

Dialogue Paper 3 Assignment

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## **Synopsis of Article-- Qualitative Inquiry: Tensions and Transformations**

*By: Mary M. Gergen and Kenneth J. Gergen*

This chapter works through many of the aspects of qualitative research (QLR) ideas and their implications regarding the crisis of validity; the rights of representation; and the place of the political in qualitative investigations. The chapter shares some idea such as political activism that can be helpful if attempting to deliver a balance of views but quite harmful if used as a tool for pushing a specific political agenda. A person should not have to read research and decipher the researchers' political leanings to then interpret the value of the implications delivered through the research efforts. The chapter considers some of the arguments regarding the idea of validity in QLR; Is it possible or not? The article further considers the concept of language, and can it be adequately utilized to explain an event or is it lacking the qualities needed to communicate the needed dynamic[s]. There is a section that brings to light the idea that many researchers over time have written from the expert to the non-expert position. QLR generally takes the stance of commonality of knowledge that is the combination from both the researcher and the participants to bring about a more diverse and inclusive final product. I will work through the chapter utilizing the six hat exercise to hopefully find the value and to reject the absurd.

### **Thinking Hat Process by Edward Bono**

#### **Blue Hat-- Management and Organization of the Thinking Process**

- I will work my way through the Gergen, M. M., & Gergen, K. J. (2000). Qualitative inquiry: Tensions and transformations article and do my best to categorize my thoughts as if I were understanding them through wearing the various hats.

**White Hat-- Neutral and Objective**

- **Societal Critique and Political Activism**--In a stretch to attempt being neutral, I will try to understand the idea of political activism as a catalyst for beginning an area of research in hopes of coming to positive change. However, what it sounds like is allowing your imagination to promote/push a preconceived desired outcome that you espouse to become the norm rather than continuing to be taboo.
- **Impossibility of Linguistic Mimesis**—It can be difficult to use words to mimic or define the realities of our world. Acknowledging the difficult can assist us in looking closer for specificity and greater conciseness.
- **Crisis of Validity**—This thought sees the idea that no truth can be adequately determined to know up from down is concerning to Denzin and Lincoln's information shared in this chapter. Without being able to know truth and to use adequate language to be able to describe it is to indicate that "the warrant for scientific validity is lost".
- **Language as a picture or map of the real is rejected**—This will allow each person to see life as they experience it and truly lead to each person's reality being their reality regardless of what the previously understood norms are and according to repeatability and continuity of events.
- **Reflexivity**—Being reflexive has the possibility within the concept to help my readers be able to better understand certain implications I may have in my work that would not be clear if the reader did not know my particularities.
- **Reframing Validity**—I am certain those putting this idea forward have the best of intentions and believe they are helping make clear the need for reading various works

through the understanding that each researcher is burdened with their own peculiarities.

This must be considered when deciphering through an individual's work.

- **Empowerment Research**—Can assist communities by having the resources to gain information that can help them to see areas of needs and strengths to plan accordingly.
- **Politics in Qualitative Research**—This may help to give someone a voice who has not had one previously.

### **Yellow Hat-- Positive and Optimistic**

- **Societal Critique and Political Activism**--Continuing my stretch, this idea of societal critique and political activism could possibly come up with ideas that could help lighten the burdens of some people. This would indeed be a blessing if the work naturally leads to the conclusion and is not skewed by a desire to change a people group through coercion and manipulation.
- **Impossibility of Linguistic Mimesis**—Not being constrained by cultural norms can seem to be freeing and allow me to fly unburdened by what has been.
- **Crisis of Validity**—I am positive and optimistic that this is an accurate statement and that the questioning of reality as being an expectation is dangerous. We must have truth, or chaos will become the new normal.
- **Language as a picture or map of the real is rejected**—Freedom to make individual professions of reality leaves people free to imagine anything in any way they desire and lean on the lack of abilities to understand previously defined statutes of normality because of their perception of the ambiguity of language.

- **Reflexivity**—This idea is a reasonable expectation for me as a writer, especially of research data, to explain the general circumstances of my life and the perceived characteristics of the world I live and operate in.
- **Reframing Validity**—Eroding the foundation of validity allows each person who reads a work to arrive at different conclusions and to stand on the principle of ambiguity in language communication and descriptive potentialities, which allows for freedom of interpretation unbound by the realities and norms of the past.
- **Empowerment Research**—Using the skills of a researcher to help communities develop ideas to help them see potential strengths and weaknesses seems to be a good use of combined efforts for improvement and sustainability. I really thought the “distributed representation” had a great concept of including all three voices (the attacker, the victim, and the researcher) side-by-side to show the perspectives. This has been done with the New Testament Gospels through the concept of synoptics and is very helpful to see all of the perspectives side by side.
- **Politics in Qualitative Research**—If used as a political tool, it is hopeful that the researcher will endeavor to offer multiple perspectives rather than using the research method as a one-sided ploy to advocate and push an agenda.

### **Black Hat-- Negative Assessment**

- **Societal Critique and Political Activism**--The statement, “...here there is space for societal critique and political activism, just as there are clearings for literary, artistic and dramatic expressions” seems ridiculous when I stop and think that research should be as neutral and with as minimal biases as possible! To be an activist is to leave the realm of neutrality entirely. If this idea of QLR being about societal critique and political activism

is the way I describe from the white, yellow, and green hats perspective, then QLR would very useful but seems to have a lower quality due to the intentional activism nature being implied. I find it disturbing that a person may have a preconceived notion and direct their words of description to intentionally twist the evidence to point toward the norming of social taboos from an agenda driven mindset. Surely/Hopefully I have misunderstood.

- **Impossibility of Linguistic Mimesis**—There may be some facets of life that are difficult to explain linguistically, but difficult is not equal to impossible. This is to indicate that we are living in a form of the Matrix and having no realization of what is real and what is not. When speaking of ideas of taste, favorite colors, preferred textures, desires, etc. those are open to interpretation and variations where the law gravity on earth is the law of gravity on earth and can be demonstrated with word phrases such as the apple falling and hitting the man on the head who was sitting under it when it fell.
- **Crisis of Validity**—Trying to be negative about this statement of fact, for people who do not view the world as having been created by an orderly God likely find solace in the idea of the lack of validity in the world. I can do my thing, and you do yours as long as you do not hinder my desires. Iran clearly believes they are justified to launch missiles at Israel. Without validity of truth as a certainty universally, who are we to say this is good or bad, right or wrong or what do these terms even mean if we are existing in the land of complete subjectivity. When taken to its logical conclusion this will lead to anarchy abroad (Each man did what he considered to be right...i.e., they abducted two hundred of the dancing girls to be their wives (Judges 21NET)).
- **Language as a picture or map of the real is rejected**—Reality is necessary to help humans to remain grounded and able to know the foundations of truth and reality that

allows people to live out their lives in a manner that is consistent with objective truth.

Without truth and the ability to communicate it (on the fallacy that language is incapable of clarification) is a tremendous leap into the dark and seems to inadvertently desire to return us to a much less sophisticated time with the irony being the very pursuit of sophistication itself. This cannot logically be a realistic understanding of language or the whole exercise of QLR would be an exercise in futility.

- **Reflexivity**—I could see where there may be some who would approach research as the researcher or reader and take the stance that individual characteristics of the researchers should have no bearing on the research by believing the researchers are neutral and simply reporting the facts (which sounds like quite the fallacy of reality).
- **Reframing Validity**—Eroding the foundations of validity is not good! Those promoting this concept are possibly well intentioned but have failed to see or care about the logical extreme that this would by necessity imply (e.g., We cannot know what God intended for us in His written Word and thus leave it open to varying interpretations that would lead to great confusion and disunity among God's adherents). As a thought exercise to help people to think outside of the standard box, reframing validity could be useful but extremely dangerous if not packaged in a clear manor that makes clear the information being presented is being intentionally presented from an abstract perspective.
- **Empowerment Research**—It is difficult to imagine that even though this sounds like a real positive may be used to manipulate communities to abandon traditionally held values in the names of pushing many of the more modern tenets such as equity and inclusion and the acceptance of alternative lifestyles. As with all QLR, the researcher should still share their biases and political aspirations to help the audience understand the slant that may

have placed on the works. As was mentioned regarding “Conjoint representation” it has an inherent potential for the researcher to put their own spin on the final work if not intentional to avoid doing so.

- **Politics in Qualitative Research**—The thought that the lack of specificity in QLR allows for one’s political proclivities to be intentionally pushed is ridiculous and disgusting. This lends QLR to research viewers simply looking for information that is supplied from the perspective of their own leanings (Much like the political nonsense we have today when viewing news via CNN or Fox News. What happened to simply reporting the news).

#### **Green Hat-- Creativity and New Ideas (Where will this idea get us?)**

- **Societal Critique and Political Activism**--Societal critique and political activism could be a catalyst for an area of research to help people to grow and mature. My research project seeking to learn the experiences of Christian married couples who see their sexual experiences as mutually beneficial is a societal critique with a desire to bring greater joyful experiences to this community. My hope is the research will help bring out some key experiences that may assist others to be able to make some adjustments in their lives to improve their mutual satisfaction. I hope to begin with the Christian married couples and then be able to move into broader categories with similar hopes of improvement.
- **Impossibility of Linguistic Mimesis**—This certainly lends itself to creativity since I would have to ignore the laws of nature and simply let my imagination run untethered by reason.
- **Crisis of Validity**—Without validity we can simply make up what we chose to be reality and adhere to anything that suits our desires in each moment and live with contradictions

because who is to say what is good, better, or best?!? We can sail off to the creative land of make believe that many of us may have experienced as little children, with no care in the world other than feeling whatever we want when we want.

- **Language as a picture or map of the real is rejected**—This idea is really not a new one but is only another attempt to erode the very foundations of truth and reality in our world. This idea of language being ambiguous and lacking the strength to clarify what is real is the blatant attempt by some (certainly not all) to distract the world from objectivity by the very objective claim that subjectivity is all there truly is.
- **Reflexivity**—Acknowledging the “situatedness” I have in the world will assist me in identifying some of my potential biases and should help me to be a bit more neutral but also allow the reader to know my worldview via wearing the preverbal glass through which I understand the world. The reader can hopefully better understand the research data as presented and draw better and more concise outcomes with these understandings of who I am.
- **Reframing Validity**—Considering what validity is or means and then to try out variations of perceived realities is a possible method of opening the mind to seeing variations of reality that may be missed when seen only through the individual worldview of the researcher. This could be a useful tool if it contains a warning that the researcher has employed variations of the understanding of what validity is and is written in terms understood by all rather than scholar speak (much like cigarettes have the Surgeon General’s warning on the label).

- **Empowerment Research**—From a creativity outlook this should indeed be a beneficial method to have new ideas come to light through the combined efforts and desires for their communities to flourish.
- **Politics in Qualitative Research**—If done with neutrality it could potentially share varying ideas and help people to become more united rather than the division that is so prevalent today.

### **Red Hat-- Emotional View**

- **Societal Critique and Political Activism**--It is very frustrating to come to QLR and think it sounds like a great way to put information out as it occurred (logically and validly) and to have others who are drawing their own inferences from the research efforts is sickening. Quantitative Research has its place but so often depends on numbers and stats to make everything seem so black and white. This lack of flexibility makes QLR appealing, but to then have someone promoting QLR as a method of societal critique and political activism is irritating!!
- **Impossibility of Linguistic Mimesis**—This thought is frankly distressing and is what leads to ideas such as relativism and being “tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes” (Ephesians 4:14 NET). If I were to seek to use sleight of hand to distract people from absolute truth, this sounds like a great plan to promote. If this could strictly be a thought tool to promote new ideas, it may be sufficient, but humans are not too good at keeping things in balance (in check). This is already becoming a way people live and interpret the world and thus anything goes because who are you to tell another person differently. It is an erosion of truth!

- **Crisis of Validity**— When we see life as being situational and variable depending on the whims of each person and emotional variabilities of the political spectrum, we are in for disastrous results. Sad, dangerous, and possibly leading to devastating results in our world.
- **Language as a picture or map of the real is rejected**—When we take things to this level of absurdity, we are treading in dangerous and potentially devastating territory. I am thinking of this and the affects it would logically have if applied to life and specifically scripture. This thought says that I cannot know and understand the mind of God as He has revealed Himself to us through scripture (He used language). If language is this way, I would be able to stand before God at the judgement and say, but your words were not sufficient to teach me what I needed to know and therefore my lack of understanding is Your fault. The thought appalls me, and I can only wonder what God would think or feel about this idea.
- **Reflexivity**— I think it will be a joy to share some of who I am with my readers so they will know a little about JG as a person, humanizing me by considering my experiences and leading them to enjoying the process more than if they approached the data from believing I am capable of delivering a cold “just the facts” approach.
- **Reframing Validity**—Changing the meaning of validity could have catastrophic implications for mankind. For sure there are varying opinions and views of each event depending on where a person is standing. This can be seen in the New Testament Gospels where each shares the same situation but generally having a slightly different detail than the other Gospel writers. This is not because they cannot know truth or have validity, but were simply at a different position or had various background noises that may have

hampered hearing the occurrence clearly causing the omission of certain words in their recounting of a conversation.

- **Empowerment Research**—It is refreshing to think about allowing groups the resource of trained researchers' talents to help the groups to improve and grow their already established motifs.
- **Politics in Qualitative Research**—If done with neutrality this could be very empowering to help bring a type of unification through trying to bring about a common ground. This view would be very encouraging. On the other hand, and what is seemingly the norm is to divisively push one's own political agenda. This is a shameful act that can only serve to further divide our nation and world (a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:24 NET)).

### **Reflective Summary of Learning**

This exercise has been helpful for me to identify the valuable ideas that I will implement in my research and to find other concepts that I will reject due to their obvious bias driven nature. One valuable nugget is the concept of using both the voices of the researcher and the voice of the participant to attempt to arrive at a well-balanced presentation of the data. A negative idea is utilizing my research to advocate for a political agenda. My goal, if political implications are present, is to give equal credence in the research to opposing forces to hopefully help the readers to be able to arrive at a well-reasoned perspective. Much like my faith, I believe my understanding of the world can withstand critical analysis. **The Bible is written in such a magnificent manner where it can handle the testing of its validity if you are truthful and just with the information.** Similarly, I want to be as balanced as a person is capable of being to help my

readers to understand why a liberal or a conservative would see various ideals and hopefully have provided enough information to help my readers make logical decisions.

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