Relational Research Supervision for Doctoral Psychotherapy Research

- A Guide for Supervisors and Supervisees

Metanoia Institute

UK Council for Psychotherapy

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Research Supervision for Doctoral Psychotherapy Research

Background

Research supervision is a professional area that despite being described as 'the most important determinant' of postgraduate degree completion (Roach, Christensen & Rieger, 2018), lacks guidelines or benchmarks (Erikson, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Lee, 2018)

Aims of this Guide

This Research Supervision Guide is aimed at research supervisors and supervisees on therapy related doctoral research programmes. It asks what makes constructive versus non-constructive research supervision on doctoral programmes for therapists? And what might supervisors learn from supervisees' experiences of supervision, and vice versa? This Guide includes research from our UKCP[1] funded study into the experience of research supervision on PhD and professional programmes for psychotherapists and counselling psychologists. It also refers to regulations for doctoral degrees, includes references to ongoing research and policy documents in order to stimulate discussions and supports the collaborative development of good practice for therapy related research supervision.

Guide Overview

The combined importance and complexity of research supervision is seldom discussed. Our aim with this Guide has been to stimulate discussions, trigger ideas and prompt further research into the constructive supervision process.

The Guide is intended for training purposes but also as a tool for supervisors and supervisees to jointly develop strategies and workplans. It includes illustrative examples, literature reviews and our own primary research presented to both support your own optimal supervisory experience and to encourage you to improve and develop it for others. For supervisors, we hope to stimulate thinking around being a 'good enough supervisor'. What might you need to support others? What feels unclear, and what might inspire and build further on your strengths? For supervisees, we aim to nurture a more confident approach to the inevitably 'transformative learning experience' of doctoral learning.

The Guide is divided across four different sections. Each section includes 'over to you' boxes with activities, reading, and discussion or reflection points to help you incorporate your input in to a 'constructive' supervision 'model'.

A theme throughout the Guide is writing, from encouraging reflective and reflexive writing to advice on disseminating research in an academic context. The Guide aims to support and provide links to personal as well as academical writing.

Finally, the Guide also offers links to seminars in three areas -namely researcher support, diversity and innovative methodology. This link will take you to these seminars. You will be reminded in the Guide. https://metanoia.ac.uk/researchacademy22/

[1]For more information about the UK Council for Psychotherapy and its support of research go to https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/policy-and-research/research/

This research was produced with the support of funding from UKCP. The research represents the views of the original creators and does not necessarily represent the view of UKCP.

Positioning Ourselves in the Study

Metanoia Institute was founded in the 1983 and was one of the first organisations in the UK to provide humanistically-oriented professional counselling and psychotherapy training programmes. It offers a wide range of training in counselling, psychotherapy, and counselling psychology, including eleven Master's programmes and four doctoral programmes, all of which are validated by Middlesex University.

Under the umbrella of the Metanoia research group called Therapists as Research Practitioners (TRP) we have explored obstacles and opportunities for research from the perspectives of counsellors, psychotherapists and counselling psychologists (Bager-Charleson, McBeath & du Plock 2019, McBeath, Bager-Charleson & Abarbanel 2019, Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath, 2018). The TRP group aims to enhance research training for counsellors, psychotherapists and counselling psychologists by providing learning and professional development events. This study has, as mentioned, been funded by the UKCP (UK Council for Psychotherapy) to explore the experience of 'good' supervision during doctoral research from the perspective of both supervisors and supervisees.

Section 1. Doing Doctoral Research

A research degree differs from programmes with a set syllabus such as a Bachelor's degree or a taught Master's degree. The QAA (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2011, 2020) provides a general guide for current and prospective doctoral candidates in which the difference between doctorate studies and other degrees is highlighted:

> Doctoral candidates all share the experience of creating knowledge through the practice of independent research and scholarship. This creation of new knowledge or of applying existing knowledge in a new way is not expected in the same way at undergraduate or taught postgraduate level. Doctoral candidates operate at a level of independence and self-direction that would not be expected of an undergraduate or taught postgraduate student (QAA, 2011, p.4)

Quality Codes and Learning Descriptors for Higher Education

The traditional PhD has been accompanied by new types of doctorates 'to accommodate the needs of increasingly diverse professions employing doctoral graduates' (QAA 2020, p.3). The QAA (2020, p.5) specify that 'all doctoral graduates' are expected to:

- 'search for, discover, access, retrieve, sift, interpret, analyse, evaluate, manage' and communicate the 'ever-increasing volume' of knowledge from different of sources
- apply critical thinking to problems for innovative solutions and new knowledge
- plan, select, manage and justify methodological processes
- exercise professional and ethical standards in research
- engage in research with impact and communicate that to diverse audiences, including the public
- build relationships with peers, senior colleagues, students and stakeholders with 'sensitivity to equality, diversity and cultural issues'.

Case Study

One of our earlier studies (Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath, 2019) highlighted some of the embodied and emotional experiences of research. One therapist ('Peter') contributed with free associative writing, describing feeling an overwhelming 'shame' during his research when faced with the reality of 'not knowing' as his old understandings failed to make sense.

At first, I read and read and read [thinking] how could I ever retrieve, synthesise, analyse this mass of thinking? I didn't want to tell anyone, I felt ashamed. (Peter)

He described having palpitations, sleeplessness and panic attacks during this level of stress.

an incredible tightness across my chest and a heavy 'band like' feeling across my forehead. I was sat in my study, with hundreds of quotes/cards strewn across the floor [...] I remember groaning out loud at the prospect – as though I was involved in heavy physical labour

'Peter' reflected on his responses in the context of transformative learning, where letting go of previous frameworks involved periods of disorientation followed by self-examination. He referred to learning to live with uncertainty and possibility as a reward and benefit of the research:

The palpitations, amazingly and much to my relief [...] stopped and have never returned. For me, they attest to the reality that undertaking research into areas which are deeply meaningful and important to us as people, not just as academics, lays us open to challenge and struggle at very deep levels. To my mind, they represent an existential struggle with fundamental concepts or building-blocks of what it means to be human; a far-from-easy letting go of aspects of life which have felt like certainties and an opening up to anxiety and learning to live with it without the need to simply resolve it ('Peter')

Glass Ceiling For Therapists?

'Moira' practised in the charity sector with a focus on sexual abuse and referred to a sense of a glass ceiling in the counselling profession. Based on being a black female counsellor, experienced as incompatible to a research persona, she refers to:

a glass ceiling [...] for me as a woman, who identifies as being Black [in] the world of research...with all these well-spoken, articulate, bright people.

This echoed, worryingly, with other participants representing Black, Asian and Ethnic minorities. 'Almas' (Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2021) said:

Research and learning... I need it like breathing, to feel alive. That's how we learn about our clients, our work. When I came to this country, I continued to look for this childhood passion for learning and escape from my lack of identity. Learning was the only solution for me. Helping as a counsellor fitted in with this, everyone accepts that. But researching is different [it's more common for men], they say – why do you always study?

Researching for a doctoral degree can be very exciting. The opportunity to contribute to new knowledge is both exhilarating and challenging, it pushes past definition boundaries and there are moments when the almost endless opportunities can overwhelm. On UK doctorates the QAA guidance provides a helpful, anchoring framework for the research process.

The QAA guide for doctoral candidates can be accessed here: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/qaa-publishes-new-advice-on-doctoral-standards-for-research-students-and-supervisors

The emphasis on 'generating new knowledge' requires a curious mix of autonomy, self-directed learning and adherence to evidence, criticality, and certain systematic processes. This will be expanded upon in the findings from our study (Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2021, in press).
It is worth considering the official frameworks for doctoral assessments. In this Guide we will focus on European conditions, and those in the UK in particular.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education

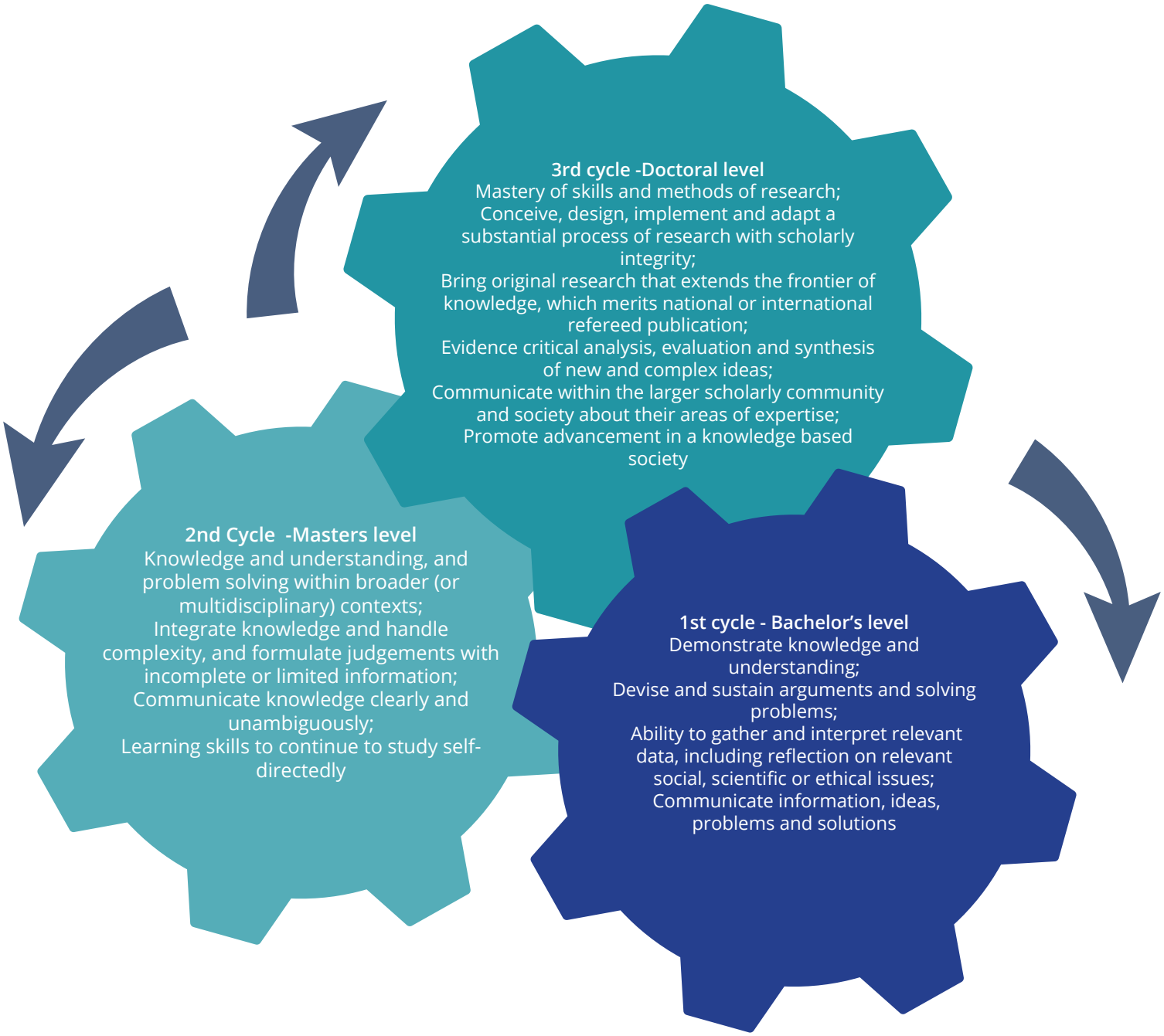
QAA reviews all UK degree awarding bodies, using the FHEQ or FQHEIS as a reference point in discharging their degree awarding powers. The FHEQ has five framework levels numbered 4-8, three of which are undergraduate and two are postgraduate. A doctoral degree within the UK is often assessed along descriptors equivalent to 'Level 8' on the FHEQ (Level 12 on the FQHEIS). This means that the student should demonstrate:[2]

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
- the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

[2]QAA= The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
UKCP = UK Council for Psychotherapy
FHEQ = Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies and FQHEIS = Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland
'Cycles Sequential Levels' is a term identified by the 'Bologna process' for all European higher education qualifications.

The 'levels' are, in turn, typically intended to connect with each other, so that level 8 builds on learning from levels 7 and 6 etc. UK frameworks for higher education qualifications are themselves required to meet the expectations of the Bologna Declaration to align with a Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). These expectations cover three cycles. The first cycle involves undergraduate qualifications like bachelor's degrees, the second and third cycles cover postgraduate qualifications like master's degrees and doctoral degrees. A Doctorate is the third-level higher education award, referring to a 'third cycle' in the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, as summed up in figure 1:

Figure 1. Cycles of Learning, Adapted from the Bologna Working Group (2005)



Assessment criteria can be reassuring to return to when one is in a state of confusion. They should, as stated by QAA (2018, 2020) on the one hand be 'clearly available to research students' and, on the other hand 'vary to reflect differences by discipline'. Appendix 1 includes an example of how 'level 8' or 'third cycle' doctoral learning outcomes can be translated into modules on a psychotherapy doctorate.

Over to You

Please go to Appendix 1 and consider how the level 7 and level 8 descriptors have been translated in to psychotherapeutic contexts in this example.

- How does your training institute specify doctoral learning outcomes? Where are they communicated? Do they differ much from the above? if so, how?
- How might the learning descriptors typically be communicated with examiners and assessors? To what extent are you, as a supervisor or supervisee familiar with these requirements?

Research Supervision

For most doctoral students, research supervision is the main point of support. The QAA (2018, p. 12) describes the supervisory relationship as fundamental:

- The supervisor is fundamental to the support and development of the doctoral candidate. The candidate's relationship with their supervisory team is key to successful completion of a research degree programme.

QAA emphasises however 'the diverse needs' of research students, and to how this requires a flexible, collaborative approach to the work. QAA (2018, p.5) states for instance that:

- Research students and supervisors share the responsibility for ensuring that regular and frequent contact is maintained. The nature and frequency of contact between research student and supervisor varies depending on the discipline, duration of the programme, approaches to the research, and the amount of support needed by the research student, but should adhere to the minimum expectations of the provider (p.8)

The QAA further suggests that 'supervisor responsibilities may include':

- introducing the supervisee to the department.
- establishing and maintaining regular contact with the supervisee.
- contributing to the assessment of supervisee development needs.
- providing timely, constructive and effective feedback.
- monitoring overall progress.
- ensuring that the supervisee is aware of ethical principles, including those regarding intellectual property, and of research misconduct implications.
- providing pastoral support and/or refering to other sources of support.
- supporting interaction with others in the field of research.
- encouraging submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals.
- maintaining necessary supervisory expertise, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities.

Another 'guiding principle' for supervisors is CPD. QAA (2018) states that:

All supervisors (including those working in industry or professional practice) are expected to engage in professional development opportunities to equip them to select and supervise research students effectively across a range of circumstances, from initial meetings to completion (p.8)

Over to You

Supervisor Q: Which elements of the above reflect your work? What aspects might be superfluous or missing from the suggestions?

The supervisee is, in turn, expected to:

- maintain regular contact with supervisors and monitor own progression by preparing for supervision meetings, meeting deadlines and completing agreed aims.
- take responsibility for their own learning and progress and seek timely support.
- proactively pursue their own personal and professional development, including attending agreed training and development opportunities.
- raise awareness of circumstances and concerns.
- adhere to regulations relating to the degree, health and safety, intellectual property and ethical research conditions.

Both supervisors and supervisees should document the meetings.

Over to You

Supervisee Questions: What might you add to the list above?
How do you see research supervision in comparison to clinical supervision?
Preparation is often important in clinical supervision; having well thought through and clearly communicated questions is an example of transferrable supervisee skills. Self-awareness – for instance paying attention to one's own fears and defences - is another helpful asset in both types of supervisions.
Can you think of more? Discuss your expectations with your supervisee.

Section 2. Research Supervision is an Under-researched Professional Area

Our literature review highlighted that, even though research supervision is referred to as 'the most important determinant of successful and timely postgraduate degree completion' (Roach, Christensen & Rieger, 2018), it is surprisingly under-explored. The literature search began with the EBSCO portal, which led us onto key search platforms like PsychINFO, Psychology and the Behavioral Sciences Collection. Of the first 100 responses to the search term 'Research Supervision in Psychotherapy', almost 75% covered clinical supervision. Of the 28 sources that did cover research supervision, most referred to other disciplines - higher education in particular - and only two involved psychotherapy research. This prompted further, less structured searches, following a 'snowball' approach. Some of the themes were:

- Research is of critical importance
- Supervision styles vary
- Doctoral programmes vary and develop
- Relational aspects matter

Supervision is Fundamental for Progress

We found several references suggesting that poor supervision is associated with doctoral delays and non-completions (Amundsen & McAlpine, 2009; Gardner, 2009; Platow, 2011). Armstrong (2004) asserted that 'high failure rates for research dissertations in the social sciences have been partly attributed to student dissatisfaction with supervision and poor student-supervisor relationships'. A decade later, Masek (2017) reiterated that 'without a good relationship between students and the supervisor, miscommunication occurs, leading to mismatched expectations from both parties'. This view was reiterated by Roach, Christensen and Rieger (2018) who assert that '[supervision is] the most important determinant of successful and timely postgraduate degree completion'.

Fixed Style Versus Adaptivity

Some research focused on style. Armstrong (2004) explored supervisors' and supervisees' experience of their supervisor-student dyads, based on 118 dyads. The study suggested that students experienced the quality of supervision as increasing when supervisors were 'analytic' and cognitive in style.

Franke and Arvidsson (2011) approached 30 supervisors of doctoral students from different faculties. They identified two types of 'supervision structures', namely 'research practice-oriented' and 'research relation-oriented' supervision. The structures differed depending on whether the supervisor and the doctoral student participated in a common research practice and shared 'objects of research' or not.

Kleijn, Meijer, Brekelmans and Pilot (2015) emphasised the importance of 'adaptive research supervision' to meeting students' needs, in light of the goals of their different tasks. They explored the practice of 'adaptivity' by interviewing thesis supervisors about 'diagnosing student characteristics to determine students' needs with concurrent adaptive support strategies in mind'. Their findings suggested that supervisors rated 'student determination' as a particularly high and relevant competence. With respect to 'support strategies' the supervisors referred to support in terms of 'explicating' standards, quality and consequences, and as providing critical feedback and 'sympathising'.

Bruce and Stoodley (2013) approached 35 supervisors engaged in both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary research within social sciences and humanities. Their participants experienced supervision as involving:

- Promoting supervisee development
- Imparting academic expertise
- Upholding academic standards
- Promoting learning to research
- Drawing upon student expertise
- Enabling student development
- Venturing into unexplored territory
- Forming productive communities
- Contributing to society

Over to you

Supervisee Questions: What style suits you best – and why? Is there a particular mix of supervision styles you think might be beneficial for you?

Relational Depth

Others emphasised the emotional and relational aspects of supervision. Roach, Christensen and Rieger (2018) explored the 'relative value of supervisory functions', employing a 'choice-based conjoint methodology' to investigate the importance of different supervisory functions for postgraduate students. Their study involved 570 Australian postgraduate students completing 10 choice tasks with 16 attributes. The findings highlighted how the relationship between academic research supervisors and their students was 'recognised as the most important determinant of successful and timely postgraduate degree completion' but also made reference to 'resource constraints and personal capabilities of supervisors' as a reason for prioritising certain functions over others. When exploring functions for the supervisory alliance, Roach et al. (2018) suggested that there should be a combined emphasis on interpersonal aspects and psychosocial needs that should consider their three key findings:

- students valued academic integrity, constructive feedback, open communication and bonding as their most preferred supervisory attributes
- student preferences were similar regardless of background differences
- students preferred supervisors who fostered caring/supportive relationships over those who focused on instrumental functions

Over to You

Supervisee Questions: How important is relational connection and depth for you in research supervision – and why? You might have experienced distress during your research related to feeling uncertain, anxious or frustrated. How important is your relationship with your supervisior in offering support in this process? What other areas of support can you access?

Meeting Frequency

Heath's (2002) quantitative survey of 355 PhD candidates suggested that frequent meetings (or interactions between supervisor and student), sometimes taking place every two weeks, increased both student satisfaction and the likelihood of a thesis being completed in time. Taylor's (2019) study, however, highlighted the huge difference between universities in terms of frequency of supervision and number of supervisors per student.

New Types of Doctoral Programmes

Malfroy's ethnographic study examined the changing nature of doctoral supervision in programmes that explicitly link research with workplace practice. Malfroy (2005) focused on changes in supervision towards more 'collective' models of supervision and collaborative knowledge sharing. The study suggested that supervisors and students often struggled with uncertainty and confusion due to disjunction in expectations. The study also highlighted creative tensions within doctoral research, and how the relatively new territory of research programmes has opened space for more flexible processes within doctoral education that traditional dyadic supervisee-supervisor relationships may have overlooked. Fillery-Travis et al. (2017) and Fell, Haines and Flint (2011) use the concept of 'modern doctorates' to describe doctorates that focus on practice. Of relevance to our study is Lee's (2018) description of a modern doctorate as one 'where the focus is on practice' in ways that might allow research methods that other programmes do not traditionally use or accept.

Diversity

Diversity is an increasingly urgent area to address in postgraduate research. Maistry (2017), McKenna (2017) and Malan, Erwee, van Rensburg and Danaher (2012) are examples of researchers addressing how differences in culture, age, gender, race and sexual orientation are shown to 'have a secondary effect on doctoral candidates' progress and successful completion'. They stress 'the potential significance of cultural misunderstandings in the supervisory relationship' (Malan et al, 2012, pp. 11-12). Based on their findings they suggest that supervisory practices are 'instituted to ensure that cultural misunderstandings between doctoral candidates and their supervisors are avoided' (ibid).

Over to You

What is your experience of diversity in research? What role does research supervision play in this, to you?

Charura and Lago (2021) write about a 'decolonized psychotherapy practice and research' To listen to Professor Charura expanding on the theme of 'decolonization in research' please go to the seminar links in the introduction.

Disorientation, Self-doubt and Anxiety in Higher Education

There is also an increased focus on student mental health. McPherson, Punch and Graham (2017) assert that the transition into postgraduate research across disciplines is often accompanied by disorientation, self-doubt and anxiety. Thorley's (2017) research into ten Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) found that rates of mental health problems are higher in British postgraduate students than other sections of the population. Research funded by the Higher Education Funding Council (Metcalfe, Wilson & Levecque, 2018) reflected this, suggesting there is a poor understanding of the emotional and mental health of postgraduate researchers.

Additionally, Barden and Caleb (2019) noted an alarming increase in mental health problems among postgraduate students since 2018. Using an online survey, Hazell et al (2020) invited UK based Doctoral researchers (DRs) to complete a Suicide Behaviour Questionnaire-Revised and qualitatively describe their experience of suicidality and its association with their PhD studies. A total of 1,263 DRs provided data, with 40% of these participants meeting Suicide Behaviour Questionnaire Revised criteria for being at high risk of suicide. Metcalfe et al. (2018) described research supervisors as being uniquely positioned 'to notice when their postgraduate researchers slip the wrong way on that spectrum as spotting subtle signs of distress', which, in turn, requires balancing general academic support with 'knowing what is "normal" for [each] particular person' (Metcalfe et al., 2018, p. 30). Stephenson (2016) and Kleijn, Meijer, Brekelmans and Pilot (2015) resonate with this, stressing - as mentioned - the importance of 'adaptive research supervision' that can meet students' needs in light of their different goals.

Postgraduate researchers (PGRs) are however, often reported to be 'unwilling to talk about any wellbeing issues if they feel it will reflect badly on how their progress is viewed' (Metcalfe et al., 2018, p. 30). In fact, with regularity ranging from 'never' and 'at least once or twice a year' to 'every day', 58% of PGRs reported considering suspending or leaving their doctoral training programme without telling their supervisor. Metcalfe, Wilson and Levecque (2018, p.41) concluded that 'for HEIs to provide a safe working environment for PGRs that supports their wellbeing and mental health the whole sector needs a systemic culture shift'.

Meyer (2019) described stress through 'psychological transitions' linked to life stage changes such as moving or the loss of familiar faces or frameworks of understanding. Our research highlighted that stress is an almost inevitable part of the transformative learning process as it is inherent in critical evaluation and the generation of new knowledge through research. Ecclestone resonates with this, suggesting a greater openness about 'transition' as something that 'combine[s] turning points, milestones or life events with subtle, complex processes of "becoming somebody" personally, educationally and occupationally' (2009, p. 12).

Over to You

Hazell, Clio et al (2021) highlight often hidden pressures for Doctoral Researchers (DRs) To listen to Hazell and Clio expanding on the themes of mental health and areas of support for doctoral researchers please go to the seminar links in the introduction.

Synthesising Benchmarks and Shared Frameworks

Erikson (2019) reiterates that institutional guidelines for supervision remain scarce and that 'supervision would seem to be an activity in higher education that mainly takes place behind closed doors'. Her overview of literature in the field suggests that supervisors still regard their roles as ranging from that of 'coach' to 'mother'. She asserts that in the absence of 'a common theoretical frame of reference' a supervisor 'may be... a guide, adviser, co-worker, tutor, supporter, leader, organizer and/or a friend'. Although focused on health-related research in general, Erikson (2019) highlights there is added stress for mental health related researchers. She suggests a 'salutogenic' model based on collegial thinking.

Doing research supervision the salutogenic way is a matter of mutual learning processes, where all parties' knowledge and experience are different and needed, they are equally valuable for a successful research supervision. (p.1205).

The key components of this model are:

- **Ethics,** guided by a 'resource-oriented approach' to the supervision team, in terms of acceptance, mutual respect and reflection on different abilities and competencies for supervision.

- **Empowerment/sustainability t**o establish 'sustainable working conditions', including balancing power relations between all parties in the supervisory team.
- **Comprehensibility,** with clear structures for the working process.
- **Manageability,** again with clear structures for easier-to-manage processes guided by flexibility.
- **Meaningfulness** through well prepared supervisory meetings guided by a for-all relevant and agreed-upon agenda.
- **Feedback/feedforward**, with room for 'criticism without discouragement' to highlight doctoral students' strengths and ending with positive feedback.
- **Learning knowledge,** prioritising learning to teaching and allowing for formal knowledge and individual experiences to be of equal value.
- **Theoretical framework** so that supervision is theory-driven and evidence-based.

Lee (2018) offers 'a framework of five approaches' as a means of providing a 'neutral', shared language for supervision, concluding that 'whilst the literature on learning and teaching has explored a conceptual approach in some depth… there has been little similar exploration for supervision' (2008). In her later study, based on a survey and 40 interviews, Lee (2018) asserts that:

There are cultural differences and conflicts between workplace supervisors and academic supervisors… between different disciplines and conflicts between academic supervisory teams. A neutral language with which to explore these differences and how to avert conflicts is important. (p. 890)

Lee (2018) offers 'a framework of five approaches' as means of providing a 'neutral', shared language for supervision. The suggested approaches are not independent of each other, but capture different emphases and focuses:

- **Functional:** where the issue is one of project management
- **Enculturation:** where the student is encouraged to become a member of the disciplinary community
- **Critical thinking:** where the student is encouraged to question and analyse their work
- **Emancipation:** where the student is encouraged to question and develop themselves
- **Developing a quality relationship:** where the student is enthused, inspired and cared for

Resonating with Lee, Taylor (2017, 2019) calls for 'benchmarks' and offers a 'Good Supervisory Practice Framework'. He refers to numerous areas including student recruitment, regular review of 'relations between supervisors and with candidates' and more specific research project-related tasks such as:

- **Discussing** conceptions and misconceptions of research itself with candidates
- Looking at **key 'threshold' concepts** in research
- Considering issues of **academic integrity,** intellectual property rights and **co-publication**
- Advising on a **choice of topic**
- Advising on a **research proposal and plan**
- Supporting the candidate in their **choice of methodology**
- Advising on gaining **ethical approval**
- Advising on **skills development** in relation to the project
- Advising on issues arising in the course of the research

In summary, Taylor (2019) examined research supervision in ten UK HEIs, concluding that the three most common criteria for eligibility to be a supervisor were being a member of staff, undergoing an initial professional development programme and having previous experience of supervision.

Over to You

Consider the 'benchmarks' suggested by Erikson (2019), Lee (2018) and Taylor (2019) in relation to your research. What resonates most with your idea of 'constructive' research supervision? What, if anything, might be missing?

Section 3. Psychotherapists and Research

One of the few studies into research supervision in psychotherapy, that conducted by Stevens (2015, p. 41), highlighted how research supervisors experienced their role on the professional doctorate in Psychotherapy (DPsych) as involving emotional support and 'holding'. The term 'research alliance' was akin to 'a therapeutic alliance… in which both parties deliberately seek to be working alongside one another' (p.41). Charura (2019) resonated with this, and emphasised the often-underestimated emotional challenge in therapy related research.

Our own studies into the experience of counsellors, psychotherapists and counselling psychologists on both PhDs and professional doctorates (Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath, 2019; Bager-Charleson, McBeath & du Plock, 2019; McBeath, Bager-Charleson & Abarbarnel, 2019; Bager-Charleson, McBeath, du Plock & Adams, 2020) highlighted different obstacles encountered by therapy-related research supervisees. Our literature review revealed, firstly, references to a 'strained alliance' (Goldfried & Wolfe, 1996) or even a 'dichotomous relationship' (Darlington & Scott, 2002) between psychotherapy practice and research. Tasca et al. (2015) referred to a 'practice-research divide, which is widely acknowledged as a problem in psychotherapy'. Henton's (2012) study showed how therapists often characterised practice and research as 'opposing domains', suggesting the existence of what Darlington and Scott (2002) and Bondi (2016) describe as a 'researcher-practitioner split'. The former noted, for instance, how different language is used to describe psychotherapy and research. In a word-association experiment, practitioners described research as 'objective, hard, cold, scientific, factual, time-consuming, difficult, prestigious, tedious, expert', whereas practice was seen as 'subjective, busy, messy, difficult, soft, warm, pressured, flexible' (Darlington & Scott, 2002, p. 4).

Our own studies (McBeath, Bager-Charleson & Abarbanel, 2019; Bager-Charleson, McBeath & du Plock, 2019; Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath, 2018) highlighted a similar split, gap or tension between psychotherapy practice and research. The first study (Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath, 2018) produced a narrative thematic inquiry titled 'Therapists Have a Lot to Add to the Field of Research, but Many Don't Make it There' based on the findings. The study examined accredited psychotherapists on a professional doctoral programme and was based on dissertations (n=50), interviews (n=7) and research journals (n=20) across 19 cohorts and years, which gave a broad pool of data, but which was nevertheless limited to one doctoral programme. Research supervision was referred to as a crucial aspect of the turning point from negative to positive. One therapist said 'The research tapped into my fears around failing, and supervision helped me to understand and contain those feelings'.

Others referred to the value of both personal therapists and research supervisors.

> I certainly had not expected this experience when I embarked on the research and was taken completely by surprise, so I now realised that not only did I need supervision in dealing with writing a doctorate, working with challenging material, but also I needed personal therapy to separate out my issues from those of the victims.

Our study titled 'The Relationship Between Psychotherapy Practice and Research: A Mixed-Method Exploration of Practitioners' Views' (Bager-Charleson, McBeath & du Plock, 2018) included a survey (n=92) and interviews (n=9) with novice and senior therapists about their general experiences from research, across different training programmes within and outside the UK. This time the dominant narrative trajectory resembled a progressive-regressive plotline, starting positively but encountering obstacles such as lack of opportunity at work to grow as a therapist-researcher. One therapist, Jamie, said:

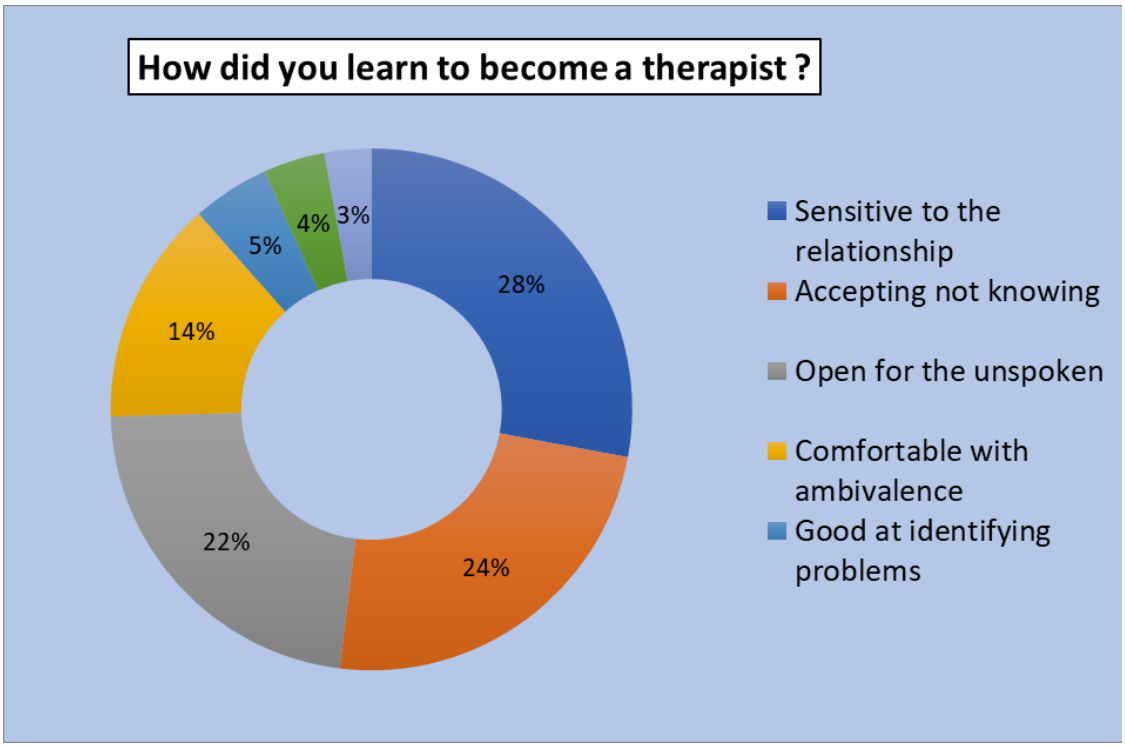
> All my colleagues are scared of research. I keep telling them that research is the process… the really exciting process about not knowing anything and then finding out. This whole thing about being curious and experimenting with ideas, and finding new knowledge… well, I find that absolutely fascinating, brilliant!

Another therapist from the NHS highlighted the obstacles to practice research:

> The scientists and researchers I work with; they know they have a career in research – you get rewarded and promoted. That kind of recognition doesn't exist in therapy.

In our mixed methods study (Bager-Charleson, McBeath and du Plock, (2018) therapists rated being 'comfortable with ambivalence', and 'open for the unspoken' and 'not knowing' as important sources of knowledge for their practice (Figure 2).

Fig 2. Types of knowledge in therapeutic practice



Several therapists expressed difficulties with linking their clinical knowledge with research. The doctoral student 'John' worked in the NHS and said:

> When I think of research I associate it with feeling lonely, the largest upset is to not find research which reflects what I work with. Being a psychotherapist can feel like being a second-class citizen in the NHS. Cognitive, neuro, biological, outcome measures – there's a whole bunch of people I can contact and speak to. But I'm not working within those approaches ... I struggle with the idea that emotions are measurable

- How do you generate knowledge in practice? What modality do you draw from, and what types of knowledge are prioritised within that theory for practice?
- How, if at all, does this impact your view on knowledge in research?

Our third study (McBeath, Bager-Charleson & Arbarbanel, 2019) focused on therapists and academic writing. This study reflected what Gergen (1988) might call a 'flat line' plotline, with little change from initial low expectations. Many therapists mentioned not having practised academic writing as part of their training at all. They also often continued to work in private practice after their training, where they lacked an affiliation from which to publish and access to online libraries.

An open question response in the survey resonated with the previously-noted sense of 'homelessness'. Many respondents shared their fears of:

- Negative evaluation
- Criticism
- Doing harm
- Being seen as a bad therapist
- Being rejected
- Failure
- Peer judgement

In summary, common themes across all three studies about therapy related research included:

- The identification of an infrequent and unstructured approach to research within therapy.
- The view that therapists hold negative attitudes to research.
- The observation that psychotherapy is described by some as an art and by others as a science, which both opens for possibilities but also leaves therapy in 'no mans' land' in terms of academic disciplines.
- The idea that psychotherapy practice builds on embodied and emotional sources of knowledge, and this can be difficult to relate to in research.

The UKCP (UK Council for Psychotherapy) describes research as central to the future of the psychotherapy profession and a key strategic objective of the organisation. It also acknowledges the broad spectrum of research within psychotherapy:

Research is very important to us at the UKCP to help promote the art and science of psychotherapy. We know that research comes in many forms, from practice-based research to large scale therapy trials, and everything else in between **https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/policy-and-research/research/**

- Do you regard psychotherapy research as an Art or Science, or both? How might that impact your own research? Discuss within your supervisory team and with peers.

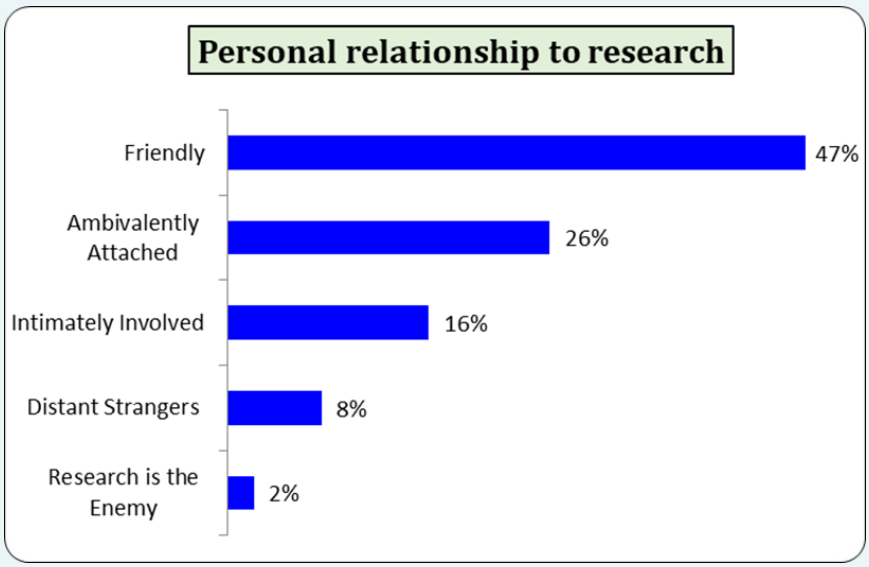
Research Reflexivity

Therapists' self-awareness and 'use of self' are significant aspects of clinical practice. In research, the concept of 'reflexivity' captures this interest in how 'what we see and understand in a situation is influenced by our own subjectivity' (Stuart & Whitmore, 2006, p.157) and how this subjectivity may be drawn upon as part of the findings, e.g. used as an asset, rather than a hindrance. Reflexivity involves, in brief, a focus on how 'knowledge' is linked to us as 'knowers' – ranging from our chosen (or available to us) epistemology, theory and methodology to how our search and understanding of 'truth' is influenced by our own biography and socio-cultural background and context.

An interesting reflexive starting point then, might, be to consider our understanding of research and its use. Our earlier literature review suggested that therapists often construed research as something 'emotionally detached' and therefore removed from clinical practice.

Our previously mentioned mixed methods study (Bager-Charleson, McBeath & du Plock 2019) also asked questions about therapists' 'personal relationship to research'. Figure 3, below, shows how 47% of participants described their relationship to research as 'friendly' whilst others felt ambivalent or distant.

Figure 3. Therapists' personal relationship to research

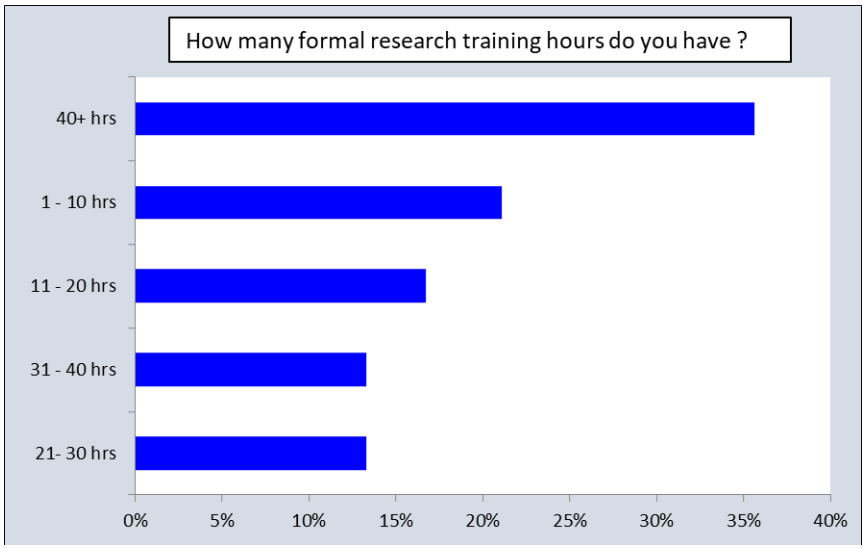


- **Which of the above comes closest to how you would describe your personal relationship to research? If none are appropriate, how would you describe your relationship to research?**

Respondents were also asked how many hours of formal research training they had received. The replies (figure 4) indicated that research is often neglected in psychotherapist's training. For example, although 36% of participants reported having undertaken more than 40 hours of formal research training, 20% had only experienced up to 10 hours.

- **Did your psychotherapy training include research? If so; what kind of research? How was it taught and practised?**

Figure 4. Survey respondents, research training.



Drawing on 'reflective writing' we have used the branch 'free associative writing' (Wright 2020) to explore and communicate our own motivations and meaning makings around research.

Research to Me is...

The accidental researcher, by Alistair.

I'd never really felt certain about my identity as a researcher until recently, when I came across a PhD student who self-identified with the term 'an accidental researcher'. I immediately felt that this was like finding a jacket that fits better than all the ones tried previously.

The word accidental captures my sense of discovering a focused passion for research that was latent but revealed by a chance opportunity for some collaborative work with Sofie who, at the time, was working on the experiences of novice psychotherapy researchers. She had unambiguously uncovered the challenges, isolation and strength of embodied response that novice researchers can experience when they begin to do research.

I immediately identified with this research focus and I felt almost honour-bound to try and make research and the business of research far less threatening for would be researchers.

Fast forward to today and there is now a body of collaborative work which we hope will truly make research a more accessible and attractive prospect for the 'researcher-practitioner'. We have explored doing research, writing research, using mixed methods research approaches, and much more, including writing a book with the appropriate title Enjoying Research in Psychotherapy and Counselling.

Paradoxically, my collaborative work with Sofie revealed to me that I had far more research skills than I was willing to recognise; so, I have experienced an unexpected personal growth as a researcher-practitioner. I would never have thought I would, one day, write a book chapter on using statistics in counselling and psychotherapy. But I did and I'm proud to be that accidental researcher.

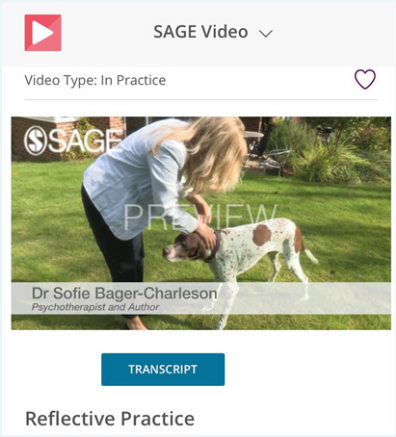
Research to me is...

About meaning and meaning making, by Sofie

I have been doing qualitative research for over 30 years. I was also trained in statistics, but something in qualitative research felt like an immediate fit. To me 'research' is about grappling with questions about meaning and meaning making. New meanings will inevitably emerge, and to be part of that process can sometimes feel like mixing detective work with arts.

Research can be immensely creative, freeing up the possibilities between reality and experience and therefore – like therapy - identifying openings for change. On an embodied level, doing research often fills me with calmness, mixed with purpose and excitement. Being a child of a bipolar parent has had an inevitable impact - with 'making sense' always construed as a valued endpoint. It has involved a struggle and a coping strategy, with a dark defended side that has had to be explored in personal therapy.

Research has subsequently offered opportunities for me to enjoy and build on this 'want' to make sense of the world as we see it. The image of our English pointer Percy picking up a scent springs to mind. He responds to a scent in an instinctive, purposeful but often also in an almost contagiously joyful way. As he's sniffing, pointing, running up and down the fields it is as if his inner world merges with his surroundings - as if he's completely 'in' the moment. It can be exhausting - at times positively painful - but the process is usually immensely satisfying. You follow or trace an interesting question, and usually see the world from new angles with new opportunities and openings as a result.



Seeing new opportunities where seemingly contradictory positionings are negotiated and combined, will always bring an added layer of satisfaction to me and my worldview. The collaboration with Alistair and colleagues around bridging different research perspectives is a rich example of this. Bringing qualitative and quantitative research together has added a genuine depth. The link below to a video accompanying a book about reflective practice captures my fondness for reflection, broadened perspectives and Pointers.

https://sk.sagepub.com/video/reflective-practice

Reflective Writing

Research journaling will typically be an important aspect of your research. Reflective writing can play a part in this. Reflection involves, in brief, a deliberate and conscientious process to building on our own cognitive, emotional and somatic capacities to mindfully contemplate past, present or future actions in order to learn, and to better understand and potentially improve our actions (Harvey, Coulson & McMaugh, 2016). The potentials of both reflection and reflexivity, are increasingly appreciated in the Higher Education sector. Many universities define the ability to reflect as a necessary skill in the course of achieving a degree (Harvey, 2016). Reflective writing is, in short, a term used for writing for the purpose of 'making sense of ourselves and the world' (Bolton 2005:4). Rather than storing experiences like computers, we 'story' them, Field and Bolton (2004:2) assert that:

Writing is different from talking; it has a power all of its own... It can allow an exploration of cognitive, emotional and spiritual areas otherwise not accessible

Reflective writing involves 'examining our story making processes critically, to create and recreate fresh accounts of our lives from different perspectives, different points of view and to elicit and listen to the responses of peers' (Bolton, 2005:3). Uninterrupted writing (Wright, 2020) is an important starting point for reflective writing.

Over to You

Write without interruption for five minutes, starting with the following line:

- Research to me is

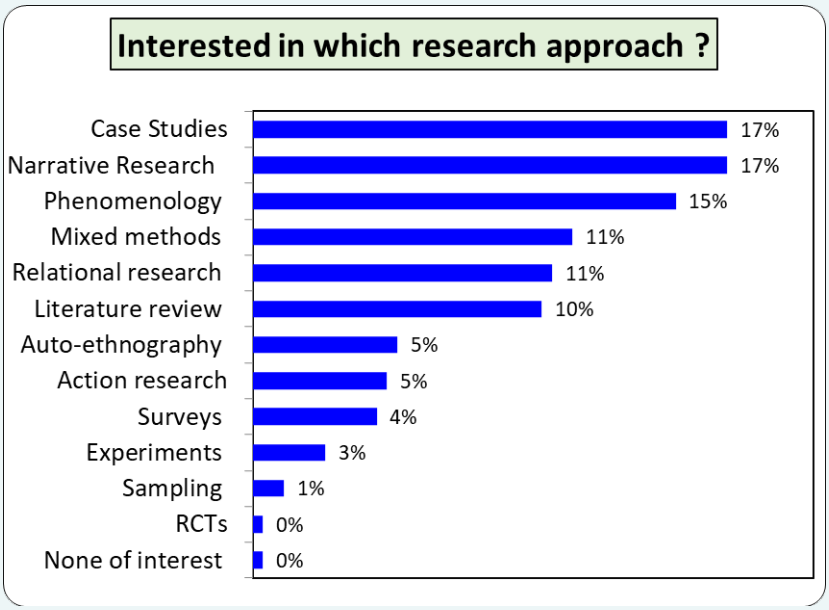
If, or when, you run out of words, just write 'word, word' until a new association comes up.

Finding soulmates in research and literature is essential. Some of the literature below covers research from a broad perspective, allowing for interests along a spectrum from arts to science.

Avoiding the 'Paradigm War'?

Whilst evidence-based approaches emphasise commonalities, certainties and objectivity, the social constructionist approaches view mental health and emotional well-being with socio-cultural, linguistic, gender related and other context-dependent interests in mind. Within these perspectives, psychotherapists are indeed often grappling with an added 'gap' (Bondi & Fewell, 2016; Bager-Charleson, McBeath & Vostanis, 2020; McBeath, 2020) relating to a divide between an often idiographic embodied, intuitive and emotional understanding in practice 'versus' objective, rational and nomothetic modes of explanations. The therapist 'John' described for instance feeling alienated from any kind of 'measuring' research approach. In that same second study (Figure 6) showed that therapists rated case studies, narrative research and phenomenology highest and the use of survey and RCT lowest.

Figure 5. Therapists' favoured research approaches



Many participants resonated with these results, but some highlighted not having been exposed to different approaches. One therapist 'Evy' said tellingly:

Well, I say I don't like surveys... but to be fair, I don't know anything about it. Maybe if I knew more, I'd be less fearful of it...it's just nothing we talked about in our training

Much has changed in the fields of both quantitative and qualitative research. McBeath (2021, 2022, in press) expands, for instance, on the use of what Braun and Clarke (2020) have coined as 'qualitative surveys' where the aim is to combine a deep understanding of the individual's experience whilst avoiding using individuals as 'spokesmen'. We use the term 'dialectical engagement' (Bager-Charleson, McBeath & Vostanis 2021) that develops through the interplay between these different perspectives to describe learning and research. Each approach brings a different paradigmatic viewpoint, leading to different ontological and epistemologically anchored questions regarding mental health enquiry. The term 'paradigm war' refers to traditionally opposed positions. Mixed methods research refers by contrast, to the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in one study or, sequentially, in two or more studies. Mixed methods research typically aims, as Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez (2020) describe to 'go beyond solely the mixing of type of data, such as whether it is quantitative or qualitative, and [is] also concerned with the mixing of worldviews and ways of understanding' (p.137).

- **How would you describe your research methodology of choice? How might this have developed?**

We suggest you use this box to add own references for psychotherapy research aligned with what the UKCP earlier described as an 'art and science'

https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/policy-and-research/research/

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It sounds basic, but you've got to love reading and writing...The field work is 5-10%, the rest is reading and writing, reading and writing...
'Paul, supervisor'

Some think they can do a PhD in 10-15 hours per week. I say it has to be your life, you have to want to bring articles with you on holidays by the beach
'Maria, supervisor'

Section 4. How Supervisors and Supervisees Experience Research Supervision

How to Support Therapists in Doing Research?

So, how can we support therapists in their research? Our earlier studies highlighted obstacles that, in turn, prompted our interest in research supervision and which the funding from UKCP facilitated further study of. The following section is based on the findings from this research. The study was, as mentioned, conducted under the umbrella of our research group called 'Therapists as Research Practitioners' (TRP) this group focuses on obstacles and opportunities for research from the perspectives of counsellors and psychotherapists to enhance research training. The supervision study in the following section explored the experience of 'good' supervision during doctoral research from the perspective of both supervisors and supervisees.

The Study in Summary:

The study draws on the experience of research supervision among supervisors and supervisees on PhD and professional programmes for psychotherapists and counselling psychologists (for the full report, see Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2021b).

What makes constructive versus non-constructive research supervision on doctoral programmes for therapists? What might supervisors learn from supervisees' experiences of supervision, and vice versa? These questions permeated the study that consisted of an online survey (n=226) utilising Likert-scale questions and open-ended qualitative questions which offered respondents the opportunity to attend a follow-up interview (n=10). After a pilot study including focus groups (n=49, see Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2021a) the survey was distributed to research supervisors and supervisees via online platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook, and via the support of collaborators from training institutes in the UK, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand and the USA.

The findings involved responses from 104 Research Supervisees and 122 Research Supervisors. The free text comments offered qualitative data consisting of 7,930 words, which comprised the 558 comments in response to the free text space and open questions in the survey. We randomly selected 10 of the respondents who offered to attend follow-up interviewees and analysed both the free text comments and interviews using narrative-thematic analysis (Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath 2018). We will present the findings with your potential supervisory needs in mind, inviting you to a 'dialogue' with the content to be pursued reflectively with supervisee or supervisor peers and - when helpful - as part of your supervisory team negotiations.

Findings

How Supervisees Experience Effective Research Supervision

Figure 6. The importance of research supervision

Research Supervision was regarded as extremely important as highlighted in figure 6. As shown in figure 7, among the 'most valued supervisory input' options, the supervisees' main priorities were 'support when feeling stuck' (21%) followed by 'methodology input' (18%) and 'advice of analysis' (17%), as in Figure 7.

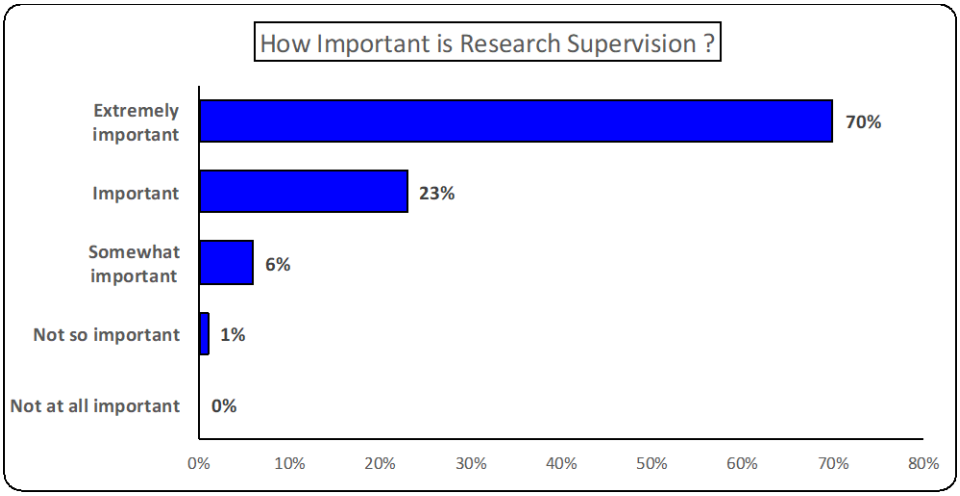
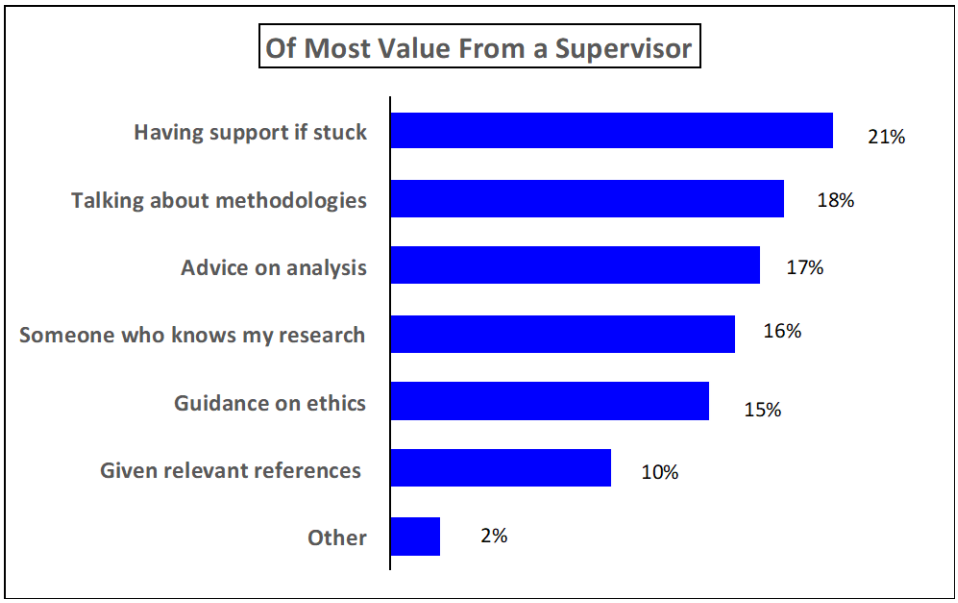


Figure 7. Areas where research supervision is most valued.



The survey was deliberately short, with questions intended to encourage reflection on practice (see McBeath, 2022, in press) through free text comments. This offered an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how supervisee chose to 'story' (Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath, 2018) their experience in their own words.

Qualitative Findings

Phase 1: Free Text Comments About Research Supervisees

The 558 comments (7930 words) we received in response to the survey added a deeper, 'three-dimensional' (Saldana, 2012) understanding to our quantitative findings.

In summary, the supervisees referred to 'constructive' supervision as involving:

- input from an **updated, knowledgeable supervisor** with deep and broad methodology experience who will help to suggest options
- **being listened to and encouraged;** challenged when too ambitious; free to discuss how to amend ideas in a non-patronising relationship
- gaining **practical support** during different phases, including the research methodology, literature review, and data analysis stages

This was expressed through the following comments:

- **No rusty, narrow knowledge.** Several supervisees referred to broad, updated research knowledge. One said:

  It's not containing to have a supervisor who admits to being 'rusty'... You feel alone and worried that what you are producing might be completely 'off'

  Echoing this, another said:

  I'm always left feeling my supervisor knows what he knows and that's it. As if **he doesn't take time to actively further his own research knowledge,** go and find out about it, make it [his] business.

- **Research methodology, literature review and data analysis**

  'Research methodology support' was expanded upon in the free text comments.

  One supervisee said:

  [My] research question required new methodological thinking and to be able to explore this was crucial to me.

  The same supervisee continued:

  I had two formative experiences; one with a supervisor who insisted on one methodology and another who helped me see options. Without the latter I probably still would have been working on my PhD - or given up entirely

  Negotiating the research question was identified as a further area of useful support. One supervisee said:

  I have reformulated my research questions lots of times, it's felt so confusing. My second supervisor was really helpful, asking questions which made everything fall into place. Big questions... about my underlying purpose and so on.

Over to You

What makes a 'good' question?

All research starts with a 'good' question. As we shall see, much effort lies in the development and honing of this question. The supervisor 'Paul' (in the interview findings section) captures some of these efforts thus:

> Some come just for the qualification, the rubber stamp [...] Some come with an agenda [and want] to prove their point and that's that [But] I'm like a broken record saying 'yes, but this is a research project, so there has to be a question that you, me and the world don't yet know the answer to yet; so, what's that question? [W]hat don't you know; what do hope to find out? Proving what you know comes at the end of the work, that's what you do at your viva
> ('Paul', research supervisor).

- **Supervisee Question:** What is your research question? How might you relate to Paul's experience?
- **Supervisor Question:** How do you experience your role with regards to the development of students' research questions? What do you find difficult and what has felt constructive?

Another supervisor resonated with the value of putting the research question in context:

My supervisor helped me to stay focus when **I began to reflect on aspects of my literature review that were not relevant to the research questions.**

Some hoped for clear 'how to do it' guidance. One supervisee addressed this in the context of data analysis:

[Constructive supervision is about] getting clear guidelines on how to write the analysis section, then getting feedback on a piece of sample writing of the analysis section, discuss and then start writing the rest of the analysis'.

Adding a 'bigger picture'

Adding a 'bigger picture' was a common theme. One supervisee said:

The most productive sessions were **when my second supervisor put my research in context.** [He] **added a bigger picture** in his critical analysis of the work I was producing

The supervisee continued:

It **wasn't just passively feeding back** on writing or checking in on project milestones [but] more of a bigger picture, helping me to **take stock** of where the project was and where it needed attention [giving a sense of the] **scrutiny that you get in your viva examination.**

Reflexivity

Some supervisees referred to the reflexive value of supervision, in terms of personal positioning and motivation. One said; 'I really appreciate when my supervisor encouraged me to think more deeply about myself on the journey of doing the PhD'. He continued:

I was challenged by a supervisor to…more deeply **understand what the proposed research meant to me and why** I wanted to do it

To illustrate this, the supervisee continued:

…my supervisor suggested I begun to write phenomenologically about my own experience of my research topic. This elicited a lot … about what I am trying to capture and how I will capture it

Over to You

Reflexivity 'asks' us, as Stuart and Whitmore (206:157) put it, 'to examine the process of how what we see and understand in a situation is influenced by our own subjectivity'. Subjectivity is used in the broadest sense (Stuart & Whitmore, 206:157) and it involves:

- Cognitive and theoretical constructions
- Embodiment (cultural background, gender, social position, sexual orientation, learning style and age)
- Personal biography
- Values
- Ethics
- Emotions

This kind of attention to research subjectivity is often compared and sometimes even equalled, to reflective practice. Reflective self-awareness involves, as Gardner, 2006, p.145 puts it 'the capacity to be aware of yourself, your own preferences and biases …?' Reflexive self-awareness 'takes this further' (Stuart & Whitmore, 2006, p.157) and requires a systematic engagement with new, different, or other perspectives. It invites us to 'try on the perspective, the world view of an "other" for long enough to look back critically at ourselves, our ideas, our assumptions, our values' (Carter & Gradin, 2001, p. 4). Reflexivity in this sense becomes, as Qualley (1999:11) puts it; 'a response triggered by a dialectical engagement with the other' so that we engage with 'another idea, theory, person, culture [or] text' to critically review our own starting point.

You might recall 'Peter' at the start of this Guide, capturing the critical, reflective review of knowledge that one can argue is typical for doctoral research, with its underpinning principles about criticality and transformative learning.

- **Return to your earlier reflective writing about your personal relationship to research and add as you peruse during this Guide.**

- **'Shut up and Write!'** is an international initiative, now run as a weekly event within many universities. https://shutupwrite.com/

Anyone can start a Shut up and Write! Group, as suggested on the link above.

You don't need extra resources [but] we have found it works best if you:

√ Meet at a regular, pre-arranged time: this means there is no organisational work required and anyone can join at any point. Have at least one person committed to turning up at the assigned time and greet new members. You might want to share this duty with another person so it doesn't become onerous.

√ Create a contact point for new members. This can be someone's email, or a social media presence, such as a Facebook page, which acts as a rallying point. Some groups even make posters advertising their sessions and put them up around campus.

√ Keep the writing sprints short. Use the Pomodoro Technique (a pomodoro is a 25 minute stretch of focussed concentration (Another way to write 1000 words a day? – The Thesis Whisperer) Between the pomodoros, take as much time as the group would like to drink hot beverages, talk and eat. Have one person willing to act as 'Pomodoro chief' who will do time calls (there are many free Pomodoro apps that you can use to keep time).

√ Work on anything, so long as it's work - transcription, analysis, reading, organising your notes – even email (although we don't recommend it). No exercises or judgment remember? The only rule is to be silent when everyone else is.

√ Accept that Shut up and Write! is not for everyone. Some people may only come once; others will be regulars. If no one else turns up, Shut up and Write! is almost as much fun on your own (it's nice to work somewhere other than office every now and then).

√ Remember, it doesn't just have to be PhD students who take part. Early career academics, professional staff and others need to put time aside for writing too. And it's the perfect opportunity to create cross insitutional links – be open to people from other universities coming along. Shut up and Write! – The Thesis Whisperer

Non-patronising relational depth with empathy, encouragement and support

The comments confirmed the importance of empathy, connection and a relational depth. One supervisee said:

I have found … working with a supervisor that demonstrates support, empathy and encouragement … invaluable

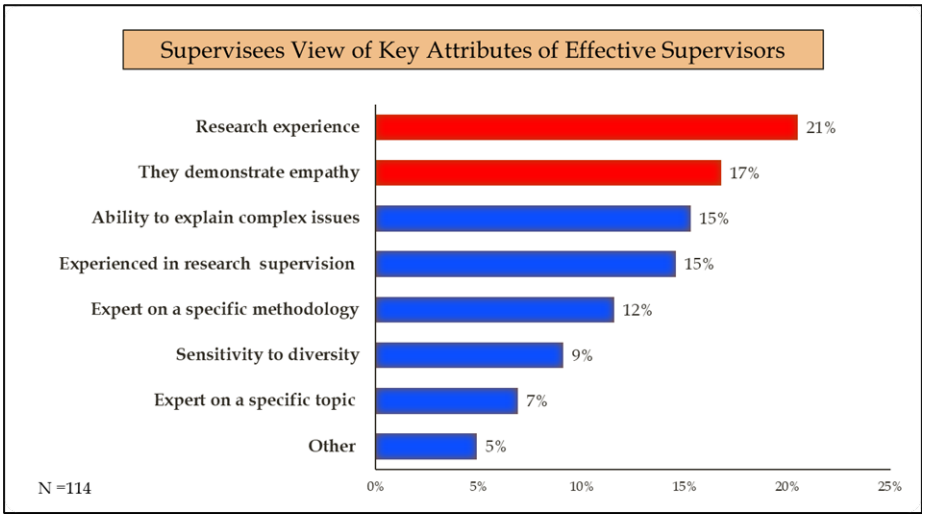
A relational, listening and facilitating support was by one supervisee referred to as 'non-patronising' support:

…listening to my ideas and encouraging them, yet also pointing out where I was being too ambitious and discussing how I might amend my ideas… [Being] non-patronising and willing to practically support in data analysis when needed too.

Another participant referred to the importance of having a 'normalising support when feeling lost and not good enough …to regain confidence'.

This appreciation of empathic, compassionate supervision resonated with our survey responses. Returning to those findings shows how 'empathy' was the second most important quality after supervisory research experience (Figure 8)

Figure 8. Supervisees' emphasis on empathy



Multiple Requirements

The requirements of a supervisor were many and varied, with qualities like knowledge and encouragement ideally complemented by efficient practical as well as deep emotional availability. As one supervisee described:

I was very anxious, needing clear, practical and ethical advice…really fast response [and] having an anchor [who] helped me stay motivated.

Another summed up the importance of a broad repertoire of qualities:

[My] research supervisor was very encouraging and supportive… she managed to incorporate her research skills and therapeutic approach in her research supervision with me, which made me feel incredibly held and got me through the research…

The supervisee continued:

She communicated a sense of belief in me and my research topic as well as a passion for the whole research process. I never felt like an inconvenience or just another number on her list but some real engagement with me, my difficulties, worries and concerns.

A further broad list of qualities was offered by another respondent:

My supervisor balanced encouragement and positivity with challenge in regard to some limitations of the research. He was proactive in reading emails, responding to queries, and offering support. He demonstrated excellent listening skills and a sense that he was fully behind me and my research'.

In summary, then: a constructive supervisor is methodologically broad and updated, knowledgeable, quick to respond, good listener and able to balance encouragement with challenge throughout the process (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Supervisees' emphasis on empathy

Good	Very good
• A knowledgeable supervisor • To be listened to and encouraged • Challenged when too ambitious • Free to discuss how to amend ideas 'The dialogical experience with my current supervisor has been invaluable to me so far. We have conversations rather than him being particularly directive, though this can be helpful too'.	• A supervisor who adds deep, broad knowledge and shows options • To be listened to and encouraged • Challenged when too ambitious • Free to discuss how to amend ideas • A non-patronising relationship • Get practical support when needed 'Yes, the supervisor was [knowledgeable and] able to guide me… listening to my ideas and encouraging them, yet also pointing out where I was being too ambitious and discussing how I might amend my ideas. She was non-patronising and willing to practically support in data analysis when necessary too'.
Poor	**Very poor**
• Narrow knowledge 'I'm always left feeling my supervisor knows what he knows and that's it. As if he doesn't take time to actively further her own research knowledge. I would go and find out about it. Make it my business. I don't feel this happens… Of course no one can know everything but it would help'	• Distant 'I don't think I have experienced productive supervision. I felt ignored and dismissed by my supervisor'

Over to You

- **Supervisee Question:** Compare your research supervision needs with the attributes raised in the free text comments above. How do the reported experiences relate to your experience of research supervision?
- **Supervisor Question:** Which of the requirements resonate with your experience of constructive supervision How, if at all, are your role and duties defined?

The Interviews (NTQ)

As mentioned, we recruited as mentioned 10 volunteers from the survey, with equal distribution across supervisee- (5) and supervisor- (5) experiences to analyse through the lens of 'narrative thematic inquiry (NTQ)' (Bager-Charleson, du Plock & McBeath 2018; Bager-Charleson & McBeath 2020 in press). The supervisees' ages ranged from 35-55. They comprised 4 females and 1 male studying for a PhD (1) and Professional doctorates (4). The supervisors were between 47 and 62 years old, 3 were females and 2 male. Each had 15 years or more of experience supervising on PhDs (2) and Professional doctorates (3). The interview agenda was deliberately open, and participants were invited to discuss 'what does supervision mean to you; how might it be helpful and/or not helpful from your experience and viewpoint?' The themes were discussed with the participants afterwards, to develop or change.

Summary of Supervisee Interviews

Trust, knowledge and containment stood out to us as key areas from our interviews with the supervisees. After a spontaneous use of a 'sailing' analogy by our first participant, we offered all participants the option, towards the end of the interview, to sum up 'constructive supervision' with a metaphor of their choice. These ranged from the aforementioned 'sailing instructor [being] in the boat with you and with a light hand on the tiller' to ideas of constructive supervisors acting as 'mountain guides', a 'telescope' and a 'seesaw partner'; throwing light and adding direction, perspectives, new vistas and exhilaration, all balanced by being grounding, compassionate and containing.

We will now present the themes that arose from the interviews, illustrated by the words of our doctoral interviewees.

Over to You

Our interest in narratives and how people organise and describe events and experiences in their stories welcomed the participants' use of metaphors. A metaphor can be used to describe characteristics of an object or person in more intuitive, free associative and creative ways than rational arguments sometimes allow – similar to the principles for reflective writing.

- **Just as supervisees and supervisors draw on different 'metaphors' to communicate their understanding of research and research supervision, you are encouraged to think of own analogies or metaphors to combine 'thinking' and 'feeling' about supervision.**

If appropriate, try writing about it in your own words as they come, starting with 'my metaphor for research is…'

‘It’s like learning to sail’, You Need Structure, Trust and Support

When our first participant, ‘Claire’, compared research to sailing, she highlighted how supervision involved learning by doing under often - dramatic circumstances.

A helpful supervisor ‘is in the boat with you, with a light hand on the tiller’

The wind can change, the tide can change… so, yes… you want the supervisor in the boat with you, also being vigilant… with their hands on or over the tiller.

‘Claire’ is a 55-year-old integrative psychotherapist who explores trainees’ experiences of therapy training. Her attempt at a PhD as a social worker 20 years ago ended prematurely in an MPhil exit, leaving her with memories of supervision that triggered a ‘fractious, fragmented feeling of not knowing what I’m doing’.

The sailing analogy and reference to a ‘tiller’ [to steer a sailing boat] captured Claire’s experience of the trials and tribulations of supervision.

Phase 1. Making a contract - structure, trust and support.

Supervisees’ first wish, as expressed in the free text comments, is for clear contracts and guidance.

Claire referred a consistent contract:

I have two supervisors, with different areas of expertise so there’s a clear demarcation… We meet once a month, we have 1.5 hour-long very focused meetings. I send in my work a week before with questions. [Afterwards] my primary supervisor checks of with me, ‘was that feedback what you needed, tell me if anything is unclear’.

Reflecting on earlier unhelpful experiences, Claire said;

[In my first PhD attempt] there was a hierarchy, a power imbalance…I didn’t feel I could ask… and so, I felt I was ‘winging it’, I didn’t know what I was doing… My [previous] supervisor wanted me to present at international conferences and told me what needed doing but never how… it was very stressful, extremely stressful.

Phase 2: Identifying ‘training needs’ and work plan

Claire added:

What I really would have needed [in first PhD attempt] was an identification of training needs; there were no training at all, I really had to do it blind

Emphasising clear instructions, she concluded:

So, I think it’s about being clear about the supervisee’s training needs in order to do the research [and] being clear about what the work involves and what needs to be done.

She explained that her present PhD experience is different:

[On this PhD] there are lots of workshops and training that I can access, a huge range, particularly data collection, analysis, consent form… And a lot of freedom to pick and choose. My secondary supervisor runs workshops on my research approach, and my primary supervisor invited her into the theme for her expertise in my methodology.

Phase 3. Supported to take control.

Claire also reflects on her own input:

Supervisors have their fingers in lots of different pies, so I guess it's about not being forgotten... It's a balancing act, it's also about how I use their time best.

She continued:

This [second] time I'm better prepared, but my supervision is also really different. My primary supervisor is good at giving credits, he'd say to me 'you are a very experienced psychotherapist, you've done research before - you know what you're doing, you don't need to hold my hand for this'. So, I set the agenda and the discussions come from that; I am more in control, they listen to my ideas and give really helpful feedback.

Feeling unsupported is nevertheless a frightening prospect:

I guess what would be really unhelpful would be the supervisors cancelling meetings, not turning up even...Or sending the work and them not looking at it, not giving feedback.

In summary, Claire's account of supervision involved clear contracting and skills training, combined with trust and encouragement towards gradual independency.

Over to You

Claire refers to **supervisor contracts.** What kind of contracts or agreements, if any, do you have for the research supervision within your supervisory team? Appendix 2 includes an example of contract. If you do not already have an agreement, perhaps this is something to develop?

The interviews highlighted a surprisingly broad variation of needs among the supervisees. As an interesting contrast to Claire, Gabriella chose the metaphor 'seesaw' to describe her supervision experience.

'Like on a seesaw' Together: My Supervisor has been Grounding, Constant and Fun.

'Gabriella' is a 36-year-old psychotherapist and counselling psychologist who completed her professional doctorate two years ago. She divides her time between England and Spain.

Gabriella described her supervisor as 'constant, containing and knowledgeable and experienced- but also flexible, empathic and fun'

Her programme provided one supervisor over a set number of hours that were to be divided across the process as agreed between the supervisee and the supervisor. The 'seesaw' metaphor was chosen to describe the experience of research supervision as a grounding, contained yet exhilarating process that resulted in Gabriella's gradual sense of her own control.

The research process can be both extremely anxiety provoking and fascinating. And my supervisor has always just been there.

Gabriella continues:

I think of it as a seesaw journey... Initially I felt totally 'up there' - with my feet up in the air and no connection at all to the ground. But she was constant. I think that trust is the grounding aspect.

Phase 1. Time to find ones' feet

Instead of a fixed contract, Gabriella refers to an unspoken contract about 'being flexible but always there.'

My supervisor and I didn't meet very often at first, but when I needed it she responded immediately and she'd always let me know well in advance if she'd be away. I remember thinking, she's always there if I need her.

Phase 2. Initial research training

Like Claire, Gabriella describes some initial training:

During our first year you don't get allocated supervisors, that only happens at the end of it. I read about different methodologies; I was first thinking about pluralistic research but I chose IPA. I was in a group, cohort, and that was really valuable.

Phase 3. Adding support and research knowledge field-work

Gabriella's need for support increased during the data gathering and analysis stages

My supervisor was absolutely essential in helping me with my analysis. She's very experienced. I did IPA on a topic that I had a lot of opinions on, and my real concern was always do I put too much of myself onto the participants... am I going too far away from the participants own narratives? She was just very good with that, always helped me to go back and look at participants own voices.

Adding a bigger picture

As in the free text comments, some respondents wished for clearer instructions and guidelines whilst others favoured more general 'bigger picture' support. Whilst Claire resonated with the former, Gabriella shared the idea of supervision ideally adding a 'bigger picture'.

My supervisor held that macro-perspective of what a doctorate looks like and what IPA is about. I was just in this own little bubble, and she helped me look at a much bigger picture.

Gabriella continued:

There are things in academia that are taken for granted or just not said, lots of unspoken things that you're meant to know. I come from a working-class background, my parents went to university but were refugees ... I was really nervous about starting this doctorate, it was a different world where I didn't really belong. And I think that someone like [my supervisor] who's really transparent, really human and can put things in perspective, that's so important from a power point of view.

Phase 4: Contained enough take control.

Gabriella uses terms like grounding, constant and containing to describe supervisory qualities that helped move from 'finding her feet' to gaining confidence and gradual control and maturity as a researcher:

She was always there and slowly allowed me to even things out, reaching a point when I felt more in control. She'd still be there, but I could both hold my feet on the ground and be up in the air and trust my work.

Sharing the adventure

The 'seesaw' is also about fun and letting go. We often laughed. And there's the excitement around the looking for and not knowing … and finding out. It's fascinating, you really need to be able to hold an element of not knowing - without the not knowing you're not getting anywhere in research.

Knowing and not knowing

The not knowing is such an important part of both research and client work. Ethically you need help with the balance of holding the not knowing at all times within the detailed and (inter)subjective process of analysis. You need someone more experienced helping you to think about it.

Over to You

Gabriella preferred a 'flexible' supervision contract.

- **How might such a model fit in with you and your research needs and why, or why not, might it work for you?**

Gabriella also refers to the 'not-knowing' as an essential source of knowledge in her research. Return to Figure 2 from our mixed methods study showing therapists' referring to 'not knowing' (24%) as more relevant than 'keeping a rational mind' (3%) in their clinical practice. '

- **How does relational, embodied and emotional aspects enter your research? And how might research supervision respond to this?**

It's Like Learning 'mountain trekking', You Need Support to Enter Uncharted Path

'Sadot' 55 has completed a counselling psychology doctorate with 'some research training but not much' and one supervisor and 'Fathima', 45 has recently finished her professional psychotherapy doctoral programme with a supervisory team of three. Both used the term 'mountain guides' to describe their supervisors.

Phase 1. Mainly informal training.

Neither Sadot nor Fathima felt their 'introductory research training' was much help. Sadot compares research methodology and theory with a 'compass':

There is some useful equipment [for my research] but sometimes you have to make your own because the compass may not fit the climate or the context.

Sadot focused on therapy and diversity in his research.

First, there was no real contexts to put Black history in. My research went nowhere. If I had had another supervisor, I might have given up. She was really supportive...

Phase 2: Support and encouragement

Sadot continued:

My supervisor supported me throughout and was there when I was scared. It's like with Mount Everest. I think researchers go to landscapes that no one has ever been to before. It's not polished, it's messy... Research is a murky, shadowy space.

Phase 3: Unchartered paths and new maps

Sadot continued:

I was accessing generations of traumas, in relation to racism [and] you need to layer the narratives. My supervisor gave me books, articles...we used a lot of grey literature, well stuff I'd never find otherwise... and then we talked about Afro-Caribbean history. Theory and research practice... it sounds precise and tidy...but oh it can be so different when you're in it!

Fathima's experience echoed this:

I'm from Afghanistan and a supervisor who understands how countries vary was really important. It wasn't just the method...choosing methodology is so much more than reason, techniques. When we talked about disability, she [supervisor] knew how that too can become political, when the individual's situation is linked to a culture, like the support a country provides and so on.

Phase 4: Confidence and self-direction

When I was doing the transcripts of an interview ... oh all the possibilities – argh [laughing] you're drowning. But then... you learn so much, you change...I'm changed. I started support groups, published and work a lot with disability. I'm so proud, feeling useful. I'm Fathima but not Fathima anymore – yes, you really change with research.

Sadot also referred to transforming on many levels:

I used to be very into... I was very analytic. My research allowed me to get rid of that teacher-attitude. It felt really risky to use such topography but it felt like that medium gave permission to be creative as a researcher. It was... it was life changing.

‘My supervisor is my telescope, helping me to see further’

‘Juanita’ is a 35-year-old integrative psychotherapist on a Professional Psychotherapy doctorate, with one supervisor. She explores arts therapy for torture victims and has recently changed supervisor. She also had a supervisor during her masters in neuroscience for quantitative research.

Phase 1. Research training

Juanita’s training involved two years of research training before supervision. Like Claire, Juanita referred to earlier negative experiences.

My first [supervisor] was conservative… with good intentions. She wanted me to pass, she wanted me to tick all the boxes… She’d chose the methodology which she felt most confident, comfortable with.

Juanita continued:

We’d meet a lot, it took a lot of my supervision hours, but made progress so slooooow… New knowledge is about thinking outside of the box, but with [my first supervisor] I felt I was IN a box [laughter].

An opportunity to change of supervisor included new methodological thinking, which freed up‘Juanita’s work drastically.

I met my current supervisor about 20 % into the stages… I went to this seminar, with hardly anyone there… I’m so glad I did, the tutor there said, why don’t you try Narrative Inquiry? And I thought ‘yes it’s a really good fit’. She was passionate, that really mattered, my first wasn’t.

Phase 2: Navigation and perspective

Juanita used ‘telescope’ as a metaphor:

I’d like my supervisor to be my telescope. My vision is limited, I can only see that far, but if you give me that telescope it’s like ‘oh, I can see now!’ My topic is a in very new area, so I don’t expect my supervisor to have expert knowledge… but by giving me that telescope I can see more, further.

Freedom and navigation

My supervisor is more experienced and helps me to navigate. I don’t need someone to tell me what to do… but I need someone to point in the right direction. So, I need freedom [and] to pick up the telescope to check - is it too far, have I been looking in the wrong direction?

Phase 3: Taking control, with the telescope ‘at hand’

Whilst the supervisee Claire valued firm and regular contracts, Juanita emphasised ‘freedom’ yet she also resonated with both Gabriella and Claire about needing someone at hand to progress into the unknown:

In the beginning I needed her [supervisor] to give me the freedom, now I feel confident enough to be free. But with the telescope at hand…

Juanita continued:

I’ve come so far with my second supervisor, two awards already. I’ve felt so encouraged, got confidence. So, it’s liberating, my supervisor sees the value of my topic and says ‘go for it!’ - that support is really important.

Relational or not?

A relational depth could, in Juanita's experience, get in the way:

The relational is important, but the first [doctoral supervisor] had a lot of personal stress, and I kept thinking I needed to be careful, not to press too hard... I became anxious to fit in. The second one, I don't know about her personal life, but I think I can say what I want, and she can say 'wow - we need to slow down' and so, and that's good.

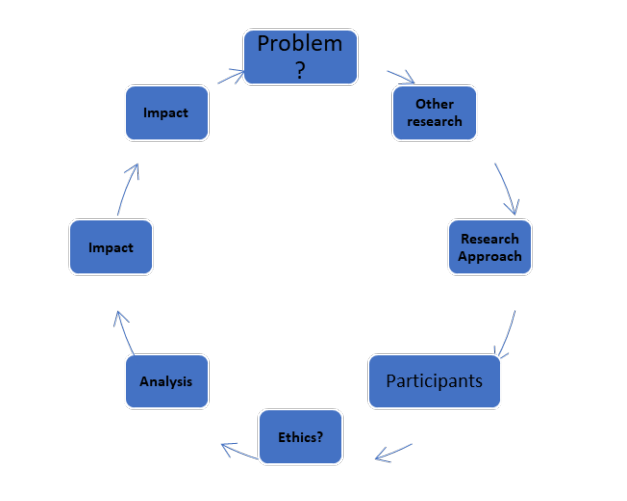
Over to You

Supervisee Question: Doctoral research is about generating new knowledge. How will you plan for that work; what stages and different focuses do you expect? The aforementioned regulatory frameworks, like the QAA framework, gives a valuable overview of how your work may be assessed. Looking at others' submissions give further background. A not unusual 'skeleton' for a doctoral thesis in the field of Psychotherapy comprises the sections, or blocks below. Some approaches deal with the phases in different order, but the headings below highlight essential junctions in the work.

Dissertation Body, 5 Distinct Chapters:

- **Chapter** I: Introduction.
- **Chapter** II: Review of Literature.
- **Chapter** III: Methodology (Research Design & Methods)
- **Chapter** IV: Presentation of Research (Results)
- **Chapter** V: Summary, Implications, Conclusions (Discussion)

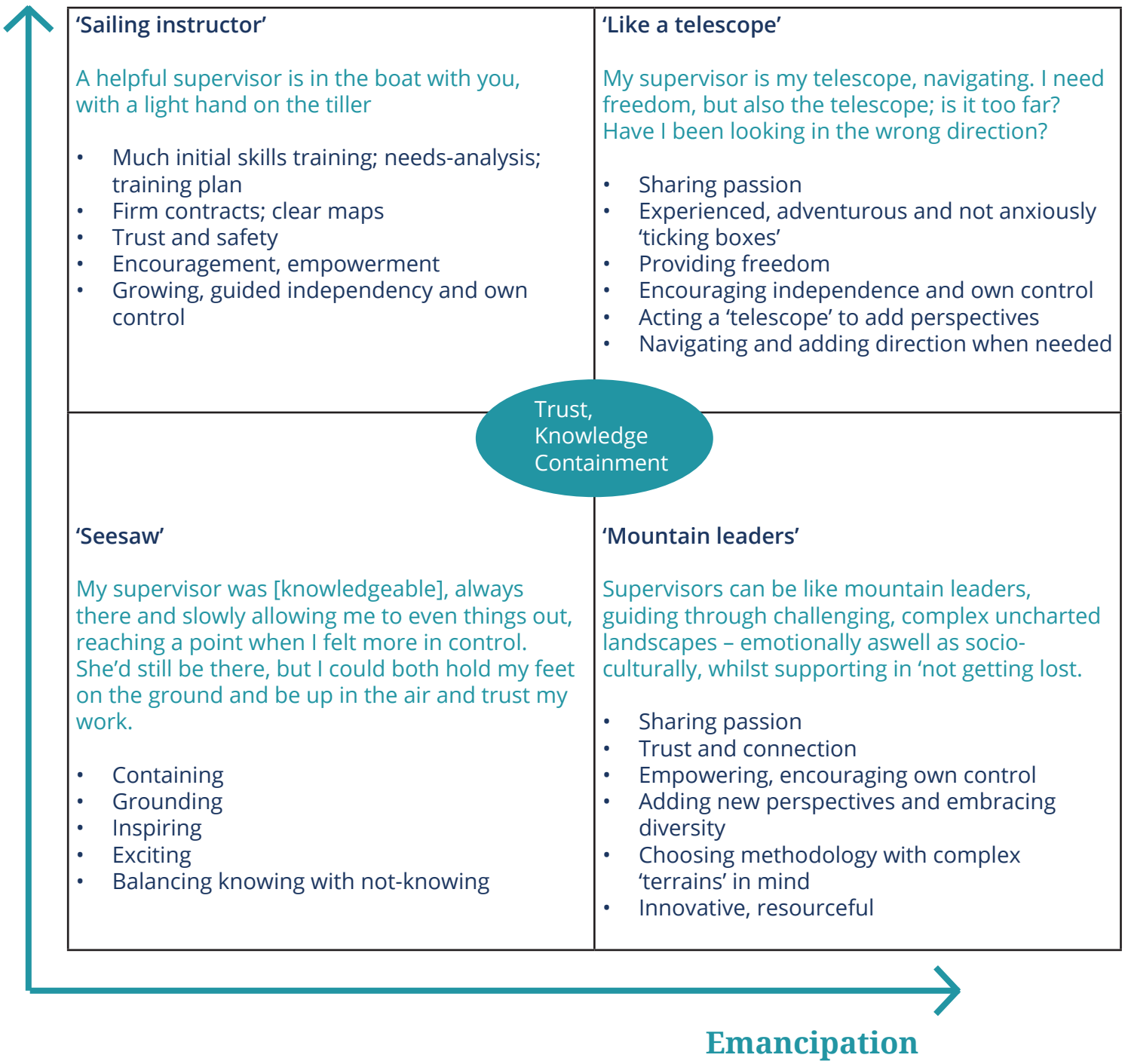
Please consider the previously mentioned level 8 and 'third circle' learning descriptors with the blocks above and your own research project in mind. If appropriate, use the 'research life-cycle' and insert your research question, literature review themes and research methodology in the circle below. If it is different from the example below; how would you structure your 'research life-cycle' map? Discuss with your supervisor.



Interim Supervisee Summary

The accounts highlight how preparative research training, the number of supervisors and meetings, and types of contracts vary. All the interviewees' metaphors conveyed a sense of 'danger' and fear – with references to 'choppy', changing conditions and there being much at stake. The sailing analogy involved a more traditional skill set and knowledge framework compared to both the mountain trekking and telescope metaphors, which emphasised 'seeing far' and making new maps to uncharted areas. The seesaw metaphor captured the idea of containment, whilst also balancing feeling grounded and anchored in evidence with letting go and 'being up in the air' as part of finding out. 'Taking control' was, finally, a significant valued end-point in all accounts. In this way, the metaphors reflected varying positions on an axis between enculturation and emancipation.

Figure 10. Supervisees on supervision archetypes



Over to You

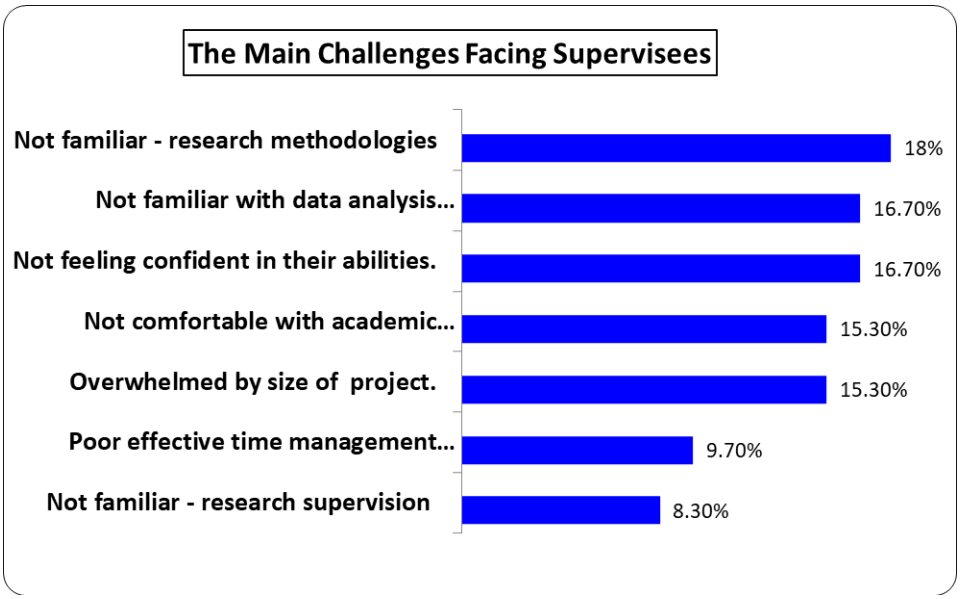
In clinical supervision, preparation is key. There is often a limited amount of time given to research supervision and preparation is important. Think of the steps you could take to prepare for your supervision, that will help you use that time so that you get your needs met?

How Supervisors Experience Effective Research Supervision

Quantitative findings

Research Supervisors were, firstly (Figure 11) asked what they considered to be the main challenges facing research supervisees. The principal issue identified was supervisees being 'not familiar with research methodologies' (18%), followed by their being 'not familiar with data analysis '(16.7%) and not 'confident in their abilities' (16.7%).

Figure 11. Research supervisors' views of the main challenges facing supervisees.



The supervisors' responses showed, further, an awareness of how emotionally challenging research can be. 'reflection on own supervision' (26%) and 'understanding emotional challenge' (22%) were rated highly, in fact they were considered as more important than 'being research active' (17%)

Figure 12. Supervisors' priorities for becoming an effective research supervisor

Qualitative Findings

Free Text Comments About Research Supervisors

As mentioned, the 122 Research Supervisors and the 104 Research Supervisees made a total of 558 comments (7,930 words) in response to our questions. The supervisors' comments resonated with the supervisees' references to trust and empathy, although they laid a greater emphasises on independency and the supervisees' own expertise.

In summary, the supervisor comments referred to constructive supervision in terms of:

- Exposing the supervisee to a broad range of research sources and approaches
- Helping the supervisees 'tune into' and orient themselves in research discipline(s) and approaches
- Gaining insight into the supervisee's own biography and values; understanding their needs, strengths and anxieties, and the time they require to adjust learning styles
- Providing safe space to be reflexive, including facilitating dialogues to help supervisees recognise their 'real' interests
- Supporting self-direction and self-motivation: 'can't think for but can think with the supervisee,'
- Adding a bigger picture
- Supporting strong research networks and collaborations, encouraging conference presentations and publications
- Guiding supervisees towards the viva

These themes will be explored further below.

Like a 'midwife': Attuning to and Building on the Student's Resources and Needs

One supervisor described her role as being a 'midwife to ideas'

I can't do their thinking for them, but I am always pleased to think with them. I'm being at hand, acting a bit like a midwife to their own ideas.

The 'midwife principle' runs like narrative thread through many accounts. Supporting someone to generate new knowledge involves encouragement, including encouraging trust in supervisees' own capacities to think.

As a supervisor, engaging academically with [supervisees'] ideas, is about encouraging them to trust in their thinking more.

This involves becoming confident enough to engage critically with existing theory, as highlighted by Sadot and Fathima earlier.

[I encourage my supervisee] to be more critical of existing ways of framing the issues they were researching [to] enable them to become more confident over time. This process has usually felt very collaborative and satisfying to be involved in.

openness to different student abilities, needs and aims. As another supervisor said, 'you need time to take in the supervisee in the meeting to understand which questions are really on her/his mind'.

Other supervisors resonated with this, with one saying:

It is very important to align with the student, being flexible... and so standing back when needed, leaning in when needed, adapting to the student.

'Aligning' with the student included tuning into the supervisee's own biography and values. One supervisor said:

... in Counselling Psychology research, the supervisee can be deeply reflexive, so a safe space within the supervision relationship needs to exist.

Another said:

Being able to talk about how the values my supervisee held (including her own personal reasons for conducting research in her area of focus and what she wanted the research to achieve) could ground and inform her choices around research methodology at a deep level.

The same supervisor continued:

An example of constructive supervision is when a student came with a vague idea of researching the therapeutic relationship. Together we brainstormed different possible angles/questions within that, and through dialogue [...] recognised that the real interest was in the embodied transferential process. That then becomes the focus of the research.

Others echoed with this. One said:

I first had to understand her strengths and anxieties, and time constraints. Then I prioritised the research process slightly differently to what I might have done e.g. for a more academic ... student.

The supervisor gave examples:

I pushed quicker to get the data, so the anxious student would learn from the data by revisiting the theory and feeling more confident and empowered. The opposite order (too much theory first) would have paralysed her.

Another supervisor expanded on variations in learning styles, and on the background to different types of contracts:

One student really struggled with her research, and we scheduled weekly but shorter supervision sessions over a period of time; she wanted very close guidance and lots of feedback, and she took it on board, and it worked for her. This style did not work with another student, who needed more space; here I learned to mostly just ask questions rather than give specific guidance: What did you do there? Why did you decide to do XYZ? How is this answering your research question? etc. It is tricky when a student wants space but actually needs a lot of guidance.

Introducing Research Knowledge

Finding ways to communicate methodology was a challenge. One supervisor stressed that 'too esoteric explanations seem to frighten or overwhelm'.

"I have often found it helpful to identify and share illustrative examples of how methodology can be used, I try to find some accessible 4-6 articles or book chapters of how methodology can be applied at the start of the supervision - and then speak about that.

Another (earlier referred to) stressed the value of critical thinking, supporting supervisees to be more critical of existing ways of framing the issues they were researching.

Over to You

Supervisor Question: Can you think of examples where you have adapted your input to the student's learning style?

One supervisor described how they tried to 'align with the student [and be] flexible… standing back when needed, leaning in when needed adapting to the student.

- How do you consider and adjust to students' learning needs? Do you build on own experience, pedagogical theory, peer support or other forms of input for this 'alignment' to the students?
- How are your needs met; what support might help you in your work?

Supervisors expanded on how adding a 'bigger picture' often involved discussing methodological implications of research interests and choices. One supervisor referred to a constructive supervision experience in which:

…we co-explored how the philosophical background of different research methodologies [and how] different positions within a particular research methodology… would guide the research in different directions, that may or may not suit her research purposes.

Many referred to the value of connecting with 'the background and interest' of each supervisee, and to ways of making supervisees' research as rich a process as possible.

I encouraged a student to adopt a pluralistic methodology, feeling that her background and interests would make this a more challenging, richer and ultimately more rewarding experience for her. Not only did she clearly enjoy the work, she also passed her viva without amendments and has since been approached to contribute a book chapter based on her research

No Short Cuts

Supervisors stressed the important of being realistic about the amount of work needed for doctoral studies.

Many look for short cuts...and this is the hardest part. My experience of constructive work has been with students who understand that they need to out in the extra hours.

Others resonate with this, addressing the nature of research in terms of its intensity. One said:

Research involves intense systematic critical scrutiny to test, analyse and synthesise. It's brutal... but also so exciting!

Over to You

- How might supervision prepare students for the intensity of doctoral research?
- What other types of support do you think the students benefit from? Do you recommend peer groups, critical friends, psychotherapy, more free time – or something else?

Several supervisor comments revolved around supervisee self-direction. One supervisor expressed 'enjoying cooperating with a supervisee who is proactive'. Another described supervision as 'a collegial meeting of peers where the researcher is the expert on the topic, whilst I am the expert on research per se'.

The same supervisor expected supervisees to agree to 'being well read, organised and have strong writing skills' and regarded in return her work as supervisor to be to 'guide them in this new world of research'. She concluded:

I provide insider knowledge on the nuances of different methods, offer thoughts on unexplored aspects of the literature, and ideas around the analysis.

Offering 'ideas' and experience was, therefore, important, whilst 'filling gaps in knowledge' was seen as the student's responsibility:

In my experience research supervision is most productive or effective when the student takes responsibility for filling any gaps in their knowledge on research methodology and puts in the time and effort to read sometimes difficult texts - essentially when the student demonstrates that they are prepared to do the work.

Research vivas and Output/Further Impact

The viva submission was clearly referred to as significant. One shared proudly that 'I have thirteen doctoral successes under my belt', and continued:

None of them has had less than the award of the doctorate with minor amendments. That, for me, is a very productive experience of being a research supervisor. I like to share in their success and celebrate it with them.

Others shared struggles with negotiating examiner critique with their supervisees. One said:

The supervisee and I had, previously, felt that her proposal was good and very likely to be approved. The supervisee felt, understandably, very upset and rather angry at the feedback she's received - and I felt that some of this anger might be directed at me because I'd said that I thought her proposal was good.

The supervisor highlighted the value of talking things through and continued:

Nevertheless, we were both able to share our frustration and puzzlement over some of the feedback given and were able to consider what might lie behind it.

Only two supervisors referred to supporting academic writing. One said:

I act as co-author to all my graduates, it helps them to get published and gives us a collaborative, equal focus in supervision.

Over to You

Where, how and why should one disseminate and publish one's research?

Our earlier research highlighted problems faced by therapists seeking to publish in academic journals.

The opportunities to publish are many and varied.

The European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy (EJQRP) describes its 'mission … to provide an accessible forum for research that advances the theory and practice of psychotherapy and supports practitioner-orientated research'. You can access the EJQRP on this link:
European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy (ejqrp.org)

The founder of the journal, Dr Linda Finlay offers a helpful article about writing for publication:

Finlay How to write an article.pdf

The Counselling and Psychotherapy Research Journal offers another platform for therapy researchers. The CPR 'is an international peer-reviewed journal dedicated to linking research with practice in counselling and psychotherapy' and can be reached via this link **Counselling and Psychotherapy Research Journal (bacp.co.uk)**

Over to You

Most doctoral programmes expect some academic publication as part of the degree, but universities differ in terms of expectations of where to publish. It is common for most institutions to adhere to the APA guidelines for publications, which can be reached here:

Student Paper Setup Guide, APA Style 7th Edition

- Presenting at conferences and events is often a stimulating and enriching experience. Most research conferences offer an opportunity to present a poster, as well as a full research paper. Poster presentations are a visual presentation of ongoing research displayed during the conference, and are often used by the first time presenters. They give the presenter an opportunity to discuss their project with others, without the stress of a full presentation. Society for Psychotherapy Research **https://www.psychotherapyresearch.org/page/SPRAbout** runs a number of local and international events that offer an opportunity to do that. Local groups (SPR chapters) run workshop events **https://www.psychotherapyresearch.org/** and also offer student grants for travel.

Return to the 'Shut Up and Write!' box. Consider how academic writing for dissemination purposes might have a part in such a group.

Summary of Supervisors' Free Text Comments

The free text comments overlapped with those of the supervisees, emphasising containment, exposure to research knowledge and encouragement, albeit with a greater emphasis on independence and supervisee self-directed learning (Figure 13). The comment 'I cannot think for, only with the supervisee' captured this idea, which we coined as the 'midwife principle'.

Figure 13. Supervisors' idea of effective research supervision, free text comments

Good	Very good
• Engaging academically around ideas • Supporting re-framing of ideas • Adding 'bigger picture' (especially epistemologically and methodologically) I provide inside knowledge on the nuances of different methods, offer thoughts on unexplored aspects of the literature, and ideas around the analysis.	• Encouraging trust in [supervisees] own thinking • Helping to clarify research aims Engaging academically around ideas • Supporting re-framing of ideas • Collaborating (for instance writing) • Adding 'bigger picture' (especially epistemologically and methodologically) • Being flexible for different learning styles • A relational depth As a supervisor, engaging academically with their [supervisees'] ideas, and encouraging them to trust in their thinking more, and to be more critical of existing ways of framing the issues they were researching, I think enabled them to become more confident over time. This process has usually felt very collaborative and satisfying to be involved in.
Poor	**Very poor**
• Poor communication • Lack of supervisee agency and preparation Infantilising [is unhelpful] as the supervisees [are] experts in their field of research, after all they are the ones who are immersed in the work	• Lack of supervisee agency and preparation • Closed for feedback • Looking for shortcuts • Lack of trust and respect • Unrealistic expectations • Lack of preparations Many [supervisees] look for short cuts … and this is the hardest part. My experience of constructive work has been with students who understand that they need to put in the extra hours. The supervisees' expectations [need to be] realistic. For example, some supervisees ask their 2nd supervisor, who usually only gets paid 1 hour per term to read 20-30000 word drafts and write extensive comments.

Supervisor Interview Findings

Our next phase was to interview the supervisors. 58 supervisors volunteered to have follow-up contact. As with the supervisees, we chose to approach approximately every 10th volunteer, avoiding recruiting colleagues. The three female and two male supervisors were between 47 and 62 years old, and each one had minimum of 15 years' experience of supervision on either PhDs (2) or professional doctorates (3). All five worked in the UK, one had supervision experience from PhD programmes in three different countries (Denmark, Poland and the UK) and another was also working on a PhD in New York.

Supervisor Interview Findings in Summary

The interviewees offered different approaches and ideas with some common priorities, as described below.

Emotionally-charged Research

In our literature review, Lee (2008, 2018) referred to 'enculturation' and to supporting supervisees in becoming 'members of a discipline'. In the case of psychotherapy, it sometimes being an art, sometimes a science – and often both, which makes the issue of introducing students to 'a discipline' complex. The supervisor 'Paul' referred to challenges that are unique to psychotherapy research.

If I were an historian, supervising someone about their history project, I think it would be easier... I would be only an academic historian. [Our role] is complex. Almost all of our work revolves around emotional and relational issues.

Connecting with the Research

The importance of 'connecting with the research' also stood out. One supervisor used the term 'bitten by the research bug' in the free text comments. This resonates with supervisors' testimony in the interviews. 'Laura' used the metaphor 'bareback riding mentor' to illustrate the importance of establishing a connection between the student and the research. It also captures the balance between skills and letting go, being open and guided by the research process. Others used metaphors like 'wild swimming', 'driving' or 'dancing' to describe their ideas about research and what they aimed to introduce their supervisees to. 'Research is like dancing' said the supervisor 'Joanne' when reflecting on 'the rhythm of research' and how important that sense of rhythm could be. Each doctoral researcher 'adds something of their own' as part of generating new knowledge, which makes the learning 'more than simply learning the steps'. Most supervisors emphasised that doctoral research required a 'real thirst for learning', ongoing curiosity, and a balance of openness with systematic reasoning. 'Joanne' spoke about a strong motivation to immerse oneself in the research and said: 'you have to want to bring articles with you on your holiday to the beach... When you're doing a PhD it should be your life'.

Self-directive Learning

A capacity for self-direction was often mentioned in the interviews. A particularly poignant metaphor was the 'stethoscope', which made a stark contrast to the supervisee depiction of supervision as a 'telescope'. As the supervisor 'Bengt' said: 'My role is to help the supervisee to connect with and build on what's already there'.

Others resonated with supervision often being about 'tapping into' dormant capabilities and slumbering motivation, as described below.

Like a ‘driving instructor’, My Role is to Help the Supervisee to be Self-directive

‘Paul’ is 54-years-old and works as psychotherapist, senior lecturer and research supervisor on a UK-based PhD programme. He describes supervision as a ‘balancing act’ involving ‘measuring, moderating and adapting to each student’ whilst stressing the importance of honing students’ own capabilities.

The supervisee ‘is always the driver’

“I look at it as if we’re in a car and I say ‘You’re the driver. I’ll support you, give direction and advice when you need it, but I’m the passenger and you’re the driver. I’ll never take the steering wheel from a student”

For Paul, he expanded

I always try to help the student to move into a driver position, to be more proactive and recognise their own capacity.

He sums up the requirements for a PhD as ‘a combination of being open to learning and recognising you have a lot to learn and yet having some fundamental self-confidence telling you that you can do it’.

Phase 1: First year training

Paul’s PhD programme includes intense training during year 1, with courses on epistemology and research design. Students can also join courses in other departments and disciplines.

At the end of the first year, the following aspects commence:

Phase 2: Supportive supervisory teams with broad methodological knowledge

Paul’s supervisor teams meet monthly and consist of a first and second supervisor. This can reflect input from other disciplines and subjects, including sociology, social anthropology, mental health nursing and politics.

Maze of Monitoring

Paul reflected on how ‘the days of the lonely, slow PhD are gone’, because a ‘maze or labyrinth of progress monitoring’ is now in place.

The monitoring system is there for a reason, but students manifest their competence at different times, and part of my role is to help them to negotiate the system.

Adapting the Learning Style

Paul added that it was necessary to be open to different ways of learning.

Every student needs something different. Some want a really critical feedback, and others they wither at any hint of that there's something wrong.

Honing the Question

I will always say, so, what don't you know; what do you hope to find out? Some know the project already; they're going to prove their point and that's that. And I'm like a broken record saying 'Yes, but this is a research project, so there has to be a question that you, me and the world don't yet know the answer to yet; so, what's that question?

Not About Empty Vessel Filling

'Paul' stated that PhD studies are 'not a place for empty vessel filling'.

...Some wants to be filled up like empty vessels [but] they need to be able to organise, plan their work and form an opinion for themselves.

He continued:

They must love the learning, there must be a real hunger for learning... a genuine thirst for it. The difference between a PhD and a masters or degree programme is that the students ultimately design their own PhDs

Drawing on Counselling Skills to Resolve 'Blocks'

Paul referred to self-sabotaging patterns, and blocks to overcome:

I try to draw on my counselling skills about what's going on for that person and between us, and why we might be stuck here. If someone piles up the books without reading them, or suffer writing blocks and always agonises about the writing... or like when they don't go to the courses... I say, it's going to be painful if you don't work on that.

As mentioned earlier, Paul reflected on the special challenges in psychotherapy-related research.

Almost all of our research is connected to emotional and relational issues. It's a complex situation. If I was an historian supervising someone about their history project I think it would be easier because I would be only an academic historian...

He continued:

There's a balance of being able to draw on our counselling skills and yet always stay focused on the research project, which is ultimately to produce a thesis aimed to show that this student is meeting academic standards for a doctorate degree. We need to be clear about that this is not counselling. We are research supervisors.

Phase 3: Methodological flexibility, networking and independence

"They often change methodology. We only really do qualitative research, but that can be anything from case study research - based on interviews or trying out new interventions, focus group, arts - people can be really creative in what they do."

Paul emphasise 'networking' and encourages his supervisees attend conferences and present papers as soon and as much as possible in order to 'build their own community with networks of co-researchers away from the supervisory relationship. When they come and say I've signed up to present a paper I think "yes!!!!"'

No Shortcuts

'Paul' stressed that there are no shortcuts.

It sounds basic, but you must love reading and writing. The field work is only 5-10 %, the rest is reading and writing. I say, if you're someone who piles up the books and always suffer from writing blocks, you've got a problem you need to deal with.

He continued:

Some come just for the qualification, the rubber stamp. I think it's a problem when students don't show interest in the question about what they don't know yet. Most students... especially the younger ones, come in open and really want to learn. But some come with an agenda. I always say that proving what you know comes at the end of the work, that's what you do at your viva.

A 'fantastic' Job

Paul describes his work as stimulating.

When it works it's nurturing both ways, they are also giving me new ideas and new lines of enquiries and ways of thinking about things... and that's just fantastic.

Like 'teaching someone to dance.'

Like Paul, Joanne emphasised the value of student motivation, will and aptitude. Joanne is a 45-year-old psychologist and an assistant professor with 15 years' experience from some 30 PhD students. She described enjoying a 'visible transition' in her supervisees as they gain confidence.

For me, the productivity of a PhD is seen at that point where there is a visible transition in the student, from novice, inexperienced researcher to confident and competent researcher.

The Rhythm of Research

Expanding on what a 'visible' transition involves, Joanne compares research supervision to dance training.

You can't put your finger on what makes a good dancer. It's partly something already there, a motivation... and sense of rhythm, a 'je ne sais quoi'. Anyone can learn to technically do the steps, move their arms and hold that gaze but still not look good on the dance floor. It's the same in research.

Joanne reflected on the importance of motivation and practice, or 'learning by doing'.

You can only learn or develop research 'by doing', and you have to feel motivated and want to practice.

The 'visible transition': Three Milestones

Joanne described 'three points when you see marked shifts or changes in the students'.

Phase 1: Skills training

Joanne referred to an intense training in the first year of a PhD, suggesting that 'when training comes to an end… there is a lightbulb moment when they are starting to see that actually they can solve problems'.

There are two or three points with marked shifts or changes in the students. The first point is the training bit… they have all these courses, and they are developing their proposal and their ideas.

Joanne continued:

At that point they are really lacking in ideas and in confidence… but you're pushing them all the time out of their comfort zone, making them do all the things they don't like doing - like presenting… and their '3-minute thesis' you know… can they summarise their thesis in 3 minutes for an external person […] There's a real shift after this full-time year.

Joanne said that she brings special research expertise:

We mainly do qualitative research, and qualitative research is on a spectrum of complexity. I specialise in [concealed], it's extremely complex and takes years to learn. It's so much more than technical skills… Many fall into the trap of being too cognitive, because that's what they're used to…they need to make that mental switch to grasp how a language constructs a phenomenon, and the only way of learning is learning by doing. You need a kind of passion for it.

Phase 2: Field work - 'once you've got your data there's a huge sense of relief, because the whole research hinges on that'

"When they go out in the field, they are a bit anxious, and you guide them and support them - and there's a sense of achievement."

Joanne reflected on the growing confidence supervisees gain through 'learning by doing':

They feel they've tackled something. They tend to screw things up a little bit at the start and they learn from that, they implement and they start to feel that they are researchers, it's the learning by doing.

Phase 3: The shift towards critical thinking

I think the third, the real lightbulb moment is when they've suddenly learnt the writing… They've been submitting drafts as they go along… But when they've done their analysis they've really learnt the critical writing thing. There's usually a distinct… you can't pinpoint it exactly, but there is a clear shift in their ability and you're like 'yes, you've got it; you're writing, you're thinking critically.

Networking

Joanne incorporates group analysis work in her supervision.

PhD students can become very lonely, so I'm arranging groups across universities because there are no other groups in that in my university. We're working with the analysis in groups with others – that's such an important part of the learning.

Putting in the Time: 'when you do a PhD it should be your life'

Joanne referred to different aspects of practice at this transformative stage. Firstly, there are 'no short cuts', secondly there is a change in field-work.

It's rare, fortunately, but you do get these students who just don't get it, they always look to you to solve their problems… I've had one or two students in the past who didn't make it… I think part of it is motivation, and part of it is time. Some try to do the PhD in 15 hours a week.

Joanne reiterated the importance of investing time, interest and motivation.

When you're doing a PhD it should be your life [laughing]. If they're not going to put in those extra hours, they're never going to learn, they're never going to switch. You have to give up your weekend and your evenings, and you have to want to bring articles with you on your holiday to the beach…

Invested in the Full Journey

Joanne describes supervision as her 'favourite part of the job'.

You get to know the students and their projects, you're invested in their journey… You watch them go from this naïve place, lacking in confidence… a very minimal research skills person going to this confident great researcher with great ideas, going onto post-doctoral work, lecturing work… There's something really amazing about that, you don't get that in teaching.

'I'm more like a stethoscope than a telescope, tapping into and strengthening an inner curiosity'

All of the supervisors described their role in terms of 'tuning into' something that already is there. 'Bengt', a 62-year-old psychotherapist, psychologist and senior lecturer who has worked as research supervisor on PhD programmes for psychotherapists in Scandinavia, Poland and the UK compared himself to a 'stethoscope'.

I like the idea of a telescope, but that's only a small part of my role… I'm more like a stethoscope [laughing]. Supervision is about teasing out what's going on for the supervisee; he's the expert and… what's going on for him, what's he interested in and what can we do about that 'itch'?

He continued:

I suppose I'm bringing a combination of telescope, microscope and stethoscope into their research, depending on the stages and problems. I don't mean to sound insincere, but supervisees bring some kind of 'itch' or concern, and my role is partially to help them to tap into that, unlock a curiosity and help them to understand and use it. So, like a stethoscope I'm trying to help my PhD student to connect to that sound, murmur.

Research is Like Bareback Riding: It Requires Attunement, Skills and a Balance Between Control and Letting Go.

Like Bengt, the supervisor 'Laura' also focuses on adjustment, attunement or acclimatisation to the research process. She compared research to horse-riding.

Other disciplines can be more like saddle riding, there is techniques and ritual [involved]. Psychotherapy research is like bareback riding [laughing], we do a lot of listening in… we sense and tune into things… and my role is to help the supervisee to see how logic and embodied knowing come together.

Laura refers to different stages, with, like Bengt, an emphasis on the early attunement:

Phase 1. Introduction to research

I always start with introducing the supervisee to others' research…articles, books…different kinds of research will speak to different students … and so they choose, pick up a pace, a kind of language or rhythm and 'get it'. So…good supervision starts by helping the student to tune into how [different types of] research moves and thinks.

Phase 2: Cultivating and supporting the journey into the unknown

As their knowledge grow, they develop their own ways… their research takes different directions. This is the other side of bareback riding, with the adventure and the [vast] ground you cover as part of the research.

Incredibly demanding and effortless at the same time

This tuning into 'how research moves and thinks' resonates in one sense with the 'enculturation' process addressed by Lee (2008, 2018). But it also encompasses some of 'Gabriella's emphasis on containing a balance between letting go, finding out and being in control of that overarching process. 'Laura' continued:

"You've got to be incredibly engaged with the research to make it. There's a sort of willingness there… to the get involved, pulled in. The rest of their research [is about] this balance between being in control and following the process. And I'm supporting and following them on that journey."

Over to You

Return to the box with the 'Shut up and Write' groups, with the link:

Shut up and Write! – The Thesis Whisperer

- **Consider the supervisor Laura's account in the context of the phrase that thesis writing is about being 'just like the horse whisperer – but with more pages';**
- **What occurs to you? Where and with whom, can and would you find it helpful to expand on those questions and insights?**

‘I’m like a wild-swimming partner’

‘Maria’ is a 48-year-old lecturer and experienced research supervisor, who also works as a psychologist and psychotherapist in the NHS and in private practice. She sums up her role as to clarify, contain and be compassionate. Similar to Bengt’s stethoscope analogy, Maria referred to research as ‘not something out there but something in here…and supervision is about sharing that’. In summary, Maria describes attunement in stages. It involves modelling a good relationship to research, and meeting of supervisees ‘where they are’ to understand ‘blocks’ in research and help her/him to find a research voice. This in turn requires broad, flexible supervisor knowledge to add new perspectives and co-explore approach aims in context of a supervisee’s topic and personal fit.

Marie compares research to ‘wild swimming’ and refers in summary to some of the following themes:

Clarify, Contain and be Compassionate.

I so enjoy research supervision. I think of my role as being to clarify, contain and be compassionate. I felt really out of my depth first… I was thinking I don’t know much about heuristic research, constructivist grounded theory - or about diabulimia or this obscure other piece of research a supervisee might bring… But I can share the interests and their excitement, literally feeling the neurons firing and thinking we can find out together!

One’s Own Positive Supervision Experience

As with Joanne, Marias’s own experience of research supervision was important.

“I had an extraordinary research supervisor. It was initially a very idealising relationship… she was a well-known professor, with all this knowledge and wisdom and I was so new to research and so confused by it.

Modelling a Good Relationship to Research

My supervisor modelled a good relationship to research. It’s so easy to shame someone in research because it’s imbued in power and knowingness… whilst really it’s such an ambiguous, uncertain and improvised path. We know and we don’t know, and it’s about making that okay.

Familiarisation

I wanted to do so something about service resistance in the NHS. She [the supervisor] kept encouraging me to go to the edge of my discomfort - a bit like I am with my horses - saying ‘it’s okay, it’s okay…’. So I felt regulated, safe enough to tell her that things were a mess, and I didn’t know what I was doing… she never shamed me.

Exploring Approaches in the Context of Topic and Personal Fit

I had for instance this rather split internal discussion myself between service provision and my own internal confusions and traumas and I think that’s quite common in research. In my case there were inter-generational, racist-related traumas.

Broad, Flexible Supervisor Knowledge

I suspect I would have abandoned the project if I'd stayed with my treatment resistance project without that social constructionist frame. I wanted to do art-formed research that had scholarship and I found methods and means that made that possible. Supervision gave me that space.

Adding New Perspectives

My supervisor knew about organic, intuitive research methods, and suggested I read this book... I thought first 'how is this research? Can research be this?

Help to Find One's 'research voice'

I read and read and thought 'hold on, I can find a different quality in my research voice... and I took it to her [the supervisor] and she said 'absolutely', I think her words were 'this research will be safe in your hands' and I thought 'WOW'... and I felt like she was championing me, kind of galvanising me gently and I felt I can do this, maybe I can do this!

Meeting Supervisees 'where they are'

So, my ongoing, growing edge as research supervisor is to balance my quite high expectations of my supervisees and remember that... like my own supervisors did, I really need to meet them where they are.

Being introduced to a broad range of theory can, as Maria described, be an essential starting point. By comparison with Paul, Maria expressed a greater interest in exploring 'blocks' or conflicting drives and motivations.

Understanding 'blocks' in Research

The blocks in research are often personal, some personal entanglement that gets in the way. People have got academic ability to do it. Some process gets in the way, but that can also often be the way if you know what I mean, like in my own research.

Addressing Defences and Misconceptions About Research

Research prowess is common but can be a regression [and a hindrance]. I think we need to learn more about why we relate to research so differently [and usually so intensely]. We talk about how people enact in clinical work but not in research. About how people regress in the research journey... they can feel very little - and very big.

Maria offered some examples of this from her own learning.

Some students treat their research as their baby, some won't let go, others are self-destructive. I was, for instance, thinking myself last night about why I love research so much now, and what's my own lived journey of being a research supervisor...

I think for me it started with the projection and the mystery of power in our notion of research as a 'special thing'. About that you had to be 'special' to do it or know it... making it frightening and asymmetrical to my experience as a therapist. I realised then that research was close to me, I already lived a life as a researcher; curious, not knowing - but with intent [laughter] and I was thinking 'Oooooh, it's me'. And I hope to help my supervisee find their place in research.

Like ‘wild swimming’

Maria used the metaphor ‘wild swimming’ to describe her experience.

It’s a bit like wild swimming. For me it’s something about uncharted territories, and that’s what wild swimming brings to mind. Something happens in researchers so they can tolerate that cold water, there are those mini-states (stages?) of mastering...

Aliveness

There’s something really exciting about getting past the shock of the cold and the fears - you don’t know what’s hit you. There’s an aliveness about it, which is incredible. The neurons are firing, there’s lots of energy -the ‘let’s find out!!’ [growling, laughter]. Even when I talk about it now I can feel a real aliveness. So there is something quite powerful.

Swimming Partners

But there [is the initial chill shock] and the reeves and... and so you may not want to be a lone wild swimmer, you might want a pairing, a partner in that deep dive some of the time - so when you get near the edge you don’t get wounded by the rocks, and when it gets too cold someone can throw you

Over to You

The supervisee and supervisor accounts relate to different experiences, ideas and approaches to research. Rather than competing, we regard these themes as complementary. Figure 14 captures what we have summed up as the 'SMT' approach to research supervision - reflecting a stethoscope, microscope and telescope focus at different stages of the research.

Figure 14. Complementary relationships to research according to a 'SMT' cycle

Stethoscope phase	Microscope phase	Telescope phase
Research is not something out there but something in here... and supervision is about sharing that [...] I [had] for instance this rather split internal discussion myself between service provision and own internal confusions and traumas [which] I think [is] common in research...I would have [never completed research] if I'd stayed with my treatment resistance project without that social constructionist frame...I found methods and means that made that possible. Supervision gave me that space.	Research involves intense systematic critical scrutiny to test, analyse and synthesise. It's brutal... but also so exciting!	I need freedom, but can only see that far. [E]xpert knowledge [becomes like a] telescope helping me to see more, further [and] navigate better.

Supervisor and Supervisee Question:

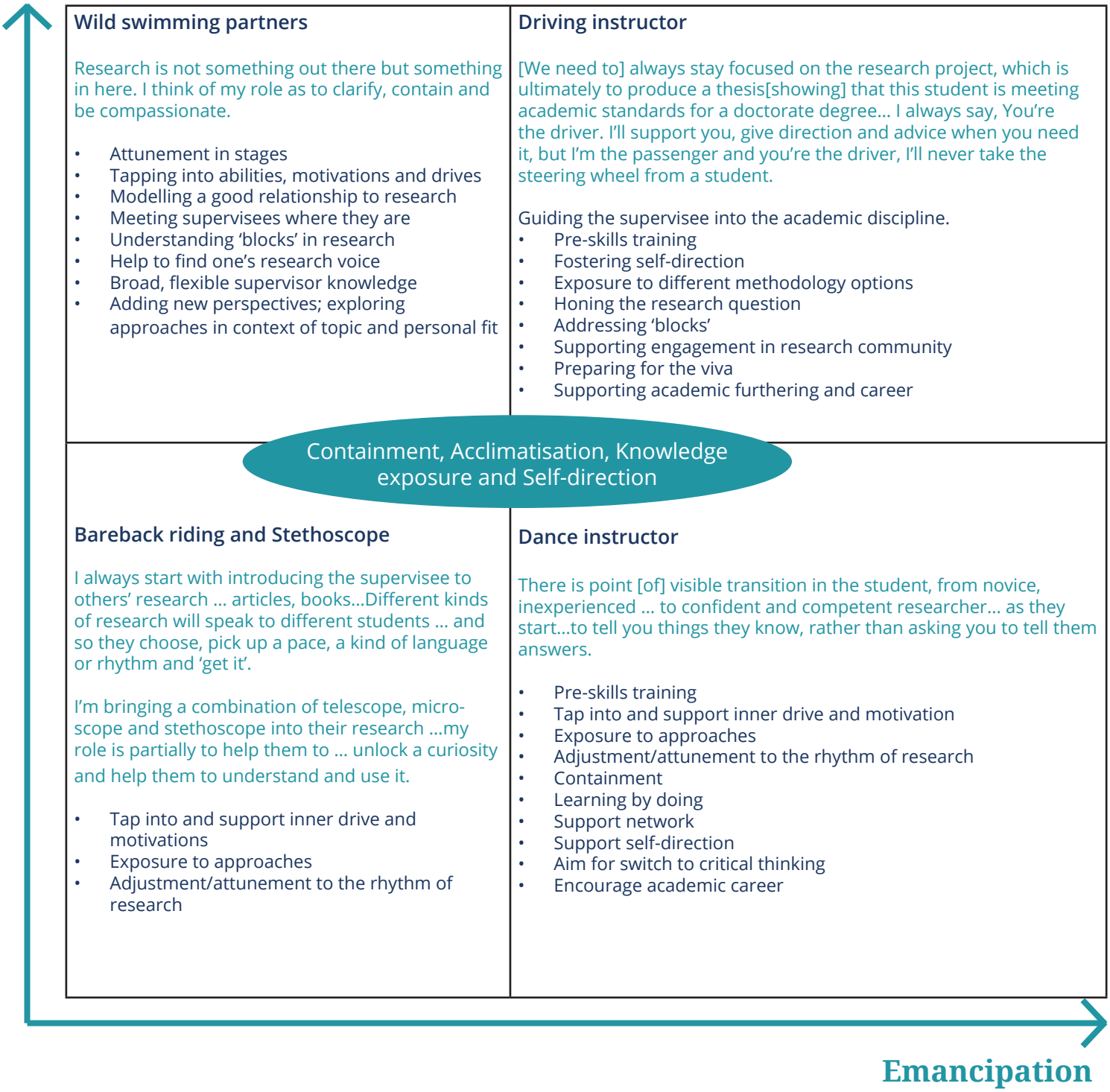
- **How do you experience the different stages of research? What metaphors for different foci and emphasis can you think of to describe the 'skill set' in doctoral research; and how might these impact the supervisory input? Discuss within the supervision team.**

Interviews in Summary

We found **Containment, Acclimatisation, Knowledge** and **Self-direction** were shared themes across all supervisee approaches. The metaphors captured archetypes with different emphases; they all highlighted for instance the importance of introducing and connecting the student to the research – although the 'wild swimming', 'bareback riding' and 'dancing' analogies were particularly strong examples of this. With the literature review (Lee, 2008) as a backdrop, we compared each archetype with 'enculturation' (introduction to the discipline) and 'emancipation' (learning to critique and develop independent thinking) in mind as below (Figure 15). Whilst all metaphors highlighted the value of tuning into and building on already existing resources, the 'dancing' and the 'driving' archetypes offered more concrete guidance towards self-direction when compared to for instance the 'stethoscope' and 'wild swimming' supervisory archetypes.

Figure 15. Complementary relationships to research according to a 'SMT' cycle

Enculturation, Attunement



Conclusion: Effective Research Supervision. The Necessary Conditions of Compassion, Containment, Connection and Clarity

Our mixed methods study reflects a 'dialectical engagement' (Bager-Charleson, McBeath & Vostanis, 2021) between qualitative and quantitative research, involving a 'qualitative survey' (Braun, Clarke et al., 2020; McBeath 2020) with closed and open questions that was internationally disseminated to supervisors and supervisees who were also provided with an option to undertake follow-up interviews.

Research experience, empathy and containment were, rated highly by **research supervisees** in the survey, free text comments and interviews. In the survey, references were made to being listened to and encouraged, challenged when too ambitious, free to discuss how to amend ideas, supervisors having a non-patronizing relationship and the opportunity to get practical support when necessary.

The findings showed, importantly, an unequivocal appreciation of research supervision. The quantitative data showed that 90% of the supervisees rated supervision as important, with 70% describing it as extremely important. Out of 100 %, supervisees rated supervisor experience highest (21%) with 'demonstrating empathy' (17%) and 'explaining complex issues' (17%) equally closely linked. In a question about rating significant input, the supervisees valued 'support when feeling stuck' (21%) most highly followed by 'methodology input' (18%) and 'advice of analysis' (15%).

This idea of a research supervisor as empathic and compassionate whilst able to explain complex issues, resonated in turn with our research supervisor responses. The supervisors' survey responses showed a considerable awareness of emotional challenges. 22% referred to 'understanding emotional challenge' (22%) as important, in fact, it was rated as more important than 'being research active' (17%) as a 'key factor for effective supervision'. When reflecting on the 'main challenges facing research supervisees' supervisors also experienced supervisees struggling with 'not being familiar with research methodologies' (18%) followed by 'not being familiar with data analysis '(16.7%) and 'not feeling confident in their abilities' (16.7%).

The qualitative findings highlighted, further, how some **research supervisees** valued firm contracts whilst others valued flexibility and freedom. All stressed the importance of trust. The free text comments expanded on the importance of broad and up to date research knowledge. One supervisee said 'it is not containing for a supervisee to have a supervisor who admits to being "rusty" with regards to their knowledge of the methodology being used… You feel…alone and worried'.

Whilst the interviewed supervisors also valued mutual trust and relational depth, they clearly emphasised supervisee agency and trust in their own thinking. One supervisor described her role as like being a 'midwife of ideas', stating 'I can't think for but with my supervisee'. Another described supervision as 'a collegial meeting of peers where the researcher is the expert on the topic, whilst I am the expert on research per se'. Among the interviews, some interesting **archetypes** developed. One particularly illustrative example of how different supervisors and supervisees depicted research supervision was when one supervisee described her supervisor as her 'telescope' – helping her to navigate and see far – whilst a supervisor chose a 'stethoscope' to describe how he saw his role as supporting each student to connect 'inwardly'.

Other metaphors were used by supervisors to capture a welcome balance between trust and new, relevant knowledge. These included:

- Sailing instructor ('The wind can always change. You want the supervisor in the boat with you, with light hand on the tiller.')
- Mountain leader (facilitating new perspectives, vistas and maps)

The supervisors also used analogies that made reference to acclimatisation, rhythm, motivation and self-direction, including:

- Dance instructor (supporting the supervisees to learn skills, practise moves and connect to the rhythm of research with independence and one's own successful performance in mind)
- Driving instructor (supporting independence, pointing out options, focusing on upcoming obstacles)

The supervisee accounts ranged from supervisors ideally 'teaching you sailing skills - and being in the boat with you with a light hand on the tiller' to acting as beacons, telescopes and seesaw partners - throwing new light, navigating and adding direction and perspectives and balancing containment with exhilaration.

Supervisors often referred, in turn, to their own roles as tapping into dormant capabilities and slumbering motivations. Introducing, connecting to and helping the student attune to research in the first place was frequently mentioned. Therapy research was referred to in terms of a complex ongoing balance between knowing what to do and letting go or being guided by the process. One used the metaphor 'bareback riding mentor', and another supervisor compared herself to a 'wild swimming companion' to illustrate this balance. Most supervisors mentioned the importance of supervisees having a 'real thirst for learning', ongoing curiosity and a strong motivation and passion to succeed.

At the backdrop of our literature review, we considered the accounts in the context of what Lee (2008, 2018) conceptualises as 'enculturation' (encouraging students to become a member of the disciplinary community) and 'emancipation' (interpreting research and contributing with new knowledge). We regarded the 'seesaw' and the 'stethoscope' as lowest on both enculturation and emancipation and 'telescope' and 'driving instructor' as highest. We found, in turn, that the supervisee accounts all shared trust, knowledge and containment as key supervisory components, whilst the supervisor accounts all referred to containment, acclimatisation, knowledge exposure and self-direction. Common across both groups, with their different setups, priorities and archetypes, were what we propose as **'the 3C Relational Research Supervision model'** building on Containment, Compassion, and Clarity as in **Figure 16** and **Appendix 5** below.

Figure 16. Relational research supervision

Supervisees on 'very good' supervision

- To have negotiated, discussed and ongoingly reviewed contracts
- Needs analysis with 'skills' training
- Guided independence with 'the supervisor in the boat with you, with a light hand on the tiller'
- Clearly communicated updated and broad methodology knowledge
- Empathy, compassion
- Openness for diversity, encouraging linkage of new paths like 'mountain leaders'
- Being listened to and encouraged
- Challenging when needed
- Supported in how to amend ideas
- A containing, non-patronising relationship
- Providing practical support when needed
- Supporting independency and own control

Supervisors on 'very good' supervision

- Encouraging supervisee's trust in one's own thinking,
- Sowing seeds early on for self-directed learning and own sense of control
- Being flexible to different learning styles
- A relational depth – containing and compassionate
- Helping to clarify research aims
- Engaging academically around ideas
- Supporting re-framing of ideas
- Adding 'bigger picture' (especially epistemologically and methodologically)
- Collaborating (for instance writing)

Appendices

Appendix 1

'Doing' a Doctorate.

The Metanoia Institute/Middlesex MPhil/PhD degree in Psychotherapy includes Level 7 and Level 8 Learning. The below illustrates how this is translated for one of the doctoral modules.

LEVEL 7 (M)

Have the following Learning Outcomes been evidenced:	**Yes/No**
A1 (Knowledge) Understanding of historical perspectives on research in the psychological therapies, and the different philosophical and epistemological frameworks which may be identified in research activities.	
A2 (Research and Development Capability) Ability to adopt a critical perspective to research approaches in psychotherapy.	
A3 (Ethical Understanding) Understanding the ethical challenges posed by research activities.	
B1 (Analysis and Synthesis) Understanding of methodological approaches to research and the issues involved in the construction of an appropriate research design and the ability to select an appropriate research methodology for Masters-level work.	
B2 (Self Appraisal/Reflection on Practice) Ability to select an appropriate research focus for research, develop a coherent research, develop a coherent research design for research, and evidence knowledge of appropriate methods, their limitations and uses.	
B3 (Planning/Management of Learning) Capacity to plan for, and collect, relevant research data.	
C1 (Awareness of Operational Context and Application of Learning) Ability to evaluate and critique research approaches and methods in various contexts and to justify their selection in a piece of successfully completed research.	
C2 (Use of Resources) Ability to review and evaluate appropriate literature in support of research.	
C3 (Communication/Presentation Skills) Ability to analyse and present the data collected, and to put material together into a coherent research report which meets standard academic requirements (e.g. referencing format).	

LEVEL 8 (D)

Have the following Module Learning Outcomes been evidenced:

	Yes/No
A1 (Knowledge) Evidence of in-depth knowledge of an inter-disciplinary nature in a complex area and is working at current limits of theoretical and/or research understanding.	
A2 (Research and Development Capability) Ability to adopt a critical perspective to research approaches in psychotherapy.	
A3 (Ethical Understanding) A wide experience and acute awareness of the ethical challenges posed by research activities	
B1 (Analysis and Synthesis) Evidence of self-directed critical evaluation of methodological approaches to research and the issues involved in the construction of an appropriate research design and the ability to select an appropriate research methodology for their specialist field.	
B2 (Self Appraisal/Reflection on Practice) Ability to select an appropriate research focus for research, develop a coherent research design for research, and evidence knowledge of appropriate methods, their limitations and uses in ways that are acknowledged to be applicable in the professional field of practice.	
B3 (Planning/Management of Learning) Capacity to plan for, and collect, relevant research data appropriate for leading-edge research and development activities.	
C1 (Awareness of Operational Context and Application of Learning) Ability to evaluate and critique research approaches and methods in various contexts and to justify their selection in a piece of successfully completed research.	
C2 (Use of Resources) Ability to review and evaluate appropriate literature in support of research.	
C3 (Communication/Presentation Skills) Ability to translate and disseminate theoretical knowledge into workable frameworks and models which are acknowledge to be applicable in the professional field of practice.	
C4 (Responsibility and Leadership) Autonomy in a wide range of professional practice contexts. Has acquired the skills of setting up and managing learning for self and others.	

Research Progress Report

This form is to be used by supervisees (candidates) and supervisors as a basis for negotiating and assessing doctoral research progress. An electronic version is available from the DPsych members section of the Metanoia website: www.metanoia.ac.uk or from the DPsych Academic Co-ordinator as an email attachment. Candidates should insert their material into the expanding fields.

Candidate:

Academic Supervisor:

1. Working Title:
2. Learning objectives and candidate aims:
3. Key Issues:
i) Theoretical and epistemological issues ii) Methodological issues iii) Practical issues
4. Possible components/structure of the final project
1. Underline argument: At what stage are you in developing the argument of the final project, and how do you see it developing?
2. Psychological theory underpinning your research (make reference to the literature):
3. Resources needed, if applicable
4. Obstacles and goals
5. Draft Timetable
6. Further comments

Signed: .....

Candidate: .....

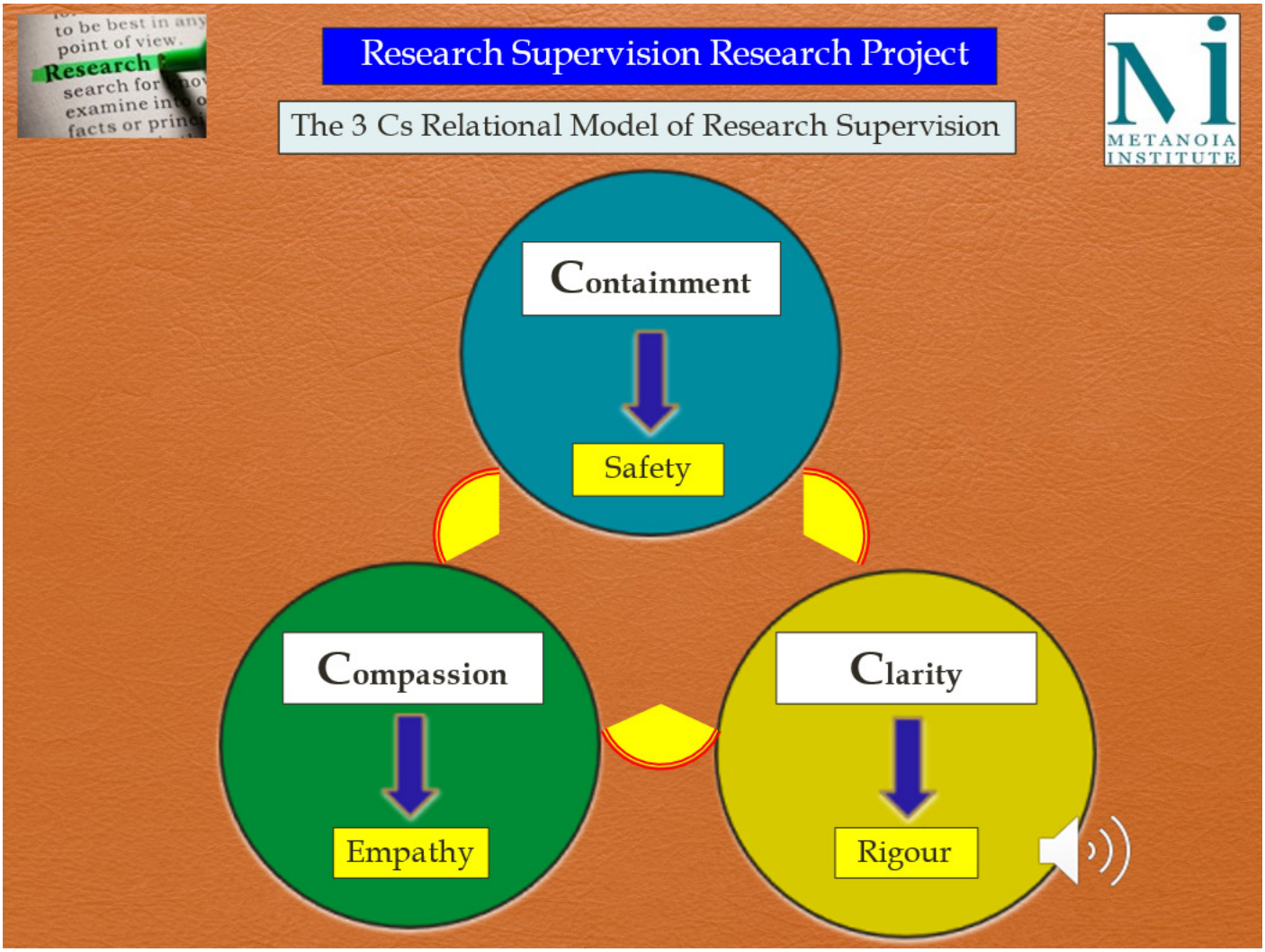
Academic Supervisor .....

Date: .....

Appendix 3. Research supervisees' experience of good supervision.

Appendix 4. Contrasts between supervisee and supervisor metaphors on good supervision.

Appendix 5. The 3 C's model



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