

# TOWARDS THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND A REFLEXIVE BODY OF PRACTICE.

## **Thesis Overview.**

This thesis, or research account, is about an inquiry into my own professional practice as well as an inquiry into the setting in which I work and how I and others have participated in change. It represents some significant personal developments and in the telling of it I would like to honour the sense of 'journey' which I experienced. The thesis is written in three sections, each with its own introduction signalling what is contained therein. I will briefly summarise each section here in order to give the reader at the outset a sense of the overall 'shape' of the research as well as a sense of how it developed over time.

### **Section One.**

This section is about 'preparations' for the research journey in which I present myself, the research setting and the research questions I began with. I tell some 'stories' about past experiences which illustrate and contain the research questions and place them in an historical and social context. I also describe theories and methodologies which appear to 'fit' with my research questions, and I begin to engage with issues of validity or quality or knowing. I decide that Cooperative Inquiry best fits my research questions and my values and intentions as a researcher.

### **Section Two.**

This section describes how I explore the possibilities for a Cooperative Inquiry, seeking to invite colleagues to join me as co-researchers/co-subjects. I decide on working with 'complex cases' as a focus around which we can all inquire together into our own practice, this term referring to the 'acting system' of family, social and professional networks involved with an individual person presenting as the identified client. However, I fail to initiate a Cooperative Inquiry as I understood it and I feel unable to begin a research venture which involves colleagues as explicit co-researchers within the frameworks I had chosen. But, I continue to inquire into my own practice using concepts from Action Inquiry and I also develop my own set of criteria for story writing as a method for recording and analysing experience. I am unable to resolve the 'research versus practice' distinction, see myself as not having 'begun the research', and this tilts me into a crisis. I am offered a resolution of this by a feminist critique of social science and a gender analysis.

### **Section Three.**

By now I am able to resolve the 'research versus practice' distinction and continue inquiring into how I and others work with 'complex cases'. I retain this as a focus for a while to hold my questions about how to develop collaborative relationships among all participants and how to contribute towards a 'community of inquiry'. In pursuing these questions I move away from the focus on casework, to a focus on relationships in the work setting around coping with and managing change. This leads to my re-conceptualising how I understand and work with the theme of power. I finish by presenting my own conception of reflexivity in practice and consider how this relates to my practice as a clinical psychologist.