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Mindful Inquiry: A Learner-Centered Approach to Qualitative Research

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Abstract

The Mindful Inquiry I pursued in my doctoral dissertation based on the approach formulated in Mindful Inquiry in Social Research (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998) was a path I laid down while walking. "Mindful inquiry combines the Buddhist concept of mindfulness with phenomenology, critical theory, and hermeneutics in a process that puts the inquirer in the center" (p. 171). Mindful Inquiry helped me develop both reflexivity and voice and resulted in personal transformation especially valuable in researching intercultural interactions.

Introduction

It is an honor to be asked to address you and tell you about my experience doing research using Mindful Inquiry (MI), an approach formulated by my teachers at the Fielding Graduate Institute, Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro.

When I began my doctoral studies in 1996 at age 52, I had not been in a formal academic program for 30 years. I added the educational challenge of being a doctoral student to my existing personal and professional roles. When people would ask me what I was studying, I began to joke: "Human development, mainly my own." Intercultural communication was the context of my study, not the main focus or the academic discipline I was working in. When I finished, I recognized how useful MI can be for studying intercultural communication, and this is what I want to share with you today.

As a well-educated European-American who came to live in Japan when already a young adult at age 26, I lacked a common linguistic or cultural background to rely on as I struggled to gain emotional and communicative competence in my new culture. Without the ability to communicate well in words, read Japanese characters, or decode

unfamiliar cultural cues, I repeatedly found myself beyond my experience, out of my depth, often teetering at the edge of my ability to make sense of what was happening around me, or losing my balance and regretting how I handled myself. I learned the hard way about the famous Japanese sense of harmony called *wa*, because I seemed to have had a talent for disturbing it. I had a lot of experience with what didn't work, and I recognize now that my inquiry was my attempt to figure out a better way to relate to the diverse people in my family and at the global company where I worked. Today's presentation is a story that condenses six years of study about how to live in Japan more skillfully, and I have come to believe that what I discovered may have a broader usefulness for interculturalists in general.

My Mindful Inquiry

My MI was a search for something deeper than personality, language, and culture pursued within myself and in relationship with others. I used MI to do research on how to communicate effectively when I have imperfect command of other people's language and limited knowledge of their culture in order to promote better communication and good relationships in my personal and professional life. I pursued this research on two overlapping levels: the intrapersonal level of human development and the interpersonal level, which was intercultural.

I want to recommend Mindful Inquiry to you for doing qualitative research in intercultural communication for the following reasons. It is a learner-centered approach to personally important questions. This learner-centeredness is indicated by my use of the first person and my personal examples in my research.

It provides a holistic approach for inquiring into complex, multilayered interactions. Like many adult students, my orientation was toward self-directed, holistic, humanistic learning experiences. Bodily felt meaning has been the crucial criterion guiding them. MI suited these tendencies well because it is an extremely flexible approach. The examples I will use here are just illustrations, not specifically necessary components of MI.

I found that MI was particularly suitable for my attempt to capture the dynamic, developmental, and complex nature of communicating with people of diverse cultures. It suited my being both a researcher and a human resources practitioner; and it facilitated my search for an answer to a life question while I was doing formal research. It was appropriate for my body-based, somatic focus on the nonrational topics of energy and emotion. I can also recommend MI to you as a personally transformative method for doing qualitative research in intercultural communication. It offers you a method of self-cultivation as an interculturalist.

MI is an essentially qualitative research approach formulated by Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro in *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research* (1998). Having lived so long in Japan, I recognize the importance of giving you a sense of context so I will describe a little about the creators of MI. Both Valerie and Jeremy have been on the faculty of the Fielding Graduate Institute for many years and saw the need for a guide for adult learners who were scholar-practitioners engaging in searches for knowledge

they can put into practice. Valerie was trained as a sociologist and a musician. She is also a psychotherapist and a yoga teacher. She has developed an approach called Deep Learning for promoting integration of intellect, body, emotion, and spirit. Jeremy studied social relations and his doctoral work was in the history of ideas. He is one of the translators of the work of Jurgen Habermas. He also has deep appreciation for music. Both are very well grounded in philosophy and social theory, and MI is based on 13 philosophical assumptions that are listed here.

1. Awareness of self and reality and their interaction is a positive value in itself and should be present in research processes.
2. Tolerating and integrating multiple perspectives is a value.
3. It is important to bracket our assumptions and look at the often unaware, deep layers of consciousness and unconsciousness that underlie them.
4. Human existence, as well as research, is an ongoing process of interpreting both one's self and others, including other cultures and subcultures.
5. All research involves both accepting bias—the bias of one's own situation and context—and trying to transcend it.
6. We are always immersed in and shaped by historical, social, economic, political, and cultural structures and constraints, and those structures and constraints usually have domination and oppression, and therefore suffering, built into them.
7. Knowing involves caring for the world and the human life that one studies.
8. The elimination or diminution of suffering is an important goal of or value accompanying inquiry and often involves critical judgment about how much suffering is required by existing arrangements.
9. Inquiry often involves the critique of existing values, social and personal illusions, and harmful practices and institutions.
10. Inquiry should contribute to the development of awareness and self-reflection in the inquirer and may contribute to the development of spirituality.
11. Inquiry usually requires giving up ego or transcending self, even though it is grounded in self and requires intensified self-awareness.
12. Inquiry may contribute to social action and be part of social action.
13. The development of awareness is not a purely intellectual or cognitive process but part of a person's total way of living her life. (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 6-7)

The first assumption emphasizes the importance of mindfulness, being present in the moment, throughout the process of inquiry. This is particularly appropriate for interculturalists, who focus on face-to-face communication in which we must be aware of our state of being in order to communicate skillfully.

MI is based on four knowledge traditions which Bentz and Shapiro describe as follows:

- * Phenomenology: a description and analysis of consciousness and experience
- * Hermeneutics: analysis and interpretation of texts in context
- * Critical Social Theory: analysis of domination and oppression with a view to

changing it

- * Buddhism: spiritual practice that allows one to free oneself from suffering and illusion in several ways, e.g., becoming more aware (1998, p. 6)

It is not necessary to remember these terms. Today it is probably more useful to think of the process of phenomenology as description and hermeneutics as interpretation.

I'll talk just a bit more about how I actually used them. The methodology of MI is characterized by circular movement that spirals into new experiences and understanding and returns repeatedly to different aspects of them on other levels or in other contexts. My study spiraled around these four knowledge traditions enriching my understanding and the depth of my practice of self-cultivation. The process was seamless including all aspects of my life and work during my doctoral work at Fielding. There is no fixed order for using them. They can be used flexibly according to the learner's need. I drew the spiral diagram (Figure 1) by hand to emphasize the free-flowing nature of this process. It is not always tidy. Each turn might be of a different size in terms of time spent and the breadth or depth of the inquiry. The spiral has the feeling of movement even when returning to familiar issues. MI helped me move onward and not be stuck in repetitive loops replaying critical incidents that still bothered me.

In a CCTS workshop, Shiori-sensei once defined the concept of a critical incident in a profoundly helpful way. He said that a critical incident is an experience that created a strong emotional response. In writing about and interpreting incidents that were critical for me, I realized the importance of this spiral movement, of returning over and over to similar situations, thoughts and feelings with the intention of finding new insights and energy in order to progress to a new understanding, rather than being stuck and replaying past difficulties over and over in my mind.

My MI was a learner-centered approach to a question arising from my lived experience of intercultural communication and attempts to make connections when language is insufficient and culture is unfamiliar. It was an attempt to become aware of and express internal experiences and aspects of relationship that are essentially ineffable. My focus was on recognizing what I know, identifying what I wanted to learn, and integrating it so that I could embody it in my way of being. In the process, I discovered that what is really communicating interculturally is state of being, which is very hard to put into words.

Paradoxically I had to use a lot of words to talk about inner experience that cannot really be described in language. Please do not be discouraged if you don't understand what I am saying at first. It is not easy to express. Please use your imagination and try to relate it to your own experience.

My research question was, "What is the embodied experience of being in emo-

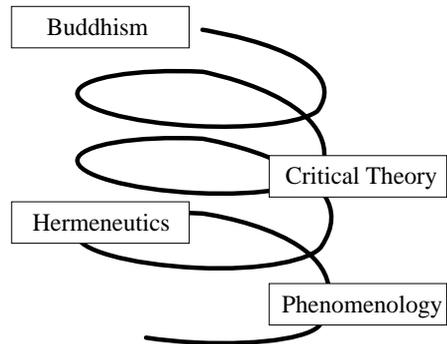


Figure 1. The spiral of Mindful Inquiry

tional resonance with another person in an intercultural interaction?" You may be wondering, "What is she talking about?" I wanted to understand what it feels like in my body when I am attuning myself skillfully to the emotional energy that another person is communicating to me so that we can develop a mutually satisfying relationship.

This question evolved through three stages: 1) cultural bridging—a role I was often cast into; 2) decentering—the ability to take the perspective of the other into account, a skill I sought to develop; 3) embodied resonance—a more vital way of living. These three are all aspects of my abiding concern to improve intercultural relational ability, but the MI I pursued changed my expectations. Originally I thought that I would produce a competency model that could be the basis for training courses, but the main result of my efforts is an appreciation for a different way of being and relating. Simply stated, a transformation occurred while I was immersed in trying to understand how to relate more skillfully.

I do not have time to really go into what I came to understand about resonance, but let me try to summarize it in three points. I was particularly interested in three aspects of the phenomenon of resonance.

- * Intrapersonal Level: Promotion of an internal state that can contribute to a kind of inner peace, pursued through self-cultivation
- * Interpersonal Level: Relational attunement, an experience of synchrony between two people that provides the basis for mutuality
- * Research Application: A characteristic of good qualitative research

Expressions such as *being on the same wave length*, *getting good vibes*, or *being in sync* with another person are attempts to describe the experience of feeling comfortable and able to communicate easily with someone, even a new acquaintance. These colloquial expressions hint at the phenomenon of interpersonal resonance that seemed to apply to the relational mode in Japan where most people have a highly developed ability to communicate without words, and where sensing the mood and fitting in with the requirements of the group is greatly valued.

In *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honoring Human Experience* (1998), William Braud and Rosemary Anderson propose sympathetic resonance as a criterion of validity appropriate for research in transpersonal psychology. They use the analogy of tuning forks and the immediate understanding that people may have when they recognize an experience described by another person.

I will do a quick summary of what I gained from each of the knowledge traditions. I used Phenomenology to do detailed descriptions exploring my lived experience and consciousness developed at the intercultural interface in Japan. Lived experience is a phenomenological term that refers to your reality and how you experience your lifeworld (van Manen, 1997). I used Hermeneutics for interpretation of my texts. I found Critical Social Theory useful for recognition of my standpoint and the strength I developed from my marginal position as an outsider in Japanese society. Buddhism promoted the development of the inner resources of mindfulness (Young, 1997) and compassion and gave me an appreciation for what the Vietnamese Zen priest Thich Nhat Hahn describes as *interrelationship*.

I would like to share with you a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) entitled *Interrelationship* that describes the level of relational knowledge (Richards, 1998) that I

have been seeking.

You are me, and I am you.
Isn't it obvious that we "inter-are"?
You cultivate the flower in yourself,
so that I will be beautiful.
I transform the garbage in myself,
so that you do not have to suffer.
I support you;
you support me.
I am here to bring you peace;
you are in this world to bring me joy.
-Thich Nhat Hanh

This poem was written at a retreat in 1989 in response to Fritz Perls' statement, "You are you, and I am me, and if by chance we meet, that's wonderful. If not, it couldn't be helped." Thich Nhat Hanh presents a radical relational challenge to conventional Western, individualistic psychology that has conceived of maturity as individuation of the self. What he teaches is how to do the inner and outer work of feeling and acting from compassion and ultimately—how to *be* peace. This state of being is what I sought through my MI.

The Benefits of Living at the Edge

I found that my life at the edge of Japanese society had promoted the skills I needed to do MI. I use the word *edge* both to refer to my marginal social position and the outer limits of my understanding and comfort zone. I used MI to increase my consciousness by working as close to my own limits as I could manage. I used writing as a form of research (Richardson, 2000) by learning to do phenomenological writing and self-ethnography, which is a description of a cultural setting in which the researcher is an active participant and functions in both practitioner and researcher modes (Alvesson, 1999; Coffey, 1999; Davies, 1999).

Phenomenology and self-ethnography promoted awareness of assumptions I had been making so that I was able to examine and suspend them. Critical theory helped me to see my position in Japanese society and the international community in Tokyo more clearly. I tried to use this position in a positive way in order to be a more effective cultural bridge person in my workplace. It also contributed to a greater sense of social freedom in the crack between two worlds that I have chosen to live in. The result of these efforts is that I now consider myself an *Everyday Peacemaker* (Chambliss, 2002), a person who tries to improve the situations in which she finds herself by promoting understanding and relieving suffering. This quick review is another example of how MI Assumption #1 was operating. "Awareness of self and reality and their interaction is a positive value in itself and should be present in research processes."

As the list above shows, MI is based on 13 philosophical assumptions. It seemed

to me that most of them are assumptions that many interculturalists would share. I will discuss about half to give you an idea of how they operated in my inquiry. Because of time, I have sometimes chosen examples that illustrate more than one assumption.

Most of them illustrate more than one of the reasons I am recommending MI to you for research in intercultural communication as a learner-centered approach to personally important questions, a holistic approach for inquiring into complex, multilayered interactions, and a method of self-cultivation as an interculturalist.

Mindful Inquiry Assumption #3

“It is important to bracket our assumptions and look at the often unaware, deep layers of consciousness and unconsciousness that underlie them” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 6).

Bracketing assumptions is emphasized in phenomenology and is also one of the main outcomes of working hermeneutically when interpreting texts. Intercultural encounters offer ongoing opportunities to develop awareness of our assumptions

My efforts in this regard were helped by my working at multiple levels of consciousness. I explored my consciousness through daily reflections in a journal and my academic work. By practicing tai chi and *kikou*, Chinese energy healing, and taking other body-focused experiential workshops, I worked to bring aspects of my subconscious experience into awareness and did descriptions of these body-based self-cultivation practices. I tried to bring my unconscious into awareness by keeping a journal of my dreams and the Voyager Tarot cards (Wanless, 1989; Wanless & Knutson, 1984) I drew each day. Working with the images from my dreams and the multicultural photo collages of the Voyager Tarot helped me bring my unconscious experiences into awareness where they reverberated throughout my days, enriching my understanding and motivation to continue refining myself.

For six years, I was immersed in these efforts literally day and night as working with my dreams (Gendlin, 1986; Quenk & Quenk, 1995) was part of my practice. Actually, practice is a better conception of what I was pursuing than studies because I tried to be mindful of all aspects of my life, which I have often joked is an intercultural communication training lab. Virtually any encounter I might have could provoke reflection in my journals, if I were lucky to have the time, or more typically just on my feet. All this has had a seamless quality.

Bracketing My Assumptions

I want to share the main assumption that I needed to be aware of in order to open myself to new ways of relating. Living in Japan has exposed me to traditions that do not make the same distinctions regarding mind, body, and self that I was raised with. I have pursued Asian practices that continue to help me experience increasing integration of the multiple realms of being: body, emotion, mind, and spirit. These efforts required a bracketing or suspension of some of my assumptions.

As a European American, I was raised to believe that I was an autonomous individual responsible for myself, and the purpose of my education was to cultivate my unique potential. I assumed the subject-object model of relationships. As a young girl growing up in the 1950s before I even became aware of feminism, I was determinedly pursuing being taken seriously as a subject. I only developed a tacit understanding of

intersubjectivity slowly through reflection on endless relational difficulties. I could not imagine sharing vital energy with another person, and I had to realize how my assumptions limited what I would be able to experience.

The main assumption was described in Allan Watts' *The Book on the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are* (1966). "The prevalent sensation of oneself as a separate ego enclosed in a bag of skin is a hallucination which accords neither with Western science nor with the experimental philosophy-religions of the East" (p. ix).

In order to practice *qigong*, *kikou*, and tai chi to learn about the flow of energy in my body, I have had to suspend the cultural belief I was raised with that I am a separate, independent physical entity and my disbelief that I could experience energy moving from the natural world including between human bodies. This resulted in a change in my sense of boundaries.

Mindful Inquiry Assumption #13

"The development of awareness is not a purely intellectual or cognitive process but part of a person's total way of living her life" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 7).

I pursued understanding without words from the level of prelinguistic, somatic experience which is the ground of our being, the very basis of our consciousness (Damasio, 1999). Prelinguistic refers to the "wisdom of the body," bodily knowing that occurs before language and before reflective conceptualization (Shapiro, 1985, p. xiv). Gendlin (1981) stresses the primacy of the body as a prelinguistic source of language that continues to operate in the midst of speaking. Somatic refers to the body as experienced from within (Behnke, 1997; Hanna, 1987).

Zen Bodies

I will share a dream that I had right in the middle of my six years of study that I later could see can be interpreted as the story of my Mindful Inquiry.

Zen Bodies: I am living in a house that is visited by a group of zany people, mainly wiry young men with wild hair. There are a few main characters and many supporting ones. The house is well maintained and well-off, and the servants seem to want to protect me from these zany characters. They come and go in and out of the space I am occupying. Most of them are invited outside by journalists who photograph them on the ground in different jigsaw-like formations made with their bodies that spell out ZEN BODIES from an aerial view. There is a real sense of relief when it can be seen that they make some kind of understandable pattern. I feel calm throughout, but the people who look after me have felt threatened by all this disturbance of the normal order of things. (Dream Journal, 9/21/99)

The descriptive adjective *zany* that is repeated in evaluation of the lively and invasive new energies that have arrived on the scene underscore the judgments that characterize the struggle to grow beyond our existing ego structure. I am comfortable, well-looked after, and calm, but my servants want to protect me from these characters

they feel threatened by. Journalists who can take a larger view from a higher level create pictures that show the spiritual meaning of using the body in ways that are not immediately comprehended. There is relief when a pattern emerges from the seeming disorder.

Table 1
Comparison of Dream and Lived Experience

DREAM	LIVED EXPERIENCE
Journalists take photographs from an aerial viewpoint to reveal a meaning that was not apparent from the lower level from which it was being viewed.	The main tool of my Mindful Inquiry has been journaling that provides the chance to work out different perspectives on the multiple realities that I am experiencing and to metacommunicate about the whole process.
The active new energies that appear come and go in and out of my life space in ways that feel threatening to those charged with maintaining the existing order. The new energies make puzzling new bodily formations on the ground that turn out to embody a playful spiritual message.	The main experiential work I am pursuing involves using my body to understand the movement of my energy within and around me in ways that challenge my assumptions and comprehension. I am grounding my personal evolution in enjoyable embodied activities.
I am calm and the people who look after me are relieved when the underlying pattern reveals a new sense of order.	I pursue my practice even when it is not clear what the outcome may be and am pleased to discover the felt meaning.

We hold our assumptions in our bodyminds. They are part of our integrated functioning as total beings, and they may be revealed in our state of being as our energetic presence.

Mindful Inquiry Assumption #11

“Inquiry usually requires giving up ego or transcending self, even though it is grounded in self and requires intensified self-awareness” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 7).

My dissertation documented some of my ongoing efforts to increase my consciousness, to refine my way of being, a necessary discipline for a qualitative researcher. It describes some of the ways I sought to become more congruent verbally and nonverbally, cultivating integration of mind, body, and spirit (de Beauport, 1996). As I have become more embodied, my authenticity seems to have been increasing. This is one aspect of self-cultivation in the Eastern understanding that it is a higher form of being that each individual must work to develop. The potential is in each person, but there is a qualitative shift when functioning in an integrated, centered way. Some previously bothersome issues and questions cease to matter, and relationships and work have a more harmonious and fluid quality. Compassion becomes a more frequent companion.

Mindful Inquiry Assumption #2

“Tolerating and integrating multiple perspectives is a value” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 6).

I used multiple sources and included a variety of viewpoints in my research. My sources included my own writing, an interdisciplinary literature review that included

diverse types of experiential learning as well as interviews with 12 interculturalists. I sought to understand multiple perspectives within my own experience and by including others who were interested in exploring my topic with me.

I wanted to expand my understanding by working on embodied empathic resonance with other people to explore a greater variety of experiences through interviewing and interpreting that data hermeneutically. I also thought it was desirable to broaden this research by including the lived experiences of people who may have different perceptual skills and processing patterns. I tried to be alert to these in the in-depth interviews with each person that were conversations about their most vivid and interesting experiences of the phenomenon of embodied emotional resonance.

Mindful Inquiry Assumption #4

“Human existence, as well as research, is an ongoing process of interpreting both one’s self and others, including other cultures and subcultures” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 6).

The 12 interculturalists I interviewed have had experience living and working in a total of more than 35 countries, and their stories interpreted their experiences in these diverse cultures.

Mindful Inquiry Assumption #5

“All research involves both accepting bias—the bias of one’s own situation and context—and trying to transcend it” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 6).

The methodology of MI helped me first to become aware of bias, and then work to transcend it. The ethical imperative of these efforts is articulated by Michael Nakkula and Sharon Ravitch in *Matters of Interpretation: Reciprocal Transformation in Therapeutic and Developmental Relationships with Youth* (1998).

Systematic deconstruction (critical taking apart) of our interpretations is an ethical responsibility because it allows for an increased understanding of the values and biases that underlie and direct our efforts. Thus, we argue, critical self-reflection is essential for an ethical approach to applied developmental practice, theory making, and research. (p. xi)
Biases and prejudices . . . should not be viewed as markers of social ignorance or flawed character. Rather, they are considered to be openings for increased self- and other-understanding and for more honest and aware communication. To be useful in this manner, biases must be continuously revised through an explicit process of uncovering and confrontation through dialogue and critical self-reflection. (p. xiii)

Mindful Inquiry Assumption #12

“Inquiry may contribute to social action and be part of social action” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 7).

During my MI, I developed a kind of embodied knowing that extended into action in both my personal and professional life.

Becoming embodied—in touch with my energetic, somatic-emotional feelings—

has brought me into a different state of being, which enables a qualitatively different kind of doing. My writing has been both revealing and guiding what was happening in my life. The mindful qualities I have tried to develop of suspending judgment, holding myself open and allowing experiences while focusing internally on their processual nature has helped new qualities emerge in my relationships, which has had a further deepening effect. By holding myself open and attending to somatic experience mindfully, I have been led forward into unknown realms of greater intricacy than I had previously mastered, using and strengthening skills I was unsure that I possessed. (Nagata, 2000b)

My writing has itself been a form of inquiry (Richardson, 2000) that usually begins with some aspect of my inner world, which I often find materializing more fully as part of my lived experience in my outer life. Working with the phenomenological protocols I created revealed that some of them have a direct relationship to other areas of my life that I might not have realized without doing this phenomenological and hermeneutic work (Nagata, 2000a). The greater openness, fluidity, and trust I began to experience in my bodymind enhanced my work as an internal organizational consultant and took me beyond what I had thought I was capable of. My whole being has been absorbed in this inquiry so that I have reached a new level of embodied understanding. Perhaps embodying these changes in action is a fourth level of Gadamer's (1989) hermeneutics. Certainly it has transformed my praxis.

Gadamer's Hermeneutical Circle Applied

Nakkula and Ravitch (1998) base their work on the hermeneutical approach of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989). In the Arc of Projection one acts in the world without realizing the assumptions, biases, and prejudices one is projecting into the situation that is the context for one's action. In the Arc of Reflection, there is the opportunity to consider the results, to analyze one's own biases and prejudices, and to prepare for ongoing work in the world. This is certainly a recognizable cycle for interculturalists.

Value of Mindful Inquiry for Intercultural Communication Practice, Research, & Theory Formulation

A qualitative researcher uses "self as an instrument." The quality of qualitative research is fundamentally determined by the quality of the consciousness of the researcher, who has a responsibility to commit to a process of continual self-reflection and self-refinement. A researcher can see what s/he can see because s/he brings her/his own internal states to the research. *Tuning my instrument* is a phrase I used to talk about clearing and expanding my consciousness that is my tool for doing research. Continual refinement of all of the sensibilities of one's bodymind and clearing of one's perceptions are necessary to cultivate intuition and increase direct knowing so that it can be used as a research tool.

For example, writing phenomenology is an iterative process of deepening your understanding of the focus of your consciousness. Interviewing is a fine art requiring exquisite sensitivity to mood, nuance, and timing which enables the researcher to for-

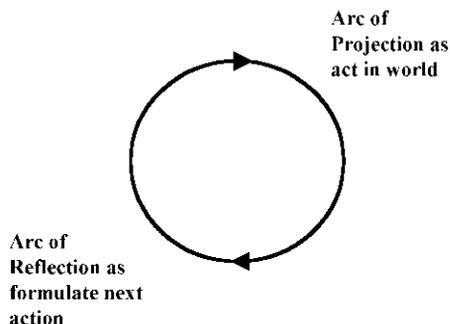


Figure 2. Gadamer's hermeneutic circle applied

ulate questions that will deepen the interchange or simply remain silent witnessing the emergence of new awareness. Becoming clear about your assumptions and opening yourself to being changed while engaging with materials are essential for hermeneutic interpretation of real value. These skills are only a few that a qualitative researcher may need.

The Importance of Reflexivity for Interculturalists

There are two definitions of reflexivity that I found to be important for doing intercultural communication research. The first is what I think of as the on-the-feet type that is needed in live interactions. "To be reflexive is to have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment" (Hertz, 1997). The second is a higher level of reflection in being able to see oneself as an intellectual in a particular context with specific biases and identifications. "Reflexivity is the way to instruct ourselves about how to be critically and explicitly conscious of what we are doing as intellectuals" (Jung, 1993).

Mindful Inquiry Promotes Synergy of Practice, Research, & Theory

MI encourages us to be mindful of all we do as we pursue understanding whatever phenomenon we have chosen for our inquiry. It is a highly synergistic approach as shown by the examples I have given. We can develop reflexivity on our feet as practitioners and intellectually as researchers and theory builders. Writing about my lived experience in the first person as a form of research transformed my practice as a human resources professional. "Thinking at the Edge" (Gendlin, 2002) is a method of working from the bodymind's felt sense to formulate theory. (See <www.focusing.org> for training opportunities.)

I chose to write in the first person (Nagata, 2002) as an expression of the feminist epistemology advocated by Elizabeth Anderson (1995): "Successful theorizing deeply depends on personal knowledge, particularly embodied skills, and often depends on emotional engagement with the subjects of study" (p. 59). This is my preferred approach and writing style. It is both necessary and appropriate for an inquiry into internal states. I have found that practice, theory, and research flow and resonate together, sometimes reinforcing each other in a crescendo of understanding, sometimes striking discordant notes that prompt deeper investigation and reflection.

Holding Open and Staying in the Tension Can Lead to Personal Transformation

Throughout my graduate studies, I tried to learn to hold myself open to more than I had previously been willing or able to look at or comprehend and to hold with the tension produced by what I found until my consciousness could encompass a larger reality, which would become an expanded world for me to inhabit. This gesture of creating space and holding it open in spite of discomfort characterized all my efforts in this inquiry. My desire was to embody my learning in my way of being so that it would be a part of all that I do, and I was gratified that my MI had a personal effect of increasing integration and consciousness of my state of being and my research. I believe that there is a special value for interculturalists in being able to tolerate confusion. To do this, it is important to recognize the somatically based discomfort and resultant dislike of confusion and anxiety and to cultivate a commitment to holding with it while gathering more information and increasing consciousness.

I am pleased to be able to report that as a result of pursuing a MI, I experienced a new, more authentic state of being. I came to conceive of myself as an Everyday Peacemaker willing to engage in resolving conflicts. I developed a new sense of my own voice as a scholar that has been reflected in new professional confidence and an expanding scholarly network.

Recommendation of Mindful Inquiry for Intercultural Communication Research

In closing, I want to emphasize again the advantages I see of using MI for intercultural communication research. It offers a learner-centered approach to personally important questions, a holistic approach for inquiring into complex, multilayered interactions with the added bonus of providing a method of self-cultivation for you as an interculturalist. Because MI allows you to investigate phenomena that really matter to you, it can also help reveal the real, deeply personal meaning of your research. I hope my talk today has given you a small sense of the tremendous value you may be able to find in pursuing your own MI. Thank you.

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