Cultivating Self as Responsive Instrument

Working the Boundaries and Borderlands for Ethical Border Crossings

* Hazel Symonette

Culture and context are critical shapers of social research processes, interpretations, and judgments. Ethical practice and excellence in research are intimately intertwined with orientations toward and responsiveness to diversity, and most importantly, one’s boundary-spanning capacities for authentically engaging diversity. Diversity includes those consequential dimensions of human difference that have socially patterned influences on interpersonal relations and the nature of the interface with organizations, institutions, and other aspects of social structure: notably, human differences that make a substantive difference for access, process, or success. Because cultures and contexts are dynamic and ever changing, this is a lifelong process. It calls for ongoing personal homework in expanding and enhancing one’s portfolio of multicultural or intercultural resources and other boundary-spanning competencies.

Too often, we researchers—from our privileged standpoints—look but still do not see, listen but do not hear, touch but do not feel. As Kaylynn TwoTrees (2003) aptly put it, “privilege is a learning disability.” We do violence to others’ truths when we fail to develop and refine...
characterized the implications and operational dynamics embodied in privileged social identities. With those identity markers come the presumption of competence, the presumption of worthiness, and the presumption of innocence (e.g., honesty, good will, good intent). In contrast, nonprivileged social identities must instead actively make the case and “prove” competence, worthiness, and innocence. As privileged authorities, how are researchers embodying normative expectations and acting on the trust conferred via their social role as respectful, trustworthy answer seekers and answer makers?

In this chapter, I explore the role of the self in research: how our most valuable instrument may be calibrated and cultivated, how empathy may be gained, and how responsively self-aware and ethical practices call for extensive cultural and contextual groundings. In addition to embracing these considerations as an essential professional development pathway for excellence, researchers have an ethical responsibility to proactively assess and address the ways in which our personal repertoire of perceptual and interpretive resources may ignore, obscure, or distort more than illuminate.

**Self-Calibration, Reactivity, and Validity**

The work of social scientists has at least some measure of ethical implications given their potentially impactful involvement in people’s lives. Such impacts are especially salient in more applied research approaches such as action research and evaluations. Social research ethics speak to the morally responsible ways in which we should conduct ourselves as we design and engage in systematic inquiry, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination processes vis-à-vis individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and so on. Ethical practice is reflected in the extent to which researchers conduct themselves and their research in ways that are respectful, accurate and just—better off—or at harm.” These deliberated and not simply unilateral researcher’s intent.

In addition to intentions, quality in examination of well as enhancements of validity which a measure accurately capture fidelity that which For example, M. well-established notion: “The appr of inferences, made about indica tions from test assessments, how to the full spectrum systematic inquisitions. Found issues include the Whos implement a thematic inquiry what ways toward Who judges?

To what extent received and received effective:

- **Appropriat** tives that expectatio engagemen tional, relat context
- **Effective:** that yield outcomes

These criteria agenda even the dimension is too consideration at
are respectful, are fairly representative (accurate and just), and ideally leave persons better off—or at least minimally, “does no harm.” These should be collaboratively deliberated and negotiated judgments and not simply unilateral decisions based on the researcher’s intent, beliefs, and judgments.

In addition to these ethical considerations, quality imperatives demand serious examination of factors that may erode as well as enhance validity. Conventional definitions of validity speak to the extent to which a measurement instrument/process accurately captures and represents with fidelity that which it purports to measure. For example, Messick (1989) offered this well-established test-related validity definition: “The appropriateness or correctness of inferences, decisions, or descriptions made about individuals, groups, or institutions from test results” (p. 13). Validity assessments, however, relate more broadly to the full spectrum of instrumentation and systematic inquiry and inference methodologies. Foundational instrumentation issues include the uses of self-as-instrument. Who is conceiving, designing, engaging, implementing, and inferring during systematic inquiry processes with Whom in what ways toward what ends. Who decides? Who judges?

To what extent is what manifests perceived and received as both appropriate and effective:

- **Appropriate**: Behaviors and initiatives that are congruent with the expectations, demands, and codes of engagement in a particular situational, relational, or spatial/geographic context
- **Effective**: Behaviors and initiatives that yield the intended or desired outcomes

These criteria undergird a “both/and” agenda even though the effectiveness dimension is too often privileged and given consideration at the expense of the other dimension. Such myopic practices undermine long-term effectiveness since perceived appropriateness is often a critical prerequisite for moving beyond expedient compliance toward generative commitment and sustainability. Assessments of validity ultimately reside in an instrument’s methodology’s intended purpose, use, and application.

Honoring ethical and quality imperatives summons researchers’ capacities to fully hear and heed the voices of key stakeholders—their needs and challenges as well as their assets and resources. In social research, ethical considerations start with a focus on the who: Who is researching/evaluating whom based on what, when, and where? Who are we as knowers, inquirers, and engagers of others? Who are we and what perceptual, conceptual, and interpretive orientations and experiences do we bring that exert critical influences on the research processes we design and implement? This occurs whether intended or desired or not. What matters most is interpersonal impact not personal intent. Expanding one’s self-awareness is especially crucial when engaging and working across diversity divides—notably, salient human differences that make a socially patterned difference in access, process, and success. Such interpersonal relations vary widely in their impacts on the quality, accuracy, and trustworthiness of observations and interpretations.

♦ **Demystifying Data**

Data are neither self-evident nor do they speak for themselves. The same data can conjure up dramatically different meanings and interpretations depending on where one stands and sits and, thus, what one brings as relevant perspectives, tools, techniques, and orientations. More specifically, what can and does one look and listen for, actually see and hear, and, then, meaningfully discern?
DYNAMIC MULTILEVEL
SCANNING, TRACKING, AND
FANNING: SELF-TO-SELF, SELF-
TO-OTHERS, SELF-TO-SYSTEMS

Increase diversity-grounded awareness of the need for continuous assessment/evaluation of one's own conceptual, perceptual, and meaning-making/meaning-shaping prisms and the particular ways they are informed and shaped by multiple social identities and sociopolitical roles, diverse life paths, sociocultural, and other experiences.

- Perceptual prism: Who and what matters when and where?
  o Lenses: The sensing portals through which researchers connect with the physical, social, and spiritual world—What is the nature of researchers' pathways for perceiving and receiving the "VOICES" as well as other data?
  o Filters: The sifting and winnowing processes and protocols based on researchers' operational definitions of what is substance and worthy of attention ("signal") versus noise and extraneous variation—What does the researcher look at and actually see, listen to and actually hear, touch and actually feel versus not fully and accurately seeing, hearing, or feeling? To what extent would stakeholders agree with one's self-assessment?

- Interpretive prism: Why, how, and how much "it" matters?
  o Frames: The meaning-shaping/meaning-making resources and "infrastructure"—What are the researcher's personal thinking and feeling practices, perspectives, and processes, that is, the constellation of relevant values, beliefs, attitudes, orientations as well as social-structure locations vis-à-vis what the context (situational, relational, spatial/geographic) is calling for from the researcher?

Researchers are not empty vessels, blank slates, or inanimate "tools"—notably, robots for data gathering, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination. Ethical praxis summons us to start with the presumption that default predispositions exist so one needs to commit to discovering, excavating, and taking account of the ways in which they may hinder or enhance one's work in a given context.

WHY BOTHER?

Focusing on the who in research humanizes what is too often a set of sterile, routinized tasks. Clearly, the what and how questions are important—the purpose, methods, and processes—but the human systems dynamics and social relations (the who) are foundational prerequisites for excellence and ethical practice. Researchers need to mindfully attend to and engage the many-faceted who and the contested terrain often associated with diverse views and vantage points. This will increase prospects for accuracy and validity as well as engaged participation in research, planning, improvement, and accountability processes. The extent to which stakeholders perceive and receive the researcher as trusting and trustworthy, as respectful and respectable and, most important, as fairly working in their best interests affects the form and levels of their engagement. These perceptions also determine the quality, depth, and trustworthiness of the data that they are willing to share.

Researchers need to proactively attend to these issues and regularly question the extent to which they can hear and engage the full spectrum of stakeholders in full voice—notably, discerning their hopes, expectations, and experiences. Appropriately responsive choices of methods can create and maintain a grace space for multiple stories to be told in full voice and for multiple truths to gain a respectful hearing. This is one of the most powerful contributions that researchers can make through recognizing their privilege, the watchwords of subjectivity, and acknowledging our social and cultural influences on design and interpretation what is substantive and what is noise. These issues are designated "in 1994 president Evaluation Association. Notably, "the ness of under personal interactivities of the how one uses inquirer" (Kirk) as knowers, inquirers, matters. We not as researchers believe we know

The Self, and Data

Ultimately, the data collected and the meaning making that processes that standpoints and

"Inclusive Excellence spearheaded a research. It places these inners to help colleges and us community engaging"
recognizing that “so long as we participate in a society that transforms difference into privilege, there is no neutral ground” (Johnson, 2001, p. 131). The compelling watchwords are multipartiality and intersubjectivity, not the more distant and elusive impartiality and objectivity.

Our social positioning and, thus, our sociocultural lenses and filters exert critical influences on the research processes we design and implement and, ultimately, our interpretations and judgments regarding what is substantive and worthy of study and what is noise and extraneous variation. These issues relate to what Karen Kirkhart designated “interpersonal validity” in her 1994 presidential address at the American Evaluation Association annual conference: Notably, “the soundness and trustworthiness of understandings emanating from personal interactions...the skills and sensitivities of the researcher or evaluator, in how one uses oneself as a knower, as an inquirer” (Kirkhart, 1995, p. 4). Who we are as knowers, inquirers, and engagers of others matters. We need to understand who we are as researchers and how we know what we believe we know about ourselves and others.

♦ The Self, Social Relations, and Data Quality

Ultimately, the nature of social relations will determine the quality and trustworthiness of the data collected, the soundness of the meaning making and possible interpretations, and the prospects for research processes that facilitate grounded understandings and “inclusive excellence.”* Culturally and contextually responsive research processes summon all stakeholder groups to step forward in full voice to authentically communicate their truths. Research typically occurs in social contexts, so reactivity abounds whether recognized, intended, or not. Reactivity concerns typically focus on “artificial effects” related to research instruments and strategies, but they also have direct relevance for the who—the person who administers the instruments and designs the strategies. This multilateral process is shaped in varying degrees by all parties involved within and across diversity divides. That some voices and views are neither heard nor heeded does not mean they are not present and operative despite the seeming silence. Reactivity abides and resides in the nature of the social relations constructed as well as emergent among the parties involved. Its existence is not solely controlled by the determinations of the researcher (see Table 18.1).

To maximize accuracy, validity, and excellence, researchers must mindfully monitor and address this inevitable reactivity in order to develop authentic insights and understandings of the persons whom they seek to research. How does one mindfully address the ways in which one’s presence may introduce nonrandom variation—bias/contamination/invalidity—as well as random variation (noise)? We can address our own limitations only with deep multilateral self-awareness, commitment, and initiative. Through ongoing efforts, we can cultivate our capacities to move from within our own sociocultural/sociopolitical boundaries into the shared space of borderlands and perhaps even across the borders into others’ spaces as an inside-outsider: an effective border-spanning communicator and perhaps even a respectful border-crossover.

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*Inclusive Excellence: The Association of American Colleges and Universities, with support from the Ford Foundation, spearheaded a research agenda that spotlights the integral interconnections among diversity and educational quality initiatives. It places these intersections at the center of campus planning and practice. The Making Excellence Inclusive project is designed to help colleges and universities fully integrate these efforts and embed them into the core of academic mission and institutional functioning: “Through this initiative, AAC&U re-envisioned diversity and inclusion as a multilayered process through which we achieve excellence in learning, research and teaching; student development; institutional functioning; local and global community engagement; workforce development; and more.”
### Table 18.1 Potential Sources of Invalidity Related to Human Systems Dynamics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extraneous Variables</th>
<th>Alternative Explanations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;WHO&quot;-Centered Social Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>On-Stage Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social desirability</td>
<td>Subject may be saying what he or she &quot;should&quot; believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation apprehension</td>
<td>Subject may be trying to impress someone judging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;mental health,&quot; intelligence, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faking bad/Faking good</td>
<td>Subject may be trying to sabotage or help research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand characteristics</td>
<td>Subject may be doing what he or she thinks researcher wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More Persistent Changes Caused by Research</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraneous Variables</td>
<td>Alternative Explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placebo effect</td>
<td>Subject may be changing because he or she expected to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researcher expectancy (self-fulfilling prophecy)</td>
<td>Researcher may subtly communicate an expectancy that subject acts to fulfill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal relationship effect</td>
<td>Subjects may perform differently because of nature of relationship with researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity problems</td>
<td>Responses may be due to researcher's personal characteristics or behavior with subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Access and Representation Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraneous Variables</td>
<td>Alternative Explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete access</td>
<td>Researcher may have selective access to only a subset of the potentially relevant data, so key unobserved factors may explain the research issue/question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher selectivity</td>
<td>Events are due to causes that the researcher's theory considers unimportant or to causes someone in the researcher's social position cannot discern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher distortion or bias</td>
<td>Researcher's evaluation of data may be colored by preconceptions/predispositions</td>
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**Embracing Lifelong Responsive Self-Development**

Cultivating *self-as-responsive-instrument* is a developmental journey without end because cultures and contexts are dynamic and ever changing. Responding to this lifework agenda requires ongoing personal homework, notably, ever-deepening awareness and knowledge of self-in-context as a lifelong project. So what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for embarking on and sustaining oneself during an often turbulent learning and reflective-practice journey? Among other things, this complex and often-convoluted journey involves the following processes.
• **Mapping the social topography:** Proactively survey the shifting sociocultural and sociopolitical terrain—diverse socially patterned ways of knowing, being, doing, thinking, and engaging in the context of power and privilege structures and flows. In what ways does the social landscape manifest itself in social boundaries, borderlands, and intersections? Identify from multiple stakeholder perspectives the salient differences that make a difference in access, process, and success. More specifically, who gains entry? For and with whose rhythms and ways of being, doing, and engaging is the “system” congruent—a mirror versus a window experience? Who benefits?

• **Multilevel dynamic scanning:** Continuously assess and refine one’s own sociocultural antennae for monitoring, understanding, and engaging in social relations embedded within contexts of power, privilege, and other social structures while remaining aware of one’s own sociopolitical location within that social topography. Cultivate flexible micro/macro zoom control powers—responsively zoom in for relevant intrapersonal and interpersonal details and zoom out for the big-picture social structural context.

• **Cultivating empathic perspective taking:** Develop one’s capacity to imaginatively stand in others’ perspectives and to live by its moral imperative, the Platinum Rule—treat others as they want to be treated (or at least be aware of what that is)—as a bridging complement to the Golden Rule, treating others as we want to be treated (Bennett, 1998). To maximize ethical practice and excellence, cultivate and regularly polish multifaceted lenses, filters, and frames that can more fully and accurately inform one’s perceptions and meaning-making reflections and interpretations. Discover what they illuminate and, even more important, what they ignore, obscure, or distort. Given these realities, expand one’s capacity to transform ambiguity and uncertainty into curiosity while productively working the frequent tensions between personal intent and interpersonal impact.

Engaging in these processes helps one to slow down, monitor, and interrupt default flows and potentially problematic leaps: *Because I perceive X, I know what X means and why it is/should be valued or not.* Through mindfully tracking, we are better able to honor and embrace a foundational intercultural/cross-cultural communications model—**Description-Interpretation-Evaluation (D-I-E)**—which explicitly decouples processes that are often conflated (Lustig & Koester, 2002, p. 76). Failure to mindfully address the ethnocentric “presumption of similarity and single reality theories” (Bennett, 1998, p. 207) leads evaluators—as well as other practitioners—to often overlook, if not explicitly dismiss, many diversity patterns as extraneous nuisance variation and noise. When not dismissible in such oversimplifying ways, socioculturally grounded differences are often defined as problematic targets for amelioration and correction. Difference tends to be almost automatically interpreted as deficient and deviant. Not surprisingly, then, patterns of sociocultural diversity have become intimately intertwined with systemic processes of asymmetric power relations and privilege.

♦ **Empathic Perspective Taking: Ethnorelative Commitment to Excellence**

To authentically and accurately answer the questions posed earlier calls for a diversity-grounded capacity to mindfully stand in one’s own perspective while consciously shifting and responsively standing in others’ perspectives. More specifically, doing self-as-instrument work summons us to deliberately engage in cognitive frame shifting (border-crossing in one’s head) and affective
frame shifting (border crossing in one's feelings). This requires knowing and anchoring in one's own center—core values, beliefs, expectations—while knowingly extending one's borders, that is, the boundaries of the self. With expanded intercultural and other cross-boundary awareness and understandings, one can demonstrate appropriate and effective behavioral code switching: doing the right things right from multiple vantage points.

Milton Bennett, Director of the Inter-cultural Communications Institute, provides useful frameworks for exploring and guiding this capacity-building self-development agenda. Based on extensive research highlighted in “Overcoming the Golden Rule: Sympathy and Empathy,” he outlines a comprehensive model and six-step process for developing empathy—“the imaginative intellectual and emotional participation in another person's experience”—versus sympathy—the imaginative placing of ourselves in another person's position” (Bennett, 1998, p. 207). In contrast to sympathy, empathy starts with the presumption of difference and multiple reality theories as opposed to presumed similarity and single reality. This foundational presumption represents Step 1. This capacity-cultivating process works from the inside-out so Step 2 is Knowing Self:

The preparation that is called for is to know ourselves sufficiently well so that an easy reestablishment of individual identity is possible. If we are aware of our own cultural and individual values, assumptions, and beliefs—that is, how we define our identities—then we need not fear losing our selves. We cannot lose something that can be re-created at will. The prerequisite of self-knowledge does not eliminate the possibility of change in ourselves as a result of empathizing. It merely makes such change a chosen option rather than an uncontrollable loss. (Bennett, 1998, p. 210)

A very critical, ongoing “Knowing-Self” task involves exploring the contours, parameters, and dynamics of one's own life space: notably, the nature of one's comfort zone versus stretch zone versus panic zone. How do these zones show up and operate within and around each of us?

Step 3, Sus pending Self, calls for a temporary expansion of the boundary between self-identity and the rest of the world, including other people: “Suspension of the self-boundary is facilitated by knowing where the boundary is (self-knowledge), but only if one first has a self-reference assumption of multiple-reality which presumes difference” (p. 210). Allowing Guided Imagination represents Step 4:

In the extended state, we can move our attention into the experience of normally external events rather than turning our attention onto those events, as we usually do. This shifting of awareness into phenomena not normally associated with self can be called “imagination.” (p. 210)

For accurate interpersonal empathy to occur, Bennett argues that in Step 5—Allowing Empathic Experience—we must allow our imagination to be guided into the experience of a specific other person: “If we are successful in allowing our imagination to be captured by the other person, we are in a position to imaginatively participate in that person's experience.” The last critical task—Step 6, Reestablishing Self—involves reconstituting our boundaries by “remembering the way back to ourselves.” (p. 211)

Empathy is a foundational prerequisite for authentic intercultural/multicultural communications and engagement—that is, ethnorelative versus ethnocentric social relations and development work. Developing essential border-crossing bridge-building competencies—and being so perceived by relevant others—requires the empathic skills associated with cognitive and affective frame shifting and behavioral code switching. Having such competencies would place one at ethnorelative Stage 5 of Milton
Bennett's *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*—"Adaptation to Intercultural Difference." In contrast, many well-intentioned educators, evaluators, and other service professionals operate at ethnocentric Stage 3—"Minimization of Intercultural Difference." Unlike Stages 1 and 2—"Denial of Intercultural Difference" and "Defense Against Intercultural Difference," this highest ethnocentric stage does recognize differences but judges them to be trivial and ephemeral vis-à-vis similarities and commonalities (Bennett, 1986). Recognition of differences is surely necessary but woefully insufficient for excellence in communication and much less for excellence in education and evaluation.

**Decentering Pathways in Operationalizing**

**WHO Matters: An Example**

Wherever there is sociocultural diversity, there very likely is some diversity in the expected and preferred research processes and practices and the associated quality judgment criteria. Whose ways of being, doing, thinking, knowing, and engaging define the "mainstream" rules, roles, and normative expectations that undergird conventional research processes and practices? Researchers—especially in the applied domains of action research and evaluation—must mindfully monitor and expand the diversity of their own ways of being, doing, thinking, knowing, and engaging that inform and shape their choices among research processes, practices, and products. Such choices differ significantly in the extent to which various stakeholder groups must look through *windows* versus looking in a *mirror,* notably, their responsiveness to and congruence with diverse lived experiences. Like the power and privilege realities of other social processes and practices, the burdens of dissonance from *window-gazing* versus *mirror-gazing* are nonrandom and typically socially patterned along power and privilege divides. Openness to these decentering realities and complexities of diversity is foundational to maximize accuracy, appropriateness, respect, and excellence.

For example, Edward Hall's (1976) high- and low-context model, a major taxonomy of societal variations in cultural patterns (beliefs, values, norms), provides some useful illustrative insights. The dominant sociocultural structures and processes in the United States are low context so conventional research training and practices have also had a low-context orientation. Note, however, that there are many high-context cultural communities within the United States: for example, Native American, Japanese American, African American, and Mexican American. When *low-context* data collection and interpretation strategies are used in *high-context* sociocultural settings, much meaning-making content may be mangled or lost—notably, where one focuses literally on the words versus on those words embedded in a multifaceted web of nonverbal communication modalities:

A high context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the [linguistically] coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. (Hall, 1976, p. 91)

While high-context transactions feature "preprogrammed information in the receiver or in the setting," most of the information must be in the transmitted low-context message to make up for what is missing in the context (Hall, 1976, p. 101). High-context listening challenges us to move beyond simple ear listening to full-body listening (like a satellite dish). The Chinese ideograph for listening—Ting—embodies this.
Table 18.2 Some Examples of Low/High-Anch or Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low-Context Cultural Orientation</th>
<th>High-Context Cultural Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low nonverbal use</td>
<td>High nonverbal use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message explicit</td>
<td>Message implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct communications</td>
<td>Indirect communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low relational commitment</td>
<td>High relational commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task focused</td>
<td>Process focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monochronic/chronological</td>
<td>Polychronic/relational time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space territorial</td>
<td>Space communal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 18.2 gives some common high-context versus low-context cultural contrasts in communications messages based on the extensive research of anthropologist Edward Hall (Lustig & Koester, 2002, pp. 111–114).

Think of such contrast pairs as anchors characterizing a continuum range. Given your typical orientation and preferences, where would you place yourself on these continua? Where would you place the persons, groups, organizations, and/or communities that you usually research? Where would you place your most common research instruments, protocols, strategies? For example, written questionnaires are low context while in-depth individual and group interviews tend to be higher-context tools. They provide more channels for messaging communications than words alone.

To what extent are these profiles congruent? In what ways do they significantly diverge and what implications might that have for the quality and responsiveness of your communications and your work generally? More specifically, to what extent do the persons that you engage discern and experience your research processes, protocols, practices, and products as accurately representing and reflecting the fullness of their lived realities? To what extent are their internal sociocultural structures and rhythms honored—experiential validity? Potential disconnects are critical because they may inadvertently introduce confounding variation and noise into data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes—notably, sources of invalidity. The questions raised here cannot be simply answered secondhand or at a distance.

Too often, research involves the unacknowledged and unresolved collision of differing worldviews given dramatic divergences in the living “rules” of being, knowing, doing, thinking, and engaging for those who are evaluated versus those who evaluate. None of us is born multicultural, so we each must consciously and conscientiously put ourselves in decentering situations that fire up our awareness of our own sociocultural prism: lenses, filters, and frames. Most important are our often havoc-wreaking blind spots (don’t know that don’t know) in addition to the many blank spots that we already know that we don’t know. As a result, many cluelessly, and sometimes recklessly, “cross borders” without invitation, visa, or passport; and then—especially among the “privileged”—they often do so without c...
so without consciousness or any personal consequence.

Bottom line, let us normalize the experience of sitting in both/and tensions and commit to staying engaged in spite of being bumped out of one’s comfort zone and plunged into the stretch zone, and sometimes even the panic zone.

Key Resources in the Journey Toward Ethical Practice and Inclusive Excellence

Effective self-presentation and appropriate uses of the self vis-à-vis others are critical pathways toward ethical practice and inclusive excellence—especially in communications-based professions such as social research, evaluation, and education. Bringing a well-endowed professional toolkit is surely necessary but not sufficient. Even if top of the line, it is all for naught if not complemented by interpersonal validity-enhancement work and is, thus, eclipsed by problematic perceptions of the person. So who do the persons that you seek to communicate with and engage perceive you as being? These questions are at the heart of bridge-building border crossings, which over time and adaptive praxis culminate in one becoming a more fully endowed border-crossing bridge builder and excellence-grounded ethical researcher.

A critical challenge involves recognizing and working with the frequent tensions between your own self-image and others’ image of you. Regardless of the truth value of others’ perceptions, they still rule until authentically engaged in ways that speak-into-their-listening. Of course, knowing others’ images of who they think we are does not compel us to embrace and own such views. Nevertheless, we need full awareness of such views since they inform and influence how people relate to us, or not. This is particularly critical for the accuracy and integrity of research, and especially evaluative research processes, because such awareness determines prospects for gathering “good” and relevant data to make sound and trustworthy interpretations and judgments about merit, worth, value, significance, congruence, and so on.

Understanding how others perceive us requires moving beyond unilateral self-awareness into multilateral self-awareness to enhance authenticity, productivity, and excellence. Such images and judgments are culturally and contextually conditioned so the figure-ground examination of self in context is crucial. Culture is one critical context that reflects diverse socially patterned ways of knowing, doing, being, thinking, and engaging. Doing this work challenges each of us to engage in dynamic assessment and evaluation at multiple levels—micro/macro scanning, monitoring, and responsive discovery and adaptation processes at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational/institutional levels. Doing so moves one toward cultural competence that is much more a stance than a status, much more about one’s orientation toward diversity than facts and figures about diverse places, spaces, and peoples. Moreover, cultural competence is not simply a matter of who one perceives oneself as being and what one believes one brings to any given situation—unilateral self-awareness. Even more important for the viability, vitality, productivity, and trust-building capacity of a transaction and relationship cultivation is multilateral self-awareness: self in relational and situational context and self as pivotal instrument.

SELF AS INSTRUMENT PORTFOLIO

What are the strengths/gifts, vis-à-vis the limits/constraints, of the perceptual, conceptual, and interpretive prism that you bring into a particular situational,
relational, or spatial/geographic context? This self-calibration question represents a starting point within a given context, not an endpoint. We each need to create a comprehensive generic, as well as context-specific, self as instrument portfolio. It will serve as a resource for mapping out what one personally has to work with versus work on in a given research setting. It is worth investing some time brainstorming and listing your salient social roles, identities, and orientations—both from your vantage point and also the vantage points of others in a particular context. To move beyond swift auto-pilot assessments, complete such an inventory as a foundation for more mindfully identifying and exploring attributes that may have important implications for one's data collection, analysis, and interpretation work as a researcher. Together, these constitute your “forcefield of preparedness” for the tasks at hand.

What can you call upon from your self as responsive instrument portfolio for both appropriate and effective engagement and professional practice? Let us invest quality time in the ongoing development of our “self as instrument portfolios” as an essential complement to our professional research toolkits. Each of us can start with a listing of our salient social roles and identities—both from our own vantage points and also the vantage points of relevant stakeholders in a given research context.

Most important is the extent to which our meaning-making transactions and interpretations resonate with lived realities, (experiential validity) and, thus, are perceived as appropriate by others. Those who stand and sit on the privilege- and power-connected sides of diversity divides typically have not a clue regarding neither diverse perceptions nor their implications for social relations and outcomes. In contrast, those not so situated within a power-privilege hierarchy maintain high consciousness given its survival-framing consequences, that is, abridged life-chance opportunities for access and success. Such divergent realities often manifest in persons vigorously talking past each other even when seeming to use the same words.

JOHARI WINDOW AS A SKILLS-BUILDING RESOURCE

The dynamic insights and potential wisdom embodied in the Johari Window communications model offers a resource for pulling many of these disparate pieces together. This long-established communications model offers a useful developmental framework for cultivating multilateral self-awareness. It uses a four-paned window metaphor to facilitate processes for proactively giving and soliciting feedback to reduce the “hidden” and “blind” domains (Luft, 1982, p. 34).

We can think of this model in two ways: as a window through which we look inward to see ourselves more clearly, and as a window through which others observe us. Through looking inward and disclosing to others what we perceive in ourselves, and through inviting feedback from them about what they notice in us, we gain in self-awareness. (Bell, 2001, p. 1)

Disclosing personal intent and simultaneously seeking insights into the frequent blind spots of interpersonal impact helps interrupt nonproductive default responses. Left unchecked, defensive responses erode prospects for continuous learning, for personal responsibility, and for commitment to change. This model can be flexibly used to increase the “open

TRUST BUILD

Much research relations and trust cultivating viab relations. Reasea attend to trust b quality research responsibilities order fear and mi tion-oriented res the prospects fe data and netw perceived value processes and fi to what extent and research products enhas. Answering this culation of ong with key stake those who are Reina and Mich and Betrayal in vied a compreh framework for with a battery for individuals, internal/external three major typ interpersonal, the Transaction components at Contractual Transr Competency Tr Communication
window” of communications between and among individuals, groups, organizations, and so on. It can be used to facilitate more authentic border-spanning communications that more effectively discern, navigate, and negotiate salient “diversity divides.” The Johari Window is a powerful resource for skill-building as a bridge-building border crosser.

TRUST BUILDING AND QUALITY

Much research is grounded in social relations and trust is the glue and fuel for cultivating viable and productive social relations. Researchers need to mindfully attend to trust building as a foundation for quality research because their roles and responsibilities often automatically engender fear and mistrust, especially in evaluation-oriented research. Lack of trust erodes the prospects for full access to important data and networks and undermines the perceived value and utility of research processes and findings. In what ways and to what extent do one’s communications and research processes, practices, and products enhance versus erode trust? Answering this question calls for the triangulation of ongoing multiway dialogues with key stakeholders, especially with those who are being researched. Dennis Reina and Michelle Reina’s (1999), in Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace, have provided a comprehensive and highly nuanced framework for trust-building work along with a battery of assessment instruments for individuals, teams, organizations, and internal/external customers. Among their three major types of trust—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transformative—the Transactional (interpersonal) Trust components are especially relevant: Contractual Trust (trust of character), Competency Trust (trust of capability), Communication Trust (trust of disclosure).

In Search of an Integral Researcher-Self as Responsive Instrument

Ethical practice and inclusive excellence in research commands us to deepen our awareness of “interpersonal validity” as a critical complement to the more conventional methodological validity. This includes the soundness and trustworthiness of understandings warranted by one’s uses of the self vis-à-vis one’s uses of research tools, techniques, and strategies. A productive starting point for a research project involves dynamically scanning, monitoring, and reading the relational, situational, and spatial/geographic contexts. Doing so calls for more than “facts and figures” knowledge or do’s-and-taboos checklists. Like other social relations, it matters Who is carrying What and How in determining the extent to which research processes will be embraced as a resource, rejected, or suspiciously tended to in perfunctory ways. Dynamic awareness and knowledge of the social topography vis-à-vis one’s own and others’ boundaries lay the groundwork for working the borderlands (free-flow zone) and ultimately for engaging in appropriate border crossings.

The most important challenges involve identifying salient and impactful diversity dimensions in a given context and implementing processes that will appropriately and effectively engage the full spectrum of stakeholders and, thus, responsively shape research processes and practices. To what extent are you hearing and heeding the voices of all stakeholders in full voice and to what extent would which stakeholders agree?

This chapter closes with a glimpse of a holistic researcher model of the self as responsive instrument. Crafted from the vantage point of an individual researcher, the model builds on Ken Wilber’s Integral
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent/Actor Vantage Point/Stance</th>
<th>Interior Environment</th>
<th>Exterior Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td><strong>Inside/In</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outside/Out</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in one’s own vantage point/perspective (self-empathy)</td>
<td><strong>Self-to-Self/Inward</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self-to-Self/Outward</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Self-Awareness *</td>
<td>* Research Task Management *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is my vision of who I be/am becoming calling for from me—unilateral self awareness?</td>
<td>• What is the situational context—the research agenda—calling for from me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How am I showing up in my own intrapersonal world of self?</td>
<td>• How am I showing up in that world of work and other tasks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>WHO AM I?</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>WHAT MATTERS?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Subjective *</td>
<td>* Behavioral *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Cultural *</td>
<td>* Social Systems *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Outside/In</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outside/Out</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Self-to-Others</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self-to-Systems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Social Awareness *</td>
<td>* Relationship/Process Management *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the relational context calling for from me—multilateral self-awareness?</td>
<td>• How is the researcher interfacing and engaging with the collective intentions and diverse sociocultural orientations organized and manifesting in the world in ways that impact their implementation of the research agenda?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How am I perceiving others as perceiving/receiving me showing up in a world of many We’s and They’s?</td>
<td>• For and with whose rhythms and ways of being, doing, and engaging is the system congruent—a mirror versus a window experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>WHO BELONGS?</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>WHO MATTERS—AUTHORIZES/DECIDES—AND HOW?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To move expansively worldviews, perspective-fest, faci...
Quadrant Model (2007, p. 2). I have focused on the most underdeveloped and untended dimensions of an integral model: notably, the interconnections among interior environments, both the individual and the collective. In Table 18.3, I have mapped many of the chapter concepts across the four quadrants, for example, unilateral self-awareness in the upper left quadrant and multilateral self-awareness in the lower left.

This model offers a framework of sensitizing concepts and questions for mindfully scanning, tracking, and monitoring who factors—notably, the human systems dynamics. These items speak to the multiple dimensions of diversity that live in the interpersonal interface among human beings: the researcher and those who are researched, the data seekers, and the data providers. As you move into a new research context, the sensitizing concepts and questions associated with each quadrant provide a comprehensive self-assessment framework, with heads-up alerts, for checking in with ourselves. What are the relevant assets and resources in your researcher portfolio—professional, intercultural, interpersonal, intrapersonal—as well as your needs, challenges, blank spots, and blind spots? What is the status of your force field of preparedness and readiness for the sociocultural context as well as the tasks embodied in the research questions and agenda? Who says so and how do I know?

♦ Connecting the Dots: Data → Information → Insights

To move beyond data-land isolation to the expansively interconnected and engaging world of insights calls for empathic perspective-taking: that is, the ability to manifest, facilitate, and foster border-spanning communications and actions via flexibly multifaceted lenses, filters, and frames. Such skills are demonstrated, for example, through speaking-into-the-listening from multiple vantage points. Through empathic speaking and doing, disembodied data can be transformed, for many, into interlinked information that is intrapersonally embraced, embedded, and unleashed as insights. Using appropriate diverse codes of engagement allows one to speak and behave in ways that are perceived and received as trustworthy, respectful, competent, credible, compelling, and so on. These skills inform and undergird how we craft data-grounded pathways through information fields enroute to insights: notably, generative provocative possibility thinking, being, and doing.

With vigilance and clear-eyed honesty, let us continually assess our empathic perspective-taking skills vis-à-vis the ways we are aided versus hindered by our own voice, social identities, experiences, and orientations. Who we are as knowers, inquirers, and engagers of others matters. This integral researcher model can help us mindfully tend to these considerations in order to move beyond flattened, disembodied social research approaches toward more full-bodied ones that foster ethical praxis and inclusive excellence.

♦ Note

1. See Dennis Reina and Michelle Reina’s trust Web site (www.trustinworkplace.com) and book (1999) for more information.

♦ References


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