

Research Methodology

The research methodology utilized in *The Role of the Arts in the Transformation of Consciousness* (Eleniak, 2008) to gather the information, knowledge and answers to my research questions is Organic Inquiry (Curry & Wells, 2003; Clements, 1998, 2000, 2001).

Organic Inquiry was the method of choice for this enquiry because:

1. Organic Inquiry begins with an “assumption that all things are sacred and interconnected” and as such “it allows the researcher to find connections between things that might otherwise be considered separate” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 16). This assumption allows for the concept of ‘oneness’ and the interconnectedness of everything as put forward by the new science and as Mack (2002) speaks about as qualities of a worldview based on spiritual principles. This quality of organic design was in alignment with the dimensions of consciousness that I wished to explore and, as such, was broad and open enough to contain possible findings in these areas.

2. Organic Inquiry has as its goal the transformation of the researcher (Curry & Wells, 2003). Usually this happens as a result of the researcher’s contact with the subjects. In this study, the researcher, that is, I, felt that part of the key to discovering the answer to the research questions was to partner what I was learning theoretically in the material with a personal experiential process of applying the theories to myself while going through an initiatory experience in the fine arts. If the theories were accurate, there was a possibility that I could be transformed and/or would create art projects that could shift the consciousness of an audience. It was, therefore, imperative that I work with a

methodology that could accommodate transformational learning and even have it as an explicit goal.

3. The Organic Inquiry methodology is an exploratory and subjectively descriptive one, rather than a predictive or even abstractly interpretive method and “it is especially well suited for investigating elusive topics, or questions that take the researcher into the unknown, and for concepts for which there is not yet an agreed upon vocabulary” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 15). This study fits all of these characteristics.

4. In Organic Inquiry engagement with the sacred in some manner is expected. Since my research question involved shifting to a worldview based in spirituality, my methodology needed to have this element in order to encompass a reality including the very characteristics that Dr. Mack (2003) described scientific materialism as lacking.

With regard specifically to the inclusion of the sacred, the methodology needed to:

- 1) Include “soul, spirit, God and...all that was known by native peoples and all people, really, throughout history”.
- 2) Have “a quality of flexible-mindedness where everything can be either real or imagined or both”.
- 3) Recognize the impact that the researcher was having on the subject of enquiries.
- 4) Be comfortable “with ambiguity, paradox, uncertainty and mystery.”
- 5) Include “the inner world, subjectivity, and concepts of the Divine.”
- 6) Have regard for and honor “the Divine, other worlds, other domains and ways of knowing.”
- 7) Be of a worldview where “heart-knowing” is valid. (Mack, 2003)

5. Organic Inquiry “claims its belonging to the participatory paradigm rather than the modernist view of the Universe” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 20) because “the principle of the sacred is positioned as the first aspect of the original Organic Inquiry model” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 20). Since the intention of the research question was to explore the most effective arena of art to assist the shift to the level of the participatory

worldview, Organic Inquiry was an open enough methodology to incorporate such findings.

6. Parallel to the Heuristic Method (Moustakas, 1990), Organic Inquiry also has as the core of the investigation the researcher's subjective experience of the topic. In this study such a standpoint was necessary since the researcher/participant, that is, I, was recording my own story as it evolved through the process.

Once again, this aspect of Organic Inquiry, that is, the flexibility to include the researcher's, that is, my observations and my consciousness aligned with the revelations of the new sciences that question the validity of any study where the researcher believes that they play the role of 'detached, objective observer'.

7. Organic Inquiry has as its third principle an honoring of the chthonic, a word used by Jennifer Clements, et. al. (1998, 1999) "to refer to the contents of the subconscious, a time-place in which the roots of the research grow in unexpected directions and ways, not to be contained by the original...research plan" (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 21). This is the arena where "researchers' instincts guide the growth of the project, where they battle to overcome doubts and worries, and learn to trust the guidance they receive, and to trust themselves as disciplined knowers" (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 22). This element became crucial for me many times in the research process since I was trained in traditional qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and have lived my life within the current dominant worldview relying on logical, rational, objective 'head' knowledge. Learning to trust my instincts or my 'horse sense' became a key unexpected, unplanned for element of the transformation arising during this process.

8. Organic Inquiry also embraces the concept of ‘the numinous’ “as the upper world counterpart to the chthonic from which the researcher may receive inspiration, direct knowing, and other forms of intersubjective guidance” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 23). Organic Inquiry, therefore, allows for manifestations of inner knowing and information gleaned from these realms into the research design. It therefore allowed the researcher to incorporate information from dreams, intuitions and/or synchronicities, all illogical, irrational realms which are a part of the worldview beyond reason.

9. Organic Inquiry focuses on transformative learning and transformative changes of heart for both participants of the study, researchers and the eventual audience who will read the study. It seemed key to research my questions within a context which allowed for, recognized, and sought such transformational learning at so many levels. After all, the subject of my research question involved exploring the most effective way through the arts to shift the worldview in the quickest, most efficient and effective way possible for as many people as possible. I was dealing with the subject of transformation on a mass scale as well as on a minute scale with the changes that could happen to me.

The experiential way in which I explored the answers to these questions involved me actively engaging in concepts from the new sciences and an initiatory experience in the arts. The ultimate intention of this process was to assist me in becoming the most effective agent of change in the arena of shifting worldview that I could possibly become. This too had the concept of transformation at its heart and required a methodology that could encompass it.

In Organic Inquiry, the researcher is “seeking to know in-depth about the experience of some concept or phenomenon as it is lived” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 15).

In this study as researcher/participant, I sought to know in-depth about the experience of shifting consciousness through the arts as I lived it.

I went into an immersion experience intending and fully willing to be transformed by my involvement. In addition, Organic Inquiry also pays attention to the impact the results or the final writing up of the report has on its readers. These results are yet to be revealed.

10. In Organic Inquiry “researchers and participants are called upon to operate in the liminal realm in recalling, gathering, and analyzing data” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 28). The liminal realm is defined as a “productive transition state reached by shifting consciousness from mundane awareness to an expanded awareness wherein one more easily feels the sacred and hears Spirit...” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 28). Once again, this would indicate an intention and desire to write the dissertation from a place consistent with the participatory worldview characteristics which was essential in at least allowing for the possibility of a true shift happening to occur and to be the place from which I write at the end of the process.

11. Organic Inquiry allowed me equal use of the rational-analytic mode of generative knowledge and “the intuitive, somatic, affective, experiential, social and cultural ways of knowing and forms of knowledge” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 29). This is also more in line with a participatory paradigm and within the vision of research done within such a worldview.

12. Organic Inquiry is described as “...a living method for exploring and describing lived experiencing...” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 30). As such, it matched my experiential approach to the exploration of my research questions.

13. Organic Inquiry methodology is “highly flexible, allowing a wide range of data gathering and analysis methods...Researchers are free to combine standard methods like interviews and content analysis with more creative processes such as art, dance, poetry and music – just about anything a researcher can think of a disciplined way to gather and look at participant’s stories” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 37). This flexibility allowed me to use the methods and instruments described in the first part of this section in order to gather my own personal story.

14. “Organic Inquiry is fun” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 38). This inherent quality of joyfulness seemed to be necessary when exploring the most effective ways to assist a shift to a worldview and/or levels of consciousness where joy is one of the essential values. According to the Law of Attraction (Hicks & Hicks, 2004) the inclusion of such a methodology in the study would be conducive to attracting the very levels of consciousness desired ... for the researcher/participant, the projects, the audiences and the eventual reader(s) of this project. It would also enable the researcher/participant, that is, me, to work and live the study within a framework as similar as possible to what I imagine would be inherent in the reality of a participatory worldview.

15. The purpose of the Organic Inquiry “is to study a topic in rich detail, pursue its uniqueness and subjectivity, and how it is experienced in the life of the study participants. It is especially well suited as a methodology when researchers have an elusive or ambiguous topic and want to examine it in a careful way, following where the topic and participants lead” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 38). This aspect of Organic Inquiry methodology was very useful to me because of the high degree of subjectivity in this study, the fact that shifts in consciousness, the subject of my inquiry, is an elusive topic

and because a common language is still to be found. Indeed, the kind of language necessary when referring to a worldview beyond reason has yet to be determined. Since the research implies the need to go beyond words, the question of what the language of the spirit or soul is remains to be identified.

The freedom given by this methodology to follow and observe my journey through the initiation process in the arts and be open to the lead of Spirit really provided a context of unlimited possibilities. This was crucial in facilitating the kind of shifts in consciousness hoped for.

16. Organic Inquiry “will likely change the researcher in ways that cannot be predicted beforehand...As with any travel into the liminal domain, where the terrain, inhabitants, and outcome are unknown at the outset, novice researchers may well find that doing an Organic Inquiry becomes an initiation experience” (Curry & Wells, 2003, p. 42). Once again this quality matched the study’s intention to create just such an initiatory experience.