

**Transfer of registration from
Probationary to Confirmed PhD or from MPhil to PhD
(in accordance with University of Cumbria procedures and
in compliance with Lancaster University regulations)**

Name of candidate: Sonia Hutchison

Provisional title of research study: How does my lived experience, from being 'a child in care' to being a leader of a carers' charity, sustain the hope that I can be the change I want to see in the world?

Funding source: Self funding

The proposal should be a substantial document of approximately 7000 words. It should provide evidence of the doctoral potential of the candidate and the research project and demonstrate the probability of timely completion, within the expected (minimum for full-time candidates) period of registration, taking account of any periods of intercalation. The content and structure of the transfer proposal will be appropriate to the subject area and methodology of the research.

Abstract (250-300 words max.) focuses on the significance of the knowledge itself.

My thesis will make an original contribution to knowledge in three significant areas: foster care, unpaid caring and charity leadership. This knowledge arises from my lived experiences, which brings hope that I can be the change I want to see in the world. The significance of the knowledge are the benefits that arise to myself, others and social formations. I will introduce a way of evaluating success based on how fully I am living my values that hold hope for the flourishing of humanity in practice personally and professionally. I will show how values based practice helps to develop resilience and hope which is especially important in a time of austerity and high staff burnout.

I will use a methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Hart, 2008) as I develop my Living Theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008). Unlike using a single methodology I will take influences from many methodologies and methods to develop my own Living Theory methodology which enables me to research in a way that is consistent with my values of love, hope, justice and participation. My Living Theory methodology will have my values as central to my research as my living standards of judgement (Laidlaw, 1996) and explanatory principles. I will explore how, rather than my life outcomes being a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Merton, 1948) of the UK care system, I have flourished to be an ontologically secure adult who has achieved academically and professionally. I will explore how the insights and understanding I gain bring hope to others who have been through the care system and those working with them.

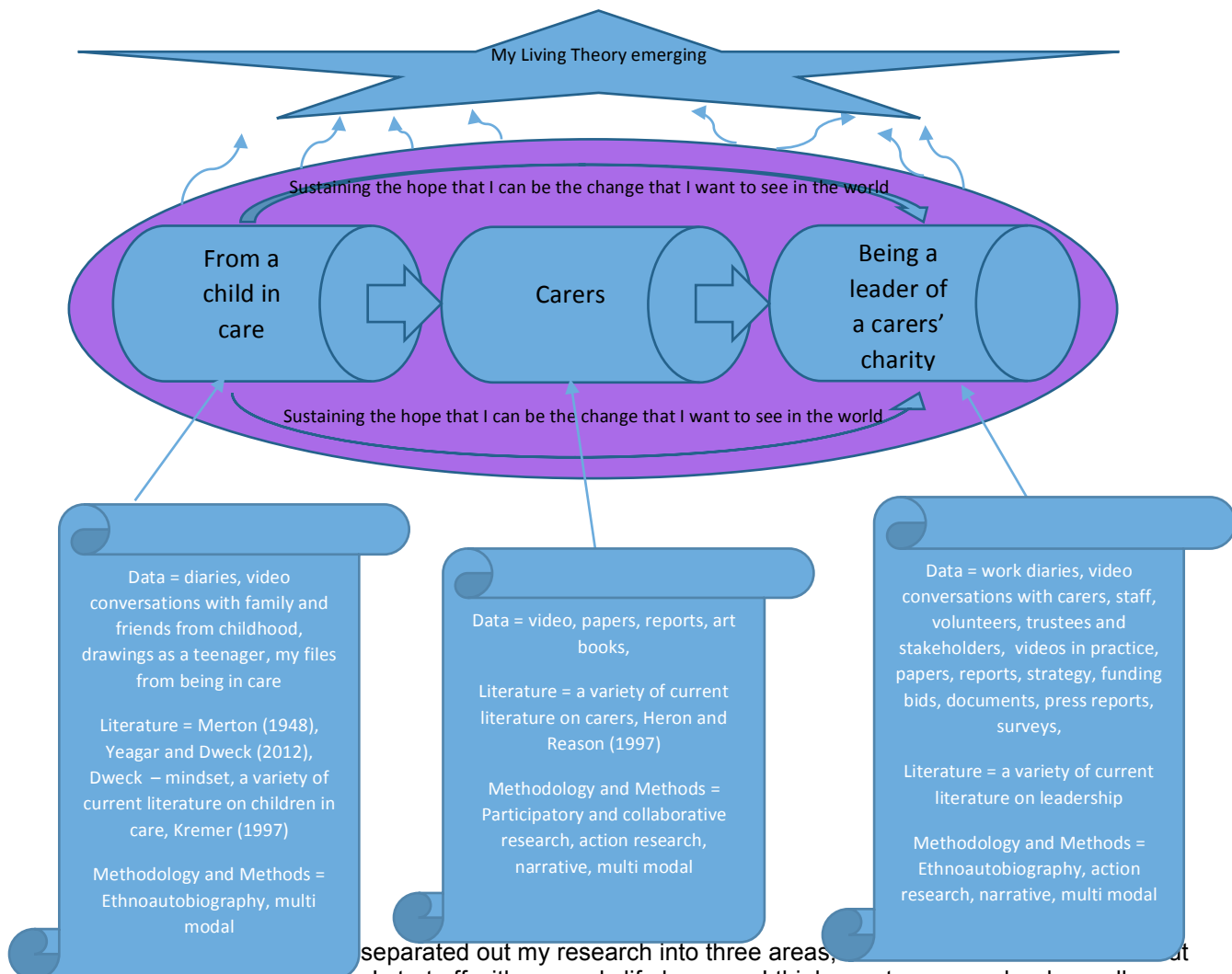
I will research the influence I have had on carers and how I can sustain myself the staff and volunteers and the organisation as a sustainable leader of a charity out of which my living-theory of caring (Hutchison, 2013) will emerge as an original contribution to knowledge. I am influenced by Schwab, 2014, as she explored in her book *The Heart of the Labyrinth* how to live in a way that is self-sustaining recognising that this is multi-faceted and challenges our current 'rat race' mentality.

Introduction

An explanatory introduction that locates and provides a rationale for the research.

In this transfer paper I explain the rationale for my research and why it is worthy of being a PhD. Diagram 1 gives a visual representation of my research, which I explain in more detail in this paper.

Picture 1. Visual representation of my thesis



I separated out my research into three areas, but they all have specific parts to them. I start off with my early life because I think my story grounds where all my values come from and it grounds where I've gone throughout my career. It is an unusual story of being a child in care, it is unusual because most people do not grow up in that environment.

Through researching my story I aim to provide an original contribution to knowledge in the research area of children in care. The Thomas Theorem is cited by Merton (1948)

"If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences"

which is the basis of his now famous term 'self-fulfilling prophecies'. Merton's 1948 paper argued that data that upholds a given view are used to perpetuate a given situation. Whilst Merton's paper was focused on the enduring nature of racism in America and the impact this had in preventing black people to progress I feel there is a similarity with the care system in the UK. The continuing lack of achievement for children in care is a pervasive issue that, despite attempts to change the situation through well-meaning practices, such as educational plans and social work interventions, is still statistically damning. David Cameron's recent speech covered how persistent the statistics have remained:

Children in care are today almost guaranteed to live in poverty. 84 per cent leave school without five good GCSEs. 70 per cent of prostitutes were once in care. And tragically, care leavers are four times more likely to commit suicide than anyone else. (Cameron, 2015)

The Prime Minister has suggested a solution involves changing the form of leadership in social services assuming that the problem is the professionals working with children in care. My concern is that David Cameron's speech is continuing to look at the failures. I think that, whilst the focus is on failure, self-fulfilling prophecies will continue to plague children in care. Third person research is used to seek generalisable findings leading researchers to focus on the majority rather than the minority, as the research David Cameron is quoting highlights. However, Merton points to an alternative focus for research, which is often ignored by researchers who adhere to a research paradigm which holds in greater esteem third person research. Merton points out that in the discipline of chemistry:

'it is the successful experiment which is decisive and not the thousand-and-one failures which preceded it. More is learned from a single success than from the multiple failures. A single success proves it can be done. Thereafter, it is necessary only to learn what made it work.'
(p.210)

I am integrating Merton's assertion as a part of the Living Theory framing for my thesis. I will argue that whilst my story is a single story,, it is a story that proves that someone can succeed despite being in care. My story shows that a child can succeed rather than fulfilling the self-fulfilling prophecy of multiple failures that pervades the care system. I will argue that if we only look at the many 'failures', we only learn how to fail. By using first person research I am aiming to create new knowledge, which may reveal answers to how more children in care can achieve and become successful adults. Merton's argument is in line with my view that more can be learnt from my story and other individual success stories than from the large body of research which looks at the multiple failures of children in care which I think is limited and will only lead to the continuation of self-fulfilling prophecies.

I will use a methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Harts, 2008) to integrate Kremer's (2004; 2014) ethnoautobiography methodology into my Living Theory methodology. I will identify the key areas of my childhood where I can identify my 'growth mindset' (Dweck, 2006; Yeager and Dweck, 2012) which I will argue led to my resilience to break the negative statistical expectations for my life due to being in care and having two schizophrenic parents with addiction issues. I will review pertinent literature on children in care and will argue that some of the current research - by trying to be generalisable - is leading to the kind of self-fulfilling prophecies Merton warned of. Generalisable research in this area is useful to identify the problems within the care system but does not bring hope to those in care or those working with children in care. Often the solutions in the literature are not lived in experience by children that have been in care and are therefore unlikely to make a difference.

The data I will use is:

- diaries from when I was a teenager
- drawing books from when I was a teenager
- video conversations with family and friends that knew me as a child to ask them what they think it was about me that meant I did not experience the failures many other children in care experience but went on to have success educationally and to have a happy and fulfilling life. I have some videos which I have referenced in papers such as Hutchison (2013)
- social services files to see how other people judged me as a child in care and to see if there are some clues there about how I have gone on to succeed. I have looked at these files when I was younger and I am able to access them for this research.

I want to look at all this data to ask questions of the nature 'what was that experience about?' and 'how has that experience given me the values that I have held in my career?'

I will argue that the originality of my contribution is the hope that my living-theory brings to the academy, professionals and children in care that supports greater study of those who are outliers in the statistics. I

will argue that hope is important in research to identify strategies that can be built on for the future. I support Adichie's (2009) premise that there is a danger to telling a single story. By using statistics to tell stories of children in care, a single story of failure and ruin is being told. Whilst avoiding telling a "smooth story of self" (MacLure, 1996, p.283) through my "narrative wreckage" (Frank, 1997) I emerge as a resilient young woman with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. It is the explanation of my story through my living-theory that provides an original contribution to knowledge.

That leads me to the second part of my research to look at where I have spent the majority of my career working. I have worked with carers since 2004, I will go back and look at the data I have from working with carers. I am also still working with carer so I am integrating a participatory methodology (Heron and Reason, 1997) into my Living Theory methodology to work with carers. I have written and presented a paper integrating a participatory methodology where I worked alongside a group of carers educating social workers and researched our practice together (Hutchison, 2014). I will continue to look with carers at how we could improve what we were doing for carers locally. I am interested in my ongoing learning to research how I can work with carers to improve what the charity is doing by asking what carers want and working together with carers to achieve their ambitions.

I will continue to integrate ethnoautobiographical methodology into my Living Theory methodology as I research my career spanning over a decade working with carers. As is consistent with ethnoautobiography, I will use narrative methods to bring stories of the carers.

I am exploring the Ubuntu philosophy, an African way of being which in English the closest translated is 'I am because you are'. However Huxtable and Whitehead (2015) also suggest that we need to acknowledge 'we are because I am'. I will explore how my 'I' is related to the 'we' in a way that is not impositional but that acknowledges that the influence and change I have brought to the world has been shared with others. There are many 'we's' in my life which I am seeking to identify how to acknowledge in my research. One of the changes I will explore is how my work with carers has made a change in the world, in my sphere of influence in Bath and North East Somerset and occasionally beyond as I have had small but significant ripples of influence on wider social formations. I will research this from both perspectives of a practitioner and as a carer of my mum with mental health and addiction issues. As a researcher, carer, professional and leader working with carers, I am in a position of being able to join up these forms of knowledge which is an issue identified by Hanson et al (2006). They state that:

'all stakeholders can not only access knowledge, but play a legitimate and important part in its production, use, evaluation and dissemination.'

Many people I work with are both practitioners and carers, however, it is very unusual to also be a researcher and leader and even more unusual to want to acknowledge each role. As I am living in all the stakeholder roles and I am seeking to join them up this provides me with a currently unique insight to develop Hanson et al's model from joining up lots of different groups to recognizing many individual people play a role in each of the groups. My research provides a unique contribution to knowledge in how you can join the different roles up to improve practice, carer experiences and create new knowledge.

As a leader of a flourishing local charity working in the current socio-economic climate I am approaching my research from the perspective of a charity leader seeking new knowledge to respond to new challenges where organisations are continually asked to do more with less. It is particularly pertinent in this time of austerity where traditional approaches are increasing pressures on staff at all level, which can lead to 'burnout'.

'Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind. A key aspect of the burnout syndrome is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion' (p.99, Maslach and Jackson, 1981).

That takes me on to look at my leadership and to see whether I am living my values in practice using action research methods to see how I can improve what I am doing. I have written papers looking at my leadership and specific challenges I have faced (Harrison, Hutchison and Walton, 2013; Hutchison,

2013; Hutchison, 2014; Hickey, Hutchison and Trumper, 2014). These papers have explored how I have tried to live my values as fully as possible in practice and where I have found my values to have been negated and what I have done to try to regain my ability to actively lead from my value base. It is very difficult to live your values fully as a leader of a charity. I feel the current socio-economic measurements I am judged by on a day to day basis such as how much money my charity is raising, how many beneficiaries are we supporting or how many staff do we have will only perpetuate the unsustainable direction of travel. Even those funders who are measuring success based on outcomes such as how many carers report improvements in their lives are not preventing staff burn-out, as in order to measure these changes a large amount of staff time is required. In the extreme the drive to do more with less leads to the closure of charities, with Kids Company being a recent pertinent example. Kids Club is an example of how the drive to keep helping without developing care for the charity itself led to the closure of the charity which has led to staff losing their jobs and more seriously thousands of children and young people being left bereft of support.

Beresford wrote in The Guardian:

“Camila Batmanghelidjh, former founding chief executive of Kids Company, has always stressed the importance of love in her approach. This mantra might have been enough for hippies in the 60s, but it is open to question whether it is an adequate underpinning for a mainstream, publicly funded organisation with hundreds of staff and a multimillion-pound budget in 2015.” (Beresford, 2015)

In order to meet the criticism of love not being enough my research is seeking to find a balance between meeting the external measurements and maintaining my key values (including love) that have come to be my living standards of judgement to evaluate my success. I argue that both are necessary to ensure charities are led responsibly whilst maintaining the love and care that is integral to providing beneficiaries with a good service.

In addition, I will explore my own journey of recognition that in ‘people-work’ our values need to include ourselves not just those we seek to serve or ‘burnout’ is still possible. Exploring a different way to evaluate my success based on my personal values which enables the flourishing of those the charity is set up to benefit provides opportunities where I aim to provide an original contribution to knowledge to the research area of charity leadership. Building on my living-theory of care-giving (Hutchison, 2013) and my research into self-care (Hutchison, 2015) I develop the concept that ‘self-care’ or ‘care for others’ is not enough but that there is a need to combine both with an acknowledgement of each-others values that work towards the flourishing of humanity. By developing these values as a way of evaluating our success we can flourish whilst supporting those we serve to flourish as well.

Holding the three parts of my thesis together is the question am I managing to be the change I want to see in the world? This question is a challenge I have of myself in my research and out of that research emerges my living-theory my explanation of my educational influence in my own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations Whitehead, 1989).

I have gained permission from the ethics committee at the University of Cumbria to conduct my research using the following principles. I recognize unlike traditional research I will not be studying so-called research participants but staff, volunteers, carers and other stakeholders will be asked to participate in various ways. I will use videoed conversations, written feedback, emails, photographs and various documents as data to help me to understand how I can improve my practice and my influence on my own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations (Whitehead, 2008). Participants will have choice about their level of involvement. For those directly involved I will use a consent forms and my consent procedures. For those I do not directly engage with but are involved in the charity I will make it public that I am researching my practice so there is an understanding that they will be indirectly involved in my research. My research benefits from a regular Skype research group of living theorists across the world, conversation café research group of Bath area Living Theorists, Cumbria summer school of PhD students using a large variety of methodological approaches and the Institute for Leadership and Sustainability (IFLAS). I am keen to join with others where:

'our inquiry is our action in the service of human flourishing. Our knowing of the world is consummated as our action in the world and participatory research is thus essentially transformative' (Heron and Reason, 1997 p. 283).

My ethical stance is to ensure that I have the best interests of the people I work with and this overrides all other considerations in my research as a result my procedures for giving consent will need to be flexible to react to a variety of situations in the best interest of the people involved. This is consistent with the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines. As the Chief Executive of the charity I work for I am in a position of power which demands a particularly robust approach to obtaining data. My situation is similar to that of teacher researchers who research their impact in the classroom as they also have a position of power over their pupils such as noted by Blair (2013) and Crotty (2012) and the additional impact of being a manager or leader in an organisation such as explored by Delong (2002). I have taken the principles that these researchers have successfully implemented in their research procedures to ensure my research holds an ethical approach to gaining consent. I will ensure all participants understand what my research is about, where it will be used and that I am particularly careful to explain that participation is voluntary and that consent can be withdrawn at any time. I am also aware that I am asking children and young people to consent to be involved in my research as a result I will also ensure that their parents are happy for them to participate as well as gaining their consent.

Literature Review

Evidence of critical and creative engagement with relevant literature.

I am using a Living Theory (Whitehead, 2014) methodology in my research, which makes the 'I' central to my research. I am not distinguishing between myself as a practitioner and my wider life, I believe like Sarason (1988) that the two are impossible to distinguish between. Our values are living and cannot be rarified. Living Theory methodology asks questions of the nature "How can I improve what I am doing?" The research starts with who I am and my story; I intend to avoid the danger of a "single story" (Adichie, 2009) being told about children in care rather enabling my living theory to emerge in my life and my leadership. Drawing on an ethnoautobiographic (Kremer, 2003) methodology, I will ground my research in my "ethnic, cultural, historical, ecological, and gender background" (p.9). The usual term is auto-ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997), I choose to use Kremer's term which prioritises decolonisation and healing as I want my story to influence social formations.

Auto-ethnography has been criticised for being self-indulgent and narcissistic (Coffey, 1999). To counter such criticisms I am clear that by understanding my story it will become clear where my values and hope that I can be the change I want to see in the world comes from. Without bringing my story to the research I would be revealing a fraction of the data and learning.

I will also review literature on children in care (Wineburg, 1987, Heath et. al., 1994; Leeson, 2007; Macleod, 2007; Munro, 2001.). In my reading to date, I have noticed that the research continues to create self-fulfilling prophecies as much of the research is focused on generalizable failures of children in care rather than paying attention to the successes of the few. 'Going to University from Care' (Jackson et al, 2005) provides some research looking at the small number of children in care who go on to succeed. The research followed 129 children in care getting to university and makes good recommendations to support children in care to go to university. However, as third person research I feel the story is being told for the care leavers, I am keen to tell my own story in my research. I feel by researching my own experience I am able to explore how I was able to remain resilient throughout my childhood, which now has the potential to bring hope to other children in care and those working with them. My reading of Yeager and Dweck's (2012) concept of mindset and resilience resonates with me as I can identify that as a child I had the view that if I worked hard and did well at school I would have a 'passport' to do a job I enjoyed and that would make a difference to others which was my ambition. I will explore the idea the negative statistical predictions for my life (Slater and Cowie, 1971; Department for Education) did not bring me hope. By reviewing the literature in this area I will be in a stronger position to provide a critique and offer a new perspectives that brings hope.

Through my work and research I am familiar with a wide range of literature about carers (Carers UK, 2004; 2007; 2011; 2013; Clarke and Riley, 2006; Clifford et al, 2011; Broady, 2015) and young carers (Becker et al, 2000; 2004; 2008; Fives et al, 2013). Whilst I use these research papers as a resource for funding bids which has brought in over £500,000 to the charity I run, I will critique the literature as biasing “narrative wreckage” (Frank, 1997) rather than “self-stories” (Shafer, 1992) which can bring hope. My original contribution to the carers’ literature will be to research from the perspective of being a carer for my mum with mental health issues and addiction issues, leading a carers’ centre and encouraging the carers I support to tell their own stories to be included in the research as part of the participatory method. Whilst not wanting to provide a “smooth story” (MacLure, 1996) which would not be authentic I feel it is necessary to include the stories that can also bring hope to carers and those working with carers. I have seen many of these stories lived out in my life and work and want to bring these to the academy to provide a balance to the current literature.

Literature on carer participation (Roulstone et al, 2006) is often incorporated with service user participation as carers are usually included as ‘service users and carers’ (Levin, 2004) in the research. I would argue this does not take into account the differences in the lived experiences depending on whether you are a service user or carer. I would argue the barriers to participation are different. I am influenced and guided by Unicef’s ‘The Convention of the Rights of the Child’ and Article 12 in particular was introduced to me as a child in care and affirmed the belief I held as a child that my views should be taken into consideration. The literature on participation is contradictory as those that are participating are described in the third person removing them from the researching process. My research will rebalance the literature to include the voice of carers within the research itself.

The literature on leadership is diverse (Bolden, 2003), I have engaged with literature on authentic leadership (Chan et. al, 2005; Avolio and Gardiner, 2005; Gardiner, 2011; Walumbwa et. al, 2008; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005) as I feel it is important to be true to my values as a leader. However, I feel the literature on authentic leadership lacks authenticity as it describes leaders’ authenticity from a third person perspective lacking the authenticity of the voice of the leader researching their own leadership. In my research I am interested in how I am leading my own learning the learning of others and the learning of social formations which necessitates starting from the first person (Hutchison, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). However, as my research has developed I am interested in sustainable leadership. I agree with Bendall and Little (2015) that a weakness of authentic leadership is that self-reflection alone can lead to self-justification for being in charge and that in order to create sustainability an ethical and collaborative approach to leadership is needed. My own lived experience has highlighted the danger of ‘burnout’ and I am aware that the increasing pressures to do more with less are leading others to ‘burnout’.

I will use insights from participatory research methods (Heron and Reason, 1997) aiming to empower others involved in my research to tell their own story. I will research how I am influenced by my story and those of others to improve the organisation I am leading and the social formations I am influencing. I use Heron and Reason’s (1997) definition of participation where there is collaboration leading to a form of co-operative inquiry. I choose this definition of participatory rather than Friere’s (1970) definition, which requires those involved to see themselves as oppressed. I do not see myself as oppressed as I feel this makes me take a victim perspective. Rather I choose to see myself as interconnected with everyone and everything where I can choose to collaborate and co-operate with others as a picture I drew when I was 18 called Conscious Conversations illustrates:

Picture 2. Conscious Conversation



The academy does not always accept participatory research or first person research (Kuokkanen, 2004) as this type of knowledge is not seen as valid. In order to meet this criticism I will use Habermas's (1976) criteria of validation through several validation groups trying to gain wide criticism of my thinking to ensure what I am saying is authentic, comprehensible, rightness and truthful. Validation groups will be used to strengthen the rigour (Melrose, 2001) of the research. Melrose suggests for Action Research there is:

a range of meanings for rigorous, such as realistic, regular, scrupulous, constant, credible, dependable, confirmable, defensible, honest, ethical, transferable, valuable to the broader community, and resulting in practical change and improvement p.178

I will explore the literature in the areas of validation and rigour further to ensure my research addresses the criticisms facing first and second person research.

Methodology and Methods

Justification of selected research approach by reference to preliminary findings.

'The meanings of Living Educational Theory research are paradigmatic in the sense that they are the abstract concepts that define the field of Living Theory research. A living-educational-theory is the unique explanation produced by an individual to explain their educational influence in learning.' (Huxtable and Whitehead, P. 1)

I am using both Living Theory (Whitehead, 2014) as the abstract concepts which I will define and follow to help me develop my Living Theory methodology for my research and in the unique explanation I will produce as my living-theory account. I am referring to methodology as defined by Heron and Reason (1997)

'How can the inquirer... go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known about?'

As I develop my research I recognise the unique strength to Living Theory is the explicit and central use of values as a living standard of judgement and as explanatory principles. As a Chief Executive developing a highly successful carers' charity. I have evidence of my success based on quantitative measurable changes such as socio-economic growth. Since I started the charity has more than doubled

the size in all aspects including beneficiaries, income and staff. Whilst I am proud of these achievements I do not feel judging my research on these criteria alone will develop knowledge that will bring flourishing to humanity. Charities are facing a decline in public opinion “the readiness of the public to believe that charities are behaving badly reflects a serious decline in trust” (Baggini, 2015). Therefore measuring purely the socio-economic growth of a charity will not increase trust or necessarily lead to a benefit to intended beneficiaries. My research is interested in a different evaluation of success which Living Theory provides by making my values my explicit standards of judgement. Therefore, the standards of judgement that I measure my success are living as they are my lived values of love, hope, participation and justice. I have explored how successful I have been at living these in practice through my research through papers and posters (Hutchison, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) and my thesis will provide an in-depth exploration identifying the areas of learning beyond myself for others. These include staff, volunteers, carers and colleagues in organisations I work with. I am also interested in the learning for social formations. Social formations:

points to the way people organise their interactions according to a set of regulatory values that can take the form of rules. (Farren and Whitehead, 2005 p.1)

It is important to me for my research to:

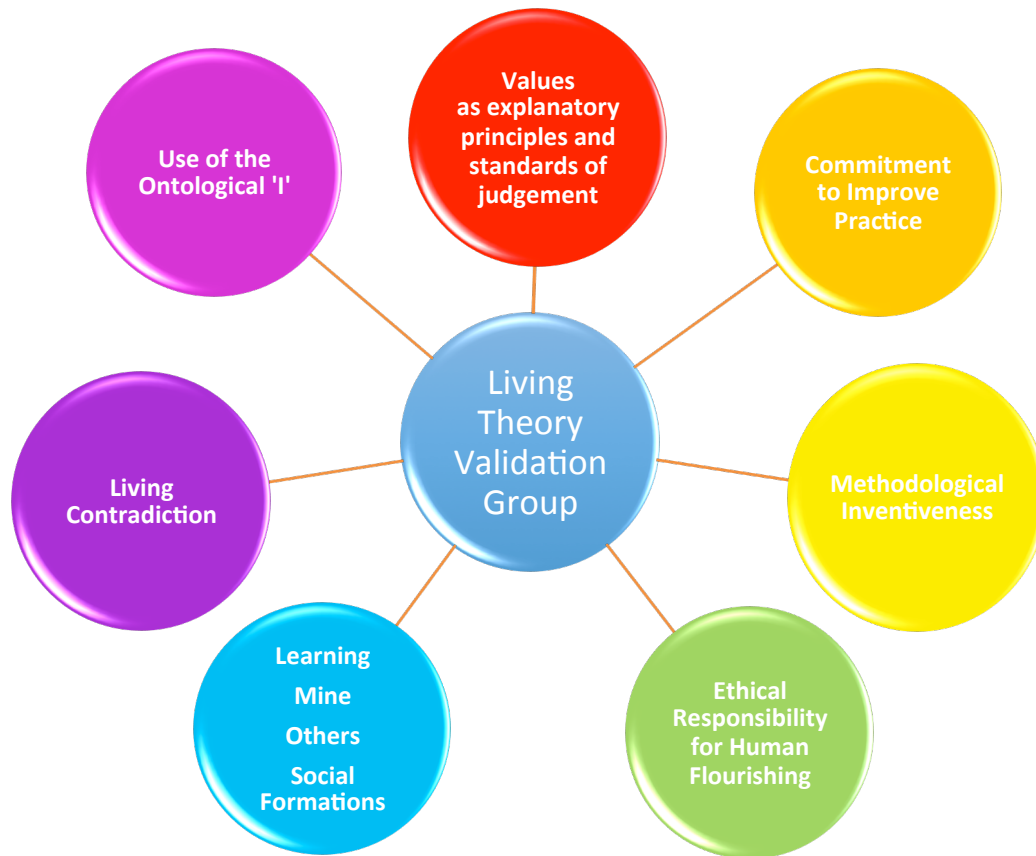
- improve my own practice as I am concerned that I benefit the carers I work with locally
- improve others learning as I want to influence the staff, volunteers, carers and colleagues in organisations I work with to improve their practice and lives
- improve social formation because I want to have an influence in how the decisions are made across society to ensure people who are vulnerable are valued, supported and listened to.

I view myself as a new generation of Living Theorists that has been accepted to research at the University of Cumbria because the university is open to engage critically on my use of Living Theory methodology. I aim to use my research to strengthen the definition of Living Theory methodology that will stand up to the critical engagement of the university. I am aiming to strengthen the comprehensibility and understanding of Living Theory using a creative approach that has principles to follow and a philosophical adherence to making values as living standards of judgement explicit and central. My unique contribution to knowledge will include new insights gained for established research areas of children in care, carers and sustainable leadership.

My thesis is arguing Living Theory has an overarching philosophical adherence to identifying the researcher's own values as they emerge and using them as living standards of judgement rather than societal values or imposed standards of judgements such as from funders, the academy or commissioners. The local clinical commissioning group and council commission services which fund 65% of the charity I run. The contracts set out standards of judgement as to whether we are successful based on outputs and outcomes. These are not related to my own values and at times can provide a challenge to continue to deliver services that do not negate my values.

I have found it useful to create my own simple diagram of the principles of Living Theory as a methodology that my thesis is seeking to clarify.

Picture 3. Principles of Living Theory Diagram



1. Having a validation group to test validity as Habermas (1976) says the researcher must be 'comprehensible', 'have the intention of communicating a true proposition', 'express his intentions truthfully' (or in my words authentically) and 'choose an utterance that is right' (pp. 2-3). Also to test rigour as Melrose (2001) says is defined as 'realistic, regular, scrupulous, constant, credible, dependable, confirmable, defensible, honest, ethical, transferable, valuable to the broader community, and resulting in practical change and improvement' p.178.
2. Values as explanatory principles in terms of the reasons given for why something happens. These lead to living standards of judgement (how the validity of the claim or contribution to knowledge is being judged). Living standard of judgement are changing as they are constituted by the unique constellation of values that the individual uses to give meaning and purpose to their life together with the insights from the ideas of others that the individual integrated within their explanation.
3. A commitment to reflect and act to improve the researchers own practice (reflexivity)
4. Methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Hart, 2001) where 'a flexible approach is required that that bends and moves with the pressures of the enquiry rather than one that is stiff, inflexible and ultimately breaks'. (p.176). This enables the research to fit with the researchers values and enables the research to be values based.
5. There is an ethical responsibility for the researcher to use the methodology as a way to bring flourishing to humanity

6. Developing the learning of self, of others (those they are seeking to benefit) and of social formations that 'points to the way people organise their interactions according to a set of regulatory values that can take the form of rules'. (Farren and Whitehead, 2005 p.1).
7. Recognising Living Contradictions where the researcher finds themselves not living their values in practice and uses these insights to change what they are doing to bring them closer to living their values more fully
8. Self-study of the ontological 'I' rather than an egotistical 'I'

To enable my research to work within this creative approach to Living Theory I am using a methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Harts, 2008) which enables me to research in line with my values. This enables me to draw on a variety of methods and methodologies, which enable me to answer the question I have set for myself. I will use ethnoautobiography which is a development of autoethnography that enables me to do a self study to tell my own story grounded in socio-cultural factors that have affected me. Through the exploration of my story I am able to explore where my values have emerged from. I am using narrative methods including stories and reflections of those involved in the research (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991) to gain understanding of whether I am benefiting carers and their families through my evolving theory and practice of my leadership in the charity I work in. I am using participatory methods (Heron and Reason, 1997) enabling me to live my values to empower people through participation to enable change to occur (Melrose, 2001). I am using action research methods (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010; Inoue, 2014) to identify areas where I am being a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) and can improve as a leader in my charity. I am able to identify ways to improve what I am doing to be more in line with my values and to use my research to see if the changes are successful and create learning for myself, others and social formations. Using multi-modal data collection methods (Crotty, 2012) is providing me with evidence of where I am being a living contradiction or where I am living my values in practice. These multi-modal methods include videos, photos, drawings, teenage diaries, reflective diaries, diagrams, evaluations, surveys and other documents. By testing out any claims I make from the data I test these with validation groups and where it applies I test my claims with the person in the data to see if what I am saying can answer Habermas's (1976) validation criteria. I use these four questions:

- How could I improve the comprehensibility of my explanations of influence?
- How could I strengthen the evidence I use to justify the claims I make?
- How could I deepen and extend my sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings of their influence in my practice and understandings?
- How could I enhance the authenticity of my explanation to show that I am living my espoused values as fully as possible?

I favour using a Living Theory methodology rather than any of the single methods or methodologies I have described which each could provide the methodological basis for my research. I have chosen not to use Ethnoautobiography as it would confine my research to only take my single lens of my life as the focus on the thesis. My research also benefits from my own second and third person research to compare and contrast other lenses to my research. Ethnoautobiography would not provide the flexibility for me to develop my research in this way.

A narrative methodology would confine my research to only tell stories, this could potentially enable me to tell my story and bring in others stories. However, it would not enable me to bring in the learning I have gained from action research where I have asked myself questions such as 'How can I improve my practice' this has enabled my research to look at where I have improved my practice not just my story of being a carer or a leader. However, Action Research as a methodology on its own would not enable me to bring the stories in from my childhood which are so important to my thesis and would not explicitly bring in my values as living standards of judgement which I argue is important to reframing how we measure success in organisations.

Therefore, I have developed my Living Theory methodology by drawing on each method and methodology to provide me with a way to develop knowledge that is consistent with my values and the type of knowledge I am seeking to create.

I am finding writing regular papers for conferences is helping me to develop my skills at critical thinking, reading and writing. The papers are providing me with markers in the sand where I can see my learning developing and I will use them in my thesis as data. The papers also open up opportunities for me to spread my influence in the learning of others and of social formations nationally and internationally. I am also regularly updating my Living Poster (Hutchison, 2015), which is providing a useful method for data collection and to draw insights into my research.

Outline of intended PhD thesis
indicative contents list

Abstract 250-300 words

Chapter 1 Introduction 2000 words

Chapter 2 Methodology (5,000 words)

- Living Theory explained
- Living Theory critiqued
- My Living Theory Methodology
- Justification for using Living Theory for my PhD research

Chapter 3 From a Child in Care 20,000 words

- The story of my lived experience of being a child in care compared to the notions of self-fulfilling prophecies and the negative statistical predictions for my life and looked after children (A literature review).
- The notion of growth mindset helps to explain my resilience and prevented me from fulfilling the negative predictions
- My values emerge through my story
- My story brings hope for children in care and those working with them
- My original contribution to knowledge in the area of looked after children and care leavers

Chapter 4 Carers 20,000 words

- My story of working with carers and being a carer for my mum compared to the negative statistics for carers (A literature review)
- Evidencing that I have improved my practice over more than a decade of working with carers by living my values
- How growth mindset has given me the resilience to continue caring
- Carers tell their own stories – narrative and participatory second person research methods – working with and alongside young and adult carers
- My original contribution to knowledge in the area of carers and caring

Chapter 5 Being a leader of a carers' charity 20,000 words

- My story of being a leader, self-care and what being a leader & the idea of leadership mean in the current context (A literature review)
- Evidence for my claims of living my values in practice through stories of others and my influence on them – narrative and participatory second person research methods
- Stories of my influence on social formations – third person research
- My original contribution to knowledge in the area of leadership

Chapter 6 Sustaining the hope that I can be the change I want to see in the world? 5,000 words

- Ubuntu 'I am because we are' leading to 'we are because I am'
- Evidence for my claims that I have lived my value of hope
- I can be the change I want to see in the world

Chapter 7 Conclusion 2,500 words

Bibliography

Outputs to date

Including any internal/external courses attended, further training undertaken (e.g. any demonstration and/or lecturing undertaken), oral/poster presentations submitted/made, papers submitted/published, any wider dissemination of research findings (press articles etc.)

In the appendices I have included each of the abstracts from the papers I have produced and a picture of my Living Poster. Since my application I have written and presented several papers which have enabled me to research and explore parts of my work in detail, as well as critically engaging with literature on these areas of work. The papers I have written and presented and posters I have made and presented are:

- How do I generate my living-theory of caring in the restructuring of a Carer's Centre? Presented at the Research and Enterprise Conference Cumbria University 4th July 2014. [Online]. https://www.academia.edu/12187257/How_do_I_generate_my_living-theory_of_caring_in_the_restructuring_of_a_Carer_s_Centre (Accessed: 26 December 2015).
- How can I work participatively with carers to improve the education of social work students? Presented at Cumbria University Doctoral Colloquium, 10th July 2014. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/12187214/How_can_I_work_participatively_with_carers_to_improve_the_education_of_social_work_students (Accessed: 26 December 2015).
- How do we generate our living theories of caring in the restructuring of a Carer's Centre? Presented at British Educational Research Association 25th September 2014 Institute of Education, London. Jointly written with Chris Hickey and David Trumper. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/12187171/How_do_we_generate_our_living_theories_of_caring_in_the_restructuring_of_a_Carer_s_Centre (Accessed: 26 December 2015).
- Living Posters presentation with large numbers of presenters from across the world at Action Research Network of the Americas 8th May 2015, Toronto, Canada. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/12187489/Living_Poster_for_Action_Research_Network_of_the_Americas_2015 (Accessed: 26 December 2015).
- 'Care For The Self? - How Can I Live Caring for Myself in Practice?' Presented at Research and Enterprise Conference Cumbria University 2015. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/13454017/Care_For_The_Self_-_How_Can_I_Live_Caring_for_Myself_in_Practice (Accessed: 26 December 2015).
- Paper with Dr Joan Walton - An inquiry into the significance of first-person research for the creation of knowledge to reduce suffering and enhance human flourishing. Presented at Action Learning and Action Research Association's World Congress 7th November 2015, Pretoria, South Africa. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/19624428/An_enquiry_into_the_significance_of_first-person_research_for_the_creation_of_knowledge_to_reduce_suffering_and_enhance_human_flourishing (Accessed: 26 December 2015).
- Living Theory Research Group – a model of participatory and sustainable learning for the 'flourishing of humanity'. Workshop led at Action Learning and Action Research Association's World Congress 7th November 2015, Pretoria, South Africa. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/s/124b1acc88?source=link> (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

These papers have enabled me to develop and improve my explanations of Living Theory as a methodology. They have helped me focus in on particular areas in my professional life where I feel I can evidence my ability to sustain the hope that I can be the change I want to see in the world and to explore areas where I can see the notion of Ubuntu 'I am because you are' and taking this on a step further than 'we are because I am'. In this sense I am not looking at 'we' in a generalizable mass but as those where I can see my influence has supported the ability for others to be the change they want to see in the world. This is an area I am keen to develop in my thesis moving from my own learning, the learning of others

through to the learning of social formations. I see this as 'I', 'we', 'they', bringing first person, second person and third person research together to draw the strengths of each within my research.

The additionality gained from developing papers and workshops provide me with experience of working with members of my research group to help me refine my ideas, edit and improve my writing to be at a level worthy of publication. I have also developed my skills at creating presentations and explaining my research to others to improve my comprehensibility. The 'Living Poster' (Whitehead, 2015) has provided me with a new method of understanding my research using visual representations of my work to date. I am planning to continue to use this as a method by updating the poster as my work progresses to give me new insights and to compare to previous posters to give me a visual representation of my learning as it develops. I have also used methods such as action research, participatory research, narrative and ethno-autography to develop my skills in these areas.

Time-scale for the remaining work

including writing up, up to the intended submission date (allowing reasonable time for supervisors to review drafts and for implementation of recommended revisions)

I am planning to continue to present more papers, posters and to develop my skills in leading workshops. Last year my work was more focused on the nature of research and why I think first person research is so important, critical engagement and critiquing of other writings to develop my own understandings and the importance of research groups to sustain me in my research. This is developing my work from focussing on individual pieces of work I am doing professionally and how I am improving my practice into a wider engagement with debates on methodologies, research paradigms and the nature and purpose of research. This will help me to develop my understanding and provide rich learning to bring into my thesis.

Further conferences and publications I am planning are:

- 2016 Sustainable Leadership Spring School, Ambleside (5-10 April)
- 2016 I am planning to publish a paper in a journal. I am researching a suitable journal.
- 2017 I am planning to submit a paper for the British Educational Research Association Conference

My timescales for my thesis are:

- April 2016 Collect and collate data and critically engage with the literature on being a child in care and write First Draft of Chapters 1, 2 and 3
- October 2016 Collect and collate data on my leadership and critically engage with the literature on leadership and write first Draft of Chapter 5 and 6 and 7.
- April 2017 Collect and collate data and critically engage with the literature on carers and caring and write first Draft of Chapter 4
- October 2017 Re-draft of thesis
- December 2017 Final draft of thesis ready for submission

Illustrative Bibliography

Include everything mentioned in the proposal plus key texts which will be used in the thesis

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Appendices

Appendix 1. – Abstracts from papers

- Hickey, C., Hutchison, S. and Trumper, D. (2014) How do we generate our living theories of caring in the restructuring of a Carer's Centre? Paper presented at British Educational Research Association Conference 25th September 2014 Institute of Education, London. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/12187171/How_do_we_generate_our_living_theories_of_caring_in_the_restructuring_of_a_Carer_s_Centre (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

The authors are the CEO and Deputy CEO of a Carers' Centre charity and an independent human resources consultant. The authors have researched their influence in the restructuring of the Centre. Within this context, the paper explores the generation of living theories of care giving (Hutchison, 2013) using a values based approach which listened to staff, provided staff with open and honest feedback and adjusted the restructure to meet the feedback received. Our learning was influenced by Living Theory, Whitehead (1989, 2013) as we wanted to live our values in practice. When we found ourselves to be living contradictions we wanted to learn how to improve our practice to move our practice more in line with our values. We were influenced by Dadds' and Hart's (2001) ideas on 'methodological inventiveness' which stresses the importance of practitioner-researchers generating their own methodologies for exploring the implications of their questions. We were influenced by literature on transactional analysis Berne (1964) and Theory Y McGregor (1960). Kubler-Ross (1969) Grief Cycle and Lewin's (1947) Change management model –'Unfreezing. Moving, Refreezing' provided a traditional theoretical framework to the restructure. However, Hutchison's (2013) living theory of care giving in which individual's seek to live their value of care-giving provided a unique analytic framework which includes the clarification and communication of the individual's expression of 'care-giving', with digital visual data and empathetic resonance (Huxtable 2009). Our research findings have shown the process of restructuring is difficult for people leading to loss of trust, closed communication, increased inter team tension and splitting. Despite this we have found the final outcome has seen a renewed commitment to the organisation, greater sense of purpose and an increase in positive energy.

- Hutchison, S. (2011) *How can I improve my practice as a Chief Executive working with carers and their families creating my living theory of mindfulness and learning?* A successful proposal for presentation at BERA 2011 at the University of London, Institute of Education. [Online]. Available at: <http://actionresearch.net/writings/bera12/sonia060911bera.pdf> (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

'It seems, then, the innovators in science are frequently those with sufficient courage to challenge widespread assumptions, enabling them to observe phenomena that were concealed from their peers by the veils of pre-conceived ideas. Norwood Russell Hanson comments: "the paradigm observer is not the man who sees and reports what all normal observers see and report, but the man who sees in familiar objects what no one else has seen before."' (Wallace 1996, p. 61)

In this paper I have four aims of my research which are to:

1. Enable me and my staff to put carers at the centre of their practice
2. Enable me and my staff to be able to reflect on our personal experience and professional practice to maintain our motivation for keeping carer centred
3. Look at how energy affects interactions when we're working with people and look at the way of measuring energy that motivates us and how we pool energy when we are together.
4. Enquire as to how I can create a mindful workforce

'Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and

non judgementally ... And if we're not fully present for many of those moments, you may not only miss what is most valuable in our lives but also fail to realise the richness and the depth of our possibilities for growth and transformation.' (Kabat Zinn 1994, p. 4)

This paper will look at how my role as a leader can create the time and space to enable my staff to learn about their own practice using 'enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care' (Dadds and Hart 2001, p. 169). I will explore how we can develop something I have called the dynamic pooling of flowing energy, which I will define throughout this paper, to help us learn and to improve what we are doing. My definition of a carer throughout this paper is taken from the Princess Royal Trust for Carers definition 'A carer is someone of any age who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help due to illness, disability, mental ill-health or a substance misuse problem.' <http://www.carers.org/whats-a-carer>.

- Hutchison, S. (2012) *My gift of authenticity as a leader*. Liverpool Hope University. [Online]. Available at: <http://actionresearch.net/writings/module/shmastersgiftsandtalents.pdf> (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

Authentic Leadership requires vulnerability to be self-aware and be transparent in relationships with those you lead (Gardiner, 2011). This paper explores my journey to identify where my values come from professionally as I explore the influences of my education and my career and personally as I explore my personal story from being taken into care to carer of my biological mum. I expand my 'living theory of mindfulness and learning' (Hutchison, 2011) which I have been developing in my practice over a number of years exploring my epistemology of dynamic flowing energy. As a leader of a medium sized charity working with carers and their families in a small unitary authority this paper explores how by my self-awareness and generosity of sharing my story as a gift my leadership is enhanced and is validated as authentic by those I lead. Using a 'methodological inventiveness' (Dadds and Hart, 2001) I draw upon the cutting edge of living theory research, multi-media approaches, ethno-autobiographical narrative and reflective diaries. I explore where I find evidence and validation that I am an authentic leader for the staff, trustees, volunteers and carers I lead and also explore where I find myself a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989; Barry, 2012) and how I use this to improve my practice.

- Hutchison, S. (2012) *How have I improved my practice and developed my living theory of mindfulness and learning since presenting at the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Conference in 2011?* Liverpool Hope University. [Online]. Available at: <http://actionresearch.net/writings/module/shalandkcmaunit.pdf> (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

This paper presents my knowledge creation and active learning from writing and presenting my 2011 BERA paper (Hutchison, 2011) through to the summer of 2012 as I continue to evolve my living theory (Whitehead, 1989) with new insights into narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin and Connelly, 1998; Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999) Living Theory TASC (Huxtable, 2012) and an educationally entrepreneurial spirit (Crotty 2012). This reflection is based on my current practice as a Chief Executive of a Carers' Centre (Centre) supporting people who care for family or friends who have an illness, disability or problematic drug and alcohol use. The methods I will use are ethnoautobiography (Kremer, 2003) using sources such as newsletters diaries and multi-media approaches (Huxtable, 2009; Jones, 2009).

- Hutchison, S. Harrison, N. and Walton, J. (2013) Using a living theory approach to action research to develop authenticity as an organisational leader. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Conference 29 April 2013 San Francisco. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/sonia/soniaaera13prop.pdf> (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

In this paper we share the reasons why we believe that leaders researching their experience of authenticity in their own practice can make an original contribution to knowledge. The contention is that most research focuses on academics inquiring into what constitutes authentic leadership through observing, questioning and interviewing others; but does not include **how** to develop as an authentic leader through the first hand exploration of their own practice. We discuss what is involved in researching our practice, what it has to offer that is of social value, and the implications for others who might be interested in this approach to knowledge creation concerning authenticity and leadership.

- Hutchison, S. (2013) *A Living-Theory of Care-Giving*. A successful proposal for presentation at the Inaugural Conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas in San Francisco, 1-2 May 2013. Retrieved 30 June 2015 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/sonia/soniaarnapaper300413.pdf>

In this paper I am offering an explanation of the educational influence of authentic leadership as a Chief Executive of a Care Givers' Centre in relation to the invention and re-invention of knowledge through an action research process that could have significance across the Americas. I will look at where my values come from by sharing my story and then sharing my research into my practice and how understanding where my values come from enables me to improve my practice as an authentic leader.

- Hutchison, S. (2013) *A Living-Theory of Care-Giving*. *Educational Journal of Living-theories*, 6(1), 40-56. [Online]. Available at: <http://ejolts.net/node/203> (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

In this paper I explore how my values based practice has helped me develop my authenticity as a leader of a care-givers' centre. I use the American term care-giver as this is based on a presentation I gave at the inaugural conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas in San Francisco 1-2 May 2013. In the UK we are called a carers' centre and our aim is to support unpaid carers who care for a family member or friend who could not manage without their help due to illness or disability. I explore how my story from child in care to chief executive of a carers' centre and carer of my mum has developed my living theory of care-giving.

- Hutchison, S. (2014) How do I generate my living-theory of caring in the restructuring of a Carer's Centre? Paper presented at the Research and Enterprise Conference Cumbria University 4 July 2014. [Online]. Available at: from https://www.academia.edu/12187257/How_do_I_generate_my_living-theory_of_caring_in_the_restructuring_of_a_Carer_s_Centre (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

I am a CEO of a Carers' Centre charity and in this paper I am researching my influence in the restructuring of the Centre. Within this context, the paper explores the generation of living-theories of care giving (Hutchison, 2013) using a values based approach which aimed to listen to staff, provide staff with open and honest feedback and adjust the restructure to meet the feedback received. The paper evidences how I moved from being a living contradiction to living my values as fully as possible as explanatory principles in the process of the restructure (Whitehead, 2008). I have been influenced by Dadds' and Hart's (2001) ideas on 'methodological inventiveness' which stresses the importance of practitioner-researchers generating their own methodologies for exploring the implications of their questions and by literature on transactional analysis Berne (1964) and Theory Y McGregor (1960). Hutchison's (2013) living-theory of care giving in which individuals seek to live their value of care-giving provided a unique analytic framework which includes the clarification and communication of the individual's expression of 'care-giving', with digital visual data and empathetic resonance (Huxtable, 2009).

The contribution to knowledge is in the living-theories of care-giving with the explication of the unique ontological values of care-giving that are expressed by each practitioner-researcher in the course of the enquiry.

My research findings have shown the process of restructuring is difficult for people leading to loss of trust, closed communication, increased inter team tension and splitting (Fugate, 2008). Despite this we have found the final outcome has seen many have a renewed commitment to the organisation, greater sense of purpose and an increase in positive energy.

- Hutchison, S. (2014) How can I work participatively with carers to improve the education of social work students? Paper presented at the Doctoral Colloquium Cumbria University 10 July 2014. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/12187214/How_can_I_work_participatively_with_carers_to_improve_the_education_of_social_work_students (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

I have been working participatively with carers to improve education for social work students for nine years. Within this context, this paper explores the generation of living theories of care giving (Hutchison, 2013) using a values based approach which enables carers to tell and use their stories to give social work students a deep learning of what it is like to be a carer and what carers need from social workers to improve their lives.

The research uses a living theory methodology Whitehead (1989, 2013). We tell our stories and encourage students to develop a values based practice which respects and empathises with carers to improve our learning, the learning of the students and the learning framework for social work students. As a group we want the social work students to understand there is no single story (Adichie, 2009) of caring. We are influenced by Dadds' and Hart's (2001) ideas on 'methodological inventiveness' which stresses the importance of generating our own methodologies for exploring the implications of our questions. We are also influenced by creating a participative reality (Heron, 1996) where power is balanced between everyone in the learning process.

As individuals seeking to live our values of care-giving this paper provides a unique analytic framework which includes the clarification and communication of our individual expressions of 'care-giving', with digital visual data and empathetic resonance (Huxtable 2009).

Our research findings have shown the social work students learning is improved through the participation of carers. More subtly a deeper learning is evident which finds learning occurs for the carers involved, the Carers' Centre and the learning of the lecturers at the university. The method of carers being in charge of the planning, delivery and evaluation of this learning is evidence of a participative reality (Heron, 1996) being lived in practice.

- Hutchison, S. (2015) 'Living Poster' Paper presented at the Action Research Network of the Americas 3rd May 2015, Toronto. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/12187489/Living_Poster_for_Action_Research_Network_of_the_Americas_2015 (Accessed: 26 December 2015).



- Hutchison, S. (2015) 'Care For The Self? - How Can I Live Caring for Myself in Practice?' Paper presented at the Research and Enterprise Conference Cumbria University 3 July 2014. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/13454017/Care_For_The_Self_-_How_Can_I_Live_Caring_for_Myself_in_Practice (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

As a leader of a successful local charity my research has recently been focusing on how to sustain myself as the amount of work becomes greater and more pressured. Informed by Foucault's 'The Care of the Self' I will recognize the contribution he has made to the understanding of the history of self-care, however I will explore the weaknesses of his work in regard to providing a practical framework to implement care of the self. I will also explore the feminist perspectives towards Foucault as The Care of the Self takes a largely male view of self-care. I will use a Living Theory approach in my research. A Living Theory approach enables me to take an ethical responsibility for living my values of love and hope fully. My findings identified the need to develop self-care or I would burnout and no longer be able to benefit those I was seeking to care for. I describe the 6 month career break I negotiated from my day to day work where I travelled to the USA. This paper explores my learning about care of the self from my career break, the influence of my research group and the sustaining nature of regular Skype and email support as well as the research group's learning about self-care. This paper will be of interest to many in the health and social care professions and those with a leadership role. It is particularly pertinent in this time of austerity where there are increasing pressures on personnel to be seen to do more with less time and resources, which can lead to 'burnout'.

- Hutchison, S. and Walton, J. (2015) An inquiry into the significance of first-person research for the creation of knowledge to reduce suffering and enhance human flourishing. Paper presented at Action Learning and Action Research Association's World Congress 7th November 2015, Pretoria, South Africa. [Online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/19624428/An_enquiry_into_the_significance_of_first-person_research_for_the_creation_of_knowledge_to_reduce_suffering_and_enhance_human_flourishing (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

We (Sonia and Joan) have been discussing ideas with each other for several years, though not in any formal academic relationship. Both of us have a deep commitment to grounding research in the first person subjective experience of the researcher. However when we talk, we realise that although we share some perspectives, there are substantial differences in why we have come to believe in the significance of first person research, and our preferred methodologies for engaging in such research. We are currently engaged in an ongoing collaborative inquiry, the aim of which is to share our respective ideas, stories and research, in the hope that we can generate a form of knowledge that is different and greater than that which either of us can achieve independently. This inquiry is ongoing. The presentation of this paper provides a 'staging post' in which we reflect on what we have learned so far, and consider where we might go from here.

We begin by each of us sharing our individual stories as to how and why we came to believe in the value of first person research. We then identify the key issues that we have in common, followed by an exploration of points of difference.

- Hutchison, S. (2015) Living Theory Research Group – a model of participatory and sustainable learning for the 'flourishing of humanity'. Workshop led at Action Learning and Action Research Association's World Congress 7th November 2015, Pretoria, South Africa. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/s/124b1acc88?source=link> (Accessed: 26 December 2015).

The paper explores the strengths and weaknesses of using new technologies in extending research groups by critiquing the Living Theory Research group I attend against Rheingold's (2010) Social Media literacies. The five literacies of 'attention, participation, collaboration, network Awareness and critical Consumption' p.16 are considered in relation to the research group. The findings are presented from the group participants and highlight that using of a Living Theory methodology means the sustainable nature of the research group transcends the actual Skype group and is living. This develops the resilience, self-care and continued learning of the participants. The paper explores how the workshop at ALARA 9th Action Learning Action Research and 13th Participatory Action Research World Congress 2015 provided an experiential learning opportunity to help others develop their own Living Theory Research Groups.