

HEURISTIC RESEARCH: A REVIEW AND CRITIQUE OF MOUSTAKAS'S METHOD



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Summary

Moustakas has made a significant contribution to research in psychology by describing the heuristic research method. This is a way of inquiring into what Wilber has identified as the Upper Left quadrant, or individual internal experience, and what Polanyi referred to as tacit knowledge, which is deeply embedded knowledge not normally available to conscious awareness. However, this article suggests that due to unacknowledged resistance to experiencing unbearable pain, Moustakas's research focus shifted from the self's experience of the experience to focusing on the idea of the experience. This shift resulted in a model of ambivalence, as reflected in the differences between what he introduced as his theory of heuristics and what he presented as its application. A clarification of the Moustakas method is presented to overcome ambivalence by recognizing resistance.

THE LAST FRONTIER

The idea of investigating the last frontier may create images of climbing to the heights of rugged mountain peaks or exploring the depths of the ocean's floor, of developing far more powerful telescopes to peer into the farthest reaches of outer space or intricately developed microscopes to probe the center of an atom. But I believe there is a terra incognita that may be far more available for human inquiry than any of these places. This final frontier, I propose, is the interiority of our experience, where feeling, which may previously not have been noticed as significant, is not just a core component of the terrain but the dominant one (Damasio, 1999), despite the profound efforts of the intellect to alter this reality. Entrance into this territory has long been resisted, and little credence has been given to its investigation. Yet I speculate that this region has a potential to bring expanded understanding to many other arenas of our investigation. Within this interiority, feeling responses to external circumstances combine to create meaning, and out of meaning, personalities are organized, personal and cultural myths are formed, worldviews are constructed, and paradigms are set in place.

Mainstream science, which includes traditional research psychology, has focused on describing, defining, explaining, and predicting the objects of its investigation. However, what I identify as this last frontier requires setting aside the skills of controlled, objective observation and surrendering to embracing subjective experience and leaping into the unknown. Moustakas (1961, 1972, 1975a, 1975b, 1990) was a researcher who took that leap. After analysis of his own work, and the work of his students, who were doing similar studies, he organized a systematic form for this kind of investigation that he called *heuristic research*.

In the fall of 1998, I had completed a 2-year self-study. At the time, I had neither the intention of having my work become a thesis nor a plan to follow any research method; I was simply trying to resolve a crisis in my life. However, after the fact, I found that the process I had experienced and written about paralleled the Moustakas (1990) method precisely. My prethesis self-report was written in six chapters, each of which covered one of Moustakas's six phases (initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis) and followed in the same sequence that he had outlined.

According to Moustakas (1990), the heuristic process opens to knowledge that is embedded and integrated within the self through understanding of the self in relation to and in context of the dynamic whole. Moustakas pointed out that his deeper understanding of the heuristic process was influenced by the work of Bridgman (1950), Buber (1961, 1965), Gendlin (1962), Jourard (1968, 1971), Maslow (1956, 1966, 1971), Polanyi (1964, 1966, 1969), Rogers (1985), and his own earlier work (Moustakas, 1968, 1981, 1988).

This interiority, which is the focus heuristic research seems to be the arena of Buber's (1970) understanding of what is formed within the self and flows between the *I and thou*. It is in Polanyi's (1962, 1964, 1966, 1969, 1974, 1983) unique background of practical and personal knowledge that each person develops from every encounter and brings to the next. Interiority is also Bronowski's (1965, 1978) self-reference in all understanding and is experienced within the unseen connective tissue that flows in and between people that Ullman (1996), Ulman and Zimmerman (1979), and Sela-Smith (2000) discovered in dream work. It is found in Damasio's (1999) step into the light when one becomes conscious of *the feeling of what Happens*. This is what is *experienced* and interpreted by the "I" in the Upper Left quadrant of Wilber's (1995, 1996, 1997) matrix as I have condensed and simplified in Figure 1.

Self-Transformation: Surrender to Feelings of the Experiencing "I"

I can best explain my sense of the *last frontier* by relating a personal experience. A few months before I left my husband to begin life as a single woman, I had a dream. In the dream, there was a major reconstruction project taking place in the offices of the business my husband and I owned and operated together. Workmen were putting up new walls everywhere. Sawdust and debris were everywhere, as everyone was busy doing tasks of remodeling. My husband was leaning over a blueprint and discussing changes with the contractor. I walked from room to room and noticed that there was no office for me.

After several attempts to communicate with my husband, I finally caught his attention and asked him where I might find my place. He seemed disconnected from me and uninterested in my obvious frustration. Without looking up, he pointed to a set of unfinished stairs in the back of the building indicating that they

Interior- "I" Intentional Subjective	Exterior-you (it) Behavioral Objective
Interior- "we" Intersubjective Cultural	Exterior-them (it) Interobjective Social

Figure 1 Four Quadrants, Each of Which Contains a Source of Knowledge

NOTE: According to Wilber (1997), all must be represented in any knowledge system.

led to my office. I walked up the stairs and found an old desk with old files and papers on top of it that looked more like garbage than valuable material. It seemed that all the things that no one knew what to do with were relegated to that upper space. The attic had no phone, no intercom, no windows—it was a dimly lighted space without a carpet, without any comfort at all. I walked back down to the main floor and told my husband that the place felt really awful to me. He didn't hear me.

I stood in a central place where I could see all our employees in their offices working diligently, and a shock wave surged through me as a dreadful thought entered my mind: There is no place for me here! I felt my throat become tight and hot tears spilled down my cheeks; I felt as if my heart were breaking. The business that I had helped create had no place for me anymore. I turned toward the main entrance and noticed how dark it was outside. I walked to the front door and opened it. I saw the most overwhelming, frightening blackness in front of me. My dreaming self was facing a moment similar to that faced by the adventurer in the 1989 film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* as he stood looking into a chasm that was impossible to jump. I was about to step outside the door when I realized that I had no idea if there was anything outside for me to put my foot on to support me, or if, in the stepping, I would fall into total oblivion.

I turned my head for just a moment to look my husband and reconsider my decision to leave. Everything in me wanted to cry out for him to become conscious of the horror of what was happening to me, to us. I had been with him for so long, and the thought of leaving was excruciating. But I knew that he would not hear me. In

the moment of the turning, I knew in my heart that remaining there would be too painful, perhaps even more painful than falling into what might be “forever” darkness. I walked to the threshold, stood there for just a moment—and I stepped into the blackness. I woke in panic. My heart was racing. My body was drenched in perspiration. I was too frightened to cry, and I felt totally alone.

When I woke, still aware of that “dream moment” standing between what was known and unknown, I became consciously aware of painful knowledge that my feeling self, long dissociated from my thinking self, had known for many years. I was living with a man who had no place for me, and I was working in a business where I did not belong. In the months that followed, my work in therapy helped me find the deep level where personal beliefs had kept me bound in a marriage that was killing me and working in a business that had become disconnected from my heart.

A traumatic childhood of being treated with insensitivity, insult, injury, invasion, and injustice resulted in the construction of a self-and-world-view wherein I devalued myself, just as those who had abused me had devalued me. To this devaluation, I added denial and dissociation. I learned to deny the overwhelming feelings of physical and emotional pain, and the rageful anger that made me want to damage or destroy those who had hurt me. I also discovered how to dissociate from awareness of the traumatic events, and this dissociation prevented me from seeing what pervaded both my internal and external worlds. Anger turned inward became depression, and sensitive feeling turned outward became subtle and at times not so subtle codependent compassion for others mixed with sacrifice of myself. These were all defense mechanisms learned very early in my life that were intended to permit survival in life-threatening circumstances, but they also led to acceptance of a pain-filled marriage and an unfulfilled life in adulthood that I did not recognize in waking life. However, my dreaming self was well aware of what I had long denied and knew the painful decision that lay ahead of me. Through months of self-search accessing the “*I-who-feels*,” I was able to reorganize the structures that had been formed in childhood and begin to reform my personal myths about myself, relationships, responsibilities, marriage, and terminating marriage.

A few months following that nightmare experience, the dream became reality. I left my husband and our business and stepped into the unknown. The journey I have taken since taking that step has been led principally by the *I-who-feels* where my own footsteps

have created the path. After the divorce, I lived in China for nearly 2 years. At the age of 49, I began a 7-year process of getting a Ph.D. in psychology, an endeavor that has taken me all over this country and the world, learning as well as teaching about what I have experienced while living in the Upper Left quadrant as the *I-who-feels*. Not only has my external, observable world changed dramatically, but also the experience of my world has been forever transformed by following my dream into the blackness and the unknown where another way of knowing exists.

From personal experiential inquiry into the Upper Left quadrant, I have become aware of both the inherent potentials for profound transformation within heuristic method as well as my own resistance to any self-search that I initiate. I have found that the resistance has to be confronted and overcome before full discovery can occur. After transforming that 2-year self-search into my master's thesis, *Regaining Wholeness: A Heuristic Inquiry Into Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Sela-Smith, 1998), I decided I wanted to use the Moustakas (1990) method for my dissertation to complete the work that remained unfinished in my thesis. Toward that end, I conducted a review of research literature that used Moustakas's heuristic method.

Heuristics Defined

The term *heuristics* originated from the Greek word *heuriskein* that means to find out or to discover. Heuristics can be used in any science, in any research endeavor where the inquiry is on the cutting edge of new territory being explored. When there is no idea of where the researcher or the territory is going (i.e., there is no paradigm established for the field), then exploratory discovery, rather than testing hypotheses, is the goal. The inquiry is open-ended with only the initial question as the guide. "What works" becomes the focus, and anything that makes sense can be tested. This trial-and-error process, this discovery of what works, is the heuristic. What succeeds becomes the "right thing." After heuristic discovery, the cutting edge of terra incognita becomes a part of the field from which other scientists can make hypotheses, conduct tests, and verify whether their hypotheses can be accepted or rejected. The use of the word *heuristic* to identify the inquiry method explicated by Moustakas (1990) was earlier used by Polya (1945) to identify the mental operations or procedures one moves through in the process of solving problems in mathematics. The same term was later

applied to computer science problem solving and was recently applied to the general process of higher order thinking to include reflection and judgment in dealing with complex issues. (Reeves, 1993)

As did Moustakas (1990), Polya (1945) recorded steps or stages that are a part of the heuristic process he observed. His stages relate to problem solving procedures in mathematics: identification, assessment, clarification, determination of cause and effect, decision making, outcome prediction, and outcome analysis, where each piece of the process is entered with trial-and-error methods until the solution is discovered. In both Polya's and Moustakas's explications, there is an implication that intuition instead of formal techniques determines the steps taken in each stage.

In the articulation of the conceptual foundations and core processes of his heuristic method, Moustakas (1990) legitimized using the term *heuristics* to define the organized and systematic form for investigating human experience in which attention is focused *inward* on feeling responses of the researcher to the outward situation rather than exclusively to relations between the pieces of that outside situation. The Moustakas method of heuristics invites the conscious, investigating self to surrender to the feelings in an experience, which carries the researcher to unknown aspects of self and the internal organizational systems not normally known in waking-state consciousness. With new, revised, or expanded understanding, internal reorganization naturally occurs, resulting in a self-transformation that almost always has social and transpersonal implications (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). Because positivism became the authority in science, where objectively attained empirical evidence was the only acceptable source of knowledge, internal subjective experience was negated as a source of scientifically approved knowledge. This article describes and critiques an alternative, heuristic method whereby psychological research can incorporate the internal subjective experience of the *I-who-feels*.

*The Deep Structures of Tacit Knowledge:
Experience, Feeling, and Meaning*

Construction of Tacit Knowledge Structures

Yu bang xiang zhen, yu weng de li., Yi ri zao she yao, shi nian pa jin sheng (Once bitten twice shy. Once bitten by a snake, a thou-

sand times frightened by a rope) (Si Tu Tan, 1988, p. 292), is an ancient Chinese saying that reflects an aspect of tacit knowledge. The tacit dimension of personal knowledge is that internal place where experience, feeling, and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to navigate that world. Tacit knowledge is a continually growing, multileveled, deep-structural organization that exists for the most part outside of ordinary awareness and is the foundation on which all other knowledge stands. This deep dimension of knowledge is under construction each time a new experience is introduced. The individual constantly compares the outer world with the inner knowledge base to evaluate and to determine what it is that is being experienced. Though some of the comparison may be explicit, it is more likely to be subliminal pondering of what fits or doesn't fit just right.

Moustakas (1990) identified tacit knowledge as "the deep structure that contains the unique perceptions, feelings, intuitions, beliefs, and judgments housed in the internal frame of reference of a person that governs behavior and determines how we interpret experience" (p. 32). Krippner and Ryan (1998) stated that these structures create a personal mythology that acts as a *chaotic attractor* (Abraham, 1989, Krippner, 1994) that pulls to it images, beliefs, values, priorities, memories, and emotions and labels them. These structures explain how people who were bitten by a snake might respond to snakes when everyone else sees ropes. Personal myths let us see and experience what we have already decided is our view of the world.

The gestalt of an experience is packaged as a structured whole and becomes a part of our tacit knowledge. According to Polanyi (1969), "While tacit knowledge can be possessed by itself, explicit knowledge must rely on being tacitly understood and applied. Hence all knowledge is *either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge*" (p. 144). Though it is the foundation on which all other knowledge stands, tacit knowledge is ordinarily not available to conscious awareness (Moustakas, 1990, Polanyi, 1969). Polanyi (1964, 1969, 1983) has stated that each new experience produces another whole that fits together with the earlier ones. Over time, the unique combination of wholes creates the fundamental building blocks of each individual's personal knowledge. The question of true or false is not applicable here, but rather whether the individual's tacit knowledge helps or hinders, and the answer may change over time.

The experiencing “I” makes continual comparison of the outer world with the inner knowledge base to evaluate what is “out there” against what is “in here.” If something is determined to be known, then thought, feeling, and behavior responses are initiated that have already been organized the first time that “something” was experienced. If what is out there does not match anything on the inside, new evaluations, thoughts, feelings, behaviors must be formed into new wholes. This development of wholes is an ongoing process (Stern, 1985, p. 260).

At the time that wholes of the tacit dimension are being formed, it is probable that incomplete, inaccurate, or misinterpreted information will be a part of the embedded information in personal knowledge. I surmise that if knowledge at the tacit level is flawed, both the experience of and response to the external world will reflect that flaw. Flawed information can be transformed if an entrance to the wholes at the tacit level can be found to allow new information to reach the deeply hidden places (Moustakas, 1990, p. 30). I propose that “feeling” provides a door and heuristic inquiry, as introduced by Moustakas (1990) and clarified by Sela-Smith (2001), provides the key to the generally unexplored territory of the Upper Left quadrant. Perhaps more than we imagine, portions of tacit knowledge are of the “rope is dangerous” variety, and the embedded worldview will be verified by lived experience, appearing to be true.

Role of Thought in Tacit Knowledge: Global Versus Verbal

Thought processing begins as preverbal, body-based, global experience of wholes in the present. In early childhood, thought processing changes to a verbal language system that is linear and time-oriented, that differentiates and generalizes, and that is observational (Stern, 1985; Werner, 1948; Werner & Kaplan, 1963). According to Stern (1985), the emergence of language is a double-edged sword. Whereas language can enhance both interpersonal awareness and awareness of self, language can also drive wedges between what is spoken and what is known, and create separation between parts of the self. Stern stated,

Language then, causes a split in the experience of the self. It also moves relatedness onto the impersonal, abstract level intrinsic to

language, and away from the personal, immediate level, intrinsic to the other domains of relatedness. (pp. 162-163)

Stern (1985) went on to say that language can have an alienating effect on self-experience when what is experienced at the level of core and intersubjective relatedness is not able to be verbalized. The nonverbalized global experiences are then sent underground into a misnamed and poorly understood existence, and the verbal becomes accepted in awareness while what is experienced is out of awareness (p. 175). Aspects of Polanyi's (1962, 1964, 1966, 1969, 1974, 1983) tacit dimension and its ineffable nature appears to me to be related to Stern's concept of the core self, a self that organizes in the infant at about 2 months but is separated from conscious awareness. According to Stern, language causes estrangement from one's own personal experience where representations of things can be talked about and what is talked about may not be what is experienced (p. 182).

Because the foundation of all knowledge is either tacit knowledge or rooted in tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1969 p. 144), and because the earliest foundation of tacit knowledge is preverbal and disconnected from the verbal-thinking self, I conclude that changes in flawed tacit knowledge must take place through thought that is connected to preverbal, body-based, global experience of wholes rather than reflective reason. I speculate that it is not the thinking-observing self but rather the *I-who-feels* who is experiencing the feeling that provides access to the aspects of the tacit dimension of nonverbal thought.

Once access is made through feeling experiences, wholes that were formed out of limited or flawed awareness can be reconstructed by new, corrected, complete, or reinterpreted information, and the meanings that propel our lives can be transformed. If I was bitten by a snake, no matter how much I tell myself that a rope is not a snake, my body reacts in fear when I see a rope. Not until I enter the feeling of fear in my body in the present will I be able to find the entry point to the "long thin snake-bite-pain, long thin rope-fear-avoid" global structure that was formed in the past and is part of the building blocks of my personal knowledge. On entry, I can bring present information that differentiates ropes and snakes into the tacit structure and transform the flaw of my fright response to ropes.

ENTRANCE TO THE LAST FRONTIER

In my initial understanding of Moustakas's heuristics, I concluded that his research method provides entrance to the tacit dimension. This method requires that the participant-as-researcher focus on the feeling dimension of personal experience to discover meanings embedded therein. Perhaps, for the first time in human science research, discovery of both the experience and *I-who-feels* is possible in ways that conventional observation, description, explanation, discussion, or reflection could never provide. Reorganization on the tacit level that was not possible by objective observation is possible through subjective experience. With reorganization, how a person consciously experiences self and world is transformed.

Surrender to the Six Phases of Experience

Moustakas (1990) references Polanyi (1983), who said, "underlying all other concepts in heuristic research, at the base of all heuristic discovery, is the power of revelation in tacit knowing" (p. 20). The heuristic process begins with a question or problem from within, regarding a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher. The personal question or problem connected to self-understanding is rooted in tacit knowledge and creates a sense of *un-ease* that the researcher seeks to resolve. To participate in this heuristic self-inquiry, the researcher must experience self-dialogue, be willing to use feeling to enter the tacit dimension, and allow intuition to make connections in the structures of tacit knowledge. The researcher must remain internally focused and dwell within the feelings of the tacit dimension, allowing the six phases to unfold naturally by surrendering to the feeling state of the subjective "I." Instead of rigorous planning and controlling the steps, as in Polya's (1945) heuristics, the researcher must release control and discover whatever the stage has to offer. If any one of these phases is not completed with full integrity, heuristic research is not successfully accomplished.

Although the phases must be completed, the completion of the phases cannot be the focus. The idea of completion according to a set of guidelines is a verbal thought. If a verbal thought is the focus, the process will be mechanistic; only feeling can direct the process through the uncharted territory to global experience of the tacit dimension. Each of the phases in heuristics is not a labeled step on

some ladder that lists all the necessary components of that step. Each phase is experiencing stepping off and falling into feeling all that occurs in the process. Each phase is an uncharted territory because the ground is not formed until the inquirer creates both the territory and the path by surrendering to the unknown and then walks the territory to discover what is there.

The goal of heuristic self-research is to come to a deeper understanding of whatever is calling out from the inside of the self to be understood. To do this, the researcher must maintain “an unwavering and steady inward gaze” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13). In the process, the researcher is coming to understand something within that is also a human problem or experience. The researcher uses the data within to lift into awareness the experiences that are felt and trigger the *being* of the researcher. In this lifting, an awakening, a greater self-understanding, and personal growth occur and combine to produce self-transformation. When a story is formed with the embedded wholes of the transformation in it, the story itself contains the power to transform anyone who dares to surrender to the listening. Moustakas (1990) carefully outlines the intentions of each of the six phases.

Phase 1: Initial Engagement

Within each researcher is a topic, theme, problem, or question that portrays a critical interest and area of search. The objective of the initial engagement is to discover an intense interest or a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher and that holds important social meanings as well as personal compelling implications. Initial engagement invites the researcher to engage in self-dialogue, to begin an inner search to discover the topic and question. During this process, the researcher encounters himself or herself in a way that is autobiographical and touches significant relationships within their social context.

When someone feels an internal draw and hears the call from the deepest recesses of the self, it is almost impossible not to notice. This may be something that is being consciously or unconsciously experienced as incomplete and that needs to be completed. It may be something that is discordant that needs to be brought to harmony or something that is unclear that needs to be clarified. It may be something that is misunderstood that needs understanding or something that is dissociated that needs to be integrated. Perhaps it is something that has not been known before that seeks to be known.

This first phase is like the attention-getting circumstance pointing to something that cannot yet be seen but has the *smell* of significance that draws any scientist into inquiry. From this intuitive place come hypotheses, theories, and questions that stimulate positivist scientists as well as scientific explorers to begin what may be years or a whole lifetime of research to discover some external truth. It is also the place where the subjective scientist feels a call to discover some internal meaning. From the moment of the call, the researcher may not even be aware of what needs to be done—only that something is calling out and that to dismiss it is to deny something very important in the self.

If the topic is not adequately clarified, it will be only partially formed; if only partially formed, research will not be able to unfold in heuristic self-inquiry. If the topic is personally painful, the researcher may unconsciously resist the actual personal problem and consider something less threatening as the stated problem and thus avoid reexperiencing pain. The research will suffer from a split focus as the unconscious self continues to push the whole personal question into the research that is focused on an incomplete question or another stated question.

Phase 2: Immersion

Once the question is discovered and the researcher has defined and clarified its terms, the researcher lives the question consciously and unconsciously, in waking state, while sleeping, and in dream states. “Everything in his or her life becomes crystallized around the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). The researcher is able to become intimately involved in the question during the immersion process to live the question and grow in knowledge and understanding. Something amazing happens when a researcher has surrendered to the call in Phase 1. When the question has been properly formed, it appears to have a power that draws the image of the question everywhere in the researcher’s life experience. Immersion happens naturally, not through control or planning. Moustakas (1990) suggests that if someone decides to investigate the meaning of delight, then delight seems to be everywhere. The researcher becomes intimate with delight, just as delight seems to become intimate with the researcher. Delight can be found in everything and at times it seems as if there is nothing else.

The inner focus of Phase 2 is not without contact from the outside. In fact, there is a continual movement from the inner experi-

ence to what it is in the outer that originally stimulated the research. This is followed by a retreat to experiencing internally what is both internally and externally lingering in the presence of the researcher. The call of Phase 1 seems to be orchestrating the experience of Phase 2, wherein the researcher's internal experience of the research becomes the "song into which the researcher breathes life . . . because the question itself is infused in the researcher's being" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 43). It is not uncommon, even in positivist research, that metaphoric dreams provide significant pieces of information needed to continue the research toward the visioned goal.

If there is no call or no immersion into the call, the research will not unfold; it will lack integrity. When the question does not have integrity, the researcher will be unable to remain focused on his or her own felt experience and will not be able to live the question in his or her waking, sleeping, and dreaming. The formation of a question may appear to be heuristic in that it seems to focus on an experience of the researcher, and the immersion may appear to be a full submersion in the topic. However, if the question is not a true focus that is coming from the depths and passion of the researcher, complete immersion does not take place; something is missing. The question does not feel alive within the researcher.

When heuristic research is initiated to fulfill dissertation requirements for graduation instead of growing out of the very being of the researcher, it is possible that the researcher may not be intimately and autobiographically connected to the question. Immersion requires the whole self to be engaged in the focus of the research by surrendering to it in such a way that the research unfolds, rather than an observing self attempting to control and direct the process to ensure that it moves in the right direction. When there is inner conflict between the stated problem and the self-problem, whether the researcher is consciously aware of it or not, focus is easily lost and confusion occurs. If the focus is on something outside the self, an institutional concern, a need for an intervention process, an experience of other people even if those other people have had a similar experience as the researcher, there will be no immersion and *self-inquiry heuristics* is not happening.

Phase 3: Incubation

Incubation is the time period during which the researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated, conscious focus on the

question and allows the inner tacit dimension to wrestle with the new input gained during immersion, reorganizing and re-forming wholes and clusters of wholes, creating new meaning, new behaviors, and new feelings. Incubation is not a period of putting something aside, or putting action on hold to do something else. Incubation is the period when additional input is stopped because living with the question has provided all the information that the unconscious processing part of self needs to sort through, consider, review, and reorganize new ways of thinking, being, seeing, and understanding, to create meaning and form an answer to the question. This stage begins without planning.

Researchers may resist this period, afraid that if they lose focus, detach, or walk a totally different path from the question, they will fail to complete their work. It is the surrender to this process that allows this to happen. This is a time when “inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness. . . . Discovery does not occur through deliberate mental operations and directed effort” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29).

Phase 4: Illumination

The process of illumination occurs naturally when the researcher is receptive to discovering what exists in the tacit knowledge and intuition. Illumination is that moment when there is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of wholes and clustered wholes that form into themes inherent in the question.

This fourth phase occurs the moment the inner work of Phase 3 spontaneously breaks through into conscious awareness. It may bring new experience, new interpretations, new meanings, or it may correct distorted understandings. This phase may allow for integration of dissociated aspects of the self by providing insight into the meanings that were attached to the internal experience of the past. These meanings, even if they are the products of incomplete or inaccurate information, formed the basis on which tacit knowledge and, therefore, the experience of life was built.

Illumination is not something that can be planned. It occurs spontaneously, as major reorganization of knowing happens and transformation takes place on a deep level. The self and the world are experienced in brand new ways. It may take place in a single moment, or it may take place in waves of awareness over time.

Phase 5: Explication

According to Moustakas (1990), the purpose of the explication phase is to consciously examine what has awakened in deep consciousness of the tacit dimension to examine various layers of meanings that have been disclosed. The heuristic researcher continues the focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure that were characteristic of the immersion phase to recognize meanings that are unique and distinctive to an experience and depend on internal frames of reference. The entire process of explication requires that researchers attend to their own awarenesses, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgments as a prelude to the understanding that can happen in conversations and dialogues with others.

This is the period of time when the new insight, the new understanding, the new meaning, and the new worldview take up residence within the researcher. Like a new person coming into one's living space, everything within that space will shift as it relates to the change that has taken place. As this is experienced, expressed, and explicated, a "more complete apprehension" occurs. The reorganization that has taken place on the deep-conscious level during incubation is now occurring in waking consciousness in the explication. This cannot occur, according to Moustakas (1990), if the major source of data is the experience of others.

Phase 6: Creative Synthesis

If the researcher has surrendered to the heuristic self-search, and the process has unfolded naturally through the first five phases, the final phase spontaneously occurs to form a creative synthesis. Moustakas (1990) states that the creative synthesis that emerges out of tacit and intuitive powers and from inspiration is what leads to the synthesis. This synthesis embodies an inclusive expression of the essences of what has been investigated. It tells the "story" that reveals some new whole that has been identified and experienced as a result of this union of the deep-unconscious and the waking consciousness and between the internal and the external.

This new whole draws some expression of creativity out of the researcher to reveal its presence in the outer world. The new whole and its expression cannot be scheduled or preplanned; it is born,

and the researcher is perhaps the midwife who is there to assist its emergence. There is something transpersonal about what emerges that seems to take on a life of its own. It is an amazing time of synchronicity, harmony, connection, and integration.

When others experience the story, whether it is in the form of a dissertation, a painting, a book, a piece of music, a dance, a lecture, or anything else creative, there will be something that resonates deep agreement within the observer. There will be mutuality between the creator and the creative synthesis; there will be a sense of connection and transformation that cannot be falsified.

Six Key Components in Heuristic Research

After studying Moustakas's (1990) work, I concluded that there were six key components that are intrinsic to heuristic inquiry:

1. The researcher has experienced what is identified as being researched (pp. 13, 27, 40).
2. The researcher makes reference to some intense or passionate concern that causes the investigator to *reach inward* for tacit awareness and knowledge (p. 27).
3. The research indicates surrender to the question has taken place (living, waking, sleeping, and dreaming the question) (p. 28).
4. Self-dialogue, not simply a one-way reporting of thoughts or feelings, is evidenced. To report a feeling is not the same as dialoguing with the feeling (pp. 11, 16-20).
5. The search is a self-search (pp. 11, 13, 15, 17, 25).
6. There is evidence that transformation has taken place by way of a "story" that contains the transformation and may transform those who "read" it (pp. 13, 14, 19, 99, 124).

A Transformational Story: Emergence of a Cemetery Plot

In *Heuristic Research*, Moustakas (1990) explains the idea of transformation by sharing with his readers a personal experience he had while driving past a beautiful countryside scene. He had made four trips past this particular place, but on a fifth passing, he saw a large cemetery plot he had not noticed before. Not only did he become aware of it; he saw the cemetery plot as not only being a core component of the scene but also the dominant component. Previously, he had been aware only of the characteristics of the scene, such as trees, flowers, peaks, and things burgeoning with life. The original meaning of the scene to him was life. He had missed the

symbolic presence of death in the scene of life until he had received news of the unexpected death of a friend's sister. Moustakas had been unable to contact his friend to offer condolences and had put the whole thing out of his mind until he drove past that countryside scene.

The "forgotten death" caused him to see the cemetery plot that he had not noticed. He had only noticed life when the scene had actually contained symbols of both life and death. This caused Moustakas to notice something about himself. Until then, he stated, he "had not wanted to face the meaning of death in such a strikingly beautiful setting" (1990, p. 30).

Self-Transformation as Intention

The researcher's transformation becomes embedded in the story that then can be transmitted to the reader, listener, or viewer. To create this story, the researcher must move beyond the data to "permit an inward life of the question to grow, in such a way that a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is realized" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). If something is growing within the self that creates a story of self-transformation, then self-transformation is an expected outcome of this method.

AMBIVALENCE IN MOUSTAKAS'S METHOD: RESISTANCE

Application Failure Leads to Method Reassessment

Based on the six key factors, I conducted a review of 28 research documents whose authors claimed to have followed Moustakas's (1990) heuristic research method. I found that of the 28 cases, only 3 were able to successfully fulfill the Moustakas method. Most inquiries presented no evidence of the type of free-fall surrender to the process that was described as a jumping into the river, a leap into the darkness. The majority did not report personal, subjective experience. Instead of having the process determine the phases, nearly all seemed to have been conducted by a time clock, a calendar, and by procedural rules. In each of the 25 cases, there was no reported internal discovery of the tacit dimension, and themes for the explication of experience were sought from coparticipants instead of from within the self. In those 25 cases, none presented

evidence of transformation based on an *I-who-feels* finding access to tacit knowledge and bringing change to it in the process. What I consider to be key to the investigation is missing. The self-search within an experience is replaced by what I interpret as a phenomenological explication of the definition of an experience.

To better understand the failure in almost 90% of the cases I reviewed, I decided to take another look at Moustakas's (1990) work. I discovered ambivalence in his method that I had not noticed before. I identified several areas that might create confusion for the researcher. The first area relates to use of the word *heuristics*. Without more narrowly identifying his method as heuristic self-inquiry in psychology, many researchers studied external situations rather than internal experience. Second, the inclusion of coparticipants seems to create a distraction from the internal process. Third, as with Wittgenstein's (1961) language games, (something I will explain later), the confusion of languages, with different perspectives and different meanings, can fully disorient the researcher doing self-inquiry. And finally, perhaps because of the other confusions, there is a shift from experience and self-search to observation of experience of self and others.

Though self-search, in my opinion, is the objective of this method, even in Moustakas's (1990) self-report of his process, there was a shift in his focus from the *self* who is experiencing the problem to the *experience* that the self is having with the problem. In this shift, though it might appear that he or she is attempting to understand an experience being felt, in reality, the experience becomes the focus and there is no return to the *I-who-feels*. Feeling is disconnected from the research and self-transformation does not occur. The tacit dimension is not entered, and the internal structures remain intact.

Mixed Messages

In his introduction, Moustakas (1990) gives two examples of heuristic research that provide evidence of the double-focus within the method. The first example identifies heuristics as a self-search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of the experience. He explains, "The researcher experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge" (p. 9). In the second example, Moustakas describes an experience Archimedes had while taking a bath, when he observed a floating bar of soap and discovered the principle of buoyancy. Moustakas shifts from *experience* used as a

verb that is connected to the internal self-search to *experience* as a noun that is connected to observation and thoughts related to the observation of an event or an experience. This dual explanation of heuristics that I had not seen in my first reading of Moustakas represents the subtle split in focus that my reevaluation of the text allowed me to see—a split focus that I contend permeates the explication of the heuristics method.

Experience of Loneliness Versus Experiencing Loneliness

I returned to Moustakas's (1961, 1972, 1975a) earlier writing and noticed that when he first began his search to understand loneliness, it was not a search to make a context-stripped, phenomenological explication of the word *loneliness*. He was not seeking to create categories or themes that explicate an objective human experience; nor was he planning to develop a research method. Moustakas needed to solve a crisis in his life.

Moustakas (1961) told the story of a period in his life when his little daughter had become gravely ill. After being told he had to make a decision regarding surgery for her, he became overwhelmed by the sense of responsibility. He wandered the streets in the night and felt utterly alone, totally lost, and frightened. He found himself falling into the unknown and was terrified. Fully immersed and confused in his feelings and unable to articulate them, he believed no one understood what he was experiencing in having to make such a decision. While he was still experiencing overwhelming feelings and struggling for a clear answer that did not come, the child had surgery, a decision made primarily by his wife.

His daughter survived the operation, and afterward, he maintained a vigil at her bedside. Late one night while sitting quietly in his child's hospital room, his attention was drawn to a small boy in another room who was gazing out a window. He interpreted the child's experience as waiting, intently gazing out into the darkness, looking for someone to come to bring protection and comfort. But no one came. He stated that he knew what the child was experiencing. He knew the child was feeling deserted, forsaken, abandoned, and utterly alone. He reported that he could no longer bear holding the suffering that the child was feeling. He went to the child's room and told the youngster, "I know. Right now there is no one. No one at all, your mamma has left you" (Moustakas, 1961, p. 3).

The child burst into tears and a nurse entered the scene, angry with him for disturbing the child. She chastised the little one for fussing and waking others, and she left the room. The researcher, who was not yet researching, followed the nurse down the hall and told her, "You can't leave him that way. He is painfully lonely. He feels cut-off from all meaningful ties. He will harbor this terror for a long time. Go back. Tell him you care. Hold his hand. Say something gentle" (Moustakas, 1961, p. 3).

Later, while his daughter was still recuperating in the hospital, she went into a seizure that resulted in a hitting and kicking frenzy. When he attempted to comfort his distraught child, she pushed him away, saying, "No, you bad." He was devastated. Unable to connect with her, and feeling helpless to comfort her, Moustakas said that he felt totally alone. He interpreted his daughter's actions as evidence that his child was as lonely as he was and that he alone realized her pain and terror.

Moustakas first felt the pain of loneliness when he had to make the medical decision, but he had to focus on the decision rather than on his loneliness because of the immediacy of the situation. He felt the pain of loneliness again when the boy in the nearby hospital room reminded him of his yet unexplored feelings; however, he was unable to contain his own suffering, though he claims it was the child's suffering he could not contain. Though there is little question that boy was likely lonely, I suspect that Moustakas was projected his own feelings on the child who was looking out the window. I would contend that the child reminded him of his own feelings of being forsaken, deserted, and utterly alone, painfully lonely, and cut off from all meaningful ties. He may have been feeling a terror that he feared he would harbor for a long time and projected that on the boy as well. The demand he made to the nurse to go back to gently comfort the child, to hold and care for the little one, was, I suspect, the comfort and care for which he, himself, longed during that terrifying ordeal.

The father pointed out that the original question that was asked of him, regarding his daughter's operation, was never answered (Moustakas, 1961, p. 2; 1990, p. 91). I believe what may have been the *heuristic* question was never formed; that question would have been the one he asked of himself. I suspect the flood of overwhelming emotions he experienced came from unformed responses from the inside that were related to how he "felt" about being confronted with the original nonheuristic question that plunged him into loneliness.

I speculate that the heuristic question might have been, "What is *my* experience of feeling lonely?" This question had the potential to take him into the tacit dimension where his globally felt loneliness existed. This is very different from the phenomenological question, "What is *the* experience of loneliness?" This latter question became the focus of much work and was answered by gathering data from observations of others. I suspect that the unformed painful question was aborted because of the external timetable of the surgical decision and, perhaps, because of the terror of confronting the heuristic question within himself.

I believe he missed something that I interpret as an amazing contradiction to his conclusion about loneliness. When his own child was in pain, he was able to feel it in his own nerves and bones and tissues and blood (Moustakas, 1961, p. 5). He *was* sharing it with her. By projecting his feelings on the child in the other room and on his daughter, as well as by studying loneliness in others, he may have *cut himself off from his own feelings for a long time* and thereby missed the deepest foundations of tacit knowledge.

Feeling cut off from all meaningful ties, feeling utterly and painfully alone, totally lost, and frightened might have caused him to harbor a second question that has remained with him for a long time—a question regarding the experience and meaning of loneliness. This second question, which is also valuable and legitimate, is now separated from the Upper Left quadrant of direct feeling as *I-who-feels* and moves into the Upper Right quadrant of observation of the experience within himself as he might observe it in someone else. By collecting observations of others, there is a further separation from the *I-who-feels* as feelings are talked about, not experienced.

If he were to deal with the experience of loneliness, he would feel it and dialogue with it, and in the dialogue, he would enter the tacit dimension of his personal knowledge to discover what is calling out to him to be more deeply understood. It is not hard to imagine that a part of himself, whom he projected on the child who was gazing out the window, is still waiting for the assurance that he is not alone.

Later, Moustakas found solace in a passage he referenced from Rilke (1954) in *Letters to a Young Poet*, in which she reminded readers to be patient regarding what remains unresolved in the heart. She suggests that people try to love the questions themselves that are like locked rooms. And she advises the reader that it is not useful to seek answers to questions with which one would not be able

to live through. Instead, one must be willing to live everything, including the questions, because gradually, without consciously trying to do so, the one who experienced the unresolved question will some day in the future live into the answer.

Opposing Halves

Moustakas (1961, 1972, 1975a, 1990) investigated loneliness for years and determined that this condition is intrinsic to human existence and growth. Aware of his own loneliness, he saw loneliness in the eyes of an unknown child. He also found loneliness in his own child who pushed him away, seeming to know she had to suffer alone. Moustakas, as the researcher, shifted his focus to studying other people's reports of loneliness and created a method to help researchers understand the meaning of experiences such as the one that he had.

I propose that he explicated a method that contains two processes instead of one. The first process is presented in the first two chapters of his book. This is the path of surrender to an internal question that flows from the internal experience of the *I-who-feels*. It reflects a leap into the unknown, a letting go, a falling into the river that flows into a new stream of consciousness. This is his "leashless" path, the way not limited or confined by methodological structures (Moustakas, 1990, p. 17). It is the place of self-honesty, self-dialogue, and self-disclosure. It is the path that leads to the tacit dimensions, to the building-block structures that act as "chaotic attractors" (Abraham, 1989; Krippner, 1994; Krippner & Ryan, 1998), which create our lives. When this method unfolds, it moves through the six phases he discovered by observing the processes of those who made the leap (Moustakas, 1990, p. 10).

The second process is presented in the third and fourth chapters, which outline the application of his method I believe to be connected with his second question, one that I propose is not a heuristic self-search question. It focuses on the phenomena of the objective, observed experience, not the self who feels. I propose that his method mirrors what I believe was his attempt to distance and gain control of "overwhelming" feelings by resisting the first question and forming and answering a second question.

This second observing-not-experiencing focus reflects years of investigating with coparticipants and perhaps is the way his unresolved question was given the opportunity to *live its way into the answer*. His discourse on the heuristics begins with the "leashless"

concepts of the first process, in which he emphasizes that his method is neither hermeneutical nor phenomenological. Yet the internal phases that he describes in the first two chapters seem to turn into external steps (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51) with requirements that appear to be both hermeneutic and phenomenological. The application portion of his method in the later chapters has been codified into an external process that requires making lists, constructing methods, and following data-collection procedures in a prescribed fashion. The final product is a document that depicts themes, meanings, and essences of the experience. Other participants become the major source of data. Validity of the self-experience is established by similar experiences of others; yet validity in subjective discovery-research is not possible by comparing to others' experience.

It is only when an internal focus is maintained that the researcher's own tacit knowledge can be lifted into conscious awareness. When the focus is on another, what is learned is from an observational perspective rather than from within experience. In the applied process that focuses on the participants and on the phenomenon, the self, the *I-who-feels*, can be too easily lost in a sea of explications and step fulfillment. The focus of the feeling, experiencing self can become lost in the experience, and the experience can be lost in the articulated application of a process.

For those who see metaphors, it would not be difficult to see the method presented by Moustakas in 1990 as being a metaphor for a man who, years before, loses himself in a dreadful experience and wanders the streets in search of an answer, a man who then loses the dreadful experience in a research method that articulates a dissociated process of discovering the phenomenon of the experience. The spontaneous creative synthesis, the story with embedded transformation, seems to disappear as a research manuscript is formed to fit the requirements of objective positive science. Moustakas has come to know about loneliness, and his extensive writing has helped many others who struggle with feeling lonely. Children's wards in many hospitals are much different in 2002 from what they were in 1961, perhaps due, in part, to his study of loneliness.

Moustakas developed a method that has the potential to enter the tacit dimensions more effectively than most any other research inquiry method. Yet the method possesses internal conflicts, perhaps the same conflicts he himself experienced when he was grappling with a question that, I speculate, was never fully formed.

Instead of remaining fully inward focused on the experience of feeling lonely, he became distracted with the word *loneliness* and with the formation of a method—extremely important, but not self-focused.

In the method Moustakas (1990) develops, he contradicts a significant aspect of self-inquiry. He says, “From the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration” (p. 11). This self-discovery

defies the shackles of convention and tradition. . . . It pushes beyond the known, the expected, or the merely possible. Without the restraining leash of formal hypothesis, and free from external methodological structures that limit awareness or channel it, the one who searches heuristically may draw upon the perceptual powers afforded by . . . direct experience. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 44)

Paradoxically, he creates a methodological structure for a process that he himself states must take place free from methodological structures if it is to be authentic.

When he describes the phases in his 1990 heuristic methods text, Moustakas emphasizes the need to surrender to them, not to formalize them and mechanically follow them. But in explaining the application of his method, he does not give direction for *letting go and falling into the river or swimming into the unknown current* that occurs when one leaps into the unknown self. He only says that it “may be refreshing and peaceful, or it may be disturbing and even jarring” (p. 13). But he gives an extensive description of the inclusion of coparticipants and the rules they must follow to determine the *meaning of the experience* being studied. I surmise that he himself shifts back and forth within his method between focus on self in the experience and focus on the phenomenon that is experienced, because his own personal research subject and process contain confusion.

Moustakas (1990) often reminds the reader that the question emerges from the depths of the person, and the data are within while the self is immersed in the experience. He states that research from outside sources comes “at a point near the end, not at the beginning where it might have acted to predispose or color . . . growing awareness” (p. 96). Yet when he is explicating the methodological structure, the focus subtly shifts from the self to the named topic being researched. He now says that in the first

stage of formulating the question, the researcher should focus on the topic at hand and enter into a thinking process about themes and subthemes that can be formulated into a question. No longer is there a psychological free-fall; now there is a plan organized by reason.

He sets out the methods of preparation for the second stage of immersion as a plan rather than the surrender that he previously says is necessary. There can be only one subject for self-study, and that is "I." However, inclusion of coparticipants is strongly suggested as desirable in the directions Moustakas gives to implement his original method. In preparing for coparticipants' inclusion, he directs the researcher to let them know what is expected of them, that a set of criteria be formed for selection of coparticipants, and that there should be a contract with them. He makes these suggestions apparently without noticing how the suggestions contradict the very core of his method. I suspect that personal ambivalence and resistance to self-search of a possible unformed heuristic question in 1961 has acted as a *chaotic attractor* (Abraham, 1989; Krippner, 1994; Krippner & Ryan, 1998) producing the ambivalence within the method he explicates in 1990.

As I read Moustakas (1990), the self-search of this heuristic process is one that is self-formed, not formed by being selected as a coparticipant and agreeing to certain expectations. It is a process that must focus on the individual's unique, yet universal humanness, which makes developing a set of criteria for coparticipants, such as the age, sex, socioeconomic status, or education of the participants, meaningless. When Moustakas suggests the forming of a contract with coparticipants to include time commitment, he is violating one of the most significant aspects of the method. He, himself, indicates that the heuristic research process could not be hurried or organized by the clock or calendar and that the researcher would have to enter into the material in timeless immersion until it is finally understood. If input from coparticipants were to be authentic, it would seem necessary that the same guiding principles that apply to the researcher must apply to the coparticipants.

Coparticipants, if they are used in self-search, are valuable as reflectors of possible areas of resistance that may be out of conscious awareness in the form of denial, projection, or incomplete search. This sends the researcher back into the self to continue the self-search into deeper or more distant tacit dimensions, thus allowing the transformation to be more expansive. This is what Humphrey (1989), another researcher who followed the heuristic

self-search method, did when he was searching life's meaning and found his coparticipants had included the dark side, which he had not included in his work. He returned to a self-search to look for what he had not seen before of his own dark side that expanded his search for meaning. A process of using others' input without removing the focus from the self, as in Moustakas's (1990) application chapters (pp. 45-54), might be found in adapting Ullman's (1979, 1996; see also Sela-Smith, 2000) dream method to the heuristic self-inquiry method. In Ullman's method, though there are participants, the focus remains on the dream-researcher.

I speculate that in attempting to make his method acceptable to positivist science, where external observation establishes validity, Moustakas (1990) has moved from the Upper Left quadrant of subjective experience to the Upper Right quadrant of observation. But checking personal experience against the experience of others to determine what is a most accurate descriptor of one's own experience is not what makes one's own experience valid, and it does not provide access to the tacit dimension. The feeling response, as experienced, is valid as it stands. Checking against others' experience can become reductionistic toward some statistical mean. Validity of the research is established by surrendering to the process that is pushing itself into the consciousness of the researcher, allowing the process to unfold and then noticing results in expansion of self-awareness, deepening of self-understanding, and of self-transformation that others can experience in the "story."

Three Languages: Two Perspectives

In considering the confusions that are apparent in Moustakas's own research and the research of others that followed his method, I have become aware of three languages implicated in Moustakas's (1990) method. Each language has a different stance. The first language is "I feel" oriented. This is the language of the Upper Left quadrant of the experiencing "I" and the language of surrender implicit in the first two chapters of *Heuristic Research*. It is the language of internal focus, the "I," feeling in the present and alive in the moment, even when the present "I" is remembering a painful past, for it is the feeling that connects the past to the present. The second language is "reporting" oriented, which is a third-person abstraction of the experiencing "I." It is an external language, even though it may be the individual doing a self-report. This is what I

do when I no longer am in the feeling but talk about the feeling objectively. This stance is past-focused and is separated from the present feeling-self in that it accumulates, summarizes, and makes generalizations about the accumulations, much like statistics that say nothing about the particular. From this language perspective, I make generalizations about my feelings and can easily slip into the third "external observation" orientated language of the third-person observer within scientific language, because there is little difference between my generalizations regarding others and my generalizations about myself.

Whenever the second language stance (reporting) is substituted for the first stance (feeling), there can be confusion of the first with the third stance (observing). I think I know what an experience is in general, but I do not connect to the specific, present, alive, feeling, where what is felt can be truly known, which can lead me to the tacit levels where my feelings are connected to meanings. Both the second and third languages are external and verbal, cut off from foundational global experience. When Moustakas (1990) opens to feeling in the experience that predominates in his first two chapters, he provides a feeling bridge to the tacit level. However, when he shifts to the second and third languages in the later chapters, he removes the bridge, and experience is simply one more "thing" for the positivist scientist wearing a "qualitative researcher's mask" to observe.

The internal orientation is difficult to maintain. It can open long-buried wounds; it can lead to feeling terrified, to feeling hurt, to feeling angry. It can result in major life changes when the researcher may not feel ready to make those changes. The experience of life may be turned upside-down when there is surrender to feeling. Even so, a relentless inward focus can lead to greater self-understanding, self-transformation, and reconstruction of a hindering worldview. Silent, painful fears that unconsciously control the experience of life can be acknowledged, heard, felt, and released as they transform. Incomplete, incorrect, or misinterpreted information that inhibits life-experience can be completed, corrected, and reinterpreted, allowing life to move forward with fewer blocks.

When Moustakas (1990) constructs a method based on ambivalence, the double meanings are present in the languages that are used, and either internal or external stances can be taken. Depending on the inclination of the researcher, one of the stances

will be noticed above the other, and the one not noticed will be ignored or dismissed as irrelevant, much like Moustakas dismissed the cemetery plot.

My original interpretation of heuristic research was formed out of my internal-oriented “first language” stance because that was what matched the 2-year self-search study that I had conducted before I had learned of Moustakas’s work. My tacit knowledge base recognized the process as described in the first two chapters of Moustakas’s (1990) method as the *correct method*, and I did not even consider the possibility that there was another interpretation. I had dismissed the application chapters without realizing that I had done so.

Others, who acknowledged the second stance, accepted the application chapters and very likely dismissed what I interpreted as the correct method without knowing they had done so. I remain committed to the understanding that without surrender to one’s nonprojected feelings, the tacit level will not be reached and brought into consciousness; but that seems to be less important in the second interpretation, whereas it is central in the first interpretation. Change will less likely occur at the tacit level if it is not the central focus; whatever change does occur in spite of the external focus will be limited in comparison to what might have been with internal feeling orientation.

The ambivalence within the method established by Moustakas (1990), which uses all three languages and both stances, creates confusion for researchers attempting to implement his heuristics. I suspect that if there is a crisis in a person’s life that needs to be answered, the researcher is likely experiencing an unknown. The investigator will more likely respond to the portion of the method that deals with surrender, jumping into the river, the darkness, and the unknown because the crisis disrupts structures and the “known” has no answers.

If there is no crisis, the researcher might not notice the suggestion to surrender but rather might gravitate to the structured portion of the method that focuses on something external. Researchers who look at an external experience may not seek an internal focus unless something of a deep-feeling nature draws them inside. They might find themselves focusing on some external problem rather than doing a self-search in relation to the problem that draws them inward. They gain their data from others rather than from themselves, and they do not experience self-transformation because that is not the goal. They create a results

list, an explication of categories in a results chapter in a dissertation, or a summary statement of what was cognitively determined from generalizations made. They are following the steps explicated by Moustakas (1990) in Chapters 3 and 4. There is no story that contains the self-transformation, which is always the potential by-product of living through a crisis in such a way that learning can be passed on to those who hear, read, or see it.

Instead, there are only themes and explications of an experience, not a story of self-transformation. Like that cemetery plot that is first not seen and then discovered to be not only a core component but the dominant component of the scene that had drawn Moustakas's attention, I believe that self-transformation that does not seem to have been seen as a component of heuristics by many researchers is not just a core component but perhaps the dominant part of heuristics research.

RESISTANCE TO THE UPPER LEFT QUADRANT

Humankind always has been on a quest for knowledge. In the Western world, that quest became narrowly idealized as positivist empirical science. By legitimizing knowledge gained only through empirical observation, much of what it is to be human, experiencing in what Wilber (1995, 1996, 1997) calls the Upper Left quadrant, has been ignored. Many current philosophers of science and a growing body of contemporary researchers recognize the self-imposed blindness of the positivist frame for knowledge, and the role of experience as a legitimate source of knowledge has been introduced. Ironically, Moustakas's (1990) attempt to introduce a method with experience as a source of knowledge has had only a negligible impact on psychology and human science research. Heuristics as a method of discovery, which ontologically predates positivist reification, appears to be interpreted for the most part from an exterior perspective even in the self-search method by focusing on thinking about and observing experience rather than self-focus on feeling an experience.

I contend that heuristic inquiry that results in self-transformation and the creation of a story that generates potential for transformation in others and in society is the strength of the self-inquiry method. A man called Jesus reportedly went out into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights 20 centuries ago to experience what may well have been a heuristic inquiry wherein he confronted himself,

his feelings, his beliefs, and his myths. As a result, he experienced self-transformation. He told his story and lived from it the rest of his short life. Others hearing the story were transformed and a religion grew up; the entire world has been directly or indirectly impacted by it, for better and for worse, for the past 2,000 years.

I conclude that heuristic inquiry as presented by Moustakas (1990) has not had the impact on research that I believe is possible because of resistance as evidenced in Moustakas and by the ambivalence in the method he established. When researchers fully immerse themselves in the Upper Left quadrant of experiencing the feelings by moving through resistance and remaining focused until self-transformation occurs, I suspect that there will be a potential for social transformation. I also believe there will be an expansion of self-awareness that can provide even greater understanding of information gained from observations made from the other three quadrants. Without the Upper Left adequately represented, all others will suffer.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE: HEURISTIC SELF-SEARCH INQUIRY

I propose a research method called *heuristic self-search inquiry*, a process that acknowledges the ambivalence of Moustakas's (1990) heuristic method, and moves beyond it. It is clearly focused on the *I-who-feels* and addresses the experiencing-self in the Upper Left quadrant as a way to access knowledge that is significant to human experience, available only by stepping into the unknown within feelings. Heuristic self-search inquiry is a psychological process wherein the researcher surrenders to the feeling in an experience and does not know what will be learned at the time the inquiry is begun. There are no hypotheses or expectations regarding outcomes, no hope to confirm or refute a proposition. There is no attempt to isolate variables or observe the effects one set of variables has on other variables within the research. The purpose is to allow the formation of new awareness and connections or to see the self or the world from a different perspective and, thus, reinterpret meanings or significance. There is no controlling the process; in fact, the opposite must take place. It is in this surrender into feeling-the-feelings and experiencing-the-experience that allows the self-as-researcher to enter heuristic self-search inquiry. Long-hidden tacit knowledge, suppressed, repressed,

rejected, and feared by the individual, by social systems, and by humankind, may finally emerge. Once known, individuals can be transformed by this self-knowledge and human beings can begin to consciously and collectively create new experience from New World views.

*Resistance as a Component of
Heuristic Self-Search Inquiry*

What I call heuristic self-search inquiry is what Moustakas (1990) presents in the first two chapters of *Heuristic Research* that describe the method, the one my own process instinctively followed independent of his method. However, there is another aspect not present in Moustakas's method, *resistance*. I propose that this "interior" search is what Moustakas (1961) intended to do but that he failed in his own self-search process because of resistance. I also propose that this sent him on another search outside his feeling-self that became a heuristic inquiry in psychology, not a self-search inquiry. His applied method, I believe, shifts to the observational position of the Upper Right quadrant (Wilber, 1995, 1996, 1997). His substitute question on the experience of loneliness from the second-language-orientation results in the creation of a palimpsest document where the first-language-question regarding his "feeling lonely," described in Chapters 1 and 2, that would lead to the "leap into the unknown," can still be seen underneath the second writing, the application chapters; but the two are not the same. An ambivalent method is the result. I submit heuristic self-search inquiry as a method to distinguish it from Moustakas's method. This expansion is significant because it addresses a concern Wilber (1997), himself, voiced: that if any one quadrant is ignored by any of the others, what is ignored will actually *reappear* in the system as an internal and massive self-contradiction and destroy the system from within (p. 23).

Evidence of Moustakas's Resistance

I commend Moustakas for the groundbreaking work he has done in the field of research psychology in encouraging inquiry into the Upper Left quadrant of the self that is experiencing experience. The explication of my own work, which I interpret as an expansion of Moustakas, would have been impossible without his foundational contribution. However, I believe that as Moustakas dissoci-

ated from the Upper Left quadrant of the *I-who-feels*, and replaced it with the “*observation of the self responding to feeling*” from the Upper Right quadrant, he ignored this most significant validity claim to knowledge. This denial did reappear as a massive, jolting contradiction in his method.

It is from the Upper Left quadrant, the knowledge of the interior, subjective, feeling-self, that psychology in theory, as developed in academic and research settings, is most connected to psychology in practice in the form of the client in the therapist’s office. Resistance on the part of the *researcher-as-participant* to surrender to the *I-who-feels* results in research that does not access the Upper Left quadrant, which is needed if there is to be an integration of all of the knowledge regarding what it is to be human. Resistance to feeling and the loss of Upper Left quadrant knowledge also negatively impacts one of the central foci of psychology in practice: transformative psychotherapy. This failure prevents the shift in tacit knowledge; it does not lead to the transformative story, and the shifts in society or humankind that are potential in self-inquiry are missing. With the Upper Left quadrant unaddressed, the gap between theory and practice, which has long plagued the field of psychology, still remains.

SUMMARY

The conclusions I make regarding the application of heuristic research are threefold. First, there must be recognition of the value of a *heuristic self-search inquiry* and a return to the internal perspective. Second, there must be an acknowledgement of resistance to feeling in the reconnection with the *I-who-feels*. Finally, there must be an acceptance of surrender that opens to transformation that can impact the individual, society, and all of humankind.

I believe I was able to follow the Moustakas (1990) method as presented in the first and second chapters precisely, without knowing the method, because I had a purely internal goal. I am convinced that this portion of the method does reflect an authentic internal process that is human. I did not have something to accomplish in the outer world that would draw me into the external observational stance and away from the inner search.

Many years of working with my personal myths on the tacit level has caused me to conclude that my outer world experience is formed of my inner world. I know that if I want what I experience in

my outer world to change, I must search internally to discover what caused me to create the external experience. By establishing the need to include the Upper Left quadrant of the *I-who-feels* in individual, professional, and cultural quests for knowledge, in research theory, and in practice, perhaps there may be a recognition that the world we have jointly created is a mirror of our collective internal tacit knowledge. As we become conscious of the last frontier, the interiority of the self as experienced by the self, we may learn how to consciously transform both the internal experience and the outside world.

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