

Persons-in-Relation and Q Methodology

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ABSTRACT: *We know ourselves through our actions in the world in relation to others. This philosophy as developed by John Macmurray is the ground on which my colleague and I are basing our work as educational researchers in the field of counseling. We are working collaboratively to develop new approaches to learning and discovering more about the process by which persons gain self-knowledge as well as knowledge about other persons in the helping relationship. Our questions focus on what it means to be a person and persons for each other particularly in the experience of a guide, counselor or therapist and a client who meet in a helping relationship. We deeply believe that for real self-knowledge to develop we must go beyond mere professionalism in the helping relation and dare to meet each other as persons. Q methodology attracts us as a philosophy and approach which seems to provide a way to discover and uncover some important aspects of self knowledge. It is congruent with our philosophy as in its method the person is in action, operating on or communicating with a series of self-referential statements; thus becoming an agent in the world.*

Introduction

In the counseling field, both practitioners and researchers are interested in discovering effective ways to help people regain lost confidence in themselves as the source of knowing how to best live their lives

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(Rogers, 1951, 1961, 1977). This involves investigating how to help people learn more about themselves so that they can become more active in the world, for instance, in ways that are more congruent with their subjective experience. Since people live in community with others another integral and central task is to assist them to learn how to be in effective relations with others and make better choices in their relational lives. One way to begin this process is to focus on the subjective experience of the person as a source of self-knowledge. And in this regard qualitative methods of inquiry (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992; Ely, 1991) have become a familiar way to investigate a person's experience allowing the researcher to enter into another person's experiential world through interviews and other field work techniques. It is well known that the data analysis and synthesis in qualitative work is time consuming if not onerous depending as it does on the researcher transcribing and coding the data into forms that enable underlying themes or schemata to emerge. Q methodology and its technique which was created "to assist in the orderly examination of human subjectivity" (Brown, 1980, p. 5) appears to be an eminently suitable yet largely ignored quantitative approach to uncovering the important aspects of a person's subjective experience which is the very focus of the counseling endeavor. The philosophical ground from which William Stephenson (1953) created Q methodology contains the same soil as the ground from which John Macmurray (1957/1991, 1961/1991) developed his philosophy of the person and which in turn forms the ground of my colleague's and my research activities as counsellor educators.

This paper is a first exploration of the connections that we are making between our work (Allgood & Kvalsund, 1995) and Q methodology. It is also theoretical in that it is preparatory to our actually using the methodology. As an exploratory piece of writing it is a web of interconnecting themes. It begins with an introduction to the concept of a person and its relation to Q methodology, followed by a series of short discussions about various aspects of this theme. Topics covered include the concept of the person, the helping relation, communication, subjectivity, learning in relation and research. Through this "understanding" in progress I hope to engage others in a dialogue about our emerging ideas.

What is a person?

A person is usually understood to be an individual, a self contained organism who is recognized by a distinct body, verbal and non-verbal

expressions of feelings and thoughts in communication with others, movements, a combination of qualities and abilities and so forth. It is also common to view the person as developing in a directional growth from the dependency of childhood, for example, to the independency of adulthood. The prevailing paradigm in the western world has been to regard the independent individual who can interact together with other independent individuals as being at a high level of development.

However, there is another conception of the person which has been explicated by philosophers and by practitioners and theoreticians in the counseling and human relations fields. It is based not on a linear developmental model but on a dynamic inter-relational model which can be called interdependency. This understanding moves out from the focus of the individual as a separate organism to a recognition of each person's deep interconnection with others. It acknowledges explicitly that we, humans, are inextricably bound to others in our personal existence and for our understanding of ourselves (Buber, 1958; May, 1983; Macmurray, 1957/1991, 1961/1991). It is through our interactions with others that we know who we are as human beings in our families, communities and societies. From this perspective we know ourselves as persons primarily through our actions in the world in relation to others.

The idea of an isolated [person] is self-contradictory. Any [person] is necessarily in relation to the Other. Apart from this essential relation he does not exist. But, further, the Other in this constitutive relation must itself be personal. Persons, therefore, are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. 'I' exist only as one element in the complex 'You and I' (Macmurray, 1961/1991, p. 24).

It is through the actual process of meeting face to face with another (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1951, 1961) that we can acknowledge our interdependency and come to know ourselves through each other. To be persons in this understanding means that we are more than our separate individualities and organisms; we are persons in our interdependent relations to each other. Furthermore, our existence as persons is explicated through communicating (acting) with others, not through being in a withdrawn or solipsistic state.

The basis for personal self-knowledge (Polanyi, 1958; Rogers, 1961), therefore, lies not in individuals themselves but in the meeting between the self and the Other. That Other can be both another real person or a virtual person as represented by words, images, rituals and other symbolic expressions of human experience. The sample of

statements in a Q sort, for example, can be seen as a virtual Other (Stephenson, 1987) being representative of a larger concourse in the experiential world. This point will be explicated further on but for now it is sufficient to state that in coming to know ourselves as persons we must transcend our organismic individualities through our actions in relation to the Other and that Other can be either real or virtual.

In summary and to make the connection between the person and Q methodology still more explicit, reference can be made to Stephenson's clear assertion that "to be a person is to be in communication with the Other" (1969, p. 77). Q methodology is all about communication as a science of subjective knowledge and as such is central to learning about persons defined as individuals (with their self-knowledge, feelings and thoughts) in action (communication behaviour) with the Other.

Communicability ... is the "essential" concept for a science of subjectivity, with self-reference as central to it.... Scientifically, what is essential is the sharing of knowledge with others, or within oneself (Stephenson, 1982, p. 240).

The Helping Relation

People enter a helping relation when they go to counselors, guides or therapists (helpers) because they have failed to find solutions to their life problems themselves or through the aid of friends. They often go for help with the intention of finding out what to do to solve the problem so they can continue on in their lives as before with the solution in hand. What they usually discover is that "the solution" is not so simply found and that it lies within a larger process of moving from intention into the action of self-discovery. If people choose to take the journey of self-discovery then they will enter into a relationship with the counselor, guide or therapist. The quality of this relationship will be a major factor in the quality of the self-knowledge that the those being helped (helpees) gain and that in turn will affect the nature of the "solution".

The commonplace occurrence in university settings of a meeting between a faculty guide (helper) and a graduate student (helpee) who is trying to decide on a topic for her thesis can provide a concrete example of the ideas expressed in the above paragraph. When the student and guide meet initially in a one-to-one situation the meeting can take on the quality of an exploration or discovery process. At the

outset, neither the student nor guide know what it is that the student is going to finally decide upon as a topic. In this meeting the guide initially helps the student to become more aware of her subjective experience and to value it as a starting point for discovering her thesis topic. Through the guide initiating a dialogue about the “here and now” relation between them, the student’s feelings of confusion and fear are communicated and personal experiences are shared. The student and guide become persons-in-relation as the student begins to share her ideas about possible topics. The conversation can begin in a version of the following:

Student: “I know that I want to write my thesis in the counseling area but I don’t know what part. I am confused. There are so many aspects that interest me.”

Guide: “How are you feeling just now?”

Student: “I’m feeling a little anxious, wondering what you think about my being confused. Somehow I thought that I should know what I’m doing before I came to you.”

Guide: “Uhuh.”

Student: “Not knowing what I want to do is hard. I don’t like feeling this way, not knowing what to do and feeling it’s not OK.”

Guide: “So I hear two things. One that you are confused which feels uncomfortable; and two that it’s not OK to be confused especially here with me.”

Student: “Yes, I feel a little afraid. I didn’t realize that before. I am afraid I won’t succeed in my task and ... I’m sorry.... and that you won’t help me ... wow that feels scary.”

Guide: “Just now your body seemed to become more tense. It is expressing your fear. If you are willing ... just tense it up a bit more, exaggerate the tension then slowly begin to let it go by taking a few deep breaths and relax.” Pause....

Student: “Yes, that feels better but I’m still wondering about you.”

Guide: “Well, I am connecting to what you say very much. I had a lot of confusion and fear when I was doing my thesis, especially at the beginning. I too wondered what my guide thought about me. So I’m not so different from you in that way....

Student: “Why did you ask me to exaggerate my tension? No one has ever asked me that. I didn’t expect it.”

Guide: (Laughs) “Well. I’m glad you asked. I know that for me it is important to be aware of my feelings and my body. It helps me to know how I am and what to do. But before I go on can I ask you, how you are feeling right now?”

Student: “Yes, I’m not afraid so much. I’m interested in what you are saying.”

Guide: "I am very interested in what you have just said. I think that by not running away from or pushing the feelings of confusion away they become less scary. When we begin to act by talking about them and then exaggerating the accompanying tension like you did we learn about them in reality and not so much in imagination ... like your imagination about what I thought about you ... Does what I say have any meaning for you?"

Student: "Yes. I have always pushed the confused feelings away and pretended they weren't there. Talking with you feels better."

Guide: "Then if you're willing I'm curious to hear about the other thing you said when you first came in ... that you have some ideas. That is a good place to begin.... Could you start by telling me something about some of those areas of interest. Maybe some of the concepts and ideas from last year's courses."

Student: "OK...."

As shown in the beginning of this dialogue, the guide tries to meet the student first and foremost as a person. The guide's goal is to try to create a personal relation in which they can be together not only with their self-knowledge and thoughts but with their feelings and bodily actions as explicit parts of the whole meeting. The guide also wants to assist the student in discovering some things about herself to help her know more about her relation to counseling education so she can make a good choice.

As they enter into a dialogue, they are both in action with their self-knowledge, their feelings and thoughts. Through their communication they will soon discover whether or not they understand each other. In the simplest sense, it is in that emerging knowledge that they both learn what they shall do next—what topic the student will pursue and how the guide can help. The key point is that as persons in the wholeness of their experience, the student and guide learn about themselves through being in action (in this case, in dialogue) with each other. The "solution" is discovered in the meeting between them.

How we act with each other as individuals determines whether or not we are in communication in the personal field. If we are meeting each other in an attitude of respect that acknowledges the profound importance of our subjective experience and personal knowledge rather than merely our "objective" and in some cases "expert" knowledge then we are in the personal field. It is a characteristic of communication in the personal field, that both helper and helpee have the opportunity to learn about themselves. Through agency and being in relation with another, this self-knowledge as it comes to be known to the persons can be used as the basis for making all kinds of choices, decisions and

actions in general. In other words, as we increase our awareness of our subjective knowledge, we become able to make more choices as agents interacting with the world on the basis of new self-knowledge (Allgood, 1990; Polanyi, 1958). In some important manner persons gain a freedom of action that was unavailable before that particular self-knowledge came into awareness. That awareness emerges through a relation with another person and can be understood as the manifestation of the "help" in the wholeness of the helping relation or personal field.

Communication and Q Methodology

Connections can be made between the concept of persons-in-relation as expressed above and Stephenson's two theories of "concourse" and "consciring" which form the ground for investigations using Q methodology. The "concourse" can be understood as the "Other," the potential others (both personal and impersonal) that persons can meet in their experiential world. It is a "collection of self-referent statements" (Stephenson, 1982, p. 239) taken from a universe of possible statements about an experience and so the "concourse" is in effect the Other that as persons we meet when we step out into the action field of performing Q sorts. The statements are examples of other persons' experiences (the culture) or their own self experience which in this process has been placed outside of them as "object". The Q sorters' experience, by being objectified, has moved from the past carrying with it their implicit self-knowledge (Allgood, 1990) into the present as experienced through thoughts and feelings with the Other. As such, the experience is available in a new way that can lead to exciting discoveries about aspects of subjective experience that have hitherto been hidden (see the woman who lost her dog, Stephenson, 1987). Out of dialogues such as between the graduate student and the guide, it is possible to create a sample of statements from a concourse of all the possible expressions about the experience of being in the "guiding" process of thesis development and writing—a form of the helping relation.

"Consciring" is the process of sharing knowledge (the communication) through being in relation with the Other (the concourse) (Stephenson, 1982, pp. 240-241). In the dialogue example the knowledge sharing that takes place in the actual meeting between the guide and the student can be enhanced through another kind of shared knowledge; i.e.: with the concourse. For example, the guide and student can both perform Q sorts on the concourse about the experience

of the guiding relationship. After the technical procedure of factor analysis, they can enter into a dialogue about their experiences doing the Q sorts which will be central to the interpretation of the emergent factors. In this way light is shed on the "personal field" and they will come to know each other as persons.

The two theories, "concourse" and "consciring" can be expressed as learning about our subjective personal experience by acting in relation with the Other or in Stephenson's terms as learning about our subjective personal experience by "consciring" with the "concourse".

In the helping relation as described above, "abductory" principles (Stephenson, 1961) of investigation are also integral to the discovery process. Abduction refers to knowing about something in a general way and using that broad comprehension to apply to facts when they emerge and so discover something. It is a process of creating hypotheses not of testing them in the hypothetico-deductive sense. The investigator as both the helper and helpee.

... knows something already; but he cannot deduce consequences from postulates; nevertheless he fully expects to make discoveries, and it is *technique, and the use of laws*, that guides him to the discoveries (p. 13).

The student began the dialogue by expressing her feelings of confusion, "I know that I want to write my thesis in the counseling area but I don't know what part. I am confused...." There is a natural feeling of some kind of mystification, like looking out over an ocean trying to discriminate some thing of interest on the horizon. As the student speaks she begins to tell the "story" of herself in relation to the decision-making process of choosing a thesis topic. Soon, through the "personal" meeting with the guide the ocean becomes a lake and then a pond across whose waters she can look and make some discriminations. She comes to a point where she has two or three ideas in enough detail that she can work with these in another now more focused process of discovery. She is still living with uncertainty, without the security of a clear hypothesis to test but that is exactly the nature of the abductory process.

If as suggested above, the student and guide were to perform Q sorts on the experience of being in this process, abductory principles will also apply. Each one using her self-knowledge enters into a relation with the statements according to the conditions of instructions. They know some general things about their experience of being in this process but it is largely implicit personal knowledge (Hunt, 1987;

Polanyi, 1958) which however can be made more explicit through the discovery process inherent in the Q sorting, factor interpretations and finally the sharing of emerging knowledge.

The guide has a faith in the graduate student's ability to discover what she needs to know. Among other things she can learn to have faith in knowing something and acting on that faith in a kind of "muddling-through" process (Stephenson, 1961, p. 12) along the lines of abductory principles, so that as she learns about herself her thesis topic will be revealed to her. At the risk of repetition, it can be noted that the "muddling-through" takes place in the communication between them through which the guide is also a learner.

Subjectivity and Q

Subjectivity in the sense of self-reference is expressed through the action of referring to one's own experience or knowledge as the basis for understanding what "I" am doing in action.

Subjectivity, as here regarded, is merely what one can converse about, to others.... It has the form which can be reached purely operantly, that is, not by prior definitions of consciousness, self or the like, but by the way of Q sorts and factor-analysis from which the facts for subjectivity are *found* before they can be named (Stephenson, 1986, p. 501).

As Stephenson elsewhere (1968) has indicated, the starting and ending points of self-knowledge are lived experience as known primarily through the senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling) and secondarily through the interactions (dialogues, communications of all kinds) with others. However, that experience as self-knowledge can be expressed as "thoughts, however simple or complex, as represented by innumerable statements belonging to it" (Stephenson, 1986, p. 535). So in a way similar to the meeting of two persons in a helping relation, the sentences in a Q sort are structured in a manner that the persons can meet them. Through the intentional character of the conditions of instruction a point of entry is created for the persons to investigate their subjective experience of a phenomenon. It can be said that in Q methodology the "phenomena of nature" are prepared "so that they can display their structure" (Stephenson, 1982, p. 237). The phenomena are threefold: the person in relation to the phenomena, the phenomena (the concourse as represented by the structured sample of statements), and the conditions of instruction which directs the relation between the

person and the phenomena. The statements are prepared and arranged so that they mirror a normal distribution of the population, thus being in integral relation to the "concourse" from which they came and representative of the Other.

After the operation of the Q sorts, the underlying structures of the phenomena are displayed through the mathematical procedure of factor analysis so that their meaning can be revealed in the interpretative process. Words as symbolic understandings or new perceptions are "fitted" to the patterns of associations (factors) after they have emerged from the subjective and self-referential "data". The data are simply the samples of statements as figure against the background of the conditions of instruction which are informing the persons about how to meet the statements. However, in meeting the statements they are not only dependent on the information from the conditions of instruction they are also dependent upon what they feel about them. Both the intellectual and organismic processes are included in the wholeness of the experience of sorting out and organizing the statements into the theoretical distribution. Through these procedures subjective experience becomes both more fully explicit and available as it is re-organized and synthesized into a now more whole knowing. This forms the basis for further discovery in the mutuality of the personal relation.

Learning as Contact-Withdrawal-Return

To learn and discover more about ourselves as persons means that we must be communicating in relation and that implies action. As counselor educators whose focus is on learning about subjective experience, we are interested in two broad questions concerning the use of Q methodology. How can the action of Q sorting be understood as a learning process? By applying a learning process model to the Q-sorting action, can we discover more about the appropriateness of Q methodology for the counseling field? An interactional cycle of contact-withdrawal-return (Macmurray, 1961/1991) that has its roots in Lewin's field theory and the work of the early Gestalt psychologists will prove helpful in this task. It can provide a framework for understanding the dynamics that are involved in persons discovering something about their subjective experience through acting on the Q sample. What follows is an analysis of the Q-sorting process and the subsequent dialogue in terms of the contact-withdrawal-return learning cycle.

When persons take action to meet the Other, we come into contact

and it is at that contact-boundary (point of communication) where the learning and discovery take place. We bring our subjective experience (personal knowledge) to the meeting and that subjective experience changes in the moment that we learn and discover something new about ourselves from the resistance (action) of the other. In that instant, we no longer have just our former experience; we now have something "new" that has entered into our experience of our self and as such has "destabilized" our "stable" or "balanced" selves. This begins a process of restoring the integrity or wholeness of our sense of self that was disrupted by the instability created through our action; this time to withdraw back into ourselves, into self-reflection. That self-reflection in turn begins a process of integrating (analyzing and synthesizing) the learning which is also a process of re-stabilizing or making us whole again. To complete the cycle and in order to know more about ourselves as persons we must return to the Other. This is a pattern that is repeated in infinite variations throughout the lives of human beings. For example, it can be clearly seen in the dialogue between the graduate student and guide in the helping relation. The student moves into contact with the guide by beginning to tell about her confusion. As the guide listens to her the guide comes in contact with the student, giving her the felt sense of being listened to, of the guide's presence. This forms the resistance in the contact which in the moment forces the student back onto herself in reflection. The guide can experience the student's withdrawal directly as perhaps a pause in her speaking as a moment of silent reflection or more indirectly in the return after the withdrawal as the deepening of her self-exploration as evidenced by her speaking in more detail and depth about her confusion. The withdrawal here can be understood as being behind the new words even though the time spent in withdrawal may have been so short that the guide could not discriminate it. In turn as the guide is listening, she also withdraws and reflects on the student's words, signaling her return by a short summary or paraphrase of what she has heard the student say. In this circular process the student and guide meet each other, reflect and return to learn again. In their dialogue both the student and guide have become aware of certain aspects of their personal knowledge and in the process of sharing acquire "new" awarenesses of that knowledge.

The contact-withdrawal-return cycle can also be seen as operating in the Q-sorting process. As indicated earlier, a sample of statements can be made from a concourse of statements about the helping relation. A variety of conditions of instruction can be constructed expressing a wide gamut of situations in research and practice. One such condition of instruction can be: "How do you think a helper/helpee would

describe you?" In performing each Q sort both the guide (helper) and the student (helpee) would bring their own subjective experience out into awareness by objectifying it temporarily. In the contact with the statements in the Q sort under the specific conditions of instruction, their subjective experience of a particular aspect of the helping relation moves from the background of their awareness to become figure. It becomes in some sense an object/figure that they can relate to as "separate" from themselves. In meeting the statements under the condition of instruction they are likely to reflect upon the statement to some extent and so for even a moment to be in withdrawal before returning to place their subjective experience on the Q-sort scale. The relational cycle of contact-withdrawal-return is evident as the guide and student are in relation to the Other through the statements in a process of shuttling back and forth between themselves and the statements.

In Q sorting the Other can be understood as virtual and imaginal (what people imagine in feeling and thought about their relation to the statements) in contrast to a meeting with real persons and in this regard the relation is not truly personal as it has been defined. However, it is not completely impersonal either as the personal is present through the imagination and the potentiality of meeting a real Other inherent in the statements. From this perspective, the relation can be described as subjective and virtually personal as each (student/guide) is contacting the potentially personal Other (as represented through the statements about the helping relation) out of the wholeness of their subjective experience. However, in the operation of doing the Q sorts the student and guide are acting on the statements, not with them (as they act with each other in personal relation) and in that way the relation is not mutual. In meeting the statements the student comes into relation not with a real, existent other person as in the dialogue with the "real" guide, she comes into contact with a virtual Other. The virtuality of the statements lies in the fact that they are representative of experience (the concourse) and are acted upon by the person but cannot act in return as they are not a real Other. It is in the helping relation itself in mutuality and contact through dialogue that the action of making self-referential responses to the statements in the Q sorts takes on real significance. Providing a point of focus for the dialogue between the student and guide, the Q sorting can be understood as a special kind of **relational act which in its virtually can enhance the discovery process in the real mutual relation. That mutuality is potentially present in the meeting between the guide and the student after the factor analysis of the Q sorts when they interpret and discuss the emergent factors**

together. Through their communication their personal knowledge becomes known to them in a more synthesized way. It is available to both persons for understanding their subjective experience. Through mutuality in communication the student and the guide come to know each other in more inclusive ways and have expanded opportunities to know themselves more holistically with the possibility for choosing new actions.

Dependency, Independency and Interdependency and Q

Dependency, independency and interdependency as expressed in relationships are three concepts that together constitute a major framework of our research (Allgood & Kvalsund, 1995) and also have an important connection to Q methodology. In the helping relation they can be seen to be operating at various times and at different levels. The guide is dependent on the student for speaking to her if she is going to fulfill her intention of being a guide. The student is likewise dependent on the guide for guidance. As individual organisms they are both independent of each other; for example, their self-knowledge is different as it is an expression of their lived experience. However both the dependent and independent aspects of the relation are subordinate to the interdependency in the personal field where the student and guide meet as persons in mutuality acknowledging their intrinsic interrelatedness—"it takes two to know one".

Within the relationship understood as interdependency the guide and student have many opportunities to express themselves freely. The student in our example was worried about the guide's reaction to her being confused. It is easy to understand the basis for this worry by reflecting on the importance given to being an independent learner and to being correct and knowing "the right answer" in the western world's schooling milieu. So it can be conjectured that she has learned some strong lessons in the past that she was not an "OK" person when she expresses confusion. She may have lost confidence in her subjective experience as a deep knowing about how she can be "OK" with herself in confusion. Rather she may have taken in and generalized others' views of her as "not-OK" when she is confused. The others then become the holders of "truth" or meaning for her experience. Her subjective experience is now that she does not really trust her subjective experience and this is the self-knowledge that she brings with her as she acts (including doing the Q sorts). In the dialogue with the guide and

through the abductory principles of discovery the underlying schemata (factors) of confusion are revealed as well as how they are working in the student's subjective experience. Through this process she has discovered some things about herself and in this new awareness has found a way to hypothesize about her world with the possibility of changing it in the future.

As a scientific endeavor, however, Q methodology is primarily about discovering how things are, not how they can be changed even though once persons are aware of something the potential for change is ever present as a possibility. The significance of Q methodology lies in providing a way to discover the underlying schemata or patterns of self-knowledge; that is, how we understand ourselves in relation to the Other (Allgood, 1990; Hunt, 1987). Any possibilities for change to occur in reality lie in the personal relation in the meeting between real persons not in the discovery of how things are with a virtual Other.

In terms of Q, then, when the student/guide has the intention to learn more about herself and the helping relation, that intention directs her actions to meeting the statements in the sample through the conditions of instruction. Under the condition of instruction, "How do you think a helper/helpee would describe you?" The student/guide can meet a statement such as "Taking an action is the first step in becoming a person" or "To be a helper you must learn about yourself". She has a "felt sense" based on her self-knowledge about these statements through her experience of being a student/guide. Would the helper/helpee describe her in this way? What meaning does she make about this statement in terms of her experience of the helper/helpee? Where on the scale of +5 to -5 would she place herself? Through meeting a series of statements about the helping relation and under a variety of conditions of instruction the student or guide begins to make meaning about her experience in the helping relation.

Without the intention of discovering something about herself in relation to the experiences as expressed in the statements, the student or guide will remain independent of the statements. In that sense the statements will have no real meaning for her. There will only be the potential for meaning that can nevertheless become real through her having an intention and acting on it by coming into contact with the statements.

Before the student or guide acts on the self-referential statements (the concourse sample) through her subjective experience "the concourse is meaningless" (Stephenson, 1988, pp. 7-9). "Nothing happens until a measurement is made" (p. 9) which means that the

statements have no personal meaning until the persons meet the Other, the 'I' meeting a lot of 'You's through performing the Q sorts. In other words, the statements depend on the persons for their meaning to emerge.

When the student or guide acts to meet the concourse of statements and begins to operate (act) on them from her self-knowledge with her feelings and thoughts in the here and now, she begins to move from being independent of the statements toward an interdependency with them. By moving into the actional field she is establishing a relationship that transcends the dependency of the statements and the independency of her individuality. The sample of statements can be understood as being dependent on the student or guide standing as it does for an expression of part of the cultural (helping relation) experience waiting for the action of the student or guide in meeting them. The understanding of the culture here is that the culture is dependent on all the persons who make it up and therefore also on the collective subjective experiences of those persons. The sample as an expression of the culture (external to the student/guide) is dependent on the student or guide's subjective experience as a kind of inner culture for its meaning. This means that her self-knowledge through her intention as fulfilled in action meets the sample of statements in her real experience. The meaning that the sample has for the student or guide is dependent on her self-knowledge and her subjective experience in doing the Q sort.

When the student and guide's reactions to the statements as expressed in the scoring on the Q sort are organized through factor analysis and then interpreted, the nature (underlying schemata) of the interdependency between the student or guide and sample of statements is revealed. Through the act of communicating with the statements the independent student or guide is operating on the dependent sample with the conditions of instruction providing an intentional direction. The interdependent relationship is established in the action of doing the Q sorts and the meaning themes or schemata emerge through the interpretation of the organization of the responses as factors.

In both Q methodology and the helping relation dependency and independency are subsumed under and are integral to a more holistic interdependency. This is the wholeness of the 'I-You' relationship and whether the 'You' is virtual as in the Q-sort process or real in the actual helping relation will determine the nature of the discovery process. Through learning about themselves through the Q sorting, the factor analysis and subsequent synthesis in interpretation, the student and guide learn to know themselves more fully and through that awareness have the potential to act in more holistic ways with the real

Other. A new opportunity for change has emerged through the action of meeting with the virtual Other as communicated through the statements and in the process of factor analyzing; however, it can only be realized through the meeting of real other persons.

The Research Endeavor

As researchers in counseling and education, my colleague and I work from a basic theory of interdependency and as such we understand the research process to be incomplete without the explicit participation of ourselves as researchers. We try to create a research experience in which as little as possible is hidden and as much as possible is simple and clear. We agree with Brown's (1980) assertion that if researchers are interested in a person's subjective experience they can simply "ask the person who he is—what his preferences are" (p. 53). Furthermore, we declare that we are an explicit and inextricable part of the inquiry process if our work is to have integrity not to mention experiential validity (Allgood, 1990; Hunt, 1987, 1992).

To acknowledge that inquiry into human affairs is itself a part of human affairs is also to acknowledge that the results of inquiry are influenced by the intentions and expectations of both the researcher and the persons being researched, as well as by the relationship between them.... Calling their work science cannot erase the fact that researchers are persons, too, and researchers' failure to acknowledge this is a major reason for the irrelevance and lack of practical value of their research (Hunt, 1992, p. 111).

and, similarly,

The most fundamental aspects of behaviour ... the way in which bits and pieces are synthesized, how they are integrated in individual lives.... The investigator's own subjectivity is necessarily deeply involved in the synthesizing stage of his analytic research enterprise (Brown, 1980, p. 53).

The above two quotations reveal deep connections between the clear acknowledgment of the researcher's presence and the significance of the ensuing research product. In arguing for including the personhood of the researchers and their intentional actions as part of the research experience, my colleague and I are placing ourselves outside the prevailing paradigm that declares that the researcher is objective

and controllable as an unwanted variable (Hunt, 1987, 1992). For us the next step, which informs our current research endeavor, is to create ways of explicating the mutuality or interdependence of the researcher and participants. It is our belief that research about persons must include the fact of the wholeness of the persons' lived experience which includes the Other. The "stories" of both the participants and researchers must have the possibility of being told (Curt, 1994) and must be acknowledged as influencing the outcome of the research venture. This means that the participants also can be agents in the interpretation and meaning making of the experience in which they are co-participants. By making meaning through the shared process of being persons-in-relation, we can transcend the undeniable yet incomplete fact that our relationship to our words (in the research report, for example) is uniquely ours and different from anyone else's (a participant's, for example) as expressed in the meaning we make through our words (Brown, 1980, p. 3).

People learn language through interaction with others. Using language itself is communication (Stephenson, 1969), an activity that begins with the first words of "mama" or "papa" having been heard and then articulated as a response to the parent (the Other) . The child does not say "mama" and "papa" out of chance or for just any reason. The child says the words to communicate back to the parent in response to the communication initiated by the parent. Therefore words are in fact both mine and yours (the Other's) as they emerge in the relation between 'I' and 'You'. In this light it is incumbent upon us, researchers, to acknowledge that the words in our reports are more than ours. The words are also the participants, the theoreticians and philosophers on whose work the research is based and we are using consciously or not to express our understanding. The interdependency is obvious once it has changed to figure from ground in awareness.

As counselor educators, we work with the learning and discovery processes involved in subjective knowledge on a daily basis. We teach helping skills and try to explicitly model attitudes and ways of being that enhance self-knowledge. We ask questions: How can we, counselor educators and researchers learn from persons without making them into objects of the research endeavour and by so doing reduce them to less than the persons we are interested in knowing? How do helpers/researchers meet with the helpees/participants in ways that maintain the integrity of their personhood and also develop understanding of the self-discovery and learning processes?

In essence, the above questions rest on the concepts of persons and persons-in-relation and are subsumed under the larger question: What

does it mean to be a person? The passionate research endeavor is to create a theory of the person, testing it out through the lived experiences of persons. We think that Q methodology has a philosophical base congruent with persons-in-relations philosophy that will enable it to be effective and meaningful for our work. Ultimately, we are interested in human beings as persons who can make meaningful choices and determine their own lives within the mutuality of the personal field.

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