeavour. In particular, I wondered whether other white IAG practitioners questioned their taken-for-granted assumptions and whiteness. The research findings have supported my initial speculation that, for numerous reasons that have already been discussed in this chapter, many practitioners do not appear to be engaging in this area of their practice. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this research is to encourage the open discussion of, and engagement with, taken-for-granted assumptions, and specifically those concerned with whiteness. This is a topic that 'some might love and others may hate' (Anonymous, 2011), but needs to be voiced and challenged, for the sake of our practice, profession, self, clients and society.

Whilst the current section has considered the wider implications of taken-for-granted assumptions for practice and society, the next section will discuss in more detail the implications in relation to the training of practitioners.

10.4.1 : Implications for training

This research has found that whilst reflection, and reflective practice, is readily discussed and referred to in training, it has itself become taken-for-granted. Practitioners are trained via routes such as NVQ and post graduate courses. Many are likely to have had little formal training in relation to reflective practice, and are unlikely to have been trained in any depth as to how to use their reflective practice to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. In the present research, the practitioners described themselves as reflective, yet they did not identify their reflective writing as a means of unearthing taken-for-granted assumptions. Their reflective practice was limited by a number of factors. However, most important was the lack of recognition by all, be they lecturers, trainers, learners or practitioners, that reflection is a skill which not everyone will possess (Holm & Stephenson, 1994). *Chapter 4: Reflection and its role in professional practice,* discusses the issues and difficulties encountered by other professions that adhere to the need for highly reflective professionals (for example, nursing).

As the field of Information, Advice and Guidance aspires to being recognised as a profession, in a similar vein to other professions such as teaching and nursing, there is a greater need to engage in reflective practice. Therefore, those who design and deliver training for IAG practitioners need to ensure that, prior to asking students to engage in reflection or complete an assignment where reflection is key, time is spent exploring reflective tools, strategies and methods, and in encouraging and coaching students in their use. Trainers need to recognise that it cannot be assumed that the skills needed to engage in critical reflection, which enable practitioners to go beyond the process of reflection and examine what lies beneath, will develop naturally or

automatically. Also, the profession as a whole needs to appreciate the difficulties that individuals encounter when trying to engage in reflective practice (Holm & Stephenson, 1994).

As IAG practitioners we work with numerous clients, some with very different life experiences to our own. When, in the interests of equality and non-discriminatory practice, white practitioners working with ethnic minority clients adopt a colour-blind approach, where everyone is treated the same, then, as Applebaum (2006) identified, we are leaving 'important aspects of race, especially its relation to power, unexamined' (p. 346). The training prescribed for practitioners needs to equip us with the tools and knowledge to enable us to acknowledge and understand that we may be categorising our clients, because if we do not then we will fail to understand how our biases and influences may impact on the way we work with clients. This is especially true if our categorizations have negative connotations. Therefore, IAG training must encompass an exploration of the cultural contexts of both the trainees themselves and their possible clients. Trainees need to explore the level of their own personal knowledge, and their training needs to include consideration of the concept of categorization so that they can understand how prejudgements are formed through categorization of others and taken-for-granted assumptions. Ignoring the importance of such topics runs the risk that practitioners will leave their assumptions untested and be unaware of how their culturally taken-for-granted learned assumptions are not unswerving standards of good practice within our profession (Pedersen, 1990).

Within this chapter I have discussed the taken-for-grantedness of reflection and reflective practice. This points to a need for all professionals to revisit their use of reflection, and its many interpretations, and to move towards a more standardised concept of reflection and reflective practice in all its forms.

10.5 : Conclusion

The main question that this research and thesis sought to answer was how reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity could assist IAG practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of the self. Supplementary issues included:

- Practitioners' lack of awareness regarding their taken-for-granted assumptions.

- Training and professional codes of practice as barriers to identifying and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions.

- The 'I-Poem' as a tool for promoting reflection that unearths taken-for-granted assumptions.

Practitioners' use of reflection was explored through a number of iterative research cycles. The pre-cycle phase focused on my own practice and the first cycle sought to test my thoughts with a colleague and co-researcher, Jane. The second cycle extended the data by exploring the understanding of and involvement in reflection of 31 participants at the NCGS and by capturing their responses to my analysis and discussion from the first cycle. This cycle also produced one case study, Becky. The third research cycle tested the results from the data analysis of research cycle two with 24 participants at the NAEGA conference and had a particular focus on the 'I Poem'. It generated two further case studies (Carol and Diane).

The key research conclusions were that:

- It was difficult to ascertain what practitioners meant by 'reflection', partly due to different definitions and interpretations of the concept.

- It was questionable whether the reflective practice that the practitioners engaged in assisted them in unearthing taken-for-granted aspects of their practice.

- Although practitioners described themselves as reflective, they did not actively monitor their reflections. Often reflection was reactive rather than proactive, task rather than process orientated, and not seen as a means to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. Ultimately, their reflective practice was limited and insufficiently critical.

Whilst the above points relate to conclusions concerning the over-arching research question, the research also generated other significant findings:

- Firstly, there was evidence that practitioners lacked awareness of their taken-for-granted assumptions. Whilst the exploration of this question began in the pre-cycle and first cycle of the research, it was a particular concern of the second and third cycles. The analyses of the capture sheet data and to a lesser extent the case studies, provided insight into whether practitioners were aware of their own taken-for-granted assumptions. Thus, whilst a number of practitioners indicated that they had previously explored their 'whiteness' as a taken-for-granted assumption, the data from others suggested that the existence of their assumptions was a new revelation to them. The data also indicated that the unearthing of taken-for-granted assumptions such as the implications of whiteness is difficult, with the confrontation of such topics likely to be something that 'some might love and others may hate' (*cf. 10.4*). The research concluded that whilst practitioners may shy away from or be reluctant to engage with the phenomenon of taken-for-granted

assumptions, it is imperative, for the sake of our practice, profession, self, clients and society, that the issue is voiced and challenged.

- Secondly, there was evidence to indicate that practitioners' training and professional codes of practice might act as barriers to identifying and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions. This question was explored through the data across all three research cycles in conjunction with relevant literature. It was concluded that, whilst training in the processes of reflection and reflective practice occurs, such training frequently treats reflection uncritically, as self-evident and as requiring minimal instruction. In other words, within training 'reflection' has become a catch all phrase and is itself taken-for-granted. The research concluded that if training fails to acknowledge that reflection is a highly skilled activity (Holm & Stephenson, 1994), then it will not equip practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions. It was concluded that practitioner training needs to equip trainees to explore their own personal knowledge, and to understand how this and the concept of categorization inform their prejudgements and judgements in practice.

A further conclusion from the research was that, contrary to its premises and goals, the IAG practitioners' professional stance may operate as a barrier to the recognition and confrontation of taken-for-granted assumptions. The research concluded that the plethora of codes of practice and/or ethical standards could unwittingly encourage a mechanistic, target-based 'tick box' culture that gives lip service to such things as training and CPD, whilst failing to recognise the time and depth of self exploration required to unearth taken-for-granted assumptions and other blocks to effective practice. Complying with the 'letter' but not the 'spirit' of codes of professional and ethical practice could preclude some

practitioners from reflecting on their taken-for-granted assumptions, and therefore lead to them assuming and proclaiming that they were non-judgemental. The participants' professional stance seemed on occasions to act as a barrier, enabling some practitioners to unthinkingly proclaim that their practice was of a 'good enough standard' (Reid & Bassot, 2011) and did not warrant further critical enquiry.

- Thirdly, the research demonstrated the role and usefulness of the 'I-Poem' as a tool for promoting reflection that unearths taken-for-granted assumptions.

  Although initially introduced as a data analysis tool, it became apparent that the 'I Poem' could assist IAG practitioners to think about their own assumptions and their practice. It provided a means to draw attention to self statements which, in turn, enabled participants to explore in a safe way how they speak about themselves and others within their journals, and to identify negative language or significance in statements that they had previously dismissed as not relevant (Bolton, 2010). It is a non-laborious, speedy and user-friendly tool which can help practitioners go through their reflective narrative and identify previously hidden aspects of the self. I was able to conclude that the 'I Poem' does have the potential to assist practitioners to engage in critical reflection.

My research revealed that, although imperative to our practice, reflection and reflective practice can be taken-for-granted skills. I concluded that further that time and energy needs to be invested by both trainers and practitioners to ensure that the process of reflection does not become meaningless.

Practitioners are not immune from holding taken-for-granted assumptions and categorizing clients. These aspects of our selves sit within our personal knowledge and inform our professional knowledge. It is crucial, therefore, that practitioners are

equipped with the skills and tools needed to critically question these dimensions of self.

As members of the IAG profession, we need to acknowledge that we can and do hold taken-for-granted assumptions, that we can and do categorize clients and that we cannot hide behind a professional stance which claims that this is not the case.

In sum, this research and thesis bring the phenomenon of taken-for-grated assumptions and whiteness into the field of Information, Advice and Guidance. Whilst the literature revealed that criticisms already existed in relation to the role of reflection and reflective practice, I believe that my research has furthered this discussion, specifically in relation to how complex the topic is to research and the difficultly of using reflection to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of our practice, specifically in relation to 'whiteness'. I believe that through my research and publications the topic of whiteness is more visible within the IAG field than previously, and can be added to the body of knowledge in other fields.

In addition, I have developed the I Poem' from an analytical tool into a tool to aid reflective practice in a number of ways, specifically as a means for helping practitioners revisit their reflective writing and hear their 'self' and their own taken-for-granted voice within their writing. Whilst the research acknowledges that the 'I Poem' is only part of the solution and a starting point enabling practitioners to be more critical, it is evident from the findings and feedback that it is, at least in part, what practitioners lacked. I have also provided initial evidence that the 'I Poem' might have wider application – i.e. an Ed Doc student used the 'I Poem' to unearth the voice of a candidate applying for a job (*cf. 10.6.1*).

Finally, the key message of this research is that the IAG profession should no longer take for granted the quality of its so-called reflective practice. As IAG trainers and practitioners we should explore and confront our taken-for-granted assumptions and

better understand how our personal knowledge informs professional knowledge. And, without doubt, as professionals in the IAG field we should no longer hide behind our professional stance.

10.6 : Final words and 'what next?'

The completion of a PhD is an intermittently lonely experience that is accompanied by widely vacillating emotions. At times I have felt that I was 'really on to something' and that the research was both important and exciting. At other times I have been anxious that, at best, the research is obvious and/or inconsequential, and, at worst, that I have 'got it all wrong'. However, during the writing up of my thesis my confidence in the quality and usefulness of my work has grown. I believe that the research has considerable merit, but also that it has some limitations, and that it is not the final word on the subject. In relation to the topic of the research, certainly in relation to taken–for-granted assumptions of whiteness within a profession whose practitioners are predominantly white, it is evident that there is still a need for further research and debate. Indeed, since the research for the PhD thesis was concluded I have continued to develop my own research, particularly in relation to the use of the 'I Poem'.

10.6.1 : Content or topic issues

Whilst completing my research, I have been sustained in my moments of doubt by the interest, comments and feedback that my research has engendered when I have discussed it, both formally and informally, with other professionals, and when I have placed it in the wider arena through oral presentations and publications.

One source of validation of my research came from the acceptance of my article: *'The emergence of a tool to aid reflective practice and assist practitioners unearth taken-for-granted assumptions'* (Bradley, 2011) in the peer-reviewed publication 'Constructing the Future: Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice' Journal (Barham &

Irving, 2011). The panel reviewing the paper forwarded me the following comments from one reviewer:

> *'This is very powerful and I understand it on so many levels in both my personal (being in a dual heritage relationship with a mixed race son - he prefers this term) and professional life (research and teaching EO and Diversity). Many years ago there was a video called 'Being White', which addressed some of these issues. Fascinating ideas about reflection, trying to get students to reflect openly and honestly is often a challenge. I love the idea of the 'I Poem' and I think some will love this and others will hate it (see it as threatening). Definitely include it in the Publication'*
>
> *(Anonymous, Aug 2011)*

This feedback, from a lecturer within the field, supports and justifies the value of the research and its relevance to the IAG profession.

Following this 2011 publication, my research has been acknowledged by colleagues farther afield, and due to the relevance of my research to the topic of social justice I have also been asked to co-author a chapter on this topic in a planned publication 'Embracing social justice: Philosophical considerations and practical implications for career education and counselling' (Malik & Irving, forthcoming).

With regard to oral presentations, at the NCGS and NEAGA conferences in 2010, where I presented my findings from the preceding cycle of research and collected further data, my research was received with interest and engagement. I have also delivered three guest lectures - at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in London, at an Institution that delivers the postgraduate qualification in careers guidance (Bradley, 2012b), and to the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), of which I am a member (Bradley, 2012a). These presentations have drawn on my research, the concept of categorization, the role of personal knowledge,

and the 'I Poem' as a tool to assist both postgraduate students and IAG practitioners with their own reflective practice. The feedback from the HEI module assessment board reported how the students valued my contribution and that a number were using the 'I Poem' within their assignments and/or practice. The feedback from the professional body echoed the HEI feedback. It is worth noting that the majority of the practitioners who attended the AGCAS training had qualified and been in practice for some time. Attendees were asked to provide feedback, and were asked 'What was, for you, the most useful aspect of the training?' A number of responses are captured below:

> *'An exploration of profound concepts in a very straight forward way. The analytical tool 'I Poem' is really clever, easy to use, I can see the benefits'*

> *'Just hearing about the research and theory and about the journey taken by the trainer in her research. The 'I Poem' was also an interesting exercise'*

> *'The 'I Poem' was very useful and will be something I will use in practice and personally'*

> *'The information on categorization and challenging my own views'*

> *'Time to stand back & reflect & access to new reflective tool e.g. the 'I Poem'*

> *(Anonymous, May 2012)*

All the practitioners who attended said that they found the seminar useful, interesting, and simulating; and a number also acknowledged that the seminar had helped them

question their taken-for-granted assumptions and better understand how they might unwittingly categorise their clients. The feedback presented above includes specific comments relating to the 'I Poem' and demonstrates how the practitioners noted that they would use the 'I Poem' in their own practice; and would also use it with their students on degree programmes or post graduate careers course.

Similarly, I delivered a seminar based on my research to a cohort of Ed Doc students at my own institution - The University of Central Lancashire (Bradley, 2012c). On this occasion the focus was, firstly, on the 'I Poem' as an analytical tool, and, secondly, as a tool to aid reflection. The feedback was similar to previous feedback. In addition, one Ed Doc student subsequently took the idea of an 'I Poem' and used it to unearth the voice of a candidate applying for a job, saying:

> *Last week I was interviewing for a post and I used the 'I Poem' to analyse the interviewee's statement to support their application. It was a great tool and my colleague also started to use it. She thought it was great. The main reason I decided to use it was that I had a statement that was a massive 6 pages of single spacing point 10 text about why they should get the job. We found that during interview the traits that we had found it the 'I Poem' did in fact reflect in the candidate's. This is something I will definitely use for any applications for posts in the future.*
>
> *(Anonymous, May 2012)*

This further evidences the role for and scope of the 'I Poem', and points to areas for further research and development that broadens the consideration of the possible application of the 'I Poem'.

It is my belief that a further publication, or series of publications, could be developed from the thesis, perhaps most particularly in relation to the conclusion that reflective practice within the profession itself has become taken-for-granted. In addition, there

is potential to publish the findings relating to the 'I Poem' and its contribution to new knowledge, highlighting role of the 'I Poem' in assisting practitioners to unearth taken-for-granted aspects of their self. Also valuable would be further research regarding the role that categorization and/or whiteness have on clients' careers choices. I also believe it would be valuable to complete a publication that considers the beneficial nature of confessional narratives in unearthing taken-for-granted aspects of self.

The suggestions for future research and publications outlined above are closely tied to the research and findings discussed in this thesis. There were occasions, however, when the research triggered ideas that might have taken me in a new and somewhat different direction. Thus, for example, in Chapter 7 I noted Jane's use of laugher at points throughout our numerous conversational interviews (cf. Box 7.6 (a) and Box 7.7 (a)). I briefly discussed my interest in these moments and suggested that the laughter could be a defensive mechanism and/or Jane's way of dealing with difficult situations (Lee & Stanko, 2003; Glenn, 2003). Whilst I found this intriguing, it was not the prime concern of the research at that point, and I did not pursue it further. However, it is a topic that I might be interested in exploring at a later date, especially as there could be links to Thompson's (2011; 2012) discussion regarding how humour acts as a vehicle to transmit and reinforce what might be considered socially unacceptable social norms.

10.6.2 : Methodological issues

Chapter 5: Methodology reported my rationale and decision making regarding how best to collect empirical data for my research. As befits a thesis with the concept of reflection at its centre, there is scope as I near the end of my PhD research journey, for further consideration of aspects of the methodologies used. Whilst conducting my research, and particularly whilst undertaking the data analysis, at times I found the literature relating to methodologies to be overly general and lacking clear guidance. I utilised Moustakas' (1990) step by step guide for data analysis, which as a new

researcher, led me fairly clearly through most stages of analysis. However, some areas were vague, for example when Moustakas (1990), discussing the final stage of heuristic research, says the 'researcher develops a *creative synthesis*, an integration of the material that reflects the researcher's intuition, imagination, and personal knowledge of meanings and essences of the experience' (p. 50). I found this final stage difficult to interpret and started to question whether I would be able to defend how I had reached the final findings and conclusions. I returned to the literature for answers, and found this vagueness reiterated by others. Mauthner & Doucet (2008) discussed these issues in great detail, recognising that researchers may gloss over reporting on, or questions about, how they analyse data, stemming from 'anxiety about whether we have analysed the data in "the right way"' (p. 123). They also concluded that the data analysis is often the 'most vulnerable' area of research and highlighted how in writing about our analysis we expose ourselves to scrutiny.

I sought, therefore, to explore additional ways of ensuring that when my data were scrutinised I would be able to defend it confidently. I sought further literature on the subject, noting the work of Thorne (2000) who also concluded that data analysis is the most complex and mysterious part of qualitative research. She notes that 'some authors use language that accentuates this sense of mystery and magic' (p. 68). This mystery or complexity is compounded when more experienced researchers and academics in the field use similar language in an interchangeable fashion to mean different things; adding to the difficulties experienced by the novice researcher. This is very much how I felt myself at the beginning of my PhD journey.

Thorne (2000) discusses how qualitative researchers make claims about the conceptual categories emerging from their data 'almost as if they left the raw data out overnight and awoke to find that the data analysis fairies had organised the data into a coherent new structure that explained everything!' (p. 68). This for me summed up my response to some of the literature I had been reading, and also linked into the

notion of 'creative synthesis'. I felt I needed some firmer foundations on which to base my analysis. Thorne (2000) discusses a phenomenological approach developed by Colaizzi (1978) which had rendered the phenomenological attitude into a set of manageable steps which also gave researchers in this field a process for working with data (Holloway & Wheeler, 2009). I subsequently added this to my researcher-as-bricoleur tool kit. In retrospect I can see that as I progressed through my PhD, some of the quandaries that I experienced were resolved or, at least, mitigated, nonetheless I believe this is an area that could be clarified through further discussion and publications. Whilst there are numerous research guides to follow, including Moustakas (1990) and Colaizzi (1978), there is also the idea of trusting our own minds which have guided us as researchers throughout the research process. Should we be more open and less guarded about revealing the mental processes we utilise as researchers?

Other methodological issues that I grappled with whilst undertaking the present research related to the vastness of the data and the multiple cycles that the research passed through. Deciding what data to include and what to omit was a constant preoccupation. At times I felt I was undertaking a constant balancing act between being too detailed (and long winded) and being too sketchy (and cursory) in my reporting. My goal was to be honest, authentic and transparent, but this did not necessarily make decision making about what to include much easier.

Not only has it been hard to do justice to the wealth of data collected, but also, whilst the thesis portrays the research in a linear fashion, in reality this was often not the case (Kleining & Witt, 2000). The cyclical and iterative nature of the research resulted in simultaneously collecting data for the next cycle, whilst analysing the data from the previous cycle. To ensure the transparency of the research, procedures for the method and methodology were systematically followed (cf. *Chapter 5: Methodology* and *Chapter 6: Methods: The research design and the research process*). In

particular I took guidance from the concepts and phases of heuristic research and the Listening Guide, *Chapters 7, 8 & 9,* to present data from Data sets one, two and three, and to include extracts from the transcripts and significant statements from the data. In reporting the data, I systematically followed the same process through each of the three cycles, presenting the meanings drawn from the data alongside interim discussion of findings, which, for cycles one and two, preceded the subsequent cycle. Nonetheless, it is likely that the linear nature of a thesis makes the research seem 'tidier' and less 'organic' than was the case.

The research evolved from a critical examination of my own taken-for-granted assumptions in practice and I struggled, most notably in the early stages of my research, with the question of how and to what extent to include my own voice and self. In this instance I found the philosophy and methods of the heuristic approach to be of great assistance. This methodology justified my starting the research with a focus on the self, on me as the researcher, and on my own experience (Moustakas, 1990) of my taken-for-granted assumptions, specifically concerning whiteness. To capture my own voice, I engaged with an auto-ethnographic approach, recognising that using the self as the only source of data has its critics. However, I was open and transparent about this and, in order to combat the criticisms of using an auto-ethnographic approach, I decided that after the first research cycle involving Jane and myself, I would broaden out the research to engage with practitioners who were less close both to the research and to me as the researcher. Whilst this undoubtedly brought benefits, it was at the cost of ceasing my exploration of Jane and my narratives and self. In a sense, I sacrificed depth for breadth in order to meet what I imagined would be the requirements for more 'objective' rather than 'subjective' data. It is my hope that, in the future, I will have the confidence and opportunity to develop my self-reflexive enquiry.

In summary, I floundered methodologically at times. Perhaps this is an inevitable part of the PhD experience; however, I also believe that there is scope for writing a critical discussion relating to the lack of clarity in relation to how we support new researchers to use and report on the methods they employ in order to collect and analyse their data.

At a far more specific and focused level, I also believe there is scope for a publication devoted to advancing existing knowledge on the use of the 'I Poem' as a tool for data analysis.

Since embarking on this research journey in 2006, the research has been a constant entity in my life. It has always been on in my mind, at times at the very forefront and at other times like a back track in my subconscious. At the start of this journey I had little or no comprehension of how difficult or powerful a journey this was likely to be. Whilst saying this, it has been a life changing journey and one that I feel has equipped me to take the next stage of my own career journey. I have discussed my own personal voice and my researcher's voice, and I now feel confident to share my research in the belief that others can, and are willing to, listen and question their practice. I have taken a step towards my goal of inspiring practitioners to get the most out of their reflective practice and unearth their own taken-for-granted assumptions for the sake of us all.

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APPENDIX 1 -: APPLICATION FORM Request for Ethical Clearance for Research with Human Subjects

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

| Please circle your level of experience in conducting research. 1 = No experience 2 = Some experience 3 = Experienced 4 = Very experienced | ST MARTIN'S COLLEGE | NO: |

APPLICATION FORM

Request for Ethical Clearance
for Research with Human Subjects

The attention of researchers is drawn to the College's Code of Conduct for Research and related documentation available on SMARTIS. **This document should be completed with reference to both the Ethical Clearance Checklist and the Notes of Guidance**

This form, **completed in black type***, is to be submitted to the Research Office. Please do not fix with staples.* **Applicants will receive a response within 30 days**

RESEARCH TEAM

*First-named Chief Investigator ** *Mrs Liz Bradley* *(Surname, Title, Initials)*	*Faculty/Division/School*
Other Investigators *(Surname, Title, Initials)*	*Faculty/Division/School* *(for students include enrolled degree details)*

* Outcomes of this request will be forwarded to this person

DECLARATION BY FIRST-NAMED INVESTIGATOR

1.   The information contained is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I accept responsibility for the conduct of the proposed research and agree to abide by the College's Code of Conduct for Research and/or applicable professional code(s) of ethics (such as BPS Code of Ethics) and any other provision as determined by the Ethics Sub Committee.

2.   I undertake to ensure that data are collected and maintained in accord with College's requirements.

3.   I, together with my co-investigators and any support staff, have the appropriate qualifications, experience and access to facilities to conduct the research as described in the attached documentation, and will be able to deal with any emergencies and/or contingencies that may arise during or as a result of the conduct of the proposed research.

Signature: Liz Bradley   Date: 18th April 2007

1.   PROJECT DETAILS

1.1   Project Title (50 words max.)

Has the Every Child Matters agenda improved outcomes of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) young minority ethnic people aged 16-19 in East Lancashire'? Is there a lack of cultural and religious awareness, or is whiteness of advice & guidance professional hindering engagement – these two statements are not either/or, but part of the same issue of cultural dominance. This sounds as though you are predetermining the outcome of the research so maybe you could think about, for example: Is there a sensitivity to the cultural and religious diversity of their client group, or is white dominance influencing the engagement of advice and guidance professionals? Of course, this also assumes that the professional will be white!

Proposed duration of the Project: from   ……01/10/.06 to   ……/10/11

1.2.   Peer   review
If the project has already been peer-reviewed, or will be reviewed eg by a funding body or by NHS Ethics Committee, please provide details, and if relevant, any results

I attended the Postgradute Researcher Arts Social Sciences & Humanities PRASH conference in Liverpool, the feedback was positive and many of phd peers felt the research had relevance. I have requested some written feedback.

1.3   Briefly describe the research purpose, techniques and procedures involved or the conduct of the proposed research (150 words).

I wish to explore whether the lack of awareness of culture/ or religious beliefs and whiteness on the part of professionals is having a negative result on young ethnic groups engaging in education and training. I wish to undertake a pilot study, where individuals will be asked to give reflective accounts of their experiences. The pilot study will enable me to revise some questions and further my research for the main study. I intend to collect these reflections from a variety of young ethnic people aged 16-19, mainly from South Asian cultures, this could include those from a Muslim religion, but as there is a class system within this culture, I intend to try and work with individuals will be from a cross section of class. Initially I intend to discuss the research will both male and female, but there is a possibility that the research may lean toward females. As well as professionals from diverse backgrounds, from a number of agencies, that may provide advice & guidance. I intend to use Participatory Action Research, mainly as it is committed to engaging participants, which this research intends to do through the story telling and reflections as well as its commitment to justice and democracy.

NOTE: *Where an agency (eg, government department, statutory authority, recognised cultural collective) is the source of either participants or confidential information, attach a statement(s) from an authorised officer confirming the agency's support for the proposed research, or indicate plans to obtain one.*

1.4 How will stakeholders obtain details of outcomes from the proposed research?

(Stakeholders may include participants, project sponsors and/or other interested parties)

As I intend to use PAR as a method of research, those who participate in the research will also be engaged in the research. It will be there work as well as mine, I want individuals to feel they ownership of the process. Once the findings a written up, individuals involved will be asked if they are happy with the interpretation. They will be asked if they feel the have been fairly represented, and if they wish they can remain anonymous.

The final findings will be part of my research, and therefore be accessible to all parties that take part. I expect that the research will be available as part of my mphil/phd, these maybe able to be accessed at university libraries, through academic sources and conferences.

2.   PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

2.1   Who are the proposed participants and how will they be selected/recruited?

Young ethnic individuals aged 16-19, both male and female who are from a varity of class backgrounds. These will be recruited through links I have previously established in East Lancashire. One of these will be a women's group who I previously worked with, they also work with young Asian women. They have already agreed to me working with some of there groups. I intend to talk to the group about the research and give them a copy of the abstract. They will then be asked by the Asian outreach workers and myself if they wish to take part further, this will hopefully help them not feeling coerced into taking part.

The selection will be made by age, ethnic groups, and their transition stage in life.

Advice & Guidance Professionals, these will be recruited via agencies both voluntary/ public who work with young ethnic individuals. There selection will be by the ethnic group only, 'White' 'British' , but then to widen the research and involve professionals from a variety of ethnic origins to see whether these barriers of communication are present not matter what your origin.

What mechanisms will be adopted to follow the College Policy on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults by protecting the rights of those who lack the capacity to provide informed consent?

Firstly the research will need to gain a CRB disclosure, to enable the researcher to work in the 'field'.

All participants will be aged 16 and over, I intend to gain full informed consent. If any of the group feel they are unsure about the research and unable to provide consent, then they may want to gain consent from a parent or guardian.

2.3   What mechanisms will be used to obtain informed consent and include the participant's right to withdraw from the study?

I intent to explain the research area to each individual, both verbally and with an

information pack, where English is the individuals second language I will use an interpreter, and have any text translated.

In the pack will be a letter explaining the nature of the research, along with a form to sign to give there their consent, and details of how they can withdraw from the study if they so wish.

Included in the letter will be a section that will explain to the participant that their anonymity will be kept. And that whilst referring to any material used a reference number or code will be used, I will aggregate the data to remove individual characteristics, therefore securing the anonymity.

I intend to fully discuss the research with all participants involved, there will be opportunities for group discussion, one to one discussion and the opportunity to ask questions then or at a later date.

Where it is proposed to use an information sheet and/or consent form, please attach examples)

3. CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

3.1   Where this project involves the use of detailed personal information, how is it proposed to meet provisions of the Data Protection Act?

I intent to follow the points outline by the Data protection act, and data collected will be:

- processed fairly and lawfully

- processed for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and not further processed in any way that is incompatible with the original purpose

- adequate, relevant and not excessive

- accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date

- kept for no longer than is necessary for the purpose for which it is being used

- processed in line with the rights of individuals

- kept secure with appropriate technical and organisational measures taken to protect the information

3.2   How is it proposed to maintain confidentiality and/or anonymity in respect of collected data/information? Particular attention to detail is necessary in the case of research involving any of the following:

- *structured questionnaires*

- *participant observation*

- *audio or video-taping of participants and/or events*

- *access to personal information (inc. student, patient or client details)*

Refer back to section 2.3 & 3.1

Individuals will be given an abstract of the initial research and asked to give reflections of their experiences.

The research intends to record these on a digital recorder, this will be downloaded onto a computer system and saved onto disk. The researcher intends to start the recording with a code, that she will use rather than revealing any personal details. The researcher will be the owner of the information given, but intends to interpret the information in a professional manner, along with permission of the individuals involved.

The researcher will also give the option for those participating in the research to send her written reflections, again these will be given a code reference no to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

4.   RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1   Identify, as far as possible, any negative events which might arise during or as a consequence of the proposed research. Particular attention to detail is necessary where the proposed research involves any of the following:

- *administration of any stimuli, tasks, investigations or procedures which participants might experience as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant;*

- *performance of any acts which might diminish the self esteem of participants or cause them to experience depression, embarrassment or regret;*

- *deception of participants;*

- *collection of body tissues or fluid samples.*

- Detail proposed support for participants who experience negative sequelae.

I intend to explain that this researcher intends with their help to help others in the future. By sharing this information to improve practice in the future. However in the event that one of the participants may experience a recollection of a past negative experience, I may need to signpost the individual to the counselling profession.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The College is fully committed to the principle of freedom of academic inquiry, judgement, opinion and publication, subject to UK law, to the requirements of the College's Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Research, and to any specific contractual   obligations   of   commercial   confidentiality.

Office Use Only
Date Received   *Registration No.*

☐   *Clearance Granted*   ☐   *Clearance Not Granted:*
revisions suggested as per accompanying letter by: (date)
Period of Approval
Signature (Chair Ethics Sub-Committee)   *DateDate   Certification/*
Advice Issued

APPENDIX 2: Information sheet

Information Sheet

Liz Bradley: Every Child / Youth Matters: MPhil/PhD Student, University of Cumbria, Bowerham Rd., Lancaster, LA1 3JD.

Title of project: Has the 'Every Child Matters' agenda improved outcomes of 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) young ethnic people aged 16-19 in East Lancashire?

Please read the information contained on this sheet. Along with this sheet there is a form to sign to give your consent, and details of how you can withdraw from the study if you so wish.

Please note that your anonymity will be kept, and that whilst referring to any material used a reference number or code will be attached. I will aggregate the data to remove individual characteristics, therefore securing your anonymity.

The research outline below gives a summary of the research which is in its very early stages. Please read this, and I will ask you to reflect on any experiences which you feel are relevant to this. We can discuss the research and you will be given full opportunity to ask any questions you feel appropriate.

Research Outline:

I wish to speak to white western professionals about their awareness of how 'whiteness' and any other issues that might affect their practice, also listen to stories from young people from minority ethnic backgrounds of how their cultural heritage and upbringing may affect professional relationships and outcomes for them. '*…the transition to earning a living is one of the important outcomes of education and is a critical stage in the life of almost every young person '*(Unicef, 2006, p.20). Child poverty in the UK rose threefold between 1979 and 1997 to an estimated 3-4 million children growing up in poverty. A child brought up in poverty is more likely to become an adult on a low income (Sutherland, 2003). If young people are going to escape this poverty trap, education and employment opportunities are of vital consequence. One in three Muslims do not have any qualifications. Does this mean that they require better advice and guidance? Professionals who deliver this service may have little or no knowledge of this group's cultural heritage. The Labour Trends Journal (2003) indicates that ethnic women were less active in education. We need to be aware of this, and understand more fully the factors which are creating unequal opportunities. Howard (2006) questions 'whiteness' and our capacity to work with individuals from different ethnic groups. Pearce (2003) is critical, and queries whether white educators understand how ethnicity affects their work. My research will be looking to contribute to debate and understand in this area of study.

Consent Form

Title of project: Has the 'Every Child Matters' agenda improved outcomes of 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) young ethnic people aged 16-19 in East Lancashire?

Researcher: Liz Bradley: Every Child / Youth Matters: MPhil/PhD Student, University of Cumbria, Bowerham Rd., Lancaster, LA1 3JD.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the research outline for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I confirm that I have had sufficient time to consider whether or not want to be included in the study

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

4. I agree that the researcher can take and use photographs, to be included in the research

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Identification Number for this study:

Name   Date
Signature

Name of Person taking consent   Date
        Signature
(If different from researcher)

Comments or concerns during the study
If you have any comments or concerns you may discuss these with the researcher.

APPENDIX 3: Amendment to ethics approval

Liz Bradley
MPhil/PhD Student ECM
24 Wyresdale Cres
Preston
PR2 6UN

Dr Hugh Cutler
Dean for Research
University of Cumbria
Lancaster LA1 3JD   22/03/08

Dear Dr Hugh Cutler

Re: <u>Amendment to ethics approval</u>

The original ethics approval application stated that all participants would be met on a face to face basis. The application outlined what mechanisms would be used to obtain informed consent and include the participant's right to withdraw from the study. Also how I intended to maintain confidentiality, anonymity in respect of collected data and information provided.

As the research has progressed, and the pilot study got underway, unforeseen issues have arisen in relation to meeting participants face to face. Due to commitments (work, home etc) of others, who initially indicated they would participate. Some of the same have requested that I email them the consent form, story, and questions, and they will respond via the same medium.

I am aware that this is not a format I outlined in my original approval, and therefore ask if this addition can be made.

Issues arising:

Security of emailed information, confidentiality and or anonymity
Careful consideration is required of the ethical issues, in the use of email as a research tool. I realize that I will be unable to guarantee, the anonymity of the participant, therefore this may well compromise whether the participant may respond. Even though within the email I will try and reassure confidentiality.
In the first instance, I need to state to those who are participating that no matter how well protected; emails are there is still a possibility that the content may be accessed by another individual. Therefore, I as an individual cannot guarantee the security, confidentiality or anonymity of the content of the email. At this point to give the participant the right to withdraw from the study.

Additional measures would be:
I propose that once the content of the email have been printed out, that the email itself will be deleted.

To ensure that my email account is password protected and not shared with any third person.

That once the information is printed out that it will be treated in the same way as the data collected in a face to face interview.
I hope the above considerations meet with the approval needed to continue.

Many Thanks

Liz Bradley
MPhil/PhD Student ECM

APPENDIX 4: **Capture sheet data set two**

Who do you think you are?

Seminar: March 3rd National Careers Guidance Show (NCGS) London

Name:

Job title:

Organisation:

Email:

Time today is limited, so the purpose of this document is:

- To hope gain a better understanding of your perception of reflection
- To help the capture of as much detail as possible to inform the development of a reflective model
- To gain feedback from the seminar, to inform future presentations

---

You can complete this section either whilst you're waiting for the session to start or when we come to it in the presentation.

What do we mean by 'reflection'?

What do we mean by 'reflexive'?

Are you reflective (**yes**) (**no**)

If no, is there a reason why?

Do you have time to reflect (**yes**) (**no**)

If no, why not:

What do you use to aid this reflection

Step 1: Listen to the language (key words and phrases).

Step 2: Listen for the plot: Jane is white woman, who is a PA working in East Lancashire with Asian women. Here narrative tells of her developing relationship with a client, the rappor building.

Step 3: Listen for the 'I' in the narrative, (using Jane's narrative) underline any 'I' along with the verb and any other accompanying words to creating an 'I poem' (write this on the back of this sheet).

Step 4: Listen for YOUR own personal responses, making explicit any thoughts or feelings.

To be complete after steps tasks:
In this section can you give some feedback on the your feelings and thought from going through the steps

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 equals not at all and 5 equals very much do you feel the steps:

How did the steps:					
Helped question your own assumptions	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Helped question your own practice	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Helped you think about things you had not thought about before	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Any further information:

Many thanks for completing this document:

□ Request a copy of this document to be sent via email or post

□ Disagree to the information being used in the research (Anonymity adhered too)

APPENDIX 5: **Capture sheet Data set three**

Who do you think you are?

Seminar: October 5th: NAEGA: Guidance professionals: valued and valuable? Manchester

Name:
Job title:
Organisation:
Email:

Time today is limited, so the purpose of this document is: To hope gain a better understanding of your use of reflection: To help the capture of as much detail as possible to inform the development of a reflective tool/model: To gain feedback from the seminar, to inform future presentations.

You can complete this section either whilst you're waiting for the session to start.

Q1.Are you reflective (**yes**) (**no**)
If no, is there a reason why?

Q2.How do you reflect on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and assumptions?

Q3.Do you write your reflections down, in either a log, journal or similar? (**yes**) (**no**)

If no how do you capture your reflections?

Q4.Do you go back to these reflections and try and understand what emerges? If so

how do you do this?

Q5.What might hinder you reflecting on your values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and

assumptions?

Step 1: Listen to the language (key words and phrases).

Step 2: Listen for the plot: Jane is white woman, who is a PA working in East Lancashire with Asian women. Here narrative tells of her developing relationship with a client.

Step 3: Listen for the 'I' in the narrative, (using Jane's narrative) underline any 'I' along with the verb and any other accompanying words to creating an 'I poem' (write this on the back of these sheets).

Step 4: Listen for YOUR own personal responses, making explicit any thoughts or feelings.

To be complete after steps tasks:
In this section can you give some feedback on the your feelings and thought from going through the steps

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 equals not at all and 5 equals very much do you feel the steps:

How did the steps (with Jane's narrative):					
Helped question your own assumptions	1	2	3	4	5
Helped question your own practice	1	2	3	4	5
Helped you think about things you had not thought about before	1	2	3	4	5

Q6.What are your **thoughts** and **feelings**, did the steps help you think about a past experience, if so what was this, when was this?

Q7.Do you think the 'I poem' helped you? (**yes/ no or maybe**)

If yes or maybe explain further

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 equals not at all and 5 equals very much do you feel the 'I poem':

How did the 'I Poem' (with your own narrative):					
Helped you analyse your reflections	1	2	3	4	5
Helped identify something you had previously missed	1	2	3	4	5
Helped you see through the mass of text/words	1	2	3	4	5
Helped you detach from the emotions or feelings	1	2	3	4	5
Helped you take ownership of what has emerged	1	2	3	4	5

Q8.Any further thoughts or feelings in relation to using the 'I poem':

Any further comments:

Many thanks for completing this document:

□ Request a copy of this document to be sent via email or post

□ If you would be happy to give further feedback on the use of the 'I Poem' in your practice

□ Disagree to the information being used in the research (Anonymity adhered too)