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auburn-haired woman stood up to go to her, but Matthew indicated to leave her. Hannah's temples pounded. Stop it. Stop it. Don't let them get to you. Don't let them see. She told herself to think about tomorrow. Start counting. Shut out the words. The girl was sobbing now. Holding herself, rocking. Then the worst. Hannah felt her tears well up. No – no – keep them down. Count faster. Look away. Look at the ceiling. White plaster cornice. Count the pattern. Count them in twos from the left. Two, four, six. Then Mel, the one who never spoke, was speaking. Her words freed, jerking out between the sobs. Tortured, burning words. She mustn't listen. Hannah gripped her stomach muscles tighter but the wish to let go was getting stronger.

'Hannah, do you want to say anything?' Matthew was looking at her. 'O.K. Perhaps not today.' He led the pledge. She couldn't move her mouth. The session ended and Hannah ran from the room, up the stairs and kicking the door shut behind her, threw herself on her bed. It was getting too close. He knew she was only just holding on.

Hannah could hear sounds from the kitchen. The radio, plates, a chair scraping. She smelt coffee and toast. She heard her mother laugh. The rooks were back. In the trees they wheeled and called. The room was warm. Her clothes hung on the back of the chair. The new jumper which felt soft. She felt safe. She wanted to get up. Wanted to be in the kitchen with her mother's laughter and the ordinariness. She got out of bed. She resisted standing on the scales. In the kitchen she gave her mother a kiss. She did the same to her startled father. Then she fetched a piece of bread from the packet and took it over to the toaster.



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Systemic trainers' cookbook

Research cartwheel: An exercise for developing research ideas

Susan Lang, Christine Oliver and Karen Partridge

At the KCC Foundation we have been experimenting with ways of managing research supervision as an interactive group process which enables students to help each other, building on strengths in the group and elaborating research stories through a process of interviewing and consultation. We have found that a group approach to supervision lessens the isolation experienced by students and enables students to explore the coherence between systemic therapy and research as practice.

At the start of the research module and at various points in the development of the students' research ideas we have introduced an exercise which we call a *Research Cartwheel*. This involves setting up chairs in two concentric circles, so that the inner circle faces outwards towards a chair from the outer circle facing inwards. Students take their positions on the inner and outer circles so that the inner circle students interview the students sitting opposite in the outer circle. Each interviewer is given a card with an aspect of the research process or write-up written on it. The number of areas to be explored can vary according to the size of the group and the stage of the research process that the students have reached. For example, in a group of 12 students the six areas for interviewing might be, Rationale, Methodology, Ethical Issues, Positioning of the researcher, Analysis, Discussion and Critique. The interviewers then interview the students on the outer ring for five minutes each, at which point the outer ring moves round a chair to the next interviewer. This continues until the outer ring has moved all the way around being interviewed for five minutes on each subject area. The two rings then swap

places and the students who have been interviewed get the chance to interview the new outer ring students.

Following the cartwheel exercise the students reflect as a group on the impact of the exercise on generating ideas for the research process, and on their narratives of identity as researchers

The idea we had about this exercise was that, even when students had little idea of what they might explore for their research, the process generates many ideas. Shifting between the different interview areas using future questioning, i.e. "what will you put in your rationale?" begins to construct a future shape for the research project whilst the movement between different sections creates coherence in ideas across the whole dissertation. Students interviewing on one subject area in the inner ring develop expertise as they hear many different ideas about what might be included in their section, and students on the outside are often surprised at the ideas they are able to generate.

On an initial research module at the end of year two, when students had little idea of what they might choose for their research, we asked them how their research narrative developed and how they felt the exercise had achieved this. These are their responses:

In what ways did your research narrative develop?

1. I don't have a clear research question – it helped me to go beyond that stage and how I can relate to the methodology – I realised the methodology needs to link with the research question.
2. I was very aware that I am trying to move away from my idea because it seemed too big but by talking about it, it became more real.



Elaine Holliday

3. I don't have an idea at all so I pinched someone else's idea around gender and what emerged was an interest in culture and its impact on therapeutic engagement
4. It opened interesting areas – gender perspectives, people's background beyond professional status and how this may affect their use of play as an engagement device with children and families. I talked about the usefulness of exploring this topic for me as a practitioner and also the constraints of doing so.
5. The questions about rationale were very helpful; we shared ideas about how difficult it is to get to the research methodology so there wasn't much development there. Would another focus have been more helpful at this stage?

How did the exercise achieve this development?

1. It helped me think more in depth and linked to previous interests and experiences. The format about being responsible and obliged to give answers/positioning myself to take responsibility. Realisation of the collective concern and anxiety decreased my sense of isolation. We could see each other as resources.
2. Being the interviewer helped me to think about my own rationale. What helped was to go beyond the research question – it created a sense of the whole of the research – connected to the picture you gave to us.
3. Listening to others, it moved me on but I realised that I was not in their position and I thought maybe I shouldn't reject my idea but it became bigger and bigger. It helped me to realise I needed to narrow it down.

4. The process helped me to develop ideas even though I didn't have any. The hardest question was the methodology.
5. It was good to have the speed which kept it dynamic and exciting, generating curiosity; the physical movement helped.
6. It gives you thinking time – to start thinking – it relieves anxiety – getting fresh ideas as you went around as you asked questions or were asked them. I was conscious that it would be uncomfortable to be quiet. It was uncomfortable at one point when the person said they didn't want to explore something.

We sometimes repeat the exercise again later in training and in year three we used it to facilitate students completing their research proposals for ethical clearance. Students were asked to give in an initial proposal following the exercise which demonstrated an elaboration of ideas. One student expressed her experience eloquently:

My initial thought with the exercise was almost like a feeling of having a scaffolding structure around me, which assisted me to move up, down or sideways, tracking ideas, receiving ideas. I also thought during the exercise when listening to different stories about a research proposal that I could add those ideas to mine or exclude them, I also had the playfulness feeling about this serious process and I liked it. Also by thinking about research ideas and listening to others' ideas I was able to start elaborating further my own thoughts, perceptions, feelings about different subjects. I felt part of a bigger process which was bodily felt, almost as sculpting. By thinking now about it, it feels as White's ideas of 'externalising the problem'..as if the 'problem' was 'the idea' but with an embodied feeling experience attached to it!

In summary, we have found this exercise useful and generative as part of the process of research teaching and supervision. It is important to highlight the value of linking the exercise to a consequent reflective process on the research learning themes that have emerged and the impact of the process on the developing narrative of researcher identity. We have found that the explicit punctuation of a narrative in relation to the exercise facilitates the development of research confidence and ability. If you try it we would love to hear how you get on!

Susan Lang, Christine Oliver and Karen Partridge are tutors at the KCC Foundation, London.

Transgressing Boundaries – from a case discussion at the Portman Clinic:

Uncertainty has set her traps among my teeth. Thoughts inchoate, found wandering, are at risk. At some point they will collect themselves, proceed with hesitation towards a purpose. Then the traps will spring cause me to stumble, stammer, fall from grace and the sharp little points which hold me thus, will rest. Assured.

Kate Daniels