

Tarot Cards: An Investigation of their Benefit as a Tool for Self Reflection

by

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B.A., Concordia University, 2004

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the way in which regular users of Tarot cards employ the cards and the focus was on the participants', or co-researchers', use of Tarot for self-reflection rather than for divination. Although Tarot cards have been in existence for at least 700 years (Beal, 1975; Cavendish, 1975) and there are over 1000 different Tarot decks, and the related oracle decks, in existence (Aeclectic Tarot, 2009) there is a paucity of academic research on Tarot use (Crocker, 2004). Studies that have been done on Tarot have focused on its effectiveness as a divination tool (Blackmore, 1983) and the susceptibility of individuals to the Barnum effect (Glick, 1989; Ivtzan, 2007). A few studies have looked at psychological correlates of Tarot use (Crocker, 2004; Sjoberg, 2002) and have offered general descriptions of its use in a therapeutic setting (Coulter, 2004; Kopp, 1984). Research has not investigated the way in which Tarot is being used, nor has it given detailed descriptions of its potential usage in therapy sessions. This study sought to investigate the way in which Tarot is being used and based on the results, outline clear and concrete ways in which Tarot can be employed in therapeutic sessions. This study adopted a postmodern approach to the pursuit of knowledge, such that knowledge was viewed as a social and linguistic construction. The methodology employed was qualitative in nature and the general research design was heuristic

(Moustakas, 1990). Interviews were conducted with four female co-researchers who used Tarot cards regularly and in a self-reflective manner. The interviews were transcribed and common qualities and themes that existed between them were extracted. The results indicated that the co-researchers use Tarot as a way to gain insight into current situations and possible action plans. The cards were used most often in difficult times, at which point, they offered comfort. This comfort involved confirmation that things were ok and that life was not without order. Tarot was also used as positive reinforcement for what the co-researchers were seeking in life and cards were drawn both intentionally, such as in positive reinforcement activities, and at random, in instances when novel insights were sought. The co-researchers sometimes pulled one card, a few cards, and sometimes used an entire spread. Just as different Tarot decks were used for different purposes, so different Tarot spreads were used in different circumstances. The nature of the co-researchers' use of Tarot supports the utilization of Tarot in a therapeutic context and this study explored various ways in which this can be done, including as a means of acquiring new perspectives and of identifying wishes or goals.

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Finally, I want to thank my co-researchers; the four thoughtful, articulate, and inspiring women who shared their time and their lives with me. Their insights imbue this thesis with meaning and continue to roll around in thoughts and impact my life.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all of the women whose thoughtful and skilful use of Tarot teaches and heals, who keep the flame of this ancient form of healing alive in our modern world.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how regular users of Tarot cards utilize the cards; what the self-reported benefits of Tarot use are and what form of interpretation was used to understand the meaning of the cards for each participant. All participants, in this research referred to as co-researchers, were female, in their mid-thirties to early fifties, and the focus was on their use of Tarot for self-reflective purposes and not for doing readings for others.

This study is based on previous studies that have investigated the psychological correlates of Tarot use (Crocker, 2004; Sjoberg & Wahlberg, 2002) and the use of Tarot in therapy (Coulter, 2004; Kopp, 1984). For the purpose of this study, the word therapy will be used as an umbrella term referring to both one-on-one psychotherapy and one-on-one counselling. Although not directly related to this study, the literature review will include a discussion of studies investigating the accuracy of Tarot readings in relation to divination (Glick, Gottesman, & Jolton, 1989; Ivtzan & French, 2004; Sjoberg & Wahlberg, 2002; Tobacyk, Milford, Springer, & Tobacyk, 1988). Divination, for the purpose of my study, will be defined as using Tarot, or other divination tools such as astrology, as a means of forecasting future events and learning about one's past and present with a concentration on personality characteristics (Ivtzan, 2007).

Furthermore, as an introduction to Tarot, a discussion of the history of Tarot (Beal, 1975; Campbell & Roberts, 1993; Cavendish, 1975) and a Dantean (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) and Jungian (Douglas, 1997) interpretation of the cards will be presented.

These two modes of interpretation were selected because Dante's work and the first Tarot deck emerged at the same point in history (Campbell & Roberts, 1993), making the symbology in each easily comparable, and because applying Jungian theory to the interpretation of Tarot may be useful in employing the cards in a therapeutic context. Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, founded a branch of psychology called analytic psychology and one of the major concepts proposed by him was psychological archetypes or "innate neorpsychic centres possessing the capacity to initiate, control, and mediate the common behavioural characteristics and typical experiences of all human beings" (Stevens, 1994, p. 48). Several authors (Coulter, 2004; Nichols, 1980) have proposed a link between the individual Tarot cards and Jungian archetypes.

This study builds on previous research in two ways: by investigating the way in which Tarot is being used and by offering specific techniques for utilizing Tarot in therapy. Although the existing literature on Tarot describes how the cards have historically been used (Cavendish, 1975; Davidson, 2001), it does not describe how Tarot cards are currently being used, particularly in a self-reflective manner. Furthermore, although the literature on Tarot offers suggestions for using the cards for divinatory purposes (Arrien, 1997; Noble, 1983) and general descriptions of their use in a therapeutic context (Coulter, 2004; Kopp, 1984), the literature contains no examples of Tarot activities that can be employed in therapy sessions.

As mentioned, the purpose of this study was to examine the benefits associated with the personal use of Tarot and was not to investigate the use of Tarot in therapy. However, because Tarot has traditionally been used between a reader and client and

because the cards are designed for this purpose, it seems reasonable to apply the details of the coresearchers' personal use of Tarot to the use of the cards in therapy. Moreover, I chose to focus on the co-researchers' personal use of Tarot and not on their readings for others because, based on my experiences with Tarot and on discussions I've had with other Tarot users, it appears that individuals, when doing readings for others, focus on divinatory insights, whereas when they do readings for themselves, the focus is on self-reflection. It seems to me that the self-reflective use of Tarot is more in line with therapeutic activities than is the divinatory use.

This study builds on the knowledge about therapy by offering general guidelines and specific techniques for using Tarot in therapy. Although pictured, therapeutic decks such as the OH deck are widely used in therapy (France & Lawrence, 1993; Shechtman, 2007), it seems to me to be the dissimilarity between such decks and Tarot that has allowed for their use in this context. Tarot cards persist in having the negative stigma of being associated with the occult (Crocker, 2004) and is it perhaps this stigma that has prevented them from gaining acceptance in academic and professional circles. However, compared with Tarot cards which contain intricate, ancient, and meaningful symbolism (Cavendish, 1975), the symbology contained in decks such as the OH deck is very basic. Several authors have commented on the therapeutic nature of symbols; for example, Jung writes that, "the psychological mechanism for transforming energy is the symbol" (Arrien, 1997, p. 12) and in Cavendish (1975) in *The Tarot*, writes:

Oswald Wirth, whose influence on Tarot interpretation has been considerable, said that, 'a symbol can always be studied from an infinite number of points of

view, and each thinker has a right to discover in the symbol a new meaning corresponding to the logic of his own conceptions. As a matter of fact symbols are precisely intended to awaken ideas sleeping in our consciousness. They arouse a thought by means of suggestion and thus cause the truth which lies hidden in the depths of our spirit to reveal itself.’ (p. 48)

Researcher Context

My interest in studying the potential therapeutic nature of Tarot has developed through my personal use of the cards. For approximately ten years, I have used the Motherpeace Tarot cards (Vogel & Noble, 1983) (Figure 1) on a daily basis as a means of gaining insight into my emotions, my cognitions, and the situations with which I am confronted. Each morning, I draw several cards and reflect how they might apply to my life. For example, when I pull the four of discs in the Motherpeace deck, representing “an inner sanctuary of some kind, perhaps a room or a house, where a person can be alone and sheltered” (Noble, 1983, p. 171), I consider the potential need for me to spend time alone and process what has occurred in the outside world. Furthermore, there have been many times, when I have been in conflict with someone, that I have pulled the five of swords card. Noble describes this card as representing “a powerful negative experience, such as a defeat, or at least a fight” and goes on to write that, “Inspired by the bright yellow mental energy surrounding the cursing pentagram, the personality may change her approach to the situation and give up power-tripping, anger, and victimization” (Noble, 1983, p. 172).

Furthermore, Noble (1983), in her rich description of each card, not only offers an interpretation of its meaning, but also advice for handling the situation it represents. In

facing personal challenges, I have often found Noble's advice to be invaluable and her insights to be an astute self-reflective tool. Similar to my experiences with Tarot, in *The Tarot Handbook* (1997), Arrien discusses her use of Tarot as a tool for personal growth and asserts that through this practice she "began to see what an important self-help tool [Tarot] could be for people to use personally, rather than to have it remain misunderstood and misused within a fortune-telling context" (p. 12).

Because of the psychological benefit I have obtained from Tarot, I was surprised at its lack of mention in my counselling training and when I have attempted to seek out information on Tarot, I have found both a dearth of academic literature and the non-academic literature to have an excessively spiritual slant. This dearth of academic writing left me wondering why there has been so little attention paid to Tarot cards, particularly in the fields of psychology and counselling, given that Tarot is so often used as a tool for healing. Additionally, although the extant literature on Tarot describes how the cards have historically been used (Campbell & Roberts, 1993; Cavendish, 1975; Sadhu, 1962), it does not indicate how the cards are actually being used and interpreted. In light of the aforementioned paucities, for my study, I chose to seek out and examine the extant academic research on Tarot and to assess how the Tarot is actually being utilized, including and the lens through which the symbolism of the cards is being understood.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

History of Tarot

History of Tarot Cards

The Tarot deck, consisting of 78 pictorial cards, is linked with our modern day, ordinary playing cards and is “often said to be their [predecessor]” (Cavendish, 1975, p. 9). Although throughout its long history, the Tarot deck was predominantly used in card games, it is now associated almost solely with fortune-telling and magic (Cavendish, 1975). Many legends have arisen about the origin of the cards, including that they came from Ancient Egypt (Ivtzan, 2007), China, or Persia, “that they were brought to the West by gypsies, or by returning Crusaders, or by the Arab invaders of Sicily or Spain, or alternatively, that they had nothing to do with the East at all and were invented in Europe” (Cavendish, 1975). In spite of these myriad and conflicting theories regarding the origin of the cards, there are two details of their history that can be agreed upon: that the first definitive references to Tarot cards were in Europe in the 1370’s and that the earliest Tarot set of which examples exist “was prepared in 1392 for King Charles VI of France by the painter Jacquemin Gringonneur” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 9).

Description of the Cards

As mentioned, modern day playing cards evolved from Tarot; the main difference between the two decks being additional 26 cards in Tarot, to equal a total of 78 cards (versus the 52 cards in playing cards). In Tarot, each of the four suits has the adjunct of a Knight card and instead of the Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs seen in playing cards, the four suits of Tarot are “Swords, Cups, Coins (Dishes or Pentacles), and Wands

(or Staves)” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 49) . The sequence of the cards within each suit of Tarot is such that the Knight follows the Page (the Jack in playing cards) and the Queen and King follow the Knight. The 56 cards belonging to the four suits are referred to in Tarot as Minor Arcana and the remaining 22 cards of the Tarot deck, numbered 0 to 22, are the Major Arcana or trumps. The word Arcana, or its singular, Arcanum, is Latin in origin and its meaning, according to Sadhu (1962) is that of:

[A] mystery, necessary for the cognition of a definite kind and number of things, laws or principles; a mystery without which one cannot operate, since the necessity of that cognition has been born in us; a mystery accessible to a mind strong and curious enough to see that knowledge. (p. 33)

Meaning of the Cards

Explanations of the symbology within Tarot cards have historically drawn on a vast amount of material including astrological, mythological, Gnostic, and Christian traditions (Campbell & Roberts, 1993; Cavendish, 1975; Sadhu, 1962). However, because the origin of the cards remains undetermined and because their order and pictorial representations have changed over time (Cavendish, 1975), there is no agreed upon interpretation of the symbolism contained therein. In addition, in general, explanations of symbols are subject to two pitfalls: the same symbol will mean different things to different people and “almost by definition, a symbol can never be explained adequately in any case” (Cavendish, 1975, p. 47). Although there exists a plethora of interpretation systems pertaining to Tarot cards, for the sake of brevity, I will narrow my discussion to two: Dantean symbology and Jungian archetypes.

Modes of Interpretation

Dantean Symbolology

The deck to which Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) refers in his discussion on the symbology of Tarot is that of Marseilles. As mentioned, the first Tarot deck of which actual cards survive was prepared by the painter Jacquemin Gringonneur in 1392 and the imagery in these cards resembles that of the medieval symbolism in the Marseilles deck (Campbell & Roberts, 1993). Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) explains that in studying this particular deck, not only was the symbolism of the Catholic church, the dominant religion at the time, evident, but, “what had most excited [his] imagination had been its reflection of what [he] thought [he] recognized as a tradition expounded by Dante in his *Convito*” (p. 4). Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) goes on to say that:

In fact, it had been my recollection specifically of Chapters 23 and 28 of “The Fourth Treatise” of that philosophical work that first opened to me... the message of the four Marseilles [trumps], 6 to 9. Whereupon the sequence of cards 14 to 17 appeared to me to match the order of the poet’s four major works, *La Vita Nuove*, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. Highly significant in this connection (I have now found) is the fact that the earliest evidences for the existence in Europe of Tarot packs date exactly from Dante’s time, while the first pack that we have tangible, visible evidence (that prepared by the artist Jacquemin Gringonneur for Charles VI of France, seventeen [trumps] of which are preserved in Paris in the Biblioteheque Nationale) appeared only seventy-one years after Dante’s death, namely in 1392 (pp. 4-5).

Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) explains, as do other writers (Cavendish, 1975, Sadhu, 1962), that the four suits of the Tarot represent the four classes of the medieval social order: swords represent nobility; cups represent the clergy; coins are the townsmen; and staves (clubs or batons) the peasants and servants. Cavendish (1975) points out that although “it was quite widely believed that cards had been invented by the Devil” (p. 15), Brother John of Brefeld in 1377 saw the potential of Tarot:

[to] be used to ‘teach noblemen the rule of life’ and to instruct the common people in ‘the way of labouring virtuously’... in other words, they could be used to demonstrate the structure of society and to inculcate the lesson of knowing and keeping one’s appointed place in it. (Cavendish, 1975, p. 17)

In the progression of the cards of each suit, from the ten numbered cards to the four face cards, is a representation of an evolving spiritual and social power (Cavendish, 1975); Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) writes that, “only in that of the Coins would the power have been economic, as it is generally in our day” (p. 10). Given that each of the four suits culminates in the figures of nobility, Knave, Knight, King, and Queen, Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) proposes that ascent along any of the four lines leads to “*spiritual* realizations of equivalent value and importance” (p. 10). In other words, in the movement from card to card in all of the four suits of the Minor Arcana, spiritual growth is depicted and Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) proposes that this growth, regardless of suit, is of the same importance.

In Medieval times there was no mobility from class to class; rather, class was determined by birth (Campbell & Roberts, 1993). Hence it is clear why, in the Tarot, movement was depicted, not in terms of social status, but only along the lines of spiritual

kingship and “in the series of the higher set, the Trumps, Honours, or Atouts, this ascent on the spiritual life is emphatic” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 11). Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) writes that the first of the Trumps, the Magician, is represented as a juggler playing with the signs of all four suits, symbolizing “that he is in control, that is to say, of the symbols of all four social estates, able to play or conjure with them, and so, represents a position common to, or uniting them all” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 11). Following the Magician are twenty numbered cards, succeeded by the Fool (numbered 0), which Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) arranges in five rows of four ascending cards, “to suggest the graded stages of an ideal life, lived virtuously according to the knightly codes of the Middle Ages” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 11). Below is a brief description of the five rows and the four or five Trumps contained in each (Figure 2).

The first row, containing Trumps II to IV, represents the social aspects predominant in the various stages of life. The High Priestess (Trump II) symbolizes youth and love as something sacred while the Empress (Trump III), who sits as the Queen of the Queens in the Minor Arcana, symbolizes the virtue of love in its maturity. Following the Empress is Trump IIII, the Emperor, which signifies the pass from maturity to age; the virtue associated with the Emperor is justice, which “according to Dante, is the cardinal Virtue of age” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 13). Following the Emperor is the Pope (Trump V), symbolizing the move from age to decay wherein the mind moves from secular to spiritual concerns.

The next four Trumps, VI to VIII, embody the informing virtues in the course of life. The Lovers, Trump VI, represents the stage of life referred to by Dante as *Adolescence* and the virtue represented in The Lovers card is that of love, which is "the

proper concern, the actual and inevitable concern, of youth" (p. 14). The next card, The Chariot (Trump VII), signifies the stage of the body's maturity to which Dante assigns the years of 25 to 45. By passing through the midlife crisis, which takes place during these years, the individual passes from the senses to salvation and the virtues associated with this period are temperance, courage, love, loyalty, and courtesy. The next card, that of Justice (Trump VII), represents the virtue of justice, what Dante described as the prime cardinal virtue of Age (the stage of life extending from 45 to 70). During this time individuals are called to be useful, not just to themselves, but to others. The final card in this series of four, The Hermit (Trump VIII), represents old age. Dante assigns the years 70 plus to this stage of life and describes it as the time at which the soul returns to God and the individual looks back upon his or her life "with a blessing upon the voyage that has been made" (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 15).

The life stages represented in these four Trumps closely mirror Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, particularly the final three stages of young adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood (Erikson, 1980). As with Campbell's (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) explanation of the stages represented by the Trumps, in all of Erikson's eight stages, the individual is faced with a specific crisis, and in overcoming this crisis, gains virtue. The main challenges in Erikson's final three stages are: in young adulthood, the pursuit of intimacy; in middle adulthood, productivity, both in family life and in work; and in late adulthood, looking back on life, ideally, with a sense of contentment (Erikson, 1980).

The next set of four Trumps, beginning with The Wheel of Fortune, symbolize "keys that lead through each of the four stages of life, beyond bondage in the accidents of

this world, to a nobler order of realizations: indifference in youth to the turns of the wheel of fortune; in maturity, submission of one's animal to one's spiritual force; in age, wisdom and justice in the dispensation of advice, indifference to personal advantage; and when approaching death, indifference to the Reaper's scythe" (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 18). The Wheel of Fortune (Trump X) represents the accidents of fortune and that wisdom and virtue lie in regarding the center (of the wheel), rather than the rim; Force (Trump XI), brings with it the message that spiritual, not physical force is what is great; The Hanged Man (Trump XII) symbolizes, that in this later stage of life, one must die to public opinion and live under the precept of justice; and Death (Trump XIII), tells that in old age, one "must have died to the fear of death" (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 17) to obtain equanimity. In other words, in these four Trump cards, Campbell outlines the lesson associated with the life stages depicted in the previous four Trumps, lessons that once learned, bring one's focus from the superficial (represented by the rim of the wheel) to what is genuine (represented by the centre of the wheel).

The next set of four Trumps is the first in what Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) calls the supernatural series, cards representing internal, spiritual journeys, versus the more tangible and concrete scenarios depicted in the previous Trumps. Temperance (Trump XIII) is symbolic of the control of the appetites and a move to a more spiritual life; The Devil (Trump XV) represents "the loathsomeness of lives lived in sensuality and pride" (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 20); The Tower of Destruction (Trump XVI) is symbolic of pride being "destroyed by the lightning bolt of God's Judgement" (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 20); and The Star (Trump XVII) shows that after purgatory one

enters paradise and that the “function of God’s chastisement is to prepare the soul for its Heaven-journey” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 21).

The final set of four Trumps is “where the highest revelations appear of those ultimate spiritual forces of which the figures of the lowest ranges have been the graded reflections” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 22). The Moon (Trump XVIII), with its cycle of waxing and waning, “tells of life’s power to cast off the shadow of death through tireless rounds of rebirths in unending cycles of time” (p. 22). The Sun (Trump XVIII) represents the un-shadowed revelation of God’s light, while Judgement (Trump XX) represents the end of the world and the resurrection of the body. The next Trump, numbered XXI, is the World card, and its message is that with the ability to discern God in all things, “one is liberated from the mouth of death” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 24). And the final card in the Major Arcana, The Fool (Trump O), is placed by Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) “outside and at the end of the set, to signify his freedom to roam as a vagabond, beyond as well as through all of the numbered stations, trumping them all” (p. 12). The Fool represents “the wandering mendicant saint or sage, known to himself as the intelligible sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere” (Campbell & Roberts, 1993, pp. 24-25).

Archetypal Symbolology

Archetypes, according to Jung, are “identical psychic structures common to all [which together constitute] the archaic heritage of humanity” (C. G. Jung & Read, 1966; A. Stevens, 1994, p. 47); in other words, they represent a “preconscious psychic disposition that enables a [man] to react in a human manner” (Jung & Hull, 1986, p. 106). Some archetypes that are described by Jung as belonging to all people are the child, the

mother, and the old-man (Coulter, 2004). When the right circumstances present themselves, “archetypes give rise to similar thoughts, images, mythologems, feelings, and ideas in people, irrespective of their class, creed, race, geographical location or historical approach” (A. Stevens, 1994, p. 48). The possibility for the activation of these archetypes occurs when they enter one’s consciousness in the form of symbols and although there are only a small number of archetypes in the unconscious, the images or symbols that point back to them are limitless in number (Jung & Hull, 1986).

Jung writes of the images in Tarot that “it seems as if the set of pictures in Tarot cards were distantly descended from the archetypes of transformation” (C. G. Jung, 1980). And in on talk on March 1, 1933, he says:

These cards are really the origin of our pack of cards, in which the red and the black symbolize the opposites, and the division of four- clubs, spades, diamonds, and hearts- also belongs to the individuation symbolism. They are psychological images, symbols with which one plays, as the unconscious seems to play with its contents. They combine in certain ways, and the different combinations correspond to the playful development of events in the history of mankind... For example, the symbol of the sun, or the symbol of the man hung up by the feet, or the tower struck by lightening, or the wheel of fortune and so on. Those are sort of archetypal ideas, of a differentiated nature, which mingle with ordinary constituents of the flow of the unconscious, and therefore it is applicable for an intuitive method that has the purpose of understanding the flow of life, possibly even predicting future events, at all events lending itself to the reading of the conditions of the present moment. (Douglas, 1997, p. 923)

Individuation is the term designated by Jung to describe “the process of personality development which leads to the fullest possible actualization of the *Self*” (A. Stevens, 1982, p. 298). It implies “becoming a single, homogenous being” and the term is synonymous with “self-realization” (A. Stevens, 1982, p. 298). Individuation has “two principle aspects: ‘In the first place it is an internal and subjective process of integration, and in the second, it is an equally indispensable process of objective relationship’” (Jung as cited in Stevens, 1994, p. 155). Therefore, becoming individuated not only involves forming a relationship with oneself, but also to the outside world (Stevens, 1994). In accordance with Jung’s suggestion that the four suits of the Minor Arcana are compatible with the symbolism of individuation, Richard Roberts (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) writes that the symbolism of the Tarot represents a process of self-transformation “comparable to... the ‘individuation process’” (p. 43).

Many authors discuss the symbology of Tarot in terms of Jungian archetypes (Arrien, 1997; Assad, 1984; Campbell & Roberts, 1993; Cavendish, 1975; Coulter, 2004; Kopp, 1984; Nichols, 1980), some giving an archetypal interpretation of each of the Major Arcana (Coulter, 2004; Nichols, 1980). However, my discussion of an archetypal interpretation of the cards will be general in its scope, allowing the reader to further investigate the various archetypal interpretations of the cards on his or her own.

In *The Tarot Handbook*, Arrien (1997) concedes that the entire 78 cards of the Tarot deck and their designated symbols “are portraitures and archetypes of inner and outer experiences that are prevalent within the human experience” (p. 12). Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) posits that the first two Trumps of the Tarot (The Magician and The High Priestess) can be read as representative of Jung’s anima and animus

archetypes, “complementary images of the ideal male in the psyche of the female and female in the psyche of the male” (p. 12). In contrast, Cavendish (1975) proposes that the Empress is the anima, “the female archetype... symbolically connected with both earth and water” (p. 79) and “the Emperor is the animus, the male counterpoint of the anima, as father, ruler and warrior, enterprising, dominating, opinionated and aggressive” (p. 81).

Coulter (2004) writes that the Tarot contains “what psychiatrist Carl Jung referred to as deep-rooted transformational archetypes” (p. 339) and that these archetypes “symbolize the hero’s journey from childhood to adulthood” (2004, p. 339). According to Jungian theory, the movement from one archetype to the next, for example, from the child to the adult, without digression, leads to psychological health and in order for individuals to find their place in the universe, they must understand these symbolic selves, or archetypes (Coulter, 2004). Given that symbols not only elicit the activation of archetypes, but also aid in one’s ability to understand them, and that Tarot is extremely rich in symbolism, Tarot could be proposed as a way of facilitating a person’s understanding of the archetypes that he or she has encountered or is currently experiencing. For example, if the Mother archetype comes up a reading, the client could examine her current experiences with either being a mother, or with her mother. Although not put in this context, Coulter (2004) does contend that Tarot can be used as a way of helping clients understand and work with “mythologic symbols and archetypes” (p. 339).

Tarot Studies

Divination Studies

There have been a few studies looking at Tarot use in a divinatory context (Blackmore, 1983; Glick et al., 1989; Ivtzan & French, 2004; Sjoberg & Wahlberg, 2002; Tobacyk, Milford, Springer, & Tobacyk, 1988) and the same number looking at the susceptibility of particular individuals to accepting as accurate spurious personality feedback (Glick et al., 1989; Tobacyk et al., 1988). The focus of these studies has been an assessment of paranormal versus non-paranormal explanations for “people’s claims that [insights gained vis-à-vis divination] accurately reflect their own individual issues” (Ivtzan, 2007, p. 139). The paranormal explanation of divination through Tarot is that the cards represent “opportunities, hidden motives, and potentials” in the individual such that they reflect “the client’s inner processes” (Ivtzan, 2007, p. 139). The non-paranormal explanation involves two related concepts: the Barnum effect and cold reading. The Barnum effect refers to “acceptance of bogus personality feedback consisting of relatively trivial statements with a high base rate” (Tobacyk et al., 1988, p. 737) while cold readings are “a set of deceptive psychological techniques that are being used in the psychic reading to create the impression that the reader has paranormal ability” (Ivtzan, 2007, p. 139). Cold reading largely involve high probability guesses based on the observation of physical traits, such as gender, age, physique, and behavioural traits, such as manner of speaking (Ivtzan, 2007).

Blackmore’s (1983) study tested the validity of Tarot with respect to the paranormal explanation of divination using three experiments. In the first, ten participants who were interested in Tarot were obtained through a parapsychology course. Each

participant was given two readings: a face-to-face reading and one in which the participant shuffled and chose the cards and the data was given to a reader to interpret. A week later, each participant was given the layouts for all ten participants and was asked to rate the relevance of the readings to them.

Results indicated that the participants rated their own readings significantly higher than those of the other participants and that they rated the face-to-face readings higher than the test reading. Blackmore (1983) criticizes this first experiment on the basis that the participants knew each other and could thus avoid choosing the readings that were not their own as they seemed to fit another participant. Another possible explanation for the ability of the participants to identify their own reading, one not discussed by the author, is that, given their familiarity with Tarot, they remembered the cards they had drawn and the associated meaning of the cards and could pick out their own readings on this basis.

To avoid the possible effect that the participants' familiarity with each other had on the results, Blackmore (1983) repeated the experiment, but this time, participants were recruited through an advertisement. Results from this experiment indicated that participants were not able to identify their own readings from those of the other participants. Blackmore (1983) suggests that perhaps this difference was due to the fact that the participants were disinterested in Tarot and thus not engaged in the experiment. To control for this possibility, she conducted a third experiment, this time with participants from a parapsychology course who were not familiar with each other; results again showed that the participants were unable to identify their own reading from those of the others. What Blackmore's (1983) study indicates is that individuals are not able to

identify their own readings from those of others, and thus, supports the non-paranormal explanation of divination with Tarot.

In a study by Ivtzan and French (2004), the paranormal versus the non-paranormal explanations of divination with Tarot were assessed. As mentioned, these explanations speak to the reason why individuals claim that the insights they receive through Tarot readings are accurate. The assumption behind their experiment was that if the paranormal explanation is valid, “the participant should give higher ratings to a real reading in terms of overall relevance compared with a control reading” (Ivtzan & French, 2004, p. 437). Real readings in which the 30 participants chose their own cards were compared with control readings in which the card selections were random. The experimenters also assessed whether believers in the paranormal were able to distinguish between real and control readings more accurately than non-believers.

Results indicated that believers gave both readings higher overall ratings than did non-believers and that neither group gave significantly different ratings to either the real or the control reading. The researchers conclude that “the pattern of results obtained did not correspond to what might be predicted upon the basis of either of the general hypotheses outlined” (Ivtzan & French, 2004, p. 438); however, implicit in the results and not touched upon by Ivtzan and French (2004), is the possibility that believers in divination are more susceptible to the Barnum effect than are non-believers.

The last two studies that will be discussed looked at the phenomenon omitted in Ivtzan and French’s article: whether believers were more susceptible to the Barnum effect than non-believers. The methods of divination that were used in the studies were not Tarot readings; they were randomly generated personality characteristics (Tobacyk et al.,

1988) and astrological profiles (Glick et al., 1989). Tobacyk, Milford, Springer, and Tobacyk (1988) hypothesized that “paranormal beliefs emphasizing divinatory procedures that produce personalized feedback... are associated with greater susceptibility to the Barnum effect” (p. 737). Their experiment involved the completion of assessment instruments, such as the Paranormal Belief Scale- the other assessment instruments were not identified by the researchers- by 128 college students. Personality feedback was given to each of the participants “by varying the order of the same set of 13 Barnum statements” (Tobacyk et al., 1988, p. 738) and the participants were then asked to rate the accuracy of these statements on a five point scale.

The results of this study indicated that over three quarters of participants gave the accuracy of their personality descriptions a rating of either *good* or *excellent*, “showing a robust Barnum effect” (Tobacyk et al., 1988, p. 738). The researchers also found a correlation between “spiritualism” and greater accuracy ratings of the personality descriptions, a finding which is in contradiction to other studies that have shown that “paranormal beliefs, as measured by the Paranormal Belief Scale, are not significantly related to the endorsement of the accuracy of bogus personality feedback” (Tobacyk et al., 1988, p. 738). As with Blackmore’s (1983) study, the studies by Ivtzan and French (2004) and (Tobacyk et al., 1988) also support the non-paranormal explanation of divination with Tarot, and the study by Tobacyk et al. (1988) indicated that “spiritualism” was related to susceptibility to the Barnum effect.

In a final study by Glick, Gottesman, and Jolton (1989), “skeptics’ and believers’ acceptance of generalized personality descriptions of the self was explored” (p. 572). The descriptions were varied in two ways: they were either said to be attributed to astrology

or said to be potentially self-descriptive and were either socially desirable or undesirable. It was found that participants- 216 public high school students- who were believers were more likely to accept the descriptions, regardless of source and content, as accurate. It was also found that favourable descriptions were rated as more accurate by both groups with the exception of negative astrological descriptions, which believers accepted as readily as positive astrological descriptions. Finally, both groups rated the “astrological descriptions as more accurate than identical non-astrological descriptions” (Glick et al., 1989, p. 572). This study, as with Tobacyk et al.'s (1988), indicates that believers in the paranormal are more susceptible to the Barnum effect than are skeptics, but that to a lesser degree, skeptics are also susceptible. All of the studies in this section point to the non-paranormal explanation of divination, both with Tarot and astrological descriptions. In other words, divination does not accurately reflect individual personality characteristics, rather, the insights gained through divination can apply, to some degree, to most individuals, and degree to which they are believed is associated with susceptibility to the Barnum effect.

Psychological Effects of Tarot Use

Studies looking at the psychological corollaries of Tarot use are extremely sparse: Sjoberg and Wahlberg (2002) looked at the relationship between New Age (NA) beliefs, including the use of divination, and risk perception while Crocker (2004) investigated the psychological effects that divination, including Tarot use, had on members of the Feminist Spirituality Movement (FSM).

Sjoberg and Wahlberg (2002) define NA beliefs as those involving superstition and the existence of supernatural phenomenon and hypothesized that NA beliefs were

associated with risk perception because in a study by Sebald (1984), it was shown that “[at] its core, the [NA] movement deeply mistrusts science, realism, and objectivity” (p. 752). In order to assess NA beliefs and risk perception, Sjoberg and Wahlberg (2002) obtained data via a questionnaire on “trust dimensions and on personality and psychopathology variables, as well as religious involvement” (p. 751). It should be mentioned that although the questionnaire was sent to “a sample of respondents approximately representative of the Swedish population” (Sjoberg & Wahlberg, 2002, pp. 754-755), of the 250 people who received the questionnaire, only 151 responded, a 60% response rate. Although there is no status quo for acceptable response rates, Baruch (1999) proposes that 55.6% be the standard for an acceptable response rate. Given that Sjoberg & Wahlberg’s (2002) response rate was only slightly above the acceptable mark, sample bias could have occurred. For example, individuals who completed the questionnaires might have been more interested in NA phenomenon than those who did not.

Sjoberg & Wahlberg (2002) assessed risk perception using a compilation of items previously used at the Center for Risk Research that focussed on such things as “technological and environmental as well as everyday hazards, 34 in all” (p. 755). NA beliefs were assessed using items from the Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS) and “items about NA beliefs and activities and folk superstition” (p. 755). The authors also assessed personality characteristics such as paranoia and schizoid thinking by using several items from two personality scales (Eysenck’s MPI and the SLC-90 scale). It was hypothesized that “those who hold NA... beliefs regard technology risks as larger than those who do not” (Sjoberg & Wahlberg, 2002, p. 754).

With respect to their hypothesis, the researchers found that several dimensions of NA beliefs, such as higher consciousness beliefs and belief in paranormal phenomenon, were correlated with perceived risks. Results also indicated that the most important background variable associated with NA beliefs was education level, with those who had more education being “less impressed by NA messages” (Sjoberg & Wahlberg, 2002, p. 759) and it is noted that this finding is in contrast to “the claims made by Frisk that NA beliefs are embraced in particular by well-educated people” (Sjoberg & Wahlberg, 2002, p. 760). With respect to my investigation on the use of Tarot, it will be interesting to note whether the co-researchers appear to perceive high risks in their environments.

An issue that was not addressed in Sjoberg and Wahlberg's (2002) study was the potential that negative sociocultural stereotypes related to NA beliefs and divination (Crocker, 2004) might have contributed to the heightened level of perceived risk seen in the “believers”. That is, if those engaging in divination and ascribing to NA beliefs are viewed negatively by mainstream society, then these individuals may become somewhat mistrustful of society in general. This issue is, however, addressed in Crocker's (2004) study where it is noted that the "practice of divination... is often misunderstood in spite of its popularity" (p. ii) and that in her participants, "negative sociocultural stereotypes create pressures without discouraging practice" (p. iii).

Important to her study is Crocker's (2004) definition of divination, which is as follows: "[divination] is an intentional attempt to ascertain truth or to gather information about past, present, or future events, or situations beyond that which is available through logical inference or ordinary sensory input, centered around an implicit or explicit question, and by means other than those that depend on rational analysis" (p. 1). Two of

the questions that were asked in Crocker's (2004) study were: "[how do] North American female diviners in the FSM [Feminist Spirituality Movement] experience and explain the process of divination... and [what] social and personal factors inhibit and encourage their practice" (p. ii). The FSM movement, according to Crocker (2004), is a new religious movement "located within the larger 'New Age' movement, the 'cultural creatives', and the 'culture of chance' (p. ii). Participants were 50 female FSM volunteers who completed a survey form and out of these 50, nine were chosen to complete an interview. These nine were selected based on such factors as "geographic availability, Pagan affiliation, and Tarot practice" (p. iii).

Survey and interview results suggested that "divination, perceived to result in greater self-knowledge and mental and physical well-being, was described by interviewees as a meaningful, fulfilling act of intrapsychic communication accessing seldom used cognitive-affective capacities to gain insight and balance" (Crocker, 2004, p. iii). Crocker's (2004) results contrast those of other studies that have focussed on the deficiency in cognitive skills of those who endorse paranormal phenomena (Irwin, 1994, as cited in Crocker, 2004) and the idea that such individuals are marginal members of society (Zeidner & Beit-Hallahmi, 1988, as cited in Crocker, 2004). Crocker (2004) suggests that her results "support further exploration of divination as an unusual way of knowing used by talented, productive women, contrary to negative stereotypes" (p. iii). As with the findings in Sjoberg & Wahlberg's (2002) study, it will be interesting to note whether the behaviors of Crocker's (2004) participants, i.e. the use of divination as a means of gaining insight and balance, are mirrored in the co-researcher's I interview.

Tarot Use in Therapy

Two researchers that have looked at the use of Tarot in therapy are Kopp (1983) and Coulter (2004), both of whom explored their use in terms of aiding clients in accessing Jungian archetypes. Kopp's (1983) article investigated the archetypal themes that can be described as represented in each of the Major Arcana while Coulter's (2004) article offers specific suggestions for using the cards with clients.

Kopp's (1983) study consisted of 81 individuals who had applied to the San Francisco C. G. Jung Institute's low fee clinic. The participants were asked to write down a title, description, and the symbolic meaning of each of the 22 Major Arcana and responses to the Fool, Hermit, and Devil cards were later analyzed. Analysis first entailed the assignation of an archetype to each of three cards followed by the assigning of themes to each archetype by several Jungian analysts. Correlational analysis indicated that the Jungian analysts were in agreement as to the archetype that was most related to each card and the major themes related to each archetype. It was also found that the participants' responses to each card contained the themes related to the card's assigned archetype, and not to other archetypes. What this implies is that there is a specific Jungian archetype associated with each of the Major Arcana of Tarot and that individuals unversed in Jungian theory are able to detect the themes associated with this archetype simply by observing the cards.

Coulter's (2004) article largely outlines the technique used by a nurse, Toni Gilbert, in Jefferson, Oregon to help clients "'interconnect' with what psychiatrist Carl Jung referred to as deep-rooted transformational archetypes" (p. 339) through the use of Tarot. Coulter (2004) does not define "deep-rooted transformational archetypes", but

appears to use this phrase synonymously with archetypes of transformation, which “symbolize the hero’s journey from childhood to adulthood” (p. 339) and include such archetypes as the child, and wise old man (Stevens, 1994). Gilbert proposes that Tarot cards facilitate analysis based on the presence of the upper and lower level aspects of archetypes, representing the higher self and the shadow. In conveying the archetypal significance of the cards to her clients, Gilbert focuses on the shadow aspect, which is communicated as a challenge or stumbling block that once acknowledged, can then be integrated by the client. Gilbert (as cited in Coulter, 2004) describes the higher self aspect of an archetype as when this archetype is experienced and understood by an individual and the shadow as when the archetypes “become obsessions of, or “possess”, the individual” (p. 339). Gilbert, in describing this conception of the shadow, uses the example of a daughter who is “possessed by the mother-complex” (p. 339). According to Gilbert (as cited in Coulter, 2004) this individual is likely to be desperate for children of her own and to see the father of these children, not as a partner, but simply as a means to an end, i.e., obtaining children. Gilbert’s (as cited in Coulter, 2004) conception of the shadow is not a conventional use of the Jungian term shadow, which is “the disowned, sub-personality” or “[u]nwanted thought... [that] persists as a powerful dynamic that we take with us wherever we go” (p. 64).

Coulter’s (2004) description of the “Tarot Method” does not include specific techniques, but rather involves its theoretical underpinnings, strengths, and limitations (some of the theory and the limitations will be integrated in the section of my study wherein I will describe ways in which Tarot can be used in therapy). For example, Coulter (2004) quotes psychologist Arthur Rosengarten as conceding that the Tarot

therapist must be capable of “suspending previous knowledge of the client, particularly during the preliminary stages of card shuffling and selection” and that “the most favourable times for introducing Tarot come when ordinary attempts to resolve or understand a problem have been unsatisfactory” (p. 340).

Further, Rosengarten advocates the use of Tarot with clients who are “normal-neurotic” and with couples and families, who “will find Tarot uniquely helpful in reflecting interpersonal dynamics” (as cited in Coulter, 2004, p. 341) and cautions against its use with clients with actively psychotic schizophrenia, paranoia, or who hold fundamentalist religious beliefs. According to Coulter (2004), Gilbert proposes that the use of Tarot cards in therapy is most fitting for “people, who are having trouble coping; who have stress in their situation[s]. They may be troubled because of illness, injury, difficult life situations” (p. 342).

Although the reasons for cautioning against the use of Tarot with paranoid and religious clients are not discussed, it can be assumed that using a tool that has been traditionally used for divination could create paranoia regarding the outcome of life events in clients who are already thus prone. For example, if a paranoid client receives the Death card in a reading, which does not usually denote actual death, but rather metamorphosis of some kind (Coulter, 2004), such a client may become afraid that his or her own death is impending. In addition, because Tarot has been traditionally associated with occult, those clients holding fundamentalist religious beliefs may take exception to the use of such cards in their therapy sessions. Coulter (2004) notes, in line with Dr. Rosengarten’s suggestion, that before proposing the use of Tarot, Gilbert questions the

clients about their religious affiliation in order to assess whether the use of the cards will fit their value system.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Philosophical Approach to the Search for Knowledge

The philosophical approach in which this study is situated is that of postmodernism. In postmodernism, “the conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by knowledge as a linguistic and social construction of reality” (Kvale, 1995, p. 24). The modernist belief in one true reality is dissolved in postmodernism and is substituted with “a focus on interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of the lived world” (Kvale, 1995, p. 24).

With respect to the issue of legitimation in qualitative research, postmodernism replaces the question of whether a study is scientific with “the pragmatic question of whether it provides useful knowledge” (Kvale, 1996, p. 42). Kvale describes the qualitative interview as the “construction site of knowledge” (1996, p. 42) and argues that this knowledge is related to five features of postmodernism. These features include: knowledge as conversation, knowledge as narrative, knowledge as language, knowledge as context, and knowledge as interrelational (Kvale, 1996).

Concerning *knowledge as conversation*, Kvale (1996) describes an interview as a dialogue between two individuals about a topic that is of mutual interest; both the interview and the philosophical discussion “rest on conversation as access to knowledge” (Kvale, 1996), p. 42). The second feature of the knowledge acquired through an interview, that of *knowledge as narrative*, is based on the idea that in qualitative interviews, people tell stories, or narratives, about their lives. Lyotard (as cited in Kvale,

1996) argues that in “[postmodernist] thought, there is a shift from modern, formalized knowledge systems to the narrative knowledge embodied in storytelling” (p. 43).

Knowledge as language implies that the knowledge generated through an interview is produced linguistically. In the qualitative interview, “language is both the tool of interviewing and, in the form of tapes and transcripts, also the object of textural interpretation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 43). Kvale’s conception of *knowledge as context* recognizes that the interview takes place within an interpersonal context and that this context influences the meaning of the interview statements. Finally, with *knowledge as interrelational*, Kvale (1996) posits that a major purpose of the interview is for the two people discussing a common theme to exchange views. He states that from a postmodernist perspective, knowledge is neither derived from inside the individual’s mind nor from the outside world, but from the relationship between the individual and the world (Kvale, 1996).

Research Design

Douglas and Moustakas (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985) write that heuristics “is a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self” (p. 39). Heuristic research begins with a number of subjective reflections, involving self analysis and dialogue with others and develops into “a systematic and definitive exposition” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 40).

My research design is heuristic in nature, incorporating a phenomenological component, and the general methodological approach is qualitative. As a means of

understanding and engaging in the process of the research, I employed the first five of Moustakas' (1990) six stages of heuristic research and in order to analyze the interviews, I used Moustakas' modification of Van Kaam's seven steps of phenomenological data analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

I employed a qualitative methodology because I studied single individuals (called *cases*) and compared the cases "with other cases that also have been studied in depth" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005, p. 14). I chose to use heuristics instead of the case study method because the inter-relational nature of the heuristic inquiry, i.e. the researcher as co-creator of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), is very much in line with the post-modern perspective that reality is created linguistically (Kvale, 1995, p. 24). The data collection involved conducting interviews with four female co-researchers. Before beginning the interviews, I clarified my own experience with Tarot and my insights related to the use of the cards by answering the interview questions myself in journal format. This was an important part of the data collection process; as Moustakas (1990) writes, "preliminary awareness of one's own knowledge and experience of a critical life issue, challenge, or problem enables one to begin the study of the problem or concern" (p. 17).

Moustakas (1994) outlines six phases of heuristic research, the first five of which are: initial engagement, immersion into the question, incubation, illumination, and explication (p. 18). I did not employ phase six, creative synthesis, because this phase constitutes an analysis of the data and I am using Moustakas' modification of Van Kaam's seven steps of phenomenological data analysis (Moustakas, 1994) for this purpose. The initial engagement is comprised of an internal dialogue in which the

researcher discovers what topic is of interest and what questions are associated with this interest (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). In the immersion stage, “anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion, for staying with, and for maintaining a sustained focus of concentration” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). During this stage, the researcher undergoes constant self-reflection, musing over and exploring variations of the topic in order to discover further components of the investigation (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). To aid in this self-reflection, during the immersion stage, I kept a journal, and when ideas related to my research would come to mind, I would transcribe them in this journal.

During the third phase, incubation, in order for fresh insights and understanding to be derived on levels outside of conscious awareness, the researcher disengages from the intense concentration on the question (Moustakas, 1990). Once this incubation has taken place, phase four, illumination, occurs, in which clusters of qualities and themes associated with the question come into consciousness (Moustakas, 1990). During illumination, I found that my interview questions became refined in my own mind and qualities associated with these questions were brought to consciousness. For example, I became aware of additional benefits associated with my personal use of Tarot and began to speculate on what the co-researchers might gain from their use of Tarot. At this point, data collection can take place and involves awareness, on the part of the researcher, of the inter-subjective nature of the exchange. And finally, after data has been obtained, phase five, explication, occurs, in which the researcher can combine the main components of the phenomenon “into a whole experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31).

Sampling

I used purposeful sampling, specifically the snowball method, in which the participants were chosen because of their expertise regarding the phenomenon (Gall et al., 2005). The selection criterion for the experts was that she uses Tarot cards regularly (at least once a month) and that she uses them, not solely for doing readings for others, but also for self-reflective purposes, or as a tool for self examination and for clarifying one's own emotions.

In order to acquire further participants, after I asked these experts (who fit my selection criteria) if they were willing to take part in my study, I then asked them whether they knew of others who fit the criteria for participation in my study. If they did, I inquired as to whether they were willing to give a letter containing a brief description of my research study and my contact information to these individuals. I ended up having only four participants because, after completing my fourth interview, I felt like I had a lot of information and that theoretical saturation had been achieved (Patton, 2002, p. 490).

Methods of Data Collection

I gathered my data through interviews and informal conversations with participants. In order to understand the content of the interviews, I employed a mainly emic perspective. The emic perspective represents the participant's viewpoint and involves the researcher coming to view the phenomenon from the perspective of the participant (Gall et al., 2005). I further obtained this perspective through "informal conversations with the... participants, and by observing them as they behave naturally in

the field” (Gall et al., 2005, p. 309). Because I interviewed each coresearcher in her home and asked her to demonstrate to me how she did a spread, I was able to gain information about her life and use of Tarot beyond what was evident in the answers to the interview questions. It should be noted, however, that the act of being observed can influence the behaviour of the individual being observed (Robins, Spranca, & Mendelsohn, 1996) and therefore, it cannot be assumed that the way in which co-researchers’ behave when I am there is entirely “natural” or, how they would behave in absence. I also applied an etic perspective, maintaining my own viewpoint as the investigator of this phenomenon. An etic perspective helped me to “make conceptual and theoretical sense of the case, and to report the findings so that their contribution to the research literature is clear” (Gall et al., 2005, p. 310). Keeping a journal with my personal reflections on the interviews aided in maintaining this perspective.

The use of theory in qualitative research can be quite varied, for example, it can “come at the beginning [of a study] and provide a lens that shapes what is looked at and the question asked” (Creswell, 2008, p. 49) or it can come both at the beginning and at the end, as in mixed methods research, “where researchers both test theories and generate them” (Creswell, 2008, p.49). For the purpose of my study, I looked to “discover concepts and theories after data have been collected” (Gall et al., 2005, p. 15).

Interview Questions

The demographic information that I included in my research were the co-researchers’ gender, approximate age, and frequency with which Tarot was used. I obtained this information through informal conversation with the participant. The other

information that I included in my research were the answers to the interview questions.

The interview questions were as follows:

1. Approximately how long (in years) have you been using Tarot cards?
2. Do you use the cards as a means of doing readings for others, for your own purposes, or both (briefly describe)?
3. What Tarot deck(s) do you use?
4. What spreads do you use when accessing the cards (please describe in detail)?
5. Why do you use the cards (i.e. as a means of forecasting the future, for insight into specific situations, etc.)?
6. How does the use of Tarot benefit your life?
7. What method do you use to understand the meaning of the cards?

It should be noted that a Tarot spread is a particular configuration of any number of cards, wherein each card is allotted added meaning by its location within the spread. These questions are related to self-reflection because part of the selection criteria was that the individual used Tarot for her own purposes and not just for doing readings for others. In attempting to ascertain the benefit that Tarot brought to the participant's life, I expected answers to not just include information related to forecasting the future, but also to clarifying issues that are currently a priority. Questions one through four are designed to elicit technical information related to the co-researchers' use of the cards and five through seven are designed to elicit information related the purpose of my study, which,

as mentioned, is to investigate how regular users of Tarot cards utilize the cards; what the self-reported benefits of Tarot use are and what form of interpretation was used to understand the meaning of the cards for each participant.

Interview Format

Moustakas (1990) describes the typical data collection method in heuristic research as extended interviews, comprised of dialogue with oneself and with the co-researchers. In these interviews, thoughts, images, and feelings unfold and are expressed naturally and the process is not bound by time constraints; it ends “only when the individual has had an opportunity to tell his or her story to a point of natural closing” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 42). The function of the interviews is to discover the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the co-researchers and then to interpret the expressed phenomenon. It should be noted that there is a contradiction in terms between *discovering the experiences* of the co-researchers and the postmodernist conception of knowledge as *co-created* (Kvale, 1995). My view, as the researcher, is that there is some kind of reality beyond what is created through dialogue, but that the modernist view in an objective reality is too black and white, given that knowledge and understanding is generated and seems to be sometimes created through dialogue.

Although the interview questions may be formulated in advance, sincere dialogue occurs through the creation, by the researcher, of a climate conducive to disclosure, and cannot be planned. This dialogue may involve self-disclosure on the part of the researcher as a means of evoking further elucidation from the co-researcher; Moustakas (1990) writes that “there may be moments in the interview process when the primary

investigator shares an experience that will inspire and evoke richer, fuller, more comprehensive depictions from the co-researcher” (p. 47).

Moustakas (1990) describes three interview approaches, identified by Patton (1980), that are appropriate in heuristic research. The one employed in my study was the *general interview guide*, which “outlines a set of issues or topics to be explored that might be shared with co-researchers as the interview unfolds, thus focusing on common information to be sought from all co-researchers” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47).

The interviews were not casual conversations, but rather involved intentional listening, reflecting, and questioning that “alternate[d] between focusing on the personal interaction and the knowledge constructed through the interaction” (Kvale, 1996, p. 16). I used a person-centered approach, involving the core Rogerian conditions of congruence or genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding. This approach is complementary to heuristic research and Corey (2005) writes of the Rogerian method that “[it] is perhaps best characterized as a way of being and as a shared journey in which therapist and client reveal their humanness and participate in a growth experience” (pp. 172- 173). Many aspects of the Rogerian, or person-centered, therapist’s attitude mirror that of a heuristic researcher:

When [person-centered therapists] encounter the client on a person-to-person level, their “role” is to be without roles... [Rogerian] therapists do not aim to manage, conduct, regulate, or control the client... Person-centered theory holds that the therapist’s function is to be present and accessible to clients and to focus on their immediate experience. (Corey, 2005, p. 169)

Kvale (1996) describes twelve structures, or modes of understanding in the qualitative research interview, which were fundamental in my data collection. These 12 structures are: *life world*, *meaning*, *qualitative*, *descriptive*, *specificity*, *deliberate naïveté*, *focused*, *ambiguity*, *change*, *sensitivity*, *interpersonal situation*, and *positive experience*. *Life world* refers to the notion that the interview seeks to uncover the everyday lived world of the interviewee and *meaning* suggests that the interviewer also seeks to interpret the central themes such that the “interviewer registers and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said” (Kvale, 1996, p. 30). The interview is *qualitative* in that it does not look for quantification; rather it seeks knowledge conveyed through everyday language and is *descriptive* in the sense that it uncovers detailed descriptions of the interviewees lived world.

Specificity refers to the fact that descriptions of specific notions rather than general descriptions are sought and *deliberate naïveté* on the part of the researcher suggests that the researcher is open to novel phenomena, as opposed to having “ready-made categories and schema of interpretation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 31). In my research, *specificity* was met by asking for more detail or clarification if co-researchers’ spoke in very general terms and *deliberate naïveté* was met through an open and curious attitude by me towards information shared by the co-researchers and also through the absence of leading questions. *Focused* refers to the idea that the interview centers on particular themes and was met in this research by using interview questions as a means of keeping the interview discussion focused on information related to the interview question. *Ambiguity* simply suggests that the interview statements can sometimes contain contradictions or ambiguities whereas *change* refers to the fact that the process of being

interviewed may bring about new insights for the interviewee. *Sensitivity* refers to the idea that the greater the sensitivity to and knowledge of the interview topic by the interviewer, the greater the knowledge obtained through the interview. As the researcher, I met the structures of *ambiguity* and *change* simply by allowing for their existence in their interview and met the structure of *sensitivity* vis-à-vis researching Tarot for my study and by clarifying my own experiences with and thoughts and feelings about Tarot by answering the interview questions myself.

Interpersonal situation simply refers to the idea that the knowledge generated is obtained through the interpersonal interaction, and finally *positive experience* refers to the fact that the “qualitative research interview can be a favorable experience for the interviewee” (Kvale, 1996, p. 36) because by telling his or her story to a sensitive listener who is seeking understanding, an affirmative response may be evoked in the interviewee. *Interpersonal situation* was met in my research by my awareness of the post-modernist conception of knowledge as co-created (Kvale, 1995) and my understanding of the actor-observer effect, or the fact that one’s behavior is influenced and can change when one is being observed. Finally, *positive experience* appeared to be met in that a positive sentiment was expressed about the interview by all four co-researchers.

Prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews, I carefully contemplated what I wanted to ask and why I wanted to ask it. This contemplation allowed me to “clarify the meanings relevant to the project during the interview, obtaining a disambiguation of the statements made, and thereby provide a more trustworthy point of departure for the later analysis” (Kvale, 1996, p. 132). During the interview, several types of questions were asked, both to elicit information on themes and to communicate to the interviewee that I

was listening. I began with *introducing questions* such as “Could you describe for me...?” to derive spontaneous and detailed descriptions of the interviewees’ experiences and *direct questions*, such as “How long, in years, have you...?” to obtain specific historical and demographic information. *Follow-up questions*, including nods and pauses, were used to extend the interviewees’ responses.

Probing questions such as “Could you say more about...?” were used to further explore the general content of the interviewees’ responses, whereas *specifying questions*, such as “What did you mean by...?” were used to “get more precise descriptions” of the specific content (Kvale, 1996, p. 134). When I sensed the subject matter of the interview was deviating from the topic under investigation, I used *structuring questions*, such as “The next question I’d like to ask is...?” in order to move to another theme. Finally, *Interpreting questions*, such as “Do you mean that...?” were used to clarify the content of the interviewee’s response.

Although Kvale (1996) emphasizes the importance of the type and quality of questions asked during the interview, he explains that “active listening- the interviewer’s ability to listen actively to what the interviewee says- can be more important than the specific mastery of questioning techniques” (p. 132). While engaged in the interview process, I attempted to listen with an “evenly hovering attention” (Freud, 1963, as cited in Kvale, 1996, p. 135) to both the content and meaning of the interviewees’ accounts. This allowed for both the asking of appropriate follow-up question and for the interviewee to perceive that she was being heard and that what she was saying was of consequence.

Data Analysis

In order to clarify my own reactions to each interview and to aid in the maintenance of an etic perspective, I wrote down my thoughts and sensations and themes that arose in the interview directly following its completion. I transcribed each interview verbatim and then for the purpose of analyzing the content of the interviews, I employed Moustakas' modification of Van Kaam's seven steps of phenomenological data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological and heuristic research methods differ in many respects, including data analysis procedures; for example, "whereas phenomenological research generally concludes with a presentation of the distilled structures of experience, heuristics may involve reintegration of derived knowledge that is itself an act of creative discovery, a synthesis that includes intuition and tacit understanding" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 43). For me as the researcher, this statement came into play in the forming of the interview themes. Forming the themes was always an intentional, conscious process, some seemed to come to me "out of the blue" or from a sub-conscious, or intuitive place.

However, incorporating a phenomenological procedure into my heuristic research design did not compromise its integrity. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) write that "although [heuristic] work done to date suggests a series of processes... of a highly individualized nature, each heuristic study is a unique, creative challenge" (p. 42).

The first of Van Kaam's seven steps of phenomenological data analysis is *listing and preliminary grouping* in which every expression relevant to the experience was listed. The second step, *reduction and elimination*, involved testing each expression for

moments that were necessary and sufficient for the understanding of the expression and determining whether it was possible to extract and label this expression. The third step, *clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents*, required that I group the invariant constituents into a thematic label (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Following this step, I engaged in step four, *final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application*, in which the invariant constituents and related themes were “checked against the complete record of the research participant” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

In step five, I created for each co-researcher, an “*Individual Textural Description* of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) comprised of the invariant constituents and related themes. Step six involved constructing for each co-researcher, “an *Individual Structural Description* of the experience based on the Individual Textural Description” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Following this, the final step, step seven, required composing for “each research participant a *Textural-Structural Description* of the meanings and essence of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). After completing these steps and derived from the Textural-Structural Description of each of the participants’ data set, I created a ‘composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole’ (p. 121).

Once a draft of the composite description was completed, and as a check of validity, I gave each co-researcher a copy of this description. I informed her of her pseudonym, and asked her to review the data attached to this pseudonym and to inform me as to whether this information belonged under the prescribed theme. Each of the co-

researchers responded, only one with suggestions for changes; these changes were incorporated into the composite description.

Generalizability, Internal Validity, Credibility, and Transferability

Heuristic research “is richly descriptive, but also strongly subjective, and weak in terms of generalizability” (Gray, 2004, p. 29). However, generalizability of data is not an aim of heuristic research. Gray (2004) writes that “philosophically, heuristic inquiry does not start from the premise that there is an external ‘objective’ truth to be discovered” (p. 29). Furthermore, internal validity is not sought after by the heuristic researcher; the heuristic researcher does not attempt to detach from the co-researcher, rather, he or she becomes wholly and pervasively immersed in the data such that “realizations occur, growing out of sheer, graphic, experiential involvement in and reflection on the theme or question” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 47).

However, credibility and transferability were a concern in this study and attempts were made to ensure they were met. Credibility, or ensuring that the results of the study, from the perspective of the participants, are believable (Patton, 2002), was met by, providing the co-researchers with the themes that were generated and inquiring as to whether, in their estimation, their information belonged under the prescribed theme. It is not clear whether transferability, or the extent to which the results of this study can be transferred to other settings (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005) has been met in this study, however, specific techniques for the use of Tarot in therapy, based on the interview findings, will be outlined in the discussion section and it is my hope that these techniques will be propagated to therapists vis-à-vis the dissemination of my research.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

Results

The purpose of this study was to assess how regular users of Tarot cards utilize the cards, including the benefits associated with accessing the cards and the means by which the cards are interpreted. Four female co-researchers, ranging in age from their mid-thirties to early fifties, were interviewed. The interviews yielded background information, such the length of time that the cards have been used, and also in depth information, such as the reasons for using the cards. In this section, I will introduce each of the co-researchers and discuss background information related to their Tarot use, what Moustakas (1990) calls the “individual depictions” (p. 60). Also included in this section will be a description of the spreads that the co-researcher uses when accessing the cards. In the next section, *Analysis*, I will discuss the in depth information related to their use of Tarot. This information will be organized into themes, or subjects that are discussed by several of the co-researchers, what Moustakas (1990) calls the “composite depictions” (p. 69).

Angela

Angela is in her early fifties and has been using Tarot regularly since she was given her first deck in 1985. Shortly after acquiring this deck, she began a job doing readings over the phone “where [she] couldn’t even see the person.” While she was doing this work, she “was really just learning” and says, “How many readings did I do a day? In those days, you had to do a five or six hour shift, so... you’re learning.”

In addition to the knowledge she gained at this worksite, Angela learned how to interpret the cards both by practicing with others who knew how to use them and by observing the patterns that emerged among her readings. She says, “It’s the symbolism... If you look at it intellectually, it’s the symbols you’re using- Major Arcana, Minor Arcana, the King, the Queen, the Page- ... [then] you develop your own style, you develop your own rhythm.” She continues:

And then I would notice all these patterns would be consistent and I’d go, ok, that card means such and such. Like that one that we flipped over, the High Priestess. Many times if somebody was pregnant that card would come up... I started to notice [that] this card’s telling me something else. Oftentimes I would say, ‘Can I ask you, are you concerned about pregnancy?’ And then... they’d [say], ‘My God, how did you know?’ ... You become really good at it.

Angela uses the cards both for her own purposes and for doing readings for others. In using the cards for herself, she will choose one of her six decks, depending on what she is looking for from the cards, because as she says, “they all have really different energy.” Some of the decks Angela uses include the Sacred Dakini, a water deck, and the Goddess Tarot deck, with artwork by Susan Boulet.

She says that when she first started using Tarot, she would read cards in the same manner for herself as she did for others. She would use a spread of ten cards, a spread that she created herself, which gives insight into a particular conflict, whether it be focussed on work, school, relationships, etc. Now, when reading for herself, Angela will pick only a few cards and do this on average, about once a month. She has been a paid Tarot reader, on and off, since receiving her first deck.

Beth

Beth, in her mid-forties, has been using Tarot for approximately 10 years. She learned about the cards through a friend who does readings and by looking at the literature on the cards. However, she says of the written descriptions of Tarot, that “sometimes they didn’t really make sense, and of course when you look at each card separately, it doesn’t really make sense, especially if you’ve got three cards sitting together. That’ll change it.” She says that she will also get a sense of the meaning of the cards simply by looking at the pictures on them, “like a lot of the times, [she] will look at the symbols that are on the cards.” She discusses the images on a few of the cards she has spread out in front of her:

Obviously this is a happy card, the Sun card. You know some one’s happy; they’re having a good time, and the sun’s out. Symbols are really good. Even the Death card, it doesn’t look bad in the sense that you’ve got the sun coming up here. You know, you’ve got the Pope here, which is yellow, so it’s about power, finding your own inner authority. And the Hangman card, when you look at it, he’s hanging upside down, but he’s got this beautiful halo of light hanging around his head. He’s ok with not making a decision right now. It’s no big deal because he can untie himself at any point. [You can get a lot] just [by] really looking at what you’re seeing, instead of reading it.

Beth says that, in addition to her academic understanding of the cards and examining the images themselves, she will often intuit their relationship to the situation at hand. She says:

And then when I read them, I read them on an intuitive level, even though there's written explanations of the cards. A lot of the times I'll just go intuitively, so how the cards sit with each other will tell a story.

Beth has only one Tarot deck, the Rider-Waite deck. She says that she likes some of the other decks, "but [doesn't] really connect with some of their viewpoints." For example, she says that "the cat deck, or the witch Tarot, or Allister Crowley's deck. It's not my belief system." What she likes about the Rider-Waite cards is their simplicity: "they're pretty basic. They have some symbology in them, but it's not overly decorative." She compares the symbology in the Rider Wait to that of other decks:

For instance, Allister Crowley also brings in Egyptian beliefs, and hermetics, and alchemy, and all this sort of stuff. [The Rider-Waite cards] just basically deal with very simplistic ways. That's how I like it. Things get too complicated [and] the solution gets diluted.

She says that the one thing about the Rider-Waite deck that she doesn't connect with is its Christian symbolism. She says that "because it was based on beliefs within a church structure, there is, of course, limitations to what I can learn." However, she notes that it is possible to interpret the symbols in a different way than they were intended. She says that "for instance, the Pope and all this, you can start to look at them a little differently, and I prefer to do that."

Beth has worked as a professional Tarot reader, but now uses the cards solely for herself. She says, "I have a website... And I was doing them through a store and also through my home. But now I just do them for myself." When doing readings for others and when she wants a more in-depth reading for herself, Beth uses the Celtic Cross

spread. She says that “each book you see tells a bit of a different story [about the Celtic Cross]” (Figure 3). She explains that with the version that she uses, there are ten cards and each represents an aspect of the subject’s life, including the past, present, and future aspects of a particular challenge. When she is not looking for a detailed reading for herself, she’ll pull just a few cards because “if it gets to be too many more, the answer can get diluted.”

Chloe

Chloe, in her early forties, has been using Tarot for 21 or 22 years. She says she became involved in Tarot at the same time that she “got interested in witchcraft.” She says, with humour, “It was all part of being, ‘I’ll get a Tarot deck and that’ll make me an official witch.’” Chloe uses the cards only for herself because, as she says, “[she’s] not a very good reader.” She continues:

A friend and I were talking about that. We think everyone has at least one psychic gift. And some people are just really good. Most people who read Tarot don’t actually need the cards. They’re technically just channelling. The cards just make you feel better about where they’re getting the information.

Chloe learned about Tarot through literature and through friends who did readings. Like Beth, she mentions that an understanding of the cards can be obtained simply by examining the images; she says, “I always like the Tarot decks where you can look at the images and know without having to read the book what the hell’s going on.” She mentions a Tarot book that influenced her understanding of the cards: “The Tarot Handbook by Angela Arrien and she uses the Crowley deck. And what I like about it is she does it mostly from a psychological point of view.”

Chloe has several Tarot decks, because, she says, “I use different decks for different reasons.” Some of the decks, Chloe admits, she bought for the artwork, and some of them, she doesn’t use. She will use her animal cards, “if something about the day feels weird and [she] feel[s] like, ‘Ok, what do I need to keep in mind?’” and “the Medicine cards, [she] find[s] are really good for everyday questions.” The two decks that Chloe uses most often are the Osho Zen Tarot deck and the Allister Crowley deck. She says of the Osho Zen Tarot that “[she] love[s] the fact that everything about it is going with the flow. So even the negative cards aren’t negative; it’s just a moment.”

Chloe also has the New Orleans Voodoo Tarot deck, which she finds “works great when it comes to family [but she] can’t get anything from it, or it doesn’t make sense if [she] use[s] it [for anything] else.” Chloe uses the Crowley deck “as positive reinforcement for whatever [she] want[s] to bring into [her] life.”

In addition to using different decks for different purposes, depending on her reason for accessing the cards, Chloe uses different spreads. She likes using the Osho Zen Tarot when it comes to relationships, employing a relationship spread. She says:

You visualize the person in your head as you shuffle the deck. And then what you do is you pull four cards. The first card is the energies you bring to the relationship; the other one’s the energies the person brings; there’s the composite energies; then there’s the insight.

If she is doing a project, Chloe uses the medicine deck to create a butterfly spread. She says of this spread:

It's the different stages and the obstacles or things you need to watch out for [or] you need to do to make a project. [The spread] is neat because it's like a creative brainstorming with yourself.

However, Chloe also mentions that she "rarely [does] readings at all anymore." What she does instead is "[she]'ll take whatever particular deck [she] like[s] at the moment and [she]'ll use a card like a positive affirmation [the way] some people will do a vision board." Or, she says, if she wants a quick overview of a situation, she will do a three card spread, symbolizing "past/present/future" of the situation, or the current state of her "mind/body/soul."

Doreen

Doreen, in her late thirties, received her first Tarot deck 15 years ago and has been reading professionally for four years, full-time for two. In addition to her professional readings, a couple of times a week, Doreen uses the cards for herself; she says, "It's a fairly regular thing. I've always got them by my bedside." Whereas before, she would do "a really big Celtic Cross for [herself]", Doreen now will just pull one or two cards at a time.

When doing readings for others, although she has 25 Tarot decks in total, Doreen uses the same deck for each spread and she says she will always "start with the Celtic Cross" unless "they have something really, really specific they want to know *right now*." She says of this spread that "[she] find[s] it to be a good overview [of the person's life]." Some of the dimensions that are represented in the Celtic Cross are "the past, the present, the future, different influences" and she says, "[she] can easily see if different people are important [in the person's] life." After the Celtic Cross, Doreen will use other spreads; if

someone wants insight into a specific relationship, she will use a relationship spread that she found on *Aeclectic*. She describes *Aeclectic* as, “an international Tarot forum [where] thousands and thousands of people [are] talking Tarot all the time.” The version of the relationship spread that Doreen uses has seven cards in total: one symbolizing the overall relationship and three for each person. These three cards represent the communication level of each person, his or her emotional level, and the spiritual level.

If a client wants insight into a project that he or she has undertaken or is considering undertaking, Doreen will use “the bridge spread”, which is comprised of five cards; the first one is “where you are right now”, the last is “where you need to be”, and “the three cards in the middle are like a ladder; they’re the three steps you need to take to get there.” Doreen mentions that this spread is “really effective for making practical, reasonable, attainable steps” towards a goal. The final spread that Doreen will use in a reading “for everything else” is a three card spread in which the first card represents the situation, the second represents the challenge, and the third symbolizes the action to be taken. Doreen says that his spread “is a really generic spread that captures everything.”

Doreen “did a lot of [her] studies surrounding Tarot on *Aeclectic*, but she says that “how [she] really learned Tarot [was by pulling] a card a day, either past, present or future”, which she did “for many, many years.” Her investigation into the meaning of the cards began with studying “the traditional way of doing it”, through literature and intensives, and says “I have 46 books on Tarot.” She says that “every card can mean a thousand things” and she now has many of these meanings mentally “catalogued”. When reading Tarot, Doreen no longer has to think of the range of possible meanings for each card, but rather, she relies on her intuition. She says:

One [interpretation] just intuitively comes up. And it's usually within a fairly small range, but then I go off on that. So we've got the ten of cups here- I know it's about family- I know it's about the connection of love between family [members]. Then I go into a psychic mode where I think about the family, I'll visualize her family... and I'll just start talking about what I see. And I keep coming back- back and forth between the [academic understanding and my intuition].

Analysis

Among the interviews of the co-researchers, patterns emerged, involving such things as the philosophical orientation towards Tarot and the appeal of and reasons for accessing the cards. The following section is an account of these “common qualities and themes that embrace the experience of the co-researchers” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52). The criterion for inclusion of a quality or theme is that it is discussed by at least three of the four co-researchers; thus considered to be a reflection of the entire group, not solely the experience of one or two individuals within the group. However, there are two instances wherein distinctly noteworthy topics (*Mind-State* and *Intentionality*) are discussed by only two of the co-researchers and these themes are expounded upon.

It should also be mentioned that the focus of the analyses is the co-researchers' use of Tarot for themselves, and not for doing readings for others. There are several reasons for this: the aim of the study was to assess how Tarot is used in a self-reflective context, the co-researchers speak in more depth about their personal use of the cards, and the general approach to, and technical details of, their personal use of Tarot can be applied to their use of Tarot for doing readings for others. In some instances, however,

the co-researchers refer to their use of Tarot for doing readings for others and where this information is applicable to the potential use of Tarot for self-reflection, it is included in the results.

Personal Growth

It is not surprising that, given that the use of Tarot for self-reflection was part of the selection criteria, all four of the co-researchers emphasize their use of Tarot for personal growth. They say that they use the cards to understand the present state of a situation and also to determine what course of action to take, either in working with emotions, or in changing an outside situation.

Although each uses the cards for self-development, the specific way that the cards are employed in this context varies between the co-researchers. Angela mentions that when she's "really, really hurting" she will pull a Goddess Tarot card to determine whether she can gain insight into her situation by reflecting on the archetypal journey taken by the individual goddess depicted. She recounts a time when she was not doing well and used the Goddess Tarot cards and "thought, 'Ok, powerful, powerful symbol, give me some of that. What can I learn that this entity went through?'"

Beth emphasizes how she doesn't often use the cards to predict the future, but will use them instead to address a solution to a situation she is struggling with. She says:

I usually just use it for reflection. So if I feel like I'm struggling with something-something isn't feeling clear- then I'll pick a couple of cards. And I usually ask it in a way that that allows me to address a solution, instead of directing into a problem. So it's solution based. It's like "Ok, if I'm feeling this anger, what are

the issues around it? How can I release it? What do I need to do that would be beneficial for myself as a person?’

Chloe mentions several times that her intent in using Tarot cards is “more about personal development than actually looking into the future.” She says that she uses the cards “as a positive reinforcement for whatever [she] want[s] to bring into [her] life.” She will pull a card “once a week, unless the cards really seem to be something [she] needs to work on for awhile” and then leave the card out until she feels that what is it she’s been working on has been resolved.

Chloe also emphasizes that Tarot doesn’t reveal anything to her that she doesn’t already know. She says that knowledge obtained through Tarot is already within her, but it is somehow just out of reach. She uses the following metaphor to explain this concept:

It’s kind of like when you wake up from a dream. Sometimes you can’t figure out what the hell’s going on and it’s only when you talk to someone else. And other times you wake up and you know very clearly what it is. And it’s kind of like when you pick a card sometimes. It’s just showing you what you already know.

Similarly, Doreen mentions that when she is in touch with herself, the cards she pulls do not surprise her; she says that “if you’re in tune with yourself, then they never wow.” In line with Beth’s orientation when using the cards, when using Tarot, instead of asking about a problem itself, Doreen will ask for insight into the present moment of a situation and about “what action should [she] best take in order to get on or stay on the best possible path.” She states that the way she uses the cards has been influenced by her understanding of such things as positive visualization and the law of attraction and goes

on to say that she does not use Tarot to tell her what *is* going to happen, she uses it to tell her what *could* happen and “what [she] could do to get the most out of that.”

New Perspectives

All four participants talked about how they sometimes use Tarot when they are feeling stuck and sense that there is something they’re missing. This is a potentially valuable property of Tarot: its ability to offer various perspectives and possible courses of action that one is unable to discover on one’s own. Angela has used the Goddess Tarot Deck for this purpose and says, “I would read and really try to discover what maybe else I’m missing.”

Beth mentions that when she’s approaching a situation feeling reactionary and would like to change her attitude, she will “pick a couple of cards, just to see what would be a better choice for me in the situation.” She also says, as a Tarot reader, that she has had artists come to her who are feeling stuck, “like [they’re] looking too much at the same thing” and want to “see if [the] reading will help open up horizons”, which Beth comments “is kind of cool.”

Chloe says she’ll sometimes pull a card when something about the days feels weird and she could use some guidance in progressing; she’ll ask the cards, “Ok, what do I need to keep in mind?” Finally, Doreen says she’ll pull a Fairy card when she’s feeling a lack of clarity, when she’s feeling “lost and sick or bewildered or hurt or uncertain.”

Cards in a Spread Influence Each Other

All four co-researchers commented on how, in addition to the individual meaning of each card in a spread, information can be derived by observing how the cards sit in relation to each other. Angela says that for example, when she is doing a reading, “the

fourth card will suggest something to [her] about the second one and on and on.” Beth, Chloe, and Doreen all speak of this phenomenon as the cards *telling a story*. Beth says that a limitation of some of the descriptions of Tarot cards is that “[they don’t] really make sense when you’ve got three cards sitting together. There’s unlimited connections with them... [the cards] tell a story.”

Chloe reflects on “the appeal of Tarot” and says it is perhaps that the pictured cards *telling a story* is an example of our most ancient and primitive language, that of communication through symbols. She says:

When we use them it touches on the most simplistic... it’s like our sense of smell, which is one of our strongest senses for survival. Maybe that’s what it is: because it was a form of survival, if we communicated through pictures.

Objectivity

All of the co-researched mention the difficulty they have in being objective when either doing a reading, or interpreting a few cards, for themselves. Two co-researchers mention that when doing readings for themselves, they tend to project onto the cards what they want the cards to depict. Angela says: “And the thing is that there’s a lot of projecting that goes on. Especially when you do something for yourself, you want a certain answer.” And Chloe says:

You can sort of twist the meaning to suite your life. I think that’s sort of the reason it’s hard to do it for yourself and it’s hard to do it for someone you know. Because you tend to want to project and if it looks like it’s going to be bad, you try to slant it in a way. Because if you don’t know somebody, you trust your intuition more.

Three of the co-researchers mention that it is a common phenomenon for individuals who do Tarot reading for others to begin having difficulties reading for themselves. Beth says that “the more I did readings for other people, the more difficulty I had having the objectivity to read for myself.” When I ask Doreen if she knows why it had become, as she says, “more and more increasingly hard to actually read for [herself]”, she ponders the question for a moment and says, “No, but apparently that’s really common.” She goes on to say:

The better I get at readings for others, the harder time I have of having the *objectivity* and cutting through my own bullshit to actually see the clarity of the truth of what’s being represented there... When I lay my own cards on the table, I might see the truth, but here’s my agenda, here’s my emotions, here’s my desires, here’s everything else piled on top of it.

Self-Interpretation

This difficulty in maintaining objectivity does not override the necessity of sometimes interpreting the cards for oneself. Three co-researchers emphasize the importance of deriving one’s own meaning from the cards, because, as Beth mentions, otherwise, “you’re always coming through [someone else’s] viewpoint, even though [he or she] might be getting some stuff that’s coming through.” She says that when she does readings for individuals who appear “really interested in [Tarot]”, she suggests to them that they get their own deck, “and start playing around with it because then [they] become [their] own authority.”

While showing me much of her collection of 25 Tarot decks, Doreen comes across one she says is more of a psychological tool than a traditional Tarot deck. She

explains that, “in the instructions it says ‘no one else is supposed to interpret the cards for you.’ You just use them as your own personal process.” This notion that the cards have multiple meanings and that in having input in the interpretation process, one becomes his or her own authority, is elucidated by Chloe in the following metaphor:

[Tarot’s] like electricity, you can use it to turn on a light or you can use to power a laser beam that can pop a hole in somebody... It’s an inanimate object; it doesn’t do anything except what you want it to do.

Underlying Philosophy

The purpose of my study was to investigate the way in which regular users of Tarot utilize the cards. Therefore, it is appropriate to include in this section the mindset, or philosophy, with which the co-researchers approach Tarot use. Three of the four co-researchers emphasize their belief that thoughts greatly influence, not only the effect that Tarot cards have on one’s life, but also one’s life path in general. Beth notes that when she uses Tarot cards, she looks for insights that will allow her to change her thought patterns. She says:

I believe that we create our lives through our thoughts. So if I feel like something is happening and I know that whatever has happened is something that I’m thinking, then I go to the cards and say, ‘Ok, what are my thoughts on the subject?’

She mentions that if she starts by changing her thoughts, the outside situation will likely change as well; she says, “it’s what’s inside that’s usually reflected outside, so if I start from the inside, then it usually changes the situation.” Chloe says that the only power Tarot cards have, is the power they are ascribed through one’s thoughts; she says,

“I personally think it’s what you believe that gives it power. That’s what drives everything anyway.” She also comments on her belief that people have, in large part, control over their lives: “As you get older, you realize you have more control than you think you do.” Lastly, Doreen discusses how her understanding that “[Tarot] could all be power of suggestion” has affected her approach to doing readings; she says that “the longer [she’s] been doing this, the more [she’s] trying to focus on the positive.”

Being Open to Messages in the Cards

An additional insight that using Tarot can give, beyond that provided by an understanding of the cards’ meanings, is whether one is open to the messages presented in the cards, or is rather looking for a specific answer. Three of the co-researchers mention that when they continually pull cards, reshuffle, and pull again, they take it a sign that they are not open to receiving what the cards are conveying. Chloe says, “I don’t know a single person who hasn’t reshuffled the deck seven or eight times and still the same answer and is going, ‘Oh, that can’t be right! No he does love me!’” Chloe says that when using the cards, looking for a specific answer, eventually “the cards stop talking and it’s like, ‘stop nagging me.’” Doreen says that she finds the more cards she pulls, “it’s a sign that [she] want[s] them to tell [her] what she want[s] them to tell [her], instead of listening to the situation that’s actually there.” To prevent this from happening, she will “start with one card and try to use it as a catalyst.” Beth also limits the cards she pulls so that she can see the messages in the cards more clearly. She says that she’ll pull just a few cards because “if it gets too many, then the answer can get diluted.”

Magic

Three of the co-researchers say that the *magical* quality of Tarot is, at least in part, what attracts them to the cards; that there is something extraordinary and convivial about the cards, which captivates them and awakens a sense of wonder. Beth says:

You know, as we get older, we tend to get more serious and worry about things. Life, in some ways, stops being fun. These are kind of fun. It brings in some of this magical, wonderful element of life that we may bypass... It's fun! I feel like a kid when I'm doing it, even though I'm asking really serious questions. It's just sort of magical. There's something really lovely about it... that sort of expanded my life.

Chloe mentions how things such as Tarot bring enchantment to life, an experience that is threatened with the loss of the myths of childhood. She notes that “once you find out about Santa Clause or that the tooth fairy aren't real, you start looking for things that are kind of magical... some of the artwork is magical.” Doreen says that when she first started using Tarot cards and she began to see the messages in the cards materialize in her life, “[she] was just *fascinated* by it.” She said that this is how “her love and fascination and obsession with Tarot developed.” For Doreen, using Tarot cards “awakened a sense of wonder [and] was the first little sparkle of something beyond the mundane.”

Healing Images

Three of the co-researchers discussed the notion that the images on the Tarot cards have the potential to bring about healing; that it is not just an understanding of the meaning allotted to each card that has the capacity to elicit growth and change. Doreen's comments:

And I also say to the skeptics who come in, ‘You know, you don’t have to believe in anything for this to be useful for you... If I lay these cards out, the pictures and the stories I tell about them trigger something in you that brings up memories, that allows you to cut through, to make associations in your head that brings up healing suggestions, then that’s useful!’

Angela, when discussing the Water Tarot deck, says that the “images are so powerful” and says that when she uses the Goddess Tarot, “just by looking at them [she] can begin a healing process”. She then says, “I mean look at these paintings... they’re just *beautiful!*” Beth notes that one need not have extensive knowledge about the meaning of each Tarot card; that much understanding can be attained by just looking at the images on the cards. She mentions that the message in the card can be understood simply by observing the image; she says:

And then you get the Tarot books that go, ‘The Hermit card means that you’re gonna have demise’ and all this sort of stuff, but they don’t mention the whole aspect of wisdom. Some books can be very limited. I find it’s kind of like if you’re looking at a painting: it’s better to look yourself before someone tells you, because then you’ll look a little deeper, but if you’ve constantly got a book in front of you... you’re gonna be missing the message in the card.

Comfort in Bad Times

Three of the four co-researchers say that they use Tarot cards more often in bad times; that accessing the cards gives them comfort when things are not going well. Angela says the amount she accesses Tarot changes “and depending if [she’s] having bad times, then [she’s] pulling like crazy.” Chloe says that whether she uses the cards or not

“depends on how secure [she] feel[s] in life, because nobody really uses the Tarot deck when things are going well.” She likens this to the notion that people often wait for things to fall apart before making adjustments in life; she says:

It’s a lot like you don’t make changes in your life when things are going well.

You always wait for things to start going really bad and go ‘oh, damn, maybe I should look for a new job or end this relationship.’

Chloe associates pulling Tarot cards when she’s feeling bad with calling her girlfriends; she says “when you have an emotional problem, you call all your girlfriends, and you pull out your Tarot deck: ‘Oh, he does still love me. I can go to bed now. I don’t have to eat this chocolate cake.’” Lastly, Doreen mentions that her connection to Tarot cards is like a relationship; one that brings her comfort in bad times, in part because the cards are “always there.” She says:

You can always pick up the deck. You can always ask. Even when all your friends are in bed and your mom doesn’t want to hear you talk about your boyfriend. You can always pick them up and get a little bit of reflection back, even if you’re too clouded to read it. It’s a relationship. It’s a relationship with yourself.

Confirmation

Three of the co-researchers comment that the function of Tarot cards is largely to confirm that things are ok; that one’s life is not without order. Beth says that when doing readings for clients, she sees her purpose, at least in part, as reinforcing that the person is ok, “that they’re really wonderful beings and you just have to find what you love to do and just go and do it.” Similarly, Doreen says that the most common function of her

professional readings is to confirm that the client is on the right track and accurately perceives the situations in his or her life. She says that readings are typically “confirmation that what they’re feeling is what they’re feeling, what they think they should do is right, and what they think is happening to them is actually happening to them.”

Chloe says that Tarot functions to reassure her, in times of stress, that her life has order. She states:

I realized that I’m not one of those people who does really well with a map, but at the same time, I find, that whenever I get anxious about a situation, part of me wants to use Tarot. It’s almost like a means of reassuring yourself that your world is ok.

Influence of Mind-State

Two co-researchers comment on the notion that their state of mind has an influence on how they interpret the individual Tarot cards. This is a point of interest because it indicates that accessing Tarot cards can, in addition to the messages in the cards themselves, give information on one’s current emotional state. Beth says:

A lot of the times, I find doing them for myself, I can tell what frame of mind I’m in by what I’m picking up. If I’m feeling a little darker or something, I may look at the card and say, ‘God this is horrible!’ and I won’t even see the sun. So in some ways it reflects where you’re at then you’re reading the cards.

Beth goes on to say that the cards she pulls in relation to a question will reflect the clarity with which she has asked the question. She says that when her question is ambivalent, the cards themselves will be ambivalent; when she is in an ungrounded state,

the cards do not seem to make sense, and are “showing you [that you are ungrounded].” On the other hand, she says that, “when you really know what you want, then you get the answer.” Chloe describes how her understanding of the cards she has drawn for a relationship spread, or a spread used to elucidate the dynamics in a specific relationship, can change depending on what is currently transpiring in the relationship. She says, for example, after drawing the cards, “a week later, suppose you had a fight, it actually does change. I always find that kind of interesting.”

Intentionality

Two of the co-researchers mention that they often choose Tarot cards intentionally, rather than selecting them at random. The significance of this technique is that it allows, as Beth puts it, for one, “to become a creator of [his or her] life, instead of just saying, ‘OK, well the cards are gonna tell me.’” Chloe says that she rarely does tradition readings for herself anymore, but will rather, “take whatever particular deck [she] like[s] at the moment and [will] use a card as a positive affirmation and sit it on [her] altar or wherever [she does] meditation.” She offered the example of when she lost a housecleaning job:

I had a happiness card, a money card, and I think I took the balance card because I wanted a job that would still leave me room, that I would be happy at, and that would make me money. I picked symbols that made sense to me.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study sought to investigate the way in which Tarot cards were utilised, including benefits associated with the use of the cards, by four female co-researchers. The co-researchers ranged in age from mid-thirty to early fifty, and the focus of the study was the way in which they use cards for self-reflection and not for doing readings for others. Although the background information and specific way in which the cards were employed varied between the co-researchers, strong commonalities emerged in the interviews. These commonalities, or themes, will be briefly discussed below and will be related to the extant literature on Tarot. It should be noted, however, that despite the fact that scholars, such as Campbell (Campbell & Roberts, 1993) and Jung (as cited in Douglas, 1997), have emphasized the historical and psychological value of the Tarot deck, and that over a thousand Tarot and the related Oracle decks are in existence (Aeclectic Tarot, 2009), to date, the research on Tarot has been sparse.

Details of Usage

Research reveals that individuals who do not take part in divination practices, including Tarot, often hold negative stereotypes of those who do. For example, in reviewing the academic writings on divination, Crocker (2003) found many “who suggested either obliquely or outright (e.g., Marks, 1986) that diviners are basically either lying or are mentally ill” (p. 6). Given that “Tarot... has had little research” (Coulter, 2004, p. 339), it is significant that there are several studies that have investigated the

relationship between divination practices and the Barnum Effect, or the tendency to accept bogus feedback as an accurate reflection of one's own individual life circumstances, (Ivtzan & French, 2004; Ivtzan, 2007; Sjöberg & af Wåhlberg, 2002; Tobacyk et al., 1988) or have looked at the correlation between divination and "denial of analytic knowledge [and] traditional superstition" (Sjöberg & Wahlberg, 2002, p. 751).

The conception of divination practitioners as naïve and superstitious sharply contrasts the philosophy with which the co-researchers in my study approach Tarot card use; they emphasized that the power that Tarot cards can exude on one's life is an effect of one's thoughts. Chloe said that, "[I]t's what you believe that gives it power. That's what drives everything anyway" while Beth said that when she is using Tarot, she looks for insights that will allow her to change her thinking because "if [she] start[s] from the inside, then it usually changes the situation."

All four co-researchers mentioned that it is often difficult to maintain objectivity when interpreting cards for themselves because they tend to project onto the cards what they want them to reflect. However, three of the co-researchers also noted the importance of interpreting the cards for oneself to prevent the information from always coming through someone else's viewpoint, and as Beth said, so that "you become your own authority." This is an apparent contradiction, however, it implies that although one might benefit from outside input into the significance of a card, ultimately, one is the authority of one's life and has the task of identifying how the card pertains to one's life. In addition, the co-researchers said that instead of pulling cards at random, they will sometimes chose specific cards from the deck. The cards are used as an affirmation for what they hope to bring into their lives and Beth said this allows her to be the creator of

her life, rather than taking the position that "ok, well the cards are gonna tell me". The personal responsibility that the co-researchers assume both in the in their approach to the use of Tarot and in interpreting the cards is in contrast to Sjoberg & Wahlberg's (2002) study which found Tarot practitioners to be fatalistic and prone to religiosity.

Benefits

In her 2004 study, Crocker looked at the way in which "North American female diviners... experience and explain the process of divination" (p. iii). Her results indicated that divination, including the use of Tarot, "perceived to result in greater self-knowledge and mental and physical well-being" (p. iii) and "was described by interviewees as a meaningful, fulfilling act of intrapsychic communication accessing seldom used cognitive-affective capacities to gain insight and balance" (p. iii). Crocker (2004) suggests that her study may lead to further exploration of "divination as an unusual way of knowing used by talented, productive women, contrary to negative stereotypes" (p. iii). Despite the fact that Crocker (2004) looked at the use of Tarot for divination whereas my study explored the use of Tarot for self-reflective purposes, my study did investigate the benefits of Tarot use and, compared to Crocker (2004), provided greater detail as to the specific way in which the use of Tarot led to mental well-being.

The benefits, reported by the co-researchers, associated with the use of Tarot included awakening a sense of enchantment and providing a reliable source of comfort when things are not going well. In general, the process of employing the cards was described as an effort to gain insight into current situations and into courses of action that might aid in working with emotions and in changing external circumstances. One of the

co-researchers mentioned that she drew cards as positive reinforcement for what she wanted to bring into her life and that she would leave these cards out until what she was working on had been resolved. Tarot was reported as useful in gaining new perspectives; that when feeling uncertain or "stuck", the cards offered insights and possibilities that they had been unable to come to on their own.

The co-researchers also discussed how, it wasn't only the prescribed meaning of each card that was useful for self-reflection, but that the images themselves had the potential to bring about healing; this occurred both automatically, by, as Kirschke (1998, as cited in Shechtman, 2007, p. 64) writes "trigger[ing] reactions within us that cannot easily be expressed in words", and in a effortful way, by the conscious consideration of the meaning of the images. Finally, the co-researchers commented on how, by noticing the aspects of the cards on which they have focused, they can gain insight into their current emotional state. Beth said that she "can tell what state of mind [she's] in by what [she's] picking up."

The Use of Tarot in Therapy

Client Issues that Tarot would Aid with

Coulter (2004) proposes that using Tarot cards in therapy is useful when clients are experiencing trouble coping, a moderate amount of stress, difficult life circumstances, or are troubled because of illness (p. 342). Based on the interview results, Tarot could be useful in working with clients who are feeling blocked or stuck; who are experiencing repetitive thinking and would like to begin thinking, or approaching a situation, in a

different manner. The cards may also be useful with clients who are experiencing difficult life transitions, such as loss of a job or a relationship break-up because several of the co-researchers mentioned that the cards are a means of reassurance that one's life is not without order and that things, although momentarily difficult, are essentially ok.

Two co-researchers mentioned that Tarot can aid in the identification of their current emotional, or mind state. Hence, the use of the cards might benefit clients who are feeling disjointed or disconnected from their current psychological state, clients who *don't know* how they're feeling. In addition to the insight into one's present state, observing the cards, or as Beth said, "just really looking at what you're seeing", could function as a grounding exercise, by bringing the client into the present moment, a technique that could be useful with clients, as Coulter (2004) proposes, who are experiencing a small to moderate amount of anxiety.

Using Tarot may not be useful if clients appear to require someone to listen to them; if they really just want to be heard, the cards may be seen as superfluous and a distraction. In addition, with short client sessions, introducing the cards and engaging in an activity with Tarot might not be possible within the allotted timeframe.

Clients with whom Tarot would be the Most Useful

The research on Tarot, to date, has focused on female populations (Coulter, 2004; Crocker, 2004), hence we know nothing of its use with individuals outside of this group. One of the co-researchers mentioned that, when doing readings for others, she likes to use the cards when someone is feeling extreme emotion, such as anger, "so that their energy

goes into that and [she doesn't] have to deal with all that crap." Thus, in working with clients, therapists might consider using Tarot with very angry clients, as the co-researcher says, in order to direct the energy away from the therapist.

Tarot may not be useful, as Coulter (2004) writes, with schizoid or paranoid clients. Introducing the cards to such clients may actually function to increase symptoms such as paranoid thoughts. Therapists should also avoid using the cards with clients who hold fundamentalist religious beliefs: the cards may not be in alignment with such clients' belief systems. Coulter (2004) proposes that therapists who use Tarot assess their clients' religious affiliations before engaging in activities with the cards. I would extend Coulter's categories of clients with whom Tarot might not be useful to include members of cultures that may hold negative views of items commonly associated with the occult. In working with clients from other cultures, the therapist, before introducing Tarot, might want to research his or her culture and decide whether Tarot will fit with his or her cultural belief system.

Techniques

Before session.

Because, as several of the co-researchers mentioned, different decks are appropriate for different situations, and as one of the co-researchers said, some decks do not align with "[her] belief system", it would be useful for therapists who use Tarot to have several decks so that the appropriate one, based on the client's circumstances and belief system, can be chosen. The therapist should also have knowledge of several

different spreads, because as the co-researchers mentioned, different spreads are appropriate for different purposes. The therapist should also have an understanding of the various interpretations of the cards, so that in dialoguing with clients, she is able to determine the interpretation that best fits the client's predicament. It is therefore very important, before a therapist begins using Tarot, that he or she becomes versed in the cards, both in the various types of decks and spreads, but also in the various schools of thought pertaining to the interpretation of the cards. As was seen in the *Results* section of this study, Angela did not have a sound understanding of Tarot before she began doing readings, and this, for me as the researcher, was alarming.

In session.

The co-researchers in this study mentioned the difficulty they had in being objective when doing readings for themselves, and also the importance of interpreting the cards for themselves. Taking these observations into account, in using Tarot with clients, therapists might want to share with the client their understanding of the meaning of the card, but also dialogue with the client about her impressions of the card. The client need not have an intellectual understanding of the card to gain insight into its meaning because, as several of the co-researchers mentioned, a lot can be gained by just observing the images. Questions that the therapist might ask in order to elicit dialogue about the card could include:

- What do you see here?
- How does what you see apply to your situation?
- What images and thoughts arise from the image?

- How do these cards relate to each other?

The interviews with the co-researchers also revealed that sometimes they will pull cards at random, or blindly, and that at other times, cards are chosen intentionally. Pulling cards at random might be useful with clients who are feeling stuck and would like to acquire a new perspective or who are looking for novel insights into a situation. Once a card(s) is pulled, the client and therapist may begin a discussion about what aspects of the card(s) are relevant to the situation.

Pulling cards intentionally could be useful in identifying the desires or goals of clients; as a symbol of what it is they want. This process could be likened to the solution-focused brief therapy's (SFBT) miracle question, which is often used to develop therapeutic goals. The miracle question is formulated as, "If a miracle happened and the problem you have was solved overnight, how would you know it was solved, and what would be different?" (Corey, 2005, p. 394), and allows clients to identify the changes they would like to see occur, and opens up a variety of future possibilities.

Pulling cards intentionally could also be advantageous in activities wherein clients are identifying theirs, or another's, role in specific situation. Again, in such instances, the card may serve as a starting point from which to open up dialogue. Shechtman (2007) discusses a similar activity that can be used in the initial session of a therapeutic group. In this exercise, group members choose a therapeutic card, meaningful to them, and introduce themselves through the card, which "conveys personal meaning that helps group members get closer to each other" (Shechtman, 2007, p. 79).

Based on the presenting concern of the client, the therapist may choose to focus on only one card, or in instances where the client is looking for a good deal of insight, choose to use an entire Tarot spread. It should be noted that even when using an entire spread, cards can be chosen either intentionally or at random. The spread can be selected based on the needs of client: if the client would like insight related to a relationship, the therapist may choose to use the "relationship spread" (Figure 4), whereas if the client is having difficulty making a decision, the "choice spread" (Figure 5) would be a good option.

Implications for Therapists

One implication that this study has for therapists is the potential to bring Tarot cards into therapy sessions and to use them with clients for a variety of concerns. Contrary to the common view that Tarot is used solely for divination and that diviners are "either lying or are mentally ill" (Crocker, 2004, p. 6), this study provides further evidence that Tarot cards can be an effective means of obtaining "self-knowledge and... mental well-being [and can help individuals] obtain insight and balance" (Crocker, 2004, p. iii). Concerns that may be addressed with the help of Tarot include trouble coping, illness, difficult life circumstances (Coulter, 2004), repetitive thinking, challenging life transitions, disjointedness, a small to moderate amount of anxiety, and intense emotion, such as anger.

In the case of angry clients, Tarot can be a means of diverting the emotional energy away from the therapist, and thus be a tool that benefits the therapist as much as the client. In this vein, Tarot can be used as a means of self-care for therapists. One of the

co-researchers mentioned that before beginning a Tarot reading, she will often pull a card as a way of focussing and creating intent for the meeting. Before a therapist begins a session with a client, such an activity might help with grounding and mentally preparing for the session. Additionally, the same co-researcher mentioned that she engages in positive visualizations for the types of clients that she wants to work with and that once she began these visualization activities, she noticed her " readings got better and [she] got more energetic." Pulling a few cards as a means of affirming the type of clients that one wants to work with and as a way of becoming cognisant of what one hopes to achieve through therapy sessions, could be an important self-care activity for therapists, helping to bring agency and energy to their work.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it reflected the experiences and views of women, within a specific age range, and in Canadian society; it is therefore difficult to generalize the results beyond these strictures. Further, the study, congruent with a heuristic research design, included only a small number of participants. Although generalizability is not an aim of heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) this again, brings the generalizability of the findings into question. Finally, the interviews focussed on the co-researchers personal use of Tarot, and when the use of the cards for doing readings for others was discussed, it was in the context of traditional Tarot readings and not therapeutic readings, or readings done in therapy sessions. For this reason, applying the findings to the use of Tarot in therapy is somewhat tenuous.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research investigating the potential psychological correlates of Tarot use might include a greater number of participants. Although this study found psychological benefits associated with the use of Tarot, it did so only in a group of women living in Victoria, BC, and therefore, future research might investigate the benefits associated with the use of Tarot by males and individuals outside of Canadian society. Future studies might also look at the effectiveness of Tarot use in therapy sessions, which could include an investigation of such factors as the relative effectiveness of the cards for use with different presenting concerns and disorders and an examination of various uses of Tarot in therapy, i.e., the choosing of cards blindly versus intentionally.

Concluding Thoughts

Completing this research, specifically, conducting and analyzing the interviews, has had a profound effect both on my psychology and on the way in which I use Tarot cards. For example, I have thought about and tried to integrate into my life insights that the coresearchers shared such as the concept that our thoughts influence our life circumstances and the importance of interpreting symbols, and events, for ourselves. I have also started to pull Tarot cards, instead of just at random, also intentionally, as Chloe said, as a positive reinforcement for what I want to bring into my life. Most importantly, conducting this research has reinforced for me the value and importance of Tarot; by witnessing the intelligent, rational, and insightful way in which the coresearchers use Tarot, my own use of Tarot has been validated.

Given the co-relational nature of the heuristic interview process, I should also mention that my leanings and approach to Tarot likely had an impact on the information that was sought in the interviews. It is probable that I asked questions and gave feedback in ways that influenced what the coresearchers shared with me. Additionally, it is also likely that my own knowledge about and approach to Tarot influenced the results, or the themes, that I chose to include. I strongly identify with all of the themes in my study and as an extension, I would assert that I sought themes from the interviews that I understood, or could relate to. For example, with the theme titled *Magic*: I have always found there to be a magical quality about the cards and they definitely have functioned in bringing something beyond the mundane into my life. I love the feel of the cards and the pictures on them and when I use them, I feel I'm tapping into a part of life, and of myself, that can otherwise be lost in the rest of my day.

I believe my research brings to light the magical and potentially powerful nature of Tarot cards and brings academic validity to their use, something that has been missing in the literature to date. I believe that, given Tarot has been used for approximately 600 years, and has been used, most recently, as a tool for healing, by looking at its use for therapeutic purposes, my research brings together an ancient healing tool and the modern day healing technique of therapy. My research shows that not only does Tarot have the potential to be used rationally and intelligently as a therapeutic tool, but it is currently being used this way by women, outside of academic and professional circles.

Figure Caption

1. *Figure 1.* Card images from Motherpeace Tarot (Aeclectic Tarot, 2009)



Permission to use this image was granted by Karen Vogel on August 3, 2009 and Vicki Noble on August 12, 2009.

Figure Caption

2. *Figure 2.* Diagram of ascent along spiritual lines vis-à-vis the Trump cards

(Campbell & Roberts, 1993, p. 8)

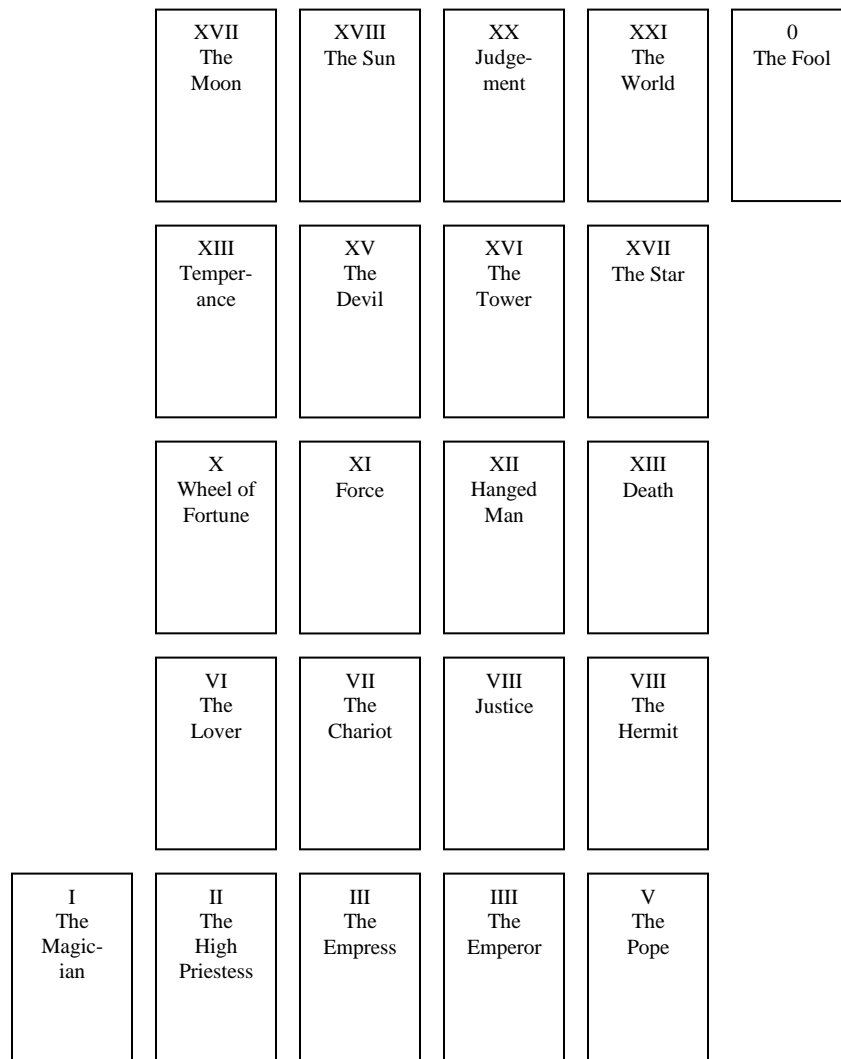
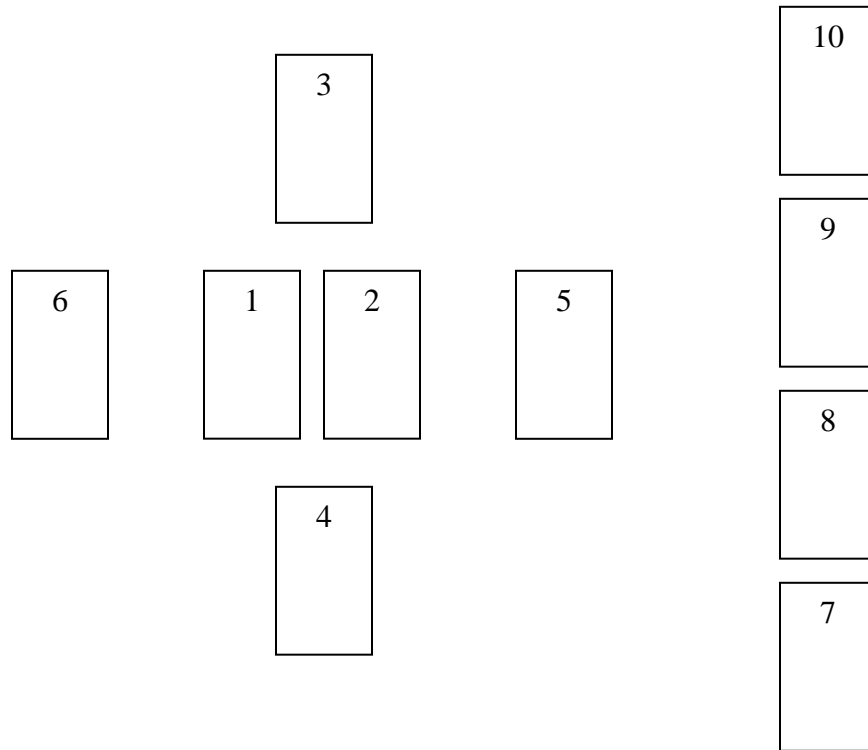


Figure Caption

3. *Figure 3. Celtic Cross Spread: diagram and description (Solandia, 2009)*



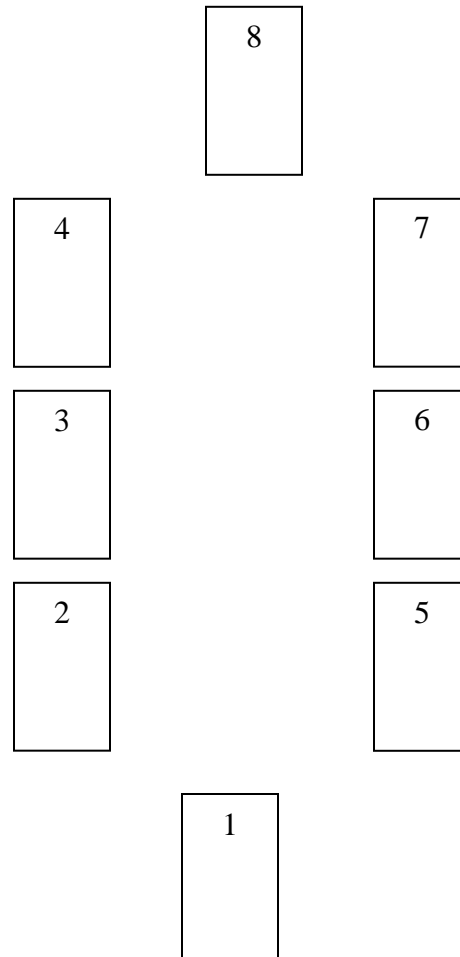
1. Central question or issue
2. Environment of the question (others involved and deeper elements of the concern)
3. Conscious aspects of the question (individual is aware of these)
4. Subconscious elements of the issue (individual might not be aware of these)
5. Aspects of the issue from recent past
6. The near future aspects of the issue
7. Tone of the issue and additional nuances

8. Opinions of the others regarding the questioner
9. Card representing the hopes and fears of the individual
10. The ultimate outcome of the issue

Figure Caption

1. *Figure 4. Snapshot Relationship Spread: diagram and description*

(Aeclectic Tarot, 2009)

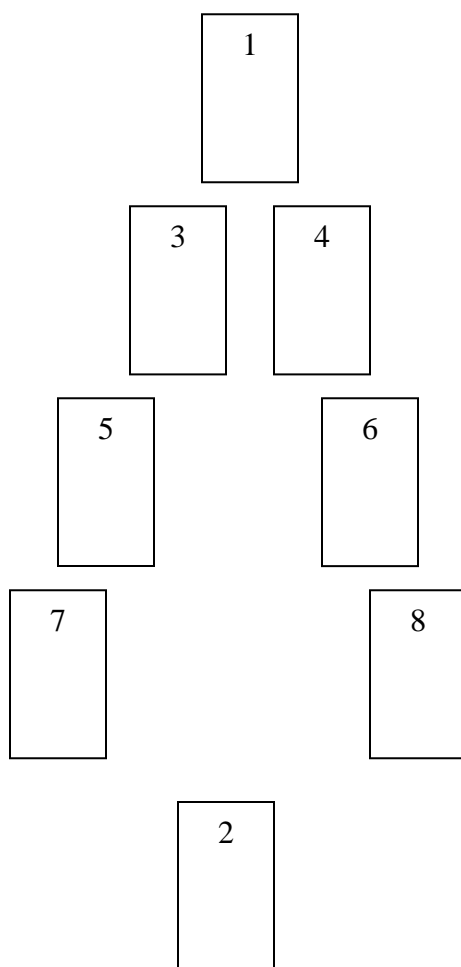


1. How things are at the moment
2. What your mind says; what you think you should feel
3. What your heart says; your real feelings
4. How you appear to the other person
5. What the other person's mind says
6. What the other person's heart says
7. How the other person appears to you; the impression he or she gives you

8. The direction the relationship is headed in the next few months

Figure Caption

1. *Figure 5. Choice Spread: diagram and description (Aeclectic Tarot, 2009)*



1. The individual herself
2. Things to keep in mind when considering choices
3. / 5. / 7. One course of action (various aspects)
4. / 6. / 8. Alternative course of action

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Appendix A

EPLS University of Victoria

Participant Consent Form

Use of Tarot as a Psychological Tool

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Use of Tarot as a Psychological Tool that is being conducted by Gigi Hofer.

Gigi Hofer is a Graduate Student in the department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have any further questions by email (gigihofer@gmail.com) or telephone (250-508-5533).

As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Honore France. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-7858.

Purpose/ Objectives and Importance of Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate how regular users of tarot cards utilize the cards. Specifically, it will assess what benefit the cards bring to participants' lives and what form of interpretation participants used to understand the meaning of the cards. I have used tarot cards for over ten years and it is my belief that they can be used as an effective tool for self-understanding and potentially in a therapeutic context. By looking at how the cards are used and at various ways of interpreting them, I intend to make a case for the use of the cards in a therapy.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you use tarot cards on a regular basis.

What is Involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include participating in an interview, in which you will be asked a total of seven questions.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, involving the dedication of approximately one hour of your time spent taking part in this interview.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the potential of contributing to the academic literature on the therapeutic benefits associated with tarot cards.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your data will not be used.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, instead of using your name, I will use a pseudonym and I will also change your identifying characteristics.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the storage of your data in a locked filing cabinet, accessible only to me.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a thesis.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of in May, 2009. Electronic data will be erased and paper copies will be shredded.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include me, the researcher, and my supervisor, Dr. Honore France. For our contact information, please see the preceding page.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca)

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Appendix B

In-Person Script

My name is Gigi Hofer and I am a second year Master's student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. I am conducting a study on how regular users of tarot cards utilize the cards. I was given your name and contact information from *person's name*, who suggested that you might fit the criteria for participation in my study. I was wondering if I could have a few minutes of your time. *If yes, then I will ask:* I will need to first ask how often you use tarot cards (*if regularly, then I will proceed with the script*)?

Participation in my study will involve answering seven interview questions, which should take approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted at a location that is convenient for you and your answers will be kept confidential, for example, I will not be using your name in my study and I will change identifying characteristics. However, because I was put in contact with you by *person's name*, the information you provide may be identifiable to this person.

Would you be willing to take part in my study? *If yes, then I will ask:* Can we arrange a time and place that is convenient for you to answer the interview questions?