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Be(com)ing a reflexive researcher: a developmental approach to research methodology

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ABSTRACT

Our purpose in this article is to achieve a shift of focus away from a view of research methods as objectified procedures to be learnt by researchers, and towards the development of researchers who craft procedures integral to the environments in which they operate – environments of which they are also a functioning constituent. A key element in such a perspective is the conceptualisation (and practice) of the relationship between development and reflexivity. Reflexivity involves a process of on-going mutual shaping between researcher and research. Development involves an increase in awareness of such processes of interaction between organism and context. Rather than see development only as a welcome side-effect of reflexive research, we treat development of the researcher as central, with reflexivity in an instrumental relationship to this on-going process. With regard to the pragmatic implementation of these concepts, we emphasise the importance of the researcher consciously stepping *back* from action in order to theorise what is taking place, and also stepping *up* to be an active part of that contextualised action. We exemplify the processes involved using research data taken from a doctoral study into the role of technology in the teaching of Arabic. The first section of this article explores the idea of *a developmental approach*. The second unpacks our sense of *reflexivity*. The third section exemplifies our discussion through the experiences of a researcher in the field. The concluding section summarises and restates our argument regarding the potential usefulness of adopting a developmental approach to the conduct of research.

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A developmental approach

As with any academic statement, this article aspires to the illocutionary force of an argument. Unlike many academic arguments, however, ours does not set out to demonstrate that others are wrong; we see our argument as augmentative rather than displacive. We wish to argue for repertoires to be extended rather than old approaches abandoned and we wish to argue for a way of being, rather than for new ways of doing. That said,

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should our argument be persuasive, radical change and new ways of doing research may well ensue.

We both have backgrounds in qualitative research in language education and it is out of that experience that we draw our exemplification of the points that we wish to make. We do not, however, intend to restrict what we have to say to that type of research or that specific field. Should our contribution also be seen as relevant to other kinds of research and other fields of human exploration, we would see that as being in line with our augmentative intent.

With regard to our title, the most familiar sense of *becoming* probably involves a change of state, or a distinct achievement: the caterpillar becomes a butterfly; the successful applicant becomes an employee. We recognise this usage with regard to research. For someone to be accepted as a researcher, the academy requires certain levels of knowledge and skill, along with certain attitudes towards care and ethical values, and it is now common for training to be provided in these areas, with courses covering the required competences and standards. This type of *becoming*, followed by the status of *having become* a researcher, while important, is not, however, the focus of our article. We are concerned with an interactive rather than a linear relationship between *becoming* and *being*, and, therefore, with a sense of *being* that always involves a process of *becoming* (Barnett, 2004). We define a 'developmental approach' as one which foregrounds the continuing growth of the whole-person-who-researches as integral to the research process. Our interest lies in the human capacity to create, to innovate and to exceed oneself, rather than in the achievement of specified competences. We are interested in socially mediated internal growth, more than in learning from the application of external models. As we first discuss and then illustrate in our case study, these concepts of *being/becoming*, *creative capacity*, and *socially mediated internal growth* are central to what we mean by a developmental approach. To recap, none of this is an argument against a linear view of becoming, or against the importance of achieving specified levels of competence, or against the usefulness of learning from external models. It is an argument that we should not be limited by these perspectives alone. It is an argument in favour of extending our repertoires and ourselves. The contribution that we seek to make through this article is to influence the practice of research in the direction of the on-going, whole-person development of the researcher, in the conviction that this entails an enrichment of the research itself.

We see such an extension of repertoire as particularly relevant to qualitative research for two specific reasons. First, qualitative research demands an empathic ability to relate to social and psychological realities other than one's own. At its most effective, furthermore, it requires both the kind of humility that acknowledges that the researcher always has a particular standpoint, and the kind of openness that is prepared to risk having that standpoint changed. A developmental approach to being/becoming embodies such humility and openness in researchers who present themselves not only as intellects, but also as whole people who engage their feelings, and values, and needs in the research process (Barnett, 2005). In Cole and Masny's (2012) terms, '[a]ffect is bound to becoming through the ways in which one may affect and be affected, which define a continuum of change that gets inside what it means to exist in a situation' (p. 1).

Second, today's research community is one of ever-increasingly interacting nationalities and cultures. While it would be either naïve or disingenuous to ignore the fact that methodological procedures and codes of conduct arise overwhelmingly from the economically

rich and powerful nations and institutions that dominate research and publication, a developmental approach to creative capacity and internal growth offers increased hope for researchers to exceed the limitations of (albeit arguably useful) pre-determined hegemonic models by synthesising new possibilities in interaction. In sociocultural terms, a developmental approach then hopes to establish in these social exchanges ways of being that will be internalised as forms of cognition (e.g. Johnson, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978).

In this sense, the approach promotes the theorisation of practice, that is, a conscious process whereby 'one discerns in one's working environment an opportunity for further intellectual effort that one believes will feed back into and enrich one's praxis' (Edge, 2011, p. 26). Such a stance encourages researchers to articulate the understanding that emerges from their lived experience, to take responsibility for the significance of this raised awareness as they identify their desired direction of travel and, consequently, to pursue the knowledge they need in search of their always-being-negotiated purposes.

Having clarified the intended contribution of this article and having defined what we mean by a developmental approach to research methodology, we now turn to what we see as the key element of such an approach.

The reflexive researcher

With regard to the pragmatics of our developmental approach, we see, as central, the capacity to operate *reflexively*. Rather than attempt a review of the variety of ways in which the concept of reflexivity has been defined and employed (e.g. Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2012; Finlay & Gough, 2003; Fook, 2002; Forbes, 2008), we propose that it is useful for our current purposes to characterise reflexivity as comprising two interacting elements: *prospective* and *retrospective* reflexivity (Edge, 2011). Simply put, prospective reflexivity concerns itself with the effect of the whole-person-researcher on the research. Retrospective reflexivity concerns itself with the effect of the research on the researcher. This linked concept was previewed above in Cole and Masny's (2012) *the ways in which one may affect and be affected*. In related fashion, Mann (2016) describes reflexivity as being '[f]ocused on the self and ongoing intersubjectivities. It recognises mutual shaping, reciprocality and bi-directionality, and that interaction is context-dependent and context renewing' (p. 28).

What we are calling prospective reflexivity has been more frequently accounted for in the literature; for example, in relation to considering how to handle researcher status, insider/outsiderness, gender, or ethnicity. Rather than seeing such influences as potential *contamination of the data* to be avoided or allowed for by achieving competence in an appropriate methodological procedure, prospective reflexivity seeks to help researchers grow their capacity to understand the significance of the knowledge, feelings, and values that they brought into the field to the research questions that they came to formulate, to the analytical lenses that they chose to employ, and to their findings.

Retrospective reflexivity is summed up in Sandywell's (1996) observation: '… reflexive action changes the form of the self: a reflexive practice never returns the self to the point of origin' (p. xiv). The significance of this assertion with regard to a developmental approach is that it establishes a metaphorical sense of movement, of distance travelled. The interpretation of that trajectory, including its consequence, indexes the individual development experienced. Once again, we see the recording of this development as

intrinsic to the research. Qualitative research thus enters into the fuller meaning of *experience* as defined by Dewey (1916):

> On the active hand, experience is *trying*– a meaning which is made explicit in the connected term, experiment. On the passive, it is *undergoing*. When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return. Such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness or value of the experience. (p. 139, italics in original)

The workings of reflexivity are accessed via observation and reflection, and through interaction with colleagues (see, for example, Bridges, 2014, on research conversations). We observe in action; we step back to reflect; and we step up again to action. That, at least, is the simple model that we find useful to hold on to. Beyond that, the actual complexities of thinking, feeling, and acting spread out before us. We might, for example, extend Dewey's two-way exchange into the cyclical shape that he doubtless intended; in other words, we do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return (and then, changed as we are, we return to take our next action). It is this focus on 'self-awareness' that gives reflexivity its hallmark (Mann, 2016, p. 16, underlining in original).

We note the relevance to the reflexive process of Schön's (1983) distinction between *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* without exploring, on this occasion, whether that counts for our purposes as a distinction of category or scale. A decision whether or not to record a conversation, for example, may have to be taken on the spot, while the decision to amend a research question will call for careful consideration of what has been learned. In both cases, we shape and are shaped.

We embrace also Kegan's (1994) framework of *levels of consciousness*, according to which individuals can develop their awareness as *subject* in contexts in which they had previously been embedded. From an earlier awareness, for example, of standing in relationship to another person, the individual can come to step outside such a relationship in order to establish a relationship to the relationship itself. In this way, the person is freed to have that earlier relationship (or not), rather than to be had by it. In more concrete terms, I may enjoy a well-established personal friendship with a colleague, only to discover through my research that that colleague favours some students in ways that I consider inappropriate. I must now consider how I view my relationship to my colleague from a standpoint that takes me outside that earlier friendship.

Embedded in and emerging from their contexts, therefore, reflexive researchers open themselves up as one element of the phenomena that are to be investigated. Moreover, in such investigation, while prescribed and learned methodological procedures may well be useful, a developmental approach to research methodology (and a *becoming* approach to *being* a researcher) will be equally open to the possibility of shifting insights, emergent goals, and evolving methods in the pursuit of findings more significant than those that initial research questions might have foreseen. The role of reflexivity that we describe here involves raising awareness of its processes with the dual aim first of enriching one's lived experience, and then articulating this awareness as a contribution to the deepening of understanding of the field. With regard to experiential enrichment, we perceive the value of reflexivity to lie in the individual researcher's ability to construct an overall sense of *congruence* in their research practice, a concept that we explore below.

The on-going search for researcher congruence entails realising a fit between the professional principles that we declare and our actual professional behaviour. It also entails an openness to new ways of being and knowing through the development of original research methods that still confirm the values that we most prize. It entails, too, the expression of our *personal* values, along with the use of our *personal* skills, in our *professional* lives and vice versa. As researchers, we are hoping to achieve a sense of wholeness as people-who-research, where how we seem is how we are and what other people see is what they get. This overall goal is what we have termed *congruence*.

At this point, we acknowledge the influence of Carl Rogers' (e.g. 1961/2004) work regarding a human *actualising tendency*:

> By this I mean the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life – the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature – the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self. (p. 351)

The workings of reflexivity are, therefore, integral to all human development. Consequently, the attempt to perceive and impact the cycles of retrospective and prospective reflexivity is what the conscious development of the whole-person-who-researches is all about. At this point, we wish to exemplify the abstractions that we have thus far explored through a case study.

A reflexive researcher in the field

While the dual authorship of this article continues, the documentation of field experience demands its single narrator.

My (Attia) doctoral research explored teacher cognition (Borg, 2003, 2006) in relation to the use of technology in teaching Arabic to speakers of other languages. The study was supervised at a university in the UK, and fieldwork took place at a university in Egypt, where I had previously worked as an Arabic language teacher for 11 years. In this sense, I was an *insider* researcher. Establishing academic rigour when researching one's own *backyard* (Alvesson, 2003; Brannick & Coghlan, 2007) creates its own particular opportunities and challenges in addition to those discussed in the research methods literature of qualitative inquiry more broadly (e.g. Denzin, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998, 2002; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Robson, 2011; Seale, 1999). For example, Cooper and Rogers (2014, para. 2.1) explain that 'in sociological terms, the "insider" role is a powerful reflexive position used to gain deeper engagement and insight into participants' understanding of lived experience, which has always been part of the nature of qualitative research'. However, the authors acknowledge that 'making the private public' can occasionally involve a degree of messiness and discomfort (para. 2.5). My response to such opportunities and challenges plays an important role in what follows.

Reflecting on my fieldwork experience, I first review the influence on the study's design of positioning myself as a whole-person-researcher (prospective reflexivity). Issues such as professional history, collegial relationships, and aspirations for improving technology use in the language programme influenced my choice of topic, formulation of research questions, adoption of research design, selection of methods of data collection, and approach to representation and reporting.

I then focus on the fieldwork with its embedded processes of *trying* and *undergoing* (Dewey, 1916, p. 139), and examine the outcome for myself, the researcher, of engaging in that particular research. I demonstrate how I stepped back to reflect and stepped up to action in processes of continuous transformation and development, thereby embodying a *becoming* approach to *being* a researcher. Throughout these continuous phases of *trying* and *undergoing*, I never returned to the same point. Rather, these processes added new meaning to the field experiences and helped me gain deeper insight into my evolving research practice (retrospective reflexivity). This capacity to operate reflexively allowed me to theorise my practice, as I illustrate below.

More generally, my focus here is on the importance of discerning methodological affordances within one's specific research environment. More specifically, I address the significance of the affective, relationship-related elements underpinning a research process in establishing measures of trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry. My emerging understanding of the role of fieldwork relationships in establishing rigour, in the specific case of examining one's workplace, is reflected in the interconnection of the four elements of Trust, Collaboration, Corroboration, and Trustworthiness, as discussed in the following sections.

Trust

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out, building and maintaining trust is essential to qualitative inquiry; without it, collecting sound data can become very difficult. A solid base of trust is likely to generate accurate and candid data (Mercer, 2007), thereby facilitating the development of a *thick description* (Geertz, 1973), which in turn strengthens the validity of research accounts, and facilitates theoretical generalisations to other settings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Unlike outsider researchers, who build trust over the course of their work, for insiders, established trust is the foundation upon which they construct their research.

Here, I faced a dilemma. My UK institution instructs its students in the use of informed consent protocols and these are taken very seriously with regard to the granting of ethical approval for the research. Before going ahead with these protocols, however, I stepped back from the action to reflect on the shape and shadow of my own profile in this context.

As a former teacher in the language programme, I shared a history of lived experiences with colleagues, which in Arabic may be encapsulated by the term '*ishra*. The concept is related to 'a kind of expected solidarity and mutual assistance stemming from belonging to a '*asheera*, that is, a tribal community, clan, or kinsfolk' (Badawi & Hinds, 1986; W. Samy, personal communication, 17 December 2010). While no longer limited to blood relations of kin or tribe, the term still evokes such concepts of communal support. It would normally be used to refer to long-standing relationships such as those between friends, neighbours, and colleagues. In light of '*ishra,* I was granted access not only to the workplace and to the data; my participants – the teachers – embraced the research, committed themselves to it, offered quality data, and, thereby contributed to the development of rigorous accounts. The research was also informed by '*asham*, a well-established concept in Egyptian culture, which may be defined as an expectation or hope – founded on an existing relationship – that one will receive a desired response (Badawi & Hinds, 1986; W. Samy, personal communication, 17 December 2010).

Perceiving fieldwork through the lens of '*ishra* and '*asham*, my main concern was not that the teachers would withdraw during the course of the study, but, on the contrary,

that they would remain when they no longer wished to be engaged in it. Gauging the affective was one of the most critical aspects of fieldwork as it necessitated a level of cultural sensitivity and methodological flexibility.

As a result of this reflection, and in the sense of prospective reflexivity, when I stepped up again into action, I distributed no informed consent protocols to teachers prior to embarking on the research (though such forms were distributed to their international learners, especially in advance of video-recording). In my estimation, asking the teachers to sign such forms would have risked the inference that the trust upon which our relationship was built was being brought into question.

Similarly, *respondent validation* or *member checking*– returning their accounts to the participants for validation – was (re)named *member sharing*, because the notion of *checking* seemed incongruous with the concept of the trust that underpinned our field relationships.

Collaboration

I informed the teachers about the objectives of my study and, on occasion, discussed with them strategies for data collection and means of safeguarding validity. We also discussed the possibility of their using my recordings of their classes and their video-stimulated recalls for their own professional development. This collaborative move was reflected in the actual wording of the consent forms distributed to the learners. These forms initially referred to my doctoral study only, but half-way through the fieldwork, they were revised to include the teachers' professional development purposes also. Collegial support was remarkable, as manifested, among other things, in teachers' offering otherwise inaccessible documents (e.g. student evaluation forms), re-recording stimulated recalls in the instance of a technical failure, inviting me to their homes to complete unfinished interviews, and suggesting new angles through which the project could be approached. With the passing of time, the study gradually developed into what may be described as a collaborative project.

Though very enriching, I realised that field relationships could also be methodologically challenging. For example, while recording classes for my study, I was asked if the video material I produced could be used in the teacher education programme (after obtaining consent from the respective teachers). I was concerned that such an arrangement would impact the future in-class performance of my participants and change it from the *real* to the *ideal*, which would in turn pose threats to validity in my study. My methodological point was acknowledged, and in the spirit of '*ishra* and '*asham*, I offered to video-record classes of teachers who were not part of my research to be used in the teacher education programme. In the Deweyan sense of experience, I saw this as an example of my undergoing the effects of what my trying had brought about.

Another challenge, clearly ethical, had to do with audio recording. The teachers knew I always carried a recorder, and on occasion data collection would take place in a corridor, in a car, or in a coffee shop, but when to record and when not to was never a straightforward decision. Nevertheless, as a point of principle, I never prioritised data collection over field relationships, no matter how inviting the situation might be. I see this as an effect of retrospective reflexivity. My earlier experience with informed consent protocols had moved me on from my methodological point of origin and I did not return to it. I proceeded in the spirit of '*ishra* and '*asham* with increased confidence.

Corroboration

Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that close collaboration between researchers and their respondents facilitates the generation of credible data. Through their active engagement, and their granting of access to alternative sources of information, the teachers contributed to triangulation (e.g. Creswell, 2014a; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Long & Johnson, 2000; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 1998, 2002; Patton, 2015; Seale, 1999) and, therefore, to the construction of thorough accounts. Similarly, Cooper and Rogers (2014, para. 4.4) explain that researchers may sometimes share 'insider information' as a way of neutralising power relationships between themselves and their participants, thereby offering space for accounts to unfold.

My prolonged stay in the field and close interaction with the teachers gradually resulted in the *saturation* of certain categories (Charmaz, 2014) even before any formal data analysis had taken place. In fact, in a few instances, emerging categories were named by the teachers themselves. The robustness of this contribution to the processes of research corroboration can also be seen as an example of retrospectively reflexive undergoing: having acted on the world as teachers, they became self-aware analysts of their own experience.

Trustworthiness

Initially, I gave participating teachers pseudonyms, assuring them that all information would be anonymous and confidential. However, given the nature of field interactions, the teachers talked about their participation in the study openly, and at times, humorously addressed one another using the pseudonyms assigned to them. At the end of the study, I asked them if they wanted their real names to be revealed in the final report and they welcomed the idea. I also felt that this transparency allowed me to acknowledge their contribution in the thesis as a small token of appreciation for their time and effort. Thus, the prospectively reflexive shaping that I had deliberately reached out to achieve through anonymity, expressing my own values and that of my UK institution, reached back to shape me in its own re-contextualised way.

I realised the value of the data with which I had been entrusted, and felt a great sense of responsibility while drafting the final report, mindful of Richardson's (1992) ethical warning about developing 'right' accounts but doing 'wrong' to those who invite us into their lives (p. 119). Since the data reflected light and cast shadow, and considering my decision to opt for transparent identities, it was important to produce accurate accounts without damaging my personal connections or collegial relationships within that particular context.

Towards the end of fieldwork, and in light of social conventions such as '*ishra* and '*asham*, I started to develop an understanding of the role of trust, collaboration, and corroboration in establishing trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry. This was the stage at which my experience led me to my theorisation of the above fieldwork, which I summarise as follows: insider researchers start with an essential base of *trust*, the cornerstone of their work. When sustained and consolidated, trust is likely to motivate participants to engage more actively with the research and such *collaboration* may result in more accurate and more candid data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Close communication between the researcher and the participants can motivate the latter to offer alternative sources of data, which are likely to *corroborate* emerging findings and contribute to the development of *trustworthy*

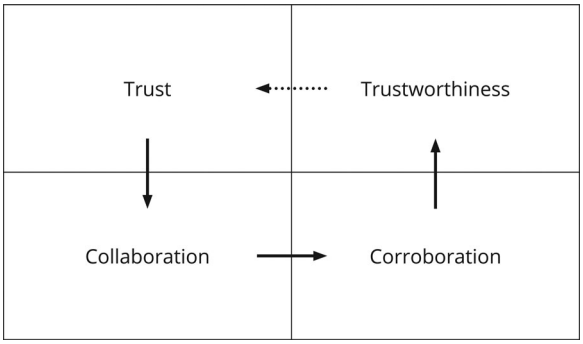

Figure 1. From trust to trustworthiness.

accounts. The quality of the final report may influence the level of on-going trust in process, beyond the specific project, if/when researchers return to their erstwhile research environments. Equally critically, researchers should be aware of the danger of despoiling the field for potential investigators who may wish to conduct research in the same environment and who will invariably require a basis of trust from which to start.

To conclude this section in appropriately positive terms, a successful trajectory from trust to trustworthiness does much more than help deliver a rigorous piece of qualitative research. It transforms its context of operation into one in which the understandably mistrusted theory/practice dichotomy (Clarke, 1994) dissolves into a celebration of personal praxis. As increasing numbers of such investigations are reported (e.g. De Stefani, 2012; Finlay & Gough, 2003; Garton & Richards, 2008; Mohanty, Panda, Phillipson, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009; Nunan & Choi, 2010; Smeyers, Bridges, Burbules, & Griffiths, 2015), we may hope for a more widespread ripple effect of this transformation across educational research. The interconnection between Trust, Collaboration, Corroboration, and Trustworthiness is encapsulated in Figure 1.

Further explorations of reflexivity in context

In addition to exemplifying mutually shaping cycles of prospective and retrospective reflexivity in context, this account also indicates a potential for further exploration at macro- and micro-levels of interaction. At macro-level, for example, it would be possible to track the way in which the findings that I eventually reported as significant were no longer straightforward answers to the research questions with which I had started the study. Thus, while my research questions were initially limited to investigating the relationship between teacher cognition on the one hand and classroom practice on the other, with further reading in the literature and the emergence of deeper insights into other aspects of teachers' mental lives, the questions expanded to include teachers' early learning experience, professional coursework, and work context. Furthermore, after completing my fieldwork, I decided to introduce a new chapter to the thesis by the title *Ethics and Culture* in which I discussed experiences of conducting research in my workplace in Cairo. Unsurprisingly, towards the end of my research, I modified the title of my thesis to encompass new areas of understanding.

At the same time, and at a micro-level, during the fieldwork itself, there were more delicate, bidirectional, mutually shaping interactions of prospective and retrospective reflexivity. To recap: prospectively, having studied research methods in the UK, I return to my old workplace in Cairo carrying consent forms. I receive a warm welcome and have a friendly conversation with my former manager, who later asks me whether I really want to distribute those forms. Her question makes me think, and, upon considering the context, I retrospectively decide to withhold the forms. Later, prospectively, I hand the teachers the initial accounts for member checking. They ask me what I am checking for exactly. I present the validity rationale, suggest that we go over the accounts together, and call it *member sharing*. After one session, I find the process artificial and a waste of the teachers' time, especially as they, in light of '*ishra* and '*asham*, cannot see why I cannot just check those accounts myself.

After some time, I, retrospectively, decide to stop sharing drafts. I was at a different point in my understanding of field relationships when this shift in behaviour happened, because I had by then learned from my previous stepping back and stepping up (in relation to the consent forms). So I did not think for as long before giving up member checking as I had before giving up the consent forms.

As evidenced above, such reflexive processes have had a powerful impact on my development as a researcher. They have raised my awareness with regard to the coherent expression of my values as a whole-person-who-conducts-research, and ensured that my research practice consistently reflects the principles that I espouse. In addition, they have supported me in the continuity with which I offer guidance to emerging researchers in their experience of conducting (field) research. That is to say, in my current work in the area of researcher development, I now insist that researchers constantly interrogate both the goals and the forms of their research in order to monitor the extent to which these maintain their centrality and relevance as they, the researchers, reach out to shape something, and are shaped in return.

These elements of coherence, consistency, and continuity combine to inspire what I have described above as a deeper sense of *congruence*, personal and professional.

A developmental approach revisited

As demonstrated in the case study above, a developmental approach to research methodology, with reflexivity being its key element, has the potential to enrich researcher experience in the sense that the bottom-up, capacity-building work they do shapes their own learning and progress. In this section, we summarise what we perceive as the value of such an approach to researcher processes of becoming.

First, as an internal growth model, a developmental approach recognises the value of reflection as a means of raising awareness. It invites researchers to consider where they currently are in their practice, how they got to that point, and in which direction they wish to proceed. The approach exemplified here emphasises the centrality of the researcher to the research process, thereby supporting researcher agency and autonomy.

Second, as a capacity-building approach, it supports creativity and innovation by encouraging researchers to discern methodological opportunities in their environments, and to be purposeful in their decision-making. This attentiveness is particularly important in light of increased researcher mobility and the geo-cultural implications of rapid

advances in information and communications technology. More than ever, qualitative research is conducted through different media, and across various geographical and disciplinary contexts, necessitating new ethical and methodological theorisation – a theorisation which originates most effectively from the researchers themselves and which is grounded in their situated practice.

Third, the approach encourages researchers to go beyond the limitations of hegemonic models (e.g. institutional practices, policy documents, ethical codes, publishing guidelines) and to interrogate underlying goals and the ways in which those goals are addressed. It maintains that it is the responsibility of both researchers and hegemonic entities to engage in open dialogue and learn from each other about goals, forms, and functions. Simply teaching the forms, or simply implementing the forms, or simply dodging the goals can never foster full engagement, awareness raising, or self-renewal.

Fourth, a developmental approach places emphasis on researcher responsibility and integrity, which take on particular significance in qualitative inquiry given its 'emergent' (Creswell, 2014b, p. 186), 'evolving' (Robson, 2011, p. 132), and highly contextualised nature, in addition to its focus on exploring 'complex interactions in natural social settings' (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 140).

Fifth, the approach recognises the role of the researcher's sociocultural environment in facilitating learning. Continuous engagement with fellow researchers and communities of interest can support researcher development, intellectually, emotionally, and socially, as well as providing a stimulus and a conduit for sharing and analysing research practice.

We began this article by saying that it aspires to the illocutionary force of an argument. The argument has been in favour of what we have called a developmental approach to research methodology. We have laid out our thinking, grounded in Deweyan philosophy (e.g. 1910/2012) and Rogerian psychology (e.g. 1961/2004), and we have exemplified that thinking in a context of intercultural exchange and twenty-first century technology. The exemplification has charted ways in which prospective and retrospective reflexivity have shaped the researcher's experience and consequent development. We conclude with a restatement of our commitment to the idea that such whole-person development should not be left as a hoped-for collateral outcome of research experience. It might usefully be moved centre-stage, into the spotlight, as a major focus of the research endeavour, in the search for ever-better questions generated by ever more fully realised researchers.

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Notes on contributors

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