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Embodied Transcription: A Creative Method for Using Voice-Recognition Software

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Voice-recognition software is designed to be used by one user (voice) at a time, requiring a researcher to speak all of the words of a recorded interview to achieve transcription. Thus, the researcher becomes a conduit through which interview material is inscribed as written word. Embodied Transcription acknowledges performative and interpretative aspects of interview and transcription processes and explores the efficacy of utilizing the researcher's body as an epistemological tool. Influenced by performance art, feminism and postmodernism, the iterative cycles of Embodied Transcription include processes of vocalization and resonation which may foster "knowing in the body," and serve to enrich and deepen the researcher's understanding of collected data. Potential pitfalls such as projection and technology failures are addressed. Key Words: Transcription, Voice-Recognition Software, Qualitative Data, Data Preparation, and Embodiment

Introduction

Transcription is an aspect of qualitative research that is primarily overlooked in the literature as a critical element of data analysis. The following is an overview of the evolving perspectives and positioning of transcription in qualitative research, including emerging technologies that improve and transform transcription practices. Additionally, I will introduce and describe a new process, Embodied Transcription (ET), including influences that inspired the practice, equipment necessary to achieve ET, and a critique of this present innovation.

The Positioning of Transcription in Qualitative Research

> Much frustration could have been avoided and time saved if I had been given some swimming lessons before being thrown in the pool.... Perhaps I could have stopped dreading sooner had I grasped the concept of transcription as a key phase of data analysis, as an acknowledged and integral part of my data interpretation. (Bird, 2005, p. 247)

Literature on qualitative methods, including those texts which serve to train future researchers (e.g., Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2007) rarely address transcription as an integral aspect of the research endeavor. Additionally, when transcription is considered, "researchers reporting data collection and analysis procedures seldom make mention of transcription... beyond a... statement that... data were transcribed... It is as if these researchers, through their neglect in addressing theoretical

or methodological transcription issues, assume that transcriptions are transparent" (Lapidat & Lindsey, 1999, p. 65). In agreement with Lapidat and Lindsey, I believe that transcription is, in-and-of-itself, theory-laden and involves initial phases of analysis of collected data. Additionally, I concur with their conclusions: "analysis takes place and understandings are derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening... Transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data" (Lapidat & Lindsey, p. 82). These statements reflect the view that the data we collect, transcribe, and analyze may be impacted both by the processes through which transcription is achieved as well as the depth of the researcher's engagement with these processes.

It is beyond the scope of this present text to address debates in the literature (Kvale, 2007; Tilley, 2003) related to the importance of transcribing one's own interview material as opposed to hiring someone to do transcription. However, I frame the discussion put forth here by disclosing my belief that transcription is an essential aspect of data analysis and that a researcher is well served by executing her own transcriptions of interview data. These opinions were two primary inspirations for my development of ET, a process of transcription that utilizes Voice-recognition Software (VRS) to achieve written texts of recorded interviews. Further exploration of the equipment and processes of ET will be addressed later in this paper. However, additional consideration of both transcription and embodiment will be useful to frame the method described herein.

Bird's (2005) trial-and-error experiences with transcription led her to evaluate and elucidate the "landscape of transcription" (p. 227). To this end, she defined several regions of this landscape including (a) transcription as data, (b) transcription as act, (c) transcription as interpretative act, (d) transcription as interpretative analysis, (e) transcription as product, and (f) transcription as peripheral participation (Bird, pp. 227-232). Especially significant to the discussion at hand, Bird notes a contemporary stance in the field of qualitative research that acknowledges transcription as a political act.

> Most qualitative researchers will agree that transcription is the act of (re)presenting original oral language in written form... A transcriber constitutes a social and political being; any act of transcription produced by such a being must of consequence be subjective... When representing an oral voice in written form, the transcriber becomes the channel for that voice. (Bird, p. 228)

The effect that the act of transcription has in transforming the original text (including intent, inflection, and context) is thus emerging as an important locus of researcher influence in the interpretation of data sources (Bird; Roberts, 1997). While qualitative data collection and analysis have traditionally been time-consuming and complex tasks, technological advancements have provided tools that may not only be time-saving, but may serve the purpose of quality control as well. Voice-recognition Software is one such technology currently under consideration in the field (Fogg & Wightman, 2000; Matheson, 2007; Park & Zeanah, 2005; Tilley, 2003).

Two articles on the use of VRS in transcription informed my development of ET (Fogg & Wightman, 2000; Park & Zeanah, 2005). A third article recently located during the development of this article articulates the process of using VRS hardware and

software in a cogent and detailed manner (Matheson, 2007). This latter article has continued to improve my own understanding of the potential benefits of furthering conversation on the use of VRS in qualitative research.

Fogg and Wightman (2000) introduced an early take on the use of VRS in qualitative research and summarized pitfalls and benefits for utilizing the emerging technology. A limitation of all current VRS is that the software can only be used with one voice and is not developed to comprehend multiple voices. In other words, the software trains itself to recognize the idiosyncrasies of one user's voice at a time and is not programmed to create text from a recording of multiple voices interacting. Park and Zeanah (2005) described the "listen-and-repeat" method of transcription in which the researcher literally speaks the words of the participants who have been interviewed into the voice-recognition software (p. 254). While this technique is identical at the practical level to ET as well as Matheson's (2007) Voice Transcription Technique (VTT), ET employs an additional set of processes, engaging multiple embodied channels—auditory, vocal, physical, and creative—in the pursuit of deeper understanding of collected data. Matheson's description of VTT details the equipment needed to achieve the highest quality transcriptions and provides great detail on the actual processes in which she engages to achieve such efficacious transcriptions. In this article, I also describe the technologies that I use and processes that I have developed that comprise ET. In addition to the technical aspects of the method, I will also describe the creative and intuitive elements of the work that have impacted the analytical and interpretive processes that are involved in qualitative research.

Like the aforementioned authors, the initial goal of saving time was at the heart of using VRS in my own research. Additionally, within qualitative research literature an emerging focus on the value of creativity to the processes of both data interpretation (Anderson, 2004) and the presentation of results (Denzin, 2001) prompted my own experimentation with VRS and the development of ET. My experience illuminated the undeniable subjectivity inherent to qualitative research and I feel the process can be utilized as a way to deepen any researcher's - novice and expert alike - interpretive analysis of collected data. The distinguishing aspect of ET is the conscious awareness of the embodied aspect of the act of speaking the words of others. Thus, it is my goal to share this method with other researchers to encourage creative engagement rather than objective distance from rich stores of information and contribute to the emerging conversation on VRS as a useful aid in advancing qualitative research.

In Search of a Solution: The Discovery of VRS

As I began the process of transcribing a set of 30 interviews related to women's experiences of intentionally choosing to remain childless for my dissertation (Brooks, 2007), I bemoaned the long hours of work ahead of me. A colleague recommended that I purchase voice-recognition software (Molina, 2005, personal communication), which I initially envisioned simply as a timesaving tool. At the time that I began using VRS in my own work in late 2005, I was unaware of the work of either Park and Zeanah (2005) or Matheson (2007), but developed, as noted above, a strikingly similar baseline approach to using VRS to achieve transcriptions. I quickly recognized, however, that utilizing this new technology also provided integrative processes through which I was

engaging with the material; my body, my intuition, and my intellect were simultaneously activated through the act of speaking my participants' words. As I worked with the technique I realized that, above and beyond simply listening, speaking, and creating a written record of what has been said, ET utilizes the whole of the researcher as an instrument with which to experience the interviews in new ways. As the transcriber speaks the participants' words, emotions, intuitions, and even the rudimentary elements of what is actually being said become clearer. As noted in the section above, the stance of the researcher as a consciously aware being with reflexive ability is a critical factor in the success of the process. Additionally, for researchers for whom verbal and auditory channels are strong, ET provides an engagement of voice, ears, and eyes that traditional listen-and-type methods generally omit.

In my own experience, ET creates a state of actively listening, of being embodied and involved with the material. Embodied Transcription allowed me to become acutely aware of how the cadence of a voice, the pacing of speech, and the emphasis on particular words reveals information within an interview that is often lost in translation from spoken word to written text.

Overview of the ET Process

Embodied Transcription is an iterative process of three cycles: (a) Revisit and Repeat, (b) Revision, and (c) Refinement and Reflection. What follows is a description of the equipment and the three iterative cycles that comprise ET (see Matheson, 2007, for another detailed description of voice-recognition-based transcription). While adhering to all three of the cycles is critical in order to minimize error within the transcription texts produced, the hardware and software one uses for this purpose may vary. In general, in order to engage in ET, a researcher will need a digital voice recorder that can hold extensive amounts of recorded data, a computer with voice-recognition software and a word processing program installed, and the desire to engage in an experimental and creative process.

For in-person interviews, I use a 60 GB Apple iPod and Griffin iTalk microphone. The iPod is equipped with a voice memo function that allows recording directly onto the device. For telephone interviews, I connect the telephone to the iPod through a Radio Shack Wireless Phone Recoding Controller plugged into the iTalk microphone. The sound quality for this process generally is very good unless the phone connection is weak or distorted in some way. The voice-recognition software (VRS) that I used for my doctoral research was Dragon Naturally Speaking 8.1 (version 9.5 is now available). I have found that Dragon Naturally Speaking 8.1 is accurate a majority of the time after the "training period," or upwards of 20 hours of use, (each VRS software package has a differing length of training time) which may also include dictation of email, writing of texts, or other written work that one must accomplish in the day-to-day life of a researcher or educator.

To achieve ET, several devices must be used at once: the laptop computer loaded with the VRS and a word processing program, as well as the iPod mentioned above equipped with standard earbud headphones. I prefer to use the left ear bud only, as the headset microphone provided by the VRS is most comfortable for me oriented to the right

side of my head. Even though I am wearing two headsets and surrounded by electronics, this is, for me, where creativity and intuition come alive.

Cycle one: Revisit and repeat.

Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) noted that, "there is not a one-to-one correspondence between conversational events that unfold during human interaction and what a researcher transcribes from an audio- or video-taped recording" (p. 72). Part of my realization as I developed a method utilizing VRS is that it is a chance to revisit something from the past in order to learn something new from the encounter. I utilize the *listen and repeat* method (Park & Zeanah, 2005), which, for me, means that, as opposed to listening to a chunk of the interview, then pausing the iPod and repeating back as much as I can remember, I prefer to work more akin to a simultaneous translator: following as closely behind the speech of the participant as possible. Since I work with the material in as close to real time as I can, I do not use punctuation and only make grammatical or text corrections on egregious errors that I notice during pauses or while adding inter-text notes. I have found it useful to pause during the process to make notes of feelings or intuitions I may be having, and the unspoken factors within the interview, such as laughter, long pauses, or changes in tone that I notice as I work, but otherwise stay close to real-time.

In this cycle, I use line-breaks to specify when the conversation moves from the interviewer to the participant, but do not take the time to add in attribution. Thus, recognizing that, as Bird (2005) surmises, transcription is "the act of (re)presenting original oral language in written form" (p. 227), the material produced in Cycle One is something new, another experience of the interview act—a re-visitation that has brought about new insight and a new form of data with which to engage. However, this is a raw textual form, and errors produced both by the VRS as well as errors of mis-hearing, mis-speaking, and omission must be addressed in Cycle Two, described below.

As a process, Cycle One is an opportunity for close listening and engaging with the cadence and rhythm of the spoken word. The intuitive, creative responses of the researcher mentioned above begin to percolate during Cycle One. For the research through which I developed this method, I conducted one to two hour interviews with 31 women over the course of several months. Each encounter had been memorable. Certain instances about each interview stood out as I reflected back on each woman's perspective on making a conscious choice to never have children (Brooks, 2007). But the subtle nuances of the individual stories grew deeper as I spoke the words of each participant in Cycle One:The determination in Cynthia to maintain her freedom and autonomy, the sorrow in Elinor as she recounted the lack of warmth in her family-of-origin, and the glee that Tracy expressed at having made the right decision for herself. I began to resonate with these emotions as I spoke the words of each woman. The individual stories of the women became much more alive and unique through the execution of Cycle One, and, additionally, the experience of embodying the words of each participant also aided in the initial development of codes and emerging categories. As I transcribed, I noticed key words and phrases that ran through many of the conversations: "freedom," "conscious," "you'll change your mind." Common themes running through all of the women's stories began to rise into my own consciousness. In this cycle, I made note of these converging

concepts as preliminary codes. Additionally, I listened to my hunches as I transcribed each interview and wrote memos if a word stood out or an emotion arose in me as I spoke my participants' words. I did not labor these ideas too much in this cycle, but rather recorded what was arising in my own words for consideration in later stages of data analysis.

Cycle two: Revision.

Of the three cycles, Cycle Two is the most practical and mundane. One drawback of the technology (Fogg & Wightman, 2000; Tilley, 2003) is that VRS does not generate punctuation automatically, but rather requires that it be spoken. Thus, in this cycle, I cull through the material produced in Cycle One to add in punctuation and assign attributions to the respective participants. I find that I prefer to do this process via typing rather than through VRS, but either method would be appropriate depending upon the preferences of the researcher. However, throughout Cycle Two, the need to pay close attention to detail in the raw text affords additional opportunity for understanding the interview's content. I work through this cycle without listening to the recording, which might seem counter-intuitive and may pose the threat of introducing error, but I have found that if this process is done immediately after Cycle One in each transcription process it is an opportunity to explore the text through another modality: reading. In addition, through Cycle One, the cadence of the participant's voice becomes an auditory echo so that the flow of the spoken word insinuates itself into the unpunctuated text.

Since VRS is still evolving and thus is not entirely accurate when utilized in conversational rather than dictational speech cadences, this cycle is also the time to mark those passages that are clearly incorrect. A line such as: "So I always remember, like, when I was a kid..." may appear in the text as "Nose or member like when I was a kid..." Or, "...and that's just so Reno, which is where I grew up, which is so different from even here..." may appear in the text as "...and that's just so Reno Riker out which is so different from you in here..." Major errors such as the latter example are rare and occur most often in places where the participant is speaking rapidly and I, as embodied transcriber, have struggled to keep up.

In particular, VRS has difficulty recognizing conversational conventions such as "um," "you know," and "oh." Such conventions are often mumbled, tossed into speech quickly, and I have found it difficult to train the VRS to recognize them. Since this type of transcription differs from general dictation, which uses more formal language and more closely mimics writing, this is an area for improvement in later versions of the software.

Cycle three: Refinement and reflection.

At the beginning of Cycle Three, I listen to the interview again and make punctuation and language corrections that I may have missed in the first two passes. This is also the cycle in which I develop a Gestalt of the interview, since I have been through the material now three times. I find that the "story" of the participant becomes clearer and clearer over the course of the process, and, as mentioned earlier, I incorporate memo writing into each of the three cycles. In Cycle Three, I tend to know more fully the participant's potential positioning within the study; in other words, I have early

conceptions of the "why's" and "where's" of how that participant fits or may not fit the subject matter under consideration. In addition, this is also the place for additional surprises or revelations about the participant's contributions to the study. Cynthia's determination, as described above, is indicative of a majority of the women's desire to live autonomous lives. Elinor's sorrow about issues in her family-of-origin was shared by several other women in the study. Tracy's glee expressed the sentiment of satisfaction and pride that virtually every woman in the study expressed in relation to her life choice. As with each cycle, such impressions, stories, and surprises are noted in memo form for further exploration during later data analysis. Thus, at the end of Cycle Three, for each interview collected, the researcher-transcriber has created both a (re)presentation of the interview experience that can be used for subsequent cycles of analysis, as well as a set of memos written throughout the three cycles that record intuitions and insights into emerging thematic structures that contribute to later interpretations of the database.

Each cycle within ET – Revisit/Repeat, Revision, and Refinement/Reflection—provides an additional way for the researcher to enrich her comprehension of participants' experience. I recognized this benefit, I believe, from my own training in both the humanities and the arts prior to embarking on a career in psychology. The dual influences from my prior education of postmodern theory and performance art are core concepts that informed the development of ET. Thus, a brief segue into these two areas and the impact that postmodern theory and performance art have had on me and other qualitative researchers (as evidenced in the literature), will detail a conceptual frame within which I have developed and experimented with this method.

Postmodern Considerations Influencing Research and Data Manipulation

The postmodern and poststructural turns in qualitative research have made important impacts upon the field, including greater focus on concerns such as subjectivity, the political nature of language, and the insider/outsider debate regarding the relationship of the researcher and researched (Denzin, 2001; Lather, 1991). Building upon the postmodern bedrock of Derrida (1972, 1976), Foucault (1980), Lyotard (1984), and Shawver (1996), Cosgrove and McHugh (2002) suggest that language is the primary tool through which social construction is achieved: "language (the term discourse is frequently used because of its inclusive connotation) is seen as *constituting* rather than *revealing* reality. Language affects what we do (and don't) notice, what we do (and don't) experience (Layton, 1998; Shawver, 1996)" (p. 24). Holding the tension between "feminist identity politics" and a postmodern perspective, allows a researcher to "examine the relationship between ontology (being) and epistemology (knowing)" (Cosgrove & McHugh, p. 25). However, my critique of a strict postmodern perspective is that it relies virtually exclusively on language (textuality), to the exclusion of additional locations of meaning such as the body and the concomitant expressions communicated in non-verbal form(s). These concepts will be addressed in further detail below. Nonetheless, postmodern theorists and researchers have focused a critical lens upon power dynamics inherent to the construction of language. This is of great importance to qualitative research in that self-expression and verbal descriptions of subjective experience are the heart of qualitative data. In short, heightened awareness of the power of language and the ability and/or rights that researchers have to interpret the

language expressed by research participants are both critical elements of consideration to achieve nuanced reporting of findings and are in-and-of themselves political acts.

Denzin's (2001) vision of the Reflexive Interview underscores the often unspoken fact that qualitative research is political and culturally-situated, not only within the researcher's and research participants' milieu, but within the interplay between them as well. He writes, "we have told our tales from the field. Today we understand that we write culture, and that writing is not an innocent practice. We know the world only through our representations of it" (Denzin, 2001, p. 23). Denzin, influenced by the work of Butler (as cited in the quote below), draws our attention to the *performativity* of contemporary culture(s). As Denzin notes:

> We inhabit a performance-based, dramaturgical culture. The dividing line between performer and audience blurs, and culture itself becomes a dramatic performance. This is a gendered culture with nearly invisible boundaries separating everyday, theatrical performances from formal theatre, dance, music, MTV, video and film (1990: 2, 1997: 159, 1999: 19)… but the matter goes even deeper than blurred boundaries. The performance has become reality. (p. 26)

Denzin (2001) illustrates Lapadat and Lindsay's (1999) observations that, within qualitative research literature, much attention and scrutiny has recently been devoted to the complex, meaning-laden process of interviewing. I posit that such consideration must also be applied to the act of transcription; the process that initially "inscribes" (Smith, personal communication, August 2006), the original performance(s) and center(s) of meaning in an interview into a utilitarian medium: text. As elucidated below, Embodied Transcription is a process that acknowledges the performative influences of both art and culture on lived experience—including the solitary work of qualitative data transcription.

Conceptualizing Embodiment from Multiple Perspectives

The deconstruction of language prompted by the postmodern turn offered vital contributions to qualitative research by uncovering power dynamics and socially constructed lived experience often overlooked in traditional psychological research. Of equal importance, the embodied nature of the production of language also must not be overlooked. Language cannot be produced without a body. Words are constructed and delivered through mental processes that generally become vocalization or a physical act of writing. Properly addressing the multiple ways that embodiment is conceptualized and utilized within qualitative research in the social sciences—not to mention in philosophy, art and performance theory, cultural studies, and critical theory—is important, but a larger project than the discourse at hand (see Todres, 2007, for a detailed discussion of his conceptualization of "embodied inquiry").

Nonetheless, building upon Bird's (2005) recognition of the socio-political nature of transcription, concepts evaluated here include how the integration of the body and voice of the researcher may impact analysis and interpretation of data. Several key constructs are useful in framing how embodiment influences transcription practices and is the foundation of ET. In the effort to dismantle the Cartesian duality that separated mind

and body, Merleau-Ponty (1962) grounded all lived experience in the body and its relation to situated contexts: "the work is inseparable from the subject which is nothing other than a project of the world; the subject is inseparable from the world" (p. 491). Within ET, I am defining *embodiment* as one's awareness of experiencing and interpreting the world in-, of-, and through one's body. Embodiment is the perspective of acknowledging how the body *is* the lived experience: personally, culturally, and socio-politically (see Grosz, 1995; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). This definition also acknowledges that the body is a repository of forms of knowledge. Wilshire (1989) noted such bodily knowing as alternative to and augmentative to intellectual knowing. However, others argue that embodied knowing is integrative and holistic, not augmentative (Anderson, 2004; Todres, 2007).

Re-membering the holism inherent to embodied knowledge within the context of qualitative research, led me to return to my own roots as an actress throughout my young life and early adulthood and to speculate that my own performance roots could contribute to a greater understanding of the psychological phenomenon I choose to study as a researcher. The body is central to performance; no mind-body split is possible if an artist is to truly portray an other (Stanislavski, 1936). Word, breath, gesture, pace, thought, and purpose are in alignment. Embodiment is the prerequisite for the craft.

In the realm of the arts, knowing in the body, most specifically through intuition and creativity, is crucial to the creation of an artistic product: a performance, a dance, a painting, a poem. Such bodily engagement is becoming increasingly prevalent with regard to the presentation of qualitative research findings (Denzin, 2001; Janesick, 2001; Spry, 2006). Janesick explored the benefits of intuition and creativity within the research process. She defined intuition as "immediate apprehension or cognition. Intuition is a way of knowing about the world through insight and exercising one's imagination" (p. 532). Creativity, as she defined it, is "in it's generic sense... having the sense or quality of being created rather than imitated" (p. 532). Janesick concluded that embracing the gifts afforded to the qualitative researcher by intuition and creativity enables us to "present a more complete, holistic, and authentic study of our own role as storytellers and artist-scientists... Nothing is so important to the story as the words we use, both intuitively and creatively" (p. 539).

Todres and Galvin (2008) also focused on the importance of words in their development of "embodied interpretation" as part of their own phenomenological research (p. 576):

> Embodied interpretation is a body-based hermeneutics in which qualitative meanings are pursued by a back-and-forth movement between words and their felt complexity in the lived body. The movement between the whole of the felt complexity at any moment (that is 'in the more') and the part that 'comes to language' is a practice that keeps open the creative tension between words and the aliveness of what the words are about.

I concur with Janesick (2001) and Todres and Galvin (2008) that, as qualitative researchers relating to the voices and words of essential contributors to a chosen area of interest (participants), we must engage holistically, or in an embodied way, with our data. Through the reflexive process of ET, words become voice and vice-versa. Intuition and

creativity are catalysts for intimate engagement with the data and the embodied experience of the researcher brings about "aliveness" to the transcribing process (Todres & Galvin, p. 576). As described below, ET enables comprehension of what the participant has said while also affording the researcher the opportunity to explore feelings, ideas, and symbols the vocalization of a participant's words may evoke.

Performance artist Anna Deavere Smith has created one-woman shows that explore race in America. Her technique for her two one-woman shows was to interview members of a community that experienced a racially influenced conflict, and to represent as many diverse voices from that community as possible (Smith, 1992, 1993). From the recorded interviews, she utilized transcribed texts—verbatim—to represent various community constituents. She embodied the voices, performing them one at a time. Smith, as Denzin (2001) noted, "learned how to listen carefully... learned to inhabit the words of the other... use their manner of speech as a mark of individuality... see that a person can be completely present in their speech, and this is a gift... (p. 34). While ET does not result in public performance, the idea of Smith's process also influenced my development of the technique. As Denzin so succinctly noted of Smith's work, "words become a means, or method for evoking the character of the person" (p. 34).

Within ET, the character of the participant is more fully revealed. Rather than create art from the data, as Smith did, what is learned or intuited may be recorded through memo-writing to be incorporated into later stages of analysis. As will be noted in a subsequent section, awareness of the fine line between interpretation and projection must always be maintained during the employment of ET as a best practice of the technique. Additional considerations of the edge between performance and engagement with data will be included in the discussion of potential pitfalls that follows below.

Like the other cutting-edge qualitative researchers noted earlier, the work of methodologist Rosemarie Anderson (2001, 2004) specifically integrates creativity and intuition into research and has influenced ongoing refinement of ET. Anderson's method, Intuitive Inquiry, is "an epistemology of the heart" (2004, p. 1). It is a hermeneutical method that moves through five successive cycles that result in findings of a specific research endeavor. As with the broad concept of embodiment mentioned previously, not enough time or space is available here to fully explicate the entire method, but the cyclical structure has served as a strong model for the three-cycle structure of ET, as has the three to four cycle structure of Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, and Bertsch's (2003) data analysis method, the Listening Guide.

In addition to the structural influence afforded by Intuitive Inquiry, a major tenet of this method is that it "joins intuition to intellectual precision" (Anderson, 2004, p. 1). Beyond Janesick's (2001) reliance on the arts for an understanding of intuition, according to Anderson (2004), the process of intuition is a transpersonal act which may take several forms and is admittedly difficult to quantify. "In one moment, intuition seems vibrant and breathtaking to behold—and then it disappears" (p. 4). Yet the author nonetheless purports that intuition is a viable form of knowing. This is in keeping with ongoing debates in the literature regarding social construction of the forms of knowledge which are deemed sound in research and which are disavowed (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Clements, Ettling, Jenett, & Shields, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 2008; Moustakas, 1990; Wilshire, 1989). One example of the utilization of multiple forms of knowledge to

enhance qualitative research, according to Anderson, is the use of *resonance* to validate research findings. She writes:

> Akin to the use of acoustic resonance in music and physics, embodied writing [an aspect of Intuitive Inquiry] employs the principle of sympathetic resonance... For example, if I bow a string on a violin, the same string on another violin across the room will begin to resonate as well. Resonance is immediate and direct. In a like manner, as I read accounts of the experiences of others—experiences both similar and dissimilar to my own—I often find myself in resonance... It strikes a chord with me... Another's depictions are similar enough to mine to help me feel through to the experience of another. It becomes a part of me. (2001, p. 84)

As Denzin (2001) also discusses, Anderson (2001) here touches upon the reflexivity inherent to a researcher's engagement with data sources. Each of these authors underscores the reality that the researcher is a central component to the research endeavor, and that postpositivist stances of objectivity purported by earlier qualitative researchers (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) prohibit the utilization of an important instrument of knowledge: the body, which is filled with emotion, intuition, and senses. The use of Intuitive Inquiry affords a researcher tools with which to engage deeply with data sets through multiple epistemological lenses. The goal of the multi-modal cyclical structure of ET affords similar complexity and rigor to the process of transcription but ensures the researcher's listening experience is captured for later review and application.

Potential Pitfalls and Criticisms

In an explication of the ongoing refinement of the Intuitive Inquiry method described above, Esbjörn-Hargens and Anderson (2006) underscored the need for the researcher to maintain awareness of and commitment to personal development as an aspect of the use of the method. They wrote: "The method is radically personal... demanding and rigorous. It is suitable for researchers willing to explore their own experience and beliefs systematically, and to open themselves repeatedly to aspects of living that exceed our usual materialistic and cognitive orientation" (p. 301). Like Intuitive Inquiry, ET also requires awareness of one's sense of self in order to maintain the boundaries between the self—emotions, thoughts, projections, opinions, and embodied knowing—and the reported experiences of the participants.

The research project through which I developed ET included a participant pool of which I, the researcher, was an insider (Brooks, 2007). My own demographic markers closely resemble the majority of women who participated in the project, including being white, middle- to upper-middle class, highly educated, and located on one of the coasts of the United States. Due to our collective similarities, there were both benefits and possible pitfalls that arose in utilizing this technique. The benefits included close identification with the social location(s) of these women. I know the primary terrain in which they have lived: ethnically, with regard to gender, and generally with respect to

geographic location and class. Thus much of our language was shared. While, as stated, the commonality among us was a benefit, it also suggests the possibility for projection, a phenomenon Boyatsis (1998) suggests is a potential problem throughout qualitative research processes. During each cycle as thoughts, feelings, and intuitions arose, I often found myself taking a moment to ask: "Is this true for this participant? Or is this only true for me?" I use this example to illustrate the importance of reflexivity within the process in order to maintain mindful discernment while walking the fine line between deep understanding of the experience of others and projecting meaning onto the spoken representations of the lived reality shared in the interview setting. In other words, while discourse represents the experience of others but is not the experience itself (cf., as discussed in Bird, 2005), it nonetheless is often as close as we may come, and is one of the essential ways through which we gain understanding of phenomena in research.

Thus, insider status creates one set of challenges that must be addressed when using ET. What, then, of difference? In one performance by Anna Deavere Smith (2007) I observed via the internet, she made a point of emphasizing that she generally does not wear shoes as she performs the various characters she has created. However, she went on to say, "The other reason I don't wear shoes is just in case I really feel like I have to cuddle up and get into the feet of somebody... walking really in somebody else's shoes" (Smith, 2007). The "somebody" she refers to is a white, middle-American, male, Republican bull rider—quite a stretch from her New York, multi-racial, female, artist identity. But what she suggests here is that we have the ability, with careful attention, careful listening, and the maintenance of awareness of our own socially constructed nexus of influence, to understand an "other." Further research that includes diverse populations as well as situations in which the researcher is positioned as an outsider will benefit the emerging understanding of the ways in which insider/outsider status influences the utility of ET.

Beyond the social construction of the self, the researcher as discrete individual also impacts the usefulness of the application of this technique. Fogg and Wightman (2000) note that "cognitive aspects of switching modalities (hearing to speech vs. hearing to typing)" (p. 7) and a researcher's cognitive style (auditory or visual) may cause difficulty for some in mastery of the use of VRS, and thus may impact the successful utilization of ET. However Fogg and Wightman also suggest that for those with less proficient typing skills, the utilization of VRS may greatly improve accuracy and speed of transcription. Thus, a researcher's cognitive and technical strengths and weaknesses may be weighed in the decision whether or not to engage in ET.

This technique was developed during the transcription of one-on-one interviews. Tilley (2003) has noted the challenges of utilizing VRS for focus groups or transcribing group interviews. Additional applications of ET in such group transcription environments are required in order to validate it as a viable technique for such purposes.

An additional area with potential pitfalls is the technology utilized in this type of work, and the possibility of technical failures. Voice-recognition Software creates stores of data for continued improvement of accuracy during dictation processes. Thus, taking care to keep computer hard drives free from viruses is one important element of productive use of the technologies. Proper storage and back-up of the original digital recordings of the interviews also ensures that further rounds of ET can take place if electronic transcription files are lost or damaged. Finally, unless one is technologically

savvy, having access to a computer technician can also be an invaluable resource for finding creative solutions to confusing technical interfaces.

Conclusion

The development of ET evolved out of my own research needs: to reduce the time requirements to produce transcriptions of qualitative research interviews and remedy my frustration with a lack of ability to connect to the deeper meaning and content in interviews when utilizing the listen-and-type method. My use of VRS and implementation of ET has altered my understanding of the position of transcription in the overall process of qualitative research. As noted above, transcription is an initial act of analysis and interpretation. Due to the profound experience of deepened understanding of the interview data that resulted from my own ET processes, it is my contention that ET is most effective when performed by the primary researcher conducting the inquiry. However, further exploration of the interpretive analysis produced by hired transcribers may result in the discovery of new opportunities for inter-rater comparisons among members of a research team. Continued experimentation with new technologies and techniques as well as further discussion of the topic in the professional literature would afford the field much-needed additional scholarship that purposefully situates the transcriber and transcription processes squarely in qualitative research as an influential part of the construction of—and analysis of—collected databases.

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