

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The criteria for the M.A. thesis in the M.A. Counseling Psychology program is stated on page 20 as follows:

Within the context of the Institute's guiding vision, students are encouraged to select a particular topic that they wish to explore in depth. Towards this end, the student is asked:

1. To pursue an area of individual interest relevant to the issues of counseling psychology (e.g., therapeutic issues, psychological motifs, clinical procedures).
2. To ground this particular area of interest in a conceptual framework (e.g., background information, findings, concluding evaluation).
3. To demonstrate competency in researching a specific area and in expressing ideas with clarity and precision.
4. To submit a thesis that meets all criteria for completion and is worthy of submission to Proquest for publication as determined by the Research Coordinator.

In order to satisfy these criteria and to assist future researchers, the student will write a statement regarding research methodology in the thesis proposal for CP 620-Research in Psychology, in the thesis outline for CP 650-Directed Research I, and in both the Abstract and Chapter 1 of the M.A. thesis itself. In addition to naming the research methodology utilized, the statement in the thesis will include the steps in the research method, the sources of data, a comment on data analysis, and the limitations of the chosen research methodology. Additionally, if the data gathering process has included the use of human subjects, the final, approved ethics application will be included as an appendix in the thesis.

Quantitative Research Methodology

Though the use of quantitative methodology is rare in M.A. Counseling Psychology Theses, we are and will be consumers of quantitative research and therefore we need to be familiar with this approach. Also, some students use the M.A. thesis as a pilot project for what becomes a doctoral dissertation, which may involve the use of quantitative research methods

In a quantitative study there must be a testable hypothesis and the hypothesis must include concepts that can be measured by numbers. In quantitative studies the experimental methods must be appropriate and well designed and the statistical applications and tools must be appropriate. Quantitative studies come in many forms. One form involves distinct experimental and control groups. In this form, to research

clinical interventions a study might be designed so one group receives the intervention and one group does not. The group that does not receive the intervention is called the control group. Other forms of quantitative studies may not have a separate control group. ABAB designs, for instance, have one group that alternates back and forth between control and experimental conditions. This design can yield important results. ABA and ABBA designs are similarly important.

Quantitative research is a process of disproving the null hypothesis. Such a study tries to prove that there will be no difference in response between the experimental and control groups. If a difference in response occurs 95% of the time, then the null hypothesis that states that there is no meaningful difference between the group receiving the treatment and the control group, has been disproved by the study. When this occurs the opposite of the null hypothesis, which the researcher surmised was the case, is proven.

Quantitative methodology takes care to control the variables studied, and to determine which variables are cause, which variables are effect, and which variables are correlative. An important consideration is choosing a sample in which both the test group and the control group are large enough to provide statistically significant results. Sample group chosen can be representative or random samples. A quantitative study needs to be described sufficiently in the literature so that it can be replicated by other researchers.

In quantitative methodology the researcher tries to be objective and to present a blank screen to the research subjects. Nevertheless, ethical considerations are paramount and, though neutral, the researcher must ensure the subjects' rights and well-being.

Suggested Reading:

Frankfort-Nachmias, C., & Nachmias, D. (2008). *Research methods in the social sciences*. (7th ed.). New York: Worth.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Many types of qualitative studies share common aspects. They are descriptive, and rather than proving or disproving a hypothesis, they explore some aspect of human experience in depth. If there is a description of some behavior (e.g., a therapeutic strategy or approach), it is offered as something described, not as a proven approach. The sample size of a qualitative study varies and can be one or more. Usually three or four is best if subjects are other than oneself and six subjects is usually the maximum for the M.A. thesis project.

In qualitative studies, the focus is on the wholeness of the experience rather than its parts. The focus is also on meanings and essences of experience rather than parts of the experience that can be measured more easily. The purpose of qualitative studies is to develop ideas and theories about human experience rather than quantified, replicable comparisons of identified groups of people. Therefore the interest is in the subjective experience of oneself as the subject or in the experience of co-researchers. Data from co-

researchers can be obtained from interviews, observations, or historical records and is open-ended and non-quantitative. Often the findings are shared with the co-researchers and the researcher might get help with design and exploration. Below are a few qualitative research methods that might be used in a Pacifica M.A. thesis.

Suggested Reading:

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Frankfort-Nachmias, C., & Nachmias, D. (2008). *Research methods in the social sciences*. (7th ed.). New York: Worth.

Ethnographic

Ethnographic research methodology arose primarily in anthropology and sociology. This methodology includes entering into the field, doing fieldwork, gathering information through direct observation, interviews, photographs, and using materials and artifacts available to members of the group or culture. This method is often informal and can appear unsystematic. The researcher observes events as they arise and things that appear obtuse may become clear over time. Researchers attempt to find key informants who can direct them toward what they need, or they choose those in the sample group deemed to be appropriate members of the group, creating “judgmental sampling.” The data is then organized into a portrait that conveys a holistic cultural impression. The attempt is to describe a culture or social group in a full and complex manner through immersion with the group at a personal level.

Suggested Reading:

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fetterman, D. M. (1989). *Ethnography: Step by step*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Human science perspectives and models. In *Phenomenological research methods* (pp.1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Case Study

The use of case study research methodology also developed in the fields of anthropology and sociology and has similar roots to ethnographic studies. Unlike ethnographies that study entire social systems or cultures, case studies usually focus on smaller units like a specific program or an individual. Case studies are an exploration over time through detailed, in-depth data collection. It is important to clarify the rationale behind the choice of the case that is being studied and this is known as *purposeful sampling*. After the participant is identified, data is collected, a detailed description of

the case is given, themes or issues are analyzed, and interpretations about the case are proposed. Data is collected through observations, interviews, documents, audio-visual material, artifacts, or archival records.

Case studies are contextualized within their physical, historical, and socio-economic setting.

Suggested Reading:

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Daiute, C., & Lightfoot, C. (2003). *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Phenomenological

Phenomenological research is experiential and qualitative. Nevertheless, detachment is important. The researcher tries to 'bracket out' his or her own biases and expectations. Though not fully possible, an effort is made to be as open as possible to what the data are revealing to the researcher. In terms of methodology, a number of in-depth interviews are often used. They are open-ended and oriented to getting personal descriptions of a lived human experience. The focus is usually more on a particular aspect of human experience as it occurs in several people, rather than on describing in a more total manner the experience of one person.

In this research approach, it is important to attain immediacy. Subjects to be interviewed are chosen for their close involvement with what is being studied. However, the subjects themselves are not the primary focus in the process of descriptive analysis. Rather, phenomenological research attempts to engage with the essence of the experience. An effort is made to find the meaning of the experience and to seek general and more universal meanings arising from these explorations. Phenomenological research permits conclusions that are more definitive than heuristic research methodology.

Suggested Reading:

Manen, M. van. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York: Suny.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Human science perspectives and models. In *Phenomenological research methods* (pp.1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hermeneutic

Hermes was the Greek god of communication. Traditional hermeneutics involves the search for meaning in and between different contexts including texts, stories people tell about themselves, films, and art. Hermeneutic methodology places concepts in

dialogue with one another to look for deeper meaning through exploring their relationships to each other, and involves the comparative study of various source materials. Theoretical theses involve hermeneutic methodology and often focus on philosophical questions concerned with rational structures, organizing principles, and the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Theoretical theses may evaluate existing theories or propose new theories.

Alchemical hermeneutics, a new research framework proposed by Robert Romanyshyn (2007), posits that we are chosen by our research rather than, as seen in traditional hermeneutics, the other way around. As an imaginal and depth oriented methodology, the task of alchemical hermeneutics is to make philosophical hermeneutics more psychologically aware. This approach perceives the soul as a landscape that can be accessed through continuous dialogue within psyche. The methodology asks that the intentions of the researcher's ego be differentiated from the soul's voice in the work. Research is a re-membling and a re-turning to the source. All interpretation is seen as filtered through a complex, which is Carl Jung's way of describing important archetypally-based structures occurring in the psyche which powerfully influence behavior. (e.g., father-complex, mother-complex, hero-complex).

In the alchemical hermeneutic approach, transference "dialogues" take place, in which the soul of the work is invited into dialogue with the ego's intentions. Reflection, reverie, synchronicity, dreams, visions, revelations, and all manifestations of the *mundis imaginalis* are sources of data. The researcher is transformed as the research progresses, and therefore the work is considered alchemical in nature.

Suggested Reading:

Manen, M. van. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York: Suny.

Messer, S. B., Sass, L. A., & Woolfolk, R. L. (1988). Introduction to hermeneutics. In *Hermeneutics and psychological theory: Interpretive perspectives in personality, psychotherapy, and psychopathology*. (pp. 2-26). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Human science perspectives and models. In *Phenomenological research methods* (pp.1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Romanyshyn, R. (2007). *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind*. New Orleans: Spring Journal Books.

Heuristic

Heuristic research encourages relationship and connectedness rather than detachment. In heuristic research, a particular phenomenon is looked at over time and in one person. The approach is more autobiographical than found in phenomenological

research, and the researcher usually is personally 'called' to the topic. Heuristic research seeks immediacy and meaning for the individual. The researcher then synthesizes the experience and writes about the structure and meaning of the entire study.

Methodologically the first step is the initial engagement of the researcher to discover a question with intense interest. The second step is total immersion of the researcher in the question. The third step is incubation and is like tending to or sitting on one egg waiting for it to hatch. The fourth step is illumination and is a change in consciousness in which the constituents of the experience come alive and rearrange themselves with new meaning and relevance. The fifth step in this methodology is explication in which the researcher examines the various levels of meaning arising through these processes. The final step is creative synthesis, in which the researcher expresses the findings.

In heuristic research, whatever presents itself to the researcher can be considered data. The researcher is both the object and subject of the research. The researcher goes back and forth from experience to witnessing to experience. The methodology requires developing the capacity to be objective about self while delving deeper into subjectivity. It requires simultaneously being the researcher, the object of the research, and the comparative researcher as readings and the literature review cast light on the experience. In heuristic methodology, the subject remains visible throughout the process of research and is portrayed as a whole human being. Heuristic research retains the essence of the subject in the experience. It leads to meaning on an essential and personal level and leaves room for paradox and inconclusive results.

Suggested Reading:

Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition*. London: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Human science perspectives and models. In *Phenomenological research methods* (pp.1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Artistic-Creative

Creativity is a valid component of qualitative research methodology. Though all qualitative methodologies require the researcher to be careful about the quality of subjectivity that is brought to the research, immersion in the material studied and the arising of material from the unconscious are both legitimate aspects of qualitative research. A production thesis contains both a production component and a theoretical analysis of the production. The nature of the production is a creative, original piece of work, completed during one's time as a student at Pacifica. Production theses have included multimedia, media, art, literature, and cultural interventions such as

performance and ritual. The methodology involves engagement in the creative process combined with thorough understanding of the theoretical contexts of the work and its implications.

Suggested Reading:

Barrett, E. (2004). What does it meme? The exegesis as valorisation and validation of creative arts research. *TEXT, Special Issue Number 3 April 2004*. Retrieved September 27, 2007, from <http://www.gu.edu.au/school/art/text/speciss/issue3/barrett.htm>

Barrett, E. (2006). Creative arts practice, creative industries: Method and process as cultural capital. *Specialization and innovation: Applying practice led research in the creative industries*. Retrieved September 27, 2007, from <http://www.speculation2005.qut.edu.au/papers/Barrett.pdf>

Sullivan, G. (2004). *Art practice as research: Inquiry in the visual arts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory research attempts to construct integrated, new theories from a careful, systemic analysis of a variety of data such as field notes, interviews and the review of written materials. The theory is constructed during the process and not prior to beginning the study. This approach is inductive -- the data comes first, and then the theory arises from it. The emphasis is on developing a theory born of the analysis of the data. To accomplish this, the focus is on unraveling the elements of experience and letting the theory grow out of the process. Grounded theory, which incorporates feminist theory, recognizes context and social structure as core constituents of the data and therefore the resultant theories.

Suggested Reading:

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Human science perspectives and models. In *Phenomenological research methods* (pp.1-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Participatory Action and Appreciative Inquiry

In research that is participatory action or appreciative inquiry based, students and researchers seek to do more than report on what they find following a research study or project, but rather engage the research environment to promote change. Studies are as meant to initiate or sustain social or organizational change as much they are research-based. Very often, the nature of this dual purpose - research and change - requires the

researcher to use nontraditional approaches that bridge the theory-practice gap. The researcher must be willing to risk her biases and prejudices. The methodology includes beginning with a thorough review of the literature, proposing questions, selecting participants, collecting data, keeping a log or journal, analyzing the data, and communicating the final results. Currently, no measures of validity and reliability have been developed for this methodology.

Suggested Reading:

Greenwood, D., & Levin, M. (2006). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks. Sage.

Reed, J. (2006). *Appreciative inquiry: Research for change*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Tolman, D. L., & Brydon-Miller, M (Eds.). (2001). *Subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods*. New York: New York University Press.

Intuitive Inquiry

Intuitive inquiry is inclusive of transpersonal experiences and can be blended with other research methods. This methodology is based upon compassionately informed research using intuition and altered states of consciousness as sources of amplification and refinement of data observed. Dreams, visions, somatic experiences, and contemplative practices can provide insights that are considered intuitive. This approach seeks to incorporate subjective and objective knowledge. It posits that the personal is universal and that the intersubjective field between the researcher, participants, and audience is primary as all can be changed by the research.

The steps are to first choose a research topic or 'text' that can be a song, painting, ballet, interview transcript, or image that is usually not the researchers own 'text.' The researcher then engages the 'text' daily, recording impressions. A specific topic emerges from this initial cycle. In the second cycle, with the topic in mind, a new set of 'texts' is engaged to help clarify the initial structure and values the researcher brings to the topic. These become lenses for interpretation and can develop and change as the researcher moves through cycles of interpretation. An interactive template is generated comprised of clustered lists of 'texts.' This cycle concludes with a literature review. The third cycle begins with the collection of original textual data through interviews or collected narratives. This original textual data is used to modify, refine, and expand the researchers understanding of the topic. The imaginal is engaged as a subjective source of knowledge in a circular relationship with more objective knowledge. Metaphors, similes, symbols and poetic writing or poetry may be used to convey the richness and fullness of experience. Embodied writing is encouraged using the physical, sensuous, and visceral wisdom of the body.

The goal of the methodology is to ensure that the researcher has expanded beyond his or her projections and has obtained some kind of breakthrough and synthesis of findings that can be communicated through empathic resonance with validity formed through consensus building with participants and audience. Currently, there are no standards that have been developed for data analysis.

Suggested Reading:

Anderson, R. (1998). Intuitive inquiry: A transpersonal approach. In W. Braud & R. Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*. (pp. 69-94). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Anderson, R. (2000). Intuitive Inquiry: Interpreting Objective and Subjective Data. *ReVision*, 22(4), 31-39.

Participatory Epistemological

Participatory epistemology, a new philosophical framework proposed by Richard Tarnas (2007), is comprised of the recognition that meaning is neither outside of the human mind in the "objective" world waiting to be discovered (the paradigmatically modern/structuralist worldview), nor that meaning is simply constructed or projected onto an inherently meaningless world by the "subjective" human mind (the paradigmatically postmodern/poststructuralist worldview). Rather, participatory epistemology posits that meaning is enacted through the participation of the human mind with the larger meaning of the cosmos. The mind draws forth a meaning that exists *in potentia* in the cosmos, but which must go through the process of articulation by means of human consciousness. Posited as a mode of integral thought, participatory epistemology is inclusive of the insights of transpersonal psychology, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. As a philosophical framework for qualitative research, participatory epistemology can be blended with other research methods.

Suggested Reading:

Tarnas, R. (2006). *Cosmos and psyche: Intimations of a new world view*. New York: Plume.

Organic Inquiry

Organic inquiry is based upon feminist and transpersonal psychology. This approach validates the personal and a non-hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched. Research is considered sacred and entered into with an attitude of reverence. It is exploratory and oriented toward discovery. Like many other qualitative methodologies it is more descriptive than interpretive. The methodology involves a thorough excavation of old ways of thinking and acquiring the genesis of an initial concept for the study to arise from the researcher's personal experience. The first step is a

descent into one's own story, allowing the chthonic to emerge, and honoring the imaginal. Co-researchers may be involved and the data are personal stories and interviews that are semi-structured or unstructured. The primary material is seen as a muse, deity, or personified image who has universal teachings that need to be shared. It is posited that a connection with the numinous emerges. The analysis is the harvesting of the stories. No structure for harvesting them is specified. Interview analysis, narrative analysis, sequential analysis, heuristic inquiry, or resonance panels may be employed. This research approach is anti-method and unique results are expected.

Suggested Reading:

Clements, J., Ettling, D., Jenett, D., & Shields, L. (n.d.). *If research were sacred: An organic methodology*. Serpentina Bookstore. Retrieved September 27, 2007, from <http://www.serpentina.com/research/organic-ifresearchsacred.html>

Clements, J. Ettling, D., Jenett, D., & Shields, L. (1998). Organic Research: Feminine Spirituality Meets Transpersonal Research. In W. Braud & R. Anderson (Eds.), *Transpersonal research methods for the social sciences: Honoring human experience*. (pp. 114-127). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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