Teaching qualitative research: A successful pilot of an innovative approach

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This paper describes the development and delivery of an innovative approach to teaching qualitative research methods in psychology. The teaching incorporated a range of 'active' pedagogical practices that it shares with other teaching in this area, but was designed in such a way as to follow the arc of a qualitative research project in its entirety over several sessions, whilst episodically dealing with distinct methodological approaches along the way. In line with this design, and the mutuality of the learning, it was called a 'qualitative learning series'. Following Mason (2002), the paper also considers the challenge of qualitative teaching in the context of academic psychology, and touches upon whether developments in the years since have made for much difference. These strands of the paper come together in how the teaching met these challenges.

Introduction

WITH THIS PAPER, I had originally wanted to share an innovative approach to teaching qualitative research methods to psychology postgraduates. I still hope to do this, but, following Mason (2002), I also want to compare notes with other teachers on the place of qualitative methodology in psychology more generally, and what development there has been in this area in the fifteen years since Mason documented his experience for this journal. Discovering the latter among the expanding literature on the topic only after I had completed the teaching, I was struck by the parallels in our respective set-ups and how much kinship I felt with him on the matter. Hansen and Rapley (2008) have since referred to the 'qualitative methods movement' in psychology. Although I've noted certain developments (e.g. the inception of the Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section of the BPS, the rapid rise of interpretative phenomenological analysis; see Smith, 2011, for a review), these have seemed peripheral to me, and I have wondered whether the continuing 'heterox' (Mason, 2002) nature of qualitative approaches within psychology meant I was fated to rediscover such innovation rather than build from an established, connected body of work. But perhaps it is I who sit on the periphery of more progressive developments in methods in psychology (Sullivan & Gibson, 2012) that are yet to be felt more firmly in 'traditional' departments.

The teaching context and task

I am a lecturer on the Manchester clinical psychology doctorate and took on the role of de facto qualitative lead for the programme. I assumed responsibility for coordinating the twelve hours of teaching time dedicated to 'qualitative research', which are supposed to equip our students with enough knowledge, if they so wish, to undertake qualitative studies for their doctoral theses.

The intellectual climate that Mason (2002) described feels almost as relevant now as it was then; qualitative research still feels secondary to the main business of quantitative research, despite a burgeoning number of qualitative projects on offer on the programme, and the growing acceptance of qualitative research in the context of psychology (Gibson & Sullivan, 2012; Hayes, 1997) and healthcare more generally (Pope & Mays, 2013). My discussions with students during sessions suggested they were well apprised of this, and they gave various examples as to how this was the case (e.g. they

had not come across much during undergraduate study, clinical supervisors tended to read and recommend quantitative papers, qualitative research had not been cited in teaching on the programme hitherto this point), despite qualitative methods being a required, albeit it recently so, element of psychology degrees (BPS, 2014; QAA, 2010).

I was also approaching this in the light of my further qualification as a psychodynamic psychotherapist. My teaching approach is informed by chief concerns in that field of learning from experience (Bion, 1962) (or 'learning by doing') and the active participation of both parties in generating, as well as receiving, content (relatable to the 'flipped classroom'), both of which are recognised as facilitating engaged and effective learning (e.g. Reese, 2011; Earley, 2016). Indeed, psychoanalytic theory and techniques have already been adopted as instruments for qualitative research (e.g. Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, 2013; Kvale, 2007), though a perceived conflation of research and clinical standpoints has its detractors (e.g. Frosh & Emerson, 2005), and these approaches remain too far outside current research concerns – and perhaps course constraints – for me to be able to make much use of them at present.

Nonetheless the psychoanalytic inclinations I brought anyway are probably no more essential than in learning qualitative methods, which simply cannot be gleaned solely from reading and discussion (Stabb, 1999).

In preparation for taking on and developing the teaching, I reviewed the existing learning outcomes and session content, the collated online feedback that students provide obligatorily after every taught session, and I liaised with a number of stakeholders, including the module coordinator, programme directors, the previous incumbent, local supervisors, and my qualitative mentor.

I soon realised that while a lot of apparently qualitative supervision was offered locally (i.e. on the programme and within the division), it was unclear what this constituted in terms of epistemology and approaches. The learning outcomes as they stood suggested that students would become familiar with three 'popular' approaches, i.e. Thematic Analysis (TA), Grounded Theory (GT), and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as well as the main features of qualitative research. My question was how well this fit with the supervisory offer mentioned previously. A scoping of local supervisors suggested very well in fact, as these three approaches were cited most regularly as areas of expertise and practice. I was however presented with the perennial dilemma of ideals versus pragmatics: the reality on the ground might dictate that I should continue to focus on these three approaches (or even less, given the time constraints), but, in that case, would I be perpetuating and reinforcing the exclusion of more epistemologically constructivist approaches (e.g. discourse analysis, ethnography), just because related supervision is more difficult to access? Pragmatics won out, as I factored in the time constraints on the professional doctorate and the availability elsewhere (e.g. within the division) of teaching on other approaches. I would use the introductory session to signpost these other approaches, especially as they came up in consideration of the philosophical and political underpinnings of any research endeavour. On this note, my prior experience teaching philosophy of science had already shown me that though largely well received teaching on the basic assumptions of the discipline was sometimes perceived to be, as one student put it, 'at the expense of limited teaching on more practical topics'. Clinical psychology is applied psychology and demonstrating the practical relevance of philosophy continues to exercise me, but some understanding of underpinning assumptions is essential to the student's being able to ascertain the positioning of qualitative research and develop her own stance (Mason, 2002). The qualitative teaching, I thought, would have been helped by the preceding session on the philosophy of science, though the

charge that it had supplanted more practical topics rang in my ears.

Perhaps the biggest influence on my development of the teaching was my experience as a panel member on the research subcommittees for the previous cohort. The research subcommittee is a programme-based panel that helps students to consider the validity and feasibility of their research proposals. What I observed essentially was that students were proposing research using one of the three approaches mentioned earlier, but with little or no understanding as to why one approach was being used over another. Up to this point, the three approaches were taught all on the same day, one after another, in a standard lecture format. Despite their dissimilarities, there is much overlap between the approaches and it was in this forum I realised that care had to be taken to separate them sufficiently within an overall framework of linkage and continuity.

In line with much of what I have already discussed, the main theme from the student feedback was a desire for more tangible examples of the processes being taught (e.g. coding) and guided, practical involvement during the class. I also thought the feedback betrayed some perceived 'distance' between the lecturer's position and that of the students, which made me wonder whether there was a limit to the degree the students could engage with apparently expert experience, especially where research methods (so much less evocative than tales from the clinic) are concerned.

With all of these things in mind I developed a 'Qualitative Learning Series', a course of teaching designed to incorporate key qualitative approaches and every aspect of the research process into a coherent, accessible whole.

The teaching format and procedure
Participants
Twenty-four trainee clinical psychologists at the University of Manchester participated in the Qualitative Learning Series. Several weeks ahead of it, I emailed the students to ask those with previous qualitative experience to email in reply: what they had studied, what method(s) they used and the level(s) this came at (e.g. undergraduate, research assistant, postgraduate etc.). Eight replied to let me know about experience ranging from undergraduate to masters level in studies on a range of topics; thematic analysis (including framework analysis) was the only method mentioned, though a few students mentioned masters-level teaching on other methods (i.e. IPA and conversation analysis); one student replied to let me know that she had no prior experience of qualitative research (and I learned in class that she was not the only one) and would appreciate 'going back to basics'.

I asked those that mentioned specific studies whether it would be alright to draw on this experience during the sessions in quite an involved way, letting them know it would be fine if they did not want to be so identified. Handily, in terms of feasible numbers for group work, four consented.

In order to make the sessions more real, I invited former students, who had only recently (all within the previous year) qualified from the programme themselves, to contribute to the sessions. Each had completed a study using one of the methods to be taught and took part in the relevant session. The materials, process and findings from their research provided the bulk of illustrative examples for each methods session; indeed the sessions hinged on these studies. Having designed an overall framework for the series, I engaged in additional planning with the former students, who were to co-facilitate the sessions. They were instrumental in helping me to refine the series and, in particular, the workshops (based around their own studies) that provided a focal point for each of the methodology sessions.

Materials and procedure
I will now describe the overall shape and process of the teaching, with reference to

aspects of its development. I asked for the two full days of teaching allotted to qualitative research to be separated into four approximately three-hour sessions to take place over four weeks; my intention here was to strike a balance between the students having time to digest the material and keeping the momentum of a learning series that would require some immersion into an 'exotic' (Mason, 2002) range of perspectives. I also asked for the series to be scheduled ahead of the students submitting their doctoral-thesis study choices, in order to inform these decisions.

I called it a qualitative learning series, to demonstrate that the sessions were of a piece and focused on a process of mutual learning. By the end of the series, it was my intention for students to have not only a workable knowledge of the main qualitative methods and methodologies supervised locally (i.e. TA, GT, IPA), but also to have *worked through the qualitative research process in its entirety*. In order to do this, I broke the latter down into what I considered to be its three main constituent stages; that is, (1) data gathering, (2) coding and early analysis, and (3) late analysis and write-up. Some might consider this unnecessarily static and, worse, linear-seeming, but, from my perspective, the time constraints of the teaching and varying degrees of experience in the cohort necessitated clear-cut definitions to be forced at this level of outline. Mitigating any whiff of 'cookbookism' was my continual attempt to encourage 'a feel' (Mason, 2002) for the different methodologies, and the qualitative approach more generally. I hope this comes across in the description of the work.

The largest part of this work was done, I feel, by the contributions of the former students. Their own doctoral research provided the empirical basis for each workshop and each session concluded with their lived experience of the qualitative research process on the programme. As well as co-facilitating the sessions with me, these former students designed the workshop exercises with me. As this was the first post-qualification teaching engagement for the majority of them, their contribution added another layer of learning to the series, which, I thought, reduced the distance between teacher and learner and contributed to an exciting spirit of joint discovery.

Session 1
The first session introduced students to the qualitative approach and was the bedrock for the series. Apart from the fundamentals of qualitative research, I used this session to get students into the 'spirit' of the approach, by which I mean, primarily, bringing oneself (one's background, one's motivations, one's assumptions, one's perspective, one's position) – reflectively and critically – into the research process. I introduced the idea of our keeping a reflective log in real-time on a flipchart, to provide a process-based complement to the teaching content. My call for 'associations' to put alongside mine went largely unanswered, but I was able to write some of the students' subsequent comments and questions onto the flipchart under this rubric, to illustrate the nature and usefulness of this staple of the qualitative research process. Given this was a clinical psychology training, I also used the exercise to show how the critical internal voice (mostly mine, in this instance!) could be harnessed to help one scrutinise and even wonder about one's work in a helpful way, rather than serving solely as inhibiting reproach.

The session was a mixture of lecture and group exercises around the definitional, conceptual and philosophical nature of qualitative research, and criterial frameworks for judging quality. In one exercise, I organised four groups around the four students who had given consent for their previous studies to be drawn on in the session. These students were able to use their experience as a basis for teaching the cohort about the thinking involved in deciding on and setting up a qualitative study, whilst being given the opportu-

nity to re-evaluate this experience in the light of group questioning and discussion.

Sessions 2, 3 and 4
Each of the following three sessions focused on one qualitative research methodology *and* one stage in the research process of any qualitative study. Each session followed the same three-part format:

> *(i) Lecture on methodology (60 minutes approx.)* → *(ii) workshop (90 minutes approx.)* → *(iii) personal narrative of lived research experience (30 minutes approx.)*

So, the second session focused on the qualitative method of *TA and* the generic research stage of *data gathering*. The workshop comprised a supported small-group exercise to develop an interview schedule/topic guide, and the large group's directing the facilitators' role-play of a 'live' qualitative interview – all with reference to the former student's own work in this area (i.e. designing a topic guide and interviewing in the context of a TA of staff views of the barriers and facilitators to transition from Early Intervention in Psychosis teams).

The third session focused on the qualitative methodology of *GT and* the generic research stage of *coding/early analysis*. The workshop comprised supported individual exercises to code at increasing levels of abstraction transcripts from two of the former student's studies (i.e. GT studies on personal accounts of discontinuing neuroleptic medication for psychosis and service-user perceptions on the role of significant others in neuroleptic discontinuation), then a small-group exercise to compare and discuss consequent codes and the coding process more generally.

The fourth and final session focused on the qualitative method of *IPA* and the generic research stage of *late analysis/write-up*. The workshop comprised a supported small-group exercise to identify the themes the former student derived in her own analysis and attribute actual, illustrative quotes accordingly, and a supported small-group exercise to outline the structure and content of a discussion section and reflective paper that could come from these findings – with the former student's own analysis and write-up (of an IPA study of parents' experiences of parenting a child with phenylketonuria) serving as a basis for comparison.

Evaluation
The mandatory feedback given by students includes qualitative responses to questions about what they learned, what they found useful and what improvements could be made, and two quantitative metrics (i.e. quality of content and quality of presentation, both on five-point Likert scales). I will come back to the largely very positive feedback here, because there was of course also the real-time feedback that was implicit in the reflective log we contributed to jointly in the opening session. I think the latter in particular captured some of the tensions inherent in this kind of teaching. One of the students mentioned a concern that her perspective would 'skew' the data in what I thought was a wonderful demonstration of how the research milieu is implicitly quantitative. Apart from that, it linked with what I thought was a recurring theme of student discomfort with the apparently inappropriate juxtaposition of their personal worlds with that of research. One of my associations, 'Are these private conversations?', related to an impromptu exercise where I asked the students to discuss in pairs influences on their own ontological and epistemological stances. That I was picking up discomfort was I thought borne out by much talking off topic, bemusement and comments that this, 'needed to be in relation to something [a specific research topic]'. Many agreed with my conjecture that research methods was supposed to be a space safe from personal involvement and that their training up to this point had made them masters in how to distance and 'design themselves out of research' (Sargeant, 2012).

Towards the end of the first session, it became clear to me that the cohort was more open than I had originally credited, with a good range of research experience. I considered my last logged reflection – 'I assumed a room full of quantitative adherents. Why?' In considering the impact of my assumptions on the session, I wondered whether the reflective-log exercise itself was a way to talk to the students, beneath the surface of our apparent discussion, about my anxieties, doubts and frustrations with the process, and with them. As indirect as this may have been at times, perhaps it exposed an ever present aspect of the process of interaction, which is particularly important to get hold of in qualitative research. One student fed back afterwards that 'the reflective log felt slightly uncomfortable at the beginning, but I felt it portrayed a real attempt of the facilitator to improve the sessions and modelled being reflective and "naming issues" well'.

The online feedback to the following three sessions was less measured than to the first and suggested that they were generally very well received. The workshops were mentioned repeatedly, in terms of what was considered useful. They were considered by one 'a very helpful and interactive way to learn about qualitative research'. One student referred to the usefulness of the 'experiential learning', while another commented that that this gave her 'a more solid understanding'. A student who had been 'reluctant to do qualitative research' said that she 'really enjoyed learning about this method and it felt do-able'. This was particularly gratifying, as I had sought to demonstrate that all studies should be open to all students on the programme, regardless of prior experience/expertise. In this vein, one student mentioned feeling 'much more confident about the use of GT'. Some of this seemed to stem from the exercises being 'engaging' and 'enjoyable'; beyond this, students referred to the specificity of the work, 'I found the practical exercises useful; in particular developing superordinate codes,' and the in-class support, from peers, 'discussing the codes we'd come up with in small groups was good. I liked hearing that the other people had come up with similar codes to me'. Although I had wanted to make qualitative methods accessible to students wanting to do qualitative projects, I certainly wasn't trying to make a case for them. Indeed, based on discussions with other teachers and supervisors, I had thought the sessions might also provide something of a caveat for students looking for the supposedly 'soft' (Hansen & Rapley, 2008) qualitative option. I think that myth was dispelled by the lived experience of the former students, with one formerly uncertain student nonetheless emboldened, 'Hearing the experiences of trainees who have used the method was also useful. Now I'm thinking that I would definitely prefer to do a qualitative research project'. I think students felt informed and even empowered through *doing* qualitative research on the teaching; one student illustrated this point neatly and articulated exactly what I had hoped to facilitate, '…most textbooks will tell you what TA is but now how to do it. I feel like I have learned a lot more about how to do TA now'.

The other big theme in the students' feedback was how facilitative the students found the former students' contributions. Students valued the specificity of the help and the provision of live examples, 'Looking through [former student's] topic guide … very useful info to have', '…pictures of their past work very useful and informative'. 'The former trainee's research was also really interesting and helped to work through the analysis stages'. Beyond this, however, I picked up a warmth in students' feedback about former students that spoke to me about how much they connected with teachers who had so recently shared their experience. In connection with this aspect of the teaching, words such as 'shared', 'enjoyed' and 'brilliant' came up repeatedly. Students, I think, also appreciated how the

Table 1: Teaching framework and examples.

ILOs for series	Series outline (4 sessions)	ILOs for sessions	Specific exercises
The guiding aims for the four sessions are to: • Enable those with limited experience of qualitative methodology to become more familiar with its principles and practice; • Enhance the knowledge and practice of those already familiar with or experienced in qualitative methodology; • Provide primers on the qualitative methods used most frequently on the ClinPsyD, including skills-based learning and personal accounts of the LSRP experience; • Provide primers on the main components of the qualitative research process; namely, data gathering, data analysis and write-up; • Inform selection of LSRP topic and methodology; and • Enable trainees to use their existing experience of qualitative research to contribute to the learning.	Qualitative research 1: the 'what?', 'why?' and 'so what?' of qualitative research	Aims of Qualitative 1: Introduction session By the end of the session, we will have covered: • Key features underpinning qualitative theory and methods; • The differences in criteria applied to evaluate qualitative research (as compared to quantitative research); • Factors influencing appropriate choice of method; • Issues related to data collection, analysis and scientific rigour; and • Evaluating a qualitative research paper.	Group work based around a fellow student's previous qualitative study (student primed ahead of session), with discussion focusing on how and why that research method was selected. Group work around a short qualitative paper, with aim of evaluating quality of the research using criteria checklist; feedback to the large group. Various large-group discussions on topics introduced throughout, e.g. definition of qualitative research, considerations in choosing a method, distinguishing qualitative and quantitative studies from a list of titles. Discussion in pairs about influences on one another's ontological and epistemological stances, following their presentation in lecture.
	Qualitative research 2: Thematic Analysis (TA) and data gathering	At the end of this lecture trainees will have: • Developed an understanding of Thematic Analysis (TA); • Had an opportunity to consider and work with data gathering (interviewing) in the context of a classroom skills workshop; • Learnt through a former trainee's personal narrative about the realities of the TA research process on the ClinPsyD.	Workshop exercise 1: Producing a topic guide Please get into four groups of six, to discuss and note down four or five areas that you would want to cover to address the research question… Workshop exercise 2: Considerations during interviewing In this exercise, [name] will enact a composite participant from her study and I will play the role of interviewer. After we have started the interview off, it will be your (trainees collectively) role to direct my further questioning, and pick up on any issues of note/concern…

Table 1: Teaching framework and examples (*Continued*).

ILOs for series	Series outline (4 sessions)	ILOs for sessions	Specific exercises
	Qualitative research 3: Grounded Theory (GT) and coding/ early analysis	At the end of this lecture trainees will have: • Developed an understanding of Grounded Theory (GT); • Had an opportunity to consider and work with data analysis in the context of a classroom skills workshop; • Learnt through a former trainee's personal narrative about the realities of the GT research process on the ClinPsyD.	Workshop exercise 1: Open coding Please work individually to open code the transcript extract you have been provided with. [name], [name] and I will be on hand if you would like to discuss your working... Workshop exercise 2: Focused coding [as above] Workshop exercise 3: Group reflecting Please get into four groups of six, to discuss how your individually derived codes and categories compare. Use the opportunity to reflect upon the analytic process and what you learn from one another, bringing in any material from your 'bracketing'.
	Qualitative research 4: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and late analysis/ write-up	At the end of this lecture trainees will have: • Developed an understanding of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA); • Had an opportunity to consider and work with data analysis and study write-up in the context of a classroom skills workshop; • Learnt through a former trainee's personal narrative about the realities of the IPA research process on the ClinPsyD.	Workshop exercise 1: Late-stage analysis In your groups, please discuss and (1) agree names for each unlabelled sub theme, (2) organise these into superordinate themes, (3) all the while (individually) jotting down whatever associations come to mind in terms of experience, practice-based/theoretical knowledge of or personal response to this area. We will come back to the large group for feedback, before finding out about the output and process of [name] LSRP analysis. Workshop exercise 2: 'Writing' up In your same groups, please: (1) Think through, discuss and jot down how you would present the results of your analysis (superordinate themes, linkages, model) in the discussion of your 'empirical' paper. (2) Consider what sort of responses or reflections you think you might write about in your LSRP paper 3, the 'reflective' paper. Any 'field notes' you made during the analysis exercise would be particularly useful here.

teaching was thereby made more relatable, 'It was great to have the "lived experience" of [co-facilitator's name], it was so helpful illustrating the model', guiding, 'I feel that using real research in this way made the teaching points much easier to follow and apply,' and real, '…bought the topic to life'. I thought research methods were brought to life much in the way clinical theory and processes are routinely in the sessions on clinical practice delivered by clinicians. Something of the 'people doing something with people' shared by clinical practice and qualitative research was communicated even more amply than I had hoped for by the former students; I was able to use their many evocative examples of human connection, to illustrate ethics, risk management, the impact of research on both parties – and the important overlap and distinctions between their clinical and research-based practice.

In response to the second session, one student commented that it was 'nice that the lecturer had taken the time to adapt the presentation based on the comments of the cohort after the last session'. While I believe there was recognition here of my having revisited certain points noted in the first session, I think it illustrates primarily an appreciation of the shift in teaching format that was already planned. There is certainly work for me to do with that introductory session, but perhaps the previous comment also shows early recognition of the linked up nature of the series, which could only be fully appreciated at the end. Indeed one student did comment on this after the final session, 'I liked how the qualitative lecture series was laid out – by experiencing each stage of the qualitative process from within different methods'.

The quantitative metrics were all above the (high) programme average, which suggests that the series had something to offer the cohort as a whole, regardless of the varying degrees of qualitative experience within it.

Discussion

It has been satisfying to be part of helping the students along in their journey to producing doctoral-level research, especially as this has entailed meeting the challenge of making the qualitative approach accessible within a fairly short space of time and relatively few teaching hours. Of course the learning series was designed to provide a platform for the ongoing development that will take place during those studies and within their supervisory relationships, but, certainly compared to their quantitative education to-date, this was a by necessity fairly hastily erected platform with relatively few materials (overall teaching hours and exposure). It has been especially gratifying then to meet the challenge of making the qualitative approach accessible and enjoyable within these constraints.

By constraints I am also alluding to the quantitative milieu of psychology that provides an additional challenge to teaching and learning qualitative methods. Despite the apparent success of the learning series, I have been mulling over points of disconnectedness between the students and myself across the series. This was most apparent in the first session and thereafter whenever the philosophical underpinnings of the approaches and scientific endeavour more generally were invoked. To me, these seem to have been a compartmentalised aspect of the teaching that remained relatively unprocessed. Now, how successful can I claim to have been in inculcating the qualitative approach without fuller integration of this basis for the critical-reflective examination of assumptions? It is possible that I am too hard on myself; sensitised doubly through my qualification as psychodynamic psychotherapist to the supposedly heterodox nature of my knowledge, I may be too quick to perceive hostility in fair questioning and not knowing. I have to ask myself how apprised I am of the assumptions underlying my own epistemological stance. This brings me back to the issue of how well integrated this epistemology is in

mainstream psychology. Like Mason (2002) I have to confess to being largely 'self-taught', but unlike Mason, though I have some experience in qualitative research, much more of this has been in vitro in a bid to develop into the role of de facto qualitative lead on my programme. Trying to expedite my learning in this area has been interesting; despite the emergence of a plethora of specifically psychological qualitative texts in recent years (Sullivan & Gibson, 2012), I have found myself more often than not, exploring trainings, texts and conferences outside of psychology. I think cross fertilisation is fundamentally creative, but also uncomfortable, especially when one has to try to hold a space for multiple, seemingly competing perspectives as one gets to grips with fundamentals (whatever those are supposed to be!).

In terms of modifying the teaching for next year, it is apparent that the introductory session is most in need of tweaking. Perhaps I had frontloaded the series with heavy-handed reflective practice, which, following Russell (2005), needed to be staged and integrated implicitly. Similarly I may need to integrate the philosophical issues throughout the series, as I did, say, ethics, and thereby make them 'in relation to something'. I did get the feedback, 'Maybe do away with the previous lecture … which was confusing and start with this one [second session]'. In considering my response to this feedback, it does strike me that a series needs introducing. Do I try to straighten out the glitches in the first session or start specific (i.e. with an identified method) and refer to general issues around this? The learning through doing really got going in the second session and seemed to jibe with the way this group as a whole learned with enjoyment. But if we were to start 'doing' more quickly, would I be supporting learning or evasion?

A lot of work went into developing and delivering the lecture series. There was not only the distillation of the masses of material that is available on the matter, but also the joint planning and coordination necessary for viable workshops. Thankfully this is in place for next year and my co-facilitators are willing to contribute again, but the degree of preparatory work required surpassed any other teaching I've been involved with and should be borne in mind as a caveat.

Getting through it (both the preparation and delivering the sessions themselves) felt overwhelming at times, which on reflection connects helpfully with the feelings that accompany qualitative research, especially when starting out, confronted with masses of unsorted data. I referred to 'overwhelm' as a key feature of qualitative research during the teaching and advised students to anticipate and work with it. Uncertainty is another feeling in this family. It is my contention that clinical training is often approached as a way to glean certainties out of the vagaries of feelings, relationships and distress and so certain aspects of the training (such as qualitative research or reflective practice) become overly anxiety provoking, rather than opportunities to glean the satisfaction that can come with 'working through' difficult issues to unforeseen solutions. One of the students with prior experience of qualitative research talked to the cohort about the excitement that came with findings if you allowed yourself to be surprised during the process, while another intimated that the findings, were more than with quantitative approaches, 'mine'.

If the students were given any taste for these aspects of the work, then the learning series will have served as the primer it could only realistically be at that stage and within the allotted time frame. Under these circumstances then, it is the feel of qualitative research more than anything else that had to be gotten across. I believe the students did get this feel from getting hold of a complete process in microcosm.

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