

Symposium IX

Reflexive Epistemologies: First and Second Person Approaches in Qualitative Research

Transformation is the essence of any research endeavour. This transformation should manifest itself in the upward development in the thought processes and worldviews of the researcher and the participants. This upward movement, however, is not possible unless the researcher connects with his/her own subjectivity, feels a passionate identification and at the same time manages to maintain a dispassionate distance from the experiences he/she is undergoing. In recent decades, qualitative research has provided the platform for researchers and participants to collaboratively explore the paradoxes within the psyche and make a harmonious existence possible rather than negating one experience and affirming another.

The current symposium addresses the issues of reflexivity and subjectivity in research. The symposium shall be of a dialectic nature wherein the first part questions the grounds of subjectivity and reflexivity, questions its inscrutable usage and inevitability. In the second part, different speakers will respond to those challenges by presenting their analysis and insights on the topic based on their own experiences.

Coordinators:

- 1) Dr. Anuradha Choudry, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur
- 2) Dr. Rishabh Rai, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur

Speakers:

- 1) Ms Annie Baxi, Assistant Professor, Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi
- 2) Mr. Tapinder Singh, Assistant Professor, University of Delhi, New Delhi
- 3) Ms Divya Parasher, Research Scholar, Indian Psychology Institute, Puducherry
- 4) Ms. Aditi Kaul, Research Scholars, Indian Psychology Institute, Puducherry
- 5) Ms. Navni Gujral, Research Scholars, Indian Psychology Institute, Puducherry

ABSTRACT I – ID0078NAOP2017

The Shared Space of the Researcher and the Researched

Annie Baxi

Department of Psychology, University of Delhi

anniebaxi@gmail.com

The paper is based on personal reflections of the researcher during the data collection phase of an ethnographic study on Muslim tenancy. This work was carried out in an unauthorised Muslim-dominated locality, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi. The article illustrates the researcher's confrontation with personal and cultural issues as she worked in an area diametrically opposite to her own residence on geographical, social, economic and cultural parameters. It highlights the importance of reflexivity and positionality as research tools and skills in developing relationships of trust with participants. Interviews were analysed weaving personal reflections, questions and dilemmas of the researcher. Finally, it builds an argument around the dichotomy between 'house' and 'home', where house stands for physical structure of the building and home a space of intimacy and safety. In this space, the researcher not only connected with her participants but also found the interactions meaningful for her own personal quests. The conclusion of the paper emphasises on 'journey within' as the fulcrum of qualitative research.

ABSTRACT II – ID00105NAOP2017

From the rented room to the borrowed ward: Experiences in Mental Hospital

Author & Affiliation: Tapinder Singh, University of Delhi

tapindersingh13@gmail.com

The paper chronicles the researcher's experiences during his fieldwork at two mental hospitals in Kolkata; Pavlov Mental Hospital and Lumbini Park Hospital. The work included participation in therapy sessions and workshops at the formally designated level. Aspects of the field work that stayed more with the researcher were the unintentional experiences of candid remarks, casual conversations, relationship building with the 'patients', distant and participant observation and the many self-doubts around 'normalcy'. These were reflected in the personal journal maintained during the field work. The paper presents the researcher's reflections around concepts like fear, loneliness, recovery, health, and intimacy, discovered through dwelling on the larger idea of normalcy. Reflexivity as a qualitative research tool is emphasised for its role in sense-making of the data built between participants and researcher, weaving their subjectivities.

The Guru-disciple Relationship

Divya Parasher

Indian Psychology Institute (IPI), Pondicherry

Email: divya.parasher@gmail.com/ divya@ipi.org.in

Abstract

Amongst the many features that define the Indian spiritual tradition there is one that stands out for its unique role and significance — the Guru-disciple relationship. In many ways it has been the most effective medium by which the knowledge and the experience of the various spiritual traditions of India have been perpetuated through the ages.

Given its history and importance, this study was an attempt to grasp some of the basic principles that underline the Guru-disciple interaction in today's world. It aimed to explore and understand the world of the disciple; his relation with the Guru, the various psychological processes and attitudes he applies for his spiritual goals, the changes he undergoes because of his association with the Guru. The study was carried out in the following four Ashrams:

1. Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram, Thiruvannamalai
2. Swami Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh
3. Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Belur Math, Kolkata
4. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry

It was based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with at least four disciples from each of these Ashrams.

The present paper primarily traces my journey as a researcher in trying to explore this very personal and profound relationship. It recounts the various challenges I faced while conducting these qualitative interviews, from questioning my intentions and capacities to learning to reconcile differences to honing my listening skills to letting go of my preferences and fears. It focuses also on the transformation I underwent during the interviewing process.

ABSTRACT IV– ID00119NAOP2017

First person inquiry: A journey towards self-exploration.

Aditi Kaul

Indian Psychology Institute (IPI)

Phone no. +919047311881

Email id- aditika9@gmail.com

Abstract

In this age of millennials, everyone is striving to build their own identity and the 24*7 work hour culture has adversely affected the work-life balance. Where on one hand globalization is bringing people around the world closer, we as individuals are getting more and more disconnected with our own selves. Psychological well-being is a key concern at the moment and a number of researches have been published on the concepts of well-being, life-satisfaction, happiness and so on. The fact that our well-being is connected to interpersonal relationships we share and the environment we live in cannot be denied but what the researcher believes is largely missing from the literature is the awareness of the inner psychological processes that influence our interactions and the way we behave in the world. This research paper is an attempt by the researcher to share her journey of first person inquiry, undertaken to conduct an in-depth study of self through the framework of Integral yoga which is centered around the concept of an ongoing evolution of consciousness and focuses on the transformation of our nature and outer life. Diary writing formed an important part of recording the researcher's effort at self-observation. The aim was to develop psychological knowledge of different processes that take place at a subtle level within ourselves and influence our outer nature and are reflected in our behaviour. This developed ability of self-observation forms the base for systematic self-inquiry and helps in attaining self-mastery. The researcher believes that an awareness of inner psychological processes will contribute to a better understanding of oneself and make us well equipped to deal with the world.

Keywords Self inquiry, Integral Yoga, First person inquiry

ABSTRACT V – ID00158NAOP2017

About-turn

Navni Gujral

Indian Psychology Institute (IPI), Pondicherry

Email: navni.gujral.navni@gmail.com

Abstract

In this research, I am using my self as the instrument and my own life as an opportunity for an in-depth psychological study and understanding of subjective human experience. I want to explore the extent to which such first-person research can reveal knowledge that may have universal implications and utility. This involves a critical discipline of recording my own inner experience and gaining knowledge through my direct experience on various psychological phenomena such as egoism, desire, fear, anger etc. As a primary step, I am attempting to refine myself as the instrument for the study by taking up a journey of conscious inner development. Through this journey, I hope to share relevant insights and systematic processes that could be used for conscious growth, as well subjective research purposes.