

TOWARDS THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND A REFLEXIVE BODY OF PRACTICE.

Section Two Overview.

In this section I will present the different ways in which I began to explore the implications for research of the different theories and methodologies I had considered to date. As I attempted to find a focus for the research which held the questions I was asking, and as I tested out different methodologies as to their suitability for my purposes and for the setting, I also began the process of capturing experience as I went. As I have already mentioned in Chapter Two in which I describe Narrative Inquiry, I did not have an explicit model for story telling as a methodology at this stage. I was searching for an authentic means of recording and reporting on my experience in the research field and story-telling emerged as a form for doing so, but without reference to the wider research literature. This section reports on these developments.

I started in the form of a reflective diary, augmented with numerous notes and journals in which I recorded observations, reflections and descriptions of events. These ranged from the informal to the formal. Some were cryptic phrases or notes I made to myself in the middle of meetings or conversations, some were jottings in my journal in the middle of the night when a vital idea occurred, and others would be more careful and considered descriptions of a series of events over preceding days

As I needed to start communicating to others about what I was doing, I wrote more carefully crafted accounts, bringing material together to link action, reflection and theory. I discussed these in draft version, with supervisors, fellow researchers in the Bath group, and with family. They were changed according to comments, questions or new understandings, until they authentically represented my experiences at the time and allowed me as a researcher to take meaning from them.

As I mentioned in connection with the New Zealand stories in the previous section, I discovered through this process that the writing up of research experience became a form of inquiry in itself. As I wrote the more crafted accounts, new meanings suggested themselves which then enriched further action and reflection.

This was not the smooth cyclical process implied by this description, rather it was a halting, discontinuous process as I struggled with the boundaries of what should be part of the research process. As I wrote reflective diaries I found that what I intended to be brief notes from the day with a few observations could easily become two and three hour sessions of writing. One reflection would lead to another and yet another, as experiences in the present linked to those from the past. There were times when, because of this, I could not face writing in my diary at the end of a tiring day at work. I did not want to cope with a cascade of reflections which led every which way in time and space.

Furthermore, for some time I felt I was waiting for the 'research proper' to begin and saw my day to day noticing of my practice as being 'merely preparation'. I started with the clear idea that I would use Cooperative Inquiry, but as that prospect seemed increasingly difficult to achieve I began to stumble. I kept diaries and wrote accounts of this process, in preparation for the time when I could start a research project, preferably using Cooperative Inquiry. But even this noticing of practice and day to day experience was difficult. What to notice, what to capture and write about, what to include, became problematic. I became increasingly vexed by my seeming inability to 'start the research proper' and eventually reached a crisis point. This led to an analysis of gender and the role it played in both the production and resolution of the crisis. Thus 'how to engage in research?' became the key question for a while and this is also the subject of the chapters in this section.

As I began to produce more crafted written accounts of my experiences, I wanted to capture the complexity of what was happening. I wanted not only to acknowledge the influence of the past, but also to do justice to what was happening in the present. I wanted the reader to have a rich enough sense of the setting and the action that they could then follow how I was construing meaning and making sense of my experiences within that setting. These intentions expressed themselves in a series of questions I posed for myself about writing at the time.

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- How can I convey in writing the experiences I bring into the research which influence who I am, how I see things and what is important for me?
- How can I best represent and express the multiplicities of experience I am having as I engage in the research?
- How do I know that what I have written is the best representation of the situation at hand as I see it, that it is 'true' for me?
- How can I write respectfully and responsibly about other people who have been a part of the experiences I am inquiring into?
- How can I convey to the reader that this is authentic and genuinely gained knowledge, so that it will seem 'true' to them?

In thinking about how I might answer these questions, I considered three possible sources. Firstly, I considered that the various criteria for rigour and quality of knowing from the research methodologies could also be a source of criteria for quality writing. In the first chapter in this section, I will consider the criteria which seemed suitable and which informed my writing to varying degrees.

Secondly, the above questions also reflected my own notion of being 'authentic' in life and so they led me to think about the principles which express this. The following are principles of personal authenticity which I tried to keep available to me throughout the research, and which form a second source of criteria for writing.

- Being true to my own values.
- Being open to others in a genuinely inquiring way.
- Noticing my own assumptions at work and being willing to amend them in the light of new knowledge.
- Being prepared, within the limits of the relationship in question, to surface my own framings, purposes and understandings of the phenomena at hand, and to support others in doing likewise.
- Working with others collaboratively while at the same time acknowledging differences according to gender, culture or social role.
- Being respectful of others' epistemology while retaining the right to challenge it.
- Affording others the rights I hold for myself.
- Assuming that others wish to do things as well as possible within the constraints of their own history and current life circumstances.

It is important to note here that I do not always achieve this and can become impatient. I am inclined to 'work too hard' and be 'too helpful' when I see others struggling and this can sometimes be perceived as controlling or 'lecturing'. On other occasions I can be seen as 'too respectful' or 'too patient' and leave people wondering where I stand. There are contradictions in this too, because I tend not to afford rights to myself which I afford others. For example, I tend to assume that if things do not work out as hoped then it is because I have not worked hard enough.

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Thirdly, I used my own set of guidelines from the theory and practice of therapy. This comes from a network of assumptions about people and change which has developed in a reflexive relationship with practice over the years. I use it as a navigational aid, to answer questions about 'Am I on the right track with this client? As I began writing, these assumptions emerged more explicitly as informing my accounts of practice around individual clients. In this section I will make explicit some of these guidelines and the way I believe they help answer the questions of authenticity I set myself.

In this thesis I am making much more explicit how these sources informed earlier writing and earlier drafts. The importance of doing so now comes from a recognition that these early research experiences constituted 'inquiry', as did the writing about them. It took some time for this recognition to occur to me.

The chapters in this section will therefore attempt three things:

- To describe early attempts at exploring different methodologies in developing a focus and finding a form for research.
- To consider in more detail the criteria for quality of knowing associated with the different approaches.
- To look at the warrants I took from the various sources to develop a style of writing as authentic representation of research experiences.