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An Introduction to Transformative Inquiry: Understanding Compelling and Significant Relationships for Personal and Societal Transformation

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Abstract

Transformative inquiry is a theoretical model designed to facilitate the inquiry of important and meaningful relationships that transform and potentiate us. Creswell (2007) described the essential elements of a research agenda: the axiological, ontological, epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical. Each carries with it assumptions that hold implications for practice and research. Transformative inquiry addresses all of these elements through considerations given to deep ecology, transdisciplinarity, integral meta-theory, heuristic research, and eudaimonistic philosophy, respectively. Transformative inquiry is an approach to understanding and fostering the full range of deep and meaningful relationships from the personal to the political, and beyond. It is a theoretical model designed to support investigation into the important and meaningful relationships that both transform and potentiate us. Transformative inquiry provides a theoretical context in which to approach any question related to obtaining a deep understanding of the rich, nuanced experience of meeting deeply with (and being transformed by and with) another. What do such relationships do in the world? They transform us, and they transform the world. Understanding deep, potent, lasting transformation means to understand the relationships that foster, support, and co-create it. Such relationships generate a paradigmatic shift of consciousness. But deeply, this shift is about the uncovering of a beautiful personality, a deep goodness within, an enduring truth of self. Within this context, transformative inquiry in general and deep heuristics in particular, is designed to allow researchers to expand farther and reach deeper than our current models and methodologies require.

Keywords

Leadership Education, Human Potential, Transformation, Growth, Heuristics, Relationships, Consciousness

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An Introduction to Transformative Inquiry: Understanding Compelling and Significant Relationships for Personal and Societal Transformation

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Transformative inquiry is a theoretical model designed to facilitate the inquiry of important and meaningful relationships that transform and potentiate us. Creswell (2007) described the essential elements of a research agenda: the axiological, ontological, epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical. Each carries with it assumptions that hold implications for practice and research. Transformative inquiry addresses all of these elements through considerations given to deep ecology, transdisciplinarity, integral meta-theory, heuristic research, and eudaimonistic philosophy, respectively. Transformative inquiry is an approach to understanding and fostering the full range of deep and meaningful relationships from the personal to the political, and beyond. It is a theoretical model designed to support investigation into the important and meaningful relationships that both transform and potentiate us. Transformative inquiry provides a theoretical context in which to approach any question related to obtaining a deep understanding of the rich, nuanced experience of meeting deeply with (and being transformed by and with) another. What do such relationships do in the world? They transform us, and they transform the world. Understanding deep, potent, lasting transformation means to understand the relationships that foster, support, and co-create it. Such relationships generate a paradigmatic shift of consciousness. But deeply, this shift is about the uncovering of a beautiful personality, a deep goodness within, an enduring truth of self. Within this context, transformative inquiry in general and deep heuristics in particular, is designed to allow researchers to expand farther and reach deeper than our current models and methodologies require. Keywords: Leadership Education, Human Potential, Transformation, Growth, Heuristics, Relationships, Consciousness

Transformative Inquiry is presented as a philosophical and theoretical model designed to explore and consider the generative capabilities of compelling and significant relationships for becoming potentiating and transformative. **Potentiating**, for clarification, is any action taken by individuals that effectively causes something, or the relationship itself, to become **potent**—or, if you would prefer, creative, strong, capable, powerful, effective, empowered . . . healthy. Transformative inquiry, with an accordant qualitative research methodology, appropriately named deep heuristics, presents a methodological bridge that serves to facilitate both the transformation of our understanding of any transformative phenomenon, to include individuals, relationships, and place (community, organization, school, home), as well as ourselves as researchers.

This paper begins with an introduction of the philosophical and theoretical frameworks that undergird this work and locates Transformative Inquiry as a viable methodological

framework for exploring and considering the generative capabilities of compelling and significant relationships. As such, attention is given to:

1. Deep ecology/axiology: What is the role of values?
2. Transdisciplinarity/ontology: What is the nature of reality?
3. Integral Meta-Theory/epistemology: What is the role of truth?
4. Heuristic Research/methodological: What is the process?
5. Eudaimonistic Philosophy/rhetorical: What is the language of potential?

The balance of the paper is used to explore the capabilities of Transformative Inquiry to inform and transform a deeper heuristic research methodological process. Deep Heuristics builds upon, expands, and deepens the existing heuristic methodology (Moustakas, 1990) for exploring and considering the generative capabilities of compelling and significant relationships. A subsequent article will elaborate the deep heuristic methodology and offer a step-by-step guide for researchers.

Transformative Inquiry is both related to and distinct from other methodological approaches that consider transformation of and in the methodological process. Transformative Inquiry is distinct from other approaches through both its structure and content, a specific and unique combination of the axiological, ontological, epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical components upon which it is based, as discussed throughout this paper. It is related to other methodological approaches in that it seeks to address a need for transformation in the ways in which research is engaged and produced. Others have identified deficiencies in existing research approaches in terms of how researchers engage with qualitative questions. Keating (2013), for example, argued compellingly for a transformation in the way in which researchers engage with and consider a subject by moving away from dualistic, oppositional approaches towards wholly inclusive, post-oppositional ones. Kakali Bhattacharya explored the use of mind-body contemplative practices as an epistemology directing inquiry that produces transformed ways of discovering and representing knowledge (Bhattacharya, 2017; Bhattacharya & Cochrane, 2017).

Transformative Inquiry is directly related to the growing number of transpersonal research methods (Anderson & Braud, 2011; Braud & Anderson, 1998). These methodologies, in general, present an expanded view of research. Transformative Inquiry is better understood with a little further introduction of the transpersonal. The meaning of transpersonal is well articulated by Daniels (2005), "transpersonal may be said to be *more or less* about the *spiritual* dimension of life, or about human *spirituality*" [all italics in original] (p. 12). In addition, Daniels explicated what the authors believe to be the importance of the transpersonal: "If there is one common central theme to the concept of the transpersonal it is about the profound *transformation* of our usual egoic, self-centered existence to some ultimately more satisfying or valuable condition" (Daniels, 2005, p. 12). For these reasons Transformative Inquiry becomes an addition to transpersonal research methods.

Assumptions

Maslow's Assumptions (1971):

1. Human beings have an innate tendency to move toward higher levels of health, creativity, and self-fulfillment.
2. Neurosis may be regarded as a blockage of the tendency toward self-actualization.

3. The evolution of a synergistic society is a natural and essential process. This is a society in which all individuals may reach a high level of self-development, without restricting each other's' freedom.

How do we create the good society? The intention held and the awareness sought by this overarching question is immediately implicit in any exploration into the nature of human potential. The long view held by this question is aimed at the capacity we hold for transformative growth and development. Relationships are very often the fertile ground upon which our potential actualizes, for as David Abram (1996) observed, “humans are tuned for relationships” (p. xi). When done well—where well refers to a growing sense of well-being—relationships become significant and compelling events in our lives. To understand the nature of these significant and compelling relationship requires, methodologically speaking, research tools and processes that provide the capacity to dwell deeply in their qualities. *Transformative inquiry* is designed for such explorations.

How do we create the good person? In any exploration into the nature of human potential, it is necessary to address this companion to our initial question. Simplistically speaking, these two questions tend to address one another in their relationship. How do we create the good society? You create a good society with good people. How do we create the good person? You create the good person through a good society. Embedded in this ladder of abductive reasoning is the nature of human potential. What remains to be addressed and understood is how the good person, through engaging in significant and compelling relationships, becomes generative to such a synergistic society. The integral nature of this thesis holds that the significant and compelling relationships are essential to the transformative growth of our potential.

Transformative inquiry is an approach to understanding and fostering the full range of deep and meaningful relationships from the personal to the political, and beyond. It is a theoretical model designed to support investigation into the important and meaningful relationships that both transform and potentiate. Transformative inquiry provides a theoretical context in which to approach any question related to obtaining a deep understanding of the rich, nuanced experience of meeting deeply with (and being transformed by and with) another.

What do such relationships do in the world? They transform each individual, and they transform the world. Understanding deep, potent, lasting transformation means to understand the relationships that foster, support, and co-create it. It is not possible to undertake a eudaimonistic journey without suffering a paradigmatic shift of consciousness. But deeply, this shift is about the uncovering of a beautiful personality, a deep goodness within, an enduring truth of self. These are the good things that await us on the path. Within this context, transformative inquiry in general and *deep heuristics* in particular, is designed to allow researchers to expand farther and reach deeper than our current models and methodologies require or allow.

One last assumption, narrowly aligned with belief, concerns the nature of reality. Given the necessity of holding an intentional and deep heuristic purpose when attempting to deeply understand significant and compelling relationships, whatever the researcher excavates is in fact a postrepresentation of what was co-revealed or co-constructed during that engagement. Postrepresentation is a multifaceted ontological construct that is operationally defined as the process of transforming subjectively collected data into an intersubjective narrative (McCaslin, 2008b). Therefore, transformative inquiry takes on an ontological bent as these deep heuristic engagements create a co-revealed mutuality. The researcher and the participant(s) are transformed, and the narrative co-revealed becomes transformative. It is possible to evoke the notion of an “ontological turn” when relating to such transformations. However, there is no more crisis held by such co-revealed transformations than the reality that the dissipating clouds

do not create the moon. They simply reveal it. Ontology is simply a philosophical construct that is as unavoidable as postrepresentation when engaging in significant and compelling relationships.

The Theoretical Orientation of Transformative Inquiry

Transformative inquiry is drawn from and builds upon the following philosophical, theoretical, and methodological approaches, each representing an essential integral function: Deep Ecology (axiological); Transdisciplinarity (ontological); Integral Meta-theory (epistemological); Heuristics (methodological); and Eudaimonistic Philosophy (rhetorical). Transformative inquiry catalyzes an integral perspective that melds these five philosophical, theoretical, and methodological approaches, creating a generative way of understanding the deep relationships that transform our world.

Each of these approaches is integrally valuable as each offers a distinct contribution to the understanding of an essential aspect of human relationships. How Arne Næss (1989), for example, explores relationship in speaking about deep ecology is very different than the transdisciplinarity of Basarab Nicolescu (2002). The integral approaches of Wilber (2006) complement both of these constructs, as well as the heuristics of a lived common experience (Moustakas, 1990), and gains a philosophical grounding as eudaimonism embraces the whole of the relationship (Norton, 1976). Taken together they frame the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological foundation for transformative inquiry.

Locating Transformative Inquiry as a Viable Research Methodology

Creswell (2007) noted the five elements required to fully develop a research agenda. These elements include axiological, ontological, epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical perspectives. Each carries with it assumptions that hold implications for practice. Transformative inquiry addresses all of these elements through considerations given to deep ecology, transdisciplinarity, integral meta-theory, heuristic research, and eudaimonistic philosophy, respectively. These elements lend a sustainable system (deep ecology), a boundary-spanning generativity (transdisciplinarity), an integral theoretical base (integral meta-theory), a methodological approach (heuristics), and a philosophical belief (eudaimonism). The relationship between the foundational elements of transformative inquiry can be seen in Figure 1.

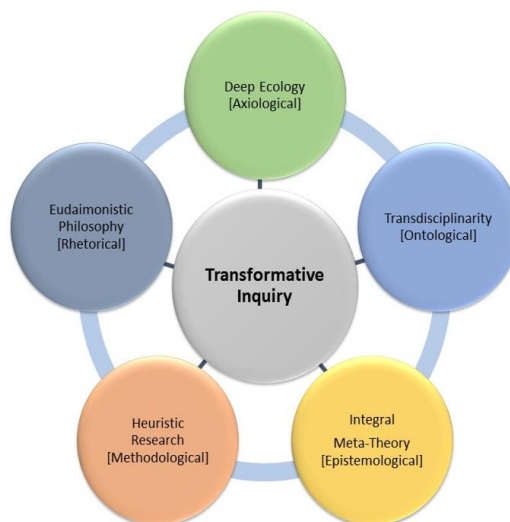


Figure 1. The five-part theoretical orientation of transformative inquiry, representing the five elements required to fully develop a research agenda (Creswell, 2007): the axiological, ontological, epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical perspectives.

1. Deep ecology/axiology: What is the role of values? Warwick Fox (1995) discussed the implications of Arne Næss' (1989) work entitled "Deepness of Questions." Fox (1995) highlighted the essence of deep ecology (Næss, 1989), which is of critical importance to the exploration of compelling and significant relationships in transformative inquiry. According to Fox, when Næss considered the whole of the deep ecology movement he underscored the concept of deepness of questioning as a major feature, which is relevant to the axiological foundations of transformative inquiry:

In the movement instigated largely through the effort of Rachel Carson and her friends, the "unecological" policies of industrial nations were sharply criticized. The foundation of the criticism was not pollution, waste of resources and disharmony between population and production rate in non-industrial nations. The foundation rested on answers to deeper questions of "why?" and "how?" Consequently, the recommended policies also touched fundamentals such as man's attitude towards nature, industrial man's attitude towards non-industrial cultures, and the ecological aspect of widely different economics.

The difference between the shallow and the deep movement is one of deepness of argumentation, and of difference in conclusions. In the shallow movement in favour of decreasing pollution and economy of resources, positions are tacitly assumed valid which are questioned in the deeper movement. But the differences in conclusions are largely due to certain questions, especially of value-priorities, not being seriously discussed and answered in the shallow movement.

[Nevertheless] because "going deep" is the essential point I recommend that a point of view might be characterized as "deep" even if it defended some of the most wasteful and socially destructive policies, namely, if it were derived from a coherent philosophy answering deep questions. I wish only to add that I cannot see any philosophy that would be suitable for such a derivation. Whatever philosophy, whether Western or Eastern, we take as a starting point, it will not be compatible with, or at least not suitable for a defense of, present unecological policies.

The mainly technical recommendations of the shallow movement reflect absence of philosophy rather than an unecological philosophy. (Næss, 1982, in Fox, 1995, pp. 94-95)

And so it would appear that a deeper ecology, by way of necessity, is linked to the presence of philosophy. The ability to discover the deeper questions only results when the researcher seeks the deep, probes for the deep, which ultimately leads to the formation of deep, meaningful relationships surrounding the phenomenon of interest among the co-researchers of a transformative inquiry: Values matter.

This recognition is not a form of surrender to the subjective. It is an abductive assertion. To that end transformative inquiry becomes pragmatically informed. In its earliest formations pragmatism moved away from an epistemological center held more centrally by both quantitative and qualitative research (McCaslin, 2008c). As the pragmatist shifted towards a more ontological rendering they also reached out to axiological (beauty, aesthetics, values) aspects that had been formally dismissed by the quantitative researcher; research is to be value-free, and largely ignored by way of simple blanket inclusion by the qualitative researcher. Research is actually value-laden. Neither side of the epistemology debate formally probed the

issues of values even though this issue was central to the separation of the objective/subjective dichotomy. The pragmatist, however, insisted that because truth is relative or situational it can best be utilized by way of forming signposts or landmarks concerning the nature of reality.

The pragmatists' rendering of reality positioned it not as holding an objective view as held by the quantitative researcher, or by subjective view as held by the qualitative researcher. Since objective and subjective positioned methodologies were both contained within the epistemological domain, they both sought to discover either a verifiable or generalizable truth. The pragmatist, because of their move toward ontology, saw the world differently. The dichotomy that had formed between the objective world and the subjective world seemed for the most part inconsequential. The pragmatist found no value in absolute objectivity or absolute subjectivity, seeing neither as sufficient for understanding the nature of reality. The pragmatist pointed out that the affinity between quantitative methodologies and qualitative methodologies may be more deeply rooted than is commonly thought (Dillon, 1988; Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In part, this perspective was formed when the pragmatist positioned their philosophy as being *value-informed*, rather than value-free or value-laden. This immediately situated pragmatism as an ontologically-centered philosophy not unlike other such positions articulated by the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004), the early transcendental renderings of phenomenology by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1977), and the phenomenology of perception presented by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962). This philosophical position held by pragmatism yielded an intersubjective rendering of the truth in that ontology was seen as relational and situational. The "we" or relationships aspect of this position holds that truth is co-created by way of intersubjective relationships. This co-created truth is epistemologically valid because it is co-constructed by the collective experience. It is through this relational construct that the nature of reality is revealed.

Beyond the humanistic and transpersonal implications of pragmatism is the deep ecology constructs found within this philosophy. Pragmatism, like transformative inquiry, involves a deep probing into the intersubjective interactions between people and their environment. Ecology, as a comparison, is defined as the study of the interaction of an organism and its environment (Darnell, 1975). Accordingly, all subjects, objects, and the interaction of subjects with subjects (intersubjectivity) and subjects with objects (interobjectivity) are taken into consideration in the inquiry.

Philosophy is the love of wisdom. That it gets confused with lesser ambitions is a matter of approach. Axiology, within transformative inquiry, holds the scope of values, ethics, aesthetics, beauty, and morality. Wisdom invites a bit of transcendence – transformation, wherein values matter. What we find in the axiological realm is the stuff that makes wisdom possible and life worth living. In the beauty that is found in the axiological "I" we discover the best of being human - and the worst. The difference between them rests on our trajectory of our questions. Will we ask the shallow questions that move us to classify, measure, order, and sort? Or, do we move to understand, appreciate, and find meaning from others and for ourselves through seeking the deeper questions? Transformative inquiry engages the personal in such a way that we become both smaller and greater simultaneously. The axiological roots of deep ecology penetrate us all and form an essential component of transformative inquiry.

As I see it, modesty is of little value if it is not a natural consequence of much deeper feelings, a consequence of a way of understanding ourselves as part of nature in a wide sense of the term. This way is such that the smaller we come to feel ourselves compared to the mountain, the nearer we come to participating in its greatness. I do not know why this is so. (Næss, 1989, p. 3)

2. Transdisciplinarity/ontology: What is the nature of reality? Interacting across disciplinary lines, the collaborative construction of approaches to societal meta-problems and questions is at the heart of transdisciplinarity and transdisciplinary research (McGregor & Volckmann, 2011). Transdisciplinarity concerns itself with the transgression of artificially constructed discipline-based boundaries allowing our collective intelligences to approach and solve the big problems we face, thereby ontologically granting an address to the real issues of concern for the scholarship of integration—capacity building, creating sustainable systems, and generativity. “Transdisciplinary research practices are issues—or problem-centered and prioritize the problem at the center of research over discipline-specific concerns, theories or methods” (Leavy, 2011, p. 9). These scholars understand that new knowledge, and ways of understanding knowledge in new ways, is often discovered at the intersections of disciplines. These scholars go beyond the results and ask:

- What do the findings mean?
- What is being left out of this approach or design?
- What are we missing?
- What perspectives are not being considered?
- Is it possible to interpret what's been discovered in ways that provide a larger, more comprehensive understanding?”

To engage the world of emerging ideas and to meet them pragmatically with strength, hope, and possibilities is a core purpose of transformative inquiry. We engage with ideas about the evolving nature of human potential and in particular creative, integrally-centered empowering ideas that inspire dialogue and adventure. Alfred North Whitehead (a British mathematician, logician and philosopher who developed a comprehensive metaphysical system which has come to be known as process philosophy) addressed what he called “Adventures of Ideas.” This resonates deeply with the transdisciplinarity of transformative inquiry.

The purpose of transformative inquiry gains strength and reach when we embrace the notion of the “Adventures of Ideas.” It is an inspiring, motivating and potentiating declaration. What Whitehead was directly addressing through his process philosophy was the historical proclivity we (teachers, scholars, and leaders) tend to fall into where we lock on to some idea or truth and then, through scholarly defense and habits of practice, offensively lock out or drown out competing or newer ideas trying desperately to push through the substrate. We seem to have a tendency in research methods and approaches to become more and more about the “history of ideas” than about the “Adventures of Ideas.” Looking back, as we often do, we begin to confuse security for creativity; order for freedom; classification for beauty; structure for imagination; conformity for elegance, and; standards for potential. We are left to mimic, copy, and imitate.

Also I suggest that the Greeks themselves were not backward looking, or static. Compared to their neighbors, they were singularly unhistorical. They were speculative, adventurous, eager for novelty. The most un-Greek thing we can do, is to copy the Greeks. For emphatically they were not copyist. (Whitehead, 1967, pp. 273 -274)

Transdisciplinarity adds to the ability of transformative inquiry to go deep by way of probing disciplinary lines – looking for and exploring intersections of potential. It allows the formation of cross-functional teams and relationships that will allow an integral extension of our knowing. Transformative inquiry is keen to leverage the transdisciplinarity made possible as we explore significant and compelling relationships.

It wasn't so long ago that the "death of man" and the "end of history" were being proclaimed by scholars. The transdisciplinary approach enables us, instead, to discover not death, but the resurrection of man as subject of his own discourse and not the end of history, but the beginning of a new stage of history. Transdisciplinary researchers increasingly appear like a new breed of contemporary knights-errant, utterly irrepressible rekindlers of hope. (Nicolescu, 2002, p. 2)

3. Integral Meta-Theory/epistemology: What is the role of truth? Integral meta-theory lends an epistemological broadening to transformative inquiry through the use of the All Quadrants model (AQAL). It can be used as an interpretive approach for making sense of the findings of transformative inquiry and for simultaneously probing for deeper meaning.

The word integral means comprehensive, inclusive, non-marginalizing, embracing. Integral approaches to any field attempt to be exactly that: to include as many perspectives, styles, and methodologies as possible within a coherent view of the topic. In a certain sense, integral approaches are "meta-paradigms," or ways to draw together an already existing number of separate paradigms into an interrelated network of approaches that are mutually enriching. (Wilber, 2003, pp. xii-xiii)

AQAL was first coined by Ken Wilber to describe the many ways to view phenomena from the intentional "I," cultural "We," behavioral "IT," and social "ITS" (Wilber, 2000, pp. iii- iv). Simply examining a phenomenon from only one of these quadrants provides an incomplete understanding of the subject. In a recent interview, Wilber discussed how current methodologies fight over truth when in fact they all display partial truths that, if integrated, would provide a holistic assessment.

AQAL provides a means to heal this fragmentation as it traverses the heuristic "I," the generative "We," to the positivistic "Its/It" and cycles back again to the "I." This cycle prevents an integral methodology from fixating on a single truth. Instead, all quadrants receive feedback and change in response to new insights from the other quadrants. The model is represented in Figure 2.

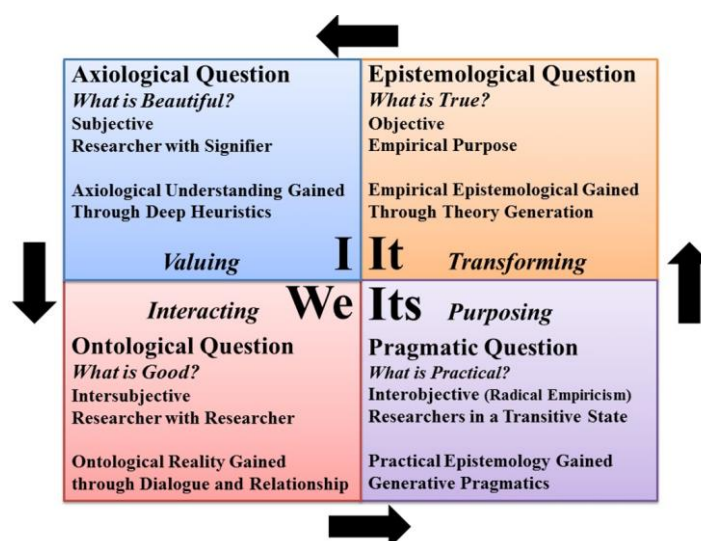


Figure 2. Transformative inquiry employs Integral theory's AQAL model to provide a holistic assessment of a phenomenon as it traverses the heuristic "I," the generative "We," to the positivistic "Its/It" and cycles back again to the "I." This cycle prevents an integral methodology from fixating on a single truth. Instead, all quadrants receive feedback and change in response to new insights from the other quadrants.

Given that integral meta-theory purposes itself as a bridging construct, researchers working and creating within what might be called an *integral space*, would be, by definition, open to learning (McCaslin & Flora, 2013). Furthermore, given the transdisciplinary, transcultural, and trans-spiritual elements radiating from any integral space, an openness to learn gives the researcher a greater reach towards resolving conflicts, solving problems, and developing innovative solutions.

The integral space cannot be represented as a physical space as to do so would immediately arrest its purpose and possibilities. Indeed, we hold a reluctance to pull this space apart even for the purpose of gaining clarity. With all due respect for the integrity of the integral space, it is possible to paint this integral space philosophically as well as conceptually without necessarily limiting its potential reach and purpose. To begin, the integral space would be best understood as a living dynamic existing within a community of practice. For the purposes of this paper, a community of practice is defined as the joint enterprise within a collection of human potentials (an organization, school, or community) that creates a sense of accountability and engagement to the collective's body of knowledge (Dixon, 2000). A community of practice strives to ensure the success of its members (Wenger, 2000).

For a community of practice to flourish, members must have a strong sense of belonging and engage in new learning initiatives to ensure the community's knowledge does not become stagnant. The negotiation of the meaning of knowledge in a CoP [community of practice] results in members learning and transforming; thus, the current practice, the status quo, needs as much explanation as the need for change. (Carlson, 2003, p. 16)

Communities of practice engage in the “generative process of producing their own future” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 58). Like the integral space, a community of practice is a “living repository of community learning, knowledge is created, accumulated, stewarded, and diffused in the organization” (Carlson, 2003, p. 20).

As a result of its living, dynamic nature, the integral space is truly never at rest but constantly evolving towards a synergistic possibility where emerging problems and/or emerging opportunities are creatively addressed (McCaslin & Scott, 2012). While it is possible to discuss the various elements at work within the integral space, it should be noted that these various elements are, in reality, inseparable; the elements of valuing, interacting, transacting, and transforming are at work together. Even pulling or lifting one element away from the integral flow will collapse the entire dynamic. This is the integral dynamic (see Figure 3).

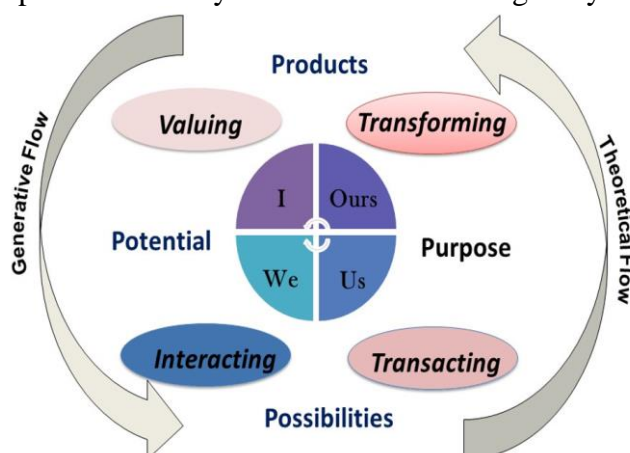


Figure 3. As a result of its living, dynamic nature, the Integral space is truly never at rest but constantly evolving towards a synergistic possibility where emerging problems and/or emerging opportunities are creatively addressed (McCaslin & Scott, 2012). The various elements contained within this space are inseparable; the elements of valuing, interacting, transacting, and transforming are at work together. Even removing one element from the integral flow will collapse the entire dynamic.

But make no mistake, because postmodernists are brutal: those approaches, apart from their virtues, are implicitly embracing the myth given. This is monological phenomenology at its worst, simply, because it believes itself to be so much more than it is, a lie in the face of the postmodern turn of Spirit itself in its continuing flowering. (Wilber, 2006, p. 178)

4. Heuristic Research/methodological: What is the process? Heuristic research is a qualitative research strategy designed to foster discovery and illuminate the nature or essence of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). The personal role of the researcher in the research distinguishes it from a phenomenological approach to an inquiry:

In heuristic research the investigator must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. There must have been actual autobiographical connections. Unlike phenomenological studies in which the researcher need not have had the experience (e.g., giving birth through artificial insemination), the heuristic researcher has undergone the experience in a vital, intense, and full way—if not the experience as such, then a comparable or equivalent experience. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14)

Moustakas (1990) defined the heuristic research as a process that starts with a question that the researcher aims to answer, one “that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives.” He explained that while the heuristic process is autobiographic, it reveals elements of universal experience: “yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social--and perhaps universal--significance” (p. 15). Moustakas described heuristics as a “way of engaging in scientific search through methods and processes aimed at discovery; a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences” (p. 15). In the heuristic research process, the researcher is able to delve deeply and methodically into the farther reaches of human experience: into those aspects of being that are the most challenging to describe and understand. In discussing his experience conducting heuristic inquiry, Moustakas explained that:

Essentially, in the heuristic process, I am creating a story that portrays the qualities, meanings, and essences of universally unique experiences. Through an unwavering and steady inward gaze and inner freedom to explore and accept what is, I am reaching into deeper and deeper regions of a human problem or experience and coming to know and understand its underlying dynamics and constituents more and more fully. The initial “data” is within me; the challenge is to discover and explicate its nature. In the process, I am not only lifting out the essential meanings of an experience, but I am actively awakening and transforming my own self. (1990, p. 13)

Moustakas emphasized the demanding nature of the heuristic process and attested to both the rigor of the method and the personal commitment it requires on the part of the researcher.

Heuristic research is an extremely demanding process, not only in terms of continual questioning and checking to ensure full explication of one’s own experience and that of others, but also in the challenges of thinking and creating, and in the requirements of authentic self-dialogue, self-honesty, and unwavering diligence to an understanding of both obvious and subtle elements

of meaning and essence inherent in human issues, problems, questions, and concerns. (1990, p. 37)

5. Eudaimonistic Philosophy/rhetorical: What is the language of potential?

Eudaimonism, the term for the ethical doctrine of the daimon, (Norton, 1976) presented an opportunity or a “way” to approach, at least philosophically, transformative inquiry. The Greek equivalent of *genius* is *daimon* – our *arété* or personal excellences. The daimon can also be thought of as an enduring goodness within, an empowering will, a gift of the soul, a tutelary spirit, an inner voice, or Atman. Plato asserted, “...each person is obliged to know and live the truth of his daimon, thereby progressively actualizing an excellence that is innately and potentially” (Plato, in Norton, 1976).

. . . eudaimonistic intuition endures today, I believe in the individual’s residual conviction of his own irreplaceable worth. But this small conviction is wholly unequipped to withstand the drubbing it takes from the world, and from which it all too often never recovers. The treachery is that as a potential awaiting progressive actualization, qualitative individuality, though it may be a powerful force in the end, is weak and tentative in the beginning. (pp. x-xi)

It is a pity we do not speak of *eudaimonism* more as we consider approaches to research. Transformative inquiry is grounded in a eudaimonistic philosophy (Norton, 1976; see also McCaslin & Snow, 2010). It simultaneously engages the good (*eu*) person (*daimon*) while creating the good society (a eudaimonistic intention). Research, flavored with a eudaimonistic intention evokes a potentiating consciousness.

What does it mean to hold a potentiating consciousness? It begins by understanding that the easiest way to cripple a person for life is to make them blind to their greatest potentials. Furthermore, to recognize that the easiest way to become this crippling force ourselves is to neglect our own emerging potential. Without an intention aimed at the full actualization of our own potential, and the potentials of those we would lead, our pursuits will always fall just short of satisfactory.

In searching for the farther reaches of human nature, Abraham Maslow (1971) stated: “On the whole ... I think it is fair to say that human history is a record of the ways in which human nature has been sold short. The highest possibilities of human nature have practically always been underestimated” (p. x). To hold a potentiating consciousness then is to hold the long view – to aim high.

Human life will never be understood unless its highest aspirations are taken into account. Growth, self-actualization, the striving toward health, the quest for identity and autonomy, the yearning for excellence (and other ways of phrasing the striving “upward”) must by now be accepted beyond question as a widespread and perhaps universal human tendency. (Maslow, 1954, pp. xii-xiii)

Transformative Inquiry: New Knowledge at the Intersection of Disciplines

A critical, and one might say observable, assumption held by transformative inquiry is that new knowledge is born to the world at the intersections of disciplines. The integral foundations of transformative inquiry of deep ecology, transdisciplinarity, Integral meta-theory, heuristics, and eudaimonistic philosophy present a generative intersection in terms of understanding significant and compelling relationships. Furthermore, this particular

intersection holds an opportunity to move us all towards an integration of personal and common destinies.

Societies where non-aggression is conspicuous have social orders in which the individual by and at the same time serves his own advantage and that of the group.... Non-aggression occurs in these societies not because people are unselfish and put social obligations above personal desires, but when social arrangements make these two identical. (Benedict, 1934, *Patterns and Culture*; Benedict, 1941, *unpublished manuscript as cited by Maslow (1964), p. 156*)

Significant and compelling relationships contribute to the creation of opportunities used to address personal destinies. This synergistic dynamic inspires the cultivation of wisdom “whereas knowledge is something we have, wisdom is something we become. Developing it requires self-transformation” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993, p. 51). To dwell deeply into the nature of these transformations requires new research tools and approaches. Deep heuristic research, among other practical applications, is a product of transformative inquiry. Deep heuristics emerges from the five-part foundational framework of transformative inquiry, which is based on the five essential elements of a research agenda (Creswell, 2007): the axiological, ontological, epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical, as described. Deep heuristics is a product of the synergistic interplay of these five elements in transformative inquiry: deep ecology, transdisciplinarity, integral meta-theory, heuristic research, and eudaimonistic philosophy.

Deep Heuristics as a Research Methodology

Deep Heuristics builds upon, expands, and deepens the existing heuristic methodology (Moustakas, 1990) in particular ways. This methodology is relevant to anyone asking questions pertaining to human potential, societal growth and change, and how transformation occurs in individuals, groups, and cultures.

In a deep approach, where we are seeking to know in a deep and meaningful way, we are required to have tools to help us investigate, as is consistent with the scientific method. In order to deepen both ourselves and our inquiries, we must be aware that such an undertaking invariably involves transformation in the one who seeks to understand: the researcher herself or himself is inevitably transformed by deep heuristic research. As researchers on this journey of discovery, we come with what we know so far, and venture out into the relative unknown in order to apprehend or befriend that which we want to understand, equipped with a variety of tools for the trek. The tools we propose here as part of a deep heuristic methodology enable us to spiral deeper, retaining what we know, learning what we believe we want to know, and learning a great deal more than we knew existed. And that is precisely the point. As researchers in this sort of transformative, deep inquiry, we invite the unknown, as well as the transformation, in the service of understanding and becoming more fully aware of that which we seek to know. In terms of spirituality or worldview, it is often said that “I am *in* the world but not *of* it.” In deep heuristics, we are both *in* the inquiry and *of* the inquiry, in the sense that we engage in and with it, and are simultaneously born of it; we are, in some sense, produced by the process itself.

To effectively deepen our inquiry, we must first recall the methodology—heuristics—that sets the stage for this endeavor. As such, the essential concepts and processes of heuristic research, examples of the heuristic research process, and an overview of the role of the researcher in heuristic research are described below.

Concepts and Processes of Heuristic Research

Moustakas (1990) described heuristic research, a well-validated and rigorous approach to research that is known for effectively illuminating the phenomena of our direct, human, lived experience. Moustakas explained that heuristic research is “a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences” (p. 15). He expressed that the “deepest currents of meaning and knowledge” occur in our direct, lived experience and are revealed through the bodymind’s senses, perceptions, beliefs and judgments. If one wishes to inquire into a phenomenon with an attitude of discovery and from “first principles,” or rather prior to first principles, one must begin the investigation with the lived experience itself. Principles are conceptual creations of the mind about a phenomenon, rather than the phenomenon itself.

Heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) has a number of defining concepts and processes that are unique to this qualitative method. They are key aspects of the design and methodology of this study and are as follows: Identifying with the focus of the inquiry; Self-Dialogue; Tacit Knowing; Intuition; Indwelling; Focussing; and the Internal Frame of Reference. These concepts and processes emerge within the six phases of heuristic research that guide and structure the research. The six phases of heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) include: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis.

An Example of the Heuristic Research Process

In Moustakas’ (1990) study on the phenomena of loneliness, he summarized his research process and described a chain of conditions, actions, and factors that initiated and characterized his heuristic study as follows:

(1) a crisis, which created a question or problem; (2) a search of self in solitude, from which emerged a recognition of the significance of loneliness both as a creative urging and as a frightening and disturbing experience; (3) an expanding awareness through being open to lonely life and lonely experiences, through watching, listening, feeling, and through conversation, dialogue, and discussion; (4) a steeping of myself in the deeper regions of loneliness, so that it became the center of my world; (5) an intuitive/factual grasping of the patterns of loneliness, and related aspects and different associations, until an integrated vision and awareness emerged; (6) further clarification, delineation, and refinement through studies of lonely lives, lonely experiences, and published reports on loneliness; and (7) creation of a manuscript in which to project and express the various forms, themes, and values of loneliness and to present its creative powers, as well as the anxiety it arouses in discontent, restlessness, and boredom, and the strategies used in attempting to overcome and escape loneliness. (1990, p. 97)

In reference to this study on loneliness, Moustakas beautifully described the emergence of his understanding of the phenomena, and explained how he knew that the study had come to an end:

When a pattern began to emerge with reference to the nature and function of loneliness in individual experience and in modern living, the formal study came to an end. At this point the framework and the clarification of loneliness had been established. It was now possible to differentiate and refine the meaning of

loneliness, to expand and illustrate its nature and relevance in human experience. (1990, p. 97)

In the years following the publication of this study, Moustakas received more than 2000 letters from individuals validating his depiction of the phenomena of loneliness (p. 97). This evidence suggests that his heuristic approach was adequately effective in revealing the essence of this phenomenon. As a result of this research, Moustakas stated that,

I now believe in a heuristic process of searching and studying, of being open to significant dimensions of experience, and pursuing knowledge through self-inquiry, full immersion into the phenomenon, and spontaneous observation of and dialogue with persons who are experiencing the phenomenon. (1990, p. 98)

This example of the heuristic research process is intended to provide a concrete example to assist the reader in understanding how it may unfold in other inquiries that involve the revealing of the very nature of a particular phenomenon of interest. In this process, the role of the researcher is central to the heuristic methodology, as explored in the following section.

The Role of the Researcher in Heuristic Research

According to Moustakas (1990), heuristic research begins with a question that has been part of the researcher's personal search to understand themselves or the world they live in. He explained that while heuristic research is highly personal, it is also potentially significant to all of humankind: "The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social--and perhaps universal--significance" (p. 15). Moustakas explained that "the heuristic researcher is seeking to understand the wholeness and the unique patterns of experiences in a scientifically organized and disciplined way" (p. 16). It is this desire that both grounds and initiates the study.

Unlike other approaches to research, Moustakas emphasized that, "the self of the researcher is present through the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge" (p. 9). Thus, the heuristic research process is designed to be of benefit to the researcher, both in terms of personal growth and professional understanding.

While in some qualitative approaches the researcher attempts to create an impersonal or "objective" distance from the phenomenon of interest, Moustakas explained that, "in the heuristic process, I am personally involved. I am searching for qualities, conditions, and relationships that underlie a fundamental question, issue or concern" (p. 11). He explained that the researcher and the phenomenon are intimately connected and cannot be abstracted out as discreet, non-mutually influencing phenomena. "In heuristics, an unshakable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling and awareness" (p. 12). In this way, Moustakas acknowledges the interrelationship of the subject and object, the researcher and the phenomenon of interest.

Moustakas described the researcher's experience of conducting heuristic research as involving a full commitment and immersion into the phenomenon of interest.

When I consider an issue, problem or question, I enter into it fully. I focus on it with unwavering attention and interest. I search introspectively, meditatively, and reflectively into its nature and meaning. My primary task is to recognize whatever exists in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness, to receive and accept it, and then to dwell on its nature and possible meanings. (1990, p. 11)

He also expressed that the heuristic research process requires a surrendering of the known for the unknown and a “return to the self, a recognition of self-awareness, and a valuing of one’s own experience” (p. 13). Even within qualitative methods of scientific inquiry, a valuing of the researcher’s own experience is often deliberately excluded or omitted. In heuristic research, the researcher’s experience is a primary and essential part of the successful inquiry. In describing his own experience of conducting heuristic research, Moustakas stated:

The heuristic process challenges me to rely on my own resources, and to gather within myself the full scope of my observations, thoughts, feelings, senses and intuitions; to accept as authentic and valid whatever will open new channels for clarifying a topic, question, problem, or puzzlement. (p. 13)

Thus, there is an intense openness and a radical honesty required of the researcher in the heuristic research process. The role of the researcher is to access all forms of knowing, from the tacit, intuitive, and explicit dimensions, and to open to and integrate what arises using all of their capacities: no part of them is excluded from the process. In conclusion, the heuristic research process,

demands the total presence, honesty, maturity, and integrity of a researcher who not only strongly desires to know and understand, but is willing to commit endless hours of sustained immersion and focused concentration on one central question, to risk the opening of wounds and passionate concerns, and to undergo the personal transformation that exists as a possibility in every heuristic journey. (p. 14)

This demanding and personal process on the part of the researcher is a hallmark of heuristic research in all phases of a study.

Transforming Heuristic Research in Transformative Inquiry: Deep Heuristics

In transformative inquiry, the methodological inspiration is transformed: heuristics became *deep heuristics*. In this process, each of the phases of research is necessarily transformed and reborn with a new name and new features that both require and foster deeper engagement by the researcher. In deep heuristics, Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic research phases are revised and re-named: initial engagement became deep ecological engagement; immersion became deep immersion; incubation became creative incubation; illumination became enlightenment; explication became revelation; and creative synthesis became cultivating creative synergy.

The Role of the Researcher in Transformative Inquiry: Deep Heuristics

The role of the researcher in transformative inquiry includes and transcends the role of the researcher in the heuristic research process. In deep heuristic inquiry, the researcher both goes deeper *within* the inquiry and expands *wider* beyond the known edges of the inquiry. In deep heuristics the researcher engages even more fully in it, in terms of number and depth of engagements with participants, as well as in the researcher’s own reflective processes. It demands total honesty, repeatedly, over the long term, as assumptions are tested, agendas uncovered, and belief systems unearthed. In deep heuristics, the researcher serves the question or phenomenon of interest. S/he allows it to live him/her. The role of the researcher involves

an even greater commitment to the process of self-deepening in service of the question and the growth of understanding.

Therefore, in employing the deep heuristic method within the context of transformative inquiry, the researcher is required to engage in all levels, modes, and ways of being (Wilber, 2000). The researcher must employ thought and reason, body and movement, voice and dialogue, relating and relationship, intuition and felt-sense, and a variety of ordinary and non-ordinary states of consciousness in the service of what they seek to know. In deep heuristic inquiry, the role of the researcher includes all of these myriad ways for engaging more deeply with the research question, beyond what is expected in a heuristic research methodology (Moustakas, 1990).

Deep Heuristics: Summary

In deep heuristics, we are approaching research with a different perspective: we are asking deeper and deeper questions, and looking for ever-deepening understandings. We are neither abandoning nor reinventing heuristics, but rather seizing the opportunity to further extend it, to explicitly invite the researcher into ever-deeper engagements in this research process in specific ways. As researchers, we are seeking an integral understanding of what we seek to know, in that we are simultaneously both part of it, and produced by it. Since hermeneutics and pragmatics emerge whenever you look at nature of reality, we embrace these philosophies in creating a pragmatic tool to assist in the application of our research perspective of transformative, deep inquiry. Building upon the influence of Næss and the methodology of Moustakas, we present deep heuristics as a useful methodological application of transformative inquiry. This methodology is further elaborated with a guide for researchers in a subsequent article.

Transformative Inquiry: Scope, Relevance and Potential Applications

Significant and compelling relationships, heuristically speaking, are very often relationships of potential. These potentiating relationships concern themselves with the art teaching, leading, parenting, and/or building community—otherwise known as the Potentiating Arts™. The aim of the Potentiating Arts™ reveals a deeper purpose for leading, teaching, parenting, living, loving, and community building. Namely, it is aimed at actualizing the potential of those we would lead, teach, parent, care for, and/or engage within our communities while simultaneously realizing our own gifts of potential. As a result, the integral approach of transformative inquiry provides opportunities to use the nature of inquiry, curiosity, and wonder to generate positive influences for our organizations, schools, homes, and communities.

Transformative inquiry informs and is informed by experiential and transformative learning. The researcher's tool of choice in transformative inquiry is to be open to learning as a way of being. As a result, other research modalities, such as action research and transdisciplinary research, become useful tools that complement our searches into the nature of these significant and compelling relationships. Consider Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury's definition of action research as an example:

Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to

issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (2001, p. 1)

The purpose of action research, then, is to contribute to the theory and knowledge base in order to enhance practice and support the professional development of practitioners, and build collegial networking systems. When coupled with experiential learning, the potential for growth and development is enhanced.

Experiential learning, by design, seeks to put knowledge and wisdom to work in the world. It bridges theory and practice, which aids in cultivating a sense of transdisciplinarity as a living dynamic existing within a community of practice. Experiential learning naturally engages as a transformative, developmental, and innovative process. It illuminates interrelationships currently at work within the community of practice. As a tool for potential leaders, experiential learning accentuates their ability to model good practices. Within the community of practice, it reveals the deep-seated connections between inspiration, innovation, and implementation.

Relating experiential learning as an integral construct to transformative inquiry presents opportunities to positively transform (potentiate) relationships of potential, including leadership. Positive transformational leadership focuses on personal and professional growth. The "positive" characterization of transformational leadership complements its intentions with the added emphasis on experiential learning and action research. The transformational engagement of knowledge and human potential is a transformative growth process by leaders and their associates that raises each to higher levels of motivation and morality. Burns (1978) stated that,

Leadership is the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers. (p. 425)

The genius of leadership, according to Burns, lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. As a result of these transformative intentions, the tentacles of leadership hold the potential to penetrate deeply into the fabric of society through understanding the nature of the significant and compelling relationships as an intentional product. Transformative inquiry is designed to support effective learning and leaders who hold transformative intentions toward our individual and collective efforts to build human capacity and actualize human potential.

“While there can be no empirical demonstrations of the universality of innate potential excellences, it is an *a priori* certainty there where such universality is established ... the manifestation of personal excellences in the world will be dramatically increased” (Norton, 1976, p. xii). To build such a potentiating force within leadership education is a purpose worth pursuing and is central to the transformative engagement of knowledge and human potential.

At this stage of human evolution there seems to be an emergent and collective need for illuminating the philosophy, principles and practices that would ultimately lead to the greater good of teachers, parents, community builders, and leaders, as well as the greater good of those they teach, parent, and lead. The foundational core of any potentiating process or practice is an overall increase in capacity: the capacity for goodness, the capacity to make a difference, and/or to *be* the difference—to become capable of action when action is called for--within the community of potential. Capacity-building is a natural outflow of the potentiating arts, and transformative inquiry is designed probe, understand, and enrich such outflows.

Within such an approach, the full measure of our current capacity is engaged not just at the problem itself, but in growing our capacity (potentiating) to engage the next emerging problem: we engage the problem from the perspective of our potential. Potentiating inspires creativity, innovation, learning, growing, health, and wholeness. In the end, through this process we are likely discover multiple ways of approaching and solving the problem, of which none is likely to lead to our decreasing capacity and health. Rather, the potentiating way of leading inspires a healthy wholeness. The depth and breadth of unrealized human potential currently lying dormant in our human ecologies is more than a match for any personal, local, societal, global, or ecological problem we face. The full actualization of these potentials through constructing a creative and transformative educational effort is our opportunity.

Conclusion

Transformative inquiry, as a philosophical and theoretical model with an accordant research methodology--deep heuristics--serves to facilitate both the transformation of our understanding of a particular phenomenon and ourselves as researchers. Transformative inquiry is useful to both practitioners and researchers; it has pragmatic value as a tool for scholarly inquiry into significant and compelling personal and professional relationships while simultaneously potentiating our personal and professional development. Transformative inquiry was successfully applied using deep heuristic methods (i.e. Bonner, 2012; Gonzalez, 2010; Kilrea, 2013) in the study of different phenomena. Transformative inquiry is already at work in the world in various practical forms, such as the positive transformational leadership elements of the *Potentiating Arts* (McCaslin, 2008a, 2015; McCaslin & Christensen, 2013; McCaslin & Flora, 2013; McCaslin & Scott, 2012; McCaslin & Snow, 2010, 2012), which include skill-building practices and workshops designed to teach and foster deep transformation within individuals and professional groups. New applications continue to emerge from this model in response to the transformation needs of the living world around us.

To be clear, the full purpose of transformative inquiry is to establish a methodology that will aid in the development and understanding of a philosophy and its associated principles, practices, and processes that will lead toward the full actualization of human potential. The thesis surrounding this methodological innovation is one of expansion, growth, and development concerning the nature of transformation and transformative learning that have direct implications on the actualization of human potential. From a philosophical perspective, transformative inquiry demonstrates how human possibilities have been cut short by our prevailing discourse on truth alone. Furthermore, we see that epistemology has corrupted ontology so completely that reality and truth have become inseparable and that axiology is rarely, if ever, concerned. Finally, we become aware of how the methodological wars have short-sighted human possibilities by way of philosophical partitioning. In its place, transformative inquiry provides a holistic and balanced philosophical methodology aimed completely at the full actualization of human potential.

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