

Research as Personal Process

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Why do we get into research?

Why do people get involved in projects and dissertations? Why do students pursue masters' degrees and doctorates? Why is research such an important part of a university's education process?

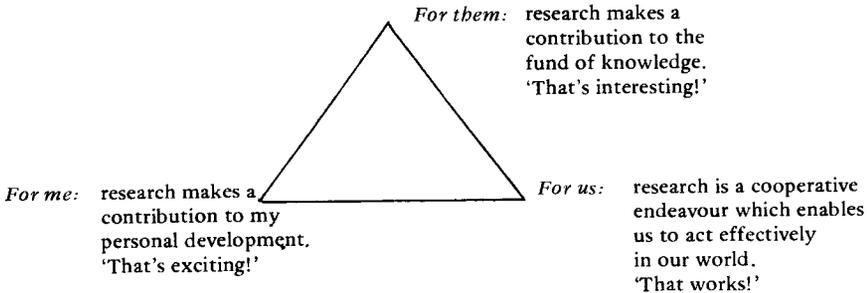
If we examine these questions carefully we can see a number of different kinds of answers. An orthodox answer is that the purpose of research is to make a contribution to the fund of knowledge in a particular field: in this sense, research is *for them*, for the community of scholars of which the researcher is a member or potential member. But this essentially positivist view has been increasingly criticized in recent years, and a second answer has been suggested by those concerned to develop the 'new paradigm' of cooperative experiential enquiry (Reason and Rowan, 1981). From this perspective, research is *for us*: it is a cooperative endeavour which enables a community of people to make sense of and act effectively in their world.

We wish here to explore a third and somewhat neglected answer to the question: research can also be *for me*. The motivation to do research is personal and often expresses needs for personal development, change and learning. So we must look at academic research as an educative process, and at the enormous potential it holds for personal growth. In this chapter we will consider some of the dimensions of personal development, and illustrate these with examples from the experience of our research students as they have pursued their enquiries. We will also outline how supervision can facilitate this process. But first, we must look a little more carefully at the enquiry process and at the nature of knowledge.

Enquiry and knowing

All good research is *for me*, *for us* and *for them*: it speaks to three audiences, and contributes to each of these three areas of knowing. It is *for them* to the extent that it produces some kind of generalizable ideas and outcomes which elicit the response 'That's interesting!' from those who are concerned to understand a similar field (Davis, 1971). It is *for us* to the extent that it responds to concerns of our praxis, is relevant and timely, and so produces the response 'That works!' from those who are struggling with problems in their field of action. It is *for me* to the extent that the process and outcomes respond directly

to the individual researcher's being-in-the-world, and so elicits the response, 'That's exciting!' – taking exciting back to its root meaning, to set in action. Research thus contributes to personal motivation and development.



Who is research for?

We regard it as unfortunate and degenerate if any one of these three purposes of enquiry becomes dominant and overwhelms either one or both of the others: all three are authentic and complementary aspects of the research process. Thus this current chapter is written *for me* (there are actually two 'me's') in that it excites us and helps us move and develop as researchers and research supervisors; it is *for us* in that it evolved and will evolve in cooperative discussions with colleagues and research students, and will hopefully contribute to our joint practice or research; it is *for them* in that we clearly intend to influence the academic community at large to view research and research supervision in a different light.

We are working within what has been called a 'post-positivist' perspective (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This emergent paradigm suggests we can see ourselves as living in an interactive and participatory universe (Skolimowski, 1985). Reality is both one and many, in the sense that we can have only knowledge of 'objective' reality (assuming for pragmatic purposes that there is one, or are some) from many different subjective perspectives; and also, more radically, in the sense that in some fashion we create or choose our reality. Thus valid enquiry rests on critical subjectivity, on the perspective of a personal view from some distance; and truth is multiple and transient, always emerging and changing, and holistic. Also our knowing is not limited to that which we can express in propositions, but can be practical, intuitive, experiential and presentational (Reason and Heron, 1986).

Enquiry in this universe must therefore be participative, qualitative, sensitive. It is enquiry *with* people, rather than research *on* people, a personal process pursued in relation to others. It must be *for me* as well as for us and for them. So in order to understand fully the research process we must have some view of the personal development process, and it is to this we turn next.

Personal development

We will explore the notion of personal development from three interrelated

perspectives: firstly, from an existential perspective as the here-and-now struggle with one's being-in-the-world; secondly, from a psychodynamic perspective which views current patterns of experience and behaviour as rooted in unresolved distress from earlier (often childhood) experiences; and thirdly, from a transpersonal perspective which views individual experience as a reflection of archetypal patterns of the collective unconscious.

From the existential perspective we take as our prime concern the individual's current being-in-the-world. Sartre asserted that 'Existence precedes essence': an individual's being is affirmed by and arises out of his or her choices, so that in the extreme, we are our choices. A more moderate existential position asserts:

There is no such thing as truth or reality for a living human being except as he participates in it, is conscious of it, has some relationship to it. (May, 1961)

Existentially, we view individuals as 'thrown' into the world, confronted with a set of issues – problems or life opportunities – with which they have to deal and creating their life through the choices they make in the face of these issues. A central existentialist concern is the relation of being to non-being: the individual's sense of being is enhanced by the courage of his or her choice-making in the face of a world which is in the end unknowable and unpredictable, while non-being is a consequence of avoiding such choices.

So people come to research with their life issues, with the opportunities offered to them by their gender, class, age, race, employment status, and so on; with the need to deal with relationships in various states of development and decay; and confronted by birth, death, and illness. Often they come to the university as a kind of retreat, with a need to take stock and make sense of their life and experience so far.

Life can be seen as a series of commitments to certain ways of being. We make a choice, and live out that choice more or less completely. Yet there comes a time when we turn *against* the old ways of being, when our existing life pattern seems inadequate, when we need to affirm and develop other, neglected sides of our being, and make new choices. Levinson (1978) sees life as moving through seasons, consisting of 'a series of alternating stable (structure-building) and transitional (structure-changing) periods'. It is often these tasks and choices of transition that people bring to a research project.

A psychodynamic perspective complements the existential by pointing out that many of the limitations on being here-and-now have their roots in childhood experience:

The theory here is that people in our sort of society carry around a good deal of unresolved distress – grief, fear, anger – from past experience, especially from the very beginnings of life and from childhood; and that there is a tendency for this to be projected out unwarily into all sorts of present situations, distorting perception of a situation and/or behaviour within it . . .

Let's look a bit more closely at how this distortion process might work. If as a child I want to express my real nature, my true self, and this urge is repeatedly interrupted and interfered with, I feel the distress of grief, fear and anger. If I am also constrained to suppress these valid distress feelings, then I am conditioned to become false to my real self – and to erect a false and alienated self with which I identify. I then become addicted to projecting on to the world the anxiety of my denied distress, seeing the world as a negative, threatening place which therefore reinforces

my addiction to my false and alienated self. I am stuck in the vicious circle . . .
(Heron, 1982)

From this kind of view of individual psychological development, we argue that researchers often choose (consciously or unconsciously) research topics which will restimulate old patterns of distress. Just as we pick at old wounds and worry at hurts in a physical sense, so we are also unable to leave alone our psychological hurts; we are not content with our distorted experience and behaviour. Many theorists of human development have suggested that human beings have a natural tendency or drive toward full realization of the self; we suggest that the researcher often moves into the anxiety of old distress in the choice of research topic and of process, and that this is (intentionally or unintentionally) a bid for personal development.

When this happens, the enquiry process obviously offers an important opportunity to move through and beyond old limiting patterns. Unfortunately, as Devereaux (1967) has pointed out, the usual response to the restimulated anxiety is defensive, so that we project our anxiety out on to the research situation, thus distorting our perspective in a way similar to the effect of countertransference in psychotherapy. Maslow (1966) and Griffin (1978) have shown how this defensive attitude pervades science. Yet this does not have to be so: if researchers are committed to the pursuit of rigorous critical subjectivity, if they are prepared and able to use their subjectivity as part of the enquiry process, if they have the skills and support to manage and transcend this restimulated distress, the response can be creative and developmental. It can be, 'That's exciting!'

All enquirers need to explore how distress and psychological defences that they are unaware of distort their enquiry. Some systematic method is needed which is powerful enough to reach into the unconscious, draw the distress into awareness and either resolve it or allow it creative expression. Devereaux (1967) suggested that the researcher should undergo psychoanalysis; our own preferred approach is co-counselling (Jackins, 1965; Heron, 1973) which is a method of reciprocal support through which each person, working as client in a pair relationship, can explore the ways in which his or her defences are being caught up with the research thinking and action:

Keeping some attention in the place of the aware adult in present time, the client in co-counselling reaches down into the hidden places of the hurt child, honours and experiences the pain, and releases it . . . This is the healing of hidden memories, a reintegration of the occluded past.
(Heron, 1977)

Hawkins (1986) has explored in detail how psychodrama can be similarly used. We have also borrowed on occasion from gestalt therapy (Perls *et al.*, 1951), subpersonalities work (Ferrucci, 1982), and art and dance therapy.

These processes not only contribute to the ab-reaction of distress patterns, they offer also a fundamental stretching of human capabilities: our enormous human capacities for love, for understanding, and for creative action and choice confront a world in which much appears unloving, meaningless and incomprehensible, and many relations are over-controlled. We then experience the existential demand for choice, for commitment, for 'response-ability': we can respond

fully – authentically and passionately – to the demands our life places upon us, or choose a more constrained and limited existence. Enquiry in this sense is not a retreat into an ivory tower, but a way of being. To borrow Torbert's phrase, a person must 'undergo a to-him unimaginable scale of self-development' (1981) to fully engage in human enquiry.

A third perspective through which we can view human development is the transpersonal. Here we see the life process as a movement up through levels of consciousness – through consciousness of body, emotions, and mind, the emergence of ego and personality, to the development of intuition and the discovery of the self. As Maslow (1968), among others, pointed out, the discovery of the self in the peak experience is also a realization of the unity of all things; and so the experience of the self is also an experience of the collective.

The self may be approached through the imaginal world (Hillman, 1975; Avens, 1980); it may be seen as a reflection of different archetypal patterns – 'primordial psychic processes transformed into images, where consciousness can grasp them' (Hampden-Turner, 1981). Imaginal work 'eschews causal connections', which it sees as 'literalisms which may trap the psyche' (Hillman, 1985). Rather, it works through multiple imaginal perspectives, different matrices, metaphors and myths to view, deepen and interconnect. As Hillman (1975) says, the task of imaginal psychology is soul-making.

It is important to honour this way of working and to be open to a variety of patterns through which imaginal knowing can emerge and take shape. We might use the I Ching, the Tarot, astrology, myths, stories of gods and goddesses, fairy tales, and so on. Much of the enquiry with which we have been associated has raised issues of masculinity and femininity: stories such as *The Descent to the Goddess* (Perera, 1981), *Eros and Psyche*, *The Grail Myth* (Johnson, 1974), and Whitmont's (1983) four images of the feminine principle have been helpful and enriching.

Among the images of the self archetype, which may also be seen as expressing different visions of enquiry, are:

The hero-king – expression of the will to power.

The priest-healer – expression of the will to expand consciousness, to love, to heal.

The philosopher-metaphysician – expression of the will to know.

The scientist – expression of the will to truth.

The magician – expression of the will to manifest.

The idealist – expression of the will to perfection (both saint and inquisitor).

The artist – expression of the will to harmony and the creation of beauty.

Thus from this perspective we can see the enquiry process as part of the discovery and realization of the self in one of its archetypal forms, and as such is an expression of the collective unconscious. The task then becomes that of exploring the images of the archetype arising in the researcher's unconscious – for example, in dreams and fantasy – and active imagination (Hannah, 1981), and manifesting them through the enquiry process. The importance of the transpersonal process lies not in the 'correctness' of its imagery, but in the challenge it throws out to the materialistic and rational world in which we live.

It draws our attention to the unconscious as the essential source of our creativity and to the reality of our imagination.

Thus a transpersonal view offers the possibility of integrating a knowing from psyche or soul with our knowing from intellect and experience (Reason and Hawkins, 1983). As Blake says:

But to the man of Imagination
Nature is Imagination itself.
AS MAN IS, SO HE SEES.

Illustrations of personal development through enquiry

We now offer four examples of the place of personal development in enquiry, each of which illustrates one or several of the three perspectives mentioned above. These examples have been gathered in collaboration with our research students, who are at different stages of the research process, and again illustrate the three audiences of enquiry. They are *for me* to the extent that they help all the students to understand and deepen their own life process. They are *for us* in that they forward our practice of research and research supervision. They are *for them* in the sense that they intend to speak out to, and seek to influence, practice in a wider academic community. (Gill Robertson's chapter in this volume provides another example of this kind of learning.)

Anne

I had been encouraged to take a secondment previously, but I hadn't had a burning issue to work on. One came from Union casework, seeing other people's perceptions of what was happening to them in their work. There were repeated problems for women, who all identified their problems as being with their superior (who was a man) and saw themselves as failing. After helping 30 people through similar problems I realized that their problem was mine, a personal problem, and that the problem was the system. I spent a lot of time trying to persuade these women that they weren't personal failures, they weren't ruining their careers because they weren't doing the right thing, but that the system was constructed in a way that didn't allow for their development. So I wanted to look at why that was.

It was at a right moment because it also fitted with the personal question of myself and developing feminist ideas. I realize now that I had been quite a convert to the system. I believed that if I worked hard and did my best obviously my wonderful qualities would be recognized, and I would advance automatically along. And that was the way I wanted to go. But I had started to question the system: it seemed to do things that I didn't like to people who were taking senior positions in schools. I questioned personally whether I wanted to pursue a career in education, whether education was worth having a career in, or whether I wanted to try to make waves. And it was all getting quite tangled with personal pressures, so the idea of taking a bit of time to think seemed useful.

Doing research has thrown up a lot that has added to the original issues. These ideas are getting confused again at the moment. They seem to be moving

onwards so fast, making me question things to such an extent that I do occasionally panic and pull back. The questioning of relationships in work and in my personal life seems so intertwined that it's quite threatening, quite hard to face.

For example, although I'm researching from a developing feminist perspective, I'm very anxious to do that alongside men. I don't want to take a women-only view. That also keys in with reluctance to let go of dependence on the man in my life. Lots of the answers, lots of the things that theoretically I'm considering are ones that I'm reluctant to apply to my personal life – such as the idea of doing your own thing. Being independent has been one of the key issues of difficulty between John and myself, and we really didn't handle it well back home.

This year has involved so much personal growth that I feel I should have done by the age of 21 (and I'm 34). I've got a whole lot of catching up to do, and that's painful because it makes me realize that a lot of difficulties are personal, personal to me in that I've got to go through them. But I'm also very anxious to keep a hold of my idea of a group or system approach, so that I don't run off and do my individual thing. I still have this commitment to doing something which is for others as well, that will have an effect.

As all this happens to me I feel that I am teetering on the edge of various social and ideological groups, not really belonging anywhere very clearly, feeling alone. And because all this questioning leaves one very exposed it's very difficult to proceed with a calm, rational research orientation when there is so much awareness of personal feelings and bias. The one thing I've managed to keep hold of is that I don't see this as wrong. It is a necessary process to go through, but at the same time it's pretty disabling, at least for spells.

All these questions were there before, but they have always been very suppressed. Now it comes too close. For years it's come close on all sorts of issues and I've allowed myself to be diverted to the more immediately obvious next thing to do – there has always been a demand that has not allowed me to explore.

I suppose at some deep level I've learned not to pay attention to my own needs. I learned it where everybody does, in the family. I'm fairly new to raising these sorts of issues. I've been a person who has been very much in control. I've been quite resistant to exploring, because I equated exploring to people being off their heads and out of control. I've come to realize that there's a whole area of me that I've not explored and need to explore before I progress any further as a person. That progression as a person affects my progression as a researcher and my ability to recognize and facilitate similar explorations in other people. That's where I am now.

Marsba

It was important for me to leave the company I was in because of some personal feedback that I got. I learned that I had behaved in ways that I didn't think I ever would. This feedback didn't match my self-concept; it really jarred me. What was I doing in an organization where I was having to be another person from who I felt I was?

I thought of myself as a very participatory manager. But the feedback was

that my subordinates didn't feel cared about and felt I was dismissive. I realize I had become pretty much like my boss, and I was scared to death of challenging her. In my next job I went out of my way to be nice to subordinates. I didn't want it to happen again. So again I wasn't who I thought I was.

When I came here to start research I was positive I wanted to work on feedback, on whether people dismissed it or did use it to change. Then I got into circle dance. This got me to look at circles and wholes. I felt OK being part of the circle: I could be a part of something that was all working to learn the same dance; it was empowering. But when I was in an organization and trying to work to the same goal there was a different feeling about how I chose to fit in: I started seeing that it wasn't about feedback but about integration, fitting in and giving up part of myself. And when I started thinking in those terms I started thinking about my relationships with men.

In America my sense of losing myself was happening in the organization and also on a personal level in my relationship with Jim. I stopped going out and doing things, I was sitting around waiting for him. And I don't see me as a person who waits. And when I come to England I get myself into another relationship where for a while I find myself waiting. I seem to let go of some sort of positive image of me in the course of a relationship. So this is a life issue for me, about how I can lose myself in a relationship if I don't stay aware of my boundaries.

It also occurs to me that all I've done is substitute the way I lose myself in an organization for the way I lose myself in the research. It's about doing something I don't want to do, a sense that when I don't have the energy to do it that I really ought to have the energy. Isn't that what was happening in the organization? I think I am less interested in my research than you want me to be, and I think if I had admitted it I was less interested in my work than my boss wanted me to be. There was a feeling that I could never put in enough time to satisfy her; and to some extent, in the research, whatever I do it won't be good enough for you two either. That's the connection, 'O my God, all I've done is transplant my issues from one continent to another!'

It may be connected with being the only child, the only baby, in a family of adults. My parents had me late in life, and my sister was already grown and gone. I was the only child around trying to fit into an adult world, always wanting to grow up faster and faster because I could never catch up with all these adults that were around. So maybe in some sense I lost my childhood? For the last two years I've felt like I've had a great deal of space for me, to re-establish who I am for me, to relearn that in lots of different ways.

I seem to keep sticking myself in situations where I need to integrate. It's a skill that I have, being able to fit in with all kinds of people in different places. In one sense I like that, it's a really good skill to have, and in another sense I think it feeds right into how I lose myself. Being able to fit in is fine, but when it gets taken to its extreme it becomes a fault.

Elisabeth

What I value most about my research is that I've created little dreams: it's about

much more than the here-and-now, it's about social imagination or the imaginal in general. So through my exploration of traditional literature, I've tested myself against a more acknowledged way of doing research, but I've also delved into philosophy, religion and different aspects that are not acknowledged to be research.

It's been about something that makes me cringe a bit, and yet I've dealt with it. It was quite a big issue for me, the spiritual side of human beings. Coming from my education, my rejection of a certain way of being presented with religion, I needed to find a model that could express spirituality of human beings. There is a side of spirituality which, for me, is completely different from all accepted religions. There is much more to human beings than consciousness, and the ego and all these different notions that help you deal with the world.

Beyond that there is the soul, the spiritual, the imaginal, the archetypal which expresses another side of our humanity. It's very difficult to research into because there are no criteria for what is valid in this type of research, except for going through the process oneself.

I got into these issues through studying the female, the feminine. Rather than just review the literature I had to assess what it meant to me, challenging myself to find out what my own experience of being female was all about. I discovered enormous resistance to certain aspects of the female which I had denied myself, being brought up in a very strong male culture. I used to think that it was great that I had been educated like a man, but now I'm not sure that it's such a good thing. There are lots of areas and potentials which I discovered through researching into the female which I had sort of resisted as being . . . soft, and these started to make sense and enrich what I was reading and writing about.

This process of discovery requires surrendering to the spiritual aspect of the female principle. It was an experience of freedom, a realization that everything I'd done had been determined by myself, that I could liberate myself from all the limitations I put on myself. And the feminine principle, which is all-encompassing and chaotic and rich and fertile, has liberated me from all these restrictions of experience.

I can't describe a process which has essentially been emotional, irrational; it's very difficult to put into words that are immediately going to make sense. It's just, I suppose, a peak experience, suddenly realizing. A surrender, and yet at the same time, giving up a certain passivity, because thinking that the limitations you find in your life are created by yourself allows you to take charge of all these aspects, as opposed to thinking that you are influenced by your past, which I also believe, but yet you can go beyond that.

The experience was very simple. One night I was thinking on my own, and all of a sudden it just dawned on me. I wasn't in an especially beautiful place, just sitting at home, not even working, just allowing my mind to wander freely, and all of a sudden I had this great big 'Wow!' experience: I am free, I can be in charge. It was as simple and as difficult as that.

The peak experience emerged from struggles, from long quite depressing struggles. And yet there was this process of surrendering; I couldn't resist any longer, I had to let go and see what happened. And that was very rewarding, to discover that there was something very freeing behind it instead of something

very chaotic and dark and frightening.

For a long time I got bogged down with the idea that there wasn't much difference between men and women. Then I moved on to believe that there are differences, and explored how I could ground them. There is a difference in experience, but that is not exactly what I'm talking about. Now I see a difference between the masculine and the feminine as archetypes.

One of my struggles has been communicating. Now, even if I don't know how to express what I'm saying, I know I've got things to say and I'm going to say them, even if it's not presented in the best way. Also, I used to think that I was too young to explore and express these aspects of Being. I've been reading about Zen Buddhism and now I'm suspicious of Western culture's linear notion of time, and of maturity that comes in later life. I reckon I can say the things I have to say now, at 25, rather than thinking they will be so much more refined when I've lived and experienced another 40 years.

Peter

I think most PhDs are going to start with the existential choice, like my dilemma of not being caught in an action mode and wanting to move into a reflective mode. That goes all the way through my research, my internal dialogue has always ended up between the acting me and the reflecting me. If you pursue an existential struggle it is bound to take you back into its own pathology, into the psychodynamic issues. Why I am a compulsive do-er has to be addressed as part of the research.

But my experience is that you get to a point where the psychodynamic stops and the transpersonal begins. In terms of phenomenology I have to develop a transcendental ego which will get a perspective on my ego-coming-to-know. One has to posit a notion that there is a transcendental ego, or in Jungian terms a Self that can become aware of persona and ego. Paul Ricoeur doubts whether you can actually do phenomenology without some sort of spiritual perspective and discipline. Otherwise you get caught up in some circularity of ego looking at ego looking at ego.

There was a time where I started thinking I was going crazy. This was a point when my whole dissertation was at risk because I didn't have a known vantage point from which to view things. What I had to hold on to was images, like Heidegger's notion of getting to a clearing. But to get to the clearing you have to actually go through the wood, you have to enter a realm of not knowing, of it not being possible to know. So the questions arose, 'What's the point of doing a PhD?' and, 'Is doing a PhD so caught up with the ego and rational knowing that it is something that has got to be left behind?'

So I've got to look at the whole nature of my being. If I go for my existential dilemma, if I really really push it, I've got to look at all the pathology that's driving it. I look at myself, how I learned in the past, I get insight about myself. But that's looking at me as an object: there is a point at which insight is not enough, so that the me that's looking and the me that it's looking at are trapped within myself, and that dichotomy of self studying self is broken. That was the experience of the Sufi Khankah. I got so disturbed and shaken up by the

experiences there that there was no way I could carry on in a mode of being a researcher in my own life. To a certain extent I had been able to use being a researcher as a defence against experience – I do that in life anyway, I disassociate through insight about my own life. The Sufi community made impossible that mode of being. There was no safe ground from which to watch, and at that point there was a breaking down of my internal self doing research on self.

I'm trying to catch how that makes a difference to the way I do research . . . Having gone through that experience and written about it, I found something cleared in me. After that the PhD was no longer such a struggle at a deep level: it was still difficult, but the whole anxiety of having been caught somewhere and of having to prove something, somehow eased. I think it was that I was choosing to do the PhD from a different place. Quite fundamentally. This is paradoxical, because while that experience broke down my pattern of disassociation, I found I could be more disassociated from the thesis. I could say, 'This is a task that has to be done; it is no longer something with which my identity is tied up.' I could say, 'Yes, this part of me needs to get it done, and I can be OK about that.' Where I am locating myself is slightly different.

I feel some anxiety about the viva, but I also find it quite humorous. I don't feel my whole being is on the line. Yes, it would be bloody annoying if I had to rewrite a couple of chapters – like getting a parking ticket. But I don't really feel an enormous anxiety about it.

The supervision process

How can we as research supervisors help and respond to these developmental processes? Typically, research supervisors adopt one or more of several different stances towards the student. They can be the experienced guide or mentor who has seen the process many times and can give advice; they may be expert in the topic area, someone whose ideas need to be referred to; or they may be the students' friend, or their advocate in the wider system of the university and research community. Our interest here is in the supervisor as process facilitator, and it is this we will elaborate on in this section.

Of course, we are very aware of the many negative and degenerate images of supervision: there is neglect and abdication, where the supervisor is simply unavailable physically, intellectually and emotionally; there are the expert-turned-tyrants, who use students as research fodder to do their own projects, or who bully the student to do research in a particular way. And there are the fools, who are simply incompetent but are supervising research because the system demands it of them. These situations sadden us: the supervisors fail to grasp the possibilities of research as an educative process in the fullest sense of that term.

If we turn to explore the stance of supervisors as process facilitators, we can see that they need to take a particular attitude. Rather than focus on the content of the research, they must pay most attention to the student's intellectual and emotional process: honouring of process is important and significant in its own right, whatever the supervisor actually does. This means following

the 'how' of enquiry, rather than the 'what' or the 'why'. It means not being too worried about conclusions, staying with 'here-and-now' events, feelings and meanings. It means trusting that good outcomes will emerge from healthy process. Thus supervision has similarities with the process of psychotherapy, in which the therapist deals with the ways in which clients approach the issues in their lives, rather than concentrating on the issues themselves. Both student and supervisor may attend to process, particularly as the relationship develops. In this chapter we are concentrating more on the role of the supervisor.

In order to be able to work effectively in this fashion, the supervisor needs to be alert to subtle nuances of behaviour, shifts in attitude, feelings of not being really sure what is going on and so on. This of course calls for a skill in attending to process beyond that normal in academic circles. It also helps to have available a number of intervention tactics, and to have the ability to move between them. We find Heron's (1977) six-category intervention analysis helpful in mapping a range of possible approaches. The categories are: prescriptive, informative, confronting, cathartic, catalytic and supportive. All of these can be used creatively or degeneratively; here we will explore some possible uses in the research supervision context:

Prescriptive interventions aim to give advice and direction. We have found that at times we have chosen to instruct a student as to what to read or write or how to deal with a certain problem. Such interventions may also be critical and evaluative, such as when we have read and commented on drafts of dissertations. Prescriptive interventions may degenerate into a 'takeover' of the enquiry project, so that the supervisor attempts to conduct the research through the student, leaving no space to exercise his or her own initiative.

Informative interventions are about giving information, advice and leads on possible ideas, from the supervisor's own experience. This will be very necessary at certain stages in the enquiry, but can degenerate into compulsive advice giving which leaves the student with no room to develop his or her own ideas. Informative interventions can also involve making an interpretative comment on the student's process as seen by the supervisor, for example by pointing to an issue of personal process. This may helpfully alert both parties to explore what is going on, but clearly can degenerate into attempting to turn the supervision into amateur psychotherapy.

Confronting interventions directly challenge the student with the nature of their processes: they may draw attention to restricted intellectual frameworks, emotional attitudes or work patterns; to issues within the relationship; or to positive qualities and attributes which the student is not seeing. Often we have felt the need to challenge limited and limiting definitions of the research topic or approach, which seems more concerned to protect students than expose them to the chaos of creative enquiry. And we have confronted students who persist in ignoring their own competencies. But confronting interventions can degenerate so that the supervisor is experienced as the enemy, blocking the student's own search for expression.

Cathartic interventions are those which speak to the emotional undercurrent in the enquiry and release tension: they prompt the expression of sadness, anger or fear, and help release the student's emotional intelligence. Often they involve

intense feelings and so challenge the supervisor's own emotional competence. Cathartic interventions can degenerate by the supervisor attempting to go too deep too quickly; raising issues which neither is competent to deal with in that forum; or raising issues and quickly shutting down, leaving the student with the unresolved and unexpressed emotional debris.

Catalytic, or structuring, interventions provide a framework within which an issue can be addressed. The supervisor might ask the student to write a piece in a particular form, that form being chosen to address an underlying dilemma. Students who appear over-concerned with what they don't know and about how to write perfectly have been asked to write what they do know about a topic area, or to produce a piece which is labelled 'draft'. 'Two chair' techniques have been borrowed from gestalt therapy, where the student is invited to dialogue in the supervision session between apparently conflicting needs in relation to the research. Structuring interventions degenerate when they are used to protect both supervisor and student from those chaotic aspects of enquiry from which creativity often springs.

Supportive interventions are those which contain and provide a boundary for the research process; overall, they assure the student of the supervisor's care and attention, but more specifically may involve active support. Examples of this are encouraging a student to accept and live with the depression of being stuck; giving time and permission for a direction a student is taking which seems tangential to the main research thrust; being alongside and empathizing at times of anxiety, so that the student can work constructively on the issues rather than being swamped by them; and so on. In our work an important supportive strategy has been to form and help develop an effective and caring enquiry group of students and staff. On the other hand, supportive interventions can degenerate into a 'cotton-wool' culture in which there is no challenge, and difficult issues are avoided.

A key skill in all this is knowing when and how to move from one kind of intervention to another. Confronting interventions, if effective, often need to be followed by support; structures may be useful a while, and must then be left behind; tears may need to be followed by constructive problem solving. If the need for supportive interventions continues too long, this may indicate that student and supervisor are colluding to avoid issues which require confrontation. And it is important to know the limits of the supervisor's role, what can appropriately be worked through within the research context, and what may need addressing in a more overtly psychotherapeutic relationship.

We would note in passing that while these process issues are central to supervision, they do at times clash with the demands of the academic system in two major ways. Firstly, timescales may be out of joint so that students require more time to explore an issue for themselves than the academic system allows. Secondly, there are the issues of standards: not only the gross one of whether the work is good enough for a research degree, but also by what standards a personal product should be judged, and how science, art and personal growth should be differentiated.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored an aspect of research which is neglected in traditional accounts and yet, for us, is at the heart of creative enquiry. Neglecting issues of personal development may block our ability to move through the 'not knowing' which typically initiates enquiry into a knowing which is both grounded in personal experience and relevant to wider communities of action and knowing. We invite readers, whether researchers or research supervisors, to open up this dimension of enquiry in their own work.

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