RESEARCH METHODS WEEKEND - STUDY GUIDE

MARCH 3RD/4TH 2012

DIPLOMA TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY & COUNSELLING - 3RD YEAR

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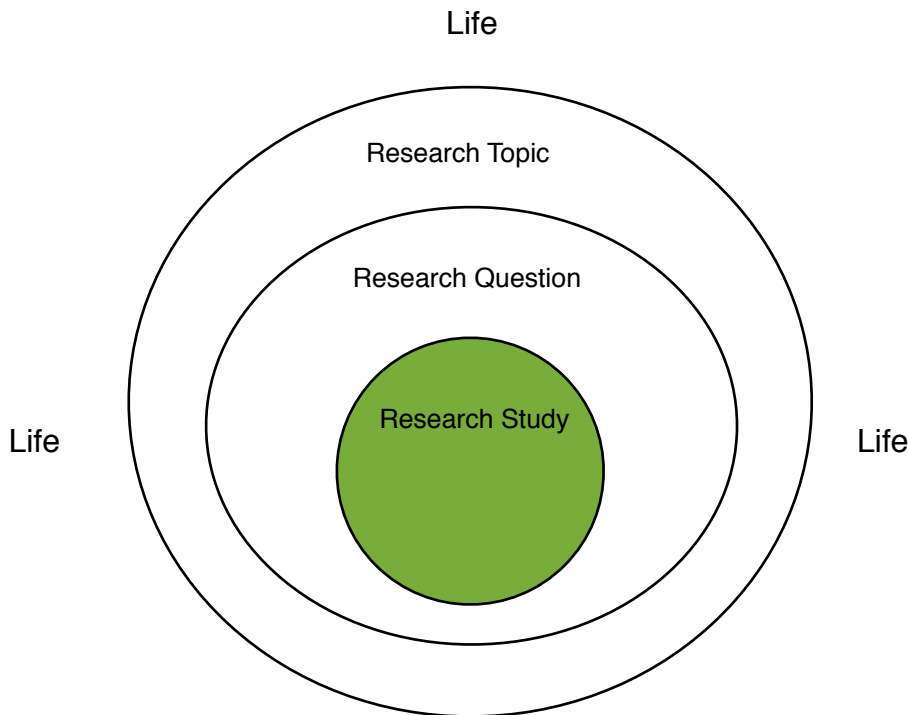
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Introduction

Humankind has been driven, from his earliest moments, by the momentum to know and to understand. This desire can be observed in various drives:

Exploring: Some researchers seek to discover more of the world, to push the edges of the familiar. They are often driven by a vague sense of knowing that something else lies beyond. This knowing is not just experienced at the intellectual level, but is often a "felt sense" that begins as a general urge and can become "focused" into specific curiosity (Gendlin, 1996). Such a quest often results in a transformation or liberation very similar to the the process of discovery seen in psychotherapy.

Protecting: We might be motivated to seek information to relieve anxiety or tension and increase our sense of safety. In the face of feeling that we don't know or understand something we might feel that, if we did, we would feel more secure and content in the world.

Remembering/realizing: The experiences of repression and suppression tell us that we once knew things we have now forgotten. It is our conscious mind that defines our perception of our self and yet the unconscious mind is a much

> *"What can we gain by sailing to the moon if we are unable to cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves? This is the most important of all voyages of discovery, and without it, all the rest are not only useless, but disastrous."*
>
> - Thomas Merton

greater part of our being. Research can also be seen as the process of uncovering or making conscious what is unconscious. This aspect of inquiry is familiar to the psychotherapist.

Understanding the research paradox: Every researcher wants to know about something. At the very start, the researcher already knows enough about "something" to want to know more. *Therefore every researcher has prejudice* about the "something" that they have not yet researched. *Every* researcher is *always* working from experience. BE AWARE OF YOUR ASSUMPTIONS/ MOTIVATIONS. Use them - don't let them use you. Don't be afraid to say what you feel you already know about your topic. You very likely have considerable experience and this same experience is what is motivating you to go deeper into the inquiry. Being clear about what you feel you already know is as important as what you don't know and want to find out.

Purposes of Research in Psychotherapy Practice

- To find out more about who we are - to experience ourselves

- To find out what our experiences share in common with others

- To express to others what we know i.e., to value our experiences

- To understand our environment better - how it impacts us and we, it.

- To better understand our inner worlds and the meaning we have made of experiences

- As a participation in community life - sharing experience generates relatedness and connection

- To justify and rationalise our (often instinctual) decisions and positions

Overall, the process of research is the process of learning from experience, of becoming conscious, of extending one's awareness through focused inquiry.

Good research is a highly personal, impassioned, well-reasoned endeavour. Its driving force is similar to what spurs us to train as psychotherapists and counsellors - a process of inquiry into self and others. It can play a significant part in our own moral development.

Ethically, research faces the same caveats and concerns that psychotherapy faces. *Psychotherapeutic* research is dealing with the treatment and understanding of the human soul under the broader heading of Human Science. This makes it infinitely more sensitive than researches in other fields of science dealing with less conscious phenomena such as chemicals, protons or electrons and more sensitive than research on even the most sentient of animals. The research we undertake should be accordingly subtle and sensitive in meeting its goals.

In our current cultural and societal climate the needs of the soul are rarely prioritised and therefore such subtleties are rarely observed. Research is often used as a blunt, political instrument in order to measure, justify or contextualise . In the move towards a scientific, evidence-based research

climate for counsellors and therapists, research is being applied in mechanistic, technical and reductive ways.

Research and State Healthcare

In recent years there have been increasing moves toward providing counselling and psychotherapy services as part of NHS mental healthcare. This is an improvement on the more archaic psychiatric practices that could be found in the mental healthcare system decades ago (see extract from Curtis documentary The Trap: What Happened to Our Dreams of Freedom: http://youtu.be/Rb3S-4T28tE). This section of the documentary also explains Laing's research into family dynamics - an example of the power of research to contribute new insights to the field.

However, as the demand for counselling services grows and funding remains limited, there are increasing demands for "scientific" research as to the effectiveness of counselling and different counselling/psychotherapeutic approaches. This type of research is often known as "outcomes-based"--it is looking specifically at the effects counselling has on the "outcome" of specific patient cases. This move towards "evidence-based healthcare" has been seen as "reform" within the NHS (Rowland & Gross, 2000).

"Evidence-based healthcare (EBHC) affects policy, provision, professional practice and, above all, patients." (Rowland & Gross, 2000, p.22). EBHC has been defined as the "conscientious, explicit and judicious use of *current best evidence* [my emphasis] in making decisions about any aspects of healthcare" (ibid). It is a term applied across the healthcare sector and thus now the mental health arena. This "movement" has cause much debate over the definitions of almost every piece of terminology: "outcomes", "therapies", "evidence", research methodologies, clients/patients etc.

The research devised and applied by the NHS and other government bodies tends to be *randomised controlled trials* (RCTs). These are scientifically organised tests with "control groups" to establish validity etc. They employ standardised, psychometric, questionnaire-based, self-report measures e.g., Beck Depression Inventory. These approaches reflect all the benefits and prejudices of scientific thinking. As such they tend to produce one-sided or limited findings. The limitations to this style of test include: minimising the importance of patient preference for a particular style of therapy; overlooking patient-therapist relationship as (the significant) factor in therapy outcome; capacity of the patient to self-assess; bias towards "measures of psychological dysfunction...[leaning] heavily on social desirability" (McLeod, 2000, p.133); human tendencies toward impression management and self deception etc. McLeod critically points out that approaches to therapy that "emphasise self-awareness and insight could be expected to be associated with poor outcomes as measured on self-report scales." (p.134).

Participatory and transpersonal researches have a role to play in restoring the current imbalance towards postivist (definition on p.9) or objectivist researches with in-depth, qualitative, (inter-)subjective research. For an example of the imbalance, review the program of researches relating to

"therapeutic effectiveness" presented at the UKCP Annual Research Conference 2011 program http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/event717.html .

Given the emphasis on quantification and assessment reported above, there is still relatively little use of *qualitative* research in assessing therapies and outcomes and also very little creativity in design and methods. In the 1990's researches were made to establish the validity of qualitative research (Howe, 1996; McKenna & Todd, 1997) but the progress in changing perception has been modest. If progress is to be made in using qualitative research appropriately and helpfully in the field of psychotherapy and counselling, then increasing the profile of qualitative research practice and findings within the field is crucial.

Happily, there are researchers specializing in the transpersonal and humanistic fields who have developed suitable research methods (Anderson & Braud, 2011; Braud & Anderson, 2008). Paradigms, approaches, methods, designs, tools have all been crafted to increasingly address the very specific requirements of researching human experience. These developments have not displaced the scientific approaches but they have complemented and deepened them. It is this approach to research that we will be taking in our workshop.

The purpose of this weekend is to encourage you to understand the questions that move you, to inspire your creativity in researching them and to equip you to translate your curiosity about life into something you might share with others.

> *"The supreme task of the physicist is to arrive at those universal elementary laws from which the cosmos can be built up by pure deduction. There is no logical path to these laws; only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding of experience, can reach them."*
>
> - Albert Einstein, Principles of Research (1918)

Using Research

The focus of this weekend is primarily on the *doing* of research rather than the *using* of it. That said, as members of a professional community that is moving forward all the time, we can maintain our awareness of new developments in the field by *using* research actively. New research is traditionally published through journals as "articles" that are submitted for review by professionals in the field. A panel of "experts" review submitted articles and suggest any amendments or changes they would like to see (if the article is accepted for publication). A selection of journals are available for you to look through over the weekend.
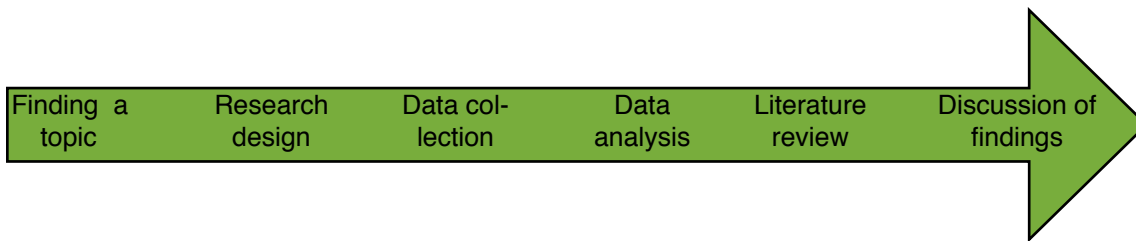
An increasingly good standard of research is available on the internet where researchers have elected to provide open access to their work. Use your discernment regarding sources however, as many internet sources remain unsuitable for academic work. When using Wikipedia, for example, track down the source they cite (see the bottom of the Wikipedia entry) for information, rather than relying on them directly. Much Wikipedia information is still unsupported i.e., little more than assertion.

As discussed in the lecture paper on *Participation* (Lewis, 2012), individual researches build into a body of **theory** over time. Theory is generally, initially created by one person and, if solid, will gather momentum over time to become a field to which many contribute e.g. psychoanalysis, attachment theory, Gestalt etc. Many practicing psychotherapists and analysts then contribute theory to the field arising out of their praxis. Examples of original contributions include:

• Freud - psychoanalysis, structure of the psyche
• Adler - theory of will-to-power
• Jung - analytical psychology including archetypes, collective unconscious
• Winnicott - object relations, childhood development
• Bowlby - attachment theory, childhood development
• Klein and others - envy and gratitude, infant development
• Laing - family dynamics, true/false self, holism
• Frankl - logotherapy
• Assagioli - psychosynthesis
• Rogers - client-centred therapy
• Perls - Gestalt
• Ellis - rational-emotive therapy

"In order to create a good world, we need to learn how to do it - how to resolve our appalling problems and conflicts in more co-operative ways than at present. And in order to do this we need traditions and institutions of learning devoted to this end...We urgently need a new, more rigorous kind of inquiry that gives intellectual priority to the tasks of articulating our problems of living and proposing and critically assessing possible co-operative solutions...To develop this new kind of inquiry we will need to change almost every branch and aspect of the academic enterprise." (Maxwell, 1992)

What is Research?

| Finding a topic | Research design | Data collection | Data analysis | Literature review | Discussion of findings |

Research is never independent or objective since it always reflects the **philosophical worldviews** of its author. A worldview or a paradigm is "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990) Every researcher holds a worldview though they may not be conscious of their own beliefs at the start of the process. A good researcher works hard to articulate their worldview as clearly as possible since they understand its role as a lens that tints the colour of the research. When starting out in research, it is common to find a worldview that reflects your own and use that to support your work. Examples include; participation, transpersonal, advocacy (agitates for change), constructivism (social theory), relativism, absolutism, feminism, postpositivism (empirical observation), pragmatism (practice-oriented), non-dualism. There can be more than one worldview (e.g. transpersonal feminist, participatory pragmatist etc.) that is held by an individual. It is helpful to your own process to make conscious the ideas and doctrines you hold to be true about the world and how they fit within the landscape of paradigms (Lewis, 2012).

A central paradigm to the CCPE program is the transpersonal worldview. You need to understand enough about transpersonal theory and views of the world to be able to place your work within that field. This field is still constantly changing and there are varying perspectives and definitions (Ferrer, 2011). A review of the references given to you on diploma lectures will be a good starting point. A search of articles in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* will help you find theorists and researchers who may have had something to say on your particular topic of interest. It does not matter if your topic has already been researched. New discussion is always worthwhile and can deepen understanding within the field further. It is important that existing researche(r)s are acknowledged however. If others have contributed to your area of interest it is respectful and ethical to review their work and credit the parts which you are using to support your own work. In research we use the tool of *citation* and *referencing* to achieve this.

The definition of the transpersonal worldview is still keenly discussed (e.g., Braud, 1998; Ferrer, 2002, 2011; Hartelius, 2009; Walsh, 2001; Washburn, 2003; Wilber; 1982). Some place spirituality at the centre of the view, reducing the importance of more existential arenas, while others reflect an immanent or integral version where the transpersonal encompasses and/or runs through the existential experience Heron, 2003; Lewis, 2012).

As discussed last week, the participatory view is well-suited to transpersonal research given its principles of holism, interconnectedness (pattern), and valuing of experience. It is also possible to view the transpersonal through other post-modern lenses. Here are a few, very rough definitions, to help you see where your views sit:

A useful working definition of transpersonal research is given by Anderson & Braud (2011): "*...investigating the nature and potential of human experience and - more generally, to support renewed imagination, creativity and wonder/wonderment throughout all scientific inquiry and discourse.*" (p.5).

Positivism: "*a philosophical system elaborated from the 1830s by the French thinker Auguste Comte (1798–1857), recognizing only observable phenomena and empirically verifiable scientific facts and laws, and rejecting inquiry into ultimate causes or origins as belonging to outmoded metaphysical or theological stages of though*t..." (OED, 2012)

Post-Positivism: "*recognizes [phenomena] as inevitably value-laden — there is no one, correct, measure of [phenomenon] to be discovered but many, each having different values.*" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu)

Constructivism: "*... holds that there are normative truths. These truths are not fixed by facts that are independent of the practical standpoint, however characterized; rather, they are constituted by what agents would agree to under some specified conditions of choice.*" (ibid.)

Relativism: "*...theory or doctrine asserting that knowledge, truth, morality, etc., are relative to situations, rather than being absolute.*" (OED, 2012).

Feminism: "*serves as a way of opening up or looking at the...world as it is usually understood and uncovering ways in which women and their current and historical concerns are poorly depicted, represented, and addressed.*" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu)

Pragmatism: "*The doctrine that an idea can be understood in terms of its practical consequences; hence, the assessment of the truth or validity of a concept or hypothesis according to the rightness or usefulness of its practical consequences.*" (ibid)

[Methodological] Holism: "*An understanding of a certain kind of complex system is best sought at the level of principles governing the behavior of the whole system, and not at the level of the structure and behavior of its component parts.*" (ibid.)

[Methodological] Reductionism: "*An understanding of a complex system is best sought at the level of the structure and behavior of its component parts.*" (ibid.)

Strategies of Inquiry

Having understood the lens that colours his/her view, the researcher makes choices about particular approaches to take to their work. Creswell (2009) calls these "strategies of inquiry".

There are three types of research design (Creswell, 2009);

- qualitative - deals with in-depth account, with story, tends to be small numbers of participants and deep, open questions

- quantitative- quantification of phenomena in some way, large number of participants, more structured inputs, looking to "prove" phenomena often

- mixed methods - combines both approaches to establish a deep and broad perspective on a particular theory or idea

Qualitative and quantitative approaches can be best understood as ends of a spectrum (rather than totally discrete approaches) with a mixed methods approach being situated around the middle of that spectrum.

According to Creswell (2009), while the approaches vary in characteristics, there are also central philosophical differences between them:

Qualitative: "...*exploring and understanding the* meaning *individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting, data analysis building inductively from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure.*" (p.4)

Quantitative: "...*means for* testing objective theories *by examining the relationship between variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a set structure, consisting of Introduction, Literature and Theory, Methods, Results, and Discussion.*" Researchers in this form of inquiry have assumptions about "*testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings.*"

Mixed Methods: "...*involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research.*" (ibid.)

Once the strategy is determined then the researcher begins to look for the *approach* or *methodology* that will best suit his/her inquiry. Here are a few examples:

QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE	MIXED METHODS
Experimental designs (randomised and non-randomised)	Narrative research	Sequential
Non-experimental e.g. surveys (longitudinal, cross-sectional)	Phenomenology	Concurrent
	Ethnographies	Transformative
	Grounded theory studies	
	Case study	

(Table from Creswell, 2009, p.12)

Quantitative Approaches

In order to undertake *quantitative* research there are a very specific set of skills required. An understanding of many concepts and tools are required including:

- Variables; e.g., independent, dependent, mediating, moderating, control and confounding

- Theory (interrelated set of constructs); e.g., hypotheses, if-then logic, visual models.

In quantitative studies, the theory is usually the framework for the entire study usually and a thorough knowledge of the theory in question is therefore an important start-point for the research. Quantitative studies are not often used by psychotherapy students on this training for their inquiries. Our methodological focus therefore narrows in on the qualitative approach.

Qualitative Approaches

The vast majority of researchers at CCPE use *qualitative* methods reflecting their usefulness in exploring transpersonal/humanistic and psychotherapeutic themes. The following list givers synopses of the more popular methods. Each method has its own variation on approaching the research study. If you decide to use one of these approaches then reading one of the relevant books or chapters will give you a full account of how to go about it:

Heuristic Inquiry: "*...refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge.*" (Moustakas, 1990, p.9)

Intuitive Inquiry: "*...cultivates the ways of the heart in human science research...In attending to the particulars of the data, intuitive inquiry joins intuitive and compassionate ways of knowing to the intellectual*

rigor of human science. Methodologically, intuitive inquiry does not replace linear, left-brain attributes with imaginal, right-brain attributes. Rather, "in the union of [conventional] masculine and feminine perspectives, the method seeks to balance structure and flexibility, exterior and interior, reason and emotion, thinking and feeling, discernment and holism" (Anderson, 2011, p.16)

Integral Inquiry: *"This approach includes and integrates aspects of the research enterprise that conventional research approaches keep separate...Some topics are especially well-suited for this kind of approach. These are topics that have great personal meaning for the researcher, topics that one wishes to understand deeply, and topics that are highly experiential--especially those that involve exceptional, transpersonal and spiritual experiences."* (Braud, 2011, pp 71-2)

Narrative Inquiry: *"...researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information is often retold or re-storied by the researcher into a narrative chronology. In the end, the narrative combines views from the participant's life with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative."* (Creswell, 2009)

Phenomenology: *"...is a strategy of inquiry in which the research identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. In this process the researcher "brackets" or sets aside his/her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study."*(ibid). **Transpersonal awareness in Phenomenological Inquiry** tends to be phenomenological inquiry applied to the study of phenomena that could be considered transpersonal in nature e.g. dreams, meditation, psychic phenomena etc. (Valle, 1998).

Ethnography: *"...researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting primarily observational and interview data."*

Grounded theory: *"...researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants...This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and inter-relationship of categories of information."* (Creswell, 2009).

Case studies: *"...researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity."* (ibid).

Organic Inquiry: *"...is an emerging approach to qualitative research that attracts people and topics related to psycho-spiritual growth. The psyche of the researcher becomes the subjective instrument of the research, working in partnership with liminal and spiritual influences. A three-step process of preparation, inspiration and integration guides both the data collection and the analysis."* (Clements, 2011, p.131)

While most of what has been covered so far is applicable in any research situation, our studies focus on psychotherapy and counselling research within a participatory and transpersonal worldview. Background on the modern field of transpersonal psychology can be found in the key texts: *Transforming Self and Others Through Research: Transpersonal Research Methods and Skills for the Human*

Science and Humanities (Anderson & Braud, 2011) and *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Braud & Anderson, 1998).

Anderson and Braud (2011) have set out innovative research methods that can take account of some of the subtle and even non-ordinary aspects of human experience and existence. They do this in a participatory approach. In her introduction to their first book, Rosemarie Anderson says:

"Yet eventually it wasn't enough just to juggle, as if psychology and spirituality were free-floating pins but never genuinely relating. Now within the field of transpersonal psychology...I'm no longer juggling the impossible. I feel like a labourer in a vineyard of possibilities. And there is much to do. Long before academic psychology and spirituality can comprehend the more expansive aspects of human nature, key reconceptualisations in theories and praxis must occur, beginning with how humans know what we know - epistemology." (1998, p.xiii)

Qualitative Research Skills

The above methods, or any method applied to the participatory or transpersonal domain involves different combinations of *expanded* (untraditional) research skills in the researcher certainly and often, the participants and readers. Research ceases to be a purely intellectually-driven process and reflects the gamut of human experiencing. For example, William Braud cites 10 "different forms of intelligence" stating "...each of us possess all of these forms of intelligence, but they are present and used in different degrees." (2011, pp 118-119):

Verbal linguistic, Interpersonal Social, Bodily Kinesthetic, Emotional, Visual Spatial, Logical Mathematical, Spiritual, Naturalistic, Musical Rhythmic, and Intrapersonal.

The different "forms" of intelligence may respond to different types of communication, e.g.;

- Imaging and symbolism
- Direct knowing
- Knowing through moving
- Embodied writing
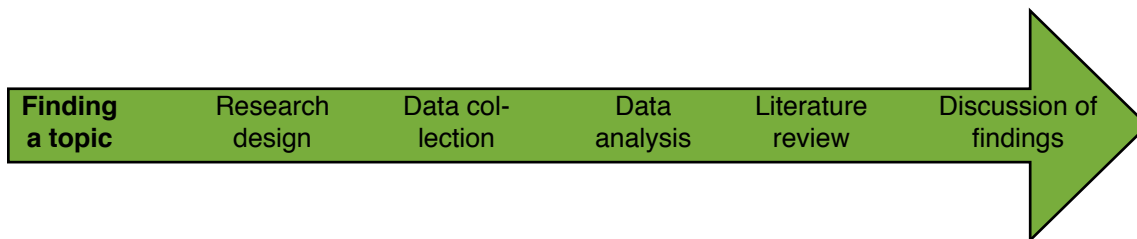- Unplanned participant outcomes

The holistic, participatory view would be that there is one Intelligence and it is expressed in multiple ways.

Jennifer Clements talks about the exploration of "liminal" experience "beyond the ego" and use Jung's model of the four functions to discuss ways of accessing the limen (Latin for "threshold") (2011). Some of this overlaps with the CCPE approach to accessing experience through Creative Imagination. If you are looking for techniques to access experience you have plenty of examples in your therapists' training to help you.

The holistic view would be that the experience already exists in the being of the individual - researcher or participant and that one needs to remain sensitive to what the individual is wanting to

express than to apply a technique because that is what the researcher has determined. We have no trouble expressing our experiences once we are ready and any individual psyche's choice to withdraw should also be respected.

The Research Process

| Finding a topic | Research design | Data col-lection | Data analysis | Literature review | Discussion of findings |

Finding a Topic

Finding your topic is essentially a creative or revelatory process. While this process can be reasoned and rational, it most authentically begins as a passion or personally meaningful question about life. Your inquiry may be something that is already known to you, but it is just as likely to reside in your unconscious.
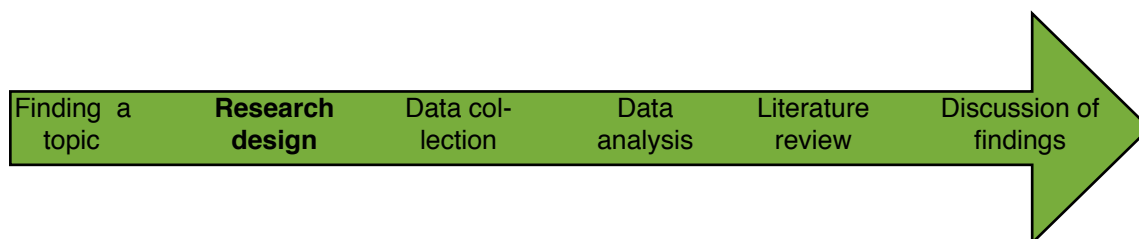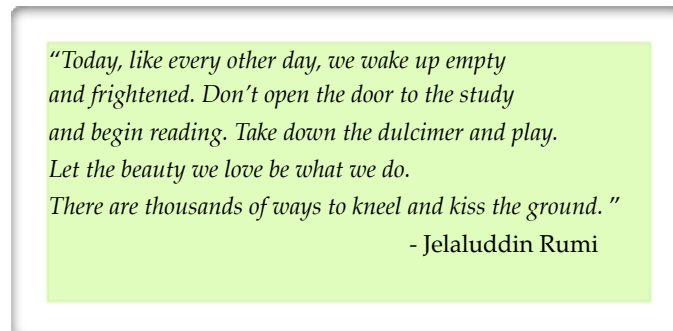
Reflect on your area(s) of interest. What do you wonder about? What do you read about? Where do you see a problem? What do you think might help? What is around you in your inner and/or outer world at the moment that puzzles you? What do you need for your own development? Be as open and creative in your reflections as you can.

Once you have a general topic in mind, it is helpful to have some understanding of what has been written about it. In research this is called a literature review. Other researchers/writers often mention their recommendations for further research in their own Finding sections and this can provide extra support for the area you want to explore. Creswell (2009) recommends you **identify your topic** very early on and use it as a focus for an initial literature search - just a rough subject area, no need for an exact question or slant yet. Over time you begin to create a map of the existing literature.

In qualitative studies theory, if it is present at all, tends to emerge at the end rather than the beginning. This is in contrast to quantitative studies which are often setting out to prove or disprove an existing theory. Qualitative studies tend **not** to be hypothesis-driven. Qualitative studies begin with a very open-mind, with the researcher gathering data in terms of stories, opinions, experiences etc. which are analysed and sifted until themes begin to emerge. These themes may begin to coalesce into a theory or hypothesis - it is rare though for a qualitative study to get past the themes stage. Qualitative approaches are well-suited to studies of human experience since this is much the pattern of experience - an on-going, unfolding and enfolding process. To the extent we have a the-

ory of our experience we are not likely to be open to what will unfold. It is therefore wise to hold opinions loosely while the research process is underway.

We are looking at the main generic steps (pertaining to any approach) involved in designing and completing with a qualitative research study.

> *"Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
> and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
> and begin reading. Take down the dulcimer and play.
> Let the beauty we love be what we do.
> There are thousands of ways to kneel and kiss the ground. "*
> - Jelaluddin Rumi

Finding a topic	**Research design**	Data collection	Data analysis	Literature review	Discussion of findings

Once you have an idea for your topic you can look again at the strategies for inquiry (qualitative or quantitative) to see what might best suit you. These steps of the process are really iterative or repeating process and not quite as linear as the arrow depicts. In fact, the whole process tends to cycle back on itself more than once - more in the action of a wave than an arrow!

As discussed, the qualitative research process varies depending on the approach followed (e.g. phenomenology, narrative, intuitive inquiry, grounded theory etc.). Given the scope of this weekend we will focus on general procedures and processes that apply to most studies. Please read further into a specific approach if you are considering it.

Further Criteria for Selecting a Research Design

The nature of the problem to be researched should begin to dictate the most appropriate design to use although this is not always the case in government-sponsored research (see p.2). Creswell (2009) suggests 3 further areas to consider before deciding on an approach:

The Research Purpose

What is the nature of the phenomenon to be researched: e.g. social (e.g. racism), meaning (e.g. alienation), extra-ordinary human experience (e.g. paranormal phenomena) or transpersonal phe-

nomena (e.g. dreams, visions etc.), values (e.g. compassion), process (e.g. effects of psychotherapy), biography (e.g. story of a past or present life) etc.

Jot down what you already understand and what aspect of the issue you wish to explore. Do you know why? Journalling is helpful at this stage of research - nothing too formal. needs to be answered: e.g. is it a phenomenon that needs in-depth exploring because it is not well known? Is it well-known but you have a different angle from which to approach it? Is it a common phenomenon but you want to know how others experience it? Are you looking to demonstrate how useful an phenomenon is etc.? Are you wanting to determine the research value of a particularly inspirational story or life? Do you have a goal in mind e.g. do you want to work with this phenomenon as a specialty in your practice? These are just a few scenarios that might help to explore the motives and purpose behind your research topic - you might have others.

Personal Experience of the Researcher

Your character, background and interests will influence not only your topic but also the approach you want to take in researching it: scientific vs. artistic, systemic vs. creative. Work out the ways in which your research will help you and *then* work out the ways in which others might benefit.

Audience

Who do you want to read this research? Why? What method would most appeal to that audience? For example, if you want to reach Western medicine doctors then a systemic approach is more likely to succeed than a creative one. If you want to reach politicians then something persuasive will be better than something poetic. If you want to reach people's hearts then something impressionistic (artistic) might be more likely to succeed than something analytical and so on. Consider your audience and the approach that will appeal to them.

The Question and Purpose Statement

Right at the beginning of your process you will have identified a basic topic in which you are interested. This topic ideally captures your imagination, your felt sense *and* your reasoning - you could feel curious and impassioned when reflecting on it. It might be related to an experience that is still poignant or even a little painful for you. If you are having trouble locating a topic try journalling or talking with a colleague. Watch your dreams as there is often information in them to guide you in the right direction or clarify a vague idea (Lunt, 2010). Don't feel deterred if your topic has been covered before elsewhere - each researcher has an original perspective on an issue because it is their own. As discussed in the lecture on *participation* (Lewis, 2012), many topics need revisiting from an experiential perspective. You might have a topic that has been frequently written about but not from the standpoint of your specific experience.

Example: My topic might be bereavement. I might be interested in researching bereavement because I cannot find my particular experience reflected in the literature. Since I experience the unembodied *presence* of beings who have died, conventional approaches to bereavement have not felt

appropriate to me. Perhaps I have felt alone with my experience wonder if there are others who have similar experiences.

Developing the topic (bereavement) in this way tightens my focus and explains the particular aspect of the topic that interests me. This helps to "frame" a large topic into something manageable to research. Research studies become much easier when time is taken to make your purpose and intention clear. Develop a purpose statement to explain your focus.

Purpose Statement: Write a short paragraph describing the reason that you have found to explore the topic. Use only a few sentences. Engage the interest of the reader - convey the broad issue. Then specify the problem - what issue establishes a strong rationale for the study? What's the point? Whom or what will be furthered by it? How is it pertinent to transpersonal psychotherapy / counselling? Reflect on the existing literature you have seen on the topic.

Example: The specific problem I might be facing within the topic of bereavement is that much psychological literature on bereavement assumes that the dead person is permanently gone from my life. If I experience the person I have "lost" as a presence *since* their death, then current research on bereavement does not address the meaning of my experience nor its impact on my bereavement process.

Example Purpose Statement: This research study aims to explore the experience of after-death presence on the bereavement process. It intends to explore the experiences of bereavement among a group of people with the unconventional perception of presences beyond death. This will enable the researcher to deepen her insight into her own experience; to benefit from, and provide a forum for, participants with a similar perspective; and provide a set of insights useful to those experiencing post-mortem presence in bereavement themselves, or to bereavement counsellors or therapists who may come across this phenomenon in patients who come to see them. The study will also be of value to broader discussions regarding the phenomena of life after death.

Research Question: After arriving at a statement, you can try expressing your study in one simple, over-arching question. The phrasing of a research question has a key role as the container for the inquiry. It requires some contemplation, months sometimes, to arrive at something you feel happy to proceed with. This is why beginning your contemplation now regarding your researches in the 4th, and possibly 5th years, cannot be too soon.

Notice the impact of different wording in the examples below and the way it impacts what the study will look at. These questions are all possible given the above purpose statement.

Examples:

- What is the effect of awareness of the on-going presence of a being after their death, on an individual's bereavement process?
- In what ways is a grieving person impacted by their awareness of post-mortem presence?

- To what extent does evidence of life after death affect the meaning given to a significant bereavement?

- How is grief impacted by awareness of post-mortem presence?

- What is the nature of bereavement for those aware of on-going life?

The question should be as open as possible. Avoid yes/no-type questions e.g. Do people grieve if aware of life after death? You are exploring a topic not trying to answer it definitively.

Selection of Method/Tradition of Inquiry and Various Research Programs

In an MA research study you would also to select a tradition of inquiry or method for your particular question. As discussed above, each tradition puts a slightly different slant on a topic/question. The tradition also has its own set of procedures that you would follow in designing the detail of your research study. In Intuitive Inquiry, Anderson (2011) defines that process as 5 cycles:

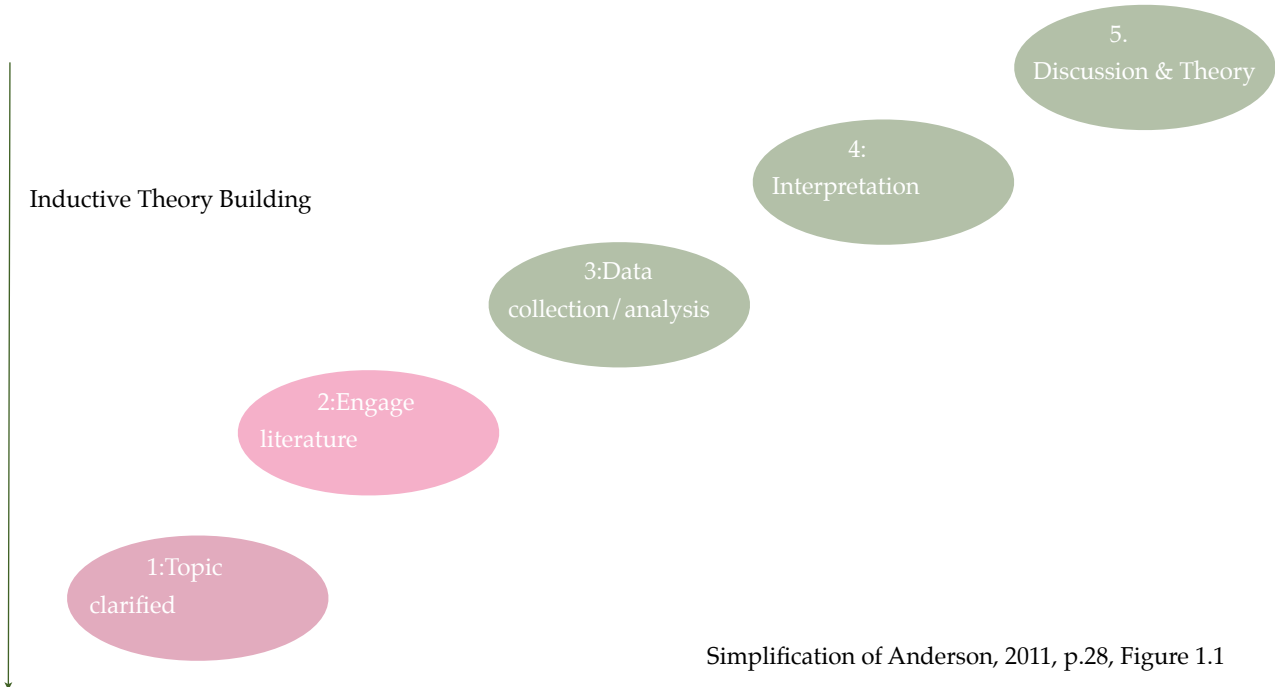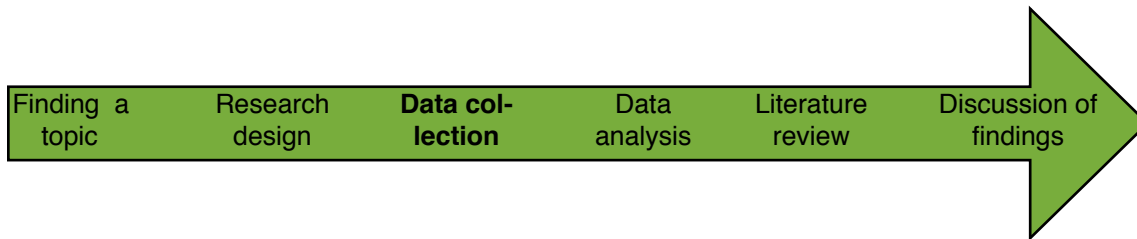**Intuitive Inquiry: Five cycles of interpretation and forward-and-return arcs.**

Inductive Theory Building

5.
Discussion & Theory

4:
Interpretation

3:Data
collection/analysis

2:Engage
literature

1:Topic
clarified

Simplification of Anderson, 2011, p.28, Figure 1.1

Table 1. Five-Questions to select the "color" to paint a qualitative design

Question to Act to Discover Preferred Approach	Associated Tradition
1. If I could discover the meaning of one person's lived experience, I would ask _____ (individual) about _____.	Biography
2. If I could discover the shared lived experiences of one quality or phenomenon in others, I would want to know about _____.	Phenomenology
3. If I could experience a different culture by living/ observing it, I would choose to experience _____.	Ethnography
4. If I could discover what actually occurred and was experienced in a single lived event, that event would be _____.	Case Study
5. If I could discover a theory for a single phenomenon of living as shared by others, I would choose to discover the theory of_____	Grounded Theory

table from McCaslin and Scotts' *Five-Question Method for Framing a Qualitative Study* (2003)

For a more general research project such as the one in the 4th year of the diploma, a more generic process of research is acceptable following the broad steps set out in the arrow used here.

| Finding a topic | Research design | **Data collection** | Data analysis | Literature review | Discussion of findings |

Data Collection

"Data" mean "givens" (OED Online, 2012). These are the answers given in response to your research question - the inputs you collect from your research. Most often in researching psychotherapy and counselling studies they are verbal and textual in format but some researchers also collect visual, audio and other kinds of data. Your data can come from both conscious and unconscious sources; people's narratives, dreams, imaginal experiences, synchronicities, vision quests etc.

The data collection procedures and processes you follow will vary slightly depending on the topic in question and the tradition being followed (if applicable). Answering the following questions will define the data collection process for your study and should form the basis of your research design/proposal:

- What are the main questions you will want to ask of your participants (whether self or others)?
- Who do you want to ask the question of and why (yourself, others, what kind of people)?
- What is the best way to ask them (time, place, people/person, format)?
- What type of information do you want to generate? (scripts, data, interviews, group discussion transcripts etc.)
- How "deep" or "wide" does the study need to be (lots of participants or lots of conversations)?
- What will you do with your information once you have it? How will it be interpreted/analysed/handled/presented etc.?
- Are there ethical considerations with your study and what are they? how will you take careof your participants' experience? What sort of role/rights will your participants have?
- How will you recruit your participants? How will you select them?
- What will the logistical arrangements be for gathering your information? How will you contain this process?
- How involved will your participants be in reviewing your interpretations and findings?
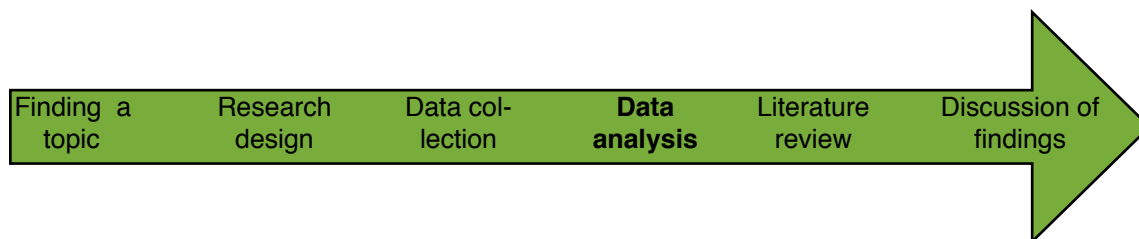
Once you have answered these questions for yourself, you will be in a position to design and plan your study, draw up a research timetable, seek ethical approval from the appropriate body and begin your data collection following the plan you have set out. Your proposal is not set in stone. You can make changes along the way if the research seems to be demanding it but it is not a decision to

be taken lightly. You would need to take note of these changes and convey them to the person approving the proposal and in the final report.

While most research methods and books focus on the traditional and rational methods of gathering data e.g. questionnaires, journalling, self-dialogue, interviews, groupwork etc. There is a whole other stream of intuitive or non-rational data that will be available to you during the course of your study if you choose to capture it. Information and guidance regarding your inquiry will come through dreams, synchronicities and patterns (parallel process) with others and the world. As a training psychotherapist you already have some experience of being able to utilize these insights and your research study is a chance to practice and deepen your awareness to this mode of knowing.

There are two extremely good accounts of these types of understanding in Anthony Lunt's *Avision - The Way of the Dream* (2010) and Peter Kingsley's *Reality* (2003).

From the minute you apply your energies to an inquiry, you invoke the topic at hand into your life. Some researchers feel that the question is, in fact, already in your psyche and therefore the inquiry begins when it actually picks you (rather than you picking it). In any event the inquiry can become increasingly meaningful and rich in its contribution to developing your potential if you are open to such an impact. Learning to use your awareness - intuition and reasoning in partnership - can be a most rewarding skill for life (including your practice) as well as resulting in resonant and meaningful research.

Finding a topic	Research design	Data collection	**Data analysis**	Literature review	Discussion of findings

Data Analysis

Once you have gathered narratives or artwork, conducted your interviews, collected stories, chosen texts or whatever route you have chosen to gather your data - you will face the Herculean task of analysis. This process is lengthy and involved whatever route you follow and, once again, there are variations between methods. This stage can be seen as the contemplation of your data. The many hours that you spend reviewing and arranging your material are what help reveal the meaning of your particular study. Cutting corners at this stage is really to be avoided. Once analysed, you can then decide the best way to communicate it in your report.
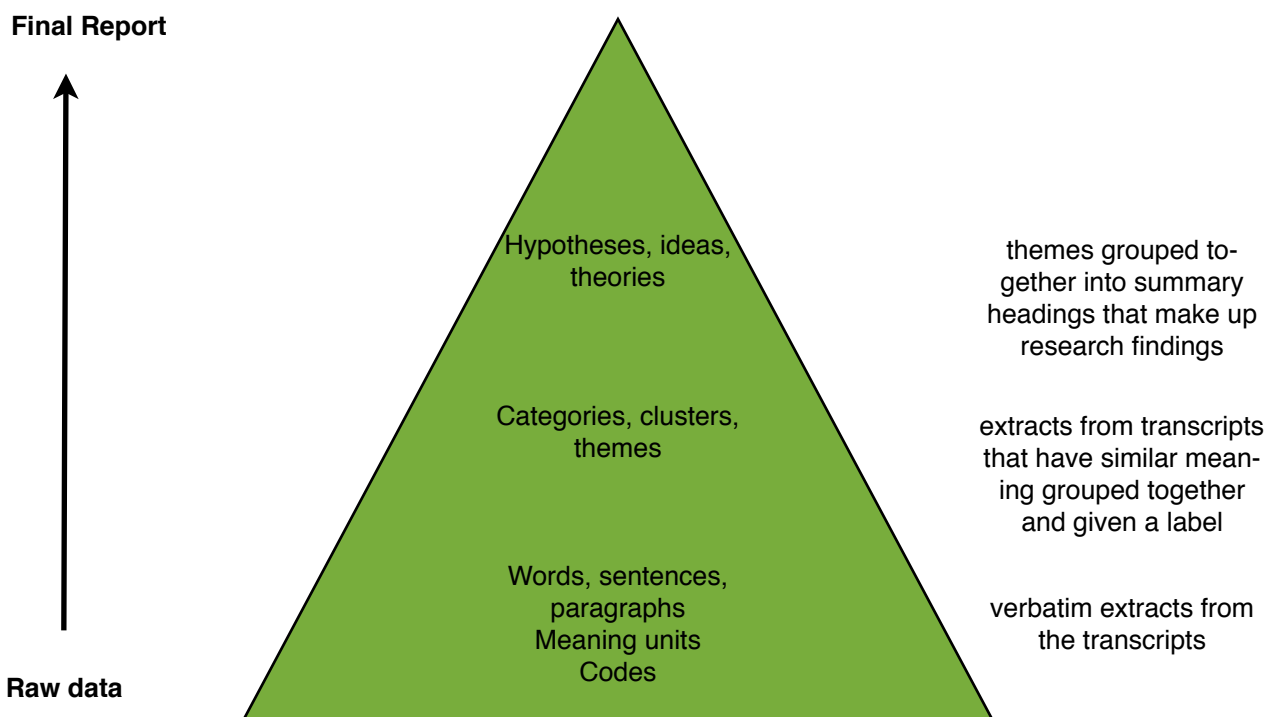
Despite the varying possible types of data and the variations in analysis prescribed by the different traditions of inquiry, it is possible to outline some broad principles to be followed in the analysis

of data. Rosemarie Anderson (2007) has drawn together a simple methodology called Thematic Content Analysis that can be followed in the analysis of any textual material (published works, case studies, narrative, interview texts etc.). You can download the step-by-step process from her website here:

http://www.wellknowingconsulting.org/publications/pdfs/ThematicContentAnalysis.pdf

Her approach conforms to the steps recommended by Creswell,(p.141, 1998) broadly outlined as :

- general review of raw data
- reflection on note-taking & marginalia
- initial summaries and displays of information (maps, tables etc.)
- development of codes (meaning unit within data) and categories (groups of codes)
- reducing or grouping categories to between 25 and 30
- further reducing group categories to 5 or 6 themes that will constitute the findings

Final Report

Hypotheses, ideas, theories

themes grouped together into summary headings that make up research findings

Categories, clusters, themes

extracts from transcripts that have similar meaning grouped together and given a label

Words, sentences, paragraphs
Meaning units
Codes

verbatim extracts from the transcripts

Raw data

Data analysis: How to get from interviews to findings

The use of categories arising from your own reflection and the report of subjective findings, are completely expected within the participatory and transpersonal paradigms. Findings are not considered to be totally objective or independent. The researcher's view is very much a part of the research. After all, the whole inquiry originated from you in the first place. Of course the research still needs to be valid and meaningful. The "objectivity" or "validity" in qualitative research is therefore ensured and conveyed in various ways. At the start the data need to be worked through

with thoroughness and rigor and some degree of "objectivity." Stick closely to what the participants and the process have "given" you. The way in which the researcher covers both his/her findings and the process followed, really impacts the extent to which the report feels valid once finished. There is a lecture paper (Qualitative Data Analysis: A Participatory View) which provides more detail on this analysis process on my website:

http://www.emmathereselewis.com/Emma_Therese_Lewis_-_Psychotherapy_%26_Yoga_Classes_,_W9/Papers_and_study_notes.html

Anderson's Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) (2007) is one approach to analyzing transcripts or other textual data. TCA ensures one is thorough in analysis and therefore produces transformative findings. TCA is described by Anderson (2007) as "objectivistic" in nature - despite being a qualitative tool. It therefore acts as a good counter-balance to the subjective aspects of transpersonal research. Anderson envisages the process as a "low hovering" over the data. "*The researcher groups and distills from the texts a list of common themes in order to give expression to the communality of voices across participants. Every reasonable attempt is made to employ names for themes from the actual words of participants and to group themes in manner that directly reflects the texts as a whole. While sorting and naming themes requires some level of interpretation, "interpretation" is kept to a minimum. The researcher's own thoughts and feeling about the themes or what the themes may signify are largely irrelevant to a TCA. That is, the researcher forestalls interpretation of the meaning of the identified themes until later in the research report, typically in the Discussion.*"
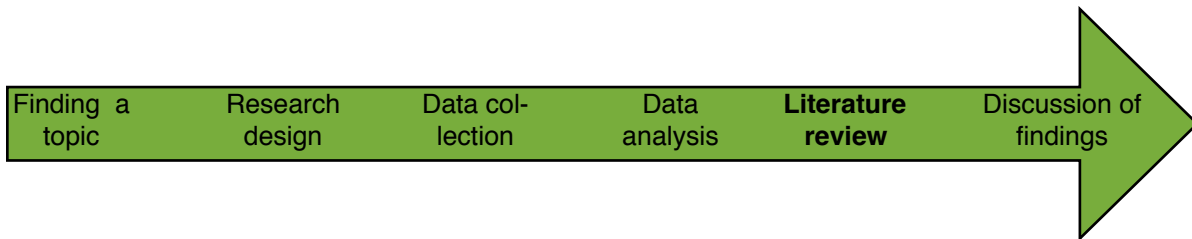
This approach is very much simpler in operation than many other methods e.g. grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) or phenomenology (Giorgi, 1985).

On the more subjective end of the research spectrum, you might use another similarly simple and popular method for discovery and analysis is known as the Heuristic method (Moustakas, 1990). By contrast to the more objectivist style, this method is a deeply reflective and reflexive approach. "*The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries.*" (p.9, 1990). This approach can be used in a simple study although a procedure for analysing data is still recommended (e.g. TCA).

The methods that Moustakas outlines for "analysis" are highly introspective processes: self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling and focusing. These are all "methods" of working with inner awareness and subjectivity. In terms of process steps he suggests:

- initial engagement -discovery of an intense interest
- incubation - detached from intensity of the topic but allowing other processes to operate
- illumination - breakthroughs into consciousness of knowings and insights
- explication - full examination of what has emerged
- creative synthesis - combining of components and core themes

- validation - *"What is presented as truth and what is removed as implausible or idiosyncratic ultimately can be accredited only on the grounds of personal knowledge and judgement."* (p.33).

Finding a topic	Research design	Data collection	Data analysis	**Literature review**	Discussion of findings

Literature Review

A general review of the literature relevant to your topic will have been done very early on when you were selecting your question. You will now return to the literature review as you have the main categories and themes that have emerged from the data and you are ready to see what other theorists/researchers have said about them. This is generally an iterative process throughout the research - the precise literature and its relevance will only really become clear once you know what your research is showing you. The review gives you an opportunity to explain where your research sits within the field of other things that have been written about it.

According to Creswell (2009) the literature review accomplishes several objectives:
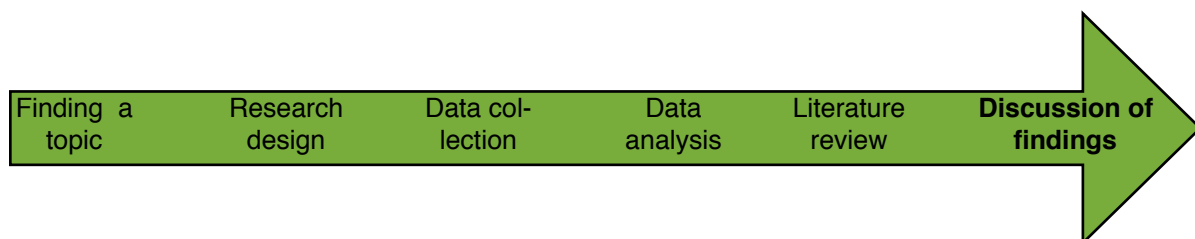
- shares with the reader other studies that are closely related to the one you are presenting
- relates your study to a larger, on-going dialogue in the field
- fills gaps and extends prior studies
- provides a framework to establish importance of your study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results with other findings

In your report, literature is most often presented either as a discrete section of the study where the above objectives are fulfilled, but it can also be covered in your Discussion section as you compare and contrast the main findings of the study with the points of view of major theorists and practitioners.

Here are the main steps Creswell (2009) suggests for the literature review to which I have added some ideas:

1. Identify key words - may come from preliminary findings or previous literature search

2. Go to the library and search catalogs for books and journals for these key words. Search the computer databases that are generally used for Social Sciences e.g. ERIC, PsychInfo, Proquest etc. Online searching can be useful too (e.g. Google Scholar) but it can be difficult to get full access to articles this way.

3. Gather a good number of articles, books and reports on your topic. Be cautious about using un-academic or popular literature to support your research. Make sure you include major theories on your topic area if only to say how your research differs.

4. Skim through the articles and books and prioritise them by relevance to your study. Start by drawing a map or outline of their main points.

5. Begin (or develop if you started it earlier) your literature map. This is a visual schematic (like a mind-map) of the literature in the field. It helps you to conceptualise, and later explain, how it fits together.

6. Begin to draft summaries of the main articles and books that are relevant (say top 10 or 15). Later you will be able to use these in your final report and it will help to be able to practice summarising what you are seeing.

Finding a topic	Research design	Data collection	Data analysis	Literature review	**Discussion of findings**

Presentation of Findings, Discussion and Critical Reasoning

The precise requirements for your Discussion and Presentation of Findings will be defined by the guidelines of the program you are on. Where publishing results is concerned, every journal has its own publishing guidelines which are freely available. It is a very good idea to understand what is expected by your reader by looking at past papers for your program and reviewing articles from journals where you might like to publish.

Taking into account these external factors, this section of your report will be influenced mostly by the nature of the findings themselves and how you feel they can best be expressed. Findings often do not need to be confined to written prose but can include visual footage and other multimedia approaches, poems, artwork etc. The most important factors are to be faithful to the findings and to communicate them as clearly as possible. You want to do justice to your thoroughness as a researcher, to the experiences of your participants, to your reader's interest and to the truth as you see it. It is important to use examples from the data to support any finding or claim you are making. This also provides illustration for the reader of the point you wish to get across. It is important to explain the data behind your conclusions to the reader so they know how you arrived at them. This is what gives research a strong, meaningful foundation rather than being just assertion, opinion or fiction.

Once you have conveyed the findings, you can then further discuss them in terms of other points of view. This is known as *critical reasoning* and is central to the research process. You need to be able to discuss your research from the point of view of people who might look at it with a different perspective than yours and then respond to those challenges. The existing literature maybe helpful in articulating points of view that are different to your own. This is your opportunity to demonstrate that you understand there are different ways to look at a matter and yours is not the only way. If all this goes well, your findings will be in context and take their rightful place in among the other research that exists.

 Any ideas for further research or "lessons learned" would be entered into the discussion here. Tips for other researchers in the same area will prove useful to those who are coming along behind you. You can also highlight new areas and new questions that your research has prompted.

Consideration for your participants and their views and experiences is just as critical at this sensitive stage as when collecting data. Get feedback on your final findings from your participants, your tutor and even your peers. Your participants should have their chance to express their views on what you have found - you might then report on that discussion in your final report. It will strengthen the foundation of your study in the reader's experience. *It can only strengthen your research to get feedback.*

When communicating findings you also want to consider your audience. Particularly in psychotherapy and counselling research, one might have different imagery, vocabulary and expression if writing for the professional community than for the lay community. It is helpful to define any technical or even abstract concepts such as ego, soul etc. since the meaning of these ideas varies so much from one piece of research (and even person) to another (Lewis, 2012).

As at any stage of the process being mindful and analytical about the assumptions you are making, shortcuts in reasoning, or compromises in fullness of disclosure, will be helpful. You cannot share everything with your audience so of course you have to make discriminating choices. The wisdom and transparency of this discrimination can make the difference between a good study and otherwise.

Validation

What makes your research findings valid? What makes them more than just opinion - yours or your participants?

Much debate goes on about the validation process in qualitative research. To those who are more familiar with the rigors and structures demanded by empirical, often quantitative studies, some of the more creative traditions of inquiry and methods seem "weak" when it comes to validation of their findings. It is important to be aware of the method or tradition you are following and how

that addresses the issue of validation. In being mindful of how you are attempting to build in validation to your study, here are some areas to consider:

- What does your intuition tell you about your findings? Have you been rigorous in your reasoning and your empathising?

- What does the extant literature say about your topic? Are there other studies that support your findings? How have those researchers approached validation?

- What do your participants say about your findings? Do they resonate with the study? Does it seem helpful to them?

- Does the study seem helpful to your other audiences? You may want to ask for feedback?

- Use the advice of advisors, supervisors, mentors etc.

- If you were to confess to some weak points what would they be? Confess them.

- Do not be afraid to admit what you would do differently if you had time to repeat the study

- Is your method sufficiently detailed that it could be replicated by another person?

- Did you leave any area of your findings or data out of the study? If so, why?

Ethical Considerations and Practices

The ethical considerations of a research study should be central to its planning and execution. Consider them as carefully as you would for your own psychotherapy or counselling practice. Many of the considerations might seem like common sense but there are important approvals and frameworks that protect participants from thoughtlessness and ill-intent. Participants and those affected by their stories are putting themselves into your hands as a researcher. Experience is the stuff of the human soul--it is sensitive and sacred. A participant may be willing to share his or her experiences with you - even the difficult ones. They may be unaware of the post-traumatic reactions that can occur as a result. You need to be very mindful of the responsibility you hold. Check here for the British Psychological Society's guidelines:

http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/guidelines-for-practitioners/guidelines-for-practitioners.cfm

Here are some central issues to be considered (CCPE, Braud & Anderson, 1998; Creswell, 2009):

- Obtain approval from any organization where you are advertising for participants
- Do not put participants at risk and respect vulnerable populations
- How will you maintain confidentiality? Is there a need for anonymity? etc.

- How will you arrange support that participants may need following the research process?

- What rights do participants have over the research data? Can they review? Can they withdraw?

- How will the data be treated, stored, during and after the project? Who will have access to it?

- How will the interview be conducted? Where, when - on whose terms?

- Check your writing for language and terms that could be considered biased or prejudiced

- Be aware of the assumptions and prejudices you bring to your study. Evaluate how they affect every stage of the study.

- Be sure to balance your views with others

- Take seriously the role of knowledge in culture - bear in mind how your study might be used. Could the study be used by one group of interest against another?

Appendix A: Key Journals in Transpersonal Research

Samples of journals available for review at the workshop and/or in the CCPE library:

- Counselling & Psychotherapy Research, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

- The Psychotherapist, United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy

- The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, Association of Transpersonal Psychology

- The Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Association of Humanistic Psychology

Many other relevant journals can be found at good research libraries (the British Library is the best) where articles can be searched online and/or hard copies ordered.

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