

Intuitive Inquiry: The Ways of the Heart in Research and Scholarship

Rosemarie Anderson

The heart has its reasons that reason cannot know.

—Blaise Pascal, philosopher

Intuitive inquiry joins intuition to intellectual rigor in a hermeneutical process of interpretation intended for the study of subtle human experiences. Long claimed as essential to wisdom in indigenous and spiritual traditions worldwide, the subtle ways of the heart nourish and balance more analytical ways of knowing. In a series of five iterative cycles of interpretation, intuitive researchers refine and challenge their initial understandings through in-depth reflection on the accounts of others, always seeking new and renewed understanding as the research process unfolds.

Intuitive researchers explore topics about which they care deeply. Usually, they wish to honor their own life experiences as unique sources of inspiration and insight. This interpretive process tends to transform both the researchers' understanding of the topic studied and their personal lives, sometimes profoundly so. While I am a researcher and not a therapist, intuitive researchers inform me that I have nonetheless developed a research method that invites a process more like in-depth psychotherapy than anything else. The simplicity and ease with which I can now describe the interpretive cycles of intuitive inquiry belie the challenges that lie within the method. In pursuing matters of the heart, intuitive inquiry is a creative process that bridges art and science in a manner aligned with artists and scientists down through the centuries.

In seeking to advance understanding of subtle, and often complex, human topics, intuitive inquiry focuses on both the present and the future, seeking to inspire, invite change, and discern what the present reveals of future hopes and possibilities. The great variety of intuitive styles used by researchers using intuitive inquiry pleases me immensely. The “containment” of the cycles invites freedom within a process that moves inexorably forward. Specifically, intuitive inquiry is a search for new understandings through the focused attention of one researcher’s passion and compassion for oneself, others, and the world. The “tale” of the research process is told and projected forward toward the future in research reports, and other applications of the findings, as an impetus for individual and collective change.

I almost always encourage my doctoral students to find research topics that seem to be chasing them, pursuing them. I simply ask my students to study what they most want to know. What may seem like one researcher’s obsessive interest in a narrow topic may be the tip of an iceberg of a call from the culture at large for change. A universal need may be disclosed by the particular and the personal (Anderson, 1998, 2000).

For intuitive researchers, understanding is discovered between what the researcher brings to the data and the data that comes forward from research participants and the culture. Discovery is in the “in between.” In his own way, Ken Wilber (2000) refers to such an intersubjective space in his Four-Quadrant Model, as his model for integral research requires many perspectives to create an integral understanding of important topics. Similarly, spiritual traditions worldwide tend to use symbolic language for similar experiences. In the depths of creative acts is Spirit—an unfathomable mystery that forms and molds us in an ever-changing world.

Intuitive inquiry is *not* for every researcher or every topic. Not every researcher wants to explore the spontaneous and startling nature of the psyche, as so often happens in the course of

an intuitive inquiry. Many topics in psychology, and the human sciences generally, do not require such an in-depth, reflective process. Certainly, aspects of intuitive inquiry can be used in any scientific inquiry and blended with other qualitative and quantitative research methods. However, as presented in this chapter, intuitive inquiry is optimally used as a full hermeneutical process of interpretation. From the start, I developed intuitive inquiry in response to the challenges posed by my doctoral students' research studying complex topics characteristic of psycho-spiritual development. "Right body size" for women (Coleman, 2000), the healing presence of a psychotherapist (Phelon, 2001), grief and other deep emotions in response to nature (Dufrechou, 2002), true joy in union with God in mystical Christianity (Carlock, 2003), storytelling and compassionate connection (Hoffman, 2003), the dialectics of embodiment among contemporary female mystics (Esbjörn, 2003), the role of consciously-chosen "dark" activities on psychospiritual development (Rickards, 2005), joy remembered among a circle of Native American women (Hill, 2005), and nature as a source of creative inspiration (Manos, 2005) are among the topics studied. Such topics are more likely to be found in the fields of humanistic, transpersonal, and positive psychology, and related fields in other human sciences.

The first version of intuitive inquiry incorporated intuition and compassionate ways of knowing in the selection of a research topic, data analysis, and presentation of findings in what might be described as an in-depth qualitative research method (Anderson, 1998). Later, I developed a hermeneutical structure of iterative cycles of interpretation to give a flexible, "soft" structure to the intuitive process that invites freedom of expression throughout the method (Anderson, 2000). In this second version, intuitive inquiry was uniquely informed by feminist theory and research (e.g., Nielsen, 1990; Reinharz; 1992), heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990), Focusing (Gendlin, 1978), classical hermeneutics (e.g., Bruns, 1992; Husserl, 1989; Packer &

Addison, 1989), the phenomenology of the lived body (e.g., Abram, 1996; Levin, 1985; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1968; Romanyshyn, 1991), and Gendlin's (1991, 1992, 1997) "thinking beyond patterns." The version of intuitive inquiry presented in this summary and elsewhere (Anderson, 2004, Esbjörn-Hargens & Anderson, 2005) represents a deepening cultivation and integration of these resources from many years as a quantitative and qualitative researcher.¹

What Is Intuition?

Carl Jung (1933) thought intuition irrational because it often eludes our attempts to rationally understand its character. We may witness our intuitions and discern their triggers. We can describe how intuitive insights assist or confound life decisions. But, often, the nature of intuition seems more akin to those unique moments when playing a musical instrument, touching a lover, or writing a poem when impulses seem to fly from the fingertips of our bodymind. Moments such as these have a marvelous quality. Sometimes they pass quickly in seconds. At other times, they prevail for hours or even days. To quote Emily Dickinson (Franklin, 1999), intuition is to "tell all the truth but tell it slant," glimpsing a thin slice of something new in the passage of life. Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca (1992) describes music, dance, and spoken poetry as arts particularly mysterious and grand "because they are forms that perpetually live and die, their contours are raised upon an exact presence" (p. 165). In one moment, intuition seems vibrant and breathtaking to behold—and then it disappears.

In intuitive inquiry, it is crucial to record an insight or sketch an image or vision on whatever scrap of paper or recording device is near by. In my own mind, documentation of data sources and their context is part of what separates scientific and scholarly inquiry from personal exploration. Both science and personal exploration are important, but usually serve different purposes. In intuitive inquiry, scientific inquiry work and personal exploration are mutually

aligned. Ideally, the five cycles of interpretation of intuitive inquiry invite creative insights and build toward new understandings. Documentation reveals the extent to which new understandings are actually gained in the process.

Five Types of Intuition

Roberto Assagioli (1990), Arthur Diekman (1982), Peter Goldberg (1983), Carl Jung (1933), Arthur Koestler (1990), and Frances Vaughan (1979) have explored the dynamic nature of intuition. The typology of intuition presented below is practical in nature, describing how intuition manifests in the creative process based on my own observations in research, research supervision, and life. Of course, behaviors typical to one type often blend with other types in everyday experience.²

1. Unconscious and Symbolic Processes.

Unconscious and symbolic processes have been explored in psychoanalytic theory, archetypal psychology, and more recently in imaginal psychology. Summarizing such large fields of scholarly endeavor is beyond the intent of this chapter. However, as the developer of intuitive inquiry, I would like to make a personal statement about my own understanding of unconscious and symbolic processes, so that readers and future intuitive researchers understand why I do not tend to make reference to these fields of creative endeavor despite their importance in psychology and otherwise.

The vitality of my own spiritual life is embedded in nature. So, what many people see as processes embedded in the human psyche or unconscious and symbolic processes, I see mirrored in the activities or movements of the natural environment. Air, earth, fire, and water have been active elements in my life since childhood, a life reality that has grown over time. Plants, animals, and humans play their respective parts *within* the

natural environment, but never outside of it. Human activity takes place within these forces however well I defend myself from this awareness day to day. Life takes place in a web of interdependence. The natural environment per se is global, galactic, and lively in character. There are great artists who have made careers of making the spiritual forces of nature explicit to the public, such as the photographer Ansel Adams, painter Georgia O'Keeffe, and nature artist Andy Goldsworthy.

Given the limits of my own realization, I am usually more aware of my immediate natural environment and of my loved ones. Occasionally, I glimpse natural forces well beyond my conventional awareness. I watch the forces of nature as carefully as I can for personal and spiritual growth. More often than not, I experience religious rituals, in a great variety of religious traditions, as ceremonial enactments of what I see almost everyday in the motions of the natural environment, including celebration, sacrifice, upheaval, chaos, birth, rebirth, transformation, and beatitude. All of these "motions" occur naturally, constantly, and seemingly effortlessly in a seamless exchange of energy.

For these reasons, I do not locate these exchanges as mine per se, consciously or unconsciously. Of course, they are "mine" to the extent that they occupy a locus within the natural environment that is informed by my own personal history, biology, and so on. I am not at all sure that my locus is unique, but it is particular. Intuitive inquiry is enthusiastically based on the premise that my—and your—particularity may be important to the whole.

2. Psychic or Parapsychological Experiences.

Despite their rather common occurrence for some people, psychic and parapsychological phenomena typically are unacknowledged in furthering the insights of scientific research.

Such direct and unmediated experiences would include telepathy, clairvoyance, or precognitive experiences that take place at a distance (in space or time). Recently, William Braud (2003) detailed a full range of such experiences that have been the subject of experimental research. Since such experiences are typically encouraged by our heartfelt feelings of connection with others and specific circumstances, the researcher's personal connection to a topic and to their research participants is likely to encourage such experiences.

3. Sensory Modes of Intuition

In addition to the five special senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch; proprioception (inner body senses) and kinesthesia (sense of movement) serve as intuitive channels, conveying subtle forms of information typically unavailable to the thinking mind. Typically, information from preceptors in joints, ligaments, muscles, and viscera are subliminal to awareness (Olsen, 2002). Yet, when brought to awareness, the same body senses that signal danger, beauty, and novelty in everyday life can be finely tuned to serve intuition and imagination.

Awareness of proprioceptive and kinesthetic signals can be enhanced through attention and specialized training, by techniques such as Focusing developed by psychologist Eugene Gendlin (1978, 1991, 1992, 1997) and Authentic Movement developed by body practitioners Mary Whitehouse, Janet Adler, and Joan Chodorow (Adler, 2002; Pallaro, 1999). In my own work, I have sought to cultivate enhanced body awareness through Embodied Writing, a research technique that records the finely textured nuances of lived experience, awakening the senses in the writer and inviting a kindred resonance in readers (Anderson, 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

4. Empathetic Identification.

Through empathetic identification or compassionate knowing (Anderson, 1998, 2000), writers, actors, psychotherapists, and scientists inhabit the lived world of another person or object of study. Via a seamless display of gesture and temper of voice, an actor convinces an audience that Macbeth is present. Psychotherapists attend to the life world of their clients, seeing the world through the clients' eyes, helping them see possibilities they cannot see for themselves. Similarly, biochemist Jonas Salk (1983) trained himself with what he called an "inverted perspective." He would imagine himself as a virus or cancer cell and ask how he would act if he were that virus or cancer cell. An extensive discussion of empathizing as used by great artists and scientists can be found in Root-Bernstein and Root-Bernstein (1999).

Intrinsically, empathetic identification invites a full spectrum of sensory awareness, especially the subtle aspects of proprioception and kinesthesia. Sometimes, we need only to remind ourselves of what we did naturally as children. During the initial stages of identifying a research topic, Cycle 1, I often lead an experiential exercise designed to facilitate the researcher's empathic identification with an object strongly associated with a research focus. (See Cycle 1, Experiential Exercise #1: Selecting a Text or Image That Claims Your Imagination.) During one such exercise, dissertation researcher Merry Coburn (2005), who is studying the psychological and transformative effects of long-distance hiking, chose to "identify" with her own well-used, hiking boots. In doing so, she discovered physical and emotional properties of long-distance hiking of which she had not been consciously aware before.

5. Through Our Wounds.

Having conducted and supervised research for many years, I am poignantly aware that an individual's intuitive style tends to settle along the fault lines or wounds in the personality in a manner akin to the concept of the wounded healer described by Catholic priest and contemplative Henri Nouwen (1979). For Nouwen, our human wounds are sites both of suffering and hospitality to the divine.

From a spiritual perspective, wounds are also openings to the world. Explorations along the fault lines of the personality tend to invite change and transform these "openings." The topics my students choose to explore in research are often those aspects of their personalities that seek healing either within themselves or within the culture at large, or both. The topics often seem to mark places in their psyches where they burn brightly. In turn, the findings tend to illuminate this realm of human struggle for us all. Indeed, the ways of intuition can also be so personal that they are darn right embarrassing. Some researchers are distressed to find that the very aspect of their personal history that they have been avoiding for years is a prime source of insight and discovery! Others regress to childhood behaviors, bringing them slowly into the light of awareness in a manner not unlike the course of psychotherapy. Sometimes these processes and insights are strictly personal, and sometimes they shed light directly on the topic of inquiry, or both. As a research supervisor, I help new researchers to distinguish the difference between personal and research insights and occasionally suggest that they seek professional assistance from a therapist or spiritual guide.

Five Cycles of Hermeneutical Interpretation

Intuitive inquiry is a hermeneutical research process requiring at least five successive cycles of interpretation. In Cycle 1, the researcher clarifies the research topic via a creative

process described below. In Cycle 2, the intuitive researcher reflects upon her or his own understanding of the topic in light of a set of texts found in extant literature about the topic and prepares a list of preliminary interpretative lenses. These Cycle 2 lenses describe the researcher's understanding of the research topic *prior* to collecting original data. In Cycle 3, the researcher collects original data and summarizes the data in descriptive accounts, content analyses, or portraits of research participants. In Cycle 4, the researcher presents a final set of interpretative lenses that have been transformed in light of personal engagement with the original data gathered in Cycle 3. In Cycle 5, the researcher integrates Cycle 4 lenses with empirical and theoretical literature reviewed at the start of the study, as well as with new literature that now becomes relevant, as is customary in the Discussion section of any research report.

By convention in hermeneutics, the hermeneutical circle of interpretation involves a forward and return arc (e.g., Packer & Addison, 1989). Cycles 1 and 2 of intuitive inquiry represent the forward arc in a process of identifying the topic and clarifying pre-understandings. Cycles 3, 4, and 5 represent the return arc in a process of transforming pre-understanding via the understandings of others. The number of interpretative cycles may increase if the researcher wishes to supplement the research endeavor with resonance panels, as described later in this article. Each iterative cycle changes, refines, and amplifies the researcher's interpretation of the experience studied. Both internal data known only to the researcher *and* externally verifiable data accompany each cycle.

For readers familiar with my first presentation of intuitive inquiry as a hermeneutical process of inquiry (Anderson, 2000), I have made three significant changes to the sequence and contents of the iterative cycles. First, I have discovered that many researchers need to prepare a summary of the data prior to the development of their final set of interpretative lenses in order to

(a) help them organize the huge amount of qualitative data before them, and (b) honor the individual voices of the research participants prior to interpretation. Cycle 3 summaries of data should be as descriptive and non-interpretative as is possible and reasonable. The second change moves the presentation of the researcher's final interpretative lenses from what was formerly called Cycle 3 to Cycle 4, as a logical consequence of adding a conventional presentation of data as Cycle 3. The third change adds an additional cycle, Cycle 5, a formal presentation that integrates the Cycle 4 lenses in light of the Literature Review, as suggested by my colleague William Braud some years ago. I have added it to emphasize the importance of integrating research findings and prior research and theory, even though doing so is conventional for the Discussion section of an article, thesis, or dissertation.

Given the spiraling acts of interpretation in intuitive inquiry, it is not always clear where to present the iterative cycles of intuitive inquiry in a conventional research report. My students and I have made different choices over the years. Generally speaking, though, the clearest presentation is to place Cycle 1 and a clear statement of the research topic at the end of the Methods section and relay Cycles 2 and 3 as two separate Results sections. The best placement of the results of Cycle 4 and 5 is in the Discussion section, thereby honoring the clearly interpretative nature of Cycles 4 and 5. This is a general guideline, as the placement of the cycles should always be guided by what is helpful to the reader. Wherever the cycles are placed in the research report, researchers should label each cycle with headers naming the interpretative cycles so they can be clearly identified by readers unfamiliar with the requirements of intuitive inquiry. Research proposals should include a presentation of Cycle 1 along with a clear statement of the research topic in the Methods section. If Cycle 2 is complete, the preliminary lenses for Cycle 2 may be presented as a Preliminary Results section in a research proposal.

A recent issue of *The Humanistic Psychologist* reviews and updates intuitive inquiry as a hermeneutical approach to research the human sciences. Included in that issue are case examples of intuitive inquiries, based on dissertation research, by Cortney Phelon (2004), Jay Dufrechou (2004), Sharon Hoffman (2004), and Vipassana Esbjörn-Hargens (2004). These case examples offer a simplified report-writing style for intuitive inquiry appropriate for journals.

Cycle 1: Clarifying the Research Topic

In conventional research, a researcher typically chooses a research topic based on current research in an area of academic specialization and scholarly interest. In intuitive inquiry, however, the researcher begins by selecting a text or image that repeatedly attracts or claims the intuitive researcher's attention and relates to his or her area of interest in a general and often obscure and non-obvious way.

When teaching intuitive inquiry, I begin the first class by leading an experiential exercise, entitled *Selecting a Text or Image That Claims Your Imagination*, that helps doctoral students to find a text or image that invites their attention around their research interests. Students are often surprised by what appears during these experiential exercises. For example, in a study of true joy among Christian mystics, Susan Carlock (2003) was surprised to find a visual image of the Pieta by Michelangelo appearing in her imagination for Cycle 1. Later in her study, she discovered the element of suffering was essential to understanding true joy among Christian mystics. In intuitive inquiry, text and images are broadly defined. Cycle 1 texts and images have included photographs, paintings, symbols, sculptures, songs, recordings, poems, sacred texts or scripture, interview transcripts, recorded dreams, or records of a meaningful transformative experience directly related to the topic of study.

Basic Instructions for All Experiential Exercises

Preparation

Step 1. Chose a time and place wherein you will be free from external distractions.

Step 2. Gather or purchase a notebook or journal to record your thoughts and art supplies to express images and symbols that occur spontaneously during the exercises. Art supplies might include white butcher paper, colored papers, glue stick, good scissors, water-based pastels, watercolor paint set, magic markers, crayons, sketch pad, copies of favorite photographs, and old magazines with pictures and colors that can be used for collages.

Step 3. Prepare a space for yourself that is clean and orderly for quiet reflection.

Step 4. Read through each experiential exercise before beginning. Alternatively, you might make an audio tape recording of these instructions to yourself, in your own voice, leaving adequate pauses and times for the experiences to occur, then play the created instruction tape, as you follow the instructions, with your eyes closed.

Concentration

Step 1. Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight. Let your eyes close, and allow your body to become relaxed and quiet. Take a few deep breaths and notice the exhalations and inhalations. Continue watching your breathing for a while, as you allow you body to relax more and more deeply. Don't try to change or control your breathing; just direct your attention to it, notice it. Allow yourself to become very comfortable, very much at peace. Let all of your muscles relax. Let your mind become peaceful and quiet, tranquil.

Step 2. With each exhalation, imagine that you are letting go of tensions, distractions, doubts, or self-judgment. With each inhalation, imagine that you are breathing in increased well-being, confidence, ability to accomplish the task at hand, ability to imagine and visualize desired and useful outcomes.

Step 3. Consider smiling ever so slightly—not a great big toothy grin but a half smile—as not to take yourself too seriously. After all, quieting down, relaxation, and mindfulness are not accomplishments but for delight!

Step 4. Once your body relaxes and mental chatter and emotions quiet down, allow your awareness to expand naturally. Sometimes you may feel as though opening to a vast internal space. Sometimes you will feel as though aligned with all the elements of space converging with all that lives and all of nature. Sometimes you may simply feel quiet or silent within. Allow yourself some time to rest in your expanded awareness.

Cycle 1, Experiential Exercise #1: Selecting a Text or Image That Claims Your Imagination

Step 1. Complete the Basic Instructions for All Experiential Exercises.

Step 2. When your awareness feels relaxed and alert, scan your awareness for a research topic that you find most inspiring now. Perhaps your research topic has changed in the last few days or weeks, and you have not noticed.

Step 3. Then, scan your life for an experience that exemplifies that research topic. Using your imagination, recall the experience with as much sensorial, cognitive, and emotional detail as possible. Remember what you were seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing, and sensing through touch and pressure during that experience.

Step 4. Once you have your research topic clearly in mind and have “relived” the experience through recall, invite your imagination to spontaneously evoke an art object, sculpture, painting, photo, poem, reading from scripture or prose, movie, etc. which represents your topic to you in some way. Do not censor what your imagination evokes. The object of art or text evoked may not make rational sense. If you get more than one object of art or prose, choose the one that seems most evocative of your topic at this point in time. If you have the object of art or text in your home, get it and place it in front of you. Spend some time exploring the impressions received.

Step 5. Begin an imaginary dialogue with the object of art or text, allowing it to inform you about your topic. Invite a part of your awareness to witness the dialogue so you will remember it later.

Step 6. Using your art supplies, dialogue with your art object or text by drawing, painting, or expressing yourself in words, song, or movement. Spend about 15 minutes in this imaginary dialogue.

Step 7. Once you have completed the dialogue for today, return to ordinary awareness slowly and write down thoughts, insights, and impressions in your journal or portfolio. If you danced or sang, try to capture the experience in words or image as best you can.

Step 8. Repeat this experience exercise until you have identified a text or image for Cycle 1.

Once the text or image is identified, the intuitive researcher enters Cycle 1 interpretation by engaging with the text or image daily and recording insights. Researchers should spend at least half an hour a day (or approximately an hour every other day) reading, listening, or viewing the identified text. Thoughts, ideas, daydreams, conversations, impressions, visions, and

intuitions occurring during sessions, immediately after sessions, and at other times as pertinent are recorded in a noninvasive manner, so as to least disrupt the stream of consciousness typically accompanying intuitive insight. Notebooks, hand-held tape recorders, and art supplies should be readily available to support recording of thoughts, memories, images, and impressions. This process of engagement with the text or image should be continued until the creative tension between the intuitive researcher and the text or image feels resolved and complete.

By repeatedly engaging with a potential text in this dialectic process, impressions and insights converge into a focused research topic. A suitable topic for intuitive inquiry is:

1. Compelling. For a research topic to sustain the researcher's interest and energy, it should inspire the motivations and intellectual passions of the researcher.
2. Manageable. If the researcher is a dissertation student, the topic should be potentially "do-able" in 1 year for fulltime doctoral students, including time for rest and relaxation, once the research proposal is complete. Of course, personal life events and research logistics can complicate and delay any research study as most researchers know only too well.
3. Clear. Good research topics can be expressed easily in one sentence. The more a researcher understands a research topic the simpler the basic statement of intent becomes.
4. Focused. A simple and focused topic with significant implications for human experience is preferable to large, ambiguously defined topics.
5. Concrete. The research topic should be directly related to specific behaviors, experiences, or phenomena.
6. Researchable. Some topics are too grand or do not (yet) lend themselves to scientific inquiry.

7. Promising. A topic is promising when it signifies an experience of something that is still unknown or appears to beg understanding. Since the topics pursued in intuitive inquiry tend to be at the growing tip of cultural understanding, it is often the case that only the intuitive researcher can evaluate the potential importance of a given topic at the start of the inquiry.

Identifying your intended audience or audiences at the start of a research project gives an overall direction and intention to the research. As a result, the stated topic is usually more precise and research design follows closely upon the intention of the project. Necessary decisions and changes made during the course of any research project are easier to make because the overall direction is clear. Even if the intended audience and, therefore, the direction and intention shifts, mid-course changes are easier to make when they are made consciously.

In intuitive inquiry, identifying the intended audience helps to give the writing of research reports a lively quality. I learned the importance of understanding one's audience some years ago, when I was learning to preach in my first parish job as a Christian minister. The quality of my sermons improved dramatically, when I got over worrying about my performance and realized that I was merely talking to people I loved. I was no longer nervous. My focus was on them, not me. My sole purpose was to reflect on the scripture of the day in whatever ways it might be useful for my listening congregation. Because I knew their struggles and triumphs, I spoke to these struggles and triumphs as I preached. Some years later, I learned that celebrated writers of poetry and fiction often use a similar technique. When writing, they address their writing to a real or imaginary reader who becomes their conversational focus in writing. They write to a specific person, real or imaginary, and their writing takes on the lively character of conversation.

The experiential exercise entitled Identifying Your Intended Audience can be used to provide the intuitive researcher with an “imaginary” audience for creative dialogue and to help give research reports a lively character.

Cycle 1, Experiential Exercise #2, Identifying Your Intended Audience

Step 1. Complete the Basic Instructions for All Experiential Exercises.

Step 2. When your awareness feels relaxed and alert, let your research topic surface in awareness. Let your sense of the topic come alive by thinking of a concrete personal example of the experience you wish to study in. Recreate that experience in your imagination using all your senses, as in the first experiential exercise in this chapter.

Step 3. Once the experience seems vivid and alive, imagine the intended (or anticipated) audience for the “fruits” of your dissertation or research project. Whom do you wish to serve in studying this research topic? Are you hoping that you will gain information or insights that may benefit specific individuals? Or groups? Try to be concrete by imagining precisely what these individuals or groups look like. As best you can, focus on one individual and imagine what he or she looks like. Imagine his or her facial features, eye color, the quality of her voice, etc.

Step 4. Once you have a clear sense of a person or group as your intended audience, begin an imaginary conversation with him, her, or them. Notice what he, she, or they have to say to you. If your intended audience includes animals or aspects of nature, adapt the exercise accordingly.

Step 5. Return to ordinary awareness in your own timing. Try doing this experiential exercise at least twice during the week. Record your insights and reactions in a journal or portfolio. By doing this exercise often throughout the course of your research project, you may discover several audiences claiming your attention or that your audience changes or shifts over time.

Cycle 2: Developing the Preliminary Lenses

Cycle 2 requires the intuitive researcher to lay bare his or her personal values and assumptions about the research topic as preliminary lenses *prior* to collecting original data. In identifying preliminary lenses, the researcher and eventually the reader of the final research report can evaluate the course of change and transformation that follows in Cycles 3, 4, and 5.

Time after time, researchers who contact me personally about intuitive inquiry (presumably because they like it) exclaim with a note of incredulity that “It’s so honest!”

In Cycle 2, the researcher re-engages the research topic via dialectic activities intended to help the researcher discern the values and assumptions they bring to the topic from the start. The dialectic process gives the researcher feedback that invites discernment and self-scrutiny.

Intuitive researchers are often surprised about what they learn about the topic, and even about themselves, through this process. Frankly, if researchers are not surprised by what they learn, I would wonder if they are engaged in genuine dialogue.

This dialectic process can be acted out in both introspective and expressive ways. So far, researchers who have chosen intuitive inquiry as their method tend towards introverted, introspective personality styles. Sharing this personality style myself, I easily developed procedures for Cycle 2 that capitalized on personal reflection. Researchers engage in dialectic reflection with selected texts that are directly related to the research topic and record insights in a journal or portfolio much as they did in Cycle 1. Cycle 2, Experiential Exercise #1, Selecting Theoretical, Empirical, Literary, or Historical Texts was developed to support the choice of texts.

However, and gratefully so, intuition inquiry is not just for introverts like me. Even I discover insights via conversation with others and activities related to my research topic. Especially informative are group conversations with folks who share common concerns and ask questions that I do not consciously invite. Since I teach in a graduate school, these conversations usually occur with students and colleagues. Another intuitive researcher, Sharon Hoffman (2003, 2004), felt stymied in articulating lenses. She eventually asked a close friend to interview her, recorded the interview, and easily brainstormed lenses thereafter.

Therefore, while engaged dialogue with texts is currently the most developed procedure, I would like to encourage future intuitive researchers to consider more engaged social processes for Cycle 2. For example, clarifying one's values and assumptions about the topic might be accomplished through psychodrama or engagement in social action directed related to the topic. Another option might be a series of incisive interviews of the researcher by others who are especially knowledgeable about the topic. Excellent interview procedures are now available in the field of qualitative research methods. In particular, procedures from Focus Group (e.g., Fern, 2001; Morgan, 1988, 1993; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) or Action Inquiry (e.g., Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2000; Reason, 1988, 1994) could easily be adapted for this purpose. Dialogal Approach (Halling, Rowe, & Laufer, 2005) and Insight Dialogic Inquiry (O'Fallon & Kramer, 1998) are two recent research approaches capitalizing on dialogue as a source of insight about a topic. Whatever the dialectic activities chosen, they should be recorded, of course. These "texts" are subsequently used by the researcher as a basis for the generating preliminary lenses of Cycle 2.

Selecting appropriate texts of Cycle 2 requires more studied preparation than identifying a text or image for Cycle 1. Selecting appropriate texts requires that you are already largely familiar with the theoretical, empirical, literary, or historical texts that are relevant to your topic. Usually, selecting appropriate texts for Cycle 2 takes place at the same time as the researcher is writing a review of the theoretical and research literature on the topic, as is conventional in research reports. What is unique about appropriate texts in Cycle 2 is the inclusion of literary or historical texts directly relevant to the topic. For example, in Susan Carlock's (2003) study of true joy among Christian mystics, Carlock reflected on the writings and lives of four Christian mystics. Specially, she chose to study texts written by Christian mystics who met three criteria:

(a) the mystics were described by contemporaries as overflowing with joy, (b) they wrote about their experiences of joy, and (c) their writings were available in English. The four mystics chosen for Cycle 2 were Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Brother Lawrence. Later, in Cycle 3, she chose different texts by other historical, Christian mystics. She used these historic texts because she felt that contemporary texts, including interviews, would not provide the depth of perspective she wished for her study. In a study of healing presence in a psychotherapist, Cortney Phelon (2001, 2004) chose a variety of theoretical and empirical texts describing presence for Cycle 2. These texts included philosophical writings by European phenomenologists, spiritual discourses by Zen Buddhist teachers, clinical writings by existential and transpersonal psychotherapists, and research findings in the field of nursing and pastoral care describing dimensions of presence in the care of patients and in the context of pastoral counseling. Among this wide range of sources, she chose texts that offered (a) a novel perspective on healing presence, (b) variety, and (c) communicated presence clearly.

Cycle 2, Experiential Exercise: Selecting Theoretical, Empirical, Literary, or Historical

Texts

Preparation

Acquaint yourself with the variety of potential theoretical, empirical, literary, and historical texts directly relevant to your research topic.

Step 1. Complete the Basic Instructions for All Experiential Exercises.

Step 2. When your awareness feels relaxed and alert, let your research topic surface in awareness. Allow your sense of the topic come alive by thinking of a concrete personal example of the experience you wish to study. Recreate that experience in your imagination using all your senses, as in the first experiential exercise in this chapter.

Step 3. Once the experience seems vivid and alive, mentally review the potential texts that are directly relevant to your research topic. Imagine that all the possible choices are before you in a visual field.

Step 4. Once you can visualize the possible choices, invite the texts to signal their importance to your study in some obvious way. Some texts might “light up” in your imagination or become more animate. The texts may animate by moving around and sort themselves visually. Some texts might become “larger” in your imagination. Or, nothing may happen. If so, try this experiential exercise another time.

Step 5. Once the texts are prioritized in your imagination, mentally notice their importance or sequence carefully so you will remember this later.

Step 6. Then, return to ordinary awareness slowly and write down the information you intuited through this experiential exercise in a journal or portfolio. If you danced or sang, try to capture the experience in words or image as best you can.

In intuitive inquiry, lenses are *both* a way of viewing a topic and what is seen. We all “wear” lenses all the time. Typically, often for the sake of healthy functioning, we are unaware or ignore of the many ways our personal habits, histories, biology, and culture shape how we perceive and understand our life worlds. In intuitive inquiry, the researcher attempts to discern and acknowledge these lenses as best he or she can by becoming aware of them in relationship to the research topic. Many of our values and assumptions are so deeply embedded in our biology, personalities, and cultures that identifying them is nearly impossible. They are a part of our unconscious ideology as were aspects of racism and sexism culturally “unconscious” in the West prior to the latter part of the 20th Century. Identifying a unique value or assumption requires feedback in the way of contrast to provide sufficient creative “friction” for a discernment process to take place in awareness

In intuitive inquiry, the articulation of lenses is *not* intended to identify and bracket them from influencing the research process, so as to set them aside. Rather, the method is boldly hermeneutical and personal in nature. The lenses are not removed from the research process in an effort to be “objective.” Lenses are identified in order to refine them in the course of the study. In articulating preliminary lenses, the intuitive researcher places preliminary lenses in full scrutiny

and invites their transformation, revision, removal, amplification, and refinement as cycles of interpretation proceed.

I have chosen the words “lens” and “lenses” to describe this process based on my experience in working with microscopes in a human cytology lab during my graduate school training in my 20s. I was astonished by the levels of organization revealed by different levels of magnification on a single slide preparation. Merely by flipping the lenses on my microscope, “worlds” were revealed. Before or since, I have not had such a deeply visceral experience of the nature of reality beyond my ordinary human grasp. My conventional level of understanding was shattered. Right then and there, I realized that what I see and apprehend is hugely limited by who I am biologically, intellectually, historically, and culturally. This understanding humbles and haunts always. It also leads me to employ optical words to describe the organizational and perceptual assumptions that underlie what we see and apprehend. Nonetheless, it is not the intention of intuitive inquiry to favor visual perception in using these words to signal the limits of human knowing.

Intuitive inquiry is simply bold enough to challenge the very notion of objectivity itself. The notion of objectivity is part of the unconscious ideology of the Western culture. The good news—or the bad news, depending on one’s point of view—is that what we know depends on our point of view or angle of perception. In recent years, small communities of discourse, such as phenomenological philosophy, Buddhism, and certain areas of physics, have challenged the notion of conventional objectivity.

After what often seems like a long period of reflection in Cycle 2, the identification of preliminary lenses is usually easy and fast, more analogous to brainstorming than a formal

process. At a certain point, the researcher seems to just know that he or she had read and pondered enough texts. A list of possible lenses is generated.

More variety in intuitive and intellectual styles exists than is generally acknowledged, so the ways in which intuitive researchers generate the initial list of lenses vary greatly. I tend to brainstorm them by sketching them out on paper with key words until the list feels complete. Then, I go back and sort, organize, and reword them so they will communicate well to others. I have students who “see” lenses as scenes or pictures in dreams both in Cycle 2 and later in Cycle 4. Sometimes, the initial list of lenses is rather long, as it tends to include everything that the researcher feels and thinks is important about the topic without an attempt to prioritize. The common expression, “everything including the kitchen sink” applies well to the experience. After generating the initial list, the researcher should review and prioritize the list over time in order to identify patterns or clusters of ideas. Through a process of combining, reorganizing, and identifying emerging patterns, the list of lenses typically shortens to less than a dozen. The researcher articulates his or her current understanding of the topic as preliminary lenses at the end of Cycle 2.

To date, most intuitive researchers have generated and presented the preliminary lenses of Cycle 2 and the final lenses of Cycle 4 as lists for the purposes of simplicity and ease of communication, at my encouragement. While lists may seem linear and conventional in form, Sharon Hoffman (2003, 2004) and Aurora Hill (2005) have also included symbolic, graphic presentations of the lenses that invite readers to appreciate the interrelated dimensions implicit in the lenses. I encourage future intuitive researchers to explore a variety of literary, graphic, and technologically-savvy modes for the presentation in order to convey a more wholistic, right-brained understanding of a topic, when appropriate.

Two examples of Cycle 2 lenses may clarify the process. In the study on true joy cited earlier, Carlock initially brainstormed 33 lenses. After a period of resting and withdrawal from focused attention on the writings, Carlock synthesized the list of 33 lenses to 6 for her final Cycle 2 lenses: (a) inward poverty in the giving up of pleasures of the world, (b) imitation of the life and character of Christ, (c) willing surrender of the self to God, (d) the love of God for sake of God alone, (e) desire for the direct presence of God, and (f) openness to God's love even amid God's apparent absence. To study nature as a course of inspiration in artistic expression, Catherine Manos (2005) interviewed contemporary women artists whose artistic expression cultivates an ongoing connection with the natural environment. Her "texts" for developing Cycle 2 lenses were the art and writings of two "nature" artists, namely Hildegard of Bingen and Georgia O'Keeffe. After visiting museum collections of their work and reviewing their art weekly for several months, Manos identified 15 preliminary lenses. Among these lenses were the following: (a) nature artists are aware of the flows and nuances in nature that often go unnoticed, (b) sensitivity to the natural world increases with time spent in nature while working artistically, (c) nature artists are aware of *simulacra*, aspects of nature that appear to have animal or human characteristics, and (d) the artists' spiritual lives and creativity are closely related and enhance one another.

Cycle 3: Collecting Data and Preparing Summary Reports

In this phase, the researcher (a) identifies the best source of data for the research topic, (b) develops criteria for the selection of research informants *or* selection of extant historical, empirical, or literary records, (c) collects the data, and (d) then prepares summary reports in as descriptive a manner as possible. Often there are many qualitative and quantitative data sources available, so making this crucial choice is often not an easy decision. Most important, the data

collected should inform the heart, or essence, of the research question. It is sometimes tempting to choose conveniently available data. Please do not do that. Since intuitive inquiry invites an in-depth process, choose the data sources that will satisfy your passion as a researcher. If your research participants (or other sources of data) take your inquiry in a direction that you did not anticipate, you are probably doing intuitive inquiry as it was intended: new things are being discovered.

After data collection, depending on the type of data collected, the researcher organizes and summarizes research data using conventional thematic content analysis, descriptive summaries, portraits (Moustakas, 1990), or conventional statistical analysis. These summary reports allow the researcher to review and organize the data prior to interpretation in Cycle 4 and allow readers to review the data in a descriptive form.

Cycle 3, Experiential Exercise: Identifying Best Research Informants or Extant Records for Your Study

[An experiential exercise will follow in a form similar to the first three experiential exercises provided in this chapter.]

At this point in the development of intuitive inquiry as a method, most intuitive researchers have chosen to collect original empirical data in the form of interviews or stories from research participants who meet specific criteria. However, intuitive researcher Susan Carlock (2003) chose an additional set of mystical texts related to true joy for Cycle 3 rather than collect data from contemporary Christian mystics because of the spiritual depth of the historical, literary sources on the subject. Several researchers have encouraged artistic expression as well

(Hill, 2005; Hoffman, 2003, 2004; Manos, 2005; Rickards, 2004). No intuitive researcher has collected exclusively quantitative data for Cycle 3, though it is theoretically possible to do so.

Modes of data summaries have included thematic content analysis of stories (Dufrechou, 2004; Phelon, 2001, 2004), edited interview transcripts (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2004, 2005), verbal portraits (Coleman, 2000; Rickards, 2004), verbal portraits set in historical context (Carlock, 2003), verbal portraits of the artists accompanied by illustrative examples of their art (Manos, 2005). Future intuitive researchers are encouraged to read the dissertations themselves in order to appreciate the variety of recruitment procedures, types of qualitative data collected, and data presentation style available. While case examples of Cycle 3 follow in this section, they are too brief to represent the unique and expressive styles of these intuitive researchers cited throughout this chapter.

In a study on grief, weeping, and other deep emotions in response to nature, Jay P. Dufrechou (2002, 2004) gathered stories from 40 research participants primarily through back-and-forth e-mail communication with participants. The majority of his participants were recruited through e-mail exchanges with members of the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS). Dufrechou encouraged participants to write in the style of embodied writing, a style of writing intended to portray life experiences in a lived, embodied way full of sensory, visceral, and kinesthetic detail (Anderson, 2001, 2002a, 2002b). In Cycle 3, he presented a conventional qualitative thematic analysis of the stories and presented this descriptive summary of the data with extended quotes from the participants' stories. The themes presented were ecological grief, healing, feelings of insignificance, sustenance, longing for deep sensory connection or harmony with nature, experience of God through deep sensory connection with nature, awareness of brokenness or loss of source, and return to experiencing oneself as part of nature.

Sharon Hoffman (2003, 2004) studied personal storytelling as a mode of compassionate connection. The initial part of the study involved creativity-based collaboration with a woman who told her story of living with breast cancer. In Cycle 3, the woman's story was presented to 95 participants in an interactive, mixed media gallery exhibition in San Francisco, CA. The exhibition featured photography, poetry, painting, narrative, a breast casting, an audio recording of the teller, and music directly related to the story. Critical design features of the exhibit included (a) a ritual entry into the space, (b) an aesthetically pleasing space, (c) the positioning of stations for private reflection and expression by participants, (d) near museum quality story materials, and (e) opportunities to physically engage with the materials. The latter included an opportunity to try on hats worn by the storyteller after receiving chemotherapy and losing her hair. The general public was invited along with friends and acquaintances of the researcher. Stations near each display invited participants to give written feedback or draw. After leaving the exhibit area, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire about the exhibit and their responses. The researcher's aesthetic responses to the participants' creative expressions were also included in the data. Data summaries were narrative in style.

In a study on the role of consciously chosen "dark" activities on women's psycho-spiritual development, Diane Rickards (2004) interviewed Irish, French, Dutch, Belgian, Polish, Russian, and American born women who engaged in espionage activities during World War II. Her work grew out of her interest in "understanding the feminine nature traditionally attributed to feminine shadow in Western culture" through the "authentic stories of women who worked undercover in enemy territory" (p.iii). Rickards' recruitment of these women, now in their 80s and 90s, has taken many forms: Internet sources, newspaper articles, networking, word of mouth, archives, and military contacts. Rickards chose and interviewed women who met the following criteria: (a)

worked undercover in dangerous territory in the WW II era for a Resistance group and/or a military organization, and (b) were of sound mind to complete the interview process.

Confidentiality was strictly observed, including the shredding of her own records at the end of the inquiry. Data collection has taken the form of in-depth interviews, often inclusive of the women's photos, art, or other personal expression. Rickards also collected quantitative demographic and historical data, when appropriate. Her Cycle-3 data summaries offer literary portraits for each woman, using procedures in Heuristic Research (Moustakas, 1990).

Cycle 4: Transforming and Refining Lenses

Utilizing the hermeneutical lenses developed in Cycle 2, the researcher then interprets data in order to modify, refute, remove, reorganize, and expand his or her understanding of the research topic. This cycle invites researchers to expand and refine their pre-understandings by incorporating the experiences of others and represents the researcher's summary of findings based on his or her interpretation of Cycle 3 data. By comparing Cycle 2 and Cycle 4 lenses, the reader of an intuitive inquiry can evaluate the changes and refinements in the researcher's understanding of the research topic.

Throughout intuitive inquiry, the most important feature of interpreting data is intuitive breakthroughs, those illuminating moments when the data begin to shape themselves before the researcher. Patterns seem to reveal themselves with each fresh set of information. I usually work with a paper and pencil, drawing small and large circles—representing themes or stray ideas—and shifting the patterns and modifying the relationships and size of the circles, rather like a mobile Venn diagram. I know other researchers who work more verbally—bringing together ideas in an array of interrelated themes, narratives, sequences, or irreducible features of the

experience studied. This interpretative process may go on for several days or weeks with rest or incubation periods between work sessions.

Perhaps more than in any of the other cycles of intuitive inquiry, the researcher's familiarity with his or her intuitive style is key to the success of Cycle 4. Knowing how one's intuitive process works makes it easier to cultivate and invite breakthrough insights. So impressed am I with the variety of intuitive styles that I sometimes feel that there are as many intuitive styles as there are people. Intuitive style seems to depend on our unique personalities and histories and often what we think are our worst qualities. For example, my over-sensitivity to changes in communication patterns in groups makes me a good social psychologist. I have students who are so emotionally sensitive that they are remarkably adept at clinical diagnosis or noticing non-verbal signals than others. In an earlier section of this chapter entitled What is Intuition?, I have identified five types of intuition. The experiential exercise entitled What is Your Intuitive Style? invites you to explore and identify your own intuitive style.

Cycle 4, Experiential Exercise: What Is Your Intuitive Style?

[An experiential exercise will follow in a form similar to the first three experiential exercises provided in this chapter.]

Three case examples of Cycle 4 lenses, from recent intuitive inquiries, follow:

Becky Coleman (2000) studied the process of healing obesity in 6 large women, including herself as both researcher and participant. All the women viewed their issues with food and weight as walking "the fine line between sustaining unconditional positive regard for themselves and honoring their own healthy need for change" (p. 2). Coleman's (2000) final

interpretation of the women's stories and discussions revealed six lenses that characterized the women's relationship to right-body size, weight, and embodiment. She reported these interpretations along with extended quotes and creative expressions provided by participants.

Below, a quote from one of the participants or a description by Coleman accompanies each lens:

1. Motivation to change. "I'm taking the time that it takes to take care of myself . . . The idea is not to lose weight, it's to get my body healthy and let it find its own particular weight in its own time (p. 155)"
2. Wisdom of space. "Tara's story included [symbols and images] about using her big 'taking up space' energy to keep herself safe in some very threatening situation as a child." (p. 189).
3. Learning and knowing. In discovering a "right" body size for themselves, the women in this study incorporated their own unique ways of knowing, including owning their obesity expertise, a sympathy with the culture's "mind-body split in girls and women," acknowledgment of "right body size" congruent with each women's knowledge of her own needs, and collaborative knowing (pp. 195, 221-228).
4. Love as power. "What's real important to me . . . is that [a commercial diet plan] comes from the masculine rules, and it's external, outside of me. When I have the limit setting from inside myself, it's the heart thing" (p. 233).
5. Call to differentiate and accept the tensions of personal growth. "I went through my own process of being judgmental about [other women's weight loss methods] . . . before . . . I understood that we all have our own ways. (p. 257)
6. Meaning Making. "[Marion Woodman] was one of the first writers that I read who didn't see weight as a matter of calories, counting calories kind of stuff..." (p. 277).

Aurora Hill (2005) used intuitive inquiry to study the experience of joy as remembered in a circle of 12 Native American women. Supported by tribal leader, Grandmother Doris Riverbird, Hill invited women of the Turtle Island Chautauqua and Eastern Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania to a joy-memory-telling ritual. In a ceremonial circle, women told and shared their memories of joy. The ritual was recorded and transcribed. Hill based her Cycle 4 lenses on transcripts of the event and an independent interview with the professional court recorder. Hill's Cycle 4 lenses described joy as a multi-faceted experience often like an event *or* state of being accompanied by strong feelings. Characteristics of joy were (a) a truth quality expressed in the presence of goodness and beauty; (b) a mysterious quality expressed in a sense of the magical, transitory, and elusive; (c) a somatic quality expressed in proprioceptive and kinesthetic language among the women; (d) a positive quality expressed as gratitude and appreciation; (e) a spiritual quality expressed through Native American teachings and practices; (f) a life-affirming quality expressed in a sense of unconditional acceptance and being blessed, (g) a co-creative quality expressed through shared life in community; (h) energy and presence; (i) an awareness of loss when joy is not present in their lives, (j) range and variety of states of consciousness, (k) specific time and place associations, and (l) a strong association with light in its many nuances.

Because it is so important to clearly identify the degree of change in the researcher's perspective between the lenses of Cycle 2 and Cycle 4, Vipassana Esbjörn-Hargens (2003, 2004) developed three categories for the presentation of her Cycle 4 lenses: new, change, and seed lenses. New lenses signify breakthroughs in understanding that were entirely new and unexpected, change lenses signify a significant progression of change from lenses presented in Cycle 2, and seed lenses signify lenses that were nascent in the lenses of Cycle 2 but greatly nuanced and developed in the course of the intuitive inquiry. This tri-part formulation for the

presentation of Cycle 4 lenses spare readers the time and effort necessary to make the in-depth comparisons between the lenses in Cycle 2 and Cycle 4 themselves. Esbjörn-Hargens identified four new lenses: (a) childhood experiences, from visions to trauma, serve as catalysts for spiritual sensitivity in the body; (b) the body serves as a barometer, where intuitions become physicalized; (c) transformation of the body occurs on a cellular level; and (d) being embodied is a deliberate choice. Her change lenses included her “central interpretation” that women devoted to a spiritual path “tend to go through a process of disidentification and re-identification with the body. Two subsidiary change lenses included (a) sexuality is integral to embodiment and (b) bringing spirit into matter as purposeful. Her six seed lenses included (a) spiritual maturation includes an energetic awakening of the body; (b) boundaries—between you and me, world and self—are experienced as permeable; (c) self reference, or awareness of ‘I,’ is fluid and flexible and is not fixed in the body; (d) the contemplation of death brings into focus the immediacy of life; (e) women are teachers of conscious embodiment; (f) inquiring into the relationship between body and spirit deepens and enlivens one’s experience of living as a body.

Cycle 5: Integration of Findings and Literature Review

In Cycle 5, the intuitive researcher stands back from the entire research process to date and takes into consideration all aspects of the study anew, as though drawing a larger hermeneutical circle around the hermeneutical circle prescribed by the forward and return arcs of the study. In a conventional empirical study, the researcher always returns to the literature review conducted prior to data collection and reevaluates that theoretical and empirical literature in light of the results and vice versa. The final integrative arc of intuitive inquiry is more demanding still. Not only must the researcher reevaluate the literature in light of the results of the study, but evaluate efficacy of the interpretive process of the five cycles. In other words, the researcher

must determine what is valuable about the study and what is not, sorting through the assets and liabilities of the interpretative cycles and determine what can now be said about the research topic, including what she or he feels is still undisclosed about the topic. Whereas the final interpretation of a study is important in all research, given the mores of positivism, conventional research tends to emphasize the results more than the discussion sections of a research report. In intuitive inquiry, the researcher's final interpretation is decisive.

Cycle 5, Experiential Exercise: What Is Left Unsaid? Possibilities Unimagined?

[An experiential exercise will follow in a form similar to the first three experiential exercises provided in this chapter.]

Challenges And Characteristics of Intuitive Inquiry

It is not easy to do Intuitive inquiry well. Aside from demands of its in-depth scrutiny, intuitive inquiry requires a postmodern perspective not easily achieved in the context of the positivistic sensibilities still widespread in the human sciences. Intuitive researchers must think unconventionally and creatively and often work rather independently. The hermeneutic basis and procedures of intuitive inquiry over a world reality in flux and mutable and, therefore, challenge conventional notions of a static worldview that is separate and distinguishable from the knower. Within its interpretive structure, intuitive inquiry encourages new visions of the future and makes them possible.

I am sometimes asked, "Is what you do really science?" I answer "yes," knowing full well that the responsibility of demonstrating the value and efficacy of an intuitive inquiry belongs to the intuitive researcher herself or himself.

The challenges and characteristics of intuitive inquiry are one in the same, as follows:

1. Being Rigorously Subjective.

Scrupulous documentation marks the difference between everyday problem solving and scientific inquiry. Everyday, we conjecture about relationships between one thing and another and watch the workings of the world to surmise whether we are right or wrong. In science, though, we keep records of what happens and the surrounding conditions and, if we are not sure whether something is relevant, we record it anyway. Since intuitive inquiry uses intuitions as data and insight for interpretation, intuitions also need to be recorded along with specifics of the context and manner of expression.

Often, the inchoate nature of intuition tends to resist record keeping, requiring patience, skill, and sometimes sheer force of will to keep records of intuitive impressions and their context. It is not easy to blend the left-brained skills of documentation with the more right-brained skills typical of intuition. My first formal attempt to encourage such documentation was to propose that researchers use a Process Grid (Anderson, 2000). The Process Grid has not been popular with my own students. Therefore, my best suggestion now is based on the insights of Sharon Hoffman (2003, 2004). She was unable to use the Process Grid for documentation, finding that it disrupted her intuitive process. Instead, she set an intention for witnessing and remembering the intuitive process after it had taken place and recorded the insights, the context, expression, and process *after* the event. I suspect that documentation is somewhat inimical to the intuition process generally and every intuitive researcher is going to have to find a distinctive solution that both allows for documentation and cultivation of intuition.

2. Telling the Truth No Matter What.

An important aspect of rigorous documentation in intuitive inquiry is telling the entire truth about the course of the research endeavor, including (a) mistakes made, (b) procedures and plans that did not work, (c) the researcher's apprehensions and puzzlements, (d) the process and content of intuitive interpretation, and (e) what remains unresolved or problematic about the topic or the method. Given the degree of unconscious processing of information there is no way to know ahead of time what will be relevant to interpretation. There are many famous "accidents" in science and so-called mistakes can be venue for important discoveries. Record and report them.

An intuitive inquiry is also not considered successful unless the reader of the research report understands the researcher's style of intuitive processing and the matter in which intuitions manifested in the course of the interpretative cycles, including the twists, slow downs, dead ends, and flow of the unconscious journey. See the validity section below for more pointers about writing style in intuitive inquiry. The most straightforward way to reveal the intuitive process is to give an extended example (e.g., Esbjörn-Hargens (2004).

3. Avoiding Circularity.

The intuitive process itself tends to carry an unfortunate air of certainty. Believing that intuition is more accurate or cogent than other sources of information is seductive and inopportune. Therefore, intuitive researchers must be particularly alert to seeking data likely to contradict their values and assumptions and openly welcome anomalies in the data. Feelings of confusion and bewilderment are usually good signs that intuitive researchers are encountering what they do not know and yet seek to understand.

There is no point in doing research if researchers are merely circling around their initial ideology. In intuitive inquiry, the articulation of the interpretative lenses in Cycle 2 and again in Cycle 4 exposes the presence, absence, or degree of circularity in the findings to any careful reader. The degree of change between Cycle 2 and Cycle 4 lenses is at least some measure of the intuitive researcher's willingness to change. Some changes are likely to be major, others minor. The new, change, and seed lenses proposed by Esbjörn (2003) provides a reader-friendly way to make substantive and subtle changes obvious to the reader in Cycle 4.

4. Trickstering and Auspicious Bewilderment.

In indigenous cultures worldwide, tricksters open gateways of awareness and insight. Tricksters are playful, mischievous, and sometimes outrageous. Particular to culture, coyotes, ravens, fairies, leprechauns, and pookas (a Irish goblin) gift humans with insight, usually in the context of making us feel rather foolish. Coyotes play tricks. Ravens steal and turn the stolen goods into something else. Fairies appear as lovers. Leprechauns give us gold that vanishes on touch. Pookas gleefully take us for a rowdy ride—an auspicious bewilderment!

Auspicious bewilderment often signals renewed understanding. Contradictory stories and examples move us deeper into the intricacies of any topic of inquiry. Nuances that do not fit generate new insights. Confusion takes us in an unanticipated direction. Paradox challenges our assumptions and so on. Methodologically, the nature of intuitive inquiry sets the stage for new ideas to happen. They often do. The research project will take longer, require more work, and probably cost more money, and it will also be more complete and useful in the end. Weeks, even months, of feeling auspiciously

bewildered—a very different experience than depression, by the way—is not unusual for an intuitive researcher. While bewildered, keep records and stay with the process as it is. If it gets to be too much, rest, sleep, take a break, or gently put the research project on the "back burner" for a while. Return to the project again when refreshed.

More dangerous to intuitive inquiry is thinking we know what we are doing, being confident that we are on top of it, or having fixed ideas about the findings before we have finished collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the full complement of data. The nature of transformative experience often demands periods of confusion to be more fully understood. If we go for long time periods of not being surprised, beware. Something might be wrong. Is the topic so well understood that there is nothing new to say? What is happening to contradictory information? Is the researcher bored? Exhausted? Otherwise preoccupied? In denial? Avoiding the inevitable move to the heart of the topic? If so, do not panic. Rest and come back when feeling refreshed and unwilling to spend energy going in the wrong direction.

Experiential Exercise: Trickstering on Your Own Behalf When Stuck or Bored

[An experiential exercise will follow in a form similar to the first three experiential exercises provided in this chapter.]

5. Maintaining a Postmodern and Culturally Inclusive Perspective. Intuitive inquiry is a postmodern and culturally inclusive method. Conventional reality is not objectively present but rather constructed by the biological, cognitive, and cultural structures and habits we inhabit (e.g., Johnson, 1987; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). Reality does not exist apart from the embodied participation of being a specific human being with a

particular physiology, history, personality, and culture but is interpretative and intersubjective in the way Ken Wilber (2000) is defining intersubjective in his four-quadrant model of human knowing. Human subjectivity is a source of knowing not just solipsistic expression or opinion.

Western researchers are often so intent on separating the personal from scientific inquiry that they often fail to render candid opinions even at the conclusion of research reports. In intuitive inquiry, however, researchers are required to interpret data, basing their interpretations on what they feel are important and inspiring about their findings and speculating about the possibilities and visions of the future to which their findings point. Student researchers often need lots of support from supervisors to maintain the interpretive perspective required by intuitive inquiry because a postmodern perspective counters the culture of conventional science (and sometimes some dissertation or thesis committee members).

6. Writing in Your Own Voice.

Scientific reports are easier to read, more interesting and persuasive, and findings more interpretable when researchers write in their own distinctive writerly voice. I was trained as an experimental social psychologist in the 1970s. Scientific reports were not only expected to be exact but emotionally flat in style, resulting in a sameness from report to report, at least for me. These days are gone especially in qualitative research reports.

In intuitive inquiry researchers are also expected to write compassionately and well. Research reports should convey the distinctive feelings and experiences that the researcher brought to the topic and to present findings in a matter that allows for sympathetic resonance (Anderson, 1998, 2000) in the reader as they read. The nature and

process of intuitive inquiry begs authenticity. If the authentic voice of the mind, body, and spirit of the inquiry is not revealed in the report, the study is not interpretable and, therefore, not valid as an intuitive inquiry. The very success of the method depends on the researcher's ability to express him or herself uniquely and courageously in the course of the study, and especially in writing given that scientific reports are still primarily written texts. See the validity section below for more information about the relationship of sympathetic resonance to validity.

Experiential Exercise: Finding Voice

[An experiential exercise will follow in a form similar to the first three experiential exercises provided in this chapter.]

7. Favoring the Particular and the Personal.

As has already been said, intuitive inquiry values the researcher's unique experience and interpretations over common patterns that might be observed externally in the experiences of others. Knowledge is always personal be it individually or culturally wrought. In 1890, William James (1950) put the matter like so:

Why, from Plato and Aristotle downwards, philosophers should have vied with each other in scorn of the knowledge of the particular, and in adoration of that of the general, is hard to understand, seeing that the more adorable knowledge ought to be that of the more adorable things, and that the "things" of worth are all concretes and singulars. The only value of universal characters is that they help us, by reasoning, to know new truths about individual things. The restriction of one's meaning, moreover, to an individual thing, probably requires even more

complicated brain-processes than its extension to all the instances of a kind; and the mere mystery, as such, of the knowledge, is equally great, whether generals or singulars of the things known. In sum, therefore the traditional Universal-worship can only be called a bit of perverse sentimentalism, a philosophic 'idol of the cave.' (pp. 479-480)

8. Imagining the Possible.

Intuitive inquiry seeks to find trajectories for new ways of being human in the world.

Like all qualitative methods, it provides thick descriptions that carefully detail the time, place, context, and culture of findings. However, intuitive inquiry also seeks to speculate about the possibilities implicit in the data, especially of subtle and complex human phenomena. Implicit in intuitive inquiry is a sense of hope that researchers are called to explore topics that require attention by the culture at large and that the intuitive researcher's personal exploration of the topic will see, imagine, or fashion human experience freshly. In this sense, intuitive inquiry is both practical and visionary, allowing that research findings can provide new options for the world that is changing and manifesting anew in every moment.

9. Risking Personal Change and Transformation. Doing intuitive inquiry can be a whirlwind and overwhelming experience for some. Hermeneutics, generally, and intuitive inquiry, specifically, is rather like chasing a moving target. If you are doing intuitive inquiry well, you are likely to wonder if you are changing or if data are changing before your eyes. From a hermeneutical perspective, both are changing because insight changes what can be seen. Intuitive researchers are often changed through each cycle, thereby bringing a fresh perspective to the next cycle of interpretation.

10. Toward Wholeness. I was recently reminded by a current graduate student that implicit in the cycles of intuitive inquiry is a movement toward wholeness and wellness (Diane Rickards, personal communication, September 13, 2005). Intuitive inquiry does not intend transform something that is necessarily a problem in the individual researcher or culture. Rather, aligned with the field of humanistic, transpersonal, and positive psychology, the method asks researchers to claim and aver a topic that calls them toward an even greater wholeness. For most intuitive researchers, that claim is intuitively identified within the inchoate prompting of the body and psyche. The path forward is uncharted, yet guided by the healing processes natural to all living systems.

Validity in Intuitive Inquiry

In recent years, a number of researchers (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mertens, 1998) have proposed different types of validity relevant to qualitative research. All of their concerns have directly influenced the manner in which I have discussed the challenges and characteristics of intuitive inquiry above, particularly in the sections headed (a) Being Rigorously Subjective, (b) Telling the Truth No Matter What, (c) Avoiding Circularity, and (d) Writing in Your Own Voice. Intuitive inquiry requires researchers to report high levels of detail. Such detail allows readers to evaluate for themselves whether or not the researcher has made reasonable conclusions based on the data collected and whether the procedures are adequate to support the conclusions reported, considerations appropriate to internal and external validity.

In intuitive inquiry and other methods aspiring to a postmodern perspective, external validity concerns the *value* of the reported findings to the receiving audiences, over and above whether findings demonstrate generalizability to other situations in the conventional sense. Intended and unexpected audiences or readers may include (a) other researchers, (b) client

populations, (c) the general public, (d) unique ethnic or minority groups, or (e) professional groups aligned with the human sciences, such as nurses, physicians, therapists, and social workers. Traditionally, findings are considered most valuable if they contribute to understanding a topic and related theory. However, the value of an intuitive inquiry—and perhaps any study—may rest more in its capacity to help readers ask good questions of their own lives or of experiences they wish to understand. Therefore, I propose two new bases to determine validity for qualitative research, namely Resonance and Efficacy Validity.

Resonance Validity

Resonance Validity refers to the capacity of a study and its findings to produce sympathetic resonance in its readers. As a principle, sympathetic resonance is best introduced with an analogy. If I pluck a string on a cello on one side a room, a string of a cello on the opposite side will begin to vibrate, too. Striking a tuning fork will vibrate another tuning fork some distance away. Resonance communicates and connects directly and immediately without intermediaries, except for the conduits of air and space. The principle of sympathetic resonance suggests that research can function more like poetry in its capacity for immediate apprehension and recognition of an experience spoken by another and yet be true for oneself, as well.

Using the principle of sympathetic resonance, research procedures can evaluate the generalizability or transferability of findings by noting consonance, dissonance, or neutrality in response to Cycle 4 lenses across groups and subgroups. Using resonance panels composed of representatives from different groups or subgroups, a kind of mapping of the generalizability or transferability of a research finding is created. A modified sociogram, constructed with concentric circles of resonance, designates subgroups wherein the research findings are immediately apprehended and recognized or reacted to with dissonance or neutrality. Resonance

panels can be progressive, each resonance panel increasing the number of iterative cycles by one. Regardless of the number of iterative cycles in an intuitive inquiry, the final cycle integrates the final set of interpretive lenses with prior theory and empirical research relevant to the topic of inquiry.

Several researchers have used resonance panels to evaluate findings in this way, employing group interview procedures like those used in Focus Group research (e.g., Krueger, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). In a study on betrayal by a spiritual teacher in the Zen Buddhist tradition, Caryl Gopfert (1999) asked a resonance panel of Zen Buddhist teachers and students who had not experienced betrayal from teachers to respond to the unique features she had identified in the stories told by her research participants. Her results then allowed for clarity in portraying the resonant and non-resonant features of betrayal by a spiritual teacher across two independent selected groups. Similarly, in a study on the healing presence of a psychotherapist, Cortney Phelon (2001, 2004) presented her findings to mature psychotherapists in small groups and in individual interviews. In so doing, she was able to evaluate the generalizability of her penultimate lenses, refine them further, and create a theoretical model for future investigation.

Efficacy Validity

Conventionally, a study is considered important to understanding and theory if it can be replicated in other situations, especially similar situations. However, in the human sciences, I believe that most researchers value a study if they resonate with the reported findings and the findings give their own lives more meaning, value, and understanding. Specifically, when I read a study, I am both researcher and ordinary person trying to make sense of my life. Sometimes, a terrific study merely gets me thinking in new ways, asking questions of life that I never asked before. Much of good research, especially ground-breaking research, is more about the creative

jumps and insights than about constructing theory upon another theory one building block upon another. Therefore, research that inspires, delights, and prods us to insight and action is at least as valuable to the scientific enterprise as more technical reports that will inevitably follow. For the purposes of intuitive inquiry, validity refers to the capacity of a study and its report as a whole to render added value to human life.

Efficacy Validity supports the notion that a reader of a research report will change as a result of encountering the findings. The same could be equally said of the researcher and research participants, as I have said above. Therefore, a study is high in Efficacy Validity if it answers affirmatively to such questions as:

1. Was the researcher transformed in the course of conducting the study? Is the reader transformed in some way, as she or he reads?
2. Did the researcher gain more compassion and depth of understanding in the course of the study?
3. In reading the report, do readers gain compassion and depth of understanding about themselves, the topic, or the world?
4. Is the research report written with such clarity and authenticity that readers feel that they know the researcher personally?
5. Does the study provide a new vision for the future?
6. Are readers inspired by the findings and the vision provided by the study?
7. Are readers moved toward action and service in the world?

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| Experiential Exercise: From Research Findings to Action in the World |
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[An experiential exercise will follow in a form similar to the first three experiential exercises in this chapter.]

Future Directions for Intuitive Inquiry

I created intuitive inquiry in order to “carve” new space or capacity within the scientific enterprise to employ intuitive processes. Now, that the formative stage of developing intuitive inquiry is complete, I feel rather like a parent watching a child graduate from high school. It is time for me to let go and watch how intuitive inquiry is used and shaped by others. While intuitive inquiry has been only 9 years in development, the seeds for intuitive inquiry were sown over 50 years ago when I was gymnast and learned that a net and a spotter helped me to risk. I was a better gymnast for the help of the net and spotters that caught me. In like manner, the five interpretative cycles of intuitive inquiry represent the supportive structure that guide and hold the creative research process of intuitive inquiry. The cycles invite researchers and research participants—and eventually users of the research findings—to confidently inhabit their intuitive ways of knowing and to interpret for themselves the visionary perspectives suggested by the data. Within a positivistic paradigm of current science, doing so is risky and requires permission and safety. I developed intuitive inquiry to help fill that need. Each interpretative cycle has a unique purpose, and I hope that future intuitive researchers do *not* skip any of the cycles in the interests of time and expediency. That said, I trust that intuitive researchers will adapt the method and procedures idiosyncratically to optimize their own intuitive styles, blend the procedures with both qualitative and quantitative methods, expand procedures to new applications, and evolve it farther than I have taken intuitive inquiry thus far.

In many ways, the development of intuitive inquiry has been an intuitive inquiry in its own right, cycling in and out of my own research entanglements and those of my supervisees—and it has been great, good fun. It has been full of spontaneity, serendipity, and auspicious bewilderment. I never quite knew what would come next—and, frankly, I did not care. Similarly, the spaciousness and permission given by intuitive inquiry invites a discourse in science that positions researchers, together with others, at the leading edge of that which is visionary, inspiring, and new in the realms of ideas and theory.

Specifically, a promising aspect of intuitive inquiry is its potential to synthesize prior theory and research on a topic and render theoretical integrations in Cycles 4 and 5. It is not possible to do intuitive inquiry well without maintaining a big-picture perspective throughout the research process. Therefore, intuitive inquiry encourages theory building because the method does not allow for a reductive perspective. The insistence of the interpretative cycles to stay close to intuitive promptings is not an easy path to travel, because Euro-American culture tends to suppress intuitive processes, especially body-based knowings such as proprioception and kinesthesia. Nonetheless, be brave! This deep listening and witnessing to intuition in research has a greater capacity to unfold into new ways of theorizing and envisioning that are closer to lived experience than do the rationalistic styles that dominate much of world culture and scientific discourse. The iterative cycles of deep listening and witnessing expand into theoretical formulations over time in a manner akin to Eugene Gendlin's (1991, 1992, 1997) descriptions of "thinking beyond patterns."

In the late 1960s, Abraham Maslow (1968, 1971) recommended that we explore the farther reaches of human experience by studying those individuals who had self-actualized their potential the most. Similarly, intuitive inquiry encourages the actualization of the researchers'

capacity to envision creative possibilities that are nascent in what they are gleaning from their creative exchanges with others. Enjoy!

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