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Considering the Oneness: Reviewing Valerie J. Janesick's Contemplative Qualitative Inquiry: Practicing the Zen of Research Mindfully

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Abstract

In *Contemplative Qualitative Inquiry: Practicing the Zen of Research*, Valerie Janesick offers an impressive, well-organized journey into the essence of what qualitative inquiry intends to offer the world. Janesick weaves Buddhist lessons throughout each chapter so that the reader feels both transformed and at home with the material. In 9 chapters and 8 appendices, Janesick builds a roadmap for the researcher, as only a mindful and fully centered approach can uncover another person's experience and share it in a way that is heartfelt and real. This review introduces the term contemplative qualitative inquiry to begin a much needed conversation about what qualitative inquiry truly is. Janesick packs each chapter with valuable content for both the novice and experienced researcher, but adds the clear voice of mindfulness as the critical piece of good qualitative inquiry.

Keywords

Qualitative Inquiry, Contemplative Practice, Zen Buddhism

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Considering the Oneness: Reviewing Valerie J. Janesick's *Contemplative Qualitative Inquiry: Practicing the Zen of Research Mindfully*

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In Contemplative Qualitative Inquiry: Practicing the Zen of Research, Valerie Janesick offers an impressive, well-organized journey into the essence of what qualitative inquiry intends to offer the world. Janesick weaves Buddhist lessons throughout each chapter so that the reader feels both transformed and at home with the material. In 9 chapters and 8 appendices, Janesick builds a roadmap for the researcher, as only a mindful and fully centered approach can uncover another person's experience and share it in a way that is heartfelt and real. This review introduces the term contemplative qualitative inquiry to begin a much needed conversation about what qualitative inquiry truly is. Janesick packs each chapter with valuable content for both the novice and experienced researcher, but adds the clear voice of mindfulness as the critical piece of good qualitative inquiry. Keywords: Qualitative Inquiry, Contemplative Practice, Zen Buddhism

Valerie Janesick's book *Contemplative Qualitative Inquiry: Practicing the Zen of Research* (2015) is a beautiful, thoughtful work of art that compels the reader to consider the oneness of qualitative research and mindfulness. Zen Buddhism is introduced as a foundation for mindfulness with accessible language and concise definitions from the onset.

Three Zen definitions capture the intentions of this book and offer context for the reader. Janesick cleverly ties the foundations of Buddhism to issues of quality, rigor, and ethics in qualitative research. First, the concept of impermanence, the Buddhist practice of knowing that everything is changing all of the time and all of our experiences are temporary, is linked to the fact that "all findings are tentative" (p. 15). Second, the Buddhist concept of non-self means that we already have everything we need within us and that we are simply extensions of one another and the universe. This thought is linked to the idea that qualitative researchers can be thought of as extensions of their research. There is no separation because we are both the research instrument and the analyst. Third, the concept of nirvana, the Buddhist practice of non-suffering, extends into the practice of qualitative inquiry because it helps us to see clearly, in the present moment, how our participant thinks, feels, and behaves. When we "let go" of our own agenda, we can invite this clarity very purposefully so that our participant can share all that they wish.

Janesick begins the book with a preface, asking her readers to "experience" her book rather than read it. Chapters 1 and 9 are beautifully written opening and closing chapters that express the art of qualitative inquiry from the Zen Buddhist perspective. These chapters remind us why we love stories, why we want to capture other people's stories, and why we value the human connection. Chapters 2 through 4 offer the foundation for qualitative research: openness, observation, writing and memoing, the interview, and the Institutional Review Board process. Janesick uses rich description and real-life dialogue to teach and model this content. Chapter 5 offers a concise approach to the use of documents, photographs, and artifacts in the research process. Chapter 6 takes us through the manuscript writing process, followed by Chapter 7, which illustrates poetry as a means to represent (data) in a dynamic and engaging

way. Chapter 8 reminds us of the significance of the reflective journal. Janesick offers wonderful suggestions for how to develop this habit and skill.

Within each chapter, Janesick begins with a koan, defined as a riddle-like story, to get her reader thinking more openly about the content. She weaves in sutras, literally defined as threads or lines, which create comfortable boundaries for the reader within a topic or concept. The end of each chapter has mindfulness activities and exercises that can be completed as a natural extension of the chapter. I envision that students would enjoy these as a way to practice each phase of the qualitative research process. Chapter summaries and resources assist the reader with confirmation and validation of what was most important in the text. The resources offer additional information for aspiring qualitative researchers.

As a yogi and mindfulness practitioner, I must add that Janesick says, to be a (good) qualitative researcher, one must slowly and intentionally develop a practice of meditation. I cannot think of a better way to practice reflexivity and deep respect for our participants. I offer that this is in no way easy. It requires commitment and intention. However, the simple act of intentionally seeking 5 minutes of stillness each day allows us to access true, unmodified reality. This book will allow you to tap into your creativity, your wisdom, and will allow you to hear the voices of your participants. We owe them this.

Reference

Janesick, V. J. (2015). *Contemplative qualitative inquiry practicing the Zen of research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Author Note

Annette Willgens is Director of Clinical Education and Clinical Associate Professor in the Drexel University Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science. As a clinical educator, she prefers phenomenology and grounded theory to explore student success during clinical experiences, student teaching and learning, and clinician stress. As a board certified pediatric clinical specialist, she is currently researching yoga in pediatric practice and mindful parenting of children with special healthcare needs. Please address correspondence to annette@drexel.edu.

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