

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the research methodology chapter is to allow the audience the opportunity to appreciate the research process, thereby providing a view of the scaffolding of the study itself. In so doing, the research design is explored. The chapter also includes discussions on the structured, systematic process of literature reviewing applied within the study. Thereafter, technical aspects of the research process are explored, including the aims and principles of the methodology, as well as formulating the problem, collecting the data, evaluating the data, and analysing and interpreting the data. The researcher then provides a description of the way in which the data is presented, followed by the ethical ethos applied during the investigation. Finally, the researcher briefly describes the way in which the outcomes of the research will be disseminated.

#### 3.2 Research design

The process of cerebrating the subject of this thesis was both intensive and extensive. While it may be possible to calculate the frequency of occurrences as regards African psychopathology in Africa, this view does not offer a comprehensive appreciation of exploring subjective views regarding psychopathology in Africa. The term *perspective* appears to feature at this stage (see section 1.7.1). Although the notion of perspective may be appreciated in diverse academic endeavours, the quality tacit to the experiential process of perspective appears best suited to a methodology competent in appreciating the verisimilitude of culture-specific reality. Thus, research methods aimed at providing exploratory and narrative perspectives regarding cultural views appear to highlight the diverse views contained therein.

While this transactional system was suggested in the theory of consensus, which underscores the sociocultural and political forces that construct socially accepted truths (Putnam, 1981), it appears to have experienced nominal research attention in

terms of African culture. The latter view is based on my personal observation concerning the limited academic material specific to the traditional African population in this regard. It appeared that literature (e.g. Nsamenang, 1992) suggested intra-cultural accord with regards to African perspectives of pathology, yet little formal research, specific to perspectives, appeared to have been available during the preliminary literature review.

Upon deliberating on a veritable methodological technique, it transpired that employing a specific research design would be of great consequence. As is often the case, diverse methodologies yield diverse observations. Agreement, therefore, should rest in which methodology is apt for specific types of research enquiry, as well as consensus with regards to the correct administration of the chosen methodology (Dane, 2010). The upshot of this intensive and extensive cerebration suggested a process whereby disparate and sparse data sources could be accrued and analysed (discussed in Chapter 1). Based on a process of elimination, it emerged that a systematic literature review with a methodological focus on research synthesis (Higgins & Green, 2008) would best suit the current investigation.

A systematic review of literature aims to gather as much research as possible, which corresponds to pre-specified eligible conditions, so as to respond to a particular research enquiry (Oxman & Guyatt, 1993). A literature review was selected as the methodology for this study based on the observation that studies regarding psychopathology are often disorder-specific rather than wide-ranging (Draguns & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003), and region-specific rather than culture-specific (Dzokoto & Adams, 2005). Draguns and Tanaka-Matsumi (2003) recommend that research focus on linking discrete studies in such a way that greater understanding of psychological dynamics be available to academia. Literature reviewing appears competent in fulfilling this requirement (Cooper, 1998). This investigation therefore endeavoured to assimilate discrete studies in such a way so as to inform academia on the dynamics of traditional African culture, as a wide-ranging construct, in relation to psychopathology.

### 3.3 The systematic literature review

Practitioners, mental healthcare users, and investigators are suffused with excessive volumes of data and it is improbable that they will possess the resources, whatever these may be, to evaluate and analyse these sources and assimilate them into policy and/or practice. Systematic literature reviewing satisfies this need to an extent, by assessing, integrating and presenting research in a manageable format (Mulrow, 1994). Oxman and Guyatt (1993) further assert this methodology as employing unambiguous, systematic techniques which aim to reduce bias and thereby supply more dependable results from which findings can be prepared.

In systematic literature reviewing, Gough (2004) proposed that reviewed reports be methodically and critically appraised. This promoted an efficient administrative system where literature informed the research with regards to recording decisions to ensure that the data meet the scope of the review, describing and coding data so as to ensure systematic rigour, and analysing the data in such a way so as to warrant accurate reporting of the results. Higgins and Green (2008) indicated that, while this approach might appear somewhat simplistic, this process is extremely rigorous and laborious as the researcher employs a range of theoretical and scientific views to generate significance of the data. This process is best conducted using research synthesis (Thomas et al., 2004). In terms of research synthesis, Popay (2005) recommended that justification and in-depth analysis into the subject area be employed.

Vis-à-vis this systematic process, Hart (1998) suggested that the literature review be lucid, composed logically, and exhibit sufficient latitude of analyses within the investigation. In this regard, the researcher introduced an analysis of the researched literature. This was achieved by instituting awareness into the sequential topography of the subject so as to depict the manner in which the issue was typified and subsequently reconnoitred. Intrinsic to the sphere of PhD research is the notion that the thesis ought to be documented and tailored with an academic audience in mind (Hart, 1998).

In addition, literature reviews centre on hypothetical investigations, applied studies, research methods, and/or the results thereof. They also venture to integrate research findings, evaluate academic compositions, assess and develop networks of comparative topics, and/or uncover elemental ideas in research areas (Hedges & Cooper, 1994). At this stage, however, it appears pertinent to introduce the ideas of both integrative and theoretical reviews.

In the integrative research review, global conclusions regarding previous research are illustrated. This is achieved by analysing several independent studies that are deemed to attend to associated or duplicated premises. The reviewer resolves to expound on the current condition of literature, and also endeavours to underscore significant concerns which remain unresolved within the present body of research. The theoretical review is an alternative to the integrative review. This type of review expects to elucidate a specific occurrence and also to evaluate this occurrence with reference to the internal consistency, disposition, and breadth of the reviewer's academic forecast. A theoretical review includes a portrayal of key research which has been proposed or performed, reviews of applicable theoretical appraisals regarding well-established interactions, and occasionally the redevelopment or assimilation of conceptual ideas from diverse paradigms (Cooper, 1998). While the current study paralleled intimately with the integrative review accentuating the position of current literature, it also attached to the theoretical interface of dynamic influences. Both types of review are accommodated in systematic literature reviews that focus on descriptive material (EPPI-Centre, 2007). To gauge the worth of this thesis therefore suggested appreciating that the opus is based on the present body of literature as it expands knowledge based on employing logical reasoning, appropriate substantiation, and an analytical and reflexive position (Hart, 1998).

Furthermore, the literature review identified and evaluated appropriate data. This suggested exhibiting, comprehending, and evaluating all core ideas, assumptions, and methods. Thus, the review was not simply an uninterrupted composition, but rather a symphony of literature which systematically guides the audience through a collection of ideas towards the goal of the thesis (Hart, 1998). Implicit here was maintaining a connective thread through the research process. This connective thread extended beyond linear reasoning and implied adopting a philosophy of science.

A philosophy of science refers to any array of tenets which identify that which is regarded as satisfactory information/education. In science, as in life, there are several acknowledged philosophies. This is discernable as philosophy is emergent, variable, and germinating in nature – existing purely to expand the current knowledge base (Dane, 2010). From the vantage point of this methodological stance, a prerequisite in the scientific inquiry included profiling the components suggested in the investigation. Of necessity was to qualify conceptual definitions and therein exemplify the degree of abstraction, or frequency of events, to which they pertain. In an attempt to foster qualitative depth in research, the reviewer adjudicated which conceptual definitions represent the components of interest (Cooper, 2009; Savin-Baden & Major, 2009). An example of a component in this investigation included the notion that primary language was suggestive of culture. As a result, it was palpable that a review generated by a different researcher may be dissimilar based on the definitions s/he chooses, as well as the literature s/he has access to. This underscores the dynamic nature of literature reviewing and intimates the effect on research of the reviewed collection of data. While it is possible to repeat the investigation, or update the review, outcomes may vary based on the researcher's process of assigning significance to the data (Higgins & Green, 2008). This faculty of reasoning, convoluted with intellectual and talent-laden debates, often point to common discussions evident in critical philosophy and were germane to the current dialogue.

Cooper (2009) indicated that a familiar protestation to the presentation of methodological directives for literature reviews was that such systematisation may asphyxiate creative resources. This is farcical. Meticulous standards will not engender perfunctory and infertile research reviews. The knowledge and insight of the researcher would undoubtedly be confronted in such a way so as to capitalise on or construct openings to acquire, appraise, and study information exclusive to each topic (Cooper, 2009). Accordingly, Cooper indicated that the restricted focus implied in a literature review, that is to say by being confined to published literature, did not suggest the impingement on imagination. Indeed, the reviewer's resourcefulness and inventiveness became animated during the stages where sense-making (Abolafia, 2010) was applied to the data, and specifically when interrelated concepts were analysed in the literature. What becomes apparent during the analysis of a review is that the collective results of literature are often more composite in nature than

considered in a separate study. The reflexive process of discovering variables, which stimulate a relation or produces diverse plots, are imperative in research synthesis (Cooper, 1998). This description in itself did not lend itself to appreciating the process of selecting a literature review as the methodology.

Petticrew and Roberts (2006) summarise the stages of conducting the review. The first stage would be to define the type of study (i.e., the literature review). The second stage delineates the process for selecting literature to include in the review and thereby apply the search strategy (Higgins & Green, 2008). For this investigation, the electronic databases available to students of the University of Pretoria, Google Scholar, hand-searching for key resources, and asking personal contacts and experts in the field for relevant authors, was used to source literature. During the third stage, one screens the material based on the taxonomy of the review, as well as describes these studies in order to map and refine the literature review. Once the process of gathering and describing the research is conducted, the researcher begins the fourth stage of the review and appraises and synthesises the data. This included an appraisal of the quality and relevance of the data; synthesising the findings of the studies; drawing conclusions and making recommendations; and developing the final report (EPPI-Centre, 2007; Savin-Baden & Major, 2009). It is of critical importance to bear in mind that the current systematic literature review is descriptive in nature. Furthermore, the descriptive nature of the method is defined by a structured process as described by EPPI-Centre (2007) and Higgins and Green (2008). The systematic literature review may, therefore be appreciated as a methodology that synthesises research by utilising processes such as descriptive and structured reviewing.

### 3.3.1 Descriptive reviewing in systematic literature reviews

Studying an experience in order to copiously characterise it, or to discriminate it in contrast to discrete experiences, is identified as descriptive research. The aim is to encapsulate the essence of an entity and to depict the manner in which that essence transforms in due course, or based on the context of that entity. Descriptive research may also be employed to investigate variation in terms of progressive trends as compared with long-standing trends (Dane, 2010). This type of study illustrates characteristics of a populace, and highlights the health condition and/or specific traits

of a sample from a delimited population (Higgins & Green, 2008). Cooper (2009) further indicated the call for more interest in descriptive research reviewing. He affirmed that a research review is advantageous in that many social scientists experience time restrictions, thereby denying them the opportunity to remain current as regards primary investigations, save for the diminutive studies in which they retain specific interest. In addition, descriptive research reviewing allows clinicians to appreciate the dynamics of natural events which are often observable in therapeutic processes. Dane (2010) defined a natural event as those occurrences which are not manipulated exclusively for research investigations. Natural events, such as population-specific perspectives as suggested in the current study, contributed significantly to the content of this investigation. The previous statement, as may be experienced, was not hassle-free.

In categorising the research method for this thesis, it became apparent that particular stumbling blocks would inevitably be encountered. The most pronounced drawback in employing descriptive literature reviewing was congruent with the threats-to-validity method. Cooper (1998) explored this drawback in depth and placed substantial focus on the manner in which diverse reviewers may elect to catalogue dissimilar procedural features. Nevertheless, the descriptive style to reviewing does not require a great deal of literature assimilation, nor does it require a significant quantity of conjectural assessment. Formulating a decision concerning the danger to validity, commonly termed poor statistical power, was a good case in point. To obviate this obstacle, the reviewer generated a list of possible threats to validity in order to maintain awareness of these threats, and also continuously describe, where possible, the methods used for primary investigations (see Cooper, 2009). In the current investigation, these included generating specific operational definitions, for example. This is elaborated on further.

The current investigation fell within the field of qualitative evidence synthesis. Here, evidence from individual qualitative, and sometimes quantitative, studies were integrated in order to facilitate further insights into a phenomenon. This was achieved by relating perceptions and results from various resources which converged on the same area of interest. This methodological aspect can therefore be appreciated as an inclusive investigatory process in itself but is often considered to be part of either

meta-analyses or systematic literature reviews. Often this type of investigation is interpretive in nature and requires transparency in process by way of proper methodological description, as well as appropriate referencing techniques. Of great significance was not merely to construct a description of specific perspectives, but also of the reasons people possess these perspectives and the consequences of holding these perspectives (Popay, 2005). To therefore differentiate this seeming essay-like process from stringent methodological process implied deliberating on the structural aspects of research reviewing.

Employing structure to expound the rationale for the composition to be articulate, one ought to make certain that the method of recording is constant and remains dedicated to the topic. The discrete fragments of the thesis may be viewed as separate elements of an argument. Thus, each element possesses adequate and essential data which, when merged in the correct structure, forms an argument (Hart, 1998).

Structure configures and conducts a review. The following structure was applied and allowed the reviewer to evaluate the competence of its appliance. Primarily, the reviewer ascertained the expense of the claim. Here, he reflected on the claim's credibility, feasibility, coherence, intelligibility, and effect. Thereafter, the primary research was reviewed in terms of its evidence. The reviewer accordingly considered aspects of reliability, quantity, reproducibility, significance, and dependability. Third, the reviewer concerned himself with data relating to the information. These included contacts, time intervals, particulars, and resources. Subsequently, the merits of information were essential. The reviewer needed to take into account the suppositions of the research, vigour, language, and level of association. This allowed the reviewer to focus on the penultimate structural process, the supporting structures. At this stage, he weighed up the problem perception, its acceptability, resilience, and validity. The conclusive structural element entailed an examination of the reasoning in the literature, corroboration, outcomes, and plausibility (Toumlin, 1958). These were essential elements of the present systematic literature review.



### 3.3.2 Aims and principles of the systematic literature review

The following goals were regarded as points of origin. The first goal was to demonstrate the structural analysis of research. Thereafter, flaws were uncovered within various arguments in the reviewed literature. Finally, the opportunities made available as regards the current review's position were exhibited (Hart, 1998; Ridley, 2008; Schmidt & Smyth, 2008). Subsequent to processing the claims posited, consideration was afforded in view of the support employed to validate those claims. The objective at this time was to illustrate deficient substantiation by either unearthing prejudiced, extraneous, and/or unsatisfactory evidence. The categories that were employed in argument analysis included reflecting on whether the data was based on hypothetical examples, hypothetical scenarios, statistics, testimony, personal experience, and/or examples. The purpose, of course, was to recapitulate the advantages of the current critique. This allowed the reviewer to construct his own outlook during the investigation. He thereafter illustrated the dilemmas as had transpired in the research, including disparities in analysis, incorrect use or basis of evidence, or erroneous consequences and findings (Hart, 1998).

To consolidate the methodological approach, it ought to be observed that a consistent and clear structure was utilised. Relevant terminology was defined, using lucid illustrations. Where appropriate, adequate justification was provided and assumptions were authenticated by formulating implicit arguments explicitly. Only dependable assumptions without explicit value judgments were presented, and anchored, in an analytic approach. The review also averted fallacies such as oversimplification, vagueness, and disoriented accuracy. This was achieved by using trustworthy, recognisable data from freely available spheres that were authentic and appropriate, not inconsequential (Hart, 1998; Ridley, 2008). This further supported the primary use of published literature. In effect the reviewer considered the process of composing the review to be an opportunity for exhibiting academic execution and erudition.

### **3.4 Criteria for eligibility of literature**

This sections details the criteria for inclusion of literature in the study. As such, research parameters are defined. These are accounted for in the eligibility criteria,

which comprises the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Higgins and Green (2008) provide specific guidelines for considering eligibility criteria with regards to including or excluding literature in systematic literature reviews. These guidelines allow the investigation to be repeated and/or updated (Green et al., 2008). Based on their recommendations, the eligibility criteria for this study included research relating to psychological distress in African culture, clinical psychology, and the South African context.

#### 3.4.1 Inclusion criteria:

- Published studies from 1980 onwards – in order to account for the researcher’s observation of the increase in published literature since 1985 during the preliminary review (see Figure 6.2.), thereby increasing the potential for a larger data pool with regards to African perspectives. Published studies, here, refer to formal avenues such as books, articles, and theses from libraries and academic journals for example;
- Studies that were justifiably, if not overtly, relevant. This implied including literature that may predate 1980 if it enriched the review, or if literature exploring specific ideas could not be located post-1980. This practice is acceptable according to Higgins and Green (2008);
- Studies which explored subjectivity, including both the identification and exploration of psychiatric diagnostic criteria (i.e. symptomatology). This implies *exploration* of the disorder;
- Studies which focused on African perspectives of psychological distress;
- South African literature on culture and psychological distress;
- Literature with regards to culture-bound syndromes in Africa and South Africa;
- Literature focused on integrative theory;
- Literature which promoted new understanding with regards to the clinical context; and
- Studies relating to psychopathology in terms of: culture; diversity; subjectivity; and a bio-psycho-social-spiritual appreciation.

### 3.4.2 Exclusion criteria:

- Informal (that is, unpublished) literature;
- Studies which were older than 30 years (1980) unless they were justifiably relevant – as indicated by the inclusion criteria;
- Studies which focused primarily on identifying psychiatric diagnostic criteria. This implies diagnosing disorders, *without exploring* their dynamics; and
- Literature which evidenced maleficence (e.g. negative stereotyping of participants, or data which contraindicates the philosophy of the South African constitution).

It should be noted that the majority of all studies located were retrospective in nature in that past experiences were addressed. However, this did not preclude including prospective studies particularly as eligible criteria included meta-analyses (Light & Pillemer, 1984).

Higgins and Green (2008) indicate that perceived outcomes of the prospective study should not establish eligibility criteria. However, a well-formulated research question will suggest specific outcomes. It was therefore urbane, at the outset, to list probable outcomes for the current study that appear to be meaningful to the audience and/or interested parties. According to Gough (2004), probable outcomes are merely ideas which the researcher may have based on a preliminary review of some of the literature which, according to the EPPI-Centre (2007), may not actually transpire during the research process. An analysis of this possible outcome may be extremely constructive to various disciplines (EPPI-Centre, 2007).

Initial notions of possible outcomes for this investigation therefore included a more integrated understanding of psychopathology from a South African perspective and the role of African culture in understanding psychological distress. Higgins and Green (2008) indicate that non-accomplishment to achieve these outcomes during the study should be explored in order to inform the audience, as well as to recommend directions for further research. This will be explored in detail in Chapter 6. Should future research be considered, Gøtzsche, Hróbjartsson, Maric, and Tendal (2007)

suggest that short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes be developed. This was generated during the study itself and also related to primary and secondary outcomes which were generated as a result of the study. This is also discussed in Chapter 6. The aim, consistent to the guidelines of the EPPI-Centre (2007), was to promote diversity in ideas by allowing for variability in the literature so as to procure a comprehensive data pool.

In addition, Furlong and Oancea (2007) indicate that one should focus on literature that relates to the research design of the study being conducted. This improves the dependability of the outcomes. This was in keeping with the methodological application in order to ensure that the design remained appropriate. Furthermore, the foci of the literature consistently related to responding to the research question and these foci were considered as outcomes as the overall general influence of substantiation was based on all of these factors.

Higgins and Green (2008) recommend that review readers be aware of the temporal indicators suggested in any systematic literature review. The literature search date began on 15 June 2009 and was completed on 31 January 2011. As such, the current literature review is considered to be up to date as of 31 January 2011. The current literature review search therefore spanned approximately 18 months, and each literature source (e.g., Google Scholar) was accessed at least once a month.

### **3.5 Doing the systematic literature review**

In this section, the researcher describes the systematic process of reviewing. The section describes the way in which the review process began. The pre-writing phase of the systematic literature review included a synopsis of current effort as regards the subject matter. This was followed by a critical appraisal of earlier research and selected findings relating to research already conducted on the topic. This allowed for the selection of a suitable structure for the review (Hart, 1998; Ridley, 2008; Schmidt & Smyth, 2008).

Furthermore, in order to preserve the systematic process, a taxonomy regarding the literature sourcing and reviewing was applied; this took place during the data

collection stage of conducting the review. Here, the researcher considered the reviewed literature, which included various literatures pertaining to African perspectives on psychopathology. While the focus was on literature regarding clinical psychology in relation to African culture, associated literature was reviewed based on the process of the systematic literature review.

As the current study served as a literature review, and utilised post-postmodern integrative theory as its framework, the research process remained fluid (Bryman, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). This taxonomy therefore proposed a foundational structure of the research. Hence, the current systematic taxonomy referred to the central fields of literature, while related literature augmented the central fields and served as peripheral sources of information. The implication here was the warranted exclusion of literature which did not stimulate the understanding of the central fields of literature.

### 3.5.1 The stages of the systematic review

While methodologists may diverge in understated aspects of the research process, the core stages of a research review are agreed upon with sufficient accord (Cooper, 1998; Swales & Feak, 2009; Schmidt & Smyth, 2008). There are five stages in systematic literature reviewing. The first stage of systematic literature reviewing is the problem formulation stage. The second stage is the data collection stage, followed by the data evaluation stage. The fourth stage is the analysis and interpretation stage, and the fifth stage is the presentation stage.

#### 3.5.1.1 *The problem formulation stage*

In many ways, primary research possibilities appear to be almost boundless. However, secondary researchers may only investigate data which are present in the literature. While novel topics and themes may be explored during primary research, unresearched notions are most likely unsuitable to be incorporated into a review except under the circumstances where the unresearched ideas have generated significant awareness in a field, or because the idea has been comprehensively explored in theory (Cooper, 2009; Ridley, 2008).

Straightforwardly, the research problem comprised the characterisation of variables, as well as the justification for associating the variables to each other. The *raison d'être* was that various feasible or perceptive reflection(s) unearthed during the study were potentially of significant consequence (Cooper, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2009). The consequence of the present investigation, therefore, was its probable aptitude to develop hypotheses. Furthermore, according to Hart (1998), literature reviewing illustrates incorrect notions and describes the problem; recommends a solution to the problem; explores the advantages that would transpire if the proposed solution were implemented; and recognises and rebuts potential protestations to the proposed solution.

#### 3.5.1.1.1 *Various functions in literature reviewing*

A significant latent disparity may manifest whilst performing the problem formulation. To begin with, one should foresee the manifold processes which may commence in utilising an extensive problem definition. Here, the reviewer might discover that the operations employed in preceding pertinent literature have been either fairly restrictive or have been conceptualised in a distinct manner. Both of these prospects may pose challenges in determining their applicability for inclusion in the review (Cooper, 2009; Ridley, 2008; Schmidt & Smyth, 2008). This was significant to an investigation such as the present study in that definitional agreement appears complex. Consider, for example, that some research suggests that multiculturalism and African culture are equivalent terms, while others do not agree with this view; or in empirical studies, mixed cohort groups are implied as specific cultural groups. According to Cooper (2009), in such cases, it is necessary to limit the conceptual foundations of the review so as to ensure that the scope of the review matches the operations as closely as possible. In a sense, this suggested finding a complementary balance between the two, the outcome of which, as Cooper (1998) indicated, facilitated wide-ranging deductions that the data affirms. Translating this view to the context of the current investigation, applying broader definitions of primary terminology (e.g. African) broadened the data pool of literature retrieved during the search.

Of acute value was the reviewer's re-appraisal of the connection between the degree of definitional abstractness of an idea and the characteristics of the functions that primary researchers have employed to identify it. Although re-classifying the scope of a problem is sometimes scowled upon in primary research, this liveness in definition reconsideration was crucial, and is often extremely constructive in secondary research (Hedges & Cooper, 1994).

As literature reviews habitually unearth information which have been moulded in conceptual frames that vary from the reviewer's frame, these reviews should also take account of constructions germane to conceptions of interest to the reviewer. Where appropriate operations relating to diverse theoretical constructs were recognised and considered for incorporation in the literature review. Indeed, diverse hypotheses and models which concerned comparable operations were frequently utilised to exhibit the constitution of phenomena (Cooper, 1998). It therefore transpired that issues such as the tension of opposites, for example *what is African*, became central to particular arguments in the review. Furthermore, the inclusion of long-standing literature relating to concepts that augment knowledge was necessary to consider as they justifiably enhanced the robustness of the findings.

According to Hart (1998), all aspects of the systematic process should endeavour to formulate suggestions and execute specific operations. These operations included compiling an account of prior literature, including the unearthing of chief ideas, descriptions, and theories. Moreover, reflecting on the manner in which concepts were cultivated and operationalised, and recognition and illustration of issues which other scientists deemed significant. The latter position suggested including a personal account of what is considered to be incorrect in previous literature, and recommendations regarding ways in which difficulties may be addressed. Here, the research being conducted was one of the proposed solutions to existing problems. The reviewer explicated the advantages from consideration of the proposed recommendations and provided a rebuttal of potential protestation of the proposed recommendations. This indicated suggesting appropriate terminology, including substitute descriptions and ideas, as well as reviewing the methodological dilemmas in essential references. During the systematic process, it was also important to provide a review of the manner in which methodological suppositions and central definitions

were operationalised in the literature. As one proceeds in the investigation, the review must be endowed with summational markers indicating the direction of the discussion. Accordingly, the accumulated deductions connected the researcher's conceptualisations with his discussion in a systematic process (Hart, 1998). In this vein, a comprehensive, inclusive data exploration permitted the researcher to carry out the review with extended operational commission (Hedges & Cooper, 1994).

Hence, the aforesaid entailed composing a persuasive justification of the review, and in so doing lent itself to the appreciation of some occurrence. The core position here was to recognise that all reference work had historical substance, and it was this substance that set the model for contemporary research (Hart, 1998). This was particularly relevant to the current research project. In terms of literature reviewing, the point of origin and destination can be poles apart. The reviewer therefore anticipated the unanticipated (Hart, 1998; Ridley, 2008).

As maintained by Hart (1998), the central features that typify effectual critique include acceding or supporting a view, or challenging its utility by means of appraisal of its fortes and flaws. One may then justifiably forfeit present notions, or validate why certain aspects of a view ought to be maintained or abandoned. The idea is to challenge opinions, as opposed to researchers, in an attempt to afford prudent, respectful, and substantiated appraisal. In so doing, the researcher recognised the value of a personal analytical perspective and distinguished possible motives for electing specific works for critiquing, and identified the limitations, in his own assessments. It was valuable to also choose constituents from current discussions and reconceptualise them into an integrated gestalt, thereby indicating an innovative approach to research. Suggested herein was discovering errors in research by detecting misleading notions, shortfall of substance, deficient proof, and/or inadequate tenability. This was coupled with the identification of inaccurate critique proposed by other researchers (Hart, 1998). In effect, the reviewer presented a considered critique and in so doing promoted the value of the original reference and rationale for excluding the critiques imposed on it.



### 3.5.1.1.2 *Moderating conceptual relevance*

As discussed previously, two stimuli on investigations considered appropriate include the conceptual definition and degree of abstraction thereof. However, a concurrence of other aspects exerts influence on one's consideration with reference to the vetting of data. The wide-ranging proposal relates to embarking on the literature exploration with a wide-ranging definition. In resolving the adequacy of operations regarding inclusion contained by the wide-ranging model, it was imperative that the researcher continue to be undogmatic in his approach as far as possible. For the duration of the data evaluation, the researcher was permitted to reject particular operations attributable to deficiency in relevance and/or probable contamination in abstractness (Cooper, 1998; Swales & Feak, 2009).

Nevertheless, during the problem formulation and exploration stages the researcher was especially inclusive albeit some information could potentially not be applied in the investigation. This was done to inhibit the grievous process of salvaging lost portions of a semi-comprehensive data search which would then have to be regenerated (Cooper, 1998; Machi & McEvoy, 2008). To allow the audience access to the excluded data (see section 5.18), a general view of the literature was included, explicating the reasons for exclusion (Cooper, 2009).

### 3.5.1.2 *The data collection stage*

The intended population in this study (traditional Africans), comprised those groups, persons, and/or constituents that the researcher anticipated to characterise in his investigation. Often, reviewers will be unable to retrieve data relating to an intended populace as it is often an unreasonably expensive process, and/or accessing the data is extremely problematical (Cooper, 1998). Open literature sources were therefore used for the current investigation.

#### 3.5.1.2.1 *Locating literature*

Primary avenues included making use of academic journals and libraries. Furthermore, cross-referenced data were consulted if relevant information happened

to be restricted. This is often termed the ancestry method and straightforwardly indicates consulting sources from the primary research reference list. As such, the ancestry method refers to reference tracking. Primary avenues were therefore not an exclusive data resource devoid of persuasive validation. Information from personal libraries, such as the researcher's personal collection of books and journals, institute bias by disproportionately representing the theories and outcomes that are contained in the researcher's preferred data reference nexus. In addition, absolute use of the ancestry method (i.e., reference tracking) will introduce bias as well. Either of these techniques was not used exclusively, as this would have introduced biases into the research without underscoring new-fangled insights into the literature (Cooper, 2009; Machi & McEvoy, 2008). It was therefore advantageous to use electronic journals and important to follow the extensive areas they implied. This allowed for heterogeneity in data collection.

For this investigation, the available electronic databases (Wiley Online Library; Springer; Elsevier; Ingentaconnect; PubMed; Sagepub; and Questia), Google Scholar, hand-searching for key resources, and asking personal contacts and experts in the field for relevant authors, was employed to resource the literature. Literature was sourced using the following keywords: African perspectives; indigenous views; cultural psychopathology; South African perspectives; African mental illness; idioms of distress; culture-bound syndrome; cultural psychiatry; Africa; clinical psychology; and cosmology. These terms were used consistently, but were also used simultaneously (e.g., Africa + clinical psychology).

#### 3.5.1.2.2 *Abstracting and indexing services*

Secondary resources ought to construct the vertebrae of a systematic literature review. This is due to the need for secondary resources to include and express data from the closest sector to all applicable research available in the public domain. These references indicated very slight restrictions with regards to the requirements for an investigation to achieve access into the academic sphere (Cooper, 1998; Swales & Feak, 2009).

Abstracting and indexing facilities relating to the social sciences have demonstrated to be of particular assistance to the literature reviewer. These facilities converge on specific areas of knowledge, and all references in the primary channels are indicated in the system. This process proves to be extremely rigorous and the time consumption implied herein is often a noticeable limitation of employing these facilities. Often, primary studies take approximately four years to complete and reviewers will only have access to these investigations once they are in the public domain. It is therefore useful to mention upcoming studies which could not have been included in the review (Cooper, 2009; Machi & McEvoy, 2008). An example of such a resource is the DSM-5, which is currently being researched and compiled.

#### 3.5.1.2.3 *Determining the competence of literature searches*

There are no universal guidelines as to the number of, or which, resources to include in a literature review. The apposite sources were utilitarian based on the reviewer's access to resources. A useful directive included utilising diverse channels of information in order to facilitate including a lesser amount of unidentified bias in the literature search. If the various investigations, from diverse channels, share dissimilar biases then other reviewers conducting similar studies will be able to replicate the review. The statute implied here exemplifies the scientific condition of replicability (Cooper, 1998; Cooper, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2009).

It may be argued that focusing on formal research probably constructed a collection of research that overstated noteworthy findings. Alternatively, one may counteract this view by considering that formal research endured meticulous methodological evaluation by reputable investigators and is most likely of premier quality (Hedges & Cooper, 1994; Ridley, 2008). It was for this reason that this study mostly included research published in the academic avenues available to students at the University of Pretoria.

#### 3.5.1.2.4 *Legitimacy issues*

As literature exploration aims to investigate prior research and personage or constituents appropriate to the subject being investigated, the researched

populations(s) must be attended to during the research process in terms of competence exhibited in the associated investigations. Thus, the researcher needed to question how the selected study varies from other studies, as well as how the constituents in the selected investigation were at variance with constituents in other investigations (Cooper, 1998; Machi & McEvoy, 2008; Swales & Feak, 2009).

A threat, relating to the soundness of the data, occurred during the data collection period where the researcher was unlikely to include all of the applicable studies relating to the subject of interest. Once more, the researcher gained access to as many channels as possible to restrict bias. This was considered within the context of the restrictions imposed by logistical and functional operations, such as financial implications (Cooper, 1998; Ridley, 2008).

In considering legitimacy issues, a subsequent threat existed. During data retrieval, the populace or constituents represented in the investigations may not be representative of the populace or constituents intended in the reviewer's target population. Certainly, the choice of units investigated in the primary researcher's study was outside of the reviewer's control; however the reviewer was compelled to illustrate the variance circumspectly and validate the findings based on the variant samples (Cooper, 2009).

#### 3.5.1.2.5 *Protecting legitimacy*

The central defence in opposition to compromised legitimacy, as regards data collection, stemmed from an extensive literature search. Although the rule of diminishing returns certainly applied in this regard, an inclusive data investigation must incorporate a bare minimum of one major abstracting facility, and the bibliographies of prior investigations. A meticulous search justified a proportionately assured review. Accordingly, comprehensive studies which reference similar data fostered comparable findings due to the accuracy in reporting the data (Cooper, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2009).

Consider that a reviewer's manuscript ought to be unequivocal with regards to the process of retrieving studies. S/he must therefore take account of the source, year(s)

of study and/or publication, and fundamental phrases included in the search. Excluding this data offers the audience nought opportunity in certifying the review's findings with the findings acquired in other reviews (Hedges & Cooper, 1994). Researchers should also put forward any indicators of possible biases in retrieving specific sources which are accessible to them (Cooper, 1998; Ridley, 2008). The ancestry method was one such potential bias available to this study.

#### 3.5.1.2.6 *Judging the quality of research*

With the current state of affairs in literature reviewing, numerous dilemmas concerning value decisions are present. In fact, these vast ranging difficulties are probably closely associated with the reviewer's particular biases. Perhaps it is to be expected that impartiality remains a subjective property whereby the (dis)interest in a topic defines what is, or is not, a valuable investigation (Cooper, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2009).

Critically reviewing the global value of an investigation necessitated the assessor's consideration of numerous aspects. As a result, the most viable opportunity existed in detecting two sources of dissent in the assessor's decisions. The first was to be deliberate on the value he assigned to various design features, and secondly, the resultant point of view regarding the competence level between the design standard and the specific investigation (Cooper, 1998). Thus, a concerted effort to appreciate the methodological framework and ontological nature of the literature presents the review audience with a view of the way in which the reviewer assigned weight to specific investigations.

Moreover, the dependability of decisions in literature reviewing may perhaps be additionally augmented by including extra reviewers (Hedges & Cooper, 1994; Ridley, 2008). Within the scope of this investigation, and outside the scrutiny of the study's supervisor, the best reviewers appear to be the wider academic community, as well as potential reviewers aiming to update the review. Furthermore, clinicians may comment on the results and the way in which the review themes correspond with, or counteract, practical experiences. This was a position propagated by Dane (2010). It was therefore anticipated that some of the most valuable feedback regarding this

investigation will transpire once the academic article is published, thereby allowing the wider clinical audience the opportunity to respond to the review.

*A priori exclusion investigation* in opposition to *a posteriori assessment of research* is every so often at variance. The research of conformity as regards research value and the function of preference during the assessment process reveals occasions in which subjectivity infringes on efforts to achieve agreement. In the context of the current investigation, this potentially includes disagreement with regards to worldview. Thus, the subjective nature of defining *African* was often a subjective interpretation. This position is significant as there are substantial disputes concerning whether or not a priori views of data value should, or should not, have been drawn on in order to reject literature (Cooper, 1998). There is merely one condition in which a priori omission of research is probably proper. This is when the norms for including/excluding literature are delimited prior to the literature investigation where the rules are invariable irrespective of the reviewer's inclination. In addition, within this process, the data pool was adequate to allow the reviewer to sufficiently support all general findings. In the majority of situations, allowing the data to inform the study proxied an exploratory process for the inclination of the researcher (Cooper, 2009).

### 3.5.1.3 *The data evaluation stage*

Data evaluation in this systematic review entailed qualifying, or disqualifying, characteristic data aims for inclusion in the inquisition. It was required that this pursuit be carried out notwithstanding whether data points represented the result of the sample population or the findings of the investigations. Data appraisal necessitated the formation of norms for arbitrating the technical competence of the way in which the data were collected. The investigator was required to explore all of the prospective effects on the data points which may have facilitated recognising some of these intricacies as extraneous to the study at hand (Cooper, 1998; Swales & Feak, 2009).

#### 3.5.1.3.1 *Appraisal assessment in scientific inquiry*

In a literature review, a renowned rationale for dispensing with data pertains to the soundness of the investigation's methodology. Hence, the reviewer concluded if

primary studies were accomplished assiduously to the extent that the outcomes were regarded with sufficient dependability. Accordingly, the research reviewer was permitted to make a distinct judgment to include or exclude specific investigations, and to make continuous judgments to illustrate the degree of credence in the reliability of various investigations (Cooper, 1998; Schmidt & Smyth, 2008).

When the reviewer deemed certain research as unconstructive, it was inadequate to generate equally unconstructive discussion in opposition to that research. Thus, one deficient line of reasoning did not counter another equitably erroneous line of reasoning (Hart, 1998). With an inductive writing structure, as was applied within this study, the reviewer collected research, enquired about the occurrence, and then categorised the data. Thereafter, he reviewed the searches for configurations in the literature and proposed prospective theories. Subsequently, theories were developed and researched until they were compared with other configurations and theories (Hart, 1998; Machi & McEvoy, 2008).

It is also valuable to reflect on the requirements of the audience. Here, the reviewer must question the capacity of information regarding the topic which one can assume the audience possesses; the components of data the audience may be looking for; their probable response(s) to the investigation; and which responses will best suit potential enquiries, as well as what the best line of reasoning will be (Hart, 1998). Certainly, this is variable based on the reader's interest; the context; and the sociocultural environment s/he is in. However, these constituents lay the foundation for preparing a review suited to meet the wider audience's needs. Certainly, amongst others, considerations regarding the present review included the academic nature of the thesis, the clinical value attached to the content by the researcher, and the sociocultural applicability of the interpretive material regarding culture in a rapidly transforming South Africa.

#### 3.5.1.4 *The analysis and interpretation stage*

In an attempt to provide a central point of reference regarding the literature included in the literature review, pertinent information regarding the literature was consolidated and tabularised. The tables are listed as Appendix A (coding sheet –

literature details) and Appendix B (coding sheet – themes), but additional observations regarding trends in the literature will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The primary decree in composing a literature review coding sheet was to consider any data that may have held the slightest prospect of being applicable to the study. On instigating the literature search, the researcher was careful to record specific detail of the literature as it is exceptionally complex to recover original data from research studies which have not been previously recorded on the coding sheet. It was relatively uncomplicated to initially take account of research that would probably be excluded from the study (Cooper, 1998; Ridley, 2008). To record and code the data referred to the process whereby a durable duplication of the observation was recorded. Coding thus necessitated assigning meaning to the examination (Dane, 2010).

In literature reviews, research must take particular care to incorporate certain data from the primary research investigation, where possible. At the outset, data regarding the credentials of the primary research was recorded. This included recording the details of the authors, the source of the literature, the date of publication, and the information relating to the channel of detecting the data (Cooper, 1998; Ridley, 2008; Swales & Feak, 2009). The current investigation, incorporating descriptive reviewing, did not necessitate the exclusive use of strict empirical design; however a polished version of the original coding sheet which summarises the reviewed literature is available (Appendix A and Appendix B). Appendix A details the key characteristics of the reviewed literature, while Appendix B lists the prominent themes in the literature. The key words were used to identify literature to be included. Each literature source was read through at least twice. During each reading, central ideas were listed on the coding sheet under the heading ‘emerging themes’. Ideas that related to these themes, but could not be listed under the emerging themes, were listed under sub-themes. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher placed emphasis on those areas which appeared to be highlighted across the literature. Phase one, according to the method described by Higgins and Green (2008), included coding the literature as they were searched. The scrutiny-based compare and contrast technique was applied. According to Strauss and Corbin (1999), this method indicates that the researcher employ constant comparison by conducting meticulous text analyses. During this process, the researcher questions the significance of the



information, as well as the ways in which it differs to other texts. In this way, the researcher is able to maintain the relevance of the actual data, without becoming engrossed in interpretations that do not directly apply to the text. The researcher records the data and assigns key words to each theme. The recorded keywords typically followed the word repetition method, which indicates that the researcher keep track of the number of times keywords appear within the data (D'Andrade, 1995). Thereafter, a number was assigned to each emerging theme and sub-theme: 0 indicated 'not significant', 1 indicated 'somewhat significant', and 2 indicated 'very significant'. Phase 2 followed the recommendations by Higgins and Green, as well as Braun and Clarke. Thus, the data was recorded on a spreadsheet and sorted, in ascending order, according to those themes that evidence the highest-to-lowest number of 2s, that is 'very significant', thereafter the number of 1s, and the number of 0s. This was the way in which the researcher progressed from coding the literature to extracting the themes.

It is of critical value to unequivocally affirm the particular conditions in which the utilisation of quantitative methodology is inapt. First, the central principle for employing statistical methods suggests that a sequence of investigations are detected, and investigated, which attend to a corresponding conceptual premise. Should the suppositions of a literature review not attest to this contention, then there is little motivation to consider cumulative statistics. Quantitative methods pertain expressly to statistical integrative reviews, not to literature reviews which centre on other objectives. Researchers should shy away from quantitatively coalescing research at a wide-ranging theoretical level than the audience would find informative and/or beneficial (Cooper, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2009). These views were consonant with the goals of this investigation (see Chapter 1) and could not therefore accommodate statistical analyses.

A major requisite was to encapsulate views in a manner that was impartial and just. Therefore, the reviewer did not presuppose that the audience was acquainted with the literature being presented. This process necessitated recognising, where fitting, the positions he (dis)agreed with. The reviewer was also congruent in his view, as feigning a view often distorts the reviewer's standing; so too does projecting an academic persona (Hart, 1998; Ridley, 2008).

While one needs to assert deficiencies in a discussion, the reviewer must also provide a structured justification as to the reasons s/he disagrees with a specific view. The reviewer must focus on the most important reasons, not merely lesser details. In so doing, s/he averts underestimating the investigation by including uncorroborated analyses and/or employing hypothetical illustrations. Hence, contesting arguments were performed responsibly by the use of well thought-out systematic appraisal (Hart, 1998). The literature review, as well as the discussion in Chapter 6, was divided into themes and sub-themes to further aid the systematic process (Higgins & Green, 2008).

The analysis of themes and sub-themes is relatively flexible, but is based on the guidelines by Higgins and Green (2008). In addition, one will certainly become aware that the analysis is rooted in the post-postmodern integrative theoretical framework. From this perspective, the analysis may be regarded as contextualist in nature (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). Certainly, the ideas presented in the thesis, and in fact throughout the research process, were reflected on (Higgins & Green, 2008). For this reason, a reflexivity section was explored in Chapter 6 (see section 6.6).

#### 3.5.1.5 *The presentation stage*

In presenting the review, the researcher was obliged to consider the following aspects in each segment of the review: the introduction, the methodology, literature sourcing and retrieval, presenting the results, the discussion section, and directions for future research.

The introduction of the literature review calibrated the platform for the observations that were discovered in the research process. This section included a conceptual colloquium of the research problem, as well as an account of the magnitude of the problem. A number of disparities are evident in literature reviews when contrasted against primary research. Most evidently, referenced works in primary research are concise and are limited to a restricted volume of resources which directly address the central topic. Conversely, in literature reviews, research must endeavour to communicate an extensive chronological, or thematic, synopsis of academic and procedural efforts aimed at appreciating the research question. The present investigation focused on a thematic synopsis so as to appreciate the research question.

At this point, the researcher needed to enquire the origin(s) of the views associated with the problem, the philosophical and applied consequences thereof, the academic disputes regarding the significance and functions thereof, and the way in which existing theories envisage how concepts relate to, and associate with, one another (Cooper, 2009; Machi & McEvoy, 2008; Ridley, 2008; Savin-Baden & Major, 2009).

The methodology section of a literature review is noticeably dissimilar to the methods segment in primary research reports. Although the rationale in both are identical, that is to operationally illustrate the way in which the examination is performed, literature reviews are obliged to address a collective of features. To begin with, the reviewer was required to expand on the particulars of the literature investigation. Moreover, the reviewer detailed the years covered in searches employing the services of abstract, indexing, and bibliography facilities (Cooper, 1998; Savin-Baden & Major, 2009).

Recording keywords and references regarding the literature investigation was fundamental to the research methodology. It provides the audience with an unsurpassed indication a propos the coverage of the search and consequently the degree of credibility which may be consigned in the findings of the review. Sketching the literature exploration process informs the audience of the diversity of the search for data. One should also be aware that a comprehensive depiction of the literature exploration affords academia the opportunity to scrutinise the manner in which the reviewer approached the data, as well as the opportunity to attempt to understand the review alongside similar reviews, even though the findings may be at variance with each other. This dimension, therefore, aids in improving the review's proficiency to be replicated (Cooper, 1998; Swales & Feak, 2009).

The next subject that was engaged in regarded the conditions of relevance that were put into operation during the data investigation. Here, the researcher explored the criteria applied in determining the relevance of studies, whether titles and/or abstracts and/or full reports were necessary to investigate specific studies, and brief details regarding excluded studies. Based on this process, the audience is permitted to analytically appraise the reviewer's perception of the way in which concepts and operations correspond with each other. A great deal of academic discussion may concern the findings of reviews and the manner in which the reviewer resolved these

dilemmas. Certain members of academia will invariably unearth some of the inclusion criteria as especially wide-ranging, for example including operational definitions which they regard as extraneous to the study (Cooper, 1998; Ridley, 2008).

This disputation may be attended to by applying these peculiarities in considering prospective arbitrators or research findings. Yet other audience members may find that the reviewer employed, in their opinions, extremely limited operational definitions. This may direct their appraisal of the study towards further examination of excluded studies in order to ascertain whether the findings in the excluded studies may have affected the outcome of the current investigation. By and large, the inclusion/exclusion criteria illustrated the manner in which the reviewer elected to ascend from conceptions to operations. A thorough account of this method is pivotal to constructive academic and conceptual discussion as regards the reviewer's findings (Cooper, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2009). In the review section of the study, the researcher offered a précis account of the literature. This section therefore exhibited a combination of descriptions of separate studies and ties in several ideas regarding the gestalt of literature.

The discussion section of the literature review functions in the same way as is expected in primary research. First, the researcher offered a synopsis of the key findings of the review. An examination of how and why this review differs to other studies was essential. In addition, the researcher was required to explore the findings relative to the hypothetical and conceptual arguments outlined in the introduction. Where any of the aforesaid did not apply, a discussion concerning this process and context was incorporated into this section (Cooper, 2009; Ridley, 2008).

As a final point, a discussion considering the possible courses of primary research, as a product of the review, will be prolific to academia. Thus, the discussion section was applied to propose the substantive analyses of interactions, the foundations and/or outcomes of previous arguments, and creative directions for potential investigations (Hedges & Cooper, 1994).

### 3.6 Ensuring research quality

Owing to the extensive sources of social science data, the legitimacy and dependability of review conclusions cannot be presupposed. Reviewers undertake a myriad of verdicts during the research process, all of which has some influence upon the conclusions and/or the trustworthiness thereupon (Cooper, 1998; Ridley, 2008; Schmidt & Smyth, 2008). This holds true for most research. Hedges and Cooper (1994) therefore recommended that the research reviewer consequently be as rigorous in the methodological slant as is expected of primary researchers. One such area includes data appraisal. It should be noted that the appraisal process is ordinarily be conducted by more than one person and/or subjected to the inspection of a supervisor (EPPI-Centre, 2007). This enhances the dimension of quality assurance, increases the credibility of the research, improves reliability, and ensures that the research question is answered. Furthermore, coding and appraising should also be subjected to a team member (in this study, the supervisor) in order to facilitate comprehension, as well as to ensure applied consistency (Oliver & Peersman, 2001). In attempting to produce a reliable literature review, Dane (1990) suggested that the reviewer continuously remain faithful to the objective of the research.

According to Dane (2010), the foremost objective of a review is to contextualise present literature within the scientific outlook. The existing literature permitted one to establish the way in which the review augmented the present information status. This was often likened to progressive education in that the degrees of knowledge are expanded if additional knowledge is added to the current body of knowledge. Thus, the research did not aim to reinvent the wheel, but to add new dimensions to the function of the wheel, as well as to explore if the wheel itself remains functional. This process was facilitated when the reviewer placed the study into perspective and contextualised it in a way that depicts the current state of research as regards the topic (Dane, 2010; Machi & McEvoy, 2008; Ridley, 2008). Thus, the thesis considered the function(s) of the African perspective as regards psychopathology, as well as the applicability of current theories in relation to the accrued functions.

The next objective in ensuring research review quality was to steer clear of duplicating previous research efforts. This implies re-conducting research without

improving the current body of knowledge (Dane, 1990). As such, the literature review accounted for similar investigations which were conducted and the manner in which they differ to the current investigation. Finally, the researcher aimed to forestall or explain difficulties which other researchers have met. Thus, prior research served as a stepping-stone to avoiding potential drawbacks (Dane, 1990). An example of this is often present in the manner in which previous researchers operationalise abstract terms. By drawing on current literature to recognise problem areas, the researcher was better equipped to avoid similar problems (Dane, 2010). The secret to supplying quality to a review is to present a lucid and equilibrated portrayal of principal ideas, theories, and research germane to the subject matter of the investigation (Hart, 1998). This process is often complex, but may appear to be even more so should limited reliable data be available.

It is therefore also valuable to inform the audience when limited reliable data are available, especially if these data may be valuable to policy planners. The researcher should also indicate if selected studies carry a high risk of bias, and/or the rationale for population-specific investigation (Higgins & Green, 2008). The motive for focussing this study on a segment of the traditional African population was due to the apparently limited body of research focused on this population, and particularly their perspectives of psychopathology.

Another important aspect to include in research appears to be reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to a cyclical interaction between cause and consequence. In the domain of human science research, reflexivity is often employed in order to illustrate the bidirectional influences between the research and the researcher. Often, the researcher engages in self-reference narratives so as to challenge his/her influence on the data analysis and vice versa (Archer, 2007). As a result, the audience is able to assess the dynamic way in which the researcher interacted with the data. To contextualise reflexivity during the course of this investigation, one ought to note that the researcher continuously made notes of aspects of the literature which appealed, or influenced, him. This was done throughout the research process, and notes were made on the original coding sheet, as well as on the printouts of the indexed abstracts. The results of this reflexive process are comprehensively explored in Chapter 6.

### 3.7 Ethical considerations

Habitual in literature reviewing is the deferential handling of data. Abiding to this directive engenders exceptional academic standards (Hart, 1998). In addition, data analyses promote relative equipoise within the process of the research and should not be deliberated on as simply a medium of sagacity conceptualisation. Quality research involves more than the contribution of data, it also demands that resources be dealt with ethically (Dane, 2010).

In portraying research findings, illustrating research correctly was crucial. The accrual nature of moral conscientiousness remained during the entire research process (Dane, 2010). Furthermore, the researcher aims to prevent his study from possibly prejudicing the field of psychology (Dane, 1990).

In addition, the researcher is obliged to forestall others in misusing literature, and to inhibit possible literature abuse. Certainly, it is unrealistic to assume that one may regulate the manner in which the data are utilised. However, one should make every attempt to correct apparent inaccuracies. The ultimate objective of ethical research is to progress knowledge, regardless of the source (Dane, 2010).

It should be noted that meticulous care was undertaken to ensure that the study remained ethical. Although no human subjects participated in this study, ethical considerations were observed. Thus, the rights of the authors and publishers of the literature were protected. Three principles were stringently subscribed to, namely (1) the principle of respect for intellectual rights and privileges. Accordingly, accurate referencing techniques were employed to ensure that the owners of the original literature receive credit for their work. To ensure this, the sixth edition of the American Psychological Association referencing style (American Psychological Association, 2010) was used. This will also be extended to possible publications which may be cultivated as a result of this research; (2) the principle of nonmaleficence, in that great care was taken not to undervalue and/or misrepresent the work of authors; and (3) the principle of beneficence which functioned as the principal aspiration of the study in that clinical psychology, psychiatry, other clinical disciplines, and society at large (albeit vicariously or in the future) benefit from the

research with possible developments in the clinical field (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Furthermore, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Pretoria's Postgraduate Committee and was given on 01 November 2010.

### **3.8 Dissemination of research results**

The research results are presented in the format of the current thesis and may also be made available in electronic format on the University of Pretoria's library website. A number of academic articles may stem from the research and will be published in academic journals. While the journal articles are better attuned to reach the academic fraternity, the author aims to disseminate the outcomes of this review at workshops and seminars. Dissemination in this way is aimed at reaching practitioners.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter sketched the research methodology applied within the present investigation. The research design was explored, including applicable information relating to the structured, systematic process of literature reviewing as applied in this study. The current chapter also highlighted specific methodological requirements, including the aims and principles of the methodology, the problem formulation, the way in which the data was collected, aspects relating to evaluating the data, and the methods for analysing and interpreting the data. The technical section of this chapter was concluded with a description of the way in which the data is presented. The chapter concluded with ethical considerations, as well as information relating to the dissemination of the research results. Chapter 4 is the first part of the literature review and allows the academic fraternity the opportunity to survey the literature regarding the foundations for questioning an African perspective on psychopathology. The review includes the literature which met the inclusion criteria and augmented the study, and was accrued during the course of the investigation.