

Action is the enemy of thought

An auto ethnographic study detailing the design and application of a psychodynamic reflective process within the role of trainee educational psychologist.

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# ABSTRACT

I am currently on placement within a local authority educational psychology service whilst training to become an educational psychologist. This has given me the opportunity to conduct an auto ethnographic piece of research demonstrating the importance and value of reflexive practice within the role of and EP. In order to do this I have developed a process of reflexive practice which comprises of six stages, taken from Moustakas Heuristic Enquiry (1958) and appropriates three techniques taken from the psychodynamic paradigm, free association, listening with the third ear and dream interpretation. This psychodynamic reflexive process has been applied to myself during my role as TEP in an effort to increase my self-awareness within my own practice. I have endeavoured to explore the possibility of developing a feasible approach to reflexive practice for EP practitioners to engage with a view to enhance their practice though increased self-awareness. While working as a trainee EP (TEP) I met with parents, teachers and children and during one week of this work I recorded four consultation conversations and my own spoken free associations. This information was then listened to repeatedly with the third ear, all dreams that I recalled were recorded and all reflective memos were stored over a six month period. At the end of the six month research process all of the data was collected and thematically analysed which led to the explication of one core theme about myself, ‘the importance of being useful’. The reflections on the process generated eleven themes regarding the process, which including ‘Use and importance of intuition’ and ‘Self-care: Nothing good lies in the unconscious’

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# THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

The process of developing this research has brought with it a degree of complexity. Therefore, in order to successfully present the research, it is firstly important to explain how this thesis is structured and offer the reader a map, in both written and pictorial formats *(see figure 1)*, of the research process.

The chapters within this thesis will be ordered as follows:

Chapter one, **‘Introduction- my journey into this research’**. This chapter will outline the research questions, which were created from an interest in self-awareness, reflective and reflexive practice and psychodynamics. In addition, this chapter explains the rationale for the research as well as introducing the reader to the core components that have organised and developed this research: auto-ethnography, Heuristic Inquiry and psychodynamic terminology/techniques.

Chapter two, **the role the educational psychologist** this brief chapter sets out the context in which the research is based and discusses the changing climate Educational Psychologists find themselves in.

Chapter three. ‘**Heuristic Enquiry’** (Moustakes, 1990). Heuristic Inquiry has been utilised to structure this research and has enabled me to design and execute a psychodynamic reflective practice. I will describe each of the six phases of heuristic enquiry, commencing with ‘initial engagement’. An overview of heuristics is presented here with the following chapter detailing the literature reviewed during the initial engagement phase.

Chapter Four: ‘**The literature review: ‘Initial engagement’**. The initial engagement, within Heuristic Inquiry, involved a review of the literature in the areas of interest - self-awareness, reflective practice, psychodynamics, including three specific psychodynamic techniques, free association (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000), listening with the third ear (Reik, 1948) and dream interpretation (Holloway, 2011). These concepts are presented in the literature review during the initial engagement phase of heuristic enquiry, which supports the aims of the research as well as my pragmatic philosophical positionality, and developed a process of psychodynamic reflection.

Chapter Five. **Methodology.** Here I will explain how the auto-ethnography, Heuristic Inquiry and the psychodynamic paradigm have been used together to create this research and develop a method of psychodynamic practice within a heuristic framework. This chapter will also include the **‘Method- The psychodynamic reflective practice’**. This section of Chapter Five will be an explanation of exactly how each Heuristic Inquiry phase was engaged with and what psychodynamic techniques were used within each phase in developing a psychodynamic reflective practice.

Chapter Six: ‘**Ethics**’, which will discuss the ethical implications and considerations of engaging with this research.

Chapter Seven: **‘Discussion- a thematic analysis.** This chapter will consist of two sections. Section one will address the first question of this research and will draw all the collated information I obtained about myself during the psychodynamic reflective process and present that information as a core theme. Section two of this chapter will discuss the experience of engaging with a psychodynamic reflexive practice and is presenting a themes from reflective notes made during the research.

Chapter eight: ‘**Conclusions’**, which will discuss the research in relation to the implications for EP training and practice and future development.

# CHAPTER ONE

# My journey into this research

‘Action is the enemy of thought’, according to Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). This statement underpins much of what I have attempted to explore through engaging with this research. As a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) or an educational psychologist (EP); when I am not busy *doing* what am I doing? When I asked myself this question I realised that I am rarely not busy *doing* and this left me wondering what thoughts lay waiting for the action to cease. Is there an element of the ‘myself’ within practice that goes unheard and do I know how that ‘self’ is impacting on the actions I take?

‘As a practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing-in-practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he [sic] is doing ... (Schon, 1983, p61)

This chapter aims to present the reader with an understanding of how this research came to life. I will initially offer a brief personal history explaining my journey into the Educational Psychology career and research and therefore an understanding of the motivational factors which led to the research questions. This chapter will also introduce the reader to the context in which the research took place, which is also revisited in the methodology, and the key elements of the context that reinforced my passion and supported the research process. I aim to share with the reader what lies at the heart of this thesis and how I used the research questions to both enhance my self-awareness and therefore become more informed about the choices I make within my practice and encourage other practitioners to consider the value of self-awareness too.

As this is an extremely reflexive piece of work, a term that it explored in greater detail in the literature review, I have strived to remain transparent and reflexive in the documentation of the study;

‘Since qualitative research usually assumes that the researcher will influence with study, ‘reflexivity’ is often an important part of the transparency of the study. Reflexivity is the term used for explicit consideration of the specific ways in which it is likely that the study was influenced by the researcher. This may mean openly describing features of the study that may have influenced the data or the interpretations (such as researches background and interests). Sometimes it may be appropriate to include a reflexive analysis of how these features could have influenced the conclusions reached’ (Yardley, 2015, p. 268)

**My own experience of education**

Perhaps my journey to becoming an EP began at primary school. I attended a number of different primary schools due to family circumstancing and relocations through my early school years. During these years I struggled in education, I was always sent to do work with teaching assistants in small groups and although on reflection I now know this was due to my lower academic ability, at the time I was none the wiser. I recall one incident at primary school where the class were engaged with an independent task and were required to collect number cards, solve the puzzle and then collect another. The cards were different colours according to their difficulty, white was the most difficult. I remember thinking to myself, at the age of seven, ‘I need to try harder and I need to impress my new teacher, I will solve a white puzzle’. I collected the puzzle and sat down staring at it in total bemusement, I realised… I was stuck… I sat there for what felt like an eternity. The teacher came over to my table, and said out loud, ‘this is too hard for you, you should not be taking the white cards’, to which the other children sniggered. It was a brief experience that has stayed with me my entire life. I was, for want of better words, written off in education. My parents evening reviews expressed how lovely I was as a child but how concerned they were with my academic progress. I became more aware of this in my final two years at a different primary school. Other children also became more aware of my additional needs, some children were kind and some not; some teachers were patient and some were less so; some lessons felt encouraging whereas others felt disheartening.

Secondary school marked a new chapter and although my difficulties remained and the work intensity increased I managed to keep up, to a degree, through the support of a fantastic teacher. Achieving GCSE’s seemed like an unachievable task but my determination to work hard never seemed to cease and as a result of that my grades made some improvement during my third year in secondary school.

I have always been regarded by others and myself as a deeply reflective person, even as a young child. My silent musings about my own thoughts, feelings and behaviours have been a constant friend and foe of mine for as long as I can remember. Interest and curiosity about my own thoughts led to an interest in ‘others’ and by the age of 13, in the third year of secondary, I enrolled on my first ‘peer counselling’ course at secondary school. As a student who was never renowned for her academic abilities I all-of-a-sudden found myself top of the class by utilising a skills set that I felt embraced who I was as a person, curious, inquisitive, able to listen, interested, caring, passionate and reflective.

My fascination, love and dedication to counselling concept, theory and practice became a driving force in my life choices and even resulted in receiving a Young Derbyshire Achievers award at the age of 16 for my work within the school. It was also during this time that I began to see that some of my bids to support others may well have been an effort to avoid my own difficulties, and concepts such as the ‘wounded healer’ (McLeod, 2003, p. 490) were brought to my attention. This led to my own experience of receiving counselling where I began to discover the healing powers of talking for myself and addressing some of my own difficulties. These experiences hugely impacted on my academic choices such as health and social care, additional counselling night classes, sociology, psychology, professional counselling skills at Masters Level and psychology with counselling at university. During these years my skills set and experience developed as did my passion for self-awareness, self-care and ownership of the self within the complex world of working with people.

As I began my Educational Psychology career, as an assistant, I was surprised to find that some of the professionals I met, who I was excited to work with and finally learn from, were not the reflective, reflexive people I had hoped they would be. I was, I have to say, in some instances disappointed and even shocked at times. I wondered how such extensive training had not challenged people to become more reflective and reflexive in their work and in their interactions and professional relationships with others. I was also surprised at myself for having such incredibly high expectations of these EPs who I had, for years, placed on a pedestal and wondered if that said more about me or those I was judging… either way I was often left frustrated, and my time as an assistant motivated me to train to become more like the EPs who did present as reflective and inspiring. The EP training has provided me with a time to learn more about myself, expand my exposure to the role of the EP and broaden my psychological theoretical knowledge. I seem to have remained equally dedicated, if not more so, to the importance of understanding the self within the role of professional practice.

**The motivation to research this topic**

This research has been motivated by both professional and personal interests. From a professional perspective, as I have mentioned, I am interested in self-awareness and methods of developing the self as a practitioner in order to enhance practice. At the heart of this research is the importance of knowing myself by understanding my own values and beliefs within my practice by being reflexive. This is important for both myself from a professional development perspective and a self-care perspective, and for those I work with to benefit from empathic, congruent and thoughtful person centred psychology. This study demonstrates the potential benefits of entering into a deeply personal reflexive journey within my own EP practice with a view to motivate others to also consider holding reflexive practice and self-awareness in high esteem. I am aware that there is a seven years old still within me and that she might well feel very protective of those children who are written off, bullied, named called and considered a low achiever. I find myself within a profession where I can challenge systems, support children and families and help promote positive outcomes, but I feel that the hard work starts from within the self and it is important for me to own my drivers and be aware of how they impact on my practice.

Reflective and reflexive practice are of great interest to me as a process of understanding and learning from experience and understanding how our own values and beliefs can impact on others. Psychodynamics fascinates me and the techniques that can be appropriated to understand the unknown self in greater detail. In my short time within the fast moving, intensely pressured and complex TEP world (Billington, 2006), I have found there to be little time afforded to reflective practice and, as a TEP I often find myself in the ‘action’, minimising the time and potentially the emphasis on thought (Mellor, 1998). I am also often left curious about the feelings and emotions that situations and interactions, and indeed people, can evoke in me and wonder what impact my own self has on those I work with and the decisions I make.

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

(Chang, 2006, p. 591 cites C.G. Jung)

In any given profession the tools one uses must be understood well in order for them to be utilised effectively. Within the EP profession there are several tools which can help understand and problem solve casework, such as psychometric tests, dynamic assessments, checklists and charts. These tools are studied, practised and learnt both before and during their administration. This research is focussed on the fact that it is my view that the first ‘tool’ an EP has access to is themselves; arguably the most powerful ‘tool’ they will ever possess, and one that is powered by the knowledge and information and experience they have gained not just through their training but their life so far, Etherington (2004). This research is grounded in and supported by this literature, which states that the more understanding I have about myself, the more effective I may be in my practice.

‘As helpers we should wisely remember that we are our own most important counselling instrument and that what we know and possess of ourselves makes a great difference in whether we help others effectively or not’ (Kennedy, 1977, p. 8)

**The context this research is set in**

Within my current two year practice placement, I work for a local authority alongside a team of EPs at various stages in their careers. I work with a small cluster of schools, primary and secondary, and these schools consider me ‘their link TEP’ and I often refer to them as ‘my schools’. I work with schools, children and young people and their families with a huge range of difficulties and/or concerns. These may be behaviours, emotional, specific learning difficulties, social skills difficulties or a combination of any or all of the above. Some cases involve child protection concerns, school and parent relationship breakdowns, school refusing children, and young people or cases where everyone feels lost and confused. I often work systemically with schools, drawing on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1978) within consultation models by having conversations with parents, staff and the child. I enjoy working in a child centred manner and often utilise person construct psychology to help gain the voice of the child. I often take a Rogerian approach to my conversations with children, parents and teachers, focussing on the core conditions and building rapport. As well as this I incorporate a variety of tools such as reflecting teams work, supervision, observations, solution focussed approaches and person centred planning approaches. Less commonly, but also within my practice, I take more behavioural approaches such as function behavioural analysis, and assessment tools such as standardised tests, all of which is in an effort to triangulate the information I collect to help work together with all the stakeholders to support the child and work towards positive change. The placements I am working within are always happy for me to explore new ideas and work creatively in order to understand a family’s story, as well as offer guidance that is supported by the information I have collected, and psychological theory which is appropriate to the child or ‘problem’ in question.

I can see, through my previous practice, that I consistently endeavour to build a good, robust rapport with ‘my schools’ and those I work with, and I work incredibly hard to be likeable, friendly, accommodating and useful. This approach to working in complex dynamics is supported by Rick Beaver, who believes that rapport is so important that; ‘It is most unlikely that any constructive work is likely to be achieved without this’ (Beaver, 1996, p. 10).

 Each school is allocated a number of hours per year and they may use them as they wish. Some of ‘my schools’ buy in extra time from the EP service and therefore me. All statutory work is tended to as a priority and is not time limited. Each school receives a planning session at the beginning of each term, and I make sure I regularly keep in contact with the school, mainly the SENCo, to keep up to speed with events. I encourage reflective practice in my schools by offering staff supervision and have attempted to set up reflective teams groups, some of which have been successful and others more challenging.

**Supervision in practice**

In my current placement I have found myself in the fortunate position of working alongside a psychologist who values supervision in a similar manner to myself. The service offers a reflecting team supervision for all staff to attend, although this is not well attended, it is available. I have experienced supervision sessions that have used solution focussed approaches and ones with a more psychodynamic approach, depending on the subjects brought to the session. The supervision has often followed the model presented by Hawkins and Shohet (2007), which pays attention to:

* Managerial
* Educative
* Supportive

The three areas in the Hawkins and Shohet (2007) model have supported my understanding of my personal time management, organisational understand and processes within the local authority. The educative element has encouraged me to up skill in certain areas when and where I become aware of a need to increase my knowledge in a certain area. My experience has also been ‘challenging’ to match the level of support, which has enabled me to congruently face my weaker areas and develop myself and my practice to an acceptable standard. The topics I have taken to a supervisor range from more simple matters of checking reports and seeking guidance on more complex decisions, to managing my own emotions in difficult casework or specific situations. This has been specifically casework based and overall EP role based. I have been able to freely share my self-doubt and insecurities and my moments of pride and success, and unpick the reasons for those outcomes by being reflexive and exploring how my own values and beliefs are impacting on myself. The supervision I have received has been regular, one hour per week at the same time on the same day, throughout my two year placement. Each session was written up in brief note format and stored for my own records, as well as university requirements. Comparing this to my peers, this appears to be an uncommon luxury rather than a standard procedure. It has been through this experience I have come to see the practice and emotional value in reflexive supervision and practice and it has without a shadow of a doubt contributed to the creation of this research project.

I draw heavily on my supervision, and this time is of paramount importance to me and I have been fortunate to experience supervision with a psychodynamic strand running through it on a number of occasions, when it was the most appropriate approach to take.

‘Supervision can be a very important part of taking care of oneself, staying open to new learning; and is an indispensable part of the helper’s well-being, ongoing self-development, self-awareness and commitment to development’ (Hawkins & Shonet, 2006, p. 5)

This supervisory relationship has been invaluable to me throughout this two year placement and has provided me with an opportunity to experience the power of a psychodynamic lens. I have become more aware, painfully at times, of my areas of development and my weaknesses and potentially the reasons for those weaknesses or specific challenges. However, through a high challenge and high support supervisory relationship, I have been able to challenge myself and improve my practice in areas of difficulty.

**Personal motivational factors, which drive this research**

As well as the personal experiences I have already shared, from a personal perspective, honesty, integrity, respect for individuality and congruence, which have been championed by Abraham Maslow (1954) from a humanistic paradigm, (Martin, 2007, p. 80) are some of the core values that I endeavour to live up to in both my personal and professional life. They are also closely related to the core conditions presented by Carl Rogers in his person-centred approach to working with people, Unconditional positive regards, empathy and congruence, Rogers (1961), which again are core themes in my current practice. It has therefore been very important for me to uphold these personal values in undertaking this research. In following my passions, ethics and interests, this, perhaps ‘unconventional research’, Moustakas (1985) has challenged the more conventional approach of going ‘out there’ and finding new information by emphasising the importance of the ‘self’ (Froggett, et al., 2015) in practice and using this concept as a starting point and central theme.

The desire to simply understand myself more can also, in turn, lead to improved relationships and a greater sense of empathy, Barron (2003). To use the words of Gergen ‘the relationship is everything’ and so, in any given interaction I have in my work, I am part of that relationship. It is therefore important to understand myself as well as possible in order to understand and support others. In addition to this, the research aims to encourage practitioners to engage with their own journey of increasing their self-awareness. I seek to call for a re-thinking in the training that is offered to trainee EPs by incorporating a greater emphasis on self-awareness and reflective and reflexive practice.

**University and placement combined**

This local authority EP practice runs alongside my university placement, where I attend monthly seminars and complete essays and placement folders detailing the practical work in which I have engaged. This work does include reflective elements such as ‘end of year reflections’ and ‘supervision logs’, which are submitted to the university throughout the year. The university course does emphasise the importance of reflective and reflexive practice but the level a student can engage is variable. I have always endeavoured to deeply engage with the ownership of the self within my practice and use the reflective and reflexive spaces as valuable opportunities to learn about the kind of EP I am and want to be. This course does not actively encourage personal therapy nor does it offer any extensive psychodynamic training. My belief in the value of self-exploration comes from personal experience of engagement with therapy and my fascination in psychodynamics comes from a brief exposure in previous courses, this current course and personal reading and research.

**The development of the research**

In the initial stages of deciding on a research topic, which is built upon the personal and professional motivational factors discussed above, I discovered Moustakas Heuristic Inquiry Moustakas (1990) as a means with which to approach the organisation of my research. It is a six-phase research design which involves the researcher’s immersion into a topic of great personal interest. The emphasis is on ownership of the experience, an awareness of the self and a qualitative depiction of the researcher’s experience. Moustakes (1990) offers a description of how to engage with each phase but encourages the researcher to intuitively work through each phase rather than systematically follow a formula. I embraced Moustakas’s encouragement to draw on my intuition and remain true to my own values and beliefs throughout, but also being explicit about them.

Through utilising a Heuristic Inquiry design and by drawing on my interests and values, I have developed a process of psychodynamic reflective practice. Although heuristics enquiry has been used to design this research it is also the framework I have used to demonstrate a feasible, workable model of psychodynamic reflective practice for EPs to engage with. This model could be engaged with by a practitioner, outside of the research remit, which will be explored later and a guideline of this can be found in *appendix a*.

**The presentation of this thesis**

This thesis is written in the first person and the accounts are personal reflections on the experience and the outcomes of this research. The emphasis on myself in this research could be critiqued for being narcissistic and somewhat self-indulgent. I would encourage this discussion and challenge such critiques with a number of less self-indulgent motivational factors for engaging with this subject. Firstly, an honest and congruent place to start would be to engage with this psychodynamic reflexive practice myself before I would encourage another practitioner to try this method. I have endeavoured to approach this research in a ‘self-searching’ manner, rather than a ‘self-seeking’ manner, the latter being described as more narcissistically motivated Freud (1904), Reik (1948), Frosh (2012). I have done this by curiously investigating my own practice, without seeking affirmation but rather motivated by a desire to understand and inform my practice for the benefit of those I work with as well as myself and from a Heuristic Inquiry perspective;

‘At the heart of heuristics lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosures from others… with a view to spark a similar call from others’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 51)

**What does this research do?**

In summary, this thesis is an auto-ethnographic study, which focusses on me within the EP culture and places me at the centre of the research. The research aims to offer an approach to intensively reflect on my own practice with a view to increase my self-awareness for the benefit of my practice and therefore those I work with. This research also raises the profile of the importance of self-awareness in the helping profession, in particular Educational Psychology, by emphasising the value of having a healthy understanding and relationship with the self. The research has been designed using a Heuristic Inquiry framework whilst appropriating three psychodynamic techniques, free association Freud (1924), Holloway & Jefferson (2000) dream interpretation, Freud (1900), Mahrer (1971) and listening with the third ear Reik (1948) to develop a method of psychodynamic reflective practice. At the core of this research is the passion and desire to encourage practitioners to focus on their own self-awareness and personal development and I start this quest with myself. This research is guided by the following questions:

**1) How feasible is to develop reflexive practice by appropriating techniques influenced by psychodynamic paradigm, within the role of trainee educational psychologist?**

**2) What is the experience of engaging with reflexive practice, which appropriate techniques from the psychodynamic paradigms, as trainee educational psychologist?**

The following chapter offers the reader a more in-depth look at the role of the EP in relation to legislation and governing bodies and links this to the culture and context of my own placement and justifications for this research.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Legislative context of the EP role.

This chapter looks at the current legislative context of the EP role and how that role can have an impact on the lives of children, young people and their families, as well the impact the school system. With such potential for impact and therefore change I use this chapter to connect the expectations of the EP role with the importance of reflecting practice.

The British Psychological society describe the role of the EP as;

‘1.1 Professional educational psychologists are concerned to support and promote the proper development of young people. In doing so, they work not just directly with young people but also with their parents and families and with other adults who teach and care for them.’ (BPS, 1993, p. 4)

Educational psychologists work with schools, children and families and ‘their primary focus should always be on achieving positive outcomes for young people’ (BPS, 1993, p. 4). In a particularly pertinent paper, written by Peter Farrell and Kevin Woods in 2006, focussed on the distinctiveness of the EP role and the degree of variance in the application of psychology.

‘The large majority of EPs in the UK work in the public services and are employed by local authorities which have a statutory duty to ensure that the special educational needs of the children are met’ (Farrell & Woods, 2006, p. 388)

The new code of practice (2015) has continued to include the EP role as an essential contributor to the statutory process, in the form of the new Education and Health Care Plan. This is a key role for EPs and indicates that the contribution made is valued at a governmental level. Farrell (2006) wrote about the ‘distinct’ contribution made by EPs but primarily questioned the huge variance in the application of educational psychology and the different motivational factors that may cause such variance. Some of these factors included, ‘academia, policy development, and custom practice… as well as national paradigm shifts’ (Farrell & Woods, 2006, p. 391). This research is curious to understand how the EPs own ‘self’ determines the choices they make in practice and for the EP to take ownership and responsibility for the fact that it may be their personal experiences, difficulties, challenges and feelings that lead to their preference in the way they work.

Schools, families and children vary in culture, contexts and backgrounds and each child, family and school that an EP works with will not have all the same needs. In addition to this the ‘problem centred work’ educational psychologists engage with will require a variety of interventions that are child and family centred with a central aim of promoting positive change enabling children to reach their potential.

The role of educational psychologist involves complex cases and the EP ‘has a duty to reflect an awareness of how factors such as disability, race, religion, nationality, gender, social standing, sexual preference and political belief can affect access to education and educational experience’ (BPS, 2000, p.4). Educational psychologists should be aware of and adhere to legislation such as the Children’s Act (1989) which encourage the protection and safeguarding of children and is held in the most paramount of importance at all times.

Educational psychologists are often found to be working with vulnerable individuals and families and as a result of this there may be times where a power imbalance is evident. It is the role of the educational psychologist to be aware of this and to manage these processes professionally, respectfully and with humility. Educational psychologists are often entrusted with extremely sensitive information of a highly confidential nature. This information can come from schools, children, families and any individuals who are stakeholders within a case. This information should be handled with care and consideration and matters of confidentiality should also be of paramount importance of practice.

The involvement of educational psychology services often results in reports being written regarding a child or a piece of casework. Any information gathered should be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality and all communication should be conveyed in a manner that is accessible to those it is intended for. Importantly, no work should be conducted or carried out without informed consent from the family and when possible the child.

Educational psychologists have a duty to work honestly and conduct themselves professionally as stated in the British Psychological Society guidelines (2002). Psychologists should have the appropriate qualifications and should be a member of a professional governing body who monitors their professional development and continuous training throughout their career. It is the expectation of the psychologist that the information gathered is done so respectfully and accurately and is appropriate for the child and/or case in question.

In addition to the British Psychological Society guidelines, educational psychologists will be registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC). This regulator is designed to protect the public and those professionals registered with HCPC are expected to

* Promote and protect the interest of service users and carers
* Communicate appropriately and effectively
* Work within the limits of their knowledge and skills
* Delegate appropriately
* Respect confidentiality
* Manage risk
* Report concerns about safety
* Be open when things go wrong
* Be honest and trustworthy and
* Keep records of their work

(HCPC, 2016, p. 1)

The HCPC guidelines are in place for professionals in areas such as dieticians, paramedics, speech and language therapist and social workers. The expectation is that those professionals registered with the HCPC are familiar with the standards and they are always able to justify the decision they make and the actions they take.

Similar to the BPS guidelines the standards state that consent must be obtained before working with individuals, people are treated without prejudice, and respectful and appropriate means of communication are utilised. It is also crucial to work within the limits of one’s knowledge and skill set and to address any skill deficits through continual professional training.

**Changes I would like to see**

I would like to see an increased emphasis for self-awareness, regular reflective and reflexive practice, personal therapy or a strong sense of ownership within the role of the EP. The latter being crucial based on the recognised variance on EP practice (Farrell & Woods, 2006) and the ever increasing growth of the private sector. This was also supported by a statement made in the Woods and Farrell paper, where they made, a decade ago, reference to accountability

‘It seems likely that educational psychologists will be required to justify their distinctive contribution to child assessment and intervention’. (Farrell & Woods, 2006, p. 378)

The HCPC state that it is expected that a professional can ‘be open when things go wrong’ (HCPC, 2016, p. 9) and additional expectations that professionals can justify the decisions that they make. I would like to see, in addition to this, an emphasis on encouraging a greater sense of self-awareness within these professional roles. This is something this is supported and highlighted in the revised HCPC standards and BPS standards in 2016. These documents state that the standards are met when an EP is able to;

(2.9) Understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection. (BPS, 2016)

 (2.10) Demonstrate awareness of personal health and well-being and seek support as appropriate, sharing relevant information regarding health status or personal circumstances which may hinder effectiveness with the appropriate person (e.g. service manager and/or supervisor), with due consideration for personal-professional boundaries. (BPS, 2016)

(11.1) Understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection (HCPC, 2016).

(3.4) Be able to manage the physical, psychological and emotional impact of their practice (HCPC, 2016).

These revisions support my endeavours in the research and reinforce the value and importance and reflective and reflexive practice and self-awareness within practice, not simply for the practitioner but for those they are working with too.

The importance of self-awareness is something I wish to highlight through this thesis and promote the value and importance of the standard to self-awareness and ownership within the complex role of the EP. I believe that one of the most effective ways to do this is to experience a deep reflexive practice myself, and document that within a research context, with a view to motivate others to value their own sense of self in their work and therefore have a greater understanding of what motivate their decisions, behaviours and actions.

**Supervision in practice**

I would also like to see a re emphasis on supervision in practice. In 2010 the British Psychological Society released a document entitled Professional Supervision: Guidelines for practice for educational psychologists. This document offers guidelines for supervision for educational psychologists, the recommended amount of supervision that should be offered and the type of supervision that may be offered. The document aims to emphasise the importance of supervision with a focus on the personal and professional development of the individual. Whereas professionals are expected to receive line management supervision with regards to ‘appraisals, monitoring of performance, operational issues, quality assurance and evaluation of outcomes’, BPS (2010, p.5), there is an additional strand to supervision which focuses more on EPs process within their casework with a more reflective and reflexive emphasis, which is referred to in the BPS guidelines as professional supervision. It is this strand where there is more opportunity for personal reflexivity however, in my relatively short time within this profession, I have rarely seen this. My experience is also supported in a statement made in the BPS guidelines ‘for EPs the ability to give and receive supervision is a core professional competence, yet one that is often neglected’ (BPS, p.13, 2010). I have now worked in four local authorities and I have rarely seen EPs access supervision which aims to encourage reflexivity. Most commonly this is justified by a lack of time and EPs have seemed to attend the minimum requirement in adherence with the BPS guidelines.

**How this research could benefit training and practice**

Through engaging with this research, and experimenting with new ideas and techniques such as psychodynamics, I would like to move forward in promoting a greater emphasis on personal development of the EP through reflecting on practice and by being reflexive about practice. I would like to see training courses, as a standard, encourage a greater look at the self within practice, and encourage personal therapy. Counselling skills could be integrated into the training course to support students with their own listening skills, and eventually supervisory skills in the future. I would also like to encourage more EP courses to incorporate a psychodynamic element to the training, as I believe it is a paradigm that can only add to a psychologist’s skills set and therefore benefit those they work with in the future (Pellegrini, 2010).

Given the changing climate of independent companies developing, and local authorities and schools becoming more like businesses, there is an even greater need to reignite the interested and passion in supervision, self-awareness and personal inquiry and development. With an increase in EPs working privately it is becoming increasingly difficult to monitor personal supervision of individuals in such sectors. It is my view that there needs to be a stronger drive towards these matters with honesty and integrity, rather than simply paying lip service to ‘reflective practice’ and ‘supervision’ (Hawkins & Shonet, 2006). If the importance of such matters is emphasised and evidenced through experience in the early stages of training, it may be more likely that EPs seek out quality personal developmental supervision throughout their careers. This could have a positive impact on burnout rates of professionals, professional relationships with colleagues, a greater understanding of the impact the EP themselves is having on any given situation and a change in the current supervision culture, Nolan (2007)

# CHAPTER THREE: HEURISTIC INQUIRY

The word heuristics is a derivative from the Greek word ‘heuriskein’, meaning to discover or find (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Heuristics describes the process whereby the researcher aims to further investigate the nature and meaning of experiences. Heuristic Inquiry originates from the work of Clark Moustakas (1990) and is described as ‘a process of informed, unwavered knowing’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10). There is little research in this particular area and much that has been done is in the form of dissertations and theses, Robert Synder, (1998), Robert Shaw (1989), Lynn Vaughn, (1989) and Smith (2002). What published information there is on heuristic inquiry emphatically describes this process as having a great deal of emphasis on internal self-awareness, intuition and the researcher being open about their passionate interest in their choice of study.

‘Heuristic Inquiry is an extremely demanding process, involving disciplined self-commitment, rigorous self-searching and self-reflection, and ultimately a surrender to the process’. (Hiles, 2001, p. 2)

Heuristic Inquiry is driven by a strong desire to understand experience whilst maintaining ownership of the self within that experience, where it departs from processes such as phenomenology, which encourages ‘a detachment phenomenon’ (Moustakas, 1985, p. 43). It is initiated by passionate personal interests and conducted by fully immersing oneself into the research, which requires an extremely high degree of personal discipline and rigour as stated by Hiles (2001). A great deal of value is placed upon the individual motives of the research and it is described as a method where at times the researcher ‘follows their own nose’ (Hiles, 2001, p. 4). Throughout the research the researcher is expected to intensively self-reflect and self-search and draw on their own inner creativity.

‘In its purest form heuristic inquiry is a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem-solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39)

Heuristic Inquiry shares many similarities to the methods such as, ‘lived inquiry’, which was introduced by Heron (1988) ‘mindful enquiry’, Bentz & Shapiro (1998) and ‘IPA’, Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009). Although Heuristic Inquiry is closely related to such methods, Moustakas’s (1990) approach emphasises the importance of the researcher within the research experience. There is a huge emphasis placed on engaging with a topic of great interest and passion Moustakas (1990) as a driving force for creating a piece of research. With such passion and emphasis on the self within the research process heuristics is presented as the most appropriate and congruent method to use as a framework to this study.

The rich qualitative nature of the research Heuristic Inquiry, in particular, requires thorough, dedicated and rigorous engagement. Hiles (2001), Moustakas (1985). The rigour can be seen in the extensive reviewing of the data and the revisiting of the raw data throughout the Heuristic Inquiry phases. This revisiting is done in order to become so immersed in the data’s problems, questions or aims that the researcher ‘lives and breathes the process’. (Moustakas, 1990). The tireless and intensive engagement with the data will be my attempts to present a rigourour piece of research, demonstrated in the method section shortly.

Validity of heuristic research is inherent, insofar as it pursues the truth, to the extent that it is conducted through authentic self-processes, and to the degree that after repeated examinations of the data, the same essence is revealed with the same degree of plausibility (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 44)

There are inherent difficulties in evidencing validity in any research and each study must address its own perspective on the trustworthiness, rigor and validity. With regards to this research I have been mindful that the more conventional criteria for validity will not suffice in measuring the value of this research and as such I have access the work of Lucy Yardly (2008, 2015) and Jonathon Smith (2008) to assist in my endeavours to create a rigorous piece of qualitative research. I have aimed to remain transparent about my own subjectivity and obvious influence over this piece of research and have used that to write a thesis which is rich in the lived experience of individuality.

‘Most qualitative researcher believe that the researcher inevitably influences the production of knowledge, by formulating the research questions, choosing the particular measure and analyses, and interpreting the findings…. Consequently, rather than trying to eliminate the influence of the researcher by rigidity controlling the research process, qualitative researchers generally seek to maximise the benefits of engaging actively with the participants in the study’ (Yardley, 2015, p. 259)

I would extend the quote to include the active engagement with the context in which the study takes place and the researchers own thought, for the purpose of my own research.

With regards to reliability the experiences that I document are only reliable insofar as they were experienced in that moment and in the moments of reflection and reflexivity. This research is less concerned with generalising these finding and more concerned with sharing an experience with the hope that other practitioner may consider the value of reflexivity in practice and will perhaps engage with a process such as this (Yardley, 2015).

Heuristic Inquiry requires a deep immersion into the self, in an effort to answer a question or problem. It is expected that the researcher engages with the following phases in a timeless manner, which I have not been able to do. This does not cause the research to be any less valid but the authenticity is less purest Heuristic. It is also incredibly difficult to untangle the complexity of experiencing phenomena myself and experiencing other people behaviours in interaction with me. The Heuristic Inquiry process often implies a simplicity to these complex processes, which in practice are fa more difficult to be conscious of.

When the focus is on another, what is learned is from an observational perspective rather than from within experience. In the applied process that focuses on the participants and on the phenomenon, these. lf, the I-who-feels, can be too easily lost in a sea of explications and step fulfilment. (Smith, 2002, p. 76)

**Processes within Heuristic Inquiry**

Heuristic Inquiry contains several core processes that guide and develop the research. These processes include;

**Self-dialogue;** this refers to the importance of ownership of one’s own position in experiences. Self-dialogue is important in the initial stages of research with the awareness of one’s own interests, qualities and experiences taken into the research process. The requirement is for the researcher to be honest with themselves and value the importance ‘of self-disclosure’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 17). Within this research self-dialogue can be observed in my initial expression of passion and interest in my chosen topic of research. Self-dialogue can also be seen throughout the method section and the discussion section where self-disclosure is made to evidence the experience of this research.

**Tacit knowledge;** is described as the very beginning of heuristic discovery. An example of tacit knowledge offered by Polanyi (1983) is that we might be able to recognise the face of a loved one easily but would find it difficult to explain how we recognise the face as putting such knowledge into words is very difficult. Tacit knowledge is the ability to understand the ‘whole’ by recognising smaller elements of something we experience. This is something that has been experienced during this research and within conversations I have had with others. I have had the experience of sensing an idea without fully ‘knowing’ the whole idea. This is somewhat different from explicit knowledge which is more ‘observable and describable’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). Polanyi (1983) stated that in order to understand the whole idea we must have tacit knowledge in the first place. For example by using tacit knowledge it is possible to know we are looking at a tree even if we are only seeing small elements of the tree, the sense of the whole tree is provided by our tacit knowledge.

**Intuition;** this is described as the ability to make ‘immediate knowledge possible’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23) without utilising theory, logic or reasoning. Intuition brings with it an element of mystery and a seemingly intangible connectivity to the world and with that questions of validity and rigour can arise. Intuition is encouraged, and exercise and practice in Heuristics Inquiry in order to reach higher levels of competency in utilising this skill. By drawing on intuition it can be possible to experience only limited elements but perceive wholeness. Drawing on the previous example, intuition allows us to see a tree from any angle and visualise the whole tree as a concept.

*‘*Any search that misses the value of intuition in formulating a question or problem, or excludes intuition merely by the vagueness of its terms, is irrelevant to the subject of scientific enquiry and of the holding of scientific knowledge’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 44)

I have drawn on my intuition a number of times throughout this research. My intuition has presented itself as a feeling or sense at times which is very difficult to articulate and encase within the rigorous demands of research. This is discussed in detail in the methodology section of the thesis.

**Indwelling**; this is a conscious experience of taking a deep, extended and inward look at experience in order to comprehend its meaning, where possible. The researcher dwells inside the subject matter and resides there in order to achieve insights. This is something that I have experienced with regards to difficult emotions throughout this research. It has been through this process I have learnt that remaining with difficult emotions enables me to learn more about myself.

**Focusing;** also crucial to the Heuristics Inquiry process is the ability to clarify, identify and examine concepts that occur during the research. The ability to focus enables large sets of data to be organised and specific elements of the data to be focused upon, where relevant, in order to create themes. Focusing is a process I engaged with in the latter stages of the Heuristics Inquiry and this process enabled me to explicate core themes in the data.

**Internal frame of reference;** this element refers to the notion that irrespective of how knowledge is attained, whether it be through intuition, tacit knowledge or experience, both independent and social, we have an internal frame of reference. In order to fully know what someone is experiencing one would have to be that person and have their internal frame of reference. Much of this is linked to the work of Carl Rogers (1951) who emphasised the importance of empathy in developing relationships with others. In order to fully understand another it is important to accept they have an internal frame of reference as we do. The concept of an internal frame of reference has been important throughout this research because it is my own internal frame of reference that has decided, directed, created and experienced this research. I value my own internal frame of reference as I believe this is the platform from which I move forward and which makes decisions and reminds me to value the internal frame of reference of others, or as Carl Rogers would call ‘unconditional positive regard’. (Rogers, 1961)

**Heuristic Inquiry phases**

In addition to the core elements of Heuristic Inquiry Moustakas presents six phases of the research process which are summarised below. These are the phases that have been adhered to throughout this research;

1**) Initial engagement:** The discovery of a topic of intense interest or a passion within a specific field. One acknowledges that interest and their relationship to that concept and as a result moves forward in creating a piece of research.

**2) Immersion:** Once the design is created the researcher becomes immersed within their chosen topic. The researcher is open to all possibilities that may present themselves during the research. The researcher also remains focused and engages in a great deal of self-dialogue and self-searching. During this phase the intuition is a welcomed skill with which to engage.

**3) Incubation:** The researcher ‘retreats’ from the research. It is during this phase that the information gathered previously is able to rest and settle in the researcher’s mind. The researcher absorbs information and processes the information. This is with the view to not add any additional data for a period of time, allowing for a more natural thought process.

‘Incubation is not a period of putting something aside, or putting action on hold to do something else. Incubation is the period when additional input is stopped because living with the question has provided all the information that the unconscious processing part of self needs to sort through, consider, review, and reorganize new ways of thinking, being, seeing, and understanding, to create meaning and form an answer to the question’ (Smith, 2002, p. 67).

This phase could been seen as contentious because it is not entirely possible to completely retreat from the research. The research is with the researcher at all times, in this research even in sleep! It is arguably impossible to let information rest undisturbed by thought and this does put the phase of incubation into question. However the research does not rest on the importance of being able to put information to one side and let thoughts rest. The incubation phase is intended for the research to not add additional information to the data set in the first instance and is an opportunity for additional clarity to develop.

‘This is a time when “inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness. . . .’ (Smith, 2002, p. 67)

 The expectation is to for the researcher to have some time to reflect on the research and not actively engage with the data that has been collected. This periods of time were useful reflective periods and did in fact offer a welcomed relief from the intensity of adding further explicit information to the data set.

**4) Illumination:** The researcher may discover new ideas and new concepts. It is during this phase that reflectiveness is crucial. The researcher is required to acknowledge what existing knowledge they had and how new knowledge is impacting on that.

5) **Explication:** Once the illumination stage is felt to have been effective it may be possible to reflect on the data and the new knowledge one has experienced. From this new knowledge it may be possible to focus on or draw out themes. Two additional processes that are effective during this phase are focusing and indwelling. These processes involve focusing down on specific areas of the data whilst immersing oneself in the data.

**6) Creative synthesis:** The final stage of this research process may involve a creative delivery of the research experience. This will be my opportunity to discuss my findings, reflect on the analysis, reflect on the process and relate to its practical purpose within the field of educational psychology.

‘Whatever the effect, the heuristics process requires a return to the self, a recognition of self-awareness, and valuing of one’s own experience. The heuristic process challenges me to rely on my own resources, and to gather within myself the full scope of my observations, thoughts, feelings, senses and intuitions’. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13)

Clark Moustakas’s Heuristic Inquiry has been used as a framework to organise this auto-ethnographic research. Within that framework I have designed and practised a method of psychodynamic reflective practice by appropriating the discourse and techniques offered by the psychodynamics paradigm. The three core elements of the research, auto-ethnography, Heuristic Inquiry and psychodynamics have been synchronised to create this piece of research as well as developing a psychodynamic reflective process. The ‘workability’ (Reybold, 2002) of these elements and other possible methods of carrying out this research are discussed in the methodology section of this thesis. Figure 1 is a pictorial presentation of the Heuristic Inquiry phases, detailing when each phase occurred and how long it lasted for, commencing with ‘declaration’, where I decided upon and declared the research aims, represented by the green block at the beginning of the process. Following on from this and working down the left hand column each Heuristic phase is listed. As each phase occurred in the research process it is shown along the timescale working from left to right. As the diagram shows, some phases occurred more than once and at the same time. Initial engagement and creative synthetics are the only phases which occurred only once. These phases allowed for me to structure the process and manage and reflect on where I was in the process at any given time.

*‘*When utilised as a framework for research, it offers a disciplined pursuit of essential meanings connected with everyday human experience’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39)

This research could have feasibly been undertaken using several methodologies such as Self-study (Robert V. Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001) or action research (Carr & kremmis, 1986) and could have been done so using an ethnographic methodology. However I chose auto-ethnography because it is situated ‘me’ within the EP culture, making this research applicable to educational psychology which relates to the second aim. In addition to this a Grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) may have been a useful tools in drawing the data together and identifying key themes from the text.

The Occurrence and Duration of Each Heuristic Inquiry phase. *Figure 1*



The table explained

The table above shows the research process from start to end. The process began with the ‘declaration’ signified by the green box in the top left hand corner. This four week period was spent deciding on a research topic and finalising the research aims, which led to the research question. Once this had been decided I entered the first phases of the Heuristic Inquiry shown underneath the declaration in the grey box, entitled ‘initial engagement’ this phase lasted for seven weeks and involved researching the chosen topic and reading into reflecting, reflexing, psychodynamic and self-awareness literature. Following this I engaged with the ‘immersion’ phase, signified by the purple box and lasted for one week. During this phase I engaged with the research week and recorded my consultation conversations, free associations and any dreams that occurred as well as reflective memos. After this week I engaged with ‘incubation’, which lasted for two weeks. Illumination followed this phase signified by the light pink box, this lasted for one week initially and then intermittently throughout the rest of the research process signified by the recurring pink boxes moving horizontally across the table. In addition to illumination, additional phases re-occurred throughout the phase including immersion and incubation signified by the purple and light blue boxes occurring horizontally across the table. Explication occurred for a period of three weeks and re-occurred until the end of the research process and beginning of the final phase, creative synthesis where I thematically analysed the data, signified by the final three weeks orange box. The process lasted for a total of six months

# CHAPTER FOUR: LITERATURE REVIEW

Initial engagement

This literature review represents my initial engagement with this research, in accordance with the first Heuristic Inquiry phase

‘When a passionate, disciplined commitment is brought into the search to illuminate a question or to discover a solution to a problem, heuristic research has fulfilled the vital first step’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 41)

This chapter aims to describe a number of key, professional and personal interests and passions that have guided me to explore the literature in these areas and explain my position within them. This research is guided by the following research question and aims, which were developed outside of the heuristic process *(figure 1)*;

Research questions:

**1) How possible is it to develop a feasible reflexive practice, to increase self-awareness, by appropriating techniques influenced by psychodynamic paradigm, within the role of trainee educational psychologist?**

**2) What is the experience of engaging with reflective practice, which appropriate techniques from the psychodynamic paradigms, as trainee educational psychologist?**

With these in mind I will firstly briefly address the concept and literature surrounding self-awareness as it is understood and pertains to this research, and discuss the value in increasing one’s self-awareness within the helping professions. Following on from this I will offer the reader a brief summary of the literature regarding reflective and reflexive practice and again its value, specifically within professions related to educational psychology. This research draws on the psychodynamic paradigm by appropriating the language and a small number of techniques and as such psychodynamic terminology runs throughout this thesis. Discussing the psychodynamic theory, as a whole, with all its details, debates and intricacies is a task that outstretches the remit of this thesis. Therefore, I have endeavoured to present the reader with a brief description of the core assumptions associated with psychodynamics and the concepts that I have drawn upon for the purpose of this research, as educational psychology and psychodynamics are worlds which seldom meet (Bornstein, 2005, Pellegrini, 2010). I also aim to justify where I have aligned myself within the theory and where I have departed from it for the purpose of this research, my values and the aims and explain my journey into psychodynamics. In addition to this I will discussed the value and importance of supervision and how my own supervision impacted on this research. Throughout this chapter I will also share the literature where psychodynamics has been applied within the field of educational psychology.

Everyone is different, people respond differently in situations and react to others in many different ways.

‘It is not at all surprising that different people can, and do, perceive and experience the same environment in radically different ways’. (Willig, 2013, p. 50)

This happens in all aspects of life and the situations EPs find themselves in are no exception and psychodynamics can help to understand some of those differences.

‘The psychodynamic approach teaches that each of us is unique. We have distinctive life histories that have been shaped, in large part, by the interaction of biogenetic endowment, physiological maturation, cultural influences, social conditions and family dynamics. Arising from these inherited and experiential forces are the particular patterns of thoughts and feelings, capabilities and vulnerabilities, conflicts and dreams, among other subjective qualities, that make us who we are’. (Weiss, 2002, p. 13)

In a study conducted in 2002 by Stephen Weiss, he presented a scenario to a number of teachers and asked how they would react to the situation. Each member of staff responded differently and vastly differently in some cases. A key driving force behind this research is bringing that difference more into our conscious thinking. We all know we are different and respond differently but we often do not know why. As professionals working with children and working within complex systems such as schools our reactions, *my* reactions, to others has an impact on the ‘other’. I may respond in a manner that proves to be useful or I may respond in a manner that does not generate a positive outcome. My quest is to discover the potential use and power of understanding the reasons for my own reactions and actions. It therefore may be possible to have greater control over my own behaviour and a more advanced understanding how our certain outcomes are reached and how more positive ones can be achieved.

To paraphrase Arthur Jersild (1955), children are better served ‘when teachers face themselves’. At the least, the preparation of teachers should stress emotional self-understanding and self-reflection. These ‘subjects’ could form the common thread of an often neglected teacher preparation component: emotional education. (Weiss, 2002, p. 111)

**Self-Awareness**

The benefits of increasing self-awareness for a practising EP

I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night. Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is, ‘Who in the world am I?’ Ah, that’s the great puzzle!

(Carroll, 1866, p. 19) Alice in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

I can remember relating to Alice as a child, being big or small to fit my environment and wondering who I really was. It would seem this wondering has continued into adulthood and no doubt contributes to my choice of research as well as career. But what is self-awareness and how can I solve the ‘great puzzle’ of ‘who am I?’

I have always sensed an intrinsic desire to know more about myself but I do not have to look far into the literature to see that this intrinsic desire is perhaps less about *my* desire but more human desire (Gergen, 1971, Barron 1993, Thompson & Pascal, 2012). If one looks at Greek mythology there has always been an interest in the self and an importance of self-awareness, which can be found in famous quotes such as ‘know thyself’ (Gergen, 1971). There also appears to be an ever increasing interest in the topic of ‘self’:

 ‘By the dawn of the 21st century, approximately 3,000 studies of self-esteem and/or self-concept were listed in the ERIC database (Martin, 2007, p. 80).

The concept of the ‘self’ is a difficult matter to untangle and define and is heavily dependent on what philosophical perspective the ‘self’ is viewed from. From a constructionist perspective the concept of self is socially constructed and it is impossible to detach social experience of the self from the self in isolation (Gergen, 1971).

‘Authenticity (understanding the self) requires a commitment backed by reason, and such a reasoned commitment only can arise in the context of shared practices and values, for reasons are based inevitably on the conventions and norms of social groups. (Martin, 2007, p. 85)

This perspective, of how the self is constructed, is at odds with the origins of the psychodynamic view of the self. With psychodynamics originally embedded in a positivist, empirical philosophy there was the assumption that the human mind could be viewed objectively and unknown ‘Truths’ about human behaviour could be found and labelled. Psychodynamics asserted that the self was developed through internalising experiences and repressed unconscious material provides the driving force in behaviour (Fosshage, 2009). However, as the psychodynamic paradigm has developed it has moved further away from a positivistic stance, promoted by Heisenberg’s uncertainty principal and later Kohut’s work on self-psychology (1982), Fosshage, 2009) and began to accept that;

‘It became unquestionably clear that the observer affects the observed, both perceptually and interactively’ (Fosshage, 2009, p. 2)

There is an emphasis on the equal importance of both the social and individual constructions of the self and this is where this research aligns itself.

‘We favour theoretical approaches that simultaneously lay equal weight to society and the individual, which do not ‘reduce the psychic to the social and cultural, and vice versa’, but recognise their ‘interweavement’ (Warin & Muldoon, 2009, p. 290)

This research project aims to develop a pragmatically useful method of further increasing my self-awareness in aid of better informing my practice, which presents a challenge to the more conventional use of psychodynamics.

‘One’s personal construct is based upon his conception of ‘reality’ rather upon reality itself. And it is the process of self-understanding that is more important than the self which the individual attempts to understand’. (Gergen, 1971, p. preface)

Despite the use of psychodynamics as means to increase self-awareness, this research does not dismiss the importance of the relationship with an ‘other’ and dually notes that both may well have an impact on how the self is constructed and developed. However what this pragmatic research does is guided by the belief that my own action can lead to increasing my own self-awareness. For the purpose of this research, and in the context of this thesis, self-awareness refers to a sense of becoming:

‘Aware of numerous personal characteristics. These include values, attitudes, prejudices, beliefs, assumptions, feelings, counter transference, personal motives and needs, competencies, skills and limitations. When one becomes aware of body language, the degree of attention they are able to pay to others, and engage in the ‘investment of self’, and understand how all of these may have an effect on others’. (Cook, 1999, p. 1293)

This definition of self-awareness meets my own beliefs of what it is to have an understanding of myself. I view it as a combination of my experiences and interactions with others as well as how I internalise those experiences and interactions and make meanings from them, which may or may not be conscious or unconscious to me.

There are a number of research papers written within the nursing profession regarding self-awareness, Burnard (1986), Kinsella (2010), Thompson & Pascal (2012) where the justifications for its importance are made abundantly clear,

‘Becoming more self-aware can help us to be more sensitive in our dealings with others. If we know what we are doing and how we are doing it, then nurse-patient relationships can be developed with more care and greater precision’ (Burnard, 1986, p. 219)

The literature suggests that increasing self-awareness has a benefit for our own mental health and general wellbeing (Burnard, 1986). An increase in self-awareness can allow a practitioner to know when to reduce their work load or take steps to avoid ‘burnout’ (Froggett, et al., 2015). If, as a practitioner, I am not in a relatively ‘good’ mental place then one can assume the effect of that can cascade into the work I do and those I work with.

‘Self-awareness can also help us to monitor our own stress levels, emotional involvement and general well-being’. (Burnard, 1986, p. 219)

I am a part of the educational psychology profession, and the internal messages that helped me to arrive at this destination are a part of who I am. That said, they are with me in my conversations with parents, children, teachers and colleagues while I work. Perhaps some messages are louder with certain people and quieter with others; perhaps some contexts dictate that I feel ‘big’ or ‘small’, leaving me with the sense that ‘I’ve been changed in the night’ (Carroll, 1866, p. 19). When I take myself into those conversations and contexts I find that I use myself to support and understand often vulnerable people. The better informed I am about myself the more equipped I will be at working towards my full potential.

‘If this I, this main subject which decides and acts, is not properly known to us, it must follow that all our actions, all our decisions are done half blindly or in a half awakened state’ (Fromm, 1994, p. 45)

If an EP were to make decisions that are done so ‘half blindly’ or in a ‘half awake state’, according to Fromm (1994, p, 45), the implication for the children and families they work with could be lasting and negative and would have been done so from a position of authority and trust. I then re-emphasise the importance and value of knowing the self within the EP role. Knowledge about the self can be obtained by looking within the self as well as by looking outwardly at the reactions the world has to us (Wachtel, 2009), and increasing this knowledge can enhance practitioners’ practice (Warin & Muldoon, 2009). This research suggests that by paying attention to my own thoughts and feelings as well as noticing the reaction others have to me I will be able to increase my own self-awareness. That is not to say I will change myself, but rather know myself, *and* a means to learn more about myself, specifically as an educational psychologist, in more detail. The literature presents the notion that knowing oneself is a prerequisite to effective practice. (Burnard, 1986)

Without self-awareness the person appears merely to have a set of skills ‘tacked on’, those skills are used neither sensitively nor awarely but in a robotic and automatic way’ (Burnard 1990, p.209)

With such a high value placed on developing the self and increasing self-awareness the question of how can this be achieved was raised in my mind. The following sections of this chapter are dedicated to this question.

## Introduction to reflective and reflexive practice

*‘*Reflection is a process of creating and clarifying the meaning of experience in terms of self in relation to self and self in relation to others’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 40)

Reflective practice is a term commonly used in the helping professional roles. For the purpose of this research, reflective practice can support the development of self-awareness. There appears to be a great deal of attention paid to ‘reflective practice’ and it is embraced by ‘UK applied psychology practice standards of proficiency’ (Williams, 2012, p. 76). As such there are a number of papers published and books written on the subject starting with the work of Dewey in the early 1900s (Froggett, et al., 2015), who introduced reflective practice to the world of science and explained it as an ‘active and deliberate process’ that can be challenging but offer the opportunity for personal growth (Frolund & Nielsen, 2009, p. 87).

‘Reflective practice refers to the process of thinking about the work we undertake – that is, reflect on our actions either at the time or at a suitable opportunity thereafter. In this regard, the hallmark of reflective practice is the informed practice it refers to forming a practice that transcends routine of habitualised actions that contain little thought or analysis’ (Thompson & Pascal, 2012, p. 319 cites Argyris & Schon 1974).

Despite some ‘semantic slips of meaning’ (Frolund & Nielsen, 2009, p. 87) reflective practice has had over the years, Donald SchÖn’s perspectives aligns well with my own beliefs. Donald SchÖn places the emphasis on the importance of practitioners being able to ‘think on their feet’ (Froggett, et al., 2015, p. 137). SchÖn believed that reflection should become part of our natural process in order to understand how our values are impacting on the decisions we make. This is achieved by reflecting ‘in action’, by paying attention to what we are doing while we are doing it, and reflection ‘on action’ where we retrospectively analyse our behaviours and actions particularly in regards to ‘critical incidents (Nesbit, 2010, p. 82).

‘It is this entire process of reflection–in–action which is central to the ‘art’ by which practitioners sometimes deal with the situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict’ (SchÖn, 1983, p. 50)

An additional description I have attempted to draw upon is that offered by Antony Williams, in his paper ‘Critical reflective practice’ (2012) who discusses the notion of critical reflection describing it as;

‘The exploration of the professional, social, cultural and structural dimensions… which aims at holding psychosocial… reconsideration of the professional practice encounters within complex professional practice situations.’ (Williams, 2012, p. 77)

**Reflexive practice**

Reflexive practice is an effort to turn the metaphorical mirror to face the self and see where and how my own values and beliefs impact on the actions I have taken. It is the ability to;

‘Notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings’ (Etherington, 2004, p. 19).

Reflexive practice is a self-analysis where I may consider myself to be an influencer from within the actions rather than viewing actions from outside (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). The literature appears to suggest that both reflective and reflexive approaches are valuable in increasing self-awareness and informing the reflector about what motivates actions and why.

*‘*We would wish to argue that a well-developed approach to reflective practice would incorporate both these elements… Reflection as an analytical process and reflective approaches with the emphasis on mirroring of practice, and thereby undertaking the self-analysis’. (Thompson & Pascal, 2012, p. 320)

There are two types of reflexivity according to Carla Willig (2013), personal and epistemological. My own personal reflexivity in this research involves my reflection upon the ways my own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims and social identities have shaped the research’ some of this has been discussed in chapter 2. I have focused on sharing how the research has affected me and potentially changed me throughout the process. From an epistemological reflexivity perspective I have endeavoured to share how the research questions have defined this research how the design of this research has come to fruition and how different questions and designs may have led to different outcomes. The personal and epistemological reflexive processes within this research are crucial in shaping this research and creating the outcomes, it has therefore been very important to be transparent about these processes throughout this thesis.

‘Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meaning throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining outside of one’s subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity, then urges us to explore the ways in which researchers involvement with particular study influences, axe upon and informs such research’ (Willig, 2013, p. 10)

Thompson & Pascal, 2012 discuss the matter of spending less time on reflective activities due to the high demands of the EP role and, as a result, the activity of reflective practice is not fully engaged with or not engaged with at all, which Raelin (2002) also discusses in the paper “I don’t have time to think!”. It has been notions such as these that led to the title of this thesis ‘Action is the enemy of thought’, and a drive to investigate reflective EP practice further. It is also accepted by many that reflexive practice is challenging and difficult, as well as time consuming, however its potential value is endless.

‘Critical reflective practice is theorised as a challenging, but intrinsically reflexive space of honest, critique and new beginnings’ (Cotter, 2014, p. 459)

**Approaches to reflective and reflexive practice**

There is currently no agreed single approach to reflective and reflexive practice (Fisher, et al., 2015), therefore there are a number of suggested approaches for practitioners to engage with (Mellor, 1998, Kinsella, 2010, Thompson & Pascal, 2012, Palmer, et al., 1994). These approaches offer phases with questions to consider and a space to consider them and these methods are readily available if a practitioner is unsure of how to engage with a structured reflective process. frameworks such as that presented by Richard Cotter (2014) suggest creating spaces for reflective and reflexive practice where the professional can be open to critique, honesty and new beginnings. This is something I have aimed to create with this research, a space for new learning to occur and therefore new beginnings to emerge.

Through reviewing the literature on reflective and reflexive processes I discovered that some processes were short exercises, whilst others were long and complicated, but very few, if any, had any emphasis on the ‘self’ or the emotions experienced at the time within the practice. Froggett describes over simplified, or over intellectualised methods, as ‘dangerous’ (Froggett, et al., 2015, p. 140). It could be argued that over time the original purpose of reflective practice and the value of reflective practice has been transformed into formulaic time boundaried tick box exercises that do not truly connect with the person who is reflecting (Froggett, et al., 2015), making them ‘superficial discussions’ (Thompson & Pascal, 2012, p. 311).

**The need for reflective and reflexive practice.**

The work educational psychologists engage with is complex, varied and emotionally charged at times, Williams (2012), Mellor (1998) and practice can be messy and influenced by our beliefs and values as well as ethically challenging (SchÖn, 1983). With that in mind reflective practice, which involves ‘intuitive sensitivity’ (Stimson, 2009, p. 578), linking well with Heuristic Inquiry, is of great importance and value to the role of a practitioner in aiding and understanding their actions and learning development through such messages.

‘And the outcome of such reflection in and on action is not only more thoughtful practice but also much deeper learning.’ (Nesbit, 2010, p. 83)

It can be through reflexive practice that an EP can open their mind to new possibilities within themselves and pay attention to not only strengths but also weaknesses. Within supervisory relationships by paying closer attention to the emotional self within practice it may be possible to increase the practitioners’ competency within their professional role.

The reflective…emotional engagement in both the therapeutic and supervisory relation, constitutes essential factors in the development of pragmatic, creative, implicit knowledge, which characterises professional competence (Frolund & Nielsen, 2009, p. 87)

 These moments of reflection and reflexivity can be a continuing feed into understanding of the actions that are taken, not just by ourselves but by others too.

‘Reflective practice allows practitioners to develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their behaviour, which in turn creates opportunities for further professional growth and development’. (Nesbit, 2010, p. 83)

The work of Mellor, a practising EP, has evidenced the impact reflection can have on increasing a practitioner’s self-awareness to better inform their practice. Mellor discusses the value and importance of engaging with a reflective process and presents a staged approach for practitioners to follow.

I became aware of weaknesses in my approach, particularly in my direct work with the children in these cases (Mellor, 1998, p. 167).

Many of the benefits of engaging with reflective practice are noted in Fisher, Chew and Leow’s paper (2015) who state that, with regards to clinical psychologists;

‘Reﬂection helped the participants understand themselves better and how they personally impacted their work. Reﬂection helped in understanding and engaging with clients; it was particularly important for the development of the therapeutic relationship, and when cases felt ‘stuck’. Finally, reﬂection helped participants understand their professional role as clinicians, and maintain professional and ethical standards’ (Fisher, et al., 2015, p. 731)

**Where this research aims to fill a gap.**

There is arguably a gap in the reflective process literature, certainly within the EP profession, where a greater look at the ‘self’ and the emotions which impact on practice is being endorsed or practised. There is also little research in the area of how reflective practices are engaged with by practitioners (Fisher, et al., 2015). There is evidence within the body of literature that postulates the importance and value of self-awareness and reflective practice, but little in the way of combining the two in great depth, or framework that provide practitioners with a process whereby this can be done.

However, reﬂective practitioner theory stops short of an account of how the emotions might inﬂuence judgement or the capacity to learn; nor has it developed a theory of the unconscious, or defended dimensions of subjective experience unavailable to reﬂective cognition (Froggett, et al., 2015, p. 139)

One possible way this can be done is by appropriating techniques taken from psychodynamics and applying them to a reflexive practice process. This is where my pursuit for self-awareness and my commitment to reflective practice meet the psychodynamic techniques that may provide me the ability to uncover an unknown me.

‘We argue that an ability to use the self effectively in practice requires context-rich applied psychoanalytical thinking of the type that has been developed within professional relationship-based practice’ (Froggett, et al., 2015, p. 133)

It has been through exploring the literature in this area and paying attention to where possible research gaps lie that I began to develop a method of reflexive practice by appropriating psychodynamic techniques, which will now be expanded on.

## A journey into Psychodynamics

The rationale for the structure of the psychodynamic section that follows is that it is important for the reader to be aware of certain psychodynamic concepts that occur later in the thematically analysed discussion. Certain terminology has also been described here, in relation to the EP role, as psychodynamics states that much of the motivation for what we do is out of our conscious awareness, and psychodynamics offers a language I can draw on in an attempt to understand and contextualise that. I would firstly like to share with the reader my own journey into and around psychodynamics and what key references I drew upon throughout this research, which guided me through the huge and complex paradigm as a novice.

My own journey into the psychodynamic world began at undergraduate level where I felt that the paradigm was almost dismissed due to Freud’s discredited theories and unconventional thinking. I re-engaged with this paradigm at Masters Level, studying counselling, but felt that as a paradigm it was only in the reach of psychoanalysts and psychodynamic therapists exclusively. It was during my Doctoral training programme that I began to see the possibility that I could increase my knowledge base within this field and draw on psychodynamics within my role as TEP and later an EP. After a number of albeit brief seminars on psychodynamics, delivered coincidently by a member of teacher staff who has a passion for psychodynamics, I was, what you could say hooked. The seminars encouraged me to see that as a practising applied psychologist I could draw on psychodynamics to help those I worked with and develop myself as a practitioner. Research in this area supports the use of psychodynamics in education and working with children.

‘The ideas and examples are thought to be relevant for all mental health and educational workers with children. The article provides an overview of transference concepts as they emerge in the context of clinical psychoanalysis and human development with implications for classroom life’. (Weiss, 2002, p. 9)

The paradigm became less illusive and more intriguing, less unobtainable and more accessible and my reading into the area began. Initially I found the work of Frosh to be hugely useful in explaining some of the complex terminology. I also found some of Freud’s original writings exciting and powerful and I was pleased to challenge my earlier thoughts with a more positive and impressive respect for his work, particularly his book, ‘The interpretation of dreams’ (1900). In addition to Frosh and Freud I enjoyed reading the work of Anna Freud and her writings around defence mechanisms and Melanie Klein’s work regarding transference and counter transference. More recent writings by Weiss (2002), Bornstein (2005), and Pellegrini (2010), helped me to link psychodynamics to EP practice and reassured me that there is a place and an evidence base for psychodynamics in the EP field (Weiss, 2002).

There was no point where I did not feel out of my depth in the psychodynamic paradigm. I entered as a novice and feel that I ended the research process knowing more but as a novice nevertheless. Despite a few brief seminars at the university, and one psychodynamic conference, the psychodynamic concepts that I make reference to throughout this thesis have been self-taught. In addition to making reference to psychodynamic theory and terminology I have endeavoured to apply certain techniques to myself during this research process in order to answer the research question and meet the aims of this study.

This process is not for the faint- hearted and has carried with it a great deal of personal risk. There are personal safeguarding issues that I have been mindful of throughout this process, and that should be explicitly highlighted to anyone considering entering such a process. The terminology is complex and the psychodynamic paradigm has been appropriated here for the purpose of this research, thus making it different from its conventional use within a therapeutic setting. My interpretation of the terminology may have been misunderstood and misattributed to myself throughout this process leading to less positive outcomes and potentially harmful side effects. These matters have been managed and carefully considered throughout, discussed in the ethics section of this document. The self-taught aspect of this research has allowed for the reading I have engaged with to be directed by my intuitive interest, and are in relation to my personal quest. It has meant that my literature is personal to me and useful to my endeavours, and in increasing my self-awareness, the work of Karen Horney was particularly pertinent in this respect. It has been challenging at times to manage the personal difficulties and the academic quagmire of psychodynamics, however the outcome has been valuable and my engagement with psychodynamics will not stop here.

## Psychodynamics

Love him, like him or loathe him, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is renowned for bringing the concept of unconscious into the world’s conscious, which ultimately led to the development of psychodynamics. The psychodynamic theory has been challenged and changed throughout its life and in some cases by Freud himself. The theory has been and continues to be developed by Freud’s contemporaries, some of which I will discuss shortly. For the purpose of this research I will be focusing on the following psychodynamic concepts, the unconscious Freud (1900, 1924), defences Anna Freud (1936), transference, counter-transference, projection and projective identification, Klein (1946), Bion (1962) and Cashdan (1988) as human experiences that according to psychodynamics, can go beyond the spoken word, Freud (1900) and Reik (1948) and discuss their relevance to the EP role.

The unconscious and the structure of the mind

A key underlying assumption of the psychoanalytic theory is the notion of the ‘unconscious’ - a dynamic force that motivates, directs, influences and impacts on our observable behaviours and our internal conscious thoughts (Freud, 1920). Psychodynamics postulates that the unconscious is not inactive but rather the thoughts, feelings and experiences that are unavailable to our conscious mind are driving much of our behaviours.

 ‘The vast majority of mental activity occurs outside awareness’. (Bornstein, 2005, p. 333)

This concept was born during Freud’s clinical work. Through observing his patients’ behaviours which seemed inexplicable and nonsensical Freud believed that there must be an explanation for these behaviours and stated;

‘We have found that this, we have been obliged to assume – very powerful mental processes or ideas exist… Which can produce all the effects in mental life that ordinary ideas do… Though they themselves do not become conscious’ (Frosh, 2012, p. 37 cites Freud 1923, p 14).

From an EP perspective, I am often left wondering what caused the uncomfortable dynamic during a meeting, or why I was left feeling frustrated by a particular conversation. These matters may not be hugely detrimental to practice but understanding them more could help support and develop my practice, which I feel is articulated well in Reinhartz’ quote;

The very act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change’ (Reinhartz, 1992, p. 112)

It is important here to state that my adaptation of psychodynamic concepts is less about generating change but rather generating self-awareness, and therefore having choice and a greater understanding of the self in complex situations I may face as an EP.

However, many practitioners do not realize that their responses to children’s struggles will be influenced by the ways in which they coped with their own developmental issues in the past. (Weiss, 2002, p. 10)

Freud believed that the mind is made up of three components calling it the structure of the mind, the Id, the Ego and the Superego (Freud, 1923-1925). Freud believed that the Id develops during infancy and is the drive for immediate pleasure. The baby does not care about logic or moral consequences - the baby just experiences urges, such as hunger. The Id is entirely unconscious and is purely focussed on receiving pleasure or ‘drive’. When a baby receives pleasure a sense of release is felt. Following from this, at around the age of two, Freud believed that the Ego developed (Frosh, 2012). This element of the mind realises that it cannot get everything they want all of the time, which may explain the ‘terrible twos’ but eventually thinking becomes more rational and more realistic. However, these past experiences can become internalised and form our personalities and programme our minds to behave in certain ways.

Thus, the child’s thoughts and feelings about past events, as well as the events themselves, influence how the child copes with present situations. (Weiss, 2002, p. 9)

Freud believed that the Ego resided in the pre-conscious and so ideas could become available to one’s conscious mind. The Superego then develops, this element concentrates on moral perfection and conscious conformity to society. Freud believed that the Id and Superego were in constant conflict with one another. The drives from the Id, which are morally irrelevant, compared with the striving for conscious moral perfection from the Superego. The Ego operates as a mediator between these two forces and can create and draw upon defence mechanisms when necessary to protect one from anxious feelings. It is this conflict that the psychodynamic paradigm states causes psychological issues such as anxiety, depression and psychosis.

‘Mastery of conflicts provides children with opportunities for psychological growth; failure to resolve conflicts adequately may lead to developmental arrest or regression and to learning and behavioural problems. Teachers play a pivotal role in the growth process by understanding that each developmental stage presents ‘particular vulnerabilities and challenges [to] the children they care for and educate, and [teachers] must translate their understandings into successful ways of working with children and their parents’ (Gordon and Browne, 1996, p. 35).’ (Weiss, 2002, p. 12)

A person’s defence mechanisms act as a means to keep difficult, unconscious childhood experiences at bay from the conscious mind and in doing so, reduce anxiety. (Eloquin, 2016)

‘Confronting painful emotional “truths” is often not a welcome experience and proximity to them, so psychoanalytic theory holds, triggers anxiety (Eloquin, 2016, p. 3)

Throughout this research I have paid a great deal of attention to the possible occurrence of these psychodynamic human behaviours, such as transference, and counter transference and have used the writings of Stephen Frosh and Stephen Weiss to aid my observations and experiences.

## Transference and counter transference

More conventionally the terms transference and counter transference were used exclusively between a patient and therapist in the psychoanalytic context. Transference is understood by the feelings that are transferred onto another, namely the therapist, but feelings are originated in previous relationships and were ‘never fully dealt with’ (Frosh, 2012, p. 187). An example of this might be a person who avoids conflict may have unresolved issues with regards to an over authoritarian parent who never allowed a child to express anger for fear of rejection from the parent. The avoidance of conflict may be transferred onto relationships the child has as an adult and therefore continues to avoid conflict for fear of rejection. Within the therapeutic relationship the therapist’s response to the client’s transference is called counter transference. This term can be understood as the analyst’s response to the transferred feelings from the client. Within a therapeutic setting, it is the role of the therapist to identify these transferences and use these relational experiences to help understand the patient and allow the patient to further understand themselves and their behaviours within relationships. (Frosh, 2012)

As the psychoanalytic theory has developed it is becoming more widely acknowledged and accepted that these unconscious relational experiences are not exclusively occurring within the therapeutic relationship, but they are alive and well in all relationships at all times.

This phenomenon, known as transference, is not limited to treatment considerations, but influences all interpersonal interactions. However, the professional literature has given minimal consideration to the importance of transference for understanding classroom dynamics. (Weiss, 2002, p. 109)

These experiences may well be the cause and therefore the explanation to a number of difficulties that can be experienced in the classroom and working with children. They may shed further light on difficult relationships with colleagues and peers and help to further personal insight into an individual’s behaviour.

‘Transference affects teachers and teaching, as it emerges through teachers’ behaviour and their dreams, consultation and emotional education can become vehicles for professional education and personal change. (Weiss, 2002, p. 109)

These experiences are not necessarily limited to relational outcomes but could also help explain teachers’ choices in lesson planning, topic choice, rules and regulations within the classroom and buyers principles that they endorse and expect. All of these things are incredibly important and have a huge impact on a child’s learning and school experience as well as the school ethos.

It is clear that teachers’ assessment of pupils, classroom interactions, choice of behavioural interventions, predilections for educational theory, and even their decisions about the teaching and learning of all curriculum content areas in school may be shaped by transference and counter transference. (Weiss, 2002, p. 110)

Despite the evident power and impact transference and counter transference can have within a classroom setting, or a school culture (Pellegrini, 2010) there seems to be little awareness of this process within schools. Difficulties within relationships can often be attributed to within child explanations or poor teaching. From my own perspective there is a concerning small amount of attention paid to the internal emotional experiences of children and of staff

Little attention was paid to children’s self-perception and inner experiences. Even less consideration was given to examining the teacher’s emotional responses to the pupil’s behaviour. If a pupil was having difficulties in learning, the possibilities that the teacher misunderstood the situation or contributed to the youngster’s problems in any way typically were ignored. Transference was never mentioned. (Weiss, 2002, p. 113)

The ability to understand the self at a greater depth appears to be more empowering and liberating than professionals working in these complex environments are giving credit. Terminology such as transference and counter transference is not readily available to teaching professionals and courses do not provide teaching staff with this information.

‘To paraphrase Arthur Jersild (1955), children are better served ‘when

teachers face themselves’. At the least, the preparation of teachers should

stress emotional self-understanding and self-reflection. These ‘subjects’

could form the common thread of an often neglected teacher preparation

component: emotional education’. (Weiss, 2002, p. 111)

If it is becoming more and more evident that concepts such as these can help support positive outcomes, a key role of the educational psychologist, then is it not equally important for psychologists themselves to employ such thinking within their own practice.

## Defence mechanisms

Freud’s daughter Anna, progressed psychodynamics and amongst many things focused on defence mechanisms. One of Anna’s key books, ‘The ego and mechanisms of defence’ (1936) was an advancement from Freud’s Id, Ego and Superego theory. The book outlined ten primary ‘defences’ that are used to protect the Ego, the acceptable preconscious version of ourselves, which requires protection from unconscious anxiety provoking thoughts as well as the judgemental Superego, (Frosh, 2012, p. 71). Anna did believe that the Ego was central to the psychoanalytical process and that the unconscious defence mechanisms were a method of managing conflict and maintaining self-preservation. Though these defences are useful in protecting the Ego they can also prevent psychological growth and cause mental health problems if not managed. Some of those defences include, **denial**, a total rejection of thought or experience such as the death of a loved one; **projection**, a failure to acknowledge aspects of the self and therefore projects these aspects on to another; **regression**, reverting to infantile behaviour to manage emotions or experiences; **humour**, focusing on a comical aspect of a difficult experience to avoid experiencing the more negative emotions that you may not want to experience; **altruism**, an attempt to manage one’s own pain by helping others and putting one’s own needs second in an attempt to not address one’s own pain, and **intellectualisation** which can defend a person’s unconscious by talking rationally and objectively about overwhelming emotions. This is a small selection of the variety of defence mechanisms and, despite the variety, they all serve the purpose of keeping the conscious mind away from the unconscious mind. A summary of additional defences can be found in *appendix b.*

‘Defence mechanisms refer to innate involuntary regulatory processes that allow individuals to reduce cognitive dissonance and minimise sudden changes in internal and external environments by altering how these events are perceived’. (Vaillant, 1994, p. 44)

By being aware of certain defences it may be possible to notice them not just in myself but in those I work with (Pellegrini, 2010). It is not necessarily my aim to remove them in myself or others, as they do serve an important purpose. However, those defences that may be hindering psychological growth or having negative impacts on my professional interactions perhaps need to be acknowledged, and the value of doing so has been discussed throughout this chapter. By understanding and paying attention to these processes it may be possible to make sense of what can be unreasonable or nonsensical behaviours in myself and others. (Pellegrini, 2010)

‘Psychoanalytic theory postulates that an individual’s forgotten past can shape his or her behaviour in the present. In psychotherapy, clients relive past conflicts and direct them toward their therapists in the present. This phenomenon, known as transference, is not limited to treatment considerations, but influences all interpersonal interactions.’ (Weiss, 2002, p. 9)

## Object relations theory

Like Sigmund Freud, Klein believed that childhood is where defence mechanisms are created but unlike Freud, Klein worked directly with children. Traditional psychoanalytic tools were ineffective with children as their concept of self was less well formed and their language skills were inadequate to decipher their experiences. This led to the development of play therapy. It was through this form of psychoanalysis with children that Klein began to question and ultimately disagree with both Sigmund and Anna Freud (Cashdan, 1988, p. 5). This new concept is worth mentioning because, whereas this research does not directly apply psychodynamics techniques to children, Kleinian theory indicates there may be benefits of utilising psychodynamics more within the field of educational psychology. This does not necessarily have to be long term intensive work but rather taking a psychodynamic perspective to understand the source behaviours differently and share that information to help others understand (Baker, 2006).

Klein began to take psychodynamics in a direction that focused more on emotions. The specific focus was the feelings and emotions directed at the child’s significant care givers. Klein called this ‘the internal object world’ and stated that this was a ‘world of human relationships’ (Cashdan, 1988, p. 5). This perspective differs from Freud’s view because he does not view the object to be only human, but rather any inanimate object used to dispel energy. Klein was more concerned with the relationships and the ‘object’ meaning ‘other’ would refer to another person. The most common ‘other’ being the mother and how this object can be internalised and can speak to us throughout our lives, giving us our internal object world.

The most crucial relationship for Klein is the relationship between mother and child and it is this relationship that creates the internal world of the child and it shapes how all future relationships are constructed. Klein believed that this happened as the child developed through certain ‘positions’ in infancy. These positions are unconscious and psychological. As the child develops they must learn how to manage the complexity and ambiguity of the world. This includes the concept of good and bad existing in the same ‘object’, or namely mother in the first instance. This difficult discovery leads to internal conflict within the child and in order to manage that conflict Klein believes that the child ‘splits’ the object and projects the bad outward and the good inward, as a ‘defence’ to their Ego. This projection can then lead to the object identifying with the projection (projective identification).

## Projection and Projective identification

5a For the purpose of this research I have accessed the work of Frosh in order to understand and apply the theory of projection and projective identification to my practice. Frosh describes projection as a process whereby a person cannot accept ‘objects’ within themselves and therefore ‘expels them and locates them in the other person or thing’ (Frosh, 2012, p. 65). It can be possible to recognise projection when one gets the sense they ‘have been made to feel’ a certain way.

Projection is the desire to expel emotions that reside in ourselves and project these emotions onto another, ‘which is essentially a mental act and need not involve overt responses of any sort’ (Cashdan, 1988, p. 55). In 1946 Melanie Klein introduced the concept of projective identification (Klein, 1946). From a Kleinian object relations theory perspective, projective identification is described as;

‘These excrements and bad parts of the self not meant only to injure but also to control and take possession of the object. Insofaras the mother comes to contain the bad parts of the self, she is not felt to be a separate individual but is felt to be the bad self. Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed towards the mother. This leads to a particular form of identification which establishes the prototype of an aggressive object relation. I suggest for these processes the term ‘projective identification’ (Klein, 1946, p. 8)

Although projective identification was introduced by Melanie Klein, there is some debate over exactly how projective identification occurs within relationships. Elizabeth Spillius states that,

‘Experiences of projective identification have led me to abandon six expectations and rigid definitions in favour of trying to be prepared to experience whatever forms of projection, introduction, and counter transference coming to life in the session’ (Spillius, 1992, p. 59).

Projective identification is a complex dynamic that relies on behavioural and emotional interactions and can only happen if an ‘other’ is involved. The process involves initially the desire to get rid of a part of the self for reasons discussed above. The person attempting to ‘get rid’ of an emotion then attempts to force the other to experience that emotion, and finally projective identification is successful when the other ‘responds to the feelings that have been induced by the projective manipulations’ (Cashdan, 1988, p. 57). The projective identification is driven by an internal conflict and an unconscious ‘inner struggle over badness and unacceptability’ (Cashdan, 1988, p. 57) of the self. The recipients of such behaviours are often left feeling confused and angry at such interactions, whether they are brief or long-term, which can be catastrophic in relationships. Projective identifications are the outcome of dysfunctional object relations in early life and are predominantly preverbal, which may explain why the outcomes are exhibited as unconscious behaviours Cashdan (1988). Cashdan has also written that there are specific projective identifications, which are summarised in a table found in *appendix B2* (Cashdan, 1988, pp. 59-76)*.*

Wilfred Bion wrote a number of papers regarding projective identifications. Bion felt that when a child experienced emotions they found difficult to hold within themselves they projected those emotions onto their primary care giver, their mother. If the mother was able to contain those emotions for the child the child was then able to observe that management and then retrieve those emotions and contain them themselves. Issues can occur when the mother is unable to contain those projections. This can result in the child not being able to manage their own emotions as an adult, and therefore not only project those feelings onto another but attempt to elicit those emotions from another, via projective identification. (Bion, 1959, 1962)

Projective identifications clearly have an impact irrespective of the role you play within the interaction. Projective identifications are driven by unconscious desires, created by early relationship experiences. Having an awareness of the power of projective identification, for example, not just as a concept but as a potential trait with the EP may help the EP to monitor their own behaviour and be more aware of an unconscious agenda by which they are driven. By noticing what characteristics in others can awaken characteristics in the EP can help prepare the EP to work with those individuals in a manner that is useful for the ‘other’ and not detrimental for the EP.

If, as Cashdan states, ‘the fate of the projective identification is embedded in the response of the recipient’ (Cashdan, 1988, p. 77), then I feel both responsible for my own projective identifications, during my work, and responsible for noticing the projective identifications I may be the recipient of, which gives me a choice to respond to them consciously and effectively. Although Klein did not agree with some of these extensions of projective identification, however, it can still be postulated that projective identification is the act of attempting to elicit an emotion in another in order for the other to experience what the projector experiences (Spillius, 1992, p. 61).

This perspective would imply that during this research I may find that through the adaptation of the psychodynamic activities I am likely to be transported to my own childhood and the significant relationships that impacted on me. Despite the emotional challenge this process may present, I do believe that the experience of such potential intensity could instil a greater depth of empathy in myself, as a practitioner, when working with mums and children who are in a time of difficulty. I also feel a sense of professional integrity whereby I am practising what I preach, rather than applying a psychological tool to others before experiencing it myself.

## How we can listen to the unconscious

### Free association

Free association was originally presented by Freud and used as a talking therapy where he would ask patients to speak freely, about an experience or a dream. Harold Kelman writes in order to secure these ideas and associations he would ask a patient to ‘let himself go’ in what he says, ‘as you would do in a conversation which leads you from cabbages to Kings’ (Harold Kelman, p 273). Free association has also been critiqued by Kelman for its subjectivity and the overwhelming potential for the analyst to influence the ‘patient’. For the purpose of this research I accept the subjectivity and the distinct lack of quantifiable data, but I challenge those views with the concept usefulness on the participant’s part, namely myself in this instance. I will also not be influenced by an analyst as I will be engaging with free association independently.

In addition to written free association, this process can also be feasibly engaged with using a Dictaphone (Reik, 1948). Rather than freely speaking to an ‘other’ and as well as writing, it is possible to record myself freely talking about my practice, and review that at a later date.

‘He should eliminate all censorship of his thoughts while he writes, take no consideration logic, aesthetics, or morals, and concentrate only on jotting down what occurs to him, lost to the social world that at other times dictates his train of thought… When he takes out those writings the next day and carefully reads them, he will meet a person who reminds him of himself in many ways but is in other ways an unknown man’ (Reik, 1948, p. 26)’.

The theory behind free association states that a process of freely talking, void from the constraints that our conscious mind can often place on the spoken word, can lead to a more spontaneous stream of speech that is perhaps not controlled by the Ego or the Super Ego. When using a free association speech, people are asked to ‘say whatever comes to mind’ (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 37). In speaking in such a manner it may be possible to recognise contradictions in speech as well as offer a richer and potentially more congruent picture that may have otherwise not been presented.

*‘*The structure and the principles of free association narrative maximise the possibility of a rich and relatively truthful story being told.’ (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000. p152)

Karen Horney in her book ‘Self-analysis’ writes how free association is a useful tool in independent self-discovery (Horney, p19) and states that

‘If he is interested in recognising the sources of his difficulties, if it can overcome his resistances to recognising them, he can in some respects observe himself better than an outsider can. After all, he lives with himself day and night. (Horney, 1968, p. 25)

In the technique of free association speech it is possible to elicit information that is not structured as it might be in normal everyday conversations. Without this ‘conscious logic’ it may be possible to hear (or in my case say and then hear) more emotional rather than consciously controlled statements. (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 37)

Given the right application, free association, written or spoken, can lead to powerful insights into the self, and surprising outcomes (Reik, 1948) , (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000).

### Listening with the third ear

This psychodynamic phrase which has been created by Theodor Reik (1949) is a term that is used to describe the process of listening between the lines. Reik stated that there are three processes an analyst engages in when listening. Firstly experiencing, whereby the analyst (recipient) consciously listens to the spoken word. Secondly self-observation, this being a more inward look, and reflexive awareness of the relationship and the processes within that relationship. Finally the recipient must decide which spoken communication to use in response. It is through this process that one can begin to connect the spoken word with the unconscious processes that are a part of our communication. In order to listen with the third ear the analyser must be open to their own free association thoughts, images thoughts and feelings that are evoked in themselves.

The aim is to listen to the words but to hear between the lines and pay attention to the thoughts, feelings and emotions and perhaps images that come to mind through listening.

‘The third ear can hear voices from within the self that are otherwise not audible because they are drowned out by the noise of our conscious thought processes’ (Reik, 1948, p. 131)

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### The value of dream interpretation

For centuries it has been believed that dreams ‘are invaluable sources for creativity, understanding the unconscious, revealing waking problems, and solving problems’ (Hill, et al., 1997, p. 53). Freud himself described dreams as the ‘royal road to the unconscious’ in his book ‘The interpretation of dreams’ (1900). Equally dreams have also been described as ‘wish fulfilments’ (Freud, 1900, p. 718) and that they demonstrate the incredibly complex nature of the whole dynamic unconscious. Dreams are very much a part of the analytic society and are, to some, still a source of great mystery.

‘Dreams – a major source of data in analytic work – often sound like bad jokes’ (Reik, 1948, p. 249)

Dreams have fascinated me throughout my life and it is rare to meet someone who is not interested in a discussion of dreams. Most of us have dreams and experience the bizarre nature of them. They can provide us with ‘great natures second course’ (Reik, 1948, p. 36) and offer a perspective on our conscious experiences through our unconscious processes.

Freud and many professionals within the psychodynamic paradigm found that dreams had two presentations, the manifest content, which refers to the actual and literal elements of a dream as it presents itself, whereas the latent content refers to the more symbolic abstract elements of the dream that Freud believed referred to the hidden unconscious meaning of the dream Freud (1900).

As I have mentioned, dreams can help in a variety of ways but they are also arguably the truest reflection of ourselves; an unfiltered, congruent, raw version of our thoughts. A version of ourselves that is free from social constraints, personal barriers and unconscious defences leaving room for creative, honest and intuitive outcomes, much like our Id. Hill (1996) has highlighted the potential benefits of dream interpretation including a greater understanding of conflicts, events, situations and experiences. Indeed, this research aims to be a creative and honest piece of work that is driven by my own intuition at times though my own experiences, situations and potential conflicts. That said, dreams seem to be an appropriate method of exploring my practice in the way and increasing my self-awareness.

‘It is the deepest part of those that formal education does not get to and cannot damage. We ourselves cannot get to it; however, it is what enables us to get everything else including our highest creative breakthroughs, spiritual intuitions and scientific insights. All true education, in its original sense of ‘know thyself’, is an attempt to acquaint the student with this inner reflective capability’. (Stimson, 2009, p. 578)

Dream interpretation without the couch

As I have mentioned, dreams were originally used in the psychoanalytic practice of professionals who were trained and experienced in the interpretation and analysis of dreams. They have been shown to be of great benefit within a therapeutic relationship in understand the self and making sense difficulties. Hill (1996). Over the course of time, perhaps through fascination and a theory base to support it, dream interpretation has been practised more widely. Jung and Ullman initiated the shift from interpretations taking place in psychoanalysis to it also taking place in the public domain (Stimson, 2009). This has specifically been used in the promotion of reflective practice Schon (1982, 1987), Jung (1964), Ullman (1996). As a result of that there have been a number of structured processes developed, which can support a person who is not psychoanalytically trained in understanding their own dreams. Mahrer, (1971) offered a seven stage process and stated that ‘an individual can bring about personal life change in himself or in others by the systematic use of dreams’ (Mahrer, 1971, p. 328). Means, et al (1986) has developed a four stage process claiming that, ‘In addition, dream work has enabled others outside of the psychotherapeutic enterprise to facilitate personal growth and behaviour change ‘ (Means, et al., 1986, p. 448). Dream group work has also been used as a means to train the reflective practitioner and is described as a ‘rich’ form of skill development.

‘Suggests its rich potential as a method to train the reflective practitioner’. (Ullman, 1996)

In agreement with this is the work of Rubenfeld and Dluhy (2005) who also worked with groups. Their work supported the notion that dream work can increase self-awareness and develop skills to ‘Search’ (Reik, 1948) for further knowledge regarding methods of personal development.

‘They shed further light on how the unconscious work’ (Rubenfeld & Dluhy, 2005, p. 347).

There is an increasing amount of support for the view that dream interpretation is possible without the expertise of a psychiatrist and that there is a great deal of skill within ourselves to achieve this.

‘It demonstrates that such revelation can only be done through and within the analysis of the dreamer. No deciphering of the dream is possible without the dreamer’s active work of analysis’ (Rodriguez, 2001, p 396).

From a Lacanian perspective the dream itself is the interpretation of the unconscious and as a result needs no in-depth analysis (Zizek, 2006). Arguably it is through attention to our dreams that we can begin to understand matters that were less conscious to us in our awakened state. This does not require the training of an analyst but rather one’s own attention to their own dreams. Hillman (1997) and Hunt (1995) also argues that a dreamer does not require the expertise of an analyst to interpret the dream. The dreamer experiences the dream from their own experiences and with their own senses. It is suggested that an analyst’s external trained eye offers no more insight than independent reflection. Hillman (1997) and Hunt (1995)

‘This way of working with dreams is not therapy and not counselling. It is not theory-based and so does not require expertise in psychology. In fact, its premise is that no outside expert can know better than the dreamer herself what her dream means. Moreover, the method is not dangerous for a teacher to use, a professional in any field, or a layperson. The dreamer herself controls the process and can stop it the moment she feels threatened. In addition to all this, it is fun and students love it’. (Stimson, 2009, p. 579)

The above research indicates that there is great value in linking dreams to professional development through learning about the self by listening to the unconscious. It would also seem that those immersed in dream work believe that we have the innate skills to decipher the language of dreams, and that the process of doing so can be both exciting as well as feasible and practically useful (Holloway, 2011). Indeed dream interpretation is possible without a formal structured approach. It would appear that, similar to free association processes Reik (1948) and self-analysis Horney (1968) the knowledge and capabilities to undertake such personal ‘searching’ resides within us all.

‘From some 25 years of working with dreams, I have observed that everybody has deep within them an ‘inner reflective core’. (Stimson, 2009, p. 577)

Gillian Holloway, in her book ‘Five steps to decode your dreams’, offers a simple, accessible and fluid approach to interpreting dreams. I have utilised this method when looking at my own dreams as a means to consider a specific element of the dream.

These steps are:

1) The first impression you have about the dream

2) Overall action in the dream

3) Pay attention to how you felt in the dream

4) The symbols in the dream, which include who is there, what is there and where you are.

5) What was the implication of the dream, what was the end goal of the dream and therefore what is the value?

(Holloway, 2011)

Karen Holloway also discusses the language of the dream in that it is different to the language we draw upon in our conscious state. Holloway believes that by applying the five steps mentioned above it is possible to begin to comprehend the language of the dream, without imposing conscious language onto an abstract, unconscious experience.

‘Because the language of the dream maker uses a different form of language we commonly use to think and reason, the discovery of the meaning in dreams has an inherent challenge. However, there are patterns that appear to be quite consistent with dreams, and we can use them to learn the language of dreams and decipher their meaning’ (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 43)

It is also important to state that if the unconscious does in fact exist then it is the job of the defences to keep my conscious mind from accessing the information that resides there. Karen Horney discusses the potential possibly of accessing the unconscious independently, *‘*dreams are also of eminent importance as a means to understanding’ (Horney, 1968, p. 124) but notes that the defence mechanisms will continue to attempt to keep the unconscious out of my awareness Horney (1968). That said, I may not be able to recall some dreams or interpret others that I recall, which may be my defences, or ‘blockages’ (Horney, 1968, p. 124) working to maintain the ‘contact barrier’ (Bion, 1962, p. 35) between my conscious and unconscious. However, one potential way to pass through that barrier is through listening to my dreams. Research conducted by Schredl et al (2000) found that dream work does in fact have value by stating that, it is an important technique, it is frequently used in theory and is has been show to ass value.

There are of course potential personal risks in attempting to interpret dreams independently. Without extensive psychodynamic training, the interpretations could be incorrect, and could cause more harm than good to ones’ personal health. The interpretations, if done independently, could lead to false ideas developing and without checking your thinking with another could produce a dangerous cycle of negative personal beliefs, grounded in the theory of dream interpretation (Boyd, 2005). This then does support the importance of bringing ideas and dream interpretations to supervision. This can be an opportunity to discuss a dream and the interpretations that were made independently as a checking process. It may be an opportunity for the supervisor to challenge ideas by presented new possible interpretations form the dream content. In my own supervision I have shared dreams and my interpretation and I have often been surprised to hear my supervisor’s views on a dream in relation to how she notices I talk about the dream or the situation the dream appears to represent. This has often helped me to review my own interpretation, which are often self-critical and view then less critically and more objectively. Additionally there have been occasions where an alternate interpretation has been offered by my supervisor and it has not felt accurate nor did it capture the essence of the dream experience I had and therefore affirms my own interpretations. Irrespective of the accuracy of the interpretations offered by my supervisor, discussing my dreams in supervision was an interesting and useful process in understanding my unconscious thoughts on situation I had experienced at work.

### Self-Analysis

The pursuit of self-awareness and personal discovery can quite easily be named as being narcissistic Baker (2006) in nature rather than being motivated by the desire to improve professional practice. Freud himself, despite his own self-analysis named it so Horney (1968). Despite that there is a unanimous acknowledgement from key voices in this field of the benefits of increasing self-awareness Freud (1923-1925), Gergen (1971), Schon (1983) through self-searching Reik (1948) as opposed to ‘self-seeking’, which is more closely related to narcissism Horney (1968).

‘My self-analysis is in fact the most essential thing I have at present and promises to become of the greatest value to me if it reaches its end.’ (Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 15th of October 1897)

Despite the hardship that one may face in investigating their unconscious, there is the possibly of exciting new discoveries and potential liberation from unconscious barriers to personal development Fromm (1994). Those personal developments may well be personal but the impact is likely to have professional implications and vice versa. The implications can lead to an improved practice, an increased skill set and the potential for an increase in positive outcomes through new creative thoughts. Stimson talks about how dreams can reveal the unconscious and how liberating that can be;

‘The ‘unconscious’ – not just a repository for all that is socially unacceptable, inferior and beneath us, but also for what is most transcendentally beautiful, sublime, and above or beyond us, including art, creativity, religious realization and scientific genius’ (Stimson, 2009, p. 578).

There is without a doubt an element of personal curiosity about what may or may not lie in my unconscious and indeed if I can notice those ‘bungled actions’. However there is a bigger element of professional integrity which is a strong driving force in my desire to understand myself more, and one that I believe practitioners should also consider engaging with. Despite the potential emotional challenges I may face by taking a psychodynamic perspective, there is the added notion that I will be facing these potential difficult emotions not from a child’s reference, but from an adult reference, arguably making those emotions more manageable.

‘Infantile experiences are revisited and reworked, but this time with psychological and physical strength and size of an adolescent… and adulthood.’ (Baker, 2006, p. 175)

### The importance of reflective practice in a changing climate

There have been some significant changes within the education system, including the introduction of the National Curriculum (1988) and the Children and Families Act (2014). There has been a number of high-profile cases within the public sector domain where professional accountability has been questioned and the profile risen. Government changes and public sector funding cuts have had a huge impact on local authorities. In some cases these impacts have led to greater workloads, with fewer staff. These increased demands have reduced the amount of time professionals can give to reflective practice yet the irony of this is somewhat disturbing. With increased emphasis on accountability there has never been more need for professionals to engage in reflective supportive practice.

‘The pace and sweeping nature of the changes both at the organisational and human level had been experienced by some as overwhelming. Frequent alterations and additions have made consolidation unlikely and consistently difficult to sustain. Little time as be left reflection and, not surprisingly, there’s been a high human cost implementing the changes’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 3)

This system in which professionals work in is changing as local authorities become more like businesses and the independent sector is growing at the rate of knots (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996). The role and position an educational psychologist finds themselves in lends itself well to working systemically and across a number of multi-professional boundaries (Farrell, 2006). This position can help enable a psychologist to see the ‘whole child’ and ‘whole family’ in a more real context. This can enable educational psychologists to utilise the information they gain to offer interventions and support most appropriate for those families and children. The role is indeed complex and requires advanced skills in communication and ability to apply psychology effectively. This work can be delivered on an individual basis or on a more systemic level including training packages for example.

‘There is an important implication for child educational psychologists, who have had an established tradition in working across professional boundaries, developing and maintaining communication across a wide range of agencies, and contributing to inter-professional support systems and training’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 6)

Educational psychology services are being increasingly pressured to work more creatively rather than purely statutory in order to survive in the business market.

‘Psychology services’ primary task is likely to involve adapting valued professional skills if the service is to survive beyond the minimum statutory role, and this means addressing the needs of the clients who are in distress in a more creative way’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 7)

This change in culture is increasingly attracting educational psychologists to an independent practice culture which carries a degree of personal risk, exciting prospects but ethical dilemmas and considerations.

‘With an unprecedented change occurring in education and the effects of entrepreneurial models’ unprofessional approach to work has also meant the invasion of values and ethical concerns’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 8)

With these changes occurring, and at such a pace, it is becoming increasingly important that professionals working in these complex dynamic situations not just engage with reflective practice but value reflective practice. I would go further to say professionals must engage with reflexive thinking and take ownership of their own actions when working with vulnerable people. While work demands are increasingly high this should be matched by an increased emphasis on reflection not a decrease in order to take ownership and learn from practice.

‘The general benefits of reflective practice. It is our shared belief that frameworks that have the search for meaning as their central tenant are of particular value at a time when the drive to act rather than reflect is so powerful’. (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 7)

I find myself frustrated when less time is attributed to reflective and reflexive practice and little emphasis is placed on the practitioner’s self-awareness, due to high work demands and heavy work-loads. The implications are that practice is less thorough and is less likely to meet the requirements of the role in accordance with governing bodies professionals have signed up to. My fear is that we are beginning to live in a culture driven by money making decisions, and basis actions on purely theory rather than taking ownership of our own impact on others, as we should be making decisions that have the child at the centre of our thoughts. An increased reflexive practice can only benefit all those involved.

‘In our view the reflective professional tries to keep in mind simultaneously the different levels of work, including themselves, their clients, the group within which they work, the group in which their clients have to function and the wider organisational responses to the work and workers in their own target organisations. Understanding the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of interaction will, we believe, furnish the individual practitioner with the resources to cope with and change puzzling and problematic situations’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 6)

**The value of, and my experience of Psychodynamics in supervision**

In the intensive highly pressured role educational psychologists find themselves in, it is incredibly important to be offered and to take the opportunity to be supervised.

‘Practitioners therefore need an opportunity to discuss their work therapeutically, as well as in terms of the skills they require. Prospective supervisors need to be able to understand and contain anxieties which arise from such work’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 33)

I view supervision as a prerequisite to good, effective, ethical practice and I have been fortunate to work in a setting where my supervisor shares this view. In addition to my personal values regarding supervision, I believe that receiving good supervision helps to value the practitioner.

If practitioners are to be able to work effectively, they need to feel valued so that they can also value their clients and be enabled to provide the best service which are available for them (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 26)

 In my short experience I am already starting to sense the increase in workload and the decrease in time available for supervision and reflective practice. I even felt guilt at times, knowing how busy my supervisor was, yet taking an hour of her time to supervise me. It started to become increasingly tempting to pass off my supervision hour as ‘unimportant’ or ‘it can wait’, approaches that alluded to some transference and countertransference that were occurring in our supervisory relationship. I discussed this in supervision and as a result began to learn more about myself as a person and a practitioner.

‘Respect needs to be given to the setting of boundaries of time, space, role and professional task. This can be particularly difficult in the crisis–ridden atmosphere of many busy services. If the supervision times can be set aside as sacrosanct, this can also be a powerful message about the way staff who help others are valued and it offer a support systems for themselves’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 34)

At the onset of my supervision my supervisor and I developed a contract. This contract included pre-organising supervision times and dates throughout the academic year, professional boundaries, supervision history, expectations and what to do if things don’t go to plan. I was able to share openly and honestly my previous supervision experiences and my hopes for this supervision. Through previous supervision experience I was able to congruently share with my supervisor how I engage with supervision. I also expressed an interest in experiencing supervision that benefited from psychodynamic perspectives, something my supervisor was also eager to do.

As our relationship developed we both felt more comfortable engaging with a psychodynamic approach to supervision.

‘Psychodynamic theory is compatible with models of reflective professional practice, as it enriches the possibilities for developing personal and professional capacities simultaneously. (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 35)

This approach suited my style of work, my growing interest in psychodynamics and my endeavours to draw upon psychodynamics in my research. The experience of psychodynamic supervision undoubtedly encouraged me to pursue a greater knowledge in psychodynamics and appropriate techniques taken from these paradigms in a reflective manner. It was through this approach that I began to notice my behaviour within the supervisor relationship, and the transference that occurred between me and the other, my supervisor. A mother-daughter transference began to emerge within our relationship. I felt protective over my supervisor, this protection extended to always reassuring my supervisor that I was okay. At times I noticed I attempted to contain my supervisor and felt extreme vulnerability if my supervisor attempted to contain me. These experiences enabled me to investigate and formulate what ended up being key discoveries about myself and the themes I have discussed later in this thesis. I felt very defensive of my supervisor, she could do no wrong and if on the rare occasions she was unable to attend supervision I could easily justify her actions, irrespective of the reasons.

My supervision enabled me to reflect on my values and beliefs and begin to understand how deeply they were rooted in me and how heavily they impacted on my practice. Jennings and Kennedy, in their 1996 paper argued that the psychanalytic paradigm enables practitioners to be reflexive and understand how beliefs and values impact on the choices that are made.

‘Psychoanalytic understanding helps us to assess implicit theories of the world which govern our actions and value judgements. It can thus lend itself to the goals of reflective practice by helping practitioners clarify the basis of their beliefs, enabling an understanding of themselves based on their own realities and so create an environment for increased meaningful choice’ (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 36)

Through a relationship that was delivered with high challenge and high support I began to accept my shortcomings and became more honest about them. I began to feel more comfortable with not knowing and I acknowledged where some of my real difficulties lay. I began to see, alongside my research, how important it was for me to be useful in my practice and that my endeavours to be perceived that way were relentless and exhausting. This supervisory experience enabled me to learn ‘what good supervision looks like’, and attempt to translate that experience into the delivery of supervision myself to teachers.

‘A capacity to learn from mistakes and avoid failure can be modelled in sessions, which reassures against the notion that there are no absolute answers to everything, and that anxieties must be responded to in an unilateral way. (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996, p. 37)

Ideas and concepts such as these, presented by Jennings and Kennedy, may allow practitioners to feel more comfortable taking ownership of their choices and it may alleviate the anxieties about getting it right all the time. This links well with the standards in the HCPC document discussed previously. I argue that that the greater emphasis on the self, through supervision and psychodynamics, the greater likelihood it may help to reduce the pressure to be ‘right’ all of the time and accept that no practitioner is perfect.

 I found that rather than changing my behaviours I became more aware of my behaviours and thoughts, feelings and values, and beliefs that lay beneath those behaviours became more conscious to me. This experience enabled me to understand some of my behaviours from a psychodynamic perspective which fed into the analysis of my themes within this research.

## Psychodynamics in educational psychology

It is well documented that the EP role is complex and ‘messy’ (Pellegrini, 2010, p. 257) and involves a great deal of reactive, on-your-feet thinking Schon (1983). Given the above discussion of the unconscious behaviours I might engage with, and the influence and impact which those behaviours can have on my relationships, I have been left wondering where psychodynamics is within the EP role.

‘The extremely limited published evidence of EP interest in psychodynamic psychology suggests that this may not be happening’ (Pellegrini, 2010, p. 257).

There seems to be a psychodynamic gap in the current practice that I have seen in my experience and in the literature.

‘In general, it is our experience the application of psychodynamic thinking in EP practice is not currently widespread’ (Hulushi & Maggs, 2015, p. 38)

Yet my immersion in the literature seems to speak of the value of psychodynamics.

Hulishi and Maggs (2015) have suggested the value of incorporating EP facilitated supervision to teaching staff which draws on psychodynamic theory to support staff’s personal development. There is a greater focus on what is happening within the group rather than solution focussed goals aimed to ‘solve a problem. It is theoretically suggested that this is where practitioner development can occur (Boyd, 2005).

I have myself utilised attachment theory perspectives within my role, to positive affect, but rarely do I hear attachment being related to psychodynamics. There seems to be an avoidance of the paradigm, or at least very little emphasis given to the approach.

‘What appears to be missing amongst these theoretical frameworks is psychodynamic psychology, with only the smallest reference to it, usually in the shape of Bowlby’s Attachment Theory or psychodynamic perspectives on behaviour’ (Pellegrini, 2010, p. 251)

In addition to this there appears to be little place for psychodynamics in undergraduate psychology courses and limited emphasis at postgraduate level. In fact my own training in this area has been limited and that which I have received has been due to the co-incidental interest a tutor has in this area

A possible explanation for this could the strong critiques of psychodynamics, which includes the lack of empirical evidence it offers or indeed is capable of offering as well as being termed unscientific in its nature (Bornstein, 2005), although this position is strongly challenged by Holloway and Jefferson who state that there are;

‘Advantages and disadvantages of departing from the conventional psychological world of reliance on what is taken to be empirical objectivity… We encourage you, the researcher, to go beyond positivism, and to do psychology in a way that is useful and relevant’ (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, p. v).

In spite of the lack of empirical evidence, there seems to be the experience of psychodynamics having value when practically used with others, but also when used as a reflective tool for self, Pellegrini (2010).

‘EP’s would benefit from being more sensitive to their own feelings in social interactions with clients and colleagues, to understand more about their experiences and help them make sense of these’ (Pellegrini, 2010, p. 259).

This perhaps highlights another possible cause for the lack of psychodynamics within not just the EP role but mainstream psychology. Perhaps, as Freud stated to his challengers, our defences are not willing to embrace such a paradigm as the risks are too high for our own psychological wellbeing. Given the potential intensity of the psychodynamic techniques, it may be too threatening for some practitioners to engage with either independently or within a therapeutic relationship, Pellegrini (2010).

Despite all that, some have used psychodynamics within education and to positive effects. Amanda Baker applied the psychodynamic paradigm to explain processes such as student’s development during university. This is to help develop a greater level of understanding of the complex dynamic between staff and students and the importance of that relationship. A psychodynamic perspective explained how ‘personal baggage’ (Baker, 2006, p. 171) can be projected onto others, thus giving the ‘other’ firstly an awareness and secondly mechanisms for dealing with those projections. Baker discusses how psychodynamics can be used to help inform a practitioner about relationships in other professional settings that extend beyond the therapeutic relationship (Baker, 2006). Dunning, James and Jones (2005) studied highly evocative and emotionally intense schools settings and witnessed ‘splitting and projecting flourish’ (Dunning, et al., 2005, p. 251), which had an impact on the individual and the institution. Xavier Eloquin (2016) has researched the application of systems psychodynamics to educational settings and found that by through systematically applying psychodynamics to complex situations EPs were able to understand greater complexity and were well placed to utilise such a paradigm in their practice, Eloquin (2016).

Pellegrini et al (2006) investigated the effects of splitting and projection within a school setting and found the process to add great value to their work as EPs. It was also not simply through viewing behaviour through a psychodynamic lens but also the reflective use of this paradigm that increased their own self-awareness, helped effect a change in a complex school dynamic and helped develop their own practice.

‘Reflections on the author’s practice highlight the usefulness of both an awareness of what may be happening at an unconscious level during social interactions, and the ability to explore it. Sometimes it is possible to use these working hypotheses to enable others to think about their own experiences differently (Pellegrini, 2010, p. 256)

These pieces of research appear to link well with the premise of this research which is driven by the following questions;

**1) How possible is it to develop a feasible reflexive practice, to increase self-awareness, by appropriating techniques influenced by psychodynamic paradigm, within the role of trainee educational psychologist?**

**2) What is the experience of engaging with reflective practice, which appropriate techniques from the psychodynamic paradigms, as trainee educational psychologist?**

It is also supported by legislative changes, local authority and public service culture changes and the increasing demands placed on practitioners. This demonstrates the need for reflective practice and emphasises the importance of raising the profile of reflexive practice and self-awareness in practitioners at a basic training level and throughout their career.

# CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

This chapter comprises of two sections; section one begins with a description of the context in which the research took place and connect this research to the application of educational psychology; following this I will then discuss the phenomenological methodological aspects of this research. This section will include an overview of the data corpus, described in thematic analysis as the entire data including all data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006) (*figure 2),* a description and discussion of auto ethnography, Heuristics Inquiry and the thematic analysis used to analyse the data. I will begin this section with an overview explaining how each dataset generated the whole data corpus for the thematic analysis.

In section two of this chapter I will describe specifically how I engaged with the psychodynamic reflective process within a Heuristics Inquiry framework, and how the data was analysed and the themes generated using Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis, in relation to the research questions.

**The context in which the research took place.**

The five schools I visited during the research week were all small mainstream primary schools, in a city, within the same local authority. The schools were part of my allocated patch that I worked with as a TEP. I had worked with the schools for one year prior to asking if they would be interested in being involved in this research project.

I explained to the schools that from their own perspective the engagement with this research would feel no different from any other piece of casework I had been involved with previously. The only difference would be my recording of the conversations I had with teacher, parent and the child. When working with a new piece of casework I followed a consultation model which included a conversation with key members of staff, parent or guardian and an observation and one-to-one with the child when and where appropriate. I would then take that information away and reflect on the case. I would also talk about my thoughts in supervision and then write a report that I felt reflected my thoughts, and suggested intervention and strategies for school and home to try.

I asked each of the four schools if they had an additional piece of casework I could be involved with and use that casework as a part of this research to intensively and reflexively review my practice. I also explained that I would be receiving supervision alongside the casework and offered a full description of what the research entailed in order to obtain informed consent, which can be found in appendix G. Once the data had been collected from the four primary schools I stored that data securely and regularly reviewed it in accordance with the Heuristics Inquiry process. Following this I collected additional data just from myself, in the form of free associations, dream recordings, listening with the third ear and reflective memos regarding the reflective process itself. During this time I continued to engage with my practice working with the schools on my patch, which included both statutory and traded (bought in) casework.

**How this research relates to the responsibilities of the EP role.**

This research has a primary focus on myself as a practising TEP. It is intensively autobiographical in nature and analyses and interprets how my values, beliefs and previous experiences impact on my behaviour, and my reaction to the children, families and teachers that I worked with. With such a strong emphasis on myself, as opposed to those I worked with, this research opens me up to the critique of it being self-indulgent. I have already addressed this issue in previous chapters and my intention is to not be over defensive about this potential critique. However this thesis is grounded in a belief and value base, that is supported by the literature discussed in Chapter Four, that an increased sense of self-awareness and a deeply reflective and reflexive practice benefits both the practitioner and can help achieve positive outcomes for those I work with. With regards to the HCPC standards of conduct (2016), a practitioner must be open and honest, have the ability to understand when they go wrong (HCPC, 2016, p. 10), understand the scope of their own practice (HCPC, 2016, p. 3) and manage their own health by knowing when they are too ill to perform effectively (HCPC, 2016, p. 8). The aim of this research is to take this a step further and elevate the value and importance of self-awareness in order to continue working towards positive outcomes for children, young people and their families, a key role of the EP. To ensure the ethical appropriateness of practice it is the duty of the practitioner to review their own practice and receive regular supervision in order to reflect on their own processes, addressing issues such as power imbalances, appropriate means of communication and:-

‘The responsibility of the psychologist is to ensure that potentially controversial issues, or those with uncertain ethical connotations, are presented for supervision’ (BPS, 2002, p. 20)

 Although I consider myself to be a reflexive practitioner, this process enabled me to reflect deeper than I ever have before in my practice by appropriating tools from psychodynamics. The children, schools and families that I worked with were a part of an innovative reflexive practitioner process. The outcomes generated for the families I worked with were presented in the form of a written report. The deeply reflexive nature of my engagement with families and children I worked with enabled me to generate reports that I felt offered insightful, reflective, supportive suggestions and interventions for the children in question. Post research I remained in contact with the schools regarding the children and families I had worked with to offer continued support and advice where applicable to ensure the children were making progress in the areas of concern, which included academic, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

**The research data corpus**

The data that the research generated included the following elements:



Figure 2 an overview of the data

This figure shows the data sets that make up the data corpus in this research. The data corpus, represented by the large blue box comprises of SIX datasets, shown beneath the data corpus box. The first layer of data, shown in the purple box, was generated during the research week and came from the consultation conversations I engaged with, with the children, families and schools. The second layer includes three datasets represented by the three psychodynamic techniques I appropriated during the reflexive process, highlighted in the orange boxes. The third layer, represented by the pink box, is the dataset of the supervision logs made after supervision sessions and the final layer, represented by the green box represents the reflective memos I made throughout the research process regarding my experience of reflecting by appropriating psychodynamic techniques.

Using Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis, the trapdoor conversations, the three psychodynamic datasets and the supervision logs were analysed and turned to themes which represented what I had learned about myself through applying the psychodynamic reflexive process. These outcomes are in relation to the first research question:

**1) How feasible is it to develop a reflexive practice appropriating techniques influenced by psychodynamic paradigm, within the role of the trainee educational psychologist?**

Using thematic analysis again, the reflective memos were analysed and as a result generated eleven themes detailing the experience of appropriating psychodynamic tools within a reflexive practice process. These outcomes are in relation to the second research question:

**2) What is the experience of engaging with reflective practice, which appropriate techniques from the psychodynamic paradigms, as a trainee educational psychologist?**

A detailed description of how the themes, in relation to both questions, were generated is offered later in this chapter. The themes are then discussed in detail in the discussion section of this thesis.

## PHENOMENOLOGY

This is a phenomenological piece of research, as it is concerned with the lived experience I have engaged with in order to develop myself as a practitioner and share that experience with others. In its most basic sense phenomenology is concerned with phenomena. There have been a number of key proponents who have offered significant developments to the field of philosophy and phenomenology, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Gadamer and Deleuze, with Husserl being considered the founder of phenomenological theory, (Vagle, 2014). Husserl was interested in how the world presented itself to humans and how humans took meaning from that. His thinking is further supported by more recent writings by Carla Willig who states that;

‘Phenomenology is interested in the world as it is experienced by human beings within particular context and that particular times rather than in abstract statements about the nature of the world in general. (Willig, 2013, p. 52)

Husserl believed that humans’ conscious experience of the world led to their beliefs about the world. He also believed that the experimental study of humans was flawed as it missed the experience of humans.

‘What typically happened according to Husserl, was that common sense terms were pressed into use as if they were technical terms, or other rough- and – ready ways of developing concepts were employed’ (Smith, 2008, p. 11)

Husserl developed a new method of phenomenology, which he felt would embrace the experience of humans while still remain rigorous. He did this by suggesting that we should ‘begin our investigations with what is experienced’ (Smith, 2008, p. 11).

Heidegger believed that humans are unable to separate objects in the world from their interactions with the objects and stated that inter-subjectivity is the ability to understand phenomena through shared experiences. I have endeavoured to share the lived experience of this reflexive process through my interpretations of my experiences as they present themselves to me. I have used artefacts of the lived experience such as dreams and conversations as a source of data to demonstrate what those experiences are like and how they can impact on my TEP practice. More importantly how reflexive practice can help to improve my practice.

I hope to experience phenomena that happen within relationships, take meaning from that and share the essence of that experience. I have endeavoured to use psychological tools and perspectives to get closer to a more essential understanding of my interactions. This research hopes to demonstrate the value in paying greater attention to the relationships I have with those I work with, in order to have more awareness of the impact I may have on others and what impact others have on me.

‘Therefore, the primary purpose of phenomenology as a research methodology stemming from its philosophical roots is to study what it is like as we *find ourselves being in relation with others’* (Vagle, 2014, p. 27)

From a phenomenological psychological perspective I am interested in exploring the ‘diversity and variability of human experience’ (Willig, 2013, p. 55) as I believe this is something I should value in my EP practice when working with others. I am also keen to experience my role as TEP and use those lived relational experiences to enhance my practice through reflexivity.

 *‘*In this respect, phenomenology tests do not tend to believe that humans construct phenomenological experience. When humans experience the world they, again, find themselves in the experience. The verb ‘find’ is not meant to signal an archaeological excavation of meaning, but a careful, reflexive, contemplative examination of how it is to be in the world’ (Vagle, 2014, p. 28)

**Choosing the methodology**

This research firmly sits in a qualitative camp as I am seeking to understand experiences and value individual difference.

‘Within contemporary psychology, then, those who wish to investigate the person’s grasp of their world in detail will tend to turn to qualitative methods’ (Smith, 2008, p. 5)

In order to answer the research questions I required a research methodology and design that would place me at the centre of the study and would allow me a degree of freedom to design and describe the experience of using a psychodynamics reflexive process. After researching a number of possible methodologies, which will be discussed shortly, I found what I believe to be the most appropriate methods of structuring and legitimising this research. I see this thesis being made up of five key components;

* The Children, families and school I worked with
* Me (The focus)
* Auto-ethnography (The research methodology)
* Heuristics Inquiry (The design)
* Psychodynamic techniques (The psychological methods)

In Judith Bell’s book, ‘Doing your research project’ (1987), she states:

‘That it is not necessary to describe in detail any standard tests or procedures that are well known… but if subjective assessments or individually devised measurements techniques have been used, then some explanation is necessary’ (Bell, 1987, p. 127).

In order to describe the structure of this research, the methodology, design and method, I will use an analogy.

I see the methodology of this research as though it were a tool box, the outer casing and holding device representing an ‘Auto-ethnography’. The Auto-ethnographic methodology, explained shortly, provides an overall structure and ‘feel’ to the research and holds all of its contents. Inside that toolbox there is a component that operates as an organiser, much like a compartment creator and, this is the design which is the ‘Heuristics Inquiry’. The organiser creates a plan within the box and Heuristics Inquiry does just that. In this research Heuristic Inquiry has provided an organised process within the auto-ethnographic outer casing. Within the organiser are tools and in this instance the tools represent the ‘psychodynamic methods’ used to understand and explain my experiences, with a view to addressing the first question of this research. Finally, it is ‘me’ who is holding the tool box as the focus of the research, and in many ways deciding where it goes and what it is used for. With Judith Bell’s sentiment in mind, I will now discuss the tool box, the organiser and the tools.

Auto-ethnography (The tool box)

‘Auto-ethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)’ (Carolyn Ellis, Admas & Bochner 2011).

It is a relatively new method of research originally dicussed in detail by Hayano in 1979. Auto-ethnography challenges the, what could be described as, more conventional qualitative methods by offering accounts which are autobiographical by their nature, and tell stories of individuals’ experiences within a culture.

Auto-ethnography is a ‘critical self-reflection’ (Mertens. M, 1998, p. 232) that allows the researcher to express their feelings and emotions within a culture, which is particularly in keeping with the first research question. The auto-ethnographer aims to describe the social world they are in and consciously reflect on that to ‘contribute to the understanding of the socal world’ (Mertens. M, 1998, p. 232). This is particularly well suited to both research questions, as I am within the EP culture, and this allows me to demonstrate the feasibility of the psychdynamic reflective process and share that experience. The auto-ethnographic process aims to encourage the values and subjectivities of the researcher to be included in the research itself by explicitly talking about how I, the researcher, has guided the research. There is a great emphasis placed upon human ‘stories’ rather than grand ‘theories’ by valuing the documentation of individual experiences rather than reducing and generalising individuals through the use of nomothetic techniques. This approach has developed over the years and with a growing popularity more examples of auto-ethnographic research display the power of the approach.

‘Gradually, scholars across a wide spectrum of disciplines began to consider what social sciences would become if they were closer to literature than to physics, if they proffered stories rather than theories, and if they were self-consciously value-centred rather than pretending to be value free’. (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 274)

Auto-ethnography is not without its criticisms, very specifically for its bias (Hayano, 1979).

‘The most fundamental dilemma raised by most auto-ethnographers concerns research bias, and the objective subjective polarity in collecting, interpreting, and reporting information’ (Hayano, 1979, p. 100)

Hayano (1979) believed that the typical approach to an auto-ethnographic study is written by an individual from within a culture with which they identify. For me this is Educational Psychology but, rather than fully belonging to this culture, I feel that I am becoming part of this culture through my training and experience. It has been through my jouney into this culture so far that I have felt the need to increase my self-awareness and encourage other EPs to do so too. This drive, to present the benefits of deep reflexive practice, is with a view to motivate other practitioners to do so too, and eventually encourage training courses to raise the importance of self-awareness.

‘The criteria for auto-ethnography, then, must include some prior knowledge of the people, their culture and language, as well as the ability to be accepted to some degree, or to "pass" as a native member’. (Hayano, 1979, p. 100)

As I am immersed within the EP culture and entering my role as a qualified EP I feel that I do meet this criteria, and that I am in a position to study myself in relation to the TEP role. As this is an auto ethnographic study I will be placed at the centre of the study. The sample will consist of myself. I will be reflecting on my experience as a TEP carrying out my day-to-day role, by appropriating psychodynamic tools. I will, one could say, be turning the mirror away from facing the people I work with to facing myself. It will be a:

‘Detailed, local and evocative first person account of the relationship between personal autobiography and culture’ (Short, 2013, p. 2).

I will pay my attention to the ‘me’ in my interaction, as opposed to those I speak with, and I will intensively analyse those interactions to better understand myself as a practitioner, in accordance with the first research question. The focus is on me because and this benefits others because

Once the shackles of objectivity are removed there is further space for the intense richness of human experience to be explored and written about. Auto- ethnographers such as Carolyn Ellis (2011), Denshire (2014), Hayano (1979), Denzin (2008) and finally Short (2013) who states that:

‘Accounts might be highly charged, thumping the reader firmly in the solar plexus, leaving them metaphorically gasping for breath, or they may be gentle and meandering, allowing the reader space and time for reflection’. (Short, et al., 2013, p. 2)

As Vygotsky states, when researching one must use ‘the proper unit of study’ (Billington, 2006, p. 76 cites Vygotsky), and I believe this is it. I also have strong views that represent a principle whereby each individual, their story, their position and their experience is more valuable than anything else, which is also consistent with a phenomenological positionality.

**Heuristic Inquiry revisited**

Heuristic Inquiry has been explained in chapter three; it is the framework I have used to create and demonstrate a psychodynamic reflexive practice. Heuristic Inquiry has served a dual purpose within this research; with regards to the first question, to enhance my self-awareness within my role as TEP. With regards to the second question, Heuristic Inquiry has been used as a framework to demonstrate a feasible method of psychodynamic reflection for practitioners who may wish to engage with such an approach.

 Heuristic Inquiry is not to everyone’s liking and to some researchers it is not clear enough, structured enough or specific enough to offer reliable results.

The problem with these heuristics is that they at once explain too little and too much. Too little, because we do not know when these heuristics work and how; too much, because, post hoc, one of them can be fitted to almost any experimental result. (Gigerenzer, 1996, p. 594)

However I challenge this criticism with a view I have already presented, that the value in this research is the rich, lived ‘whole picture’ experience I am detailing. Humans are ‘vague’ at times, ‘unspecific’ and ‘undefined’ and I believe there is value in attempting to capture that and demonstrate that and still offer a method that is reliable and valid for the purpose of the individual, which again is congruent with a pragmatic drive from this process.

‘Heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behaviour’. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 42)

To reiterate the analogy I feel that the organiser fits into the tool box very well and that the three components speak to each other, sharing the same language and values, and support the philosophical foundations and feed into the questions of this research. All three components include an emphasis on self-awareness and self-knowledge in self-discovery, which aligns well with the primary question of this research. Heuristics research can be conducted creatively, also encouraged in auto-ethnographic research where dreams can become part of this journey (Smith, 2002), and there is unquestionable value placed on one’s intuition synchronising well with psychodynamics. There is a shared drive to extend knowledge through experience and heuristics displays an:

‘unwavering and steady inward gaze and inner freedom to explore and accept what is. I am reaching into deeper and deeper regions of human problem or experience and coming to know and understand its underlying dynamics more fully’ (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13)

Heuristic Inquiry shares a belief with psychodynamics that there is a conscious which implies the potential presence of an unconscious.

 ‘Heuristic explorative methods also have been used extensively within certain branches of psychology e.g. the Wurzburg school, the Berlin Gestalt psychology, Freudian psychoanalysis, (Gerhard & Witt, Harald (2000, p.1)

The psychodynamic lens has allowed me to look at what my own possible drivers are by valuing and listening to my own self within my practice and paying attention to my experiences, which is also encouraged in auto-ethnographic research and Heuristic Inquiry. This research hopes to motivate others to engage with a deep reflexive practice by incorporating psychodynamics into their practice.

‘They (auto-ethnographers) realised that stories were complex, constitutive, meaningful phenomena that taught morals and ethics, introduced unique ways of thinking and feeling, and helped people make sense of themselves and others’ (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 274)

And additionally:

At the heart of heuristics lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosures from others… with a view to spark a similar call from others’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 51)

## Section two: Becoming more self-aware - a psychodynamic reflective process

This section will now explain in a literal and sequential manner how I applied the psychodynamic techniques within a Heuristic Inquiry framework to develop and apply a process of psychodynamic reflexive practice. From this I have created a psychodynamic reflexive practice for practitioners to engage with outside of the research context which can be found in *appendix a.*

This section will detail how the following three psychodynamic techniques were appropriated within the six stage Heuristic Inquiry process.

* Listening with the third ear (Reik, 1948)
* Dream interpretation (Freud, 1900, Mahrer, 1971, Hill, et al., 1997, Rubenfeld & Dluhy, 2005, Holloway, 2011)
* Free association (Freud, 1900, Reik, 1948, Horney, 1968, Holloway & Jefferson, 2000)

I will describe the activities which took place at each stage and offer examples, from the raw data, to enrich the descriptions. The following table is an overall summary explaining the activities that took place at each stage of the heuristic enquiry. A timetable of activities can be found in *appendix c*

Table 1: The activities within the psychodynamic reflective process

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Heuristic phase  | Psychodynamic activities  | Additional activities  |
| 1.Initial engagement  |  - | Discussion with supervisor and peers and review of the literature in areas of interest Written reflective notes on the process  |
| 2. Immersion  | Free association spoken and writtenDream recording and interpretation Listening with the third ear | Engaged with my working week and recorded my consultation sessions. I made spoken and written free associations and logged any dreams I recalled and noted my interpretations. I listened to the conversation recordings, the spoken free associations, the written free associations and the dream logs and interpretations.I made written reflective notes on the process |
| 3. Incubation  |  Free association  | I did not add any further information to data set collected during the immersion phases. I reflected on the data by occasionally writing in my research diary if thoughts or ideas came to me. I made written reflective notes on the process |
| 4. Illumination  | Free associationDream interpretation  | Through a natural process of being open minded and reflecting on the immersion phase, ideas and concepts illuminated themselves to me. I made written reflective notes on the process |
| 5. Explication  | Free associationDream interpretation  | I reviewed the data set that included all spoken free associations and written free associations and dreams, recordings and interpretations. This re immersion, based on the illuminations allowed me to explicate core concepts from the data set. I made written reflective notes on the process |
| 6.Thematic analysis  |  | I took those explicated ideas and concepts from the data and through the application of a thematic analysis, I generated core themes and demonstrated these in the discussion section of this thesis |

**Initial engagement**

Before I engaged with Heuristic Inquiry I was aware of my initial interest in self-awareness, reflective practice and psychodynamics, which led to the research questions. I have also always been incredibly passionate about working with vulnerable people and helping others in a congruent manner by offering myself as a means to help, support, guide, counsel and advise others. It was at this juncture that I discovered Heuristic Inquiry and felt that Moustakas’s (1990) approach to research was congruent with my interests, questions and phenomenological approach of understanding experience, and of wanting to develop a useful process of increasing my self-awareness to help others (Morgan, 2013, p. 1047, 1051). Once the research was placed within a heuristic framework, I began phase one by reviewing the literature, discussed in chapter four. In addition to reviewing the literature I wrote diary notes, ‘self- dialog’, (Moustakas, 1990, p 27) and spoke with peers and supervisors regarding my areas of interest and possible ideas for the research process within the EP profession. After reflecting on the advice of others, I came to what felt was an unconventional but important discovery. I felt as though I was being asked to go ‘out there’ and find or challenge knowledge and I felt some resistance to this. My resistance or challenge to this notion is that there is a great deal of knowledge I do not yet know about myself as a TEP, and is that not just as important as challenging or adding to knowledge that is ‘out there’?

*‘This doesn’t feel like the structured approach that I’ve been advised to take for this research process. I have a feeling I may be biting off more than I can chew but this does feel like me and when Janisha said today ‘this research is so you LJ’, I thought yeah it is, but oh God LET it work’*

*Extract taken from reflective memos in the initial engagement phase (15.06.15)*

The initial engagement phase lasted for one month commencing with areas of interest and research aims. The end of this phase was marked by the development of a psychodynamic process that aimed to address the research questions.

**Immersion**

This phase included the following psychodynamic activities;

* Dream diary and interpretation
* Written free association
* Spoken free association

In addition to applying the above psychodynamic activities, I also engaged with the following activities:

* The research week, where I recorded all consultation conversations during my working week.
* Conversations with friends, family and colleagues

Trapdoor conversations

The immersion phase was revisited on more than one occasion through this process. In the first instance I engaged with the immersion week where I recorded my work as TEP for one week, and each day I worked in a different school with a new case. Each consultation session included a conversation with a parent, a conversation with a teacher and a conversation with the child. Each conversation was recorded separately using a Dictaphone, with the participants’ pre-organised consent. These conversations are referred to as ‘trapdoor conversations’ as they were the beginning of my journey into increasing my self-awareness and did allow for a process of investigating my unconscious to begin. The consultation session, including all trap door conversations, lasted between 2.5 and 4 hours. Following on from this I recorded myself free associating into a Dictaphone, independently.

**Spoken free association**

Free association as a technique has also been discussed in detail in the literature review and so this section aims to describe how I applied this psychodynamic technique to myself throughout the psychodynamic reflective practice.

I did not put a time limit on the space to free associate, though circumstances often dictated that I had a maximum of 2 hours. The longest dictation was fifty minutes and the shortest was twenty five. I would begin the free association by summarising the consultation session. I found it difficult to speak freely at first but then with a little practice and by allowing myself to just ‘go for it’ the words began to flow. I stopped tracking my words and just let them spill out, and I did not pull myself back even if I found myself off topic entirely, which happened frequently. I did also find it difficult not to try and analyse myself in the moment, especially after one session where I had found myself a little angry. I spoke until I felt I had no more to say on the session and then switched off the Dictaphone. This took place in my car, parked in a private car park and on one occasion at home.

*So… Free associate from that…long… Such a long conversation with mum, again. There seems a pattern occurring having long conversations with mums… Mums who have their own needs and I’m working alongside someone who has a story to tell so I let them tell their story… ummmm…. Is that useful though? I was nervous when I started talking about the attachment stuff but I was pleased when she heard it without getting offended’.*

 *Extract taken from spoken free associations after a trapdoor conversation during the research immersion week (29.07.15)*

**Dream interpretation**

Throughout the Heuristic Inquiry process I paid significant attention to my own dreams, which started at the beginning of the ‘immersion week’. The dream interpretation process continued until the end of December 2015, seven months after the research began and this timescale is discussed shortly. The process of dream interpretation has been guided by the work of Karen Holloway in her book ‘Five steps to decode your dreams’ (Holloway, 2011). In the first instance I kept a notepad and pen by my bed to recall any dreams that may have woken me during the night or occur to me during the night. I made sure I wrote the dream in the present tense when initially recalling it, as recommended by Holloway. I made notes of the emotions I felt, significant symbols that occurred in the dream, and the direction in which I felt the dream was going. I did not censor the content of the dream in my first recording of it. I allowed space on the page to add additional notes if later on any further details occurred to me. It was sometimes possible to immediately offer an interpretation of the dream whereas on other occasions the interpretation occurred later. Once the dream had been logged, any additional notes had been added, and interpretations made, the dream was translated into a narrative for the purpose of presenting the dream in the thesis. An example of this can be found in the results chapter. The process of decoding dreams within the psychodynamic reflective practice is summarised in the psychodynamic reflective practice ‘how to’ document in *appendix a.*

For each dream I would follow Holloway’s five steps to interpret the dream, discussed in the literature view (Holloway, 2011). Once I had considered each element of the dream I wrote the dream as a narrative, demonstrated above, and stored the dream with a date of its occurrence, which could be on a computer or written. I did this on the same day the dream was recalled.

**Written free association**

There were a number of strands to the written free association. The first strand was applied during listening with the third ear (Reik, 1948) to the trap door conversations I engaged with in the immersion week. The second strand of written free association happened sporadically throughout the research process and could be about anything. The decision to engage with written free association was dictated by the desire to further investigate a thought or peruse an idea that has illuminated itself during the process. The third strand was in reference to the psychodynamic reflective practice itself, and how I was experiencing the process; these writings differed from conventional reflective writings because I wrote without censorship, for the length of time I needed. I made written free association regarding the process once a week throughout the research. I also made brief memos during the process that were not free associative but rather reflective notes throughout the research. Some writings were on pieces of scrap paper available to me at the time, which were then placed inside my research diary and some were written straight into my diary.

*What do I sound like? Why did I do that, LJ you sound so uncomfortable… you’re panicking and filling the silence….*’

*Extract taken from written free association while listening with the third ear to trap door conversation (30.07.15)*

*‘I think I may have underestimated the power of the unconscious. Nothing good is in the unconscious and here I am trying to access it. Some concepts I keep finding really relevant or is it intrigue… but I'm really not sure I want to go there… Not sure if it is needed for the purpose of this research… How brave is just stupid? Projective identification has just hit me between the eyes…’*

*Extract taken from written free association (27.08.15)*

*How on earth am I going to make sense of this? What if I don’t have a dream? Everything I am seeing is just negative and critical. Is this the process or is it me?*

*Extract taken from written free association of process reflection (02.07.15)*

*Make sure you take care of yourself LJ, this is pretty intense*

*Reflective process note (09.09.15)*

###

Additional activities:

Talking to friends and family and colleagues

I had conversations with colleagues, friends and family (Poland, 1993, pp. 219-234) which is supported by the aforementioned research and proved to be an invaluable element of my reflective process.

‘Placing a high value on consulting with others regarding the phenomenon or experience’ (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39)

These conversations were fluid and intuitive rather than planned and structured. I had at least one conversation a week regarding my research throughout the process, and on some occasions I spoke at great length and depth, sharing my thoughts and listening to the thoughts of others. The latter conversations happened only three times during the process. My conversations included discussions of my interpretation of dreams, my attempts at applying psychodynamic terminology and concepts to my interactions, and sharing my thoughts and feelings regarding my research experience of reflecting using psychodynamic techniques. My discussions included listening to others’ interpretations and perspectives on the information I shared with them, as well as helping to increase my understanding by teaching others. It was through some of these conversations that I began to understand psychodynamics further and immersed myself deeper into the literature, applying it to myself along the way.

*I somehow ended up talking more about myself but seemed to maintain an intellectual defence - wanting to seem smart but share my vulnerabilities at the same time - how can I be both? This helped me to see where I had knowledge gaps and take a meta-perspective when talking about this to friends who have little or no knowledge of psychodynamics.*

*Extract taken written free association after a weekend with friends (19.08.15)*

**Summary of the immersion week**

The immersion week recorded my immersion into the EP culture and collected data from a range of activities;

* Recorded trap door conversations
* Recorded free associations
* Dream diary and interpretations
* Written free associations
* Reflective memos entered into my research diary regarding the process
* Conversations with people around me in my life, including friends, family and colleagues.

The trap door conversations, written free associations and spoken free associations were stored on an encrypted computer and all other data was anonymously written in my research diary.

**Incubation**

The phase of incubation occurred after the immersion week and lasted for two weeks. In order to engage with this phase I continued my day to day work. If the conversation of my thesis came up I happily talked about it, and I often thought about how I would engage with the following phases. I did not disengage from all reflective activity and I did not close off my thoughts about the immersion week. As well as the two weeks between the immersion week and the illumination phase I did ‘incubate’ at other points through the research process. These times were not planned (Smith, 2002) and were often guided by a personal need to spend some time away from the intensity of the research. I did this by listening to my intuition and took these times as opportunities for information to settle in my mind.

*‘I feel so guilty not doing any work even though I am doing work. It's almost like I am waiting for an eureka moment where I make sense to myself, where I find some inner peace, the penny drops and I become an excellent EP… Can you get sick of the sound of your own thoughts? I wonder if that's what people around me think to my voice? Be patient LJ, be patient with yourself let the info just settle’.*

*Extract taken from written free association (30.08.15)*

**Immersion revisited**

Upon completing the two week incubation phase I revisited the data that had been collected. This phase began with listening to the recorded conversations and free associations collected during the immersion week by listening ‘with the third ear’ (Reik, 1948), discussed in the literature review. I worked independently in a quiet and uninterrupted space, allowing a day to listen to the trap door conversations.

I sat at my computer, placed my headphones on, I switched off from the world and switched on to the recording. I listened to each recording, occasionally pausing to make notes and to reflect on what I had heard. There was no formal structure to this, I paused the recordings to allow my thoughts to be expressed in written form and so as not to miss any part of the trap door conversations recording. During the recording I made free association notes and paid attention to my thoughts and feelings as I relived my interactions.

I sat listening, poised, listening between the lines and paying ‘free floating attention’, to not just the words but what I felt was happening between me and the other. I attempted to remove judgement of myself while listening to the interactions and not concern myself with what others may think if they heard the recordings. I did this by knowing I was the only one who would listen to the trap door conversations, and I closed my ears to the judgemental characters that live within me and simply listened without conscious expectation or hope. This was not an easy task to perform and so when I felt a judgemental thought I paused the recording and wrote that down.

‘And to shut his ear to the noise of adult wisdom, well considered opinion, conscious judgement. The night reveals to the wonder things that are hidden by day. ‘ (Reik, 1948, p. 147)

I spent one day per consultation session recording and this took one week to complete. During that week and the following week I carried out dream analysis in the manner previously discussed. I continued to have conversations with colleagues, friends and family (Poland, 1993, pp. 219-234).

*I am angry. She’s talking all over me. Interrupting. And again. Why am I not angry with her in the meeting? And again! I was talking then…. Why are you doing that? Why am I letting her? Constantly talking over me. Didn’t notice at the time! I am really frustrated.*

*Extract taken from written free association while listening with the third ear (03.09.15)*

Once I had listened and written any thoughts that came to mind I free associated again about what I had heard and how I felt. This was not time limited and ended when I intuitively felt I had made progress, in the form of acknowledging something new or noticed a reoccurring theme.

*Wow, I didn’t expect to uncover anything of real interest from today. Even though this was over a week ago I can still remember the conversation being more factual and superficial than my usual approach which is emotional and trying to build rapport. I can remember that I felt frustrated with mum at some points. Even though I did and I even felt angry I don’t think this was obvious to mum. I could see four key times when I felt this frustration and I felt frustrated listening back to the recording. But my tone of voice, ability to listen, questioning and general attitude towards mum I felt did not seem to reflect my frustration. I think this is key because it could have been an opportunity in the conversation for me to project frustrations on to mum. This would not have helped me build rapport and so maybe that’s what stopped me from projecting.*

*I did notice that, by listening with the third ear and paying more attention to the relationship and the process rather than just the words, that shortly after my feelings of anger and frustration I really quickly tried to build rapport again. I used humour, I showed empathy, I raised my tone of voice, and I can hear myself smiling more. I wonder if I felt guilty feeling frustrated. Why was I even feeling that frustrated….?.*

*Extract taken from written free association made after listening with the third ear (01.09.15)*

**Illumination**

After re-immersing in the data and re-engaging with the trap door conversations, I incubated once more for a period of two weeks. This two week period ended as ideas and concepts illuminated themselves to me and I began to explicate themes. This phase often came in flashes, for example during my holiday I had moments of ‘illumination’ and realisations that were powerful and relevant. These moments were noted and returned to later. I certainly felt that at moments through the research the original data seemed a distant memory and the newly found information became less about segmented, isolated experiences and more about my character generally, which is a concept discussed in the paper presented by Poland in ‘the self in self-analysis’. (Poland, 1993, p. 222).

*The cup of tea illumination.*

*Whenever I'm asked I always say ‘only if you’re making one yourself’, followed by ‘no fuss, no faff’ and ‘beggars can't be choosers’.*

*I just don't want to be any trouble for anyone, I don't want anyone to go out of their way for me, am I not worth it? How does it manifest in the work I do as an EP. I won't ask much of people - does this make me the problem holder more easily? I will always make sure if someone does something for me I return the favour asap and this can create a workload that is just unsustainable, that or I feel guilty for being a ‘taker’ or a burden.*

*Extract taken from written free association (3.10.15)*

These moments often led me to immerse myself more into the literature and explore my new knowledge further with the aid of psychodynamic language. I also experienced dreams during this phase that illuminated themes and ideas to me about myself. In order to demonstrate an example of illumination I will share with you a dream that occurred to me during the research process and during writing my thesis. The following section discusses a dream that occurred during the research process and has been discussed to demonstrate the potential impact dreams can have.

**The motorway dream**

During writing this thesis, in particular the literature review section, I was having a great deal of difficulty in creating a piece of writing I felt was satisfactory. On the 11th version of the literature review, several emails to my supervisor, ‘many head in hands’ moments and countless essay plans being made, I felt completely lost and not least incapable. I finally decided to leave the literature review and attempt writing the methodology. I had two good days of writing and I began to feel more confident. Subsequently I had a dream that following night, which can be found, along with my interpretations, in *appendix d*.

**Dream interpretation affect**

The interpretation of the dream proved to be a catalyst in my work productivity. I analysed this dream in the manner described previously considering the five stages presented by Gillian Holloway (2011). The dream example above has attempted to show the power of dream interpretation and the impact it had on me, and perhaps could have on others too. The dream highlighted several aspects of myself that I was not consciously aware of, my disorganised victim persona, my inability to accept help without giving help and my need for help, and yet my ability to problem solve independently. As a result of this dream analysis I took myself out of ‘victim mode’ and began working on the problem at hand in my conscious life. This dream interpretation also impacted on my perspective during my EP practice when faced with writing complex reports and difficult intricate case work by believing I had the skills within myself to attend to difficulty.

The illumination phase was very emotionally challenging and my free association notes evidence some of this. At this phase I began to draw the data together more and the themes which did emerge more regularly were undeniable and grew in prevalence as the research progressed.

**Explication**

Again, this phase occurred several times throughout the process. At the beginning of this phase the data set consisted of:

* Recorded trap door conversations (immersion week)
* My spoken free associations (immersion week)
* My written free associations (throughout)
* Process written free associations and memos
* Written free associations made from ‘listening with the third ear’. (initially during immersion week and then returned to throughout as I felt appropriate)
* Dream diary and interpretations (immersion week and throughout)

Although this phase occurred more than once, as themes illuminated to me, this decision to end this phase was influenced by my intuitive feeling that I had come to a point in the research where core, relevant themes had begun to emerge in the form of illuminations. Additionally I had a dream, which played a part in signalling the end of the research detailed below.

This dream came after I was reading ‘self-analysis’ by Karen Horney (1968) and contemplating costs and benefits of undergoing a deeper look into my own unconscious, through reading psychodynamic material that I found particularly powerful. Although this dream is not related to my EP role, it was a landmark dream in determining a transition to the following phase. This dream and its interpretation can be found in *appendix e*

The explication phases involved reviewing the data set where ideas, themes and concepts had arisen and I cross referenced the occurrences with the core themes I had come to realise. During this phase I relied on the data set and my intuition. I listened to my own reflective thoughts about whether a theme felt ‘robust’ and ‘trustworthy’ (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, Carolyn Ellis, 2011) rather than a vague hopeful collection of ideas. I wrote these themes down and reflected on them before finalising each theme.

In order for this phase to be carried out I trusted the heuristic process in that through my immersion in the original data and subsequent data I had created, themes would emerge. I would read my free association notes, read my own dream transcripts and, through continuing a free association process, core themes emerged. The themes emerged by way of regularly reappearing through my free associations and my dreams and I heard the themes more prominently when listening with the third ear to the original data. I did not follow a prescribed process other than to trust the heuristic process and be guided by my natural inquisitive enquiry as well as my intuition.

*There seems to be a clear theme emerging from the data set that I can't shake off from my thoughts even if I wanted to, which I don’t. Every time I go back into the information I come out with the same feelings, feelings that I have taken as far as I want to, as far as I feel safe, and I have got some fascinating, interesting and useful stuff to work with here.*

*Extract taken from written free association (6.09.15)*

At this juncture, I felt that the data set was held in my mind as much as it was stored on a computer, or written in a book. The exposure to the original trapdoor conversations and the reflections and psychodynamic techniques applied throughout began to naturally form themes that felt consistent, robust, appropriate, applicable and honest.

## Creative synthesis: A thematic analysis

Although Clark Moustakas’s Heuristic Inquiry suggests that the data is creatively synthesised, I have chosen to use a thematic analysis which offers a more structured approach to analysis, presented by Braun & Clarke (2006). This approach offers a six phased process to analyse data and present themes in accordence with the research questions. The following process lasted for three weeks. The process was concluded when I felt I had generated one clear theme regarding my own personal self-awareness and eleven themes regarding the process itself. These themes were generated by following the following six phases.

**Phase 1: familiarising yourself with the data**

As I came to the data analysis phase I was already reasonably familiar with the data, having generated most of it, and re-engaged with the original sources on several occasions as the Heuristic Inquiry process suggests. Irrespective of this once this phase began I collected all of the data and re-read all of the data sets that had been generated from the trap door conversations. Firstly, I organised the data set in accordance with the research questions. In relation to question one:

**How feasible is it to develop a reflexive practice appropriating techniques influenced by psychodynamic paradigm, within the role of the trainee educational psychologist?**

I re listened to the trap door conversations, listened to my free associations, re-read my written free associations read my supervision logs and re-read all dream logs and interpretations. I made notes throughout this re-immersion and noticed any perceived latent meanings in the writings and the recorded conversations. I paid attention to how I felt during these times and noted any reoccurring sensations, memories and feeling that came to my mind.

In relation to the second research question:

**What is the experience of engaging with reflexive practice, which appropriates techniques from the psychodynamic paradigms, as a trainee educational psychologist?**

I collected all of the reflective and reflexive memos made throughout the entire research process. These were written memos on loose pieces of paper, post-it notes, even the back of receipts and in my research diary and I typed these onto a computer. I also collated the free associations I had written regarding the process throughout the research.

As thematic analysis suggests I read all this data and searched for meaning and any recurring patterns that I noticed. As I entered this phase I was already aware of certain themes that I had seen, as I had repeatedly revisited the data throughout the research process, in accordance with the Heuristic process. I made brief notes to myself about words, phrases and ideas that occurred to me through this re-immersion in the datasets.

**Phase 2: Generating initial codes**

During this phase I worked through each of the data sets firstly for question one and then question two. I attempted to approach this with an open mind and pay equal attention to all of the information I listened to and read. I began highlighting vivid extracts and writing down notes along-side the extract, words or phrases that came to mind as I read the extract. All the extracts were initially highlighted in one colour and were chosen based on the impact they had on me when re immersing in the data. I then typed the extracts on to a computer in tables and following this I wrote the extracts on post-it notes. I used coloured post-it notes to signify which data set the extract came from. I stuck the notes on a large piece of paper to review them.

In relation to question two, regarding the experience of using psychodynamic techniques in a reflective process, I read all reflective memos and free associations and began highlighting statements based on how vivid the statement felt and the impact it had on me and typed them into tables on a computer. Below is an example of how the extracts were organised into data sets initially

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Example from data set  | Data set  | Note |
| I feel like this weekend I need to just be away from it | Reflective memo | Sel care, too much. Incubation. Intensity  |
| Nothing good lies in the unconscious hold tight and take care of yourself | Reflective memo | The negative elements to the unconscious/ dark. Self care |
| I’m hoping that my unconscious defences do their job because this is really hard sometimes. Ouch | Free Association | Self care. Independently doing this  |
| Is so important to look after my own mental health but this is just so interesting.  | Reflective memo | Self care Fascinating  |
| Is no use me losing the plot of got to write a thesis take care of yourself | Reflective memo | Doing both too hardSelf care |

 I then wrote the vivid and powerful memos on post it notes and stuck them on a large piece of paper. This process allowed me to organise my thoughts, which at times became clouded and confused giving my immersion in the data and the intensity and personal nature of the data. However this process was useful and affirming in seeing regular concepts, themes, patterns and ideas occurring within the data. I also wanted to take an inductive approach to the data and pay attention to the latent themes within it, rather than focusing at a word level. This is important to me because I was interested in how I was engaging in the relationship with another, and how previous relationships I have had may have impacted on my ability to relate to others in the trap door conversations as well as reflect on the data I had collected.

**Phase 3: Searching for themes**

In order to review the data set, which supported the first question I used a large piece of paper stuck to the wall, and transferred the vivid extracts on to coloured post-it notes. The extracts that I had explicated from the data sets appeared to present as one large overarching theme of ‘the importance of being useful’. It was through my immersion into the literature that I began to notice that additional explicated themes were correlating with an ‘altruism defence’.

In relation to the second question, I noticed that the reflective memo extracts were forming clusters in relation to a psychodynamics experience, a Heuristic Inquiry experience and an overall experience of the reflexive process and I generated a table to organise these clusters. Following this phase I used large sheets of paper placed on the wall, one for psychodynamics, one for Heuristic and one for a combination. I used post-it notes to write the memos on that I had explicated from the data, and moved the post-it notes around the sheets of paper to see which segments appeared to generate a more concrete thematic concept, and which codes had a relationship with one another. After some time of moving post-it notes to the similar statements and quotes, eleven themes emerged, within the three clusters, each with numerous supporting statements from the raw data.

**Phase four: Reviewing the themes**

In relation to the first question, at this juncture I proposed a preliminary name for the one core theme that I felt had emerged regarding my own self-awareness. After many hours staring at the sheet of paper on the wall looking at the grouped, words, sentences, illuminations, explications, and statements the theme name ‘The importance of being useful’ emerged. This process was extremely intensive and lengthy. I worked independently in an office for hours and days at a time seeking no guidance from anyone. It was a period of time that was emotionally challenging but also incredibly enlightening. I spent hours on end on this section of the analysis, and it ended as I felt the core theme was robust, valid, and accurate. I felt that I had understood the latent meaning in the data and as a result I had extracted a core theme that was powerful to me. I intuitively believed I had discovered something of use about myself that would help enhance my practice. I felt that this theme had stood out to me through this process and I could not ignore this newly found information about myself as I could not only see it in the data before me, I could see it in my practice generally.

For the second question, and the themes regarding the psychodynamic reflexive process, I reviewed all of the data extracts on the large sheet of paper and checked to see that the groupings showed coherent and consistent patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some statements appeared to cross over into more than one theme and as a result of this reviewing period and revisiting the original data repeatedly, I grouped certain themes together. This process of reviewing the reflective memos was time consuming, as I repeatedly returned to the original data, as the Heuristic research suggests, to ensure the themes were rigorous and valid. The themes I had come to see in the data appeared to say everything I wanted to say, they depicted the process exactly as I had experienced it and, despite revisiting the data sets over and over again, the same themes emerged. The themes I had explicated at this juncture told a story of the process, my story of the process and it felt honest, real, and rich with experience.

**Phase five: Defining and naming themes**

This phase involved the refining and defining of the themes. I wanted to make sure that the one core theme about myself and the eleven themes about the process really displayed the essence of this research. Through the themes, I wanted to show my values and beliefs about the importance of reflective and reflexive practice, and my passion for valuing individual difference, as well as owning the self when working with others. I have decided to share one core theme about myself that I have taken from this process. This theme presented as the most powerful realisation I took from this research and one which I know will impact on my practice in a positive way, or at the very least give me more choice about my behaviour in my role.

**Phase six: producing the report**

Once I had ‘a set of fully worked out themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006) I began the task of writing up the thematic analysis in a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23) manner. This section can be found in chapter seven, where I have described, in detail, one core theme I have explicated regarding myself and 11 themes regarding the process. These themes will be presented alongside examples from the data demonstrating the prevalence of the theme and in some cases the power and impact of the theme of myself and my practice.

This process will be engaged with differently, depending on the participant engaging with the psychodynamic reflexive practice. Each person will have their own goals, hopes and drivers for participating in a deep, reflexive process. This section has detailed my own engagement with the heuristic framework, while applying the psychodynamic tools, within a research context. I would hypothesise that no two processes would be the same and, whereas that does not meet the demands of quantitative research, it meets the reality of individual differences and the rich variety of life in the role of the EP. Taking this perspective this research is then relevant to the EP profession and useful and appropriate in its application to the self within that role.

# Ethics

In order to create and ethically sound piece of research I followed the University of Sheffield course guidelines as well as the British psychological research ethics guidelines. I was required to submit an ethical application to the University board before commencing this research, which was approved in May 2015. As this is an auto- ethnographic piece of research the risk to others is relatively minimal in comparison to myself. However as Chang, 2008 states there is a degree of additional difficulty with regards to the protection of participants with an auto ethnographic research due to the assumption that auto ethnographers believe they are the centre of the study. With this in mind I have been careful throughout this research to maintain the respecting privacy of all those I engaged with in the research and have referred to throughout. All persons recorded in the trap door conversations gave their informed consent to be included in this research. Participants were given a written document detailing the purpose of the research, this included a child friendly version for younger individuals. In addition to the written document all those included in the trap door conversations which spoken to prior to the research taking place to offer participants the opportunity to ask any further questions. Signed a consent form giving permission for their participation in this research. No personal information regarding specific cases has been written in this thesis and the main focus has remained on me. Any verbatim statements have been written out of context and have brief, making the identification with these segments extremely unlikely. This has been done to re inforce the emphasis on my endeavours to develop my own practice by reflexively reviewing myself within my role. Those participants involved it the research may find benefits in my ability to take ownership over my own emotions, experiences and reaction to them rather than singularly attempt to understand the participant. By viewing my own reactions may help to further understand the participant and there help to suggest interventions and strategies to help affect positive change. All Dictaphone recorded conversations were saved onto an encrypted computer. All written names were either deleted or replaced with pseudo names and those who were recorded were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Tolich (2010) presents guidelines which focus around core ethical considerations when conducting auto ethnographic research: consent, consultation and vulnerability. He states that it is crucial to respect participants, acknowledge their autonomy and the voluntary nature of participation and the researcher is responsible for documenting informed consent. I will ‘Assume that all people mentioned in the text will read it one day’ Ellis (1995), Tolich, (2010, p. 1608)

I will treat this research as a ‘permanently inked Tattoo’ and attempt to anticipate my own and others’ future vulnerabilities (Tolich, 2010, p. 1608). No story should be written with the intent to harm others and if harm is unavoidable necessary steps must be taken to minimise that harm. (Tolich, 2010). I am aware that as I am the centre of this study I am the most likely to experience any harm and therefore it is my responsibility to be mindful of the potential dangers of attempting to investigate my unconscious. I embark on such a journey with the words of Karen Horney in mind;

I would say, then, that self-analysis is within the range of possibility and the danger of it resulting in positive damage is comparatively slight (Horney, 1968, p. 33)

This chapter has aimed to simultaneously describe how I appropriated psychodynamic techniques to reflexive practice, as well as detailing my own experience of this approach, and demonstrate its use for the purpose of encouraging practitioners to engage with their own psychodynamic reflection. I have also aimed to describe how the themes were generated using a thematic analysis in order to answer the research questions. This chapter has been summarised by review the ethical considerations that have been made and addressed throughout this research.

# CHAPTER SIX- OUTCOMES

This chapter will share the results that have been obtained throughout the six month research process using a thematic analysis to interpret the data. The aims of this chapter are to be explicit in how the thematic approach has been used to analyse the data, present a clear connection between the thematic approach and the phenomenological underpinnings of this research, and comprehensively demonstrate how the themes were generated. This will be in accordance with the approach presented by Braun and Clarke (2006), discussed in detail in the methodology chapter. In order to share and discuss the results coherently this chapter is separated into two sections. The first section will be in reference to the primary research question:

**1) How feasible is it to develop a reflexive practice appropriating techniques influenced by psychodynamic paradigm, within the role of the trainee educational psychologist?**

I will discuss the personal information I have learnt about myself through the application of a psychodynamic reflective process using a Heuristic Inquiry design. This section will include extracts from the trap door conversations, the spoken free associations, the written free associations and dream logs and interpretations. I have discussed one primary theme, ‘the importance of being useful’, in detail in this section. During the thematic analysis the data supported one core theme as items taken from the data clustered around one main concept. The justification for this is that as the primary theme illuminated itself to me during the research process, data was continuously explicated that supported the theme. This theme developed, to use a metaphor, a gravitational pull that took much of my attention and thoughts. I noticed an increased number of behaviours in myself that supported this new information I was gaining, as such, presented as the most impacting illumination and outcome for me from this research. The search for personal development is potentially endless and, whereas this can be embraced in my personal life, it was important to bring the research process to a close with detailed information to present. For this latter reason I have endeavoured to present the primary theme in detail as I experienced it.

‘An alternative use of thematic analysis is to provide a more detailed and nuance account of one particular theme, or group of themes, within the data. This might relate to a specific question or area of interest within the data’. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 11)

This outcome demonstrates the feasibility of this approach, and the extracts taken from the data which led to the theme, demonstrate the lived experience of the psychodynamic reflexive process.

The second section of this discussion refers to the second aim of this research:

**2) What is the experience of engaging with a reflexive practice, which appropriates techniques from the psychodynamic paradigms, as a trainee educational psychologist?**

Here will be a presentation of the themes, explicated from the reflective memos made throughout the six month process, with a view of sharing the experience of engaging with a reflexive practice, which aims to increase my self-awareness and motivate other practitioners to also value this concept.

The summaries are just that, a summary of a lengthy and emotional process that lasted six months in total, but the effects extend beyond the psychodynamic reflexive process period and spill into all areas of my life. Rather than attempting to fit the findings into a conventional ‘mould’ I have endeavoured to share the findings as creatively and honestly as possible, and as such convey the essence of the reflexive experience I had throughout. It has been important to me, both in the research and in my practice, to value individual experience.

‘Using reflexivity in research has meant I have had to find ways of being openly creative, and this has stimulated me to generate new ideas to help me avoid the research data being poured into a given theoretical mould’ (Etherington, 2004, p. 20)

Below is my presentation of the thematic analysis; these outcomes are relevant to me and my psychological practice, and I have discussed the impact these outcomes have had on those areas. This theme also links with examples offered from the raw data where I believe I observed psychodynamic concepts occurring such as transference, projection and defences.

## Theme one. The importance of being useful

How I generated this theme:

In Phase one: I re listened to the trapdoor conversations and free associations and re-read the data from the written free associations and dream interpretations. Throughout this process I made notes regarding any initial thoughts or ideas I had.

In Phase two: I began highlighting elements of the data, which I felt were of interest to me, relevant to the research question and intuitively resonated with my endeavours to increase my self-awareness. As each item was highlighted it was coded according to which data set in which it appeared, I also added notes or words to accompany the extract. As a result of this process I generated tables, an example of which can be seen below;

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Extract from data | Data set | Notes |
| My job is to collect all the information I can and then add my own thoughts to offer something useful to the school to support Tom’s progress.  | Trapdoor conversation transcript  | Clarity/ communication/ useful  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Extract taken from data | Data set | Note |
| For God sake LJ, you are not useful at all, what’s the point of you turning up today?  | Spoken free associations | Self- critical/ hard on self/ value  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Extract taken from Data | Data Set  | notes |
| I feel that the system is stopping me from being affective and I don’t know how to manage that and if that’s a reflection on me or a reflection on the system. Supervision today has been particularly powerful. Sarah challenged me to think less about the latter question and more how important being useful readiness is to me. | Supervision log | Don’t be a burden/ reflection/ be of use/ don’ get in the way/ useful need |

In Phase three:

At this stage I had a number of examples, from each dataset, that I felt represented important elements within the data about my own personal learning. I used the organisation of this data to begin searching for themes and any patterns and connections between the extracts I had explicated, by paying attention to the notes made and words that came to me when reading the extracts but also what I felt when reading the extracts. It was becoming clearer to me, at this juncture that an overwhelming number of extracts were in reference to my need to appear useful. I wrote the extract on post it notes and stuck them on a large piece of paper. These extracts were vivid examples of times when I felt an emotion and the extract was powerful. As I looked at the extracts I could see that there was an overwhelming synchronicity between them and the word ‘Useful’ stuck in my mind. The the name of this theme them immerge as ‘the need to be useful’.

‘Choose particularly vivid examples, or extracts which capture the essence of the point you are demonstrating, without unnecessary complexity’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23)

At this phase I generated a spider diagram on a computer programme. I numbered the explicated extracts that related to the theme of ‘the importance of being useful’ and colour coded boxes to demonstrate the prevalence and ratios of the theme within each data set, shown below.



Figure 3 shows the number of explicated data items from the data corpus, which are used for the final write up, and which data set they came from.

The following tables are the extracts taken from the explicated data, which were input into the diagram above and supported the theme ‘the need to be useful’.

|  |
| --- |
| **The need of being useful** |
| Extract  |  | Data set (purple) |
| I feel that the system is stopping me from being useful and I don’t know how to manage that and if that’s a reflection on me or a reflection on the system. Supervision today has been particularly powerful. Sarah challenged me to think less about the latter question and more how important being useful readiness to me. | 1 | Supervision logs  |
| I am pleased that Sarah found my support helpful and that I am not adding to her work load | 2 | Supervision logs  |
| The role I have taken in the team is a big one. It’s one of the key innovation groups. I might have taken on more than I should have. It’s hard to discuss this in supervision when I want to support Sarah, not moan about extra work | 3 | Supervision logs  |
| I recall the reflecting team work. I felt I really added value to that session and it felt great.  | 4 | Supervision logs  |

*Figure 4*

During my placement within the local authority I received weekly supervision. This continued throughout the research process and during these sessions I often reflected on the research and the impact the reflexive process was having on me. Additionally, at times where my supervisor took a psychodynamic approach I was able to use those moments of illumination to learn more about myself within my practice.

There were also important moments where I clearly felt the need to be of use to my supervisor rather than a burden, which may have been some evidence of a mother-daughter transference that was occurring in our relationship. I believe that there was a degree of transference in the relationship that we initially were unaware of.

‘Transference projections from both the supervisor and supervisee built into the supervisory situation are by definition at first not conscious and may not be recognised by either party’ (Scaife, 2009, p. 286)

It was over a period of time and through the illumination of the core theme that we began to see this transference. My transference could be observed as my desire to contain and support my supervisor. Each session was an opportunity to offer any service I could to be of use to her, and I found it particularly difficult if there was no practical actions I could take to support her. In these instances I would offer my abilities to listen to her concerns and provide a space at the end of our sessions to allow my supervisor to share with me. It was through discussions about my need to appear useful that the supervisory relationship grew in strength and we both learnt something about each other.

‘However, supervision is unlike analysis in that the supervisee’s transference to the supervisor is not systematically analysed or interpreted. The supervisory relationship is mutual, acknowledging that as the supervisor he is also learning from the relationship.’ (Scaife, 2009, p. 287)

These are words that my supervisor shared with me and provided me with some solace in times when I felt supervision was self-indulgent and I offered nothing to my supervisor. With these concerns in mind we discussed how to manage placing the right amount of emphasis on me compared with the casework I was talking about. I did not want to place too great an emphasis on myself, but at the same time wanted to remain reflexive about my practice. I did not want my supervision to turn into therapy and I felt that my supervisor managed this process well. This work resonates well with the work of Hulushi & Maggs (2015), who, in their pychdynamic work discussion groups where the

‘Focus of the consultatnts work is to facilitate the groups reflection on the psychdynamic aspects o the group process rather than soley the search for solution’ (Hulushi & Maggs, 2015, p. 32)

Extracts taken from the spoken free association data set *(figure 5)*

|  |
| --- |
| **The need to be useful** |
| Extract  | No. | Data set (green) |
| You know me, here to help! | 1 | Spoken Free association  |
| It felt like they really wanted to talk to me, they really seemed to really value me. I was desperately searching for something clever to say.  | 2 | Spoken Free association  |
| After all this work had been done and I was relatively pleased with how the conversation had gone mum took a deep breath but very quickly said ‘so can you help him?’ My heart sank, I think it even broke a little, and my written free associations while listening with the third ear read, ‘panic, disheartened, failure’. I felt useless and quickly felt the sensation that I needed to give more. I am not good enough what I just did was not good enough.  | 3 | Spoken Free association  |
| Awwww GOD, I guess that means I haven’t done enough and I guess I understand that, what was my give?’.  | 4 | Spoken Free association  |
| That didn’t feel good at all, I had no idea what to say, it felt so weird it wasn’t like me at all, now what am I going to do!? | 5 | Spoken Free association  |
| I really hope this research is useful to have a go at learning about themselves. That’s what we should do as psychologists.  | 6 | Spoken Free association  |
| I have never felt so useless… I felt like she thought I wasted her time… maybe I did… eugh.  | 7 | Spoken Free association  |
| ‘I’ll get this report written tonight, I need to find a way of making it useful’.  | 8 | Spoken Free association  |
| There was psychology in there, good psychology, maybe mum will think about it and see that the conversation wasn’t useless, maybe she did not grasp the person construct psychology, maybe I went in over her head. Those opposites were striking, I really was on to something, I do feel that I have a good psychological perspective on him’. Or is this all just made up rubbish?  |  | Spoken Free association  |

My spoken free associations were a powerful experience for me. Within each spoken free association I was surprised by how quickly my free speech wandered off into unexpected terrains. The more practised I became in free associating the more I noticed how quickly my free associations would lead to childhood experiences. I regularly compared feelings I had experienced in the consultations with feelings I experienced as a child. Extract 4 is a particularly pertinent example of this, where in the free association, I spoke about a time, as a child, when I was unable to complete a task at home and felt overwhelmed with uselessness and truly believed that my mum thought less of me because of it. The free associations reminded me of how important the latent meaning is within speech, as the power of that emotion can in no way be conveyed in the extract alone.

Extracts taken from the written free association data set

|  |
| --- |
| **The need to be useful** |
| Extract  | No. | Data set (Orange) |
| I was like shiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiit… what you going to say now smart arse, you’ve failed | 1 | Written free association  |
| That consultation with mum was hard going. I feel so confused about how useful I was to her compared with how pleased I was with the PCP stuff. What good is my psychology if no one wants to hear it - what difference does that make?  | 2 | Written free association  |
| It is my job to help change the situation, I hardly ever feel like I do that. This is not a good feeling, is this how it is for an EP, a constant feeling of losses? How on earth can I make a difference here!!!!? | 3 | Written free association  |
| I need to know I am making a difference.  | 4 | Written free association  |
| Is this research going to be of any use at all… can I write it in a way that will get my point across… do people even care, does my research make someone care who doesn’t value this stuff already… feel like I might be fighting a losing battle.  | 5 | Written free association  |
| I do feel hit between the eyes by this altruism defence, I really do, is that me? How incongruous is that! Clearly I need to be doing for others all the time or I have no value.  | 6 | Written free association  |
| ‘So can you help him?’,Oh God I thought I already had. I need to give more. Panic disheartened. Nothing can be good enough for this mum | 7 | Written free association  |

*Figure 6*

Similarly to the spoken free associations, the emotions I felt during explicating these extracts are what determined the importance and the validity and reliability of this theme. Whilst listening to the trapdoor conversations with the third ear I was reminded of my helplessness and became re-immersed in the sense of uselessness. My written free associations reflected that deep sense of need to be useful, and the pain that is felt when I feel I perceived, or I perceive myself, as useless. It was through my reading into the literature that I became more aware of the Altruism defence, which I believe fits in well with the importance of being useful. It was also around that time that I had the ‘congruence dream’, discussed shortly.

The following extracts are vivid examples taken from the trap door conversation data set, where I believe my need to appear useful to others is evidenced.

Extracts taken from the Trap door conversations data set

|  |
| --- |
| **The importance of being useful** |
| Extract  | No. | Data set (blue) |
| Me: Did you know that if you hold an egg, like a chicken egg, in this position \*models the position\* you won’t be able to crack it… its so, so strong. So even though people think eggs are fragile, they’re actually pretty strong in some ways. Did you know that? Child: Umm, it's probably due to protection when the chicken is laying on it | 1 | Trapdoor conversations  |
| ‘Don’t worry, I have managed to move things around and if I am late for my next meeting then so be it, this is important and I want to give you the time you need’. Trap door conversation (28.07.15) | 2 | Trapdoor conversations  |
| Thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate you being here and sharing your story with me. Trap door conversation (28.07.15) | 3 | Trapdoor conversations  |
| My job is to collect all the information I can and then add my own thoughts and offer something useful to the school to support Tom’s progress. | 4 | Trapdoor conversations  |
| I am desperately searching for how I can add value to this case and tell you something that you don’t already know so that I can help make a difference here.  | 5 | Trapdoor conversations  |
| Is there anything I can do to help this conversation be useful to you?  | 6 | Trapdoor conversations  |
| What would you like the report to look like because there is no use in me just writing something that you already know. What would be the most useful way for me to document this visit?  | 7 | Trapdoor conversations  |

*Figure 7*

These statements stood out to me during the analysis due to the emotions that came with the experiences. Extract one was in relation to a child who I believe was also projecting onto me and my reaction was my identification with his projections. The young man valued his intelligence, and I noticed during the consultation that I was beginning to feel useless but more specifically un-intelligent. I reacted to this by attempting to give the young boy some facts, thus showing I am intelligent, which he subsequently rejected. While listening with the third ear I was also able to recognise this interplay of projection for the young boy, his desire to ‘get rid’ of the feeling of being ‘stupid’ and my identification with this, by feeling ‘stupid. This unconscious interplay between the two of us also impacted on my need to be of use to the young boy in the consultation and I found myself desperately attempting to show him I was intelligent as well as having some use to him in the session.

Throughout the research process I paid close attention to my dreams. By this I mean that my first waking thoughts were often an attempt to collect all the dreams I had experienced during the night. I am a prolific dreamer. It is not uncommon for me to experience up to ten dreams per night. The research process did not slow that prevalence down, but nor did it speed it up. Some dreams were recalled during the night and were written down there and then; some were recalled in the morning and were logged during the day and others were recalled during free associations or the writing process of this thesis. There were a number of dreams which were significant to me during the research. One in particular, which has been discussed in the methodology, which indicated the end to the reflexive process. Other dreams which were pertinent to the research and relevant to the core theme are briefly described below. During the thematic analysis I collected all the dreams and reviewed the more vivid dream experiences. The dreams that, at the time of dreaming, felt like it was a reality rather than a dream, the ones that evoked emotions within me and that I could connect to feelings and experiences I had been involved with during my work.

Extracts taken from the dream interpretation data set

|  |
| --- |
| **The importance of being useful** |
| Extract  | No. | Data set (pink) |
| Supervisor dream  | 1 | Dream interpretations |
| The avatar dream  | 2 | Dream interpretations |
| Naked dream  | 3 | Dream interpretations  |
| Congruence dream  | 4 | Dream interpretation |

*Figure 8*

*Extract one: supervisor dream*

*My mum was seated at my supervisor’s desk, but this character kept changing between my supervisor and my mum. I was seated at a desk adjacent. My supervisor who intermittently became my mum said that it was time for supervision and as I stood up from my desk I realised I had no clothes on below the waist. I therefore sat back down and stayed under the desk claiming I did not need supervision that day. My supervisor/ mum, was okay with this and sat back at her desk.*

*Interpretation*

*There are several aspects of this dream I found interesting. Firstly the interchangeable character of my supervisor and mum, perhaps representing a transference I have made. In the dream I know I wanted to impress this character, but also contain and take care of this character and always make sure that this character didn’t feel the need to look after me. When I realised I had no clothes on below the waist I realised I felt insecure and I needed help, but rather than ask for help or show my insecurities I chose to deal with it alone but express a persona of capability and self-assurance without needing any support.*

*Extract two: The avatar dream*

*I seemed to be an avatar in this dream. I was walking round the forest which was filled with beautiful colours. I was relaxed, content and happy and I was not concerned with what anybody thought.*

*Interpretation*

*Although this dream was short it had a powerful impact on me. I feel the dream represented a sensation of change in myself. Not just any change but a positive change, I had the sensation that I was moving into a more comfortable ; that I was evolving into a better version of myself and this new ‘self’ had more concern for my own welfare rather than what others thought of me. In the dream I wasn’t searching for anything from anyone I was simply enjoying my environment. Thus perhaps demonstrating a wish to be free of the need to be useful.*

*Dream log (02.10.15)*

***Extract three: The Naked dream***

*So I’m in a school having a meeting with a male SENCo whom I do not know or recognise. All of a sudden I realise I have no clothes on and I am desperately trying to pretend that is not the case. The SENCo leaves the room and I run off to try and find some clothes, realise that all the students in the school will see me and all the students point me in the wrong direction to lost property, and I find myself running through the school helplessly trying to find something to wear.*

*Dream log (30.07.15)*

 *Interpretation*

*In the dream I felt very anxious and very vulnerable. I also remember feeling as though I needed to pretend everything was okay even though it wasn’t. There was definitely an element of putting on a show to disguise the fact I was in fact naked. I felt frustrated that nobody in the school would help me and felt very alone. I felt desperate and definitely feared the disciplinary consequences of my actions.*

*This dream occurred after a consultation in a school where I find the SENCo particularly difficult to work with. I am often left to my own devices in the school with no point of contact, nowhere to work and am unfamiliar with the school layout. I often feel undervalued and I feel like I don’t want to put in my usual maximum effort, which creates a huge amount of dissonance in me. I was working on a case where I felt ‘stuck’ and the members of staff I spoke to all seemed to have a different view, which may have explained the children in the dream pointing me in different directions. I was interested in my attempt to appear dressed when in actual fact I was naked. I wonder if that reflects my bids to appear intelligent and competent whereas I have an internal anxiety and self-doubt about my involvement.*

***Extract four: The congruence dream***

*I’m in a busy canteen and I am talking with chez. My voice was drowned out by the people in the canteen. I felt really happy I was talking with her. You could barely hear my voice over everyone else. I was having supervision with her. I was deep in thought and finally said how congruence was so important to me but not possible to achieve all the time – Chez smiled- it was a smile that showed me she was pleased that I had finally accepted this. Chez held her hands in a cupping position and said why don’t you do this? Chez motioned to hold myself, there was something caring and tender in this idea. . In the dream I wanted to cry, a happy and relieving cry but I didn’t because of how public that would be.*

*Interpretation*

*The feelings I had in this dream began with happiness as I was talking with somebody I deeply respect and look up to. Interestingly another strong female character in my life. I was also so relieved to hear Chez tell me that congruence is not always possible. I believe that the use of the word congruence represented a bigger concept, being a perfect people pleaser- keeping everyone happy. Chez looked at me as though she was proud of me to realising this. It felt like Chez was then telling me my next step is to learn to hold myself and take care of myself and this is perhaps why I felt close to tears in the dream, as this felt nurturing, but I chose not to publicly show that emotion. The latter point perhaps represents my uncomfortable awareness of how personal this public document is.*

*I feel the drowning out of my voice in the initial part of the dream represents my need to feel as though I entertain the masses, that everybody hears me, that I have an impact on everyone yet in the dream this didn’t concern me. The person I wanted to hear me, heard me and the person I wanted to hear I was listening to and nothing else mattered.*

*Again I feel this dream represents the development of the self, an increased sense of self-awareness and a realisation and acceptance of myself. It also shows how this journey is never-ending, there is always another step to take and not only is that okay but I am okay with that. It is interesting how I was slightly uncomfortable with any public display of emotion, this perhaps represents my awareness of just how personal this research is and I have wrestled with the thoughts of how to be entertaining and useful without overexposing myself.*

## Reflections on the psychodynamic reflective process

For this section I have explicated information from the data set to synthesise the key themes regarding the application of the psychodynamic reflective process. This is in relation to the second research question,

2) **What is the experience of engaging with reflexive practice, which appropriates techniques from the psychodynamic paradigms, as a trainee educational psychologist?**

The following core themes have been taken from my on-going reflective memos, which were written throughout the research process, some of which were memos and others were written free associations. During the analysis of the data set, which represented the experience of the psychodynamic reflexive process, I initially re read all of the reflective memos. I then separated the memos in relation to either heuristics or psychodynamics or were a combination of both and regarding the whole process. Following this I highlighted all of the memos that were vivid examples of experiences I had throughout the reflexive process which I felt were important to share. They were highlighted using one colour only. I did this for the psychodynamic items first, then the heuristic and finally the whole process. I then wrote the vivid memos on post-it notes and began sticking them on a large sheet of paper, one for psychodynamic, one for heuristic and one for the whole process, and clustered any notes that related. This began to form clusters, which, once they had been finalised were named as themes.

I input this data into a word document and generated tables. Examples of this can be seen below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Memo | Cluster  | Notes |
| Nothing good lies in the unconscious  | Psychodynamic  | The negative elements to the unconscious/ dark |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Memo | Cluster  | Notes |
| For a kooky design its keeping my kooky mind organised  | Heuristic  | Organised. Structure.  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Memo | Cluster  | Notes |
| Well it might be hard and painful but its working!  | Combination  | Hard/ painful/ feasible/ works!! |

The theme name was generated from the notes made during the analysis and was chosen to help represent the experience of engaging with the reflexive process.

In order to organise this section I have taken psychodynamics and Heuristic Inquiry as separate elements of the psychodynamic reflective process, and discussed the themes which were illuminated to me throughout the research. Finally I have reflected on the psychodynamic reflective process as a consolidated process and discussed the themes within that. There have been eleven themes generated in total and I have summarised each one below.

**Psychodynamics**

Self-care: Nothing good lies in the unconscious

*I’ve totally underestimated how powerful the unconscious is and didn’t stop to think for a second that there isn’t anything good there.*

*(Extract taken from written reflective notes).*

*Ouch! Wobbly leg moments. Where I sense I am touching unconscious nerves and I feel my defences coming into action – denial I am just in the wrong – guilt I am bad for thinking these things. Fear of the implication these realisations have on my relationships – fear of my own anger – this is really hard.*

*Extract taken from written free associations process notes (10.09.15)*

Despite the literature indicating the relative safety in self-exploration (Horney, 1968) that does not negate the fact that this was a very emotional process. Self-care is crucial during this process. This can take the form of time away from the research, which I engaged with through the incubation phase; conversations with others which I also engaged with regularly, and truly utilising the free association element of the psychodynamic reflective process as an opportunity to vent. I found it incredibly important to regularly check in with myself, take a meta-perspective and withdraw from the process, in the form of incubation, when I felt the need to. My need to withdraw from the intensity at times was guided by my dreams and my intuition.

**Dream interpretation**

*Dream thought: I have a dream and while I’m waking up still almost lucid – during that state it is as if I speak the language of the dream – as if there is a moment where I understand the meaning, a zone where I’m in-between the conscious, and a zone where the dream makes sense to me. Later that day the same dream doesn’t seem to be so clear or make as much sense. Extract taken from written free association reflective memo (07.09.15)*

A fascinating realisation for me was the ability to understand and interpret my dreams in a different way by allowing myself to stay in a preconscious state. This took practice and was not without its frustrating failings along the way. However this new-found skill is something that I would encourage others to engage with, whether it be within or without the psychodynamic reflective process.

The application of psychodynamics within my EP role

*I’m really starting to see psychodynamics everywhere it seems to be the paradigms I am seeing all my cases throughout the moment (reflective memo).*

It has been through immersion into the psychodynamic literature as well as my apparent fascination with this topic that I have begun to notice certain behaviours in others during my work that has informed my practice. I feel that I have ‘up skilled’ in a paradigm, which has had an impact on my ability to understand others in a different way.

**No end to ‘self-searching’**

*This self-awareness malarkey is a lifetime venture and there is not really going to be an end to this, the idea being that you don’t stop trying to learn about yourself.*

*(Extract taken from written reflective notes),*

A powerful but positive and relieving realisation, supported by the literature and even encouraged by the literature, is that there is no end to the journey of self-awareness. Lacan may have described this as my sense of ‘lack’ (Zizek, 2006) that drives me to want to know myself more, but the sense of completion I will never achieve. I feel it is important for anyone embarking on this journey to understand there may not be an end, or the end may not be what you expected. I believe that the power of this process is ingraining it into your practice and being open to new knowledge about yourself as it presents itself.

**The importance of the literature**

*I really have learnt so much through reading about psychodynamics… HA… Who would have thought! I’ve learnt a lot about myself by using psychodynamic language.*

 *(Extract taken from written reflective notes).*

My exposure to the psychodynamic literature was the catalyst to increasing my self-awareness and an essential component in making sense of complex situations. Additional paradigms may be used in this instance, however I feel that psychodynamics is the most appropriate and the literature has enabled me to understand elements of the non-verbal communication between myself and others.

**Heuristic Inquiry**

**Keeping organised**

*This process has kept me well on track, even when I feel lost I feel lost within the process rather than just lost entirely- kinda feels safe.*

*(Extract taken from written reflective notes).*

The Heuristics Inquiry proved to be invaluable in doing exactly what I had intended it to do, which was to organise the process. Each phase did lend itself to the natural process I went through. Rather than wondering what was happening in my thought process I was able to name that process and place it within a phase without losing my individual experience or the integrity of the research.

**Use and importance of intuition**

*My intuition deserves more credit, I love listening to it. It’s like another person in the room.*

*(Extract taken from written reflective notes).*

Although I have always valued my intuition I do so now more than ever. I was able to give my intuition its own voice and almost externalise my intuition to validate it, which was really interesting and powerful. I have since not only paid more attention to my intuition in consultations, but I have encouraged those I work with to listen to their own intuition. This includes parents, teachers, children and colleagues.

**The psychodynamic Reflexive Process as a whole.**

**Feasibility. A tiring yet feasible process within work**

*If you’re willing this is very feasible, but you’ve got to be prepared to work outside of 9-to-5 boundary and you’ve got to be prepared for this to infiltrate your thoughts all the time. If people don’t even go to supervision then they’re not going to do this! (Extract taken from written reflective notes)*

Make no mistake, feasibility does not mean easy! I feel that the feasibility of the psychodynamic reflective process is measured by the willingness of the participant. Incorporating anything new into what is already a complex and busy role is no easy task. This is a tiring task, almost exhausting at times, and not for the faint-hearted. That said I do believe it is possible if the will is there, and I would also only encourage a practitioner to engage with this process if there is will and a healthy motive in the first instance. This would perhaps become evident in the initial engagement phase.

**It is not about change**

*I really do know things about myself I didn’t know before - not sure I like all of it - not sure I even know what to do with some of it. but I don’t have to change myself. It feels more about accepting myself and valuing the importance of reflection as an ongoing process. (Extract taken from written reflective notes).*

An interesting revelation has been that reflective practice does not necessarily correlate with change but rather encourages development. The concept of change would suggest striving for self-actualisation, which is in fact arguably impossible. This process is not about developing the perfect practitioner, it is about developing a practitioner who is able and willing to learn about themselves as well as learn about others.

**Importance of verification: Lonely**

*Note to self: It would be nice to have a sounding board sometimes. Often tempted by the desire to have therapy but this was more for the use of the sounding board than for containment. I did reach out at times to family and friends and colleagues but this involved intellectually discussing things - is this a bad thing? (Extract taken from written reflective notes).*

There have been a number of times during this process that I have considered the idea of engaging with personal therapy. I have also considered the importance of supervision alongside this process. I did experience supervision throughout this process, but I did not discuss the psychodynamic reflective process directly in supervision. I would be interested to have had psychodynamic supervision during the process. I did not incorporate any structured times to discuss the psychodynamic reflective process with anyone. Although I did discuss this process at sporadic, a more structured engagement with another may have been useful and insightful.

**Fascinating**

*This is so fascinating, I’m almost giddy. Sometimes hard and I can see myself reaching for my phone for distraction every now and then. It’s so interesting and to think would I have been able to learn this stuff about myself otherwise? (Extract taken from written reflective notes).*

It has been a thoroughly fascinating process to engage with. Learning new information about myself has been interesting, powerful and insightful not only in my professional capacity but my personal life too. This fascination has not felt as self-indulgent as I had perhaps predicted, but rather professionally interesting and fascinating to engage with.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

**How does this study inform and contribute to the EP role?**

This research has been conducted with two hopes in mind, one, to seek to discover the possibility of learning more about myself as a practitioner through the application of psychodynamic techniques and two, to encourage others to engage with reflexivity too in order to improve practice.

‘There is no point in carrying out research unless the findings have the potential to make a difference’ (Yardley, 2015, p. 268)

Within the changing landscape of the EP profession there is an increasing need to re-emphasise the importance of reflexive and reflective practice, both independently and within supervision. There are increasing work demands being placed on local authority staff, and employees are expected to be accountable for their actions and be able to justify decisions that are made (Jennings & Kennedy, 1996). Those decisions have a huge impact on the lives of children and their families and, by being in a position of power, it is crucial that practitioners are able to understand their own capabilities, practice and behaviour (BPS 1993). These elements of the EP role are supported by the codes and standards that each professional signs up to (HCPC, 2016). There is the expectation that practice is ethically delivered and standards are high. I believe this is only possible where reflective and reflexive practice occur, supported by regular supervision and support within services (Hawkins & Shonet, 2006). With the private sector developing and local authorities dispersing there is a greater need for the value of reflexive practice to be ingrained in practitioners who are less monitored by hierarchical systems in local authorities. Engaging with intensive reflexive practice such as the one suggested in the research can help to continue the personal development of a practitioner (Boyd, 2005). It can help to invigorate the passion a practitioner has for psychology and help them to practice what they preach. It can also help to continuously reflect on practice and encourage practitioners to develop new skills in psychology, irrespective of what stage they are at in their career. Rather than becoming stagnant in the profession, reflexive practice can help to challenge the practitioner into new and innovate areas and become more personally aware of how to manage strengths and weaknesses (Pomerantz, 2008). Learning new information about oneself can be emotionally taxing and incredibly challenging but, as this research has found, it can also be fascinating, exciting and encouraging, as this research has also found. Through reflexive practice a practitioner is more likely to be more aware of their own values and how they are impacting on others (Kennedy, 1977), which enables practice to become more ethically sound and congruently driven towards a focus for positive change, which can be seen in the model presented by the BPS (1993). This model promotes ethical practice and has an emphasis on values, but does not emphasise the importance of personal evaluation and reflexivity, which is at the heart of this research.

**The benefits and potential for utilising psychodynamics within EP training.**

I have personally benefitted from only a brief exposure to psychodynamic theory on the university course. I have further benefitted from personal reading into psychodynamic theory and practice, which is available to everyone. In addition to this I have experienced the benefits of receiving supervision that has, at times, drawn on the psychodynamic theory. In my experience it appears to be rare for a trainee to have the luxury of psychodynamic supervision, which is perhaps a training issue within services, despite the ever increasing evidence of its benefits (Hulushi & Maggs, 2015). As a result of these experiences and this research I would like to see psychodynamic modules in all EP training courses. I believe it would have widespread benefits, if psychodynamic technique and theory were taught and practiced in training courses, for children, families and schools, as suggested in the studies discussed in the literature review (Pellegrini, 2010). An increased self-awareness in practitioners can help practice to be more reflexive, and practitioners can take a more ‘meta perspective’ when attempting to understand complexity and support families and schools. An advanced understanding of unconscious behaviours can help schools on an individual level as well as on a systemic level, again having positive impacts on the children, families and staff. Supervision can be delivered in group context, as studied in Hulushi & Maggs’ paper (2015) allowing for students to work together and learn from each other. In addition to this I would like to see a psychodynamic element delivered in the training of educational psychologists by:

*1) Incorporate a psychodynamic module in the first year training including speakers from the field of practice and theory.*

This is based on the impact psychodynamic theory has had on my own psychological practice with other and my ability to reflect on my own practice. I consider it an additional tool I can draw on at the appropriate times. In my own experience I have predominantly self- taught psychodynamic theory and this does present a number of critical issues, which have been addressed previously. By incorporating psychodynamic theory into trainee courses, professionals, with experience and knowledge in this field can guide students and support their own engagement with the theory. I postulate that the more paradigms a student is exposed to the more they have the choice to further their own interests in psychology and develop themselves into the psychologist they want to be.

Institutions with currently little or no psychodynamic content could develop modules by seeking advice and support from universities that do currently deliver psychodynamic content such as The Tavistock.

*2) Include basic counselling skills on the training courses*

This can give a space for trainees to enhance their listening skills, and offer a safe space to experience processes such as transference and counter transference. This training exposure can also highlight the importance of rapport with working in complex systems (Beaver, 1996) and how that rapport can be developed. This can be supported by experienced professionals and be designed in a safe and therapeutic fashion where trainees can support one another, enhance their own self-awareness, develop new skills and instil the value and importance of deep reflexive practice. My own previous training in counselling skills has proven to be invaluable in my training years as an EP and I feel that elements of this skill set would be incredibly useful for EPs to engage with and then apply in practice.

Training for counselling is not just matter of developing a few new skills. It required setting one’s psychological house in order so that one knows where he is and where he is going. (Tyler, 1982, p. 37)

## Possible improvements for this research

**Methodological improvements**

On reflection I would have spent more time in the research planning phase. This would have made the research process as a whole run more smoothly and would have enabled me to engage with the writing process with a clearer thoughts. A more comprehensive until panning phases is something that would have helped to improve the sequential documentation of the research, especially given that this was not a linear or simplistic research process. Better planning would have enabled me to possibly make the process more simplistic. I would have perhaps developed a psychodynamic reflective process as a pilot study and applied it to myself separately from the developmental process. This would have allowed for me to singularly focus on the experience of the reflection rather than developing and applying it simultaneously. Additionally I may have benefitted from utilising IPA as a methodology as this methodology offers a structured approach to research, which may also have supported and contained the complexity more comprehensively than the less widely used Heuristic Enquiry

**Areas for future development; what would I do differently?**

There are four main areas I would like to consider for future developments to this research.

* *Consider working as a pair.*

I would be interested to see what impact the psychodynamic reflective process could have if it is engaged with independently but alongside another person also engaging with the process. This could incorporate regular reflective discussion with an ‘other’ person to check back what you have experienced and share your thought about the process and difficulties or positive experiences along the way. This could also alleviate the sense of potential loneliness and/or becoming fixated on matters or ideas that are more harmful to the self than they are beneficial.

* *I would like to re-engage with the process outside of the research context*

By taking away the constraints of research it could be possible to focus more on the reflections rather than writing up a piece of research. Outside of a research domain there are less time constraints, and there would not be the expectation to document the process for others to read. This could reduce censorship and increase a deeper exploration into the self.

* *Use my later new found dream interpretation process from the beginning.*

It was through listening to my dreams that I noticed the possible ability to speak the dream language by listening in a pre-conscious state. This is something that I feel would take time to master, but could be hugely powerful in offering insights if it were a skill that was mastered.

* *Encourage a practitioner to use the process and discuss their experience of the psychodynamic reflective process.*

Finally I would like to encourage a practitioner to engage with the psychodynamic reflective process and feedback their own experience. I would like to know what impact this process has on another practising EP and I would use that information to continue developing guidelines for other EPs to use in their own practice. This is the most important ‘next step’ for me, in developing the process with a view to encourage others to embark on a journey of personal development in order to improve their practice.

## Closing reflections

Trustworthiness and rigour have been incredibly important matters for the purpose of this thesis. These matters have been addressed by thoroughly reviewing and revisiting the data I collected, during the Heuristic Inquiry process, to ensure the themes I explicated could be evidenced through transcripts as well as having an intuitive sense that the information I had about myself felt accurate. Through the application of the psychodynamic reflective process, I can say with confidence that I now know more about myself as a person and a practitioner than I knew at the onset of this research. I have increased my self-awareness and this is evidenced by the fact that I have knowledge about myself now that I did not have before.

This research has demonstrated my engagement with a psychodynamic reflexive process as well as present a framework for practitioners to engage with outside of the research context. I can say with confidence that this method was feasible to conduct within my practice. I suggest that, if it is possible to both utilise this process during its documentation then it is feasible to engage with this process outside of the research context. My belief that this process is feasible does not negate the fact that it is hard work, tiring and challenging. At points I did feel lost and confused about myself, however;

‘The man who does not lose his mind in certain situations has no mind to lose’ (Reik, 1948, p. 36)

Section two of this discussion has aimed to prepare a reflector for this process, within reason, and the challenges that they may, or may not, encounter. Each stage of the Heuristic Inquiry is flexible enough to be used in a manner that suits the reflector. This can be seen in the psychodynamic reflective process steps in appendix a.

During the psychodynamic reflective process it became very evident to me that the most important relationship you will ever have is the relationship you have with yourself. This relationship is taken into every conversation and consultation that you undertake in your role as a psychologist. This suggests that the better you know yourself the more capable you will be of acknowledging both the emotion that is felt during your conversations and who that emotion belongs to. According to the psychodynamic paradigm, the things that we like in ourselves, we like in others, and the things that we dislike in ourselves we dislike in others (Fromm, 1994). It is through reflecting we can turn the mirror from the dislike we notice in others and turn it to the aspects of ourselves we are not in favour of. Although this is painful, as I have discovered, this is the opportunity to learn and this learning is arguably owed to the people that EPs work with. Some of the individuals EPs work with are incredibly vulnerable and they do not have access to the psychological language and knowledge that EPs do, they may also not be ready or willing to access such language and concepts. From this perspective, it is for me to own my position and to be aware of myself as well as theory, as Schon stated, and support those that I work with and to do so not in elitist manner but in a manner that acknowledges myself in my practice (Horney, 1968). If the relationship truly is everything (Gergen, 1971) then it is my view that the best place to start is with the relationship you have with yourself (William James 1842- 1910) and take that knowledge into the role of psychologist and use it to better inform your interactions. The discoveries I have made about myself have had such an impact on my practice that I sense that my perception of my ‘self’ has been changed in a manner that feels permanent.

‘Having made a discovery, I shall never see the world again as before. My eyes have become different; I have made myself into a person seeing and thinking differently. I have crossed the gap, the heuristic gap, which lies between problem and discovery’ (Moustakes, 1990, p. 56)

As with all things in life a healthy balance is essential in achieving stability, I cannot spend all day reflecting and thinking and discussing my own behaviours, nor do I want to. Reflection can be engaged with to a lesser or greater extent, but there is great value in acknowledging when I am so busy in the action I have not given much time to thought and pause to question how that is influencing my practice. The psychodynamic reflexive process has been a powerful process that I believe has had a positive impact on my own practice. I endeavour to engage with the psychodynamic reflexive practice further and maintain a healthy amount of reflection within my practice, whilst remaining mindful that too much thought can also be the enemy of action.

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# APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – **THE PSYCHODYNAMIC REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

APPENDIX B - **A SUMMARY OF DEFENCES**

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## APPENDIX A- THE PSYCHODYNAMIC REFLECTIVE

The following document explains how the psychodynamic reflective process may be engaged with for a practising educational psychologist, or trainee educational psychologist. At each phase there are psychodynamic activities to engage with as well as additional activities the reflector may wish to engage with. The reflector is encouraged to engage with all activities throughout this process. The reflector is at the centre of this process and therefore dictates how long each phase lasts, when each phase commences and when process ends. The reflector is encouraged to engage with their intuition and desires and their own ability to assess when it is professionally and personally safe and appropriate to pursue ideas and engage with this process or cease engagement with this process. Each phase is designed to sequentially organise a reflective process by appropriating psychodynamic activities within a Heuristic Inquiry framework. The emphasis is on the reflectors own aims of the process and the outcomes are measured by the reflectors own sense of increased self-awareness

**INITIAL ENGAGEMENT**

Psychodynamic activities;

* Written free association

Additional activities:

* Discussions with peers
* Exploration of the literature

This phase commences with the written free association of matters of importance to the reflector. This may include areas of interest within their practice, areas a practitioner may wish to develop in themselves, a particular weakness or an area of difficulty that they find re-occurring in their practice. The reflector should allow for one hour to free associate but I acknowledge the hour may be too long or too short. Create an environment that is quiet unlikely to be interrupted. The writing is an individual exercise that is guided by the reflector’s own thoughts, feelings and emotions and the exercise will cease when the reflector has nothing further to add at that time or feels that a predominant theme is presenting itself in the free associations. Repeat this exercise as often and as many times as the reflector feels appropriate until a particular area of interest emerges from the free associations. The free associations may lead to a more general interest in the practitioner’s work or a very specific area of the practitioner’s work they wish to explore more.

I would also encourage the reflector to engage with the psychodynamic literature at this phase and expose themselves to the ideas presented within this paradigm and some of the concepts and terminology that may become useful in understanding their behaviour in the following phases. I would encourage the reflector to allow the literature to guide them to areas of interest and to pursue topics and concepts that are more pertinent to their own personal endeavours.

**IMMERSION**

Psychodynamic activities

* Spoken free association
* Listening with the third ear
* Written free Association
* Dream recording and interpretation

Additional activities

* Continued exploration the literature

During this phase the reflector is encouraged to audio record, with the use of a dictaphone their conversations during the working week, referred to as the trap door conversations. The reflector is encouraged to record more than one conversation so to have conversations to use as a comparison as well as affirm or challenge illuminated themes which may emerge. This may include all conversations, with those who have consented for you to do so, or it may be specific conversations which will be dictated by the initial engagement free associations. For example the reflector may choose to only explore the interactions with teenagers or with male teachers. A more general enquiry would dictate that the reflector will record all conversations. After each session or recording with another the reflector is encouraged to free associate, in a spoken manner, into a dictaphone, regarding the interaction engaged with. This spoken free association is to be engaged with independently and privately with no time constraints where possible. The reflector is encouraged to speak freely and allow their natural thought process to take them where ever it takes them.

Once the conversations the reflector aimed to collect have been collected and all spoken free associations have been made the information should be stored safely and securely. At this point in the psychodynamic reflective process the reflector is advised to incubate and leave the information collected to settle in their mind.

**INCUBATION**

Psychodynamic activities

* Written free associations
* Dream logs and interpretations

During this phase allow for a period of time to laps between the trap door conversations and re-exposing yourself to the recordings. This time lapse is to allow for the reflector to not still be a part of the lived experience of those conversations and to have had time to allow that experience to settle in their mind. During this phase the reflector is encouraged to engage with written free associations. These written free associations may occur when the reflector notices a thought or is curious about a thought they have regarding the area they are exploring within themselves. These written free associations enabled the reflector to express those thoughts in a manner that is private, curious and open to new ideas. These written free Associations are to be treated in the same manner as previously whereby the reflector is independently writing about a subject of their choice in a quiet uninterrupted space. The choice to engage in free associated writings is dictated by the reflectors intuitive desire to explore a thought further. The writings commence with an intuitive desire further explore a matter and end when the reflector feels there is nothing further to add at that time. These written free associations are dated and stored safely and securely.

**DREAM LOGS AND INTERPRETATION**

Throughout the process the reflector encouraged to log any dreams that occur. These may be dreams recalled during the night, in a morning or perhaps during the day. The reflector is encouraged to follow Holloway’s (2011) process of interpretation these dreams. This process can be used by examining the dream and considering the following five steps

1) The first impression you have about the dream

2) Overall action in the dream

3) Pay attention to how you felt in the dream

4) The symbols in the dream in the dream, which include, who is there, what is there and where are you.

5) What was the implication of the dream, what was the end goal if the dream and therefore what is the value?

I have included an additional consideration when interpreting dreams and that is to consider yourself as every single symbol in the dream and investigate what implication this consideration has.

Make the dream recording process as easy as possible for you but having a pen and pad next to the bed and carrying a note pad round with you specifically for dream logs. When you recall a dream, write it in the present tense and try not to censor the dream in the first recording. This is for your eyes and you can translate the raw content into a narrative you are comfortable for the creative synthesis.

The reflective is also encouraged to attempt to engage with the dream during a preconscious state, that is the phase between unconsciously and conscious awakening. It is hypothesised, through this research, that during this preconscious phase it may be increasingly likely to understand and interpret the dream.

Following these steps, as well as the additional step as an attempt to interpret the dream during a preconscious state, an interpretation may be made of the dream exposing that dreams latent content and this is written as a narrative, this may be handwritten or directly input onto a computer. These dreams are dated and stored safely and securely.

**IMMERSION**

Psychodynamic activities

* Written free associations
* Listening with the third ear
* Written free associations while listening with the third ear
* Dream logs and interpretations

Once the reflector has incubated for suitable amount of time, I would recommend no more than two weeks, which will allow for the reflector to be no longer in the lived experience but able to recall the event, the reflector is encouraged to re-engage with the trapdoor conversations.

Listening with the third ear

The reflector is encouraged to create an environment where the trapdoor conversations can be listened to without interruption. The recordings are played and the reflector listens to the content of the session, paying attention to how they felt at the time as well as how they feel during listening back to the recording. Is the reflector proud, embarrassed, confused or angry? Pay attention to the dynamic between yourself and the other, what you notice and what you perhaps did not notice at the time. The recording can be paused at any time and the reflector is encouraged to make notes whilst listening with the third ear. These notes may be free associated in nature and the reflector is encouraged to write as often as they feel they need to throughout the recording.

Once the recording has been listened to him and any free association notes were made during listening with the third ear or the new information created must be stored in a secure and safe place. During this time the reflector may wish to add additional free associations, discuss any matters arising with colleagues and friends and may also wish to re-engage with the literature to help explain any psychodynamic phenomena they experienced such as transference, counter transference, defences, projective identifications or splitting and projection, for example.

Once all the recordings have been listened to and all the written free associations made whilst listening with the third ear as well as intermittently made throughout this time the reflector is encouraged to incubate once more.

**INCUBATION**

Psychodynamic activities

* Written free associations
* Dream logs and interpretations

The length of this incubation period can be dictated by the reflector. The reflector is encouraged to allow enough time for the information from the trap door conversations and subsequent written free associations to settle in their mind. The reflector is encouraged to allow himself a degree of emotional time away from the intensity of the process. During this time the reflector may wish to engage with additional free Association writings, may continue engaging with the literature and may have conversations with colleagues, friends and family. This is not to be discouraged but the reflector is encouraged to be mindful of their own mental health throughout this process and this may be discussed in their free Association writings.

**ILLUMINATION**

Psychodynamic activities

* Written free associations
* Dream logs and interpretations

Additional activities

* Conversations with family, friends and colleagues
* Engaging with the literature

The illumination phase may commence at several points throughout this research. When the reflector begins to notice core themes or ideas that regularly occur throughout the psychodynamic reflective process they may feel that certain new information about themselves becomes illuminated. These illuminated ideas may be further explored through written free associations, to be engaged with as and when the reflector deems it important and necessary for further elaboration. Previous written free associations may be reengaged with in order to clarify new ideas or challenge illuminations or indeed confirm illuminations. This phase is not to be rushed and the reflector is encouraged to be patient with any new information that they feel illuminates itself and explore new ideas through written free associations. Once the reflector feels that there is enough evidence and intuitively belief that new ideas have been illuminated the reflector may wish to move onto the following phase.

**EXPLICATION**

Psychodynamic activities

* Written free associations
* Dream logs and interpretations

Additional activities

* Conversations with family, friends, colleagues
* Exploration of the literature
* Re engaged with the data collected throughout

The reflector is encouraged to review the data that has been collected to date. This may include re-engaging with the trapdoor conversations, spoken free associations, written free associations whilst listening with the third ear and written free associations intermittently engaged with. From the information collected the reflector may be able to explicate, that being extract the key themes and illuminations that have presented themselves to the reflector throughout the process. These explicated themes will feel relevant to the reflector important and be new information they were not previously aware of about themselves as practising educational psychologist.

## APPENDIX B- DEFENCES

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Defence  | Description  |
| Denial  | A lack of acceptance that there is a problem and reacting badly to the suggestion that there is a problem. This may lead a practitioner to not wish to engage with a reflective process as they do not believe they have any areas to develop.  |
| Projection  | The projections of unwanted internal feelings onto another. The giving of unwanted feelings to another. This may be an experience a practitioner may experience within a consultation session, leaving them feeling confused or annoyed. (Bornstein, 2005) |
| Turning against the self  | The belief that the self is bad rather than those around us are bad. This is with the aim of lessening the pain by choosing the least painful option but causing pain to soften the process ie blaming the self rather than the parents. A practitioner may choose to emotionally punish themselves for ineffective outcomes or difficult experiences rather than expressed disappointment at any others.  |
| Sublimation  | The attempt to turn negative internal emotions into art, literature or another more positive outlet. The act does not address the issue but rather aims to ‘vent’ the problem away through creative expression. A psychodynamic reflective practice may be experienced as sublimation in order to creatively understand oneself more, for example by creatively synthesising new elements information about the self. (Moustakes, 1990) |
| Regression  | The tendency, when faced with difficulty, to regress to an infantile state and not take any responsibility for one’s own actions by believing in one’s own innocence. A practitioner may notice an adult they are consulting with exhibiting child-like behaviours, which without understanding could be difficult to accept and work with.  |
| Rationalisation  | The manipulation of facts so that we can justify our actions and outcomes and protect our ego. It could be very important for the EP to be aware of their own ability to alter information to protect their sense of self as well as others we work with. It may be particularly interesting to see these behaviours in teachers who could feel threatened by an external professionals coming into their setting. *‘While EPs may subscribe to different ontological/ epistemological positions, the lack of engagement with psychodynamic psychology may be the result of a self-preserving defence process’.* (Pellegrini, 2010, p. 257) |
| Intellectualisation  | Hurtful feelings can be less thought of by focussing on other intellectual matters that distract the self and again protect our ego from hard and hurtful thoughts  |
| Reaction formation  | The attempt to act in the opposite manner than our Id wants. An attempt to conform more to society and act conversely to our desires. |
| Displacement  | The experience of a negative emotion or thought and the attempt to displace that emotion or feeling into another by perhaps re-enacting the behaviours that cause those feelings in yourself.  |
| Fantasy  | The use of the imagination to escape difficult thoughts feelings and emotions and distract ourselves through various different external mediums or even by just daydreaming problems away.  |
| Altruism  |  A person manages internal conflict by attempting to support others and manage their needs rather than their own. By putting other peoples’ needs first they do not need to address their own concerns and therefore do not face their own internal conflicts.  |

Horney, (1968) Frosh (2012), Freud (1920)

## APPENDIX B2- SUMMARY OF PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATIONS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Projective identification  | Description  |
| Dependency | The need for help, advice and guidance from others irrespective of one’s own capabilities. The internal feeling of helplessness and the desperate need for support over even trivial matters because of a core belief that they are incapable of making their own decisions. By reading between the lines these behaviours signal a message of I cannot survive without you and the consequences of not receiving help is catastrophic in relationship. The projector may exhibit childlike tantrums, excessive crying agoraphobia and even depression. Essentially the child has learnt through their relationship with the mother that to be weak and needy is to be loved. |
| Power | Dominance and control are at the core of the power projective identification. The projector attempts to create feelings of incapability and weakness in the ‘other’. The key message the projector wishes to give to the other is that they are incapable of surviving without them. The projector may fear abandonment and as such aims to elicit the sensation of powerlessness in the other and therefore control them to keep the other with them. Power projective identifications can be caused by the infant’s caregiver appearing incapable of caring for themselves and utilises the child as their carer. This may be the result of a chronically ill parent, alcohol abuse and drug abuse. A child may believe that they are lovable when they are in control and they are only worthwhile when they are managing others.  |
| Sex/sexuality | For this projective identification sex becomes not just part of the relationship but the definition of the relationship. Sex becomes the reason for the relationships creation and sustainability. Although childhood sexual abuse can cause this projective identification it is not the only cause. A child for example who notices the adults in her life getting attention through provocative dressing, flirtatious behaviour or high numbers of sexual partners passing through the house for example, may internalise the message that one is valued, desirable and attractive by using sex as a means to relate to an ‘other’. Another core message may be that the child is desirable as long as they ‘excite’ the other and this can then be internalised as the only foundation for a functional relationship.  |
| Ingratiation  | For this projective identification the recipient is manipulated to feel gratitude and an awareness of the projectors personal sacrifice for them. The recipient may experience the need to thank the projector constantly and offer affirmation for the projectors efforts. The projector is in constant striving to feel that they are helpful. The projector can go through life feeling loved based on what they do for others rather than who they are as a person. Those who project ingratiation believe so strongly that they are loved only when they are useful. |

## APPENDIX C - TIME TABLE OF EVENTS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date  | Activity  | Length  | Heuristic phase  |
| May | University lectures  | 2 weeks  | N/A |
| May | Reviewing the literature including heuristic enquiry | 2 weeks | N/A |
| June | Reviewing the literature including psychodynamics, reflective practice and self-awarenessWritten free associations  | 7 weeks  | Initial engagement  |
| July | Research week (trap door conversations) Dream recording and analysis Written free associations Memo recording  | One consultation session each day, 1 week  | Immersion  |
| August  | Allowed time to laps between data collection and analysisDream recording and analysis Memo process notes | 2 weeks  | Incubation  |
| August  | Listened with the third ear and made free association notes Dream recording and analysis Memo recording | 1 day per consultation 1 week  | Immersion Illumination  |
| August/ September  | Revisited the literature and conversed with colleagues, friends and family Dream recording and analysis Memo recording | 4 weeks  | ImmersionIllumination  |
| September  | Retreated from the data Memo recording | 1 week  | Incubation  |
| October  | Revisited the free associations created from listening with the third ear Dream recording and analysis Memo recording | 3 weeks  | Immersion, illumination and the first signs of Explication  |
| October  | A weekend away  | 3 days  | Incubation  |
| October/November  | Reviewing the data set and free associated analysis data Memo recording | 2 weeks | Illumination Explication  |
| November  | Reviewed the data set and the literature around psychodynamics Memo recording | 2 weeks  | Immersion, illumination and explication  |
| November  | Retreated from the data Memo recording | 1 week  | Incubation  |
| December  | Reviewed the data set and additional free associations to finalise themes Memo recording | 1 week  | Immersion illumination Explication  |
| December  | Drew the data set together  | 3 weeks  | Thematic analysis  |

## APPENDIX D- THE MOTORWAY DREAM

*Was driving in my car on the motorway and found myself having to pull over on the hard shoulder. The car needed its tyre changing. As I pulled over I panicked. I had no idea how to change the tyre. I did not know where to start and I was alone. I carelessly left my driver's side door open and other cars driving past were beeping their horns angrily. Somehow in the commotion I cut my right arm and it felt like it was gushing blood. This increased my panic and worsened the situation. I hand wrote a sign saying ‘help me’ and very quickly a car pulled up in front of mine. An old man got out and his family. He came over to me and I tried to show him the cut on my arm. I wanted to show how serious the cut was but could not pull my sleeve to expose the cut. I felt like he had not understood how worried I was or how significant the cut was. However when I looked at the cut there was no blood. The old man came over and applied three plasters to the cut. He stood back and didn't help me with the car but somehow his presence seemed to initiate my action. I started to think sequentially about how to solve this problem. I closed my driver's side door, went into the boot and collected the reflective triangle which I placed further down the hard shoulder and put on a high visibility jacket. The old man and the family nodded in approval. I then realised that I did have the tools in the boot to fix the car. I had a jack and the equipment needed to remove the tyre and replace with a new one. The family never helped me but I seemed confident in achieving it myself. Then another man appeared. It was at this point I realised I didn't know how to jack up the car. The man used the equipment and showed me what to do. I helped him and tried to impress him with my helping skills. I also joked with the old man's family and asked where they were going. They told me they were going to a city I was familiar with. I told them I could help them, in repayment, by telling them all the places to go for good food and good sites.*

*I do not recall fixing the car but the dream ended as I arrived at my destination*

*Dream log (10.10.15)*

My interpretation.

The motorway, fast, dangerous and unpredictable represents my thesis journey. I believe that the car breaking down and my panic and helplessness represent how I felt about my literature review. Help came but it wasn't as proactive as I perhaps hoped and this could be how I felt about my supervision. Despite this initial thought the help was useful and by changing my approach it became possible to structure my thinking and solve the problem. I believe the cut represented a sensation of being drained. That the internal feeling was greater than my outward appearance and so my pain was being ‘missed’. Also that it was perhaps not as great as I had first thought. I find it interesting that I found it difficult to receive help without giving something in return. This is something I have found to be an occurrence within my work. I also noticed how I was desperately attempting to look capable when I was receiving help. Interestingly despite not seeing myself fix the problem I did reach my destination, or as Freud would have termed it ‘wish fulfilment’ This is perhaps my ‘wish fulfilment’ (Freud, 1900) being played out and my new-found confidence enabling me to see the possibility of completing this thesis.

Additionally, I could play all the characters in the dream; I am the motorway, careless and thoughtless and one track minded. I am the car, broken and helpless, I am me, incapable and waiting for help for someone, I am the old man, the ability in myself to encourage myself, I am the second helper, the less emotional supportive and more practically supportive. Potentially, these are all the characters within myself.

## APPENDIX E - PHASE TRANSITION DREAM

*The dream involved a really attractive person chatting to me at a bar. I was single and this person seemed out of my league. I don’t remember what they looked like but they had a haircut that was similar to the one that I was hoping to have cut soon. We were chatting and flirting and I soon realised that they were attracted to me but appeared nervous. This person had a child with them, a schoolchild and the young girl was the attractive person’s responsibility. Because of this we didn’t go anywhere but we secretly and playfully flirted with each other. The next day the person came to my house and told me that they didn’t want to get hurt by me and that I made them nervous and that they wanted us to think long and hard before we did anything together because it could cause her harm. I said to them that it seems like they’d made their mind up and that they didn’t want to pursue anything with me. The attractive person told me to go to a bar the next day and if we both turned up there then we could see where things went.*

*Dream log (03.11.15)*

Dream interpretation

I managed to interpret this dream as I was coming into consciousness in the morning. The key for me was the haircut the ‘attractive person’ had. It was a haircut that I would like to have. I believe the attractive person in the dream may have represented a part of me. A vulnerable and frightened part of me, my unconscious in fact. The ‘me’ in the dream I think represents my bullish, curious, inquisitive and driven side of me who wants to go into my unconscious and access information about myself I’m not aware of and learn about myself and change some traits that are not helpful. The ‘attractive person’ is nervous about pursuing anything and wants me to think long and hard about the risks that are involved in pursuing my unconscious. However my drive to want to have a relationship with them/investigate my unconscious was overwhelming and it was just a case of waiting for them to give me the green light as opposed to carefully thinking through the process. This dream has really made me think about how tentative I should step deeper into this process and investigate my deep unconscious self and know that I could get very hurt in the process. The ‘me’ in the dream felt impatient and frustrated with the attractive person. My bullish curious personality wanted to march into something that I could later regret. I feel that this was my unconscious warning me off or perhaps making me think about things a little more. Even as I write this I notice myself feeling more cautious and protective over the attractive person and possibly that young child she had with her who could have represented a younger vulnerable me – I could not tell if my defences were just doing their job or if they are in my best interests. I think both.

## APPENDIX F- THE ANGRY DREAM

I am on a beach and a woman barges passed me knocking me forward. I was angry. She initially said sorry but when she saw I was angry she went ballistic and wanted to fight me, she was shouting and insulting me and had lost total control. I kept completely calm, I was not displaying any anger (possibly a wish) and did not feel any anger in the dream. I kept repeating to the woman, have a nice holiday, have a nice day to calm the situation down. There were lots of family members gathering round. People I want to appear sensible and calm to. The woman was still in a rage and at this point had to be held back from me. As she was ushered away I saw a necklace round her neck with my mum’s name on it. I woke up.

Dream interpretation;

I am fortunate to have had a happy childhood and an excellent relationship with my mum, which exists today and only grows in strength. Despite this, no childhood is necessarily perfect and ‘The fuck you up, your mum and dad’ (Phillip Larkin). It is possible that the emotion of anger was not encouraged within me as a child and my own feelings of anger were not contained by myself or my own mum as I grew up. I do however have memories of my mum being angry, albeit rarely, at me or family members. The dream my represent a feeling of having to try and contain my own feelings of anger and make sure no one sees me ‘lose it’, while the woman in the dream, possibly my own mum, is able to express herself guilt free and without concern.

## APPENDIX G- ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval from Sheffield university



Downloaded: 17/04/2015

Approved: 15/04/2015

Laura Ducksbury

Registration number: 130113425

School of Education

EDUR136 Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology (2013~14)

Dear Laura

**PROJECT TITLE:** Action is the enemy of thought

**APPLICATION:** Reference Number 003387

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 15/04/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

University research ethics application form 003387 (dated 09/04/2015).

Participant information sheet 006837 (27/03/2015)

Participant information sheet 006836 (27/03/2015)

Participant information sheet 006835 (27/03/2015)

Participant consent form 006838 (27/03/2015)

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](https://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure/changes-made-after-approval) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

Professor Daniel Goodley

Ethics Administrator

School of Education

## APPENDIX G1- INFOMRMATION SHEETS



**Parent Information Sheet**

1. Research Project Title:

A study to explore techniques of reflection to increase my self-awareness as a practitioner.

2. Invitation paragraph

 You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the project’s purpose?

During this one week period I hope to carry out an in-depth study. This study is an investigation which focuses on me as a trainee educational psychologist. I believe it is very important to have a degree of self-awareness as an educational psychologist and reflect on your own practice. This research will involve recording conversations and an in-depth reflection of those conversations. This is with a view to continue my professional development and share my experience with others who may choose to reflect on their own work in a similar way. In order to do this I hope to record conversations with teachers, parents, guardians, children and school staff.

4. Why have I been chosen?

In order to conduct this research I have selected a random week in my calendar. It is during this week that I will record pre-organised consultation conversations where consent has been given. I will be working in the same way I usually do but instead I will be recording a conversation and reflecting on my own practice using specific techniques taken from a psychodynamic perspective.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

By taking part in this research you will be allowing me to work as I naturally do and reflect intensely on my own practice. You will receive no different service from the by being involved in this research. If you choose to not be involved in this research that will have no implications on my involvement with your child and this case.

7. What do I have to do?

There is no requirement for you to do anything different than you would do ordinarily. With your consent I will record the conversation and be focusing my reflections on my own behaviour in the conversations.

8.What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

By recording our conversation you may feel uncomfortable talking freely and openly. If this is the case you can request the recordings and at any point. By recording the conversation you may be distracted by the recording and this may impact on your behaviour in the session. If, after our meeting, you feel that the recording affected your behaviour in anyway then you are welcome to request the recording to be deleted. You may also wish to contact me and discuss your thoughts. At the end of the conversation once the recorder has been switched off you may wish to add further items to our conversation that are not recorded.

9. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is my belief, as well as a theory that is heavily supported by research, that the more reflective a practitioner becomes the more effective their work is. I believe educational psychologists work in a highly emotional environments and we often ask a great deal of the people we talked to. We are offered insight into people’s lives and told highly personal stories. I believe it is important to understand how a practitioner copes with and deals with and learns from those experiences. This is with a view to become the most effective practitioner one can be. By taking part in the research you will be allowing me to reflect intensely using specific techniques. Those techniques may then be used by other practitioners to increase their own self-awareness and improve their reflective practice.

10. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

In the unlikely event that the research study stops earlier than expected, the participants will be informed and reasons will be provided.

11. What if something goes wrong?

If you have a complaint you wish to share at any time during the research it should firstly be addressed to the lead researcher and the supervising tutor via email: t.s.davis@sheffield.ac.uk. However, should you feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction you can contact the University’s Registrar and Secretary via email: registrar@sheffield.ac.uk.

12. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that is collected from your involvement in the project will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be anonymised before being analysed. In signing the consent form you will be giving permission for members of the research team to have restricted access to your data once is has been anonymised.

During the research tasks, participants will be referred to by their first initial and may adopt a pseudonym if desired. No third parties or schools will be made recognisable.

13. Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

Our conversation will be recorded for analysis using a Dictaphone. The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. You will always have the opportunity to request that you are not recorded. One month after the recordings have been made they will be destroyed.

14. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the project will be drawn together to be included in a thesis and may be published in a journal. You, your child and the school will not be identified in any reports or publications.

If you require any further information or wish to know the outcome of the research please feel free to contact me at lducksbury1@sheffield.ac.uk .

15. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research project is part of the requirements for completion of the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology and does not have any sponsorship or funding.

16. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield’s Education Department ethics review procedure.

Should you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and if you decide to take part then thank you for your participation.

17. Contact for further information

If you have any further questions or concerns then please do not hesitate to contact Laura Ducksbury (lead researcher). If you have a complaint to make then please contact Hull county council, the name and address can be found below.

Laura Duckskbury

Educational Psychology Department

The supervising tutor for this project is Sahaja Davis and his contact details are as follows:

## APPENDIX G3: Information sheet for children

This is a letter to explain something important to you. I am at University. University is like school for grown-ups. While I’m at University I’m doing something called research. Research is a way of finding out new information by investigating and exploring.

I want to find out a bit more about myself. Sometimes I wonder what I might sound like to other people. I think that if I know a bit more about myself and what I sound like, then it might help me to be better at my job.

I work with teachers, mums, dads, grandads and grandmas and children. I am really interested to investigate and explore how I act in front of all these different kinds of people.

While I work with you today I wondered if it would be okay to record the time I spend with you on this dictaphone. It will record everything that we say. After a week and going to listen back to the recording and have a think about what I said. I will be listening to what I say more than what you say. After a few weeks I will delete this recording and nobody else will hear it.

I will write about it in a big book called a thesis and other people will be able to read it. No one will know it is written about our conversation a part from me.

If you don’t want me to record our time together then that is absolutely okay. I will still stay here and we will still work together. It is absolutely up to you if I record the session and I do not mind if you say yes or if you say no.

If you say yes now but then change your mind later then all you have to do is tell your teacher and I will throw the recording away and I will not listen to it or write about it.

no

yes

Name …………………………………………………………………………

## APPENDIX G4 CONSENT FORM



**Researcher Lj Ducksbury**

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above

 project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw
at any time without giving any reason. (To withdraw please contact Lj Ducksbury

 on XXX).

1. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis.
I give permission for members of the research team to have access
to my anonymised responses.
2. I agree to take part in the above research project.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent (if appropriate) Date Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant Date Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Lead Researcher Date Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*