

Title of Thesis: The Experience of Talking to One's Self

Research Model: Heuristic Research Model

Research Question: What is the experience of talking to one's self?

Descriptors: Talking to one's self, self talk, embarrassment, self dialogue

Name: Kyle A. Glasgow

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the question, "What is the experience of talking to one's self?" Personal experiences are described and illuminated using the heuristic research model. The heuristic model was employed because of the desire to explore the in-depth issues surrounding the phenomenon in a personal and intimate way. The literature search revealed how many studies had been done on the way self talk influences behavior, either externally or internally and some research has been done on theories of self talk in children or adults. However, none had been done heuristically and none had been done that focused specifically on the phenomenon. The material for the study was obtained through self-searching and co-researcher participation and yielded original data in the researcher's opinion. Data was obtained from eight co-researchers and one co-researcher's was eliminated from the study due to lack of depth. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, double checked for accuracy and studied in an effort to elicit thematic elements. Themes deemed to be particularly important were: I. Specific and safe places to talk to one's Self, II. Embarrassment at being caught, III. Transcendence of time and space, IV. The imagined audience, V. Connection with emotions. Three conversational types were also found. They were: I. The Rehearsal, II. The Re-enactment, III. The Quest for Meaning. The themes cast some light on aspects of an experience that is common, if not universal, and yet looked upon as somewhat bizarre. The findings of this study could be used by therapists, researchers and the public as an awareness of the commonality of the experience.

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This study explores the question, “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?” Personal experiences are described and illuminated using the heuristic research model. The heuristic model was employed because of the desire to explore the in-depth issues surrounding the phenomenon in a personal and intimate way. The literature search revealed how many studies had been done on the way self talk influences behavior, either externally or internally and some research has been done on theories of self talk in children or adults. However, none had been done heuristically and none had been done that focused specifically on the phenomenon. The material for the study was obtained through self-searching and co-researcher participation and yielded original data in the researcher’s opinion. Data was obtained from eight co-researchers and one co-researcher’s was eliminated from the study due to lack of depth. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, double checked for accuracy and studied in an effort to elicit thematic elements. Themes deemed to be particularly important were: I. Specific and safe places to talk to one's Self, II. Embarrassment at being caught, III. Transcendence of time and space, IV. The imagined audience, V. Connection with emotions. Three conversational types were also found. They were: I. The Rehearsal, II. The Re-enactment, III. The Quest for Meaning. The themes cast some light on aspects of an experience that is common, if not universal, and yet looked upon as somewhat bizarre. The findings of this study could be used by therapists, researchers and the public as an awareness of the commonality of the experience.

What is the Experience of Talking to One's Self?

by

Kyle Glasgow

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Dedication

To my family, my friends and everyone who
has ever caught me in the act of
talking to myself and smiled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I would also like to acknowledge all my co-researchers for sharing their stories openly and honestly with me and providing the energy that infuses these pages.

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Chapter 1

Personal Experience

Since I can remember, I have never lacked for good conversation. Everywhere I went there were discussions on politics, relationships, the nature of reality, what the sex life of a dragon was like. Fascinating conversation of high intellect and low brow humor. Observations on life and the most intimate secrets were shared. Therapy of the deepest nature was carried out. Decisions critical to my very life were examined, reexamined and acted upon. Arguments raged and were repeated until there was peace. The best part was that all this took place with only one person - me.

I grew up in the suburbs of New Jersey. This was back in the 1970's when the suburbs were more rural than they are now. While it was not quite a farm, it was quiet. I was the youngest of three children. My brother and sister were eight and seven years older than I and did not find the same things as interesting as I did. I had some friends in school, but growing up I cannot remember a single child my age in the neighborhood until I was around eleven or twelve. Of course, this made for a very solitary existence.

My first memory of talking to myself was on the swing set in the backyard. I had constructed a scene from television in my imagination and

was playing it repeatedly in my mind. Soon there were other times when I talked about things with imaginary friends, or said things aloud to real people who were not there at the time. I would rehash old conversations and make them turn out differently. Sometimes I would make up entirely new conversations and carry them through. Other times I would lecture to myself what I had learned.

I suppose I may have picked up this habit from my father. At the very least he reinforced it. He would often talk to himself and address himself by his own name saying things like “Come on now, Jerry.” I can remember thinking, “Wow, talking to myself must not be that bad.” This message was not often what I would get from other sources.

I can remember being judged as a child for talking to myself. Adults would look at me strangely and ask if anything was wrong. As I became older, I learned from society that people who talk to themselves were crazy. So for a long time, I believed I was one step away from wandering the streets in a dirty overcoat mumbling to myself as I looked through garbage cans. Surely talking to myself was a way to isolate from others. It may even be a sign that I was someone afflicted with multiple personality disorder. Thankfully, a little psychological exploration in high school proved that diagnosis wrong, but it also taught me that most ‘experts’ thought that talking to yourself was a sign that something was wrong.

This continued in college. I can remember being in one class with a friend of mine. This friend knew that I had quite the habit of talking to myself. The class was discussing the topic of social isolation. Talking to yourself came up and the instructor said it was not a sign of insanity. I triumphantly turned to my friend and said, “See! See!” The instructor then added, “unless a person begins to answer themselves.” “See! See!” replied my friend. For one brief, shining moment I had been ‘normal’.

For a few years after, I would catch myself talking to no one in particular. I began a behavior modification program where I mentally stopped myself from talking aloud. I was determined to prove I was a normal, well-adjusted individual who did not talk to himself. However, I could not stop. It had been such a part of my life that to deny it was not worth the effort. Besides, it really seemed normal to me. I was just going to become one of those people who wandered the street mumbling to themselves.

Of course it did not turn out that way. I went on with my life having conversation after conversation. I accepted the fact that I may be a little eccentric. I would be in the car talking to myself and look over to find someone smiling at me, to which I would wave as if they had caught me doing something very embarrassing. This happened more until I came to understand that many people talk to themselves (if not aloud, than in their heads).

My friends still occasionally catch me talking to myself. They sometimes look at me strangely, but now I sometimes include them in the conversation. When people ask me why I talk to myself, the reply is usually

“it is the best conversation around.” After all, I am the only one who really listens to me. I am the only one who can truly understand me, even if sometimes I disagree with myself.

While exploring the naive possibility that I may have multiple personality disorder, I read a book titled When Rabbit Howls by Trudy Chase. The book tells her story of recovery from multiple personality disorder. Her descriptions of the process of different personalities talking to themselves resonated with me. It was this same process that occurred when I talked to myself. It is an automatic process that has a free flowing nature to it. I came to understand that a person with multiple personalities has distinct and separate personalities within them. I did not have such well formed, distinct personalities. The people I talked to in my head were more projections of my own inner parts.

It is the conversation of these parts of myself that contribute to the whole. It has often been said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As I began my career in the mental health field I found a shining example of this. One of the clients I worked with had a very child-like behavior; he would carry dolls. Usually it was just two dolls, but he had a wide collection of dolls. He would carry on conversations with these dolls to determine what he was going to do. I had a friend who was a psychologist and he gave this individual an IQ test. On all previous IQ tests the client was asked not to bring his dolls in as they would be a distraction. However, this time my friend allowed him to bring his dolls. During the test, the client would consult with each doll before answering the questions. My friend would ask a question and the client would whisper to each doll and hold it up to his ear to listen to the reply. Then he would answer. He even did this on the timed questions. The results were amazing. His IQ jumped from the previous level of a person with a mild mental impairment to an above average IQ.

I had the opportunity to work with this client for a time. I also allowed him to bring his dolls and consult with them. They seemed to me to be like

advisors and supporters. When under stress the client would talk to the dolls and become calmer and more focused. I began to more closely listen to myself while I was carrying on conversations. It occurred to me that I did at times use this as a way to encourage myself or support myself. More often though, talked to myself about intellectual matters and viewed my replies as a way to develop a more in-depth knowledge of a concept. The conversations had that free flowing quality and often took on a life of their own. This is the background information that led me to my question, “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?”

Chapter 2

Definition of Terms

My question is “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?” I will define the following terms in my study: experience, talking, self and the phrase “talking to one’s self.” I have chosen not to define ‘one’ as I use the word more to make grammatical sense. I will ask the reader to consider ‘one’s self’ as being ‘self’. I am not, at this point, going to delve into the word ‘is’. The task is simply too large for the scope of this study. The words ‘what’, ‘the’ and ‘of’ are self-explanatory.

Webster’s (1989) defines the word experience as:

1. A personal instance of personally encountering or undergoing something.
2. The process or fact of personally observing, encountering or undergoing something.
3. The observing, encountering or undergoing of something.
4. Knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered or undergone.
5. The totality of cognitions given by perception; all that is perceived, understood, and remembered.
6. To have experience of; meet with; undergo; feel.
7. To learn by experience. (p. 501)

I would like to draw the reader’s attention to the word personal. This implies that experience is unique to a given individual. It also implies that a given

experience is not passive, but an action that involves the person experiencing (or perceiving) as much as the actual experience. Also, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the word knowledge. Experience involves not just the one moment in time, but the knowledge of the event. So, if something happens to a person but the person does not recognize it as important, it is not an experience. Therefore, in my definition of the word experience, if a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, it does not make a noise.

Moustakas (1956) examines the act of experience as taking place in solitude. "Experience is true to the person when he is himself alone. In such experience perception is unique and undifferentiated" (p. 3). This is especially important in my study as the act of talking to one's self is a solitary experience. The integrity of one talking to one's Self is paramount in the study. It will be assumed that the individual's experience is true to that individual.

No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me.

(Rogers, 1961, p. 23-24)

It is for this reason that I have decided to clarify self talk from talking to one's self. Self talk I see as scripted messages repeated as a way to maintain or change certain ways of looking at the world. It has a more utilitarian purpose. Talking to One's Self may change one's outlook, but it is an activity that occurs spontaneously and is an integral part of one's life. Talking to One's Self is an activity taken for its own sake.

All experience in this study will be personal and unique to the individual, although it is my belief that common themes will emerge. All experience will be active that is it will involve the perceptions of an individual. These perceptions I intend to delve into as deeply as possible during the data collection phase. Finally, all experience will have an element of knowledge, or the person will attach significance to the experience.

Webster's (1989) defines the word talking as:

1. To communicate or exchange ideas.
2. To consult or confer.
4. To chatter or prat.
5. To employ speech; perform the act of speaking.
6. To deliver a speech, lecture, etc.
10. To express in words, utter.
12. To discuss.
13. To bring, put, drive, influence, etc., by talk. (p. 1450)

I have chosen to focus on these definitions of the word talk, in particular the act of expressing or consulting. Talking, in this study, will concern itself with the actual interior dialogue of myself and my co-researchers. I am concerned with interior messages only if the co-researcher views these messages as part of a conversation. To further illustrate this aspect of talking consider Lance Morrow's (1998) description of a deaf woman talking to herself. "A friend of mine has a sister who is deaf and talks to herself in sign language, which takes the behavior into a new dimension. . .The deaf woman turns her brain waves into fast-forward hand dancing" (Morrow, 1998). The comparison of talking to a dance is what I believe separates the mechanical, routine repetition of self talk from the organic, expressive, free flowing nature of talking to one's Self.

Also, I will be considering the communicative and discursive properties of talk. The talk will have a conversational tone to it. I will avoid looking at simple one word comments made when no one else is around such as saying "Damn!" when someone locks his/her keys in the car. I will look at soliloquy's as a speech delivered to no one in particular and are some of the best example of talk. They are a consultation of the Self.

Webster's (1989) defines self as:

1. A person or thing referred to with respect to complete individuality.
2. A person's nature, character, etc.
4. Philos. A. the ego; that which knows, remembers, desires, suffers, etc. b. the uniting principle, as a soul, underlying all subjective experience. (p. 1293)

I will, of course, consider the Self to be a person, not a thing. Again, as with experience, the important thing is that the Self is a reflection of individuality.

The second definition (nature and character) includes some characteristics of the Self as I see it. However, it is an incomplete definition. The Self is a composite of parts where the whole is greater than the sum. I will look at the Self in this study as a composite of different parts. The last definition moves toward inclusiveness. I believe another item constitutes a Self. That is the concept that the Self moves through time. Because each Self goes through life in a different way, another Self cannot know everything there is to know about a separate Self. How can one understand a lifetime of experience unless they devote a lifetime? Since this is impossible, a Self can only know itself in totality. As Moustakas (1956) says, "The self is itself alone existing as a totality and constantly emerging. It can be understood only as unique personal experience" (p. 3).

The last term I would like to define is the phrase ‘talking to one’s Self.’

By this I mean dialogue experienced. One part of the Self talking with another part of the Self and also the entire Self talking to ItSelf. By talk I mean an original discourse. A conversation between parts of the Self that occurs spontaneously and naturally. I do not wish to look at interior scripts or messages that play repeatedly in the mind except as they evolve and grow. I feel that there has been plenty of research on these topics. My literature search will help place my question within the established body of research.

Chapter 3

Literature Search

I began the literature search using the PSYCHLIT database at the Center for Humanistic Studies. Since my question is “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?” I searched first using the phrases “talking to yourself” and “talking to oneself.” There were no articles on this subject found. Then I searched for “self talk.” This produced 390 results through which I scanned. I selected twenty-seven articles that I felt are closely related to my study. From these results I began categorizing the articles. The categories are how self talk influences behavior, either externally or internally, and theories of self talk in children or adults.

Lange et al. (1997) studied the effect of using positive self talk in therapy. They had patients read positive statements that they designed to oppose previous negative statements. Kordacova (1995) looked qualitatively at inner dialogue in adolescents after they imagined an unexpected failure. Kordacova found that the most common type of self talk in this situation is one of a self-blame nature. Siegrist (1995) found that there was a relationship between self talk and self consciousness. Morin (1995-1996) examined the

characteristics of effective self talk that includes taking others perspective through self-talk, possessing a rich vocabulary about oneself, and paying attention to the content of one's self-talk. Tyler (1995) examined the use of self talk in resolving ethical dilemmas. Wilson (1995) studied the use of self talk in groups. Ronan et al. (1997) found that negative self talk occurred much more frequently in youth who were both depressed and anxious.

Neuman et al. (1998) examined the use of self talk in problem solving. They found that self-explanation had a positive effect on problem solving. It was further found that talking about the “surface structure” of the problem had a negative effect. Hiebert et al. (1998) found that high levels of anxiety reflected high levels of negative self talk in counseling skill. Millman (1997) looked at the value of self talk in job search behavior. Van Raalte et al. (1995) found that positive self talk resulted in better dart throwing behavior. They also found that subjects who used negative self talk expected to improve in the future.

Several authors explored the use of self talk in childhood development. Berk (1986) further validated the theory that self talk provides verbal self-stimulation and affect expression. Fernyhough and Russel (1997) found that

self talk among five year olds had a place in the differentiating of oneself from others. Duncan et al. (1997) found that children used more self talk to solve difficult problems than they did to solve easier problems. Daugherty and Logan (1996) showed that self talk also increased creativity in problem solving. Winsler et al. (1995) reported that children used more self-regulatory language when they were solving problems compared with unstructured activities. They also found that children's frequency of self talk did not vary whether they were alone, with teachers or with their peers.

Josephs and Valsiner (1998) studied what happens in auto dialog when a person is making sense of ordinary happenings and understanding religious miracles. They illustrate a process model where meaning is constantly reevaluated by using internal dialog. Blachowicz (1997) argues against a reflection model of self talk and presents talking to one's self as a genuine dialog instead of a monologue. Liester (1996) distinguishes between the transcendental characteristics of hearing inner voices and the pathological characteristics. Morin (1995) found a moderate correlation between the complexity of self-concept and a more or less frequent use of self-talk. Macken and Jones (1995) found that when people were prevented from talking to themselves while memorizing a list they performed worse than if they silently mouthed the list. They claim that it is not necessary actually to hear what is being said to one's self, but vocalizing it may be necessary (at least silently).

I also looked at several books on the subject of talking to one's Self. I rejected these as resources because they dealt with altering one's self talk in a therapeutic manner. I intended to look at the experience of talking to one's Self as it occurs in natural everyday settings without looking at it as an

artificially inserted therapeutic tool. I feel that the books, while valuable for changing one's frame of reference, speak to self talk rather than talking to one's Self.

I also searched the World Wide Web. There were many documents dealing with self talk and a few that mentioned talking to one's self in a passing manner. There was one article on talking to one's Self which approached the subject in much the same manner as I intend to. It was written by Lance Morrow of *Time* and is entitled "Caught In The Act Of Soliloquy: Tips on Chatting with the World's Most Brilliant Conversationalist, Yourself" (1998). There was also a webpage for a performance artist, David Awl, who uses talking to the Self as the basis for "an electric, metaphysical vaudeville routine about finding oneself on the wrong side of the slippery boundary between Self and Other" (1999). It is from this website that I realized the power of talking to one's Self.

I will approach the question of "What is the experience of talking to one's self?" in a heuristic manner. I found only one article that approached this topic in a qualitative way; Kordacova's study on adolescents' internal dialog after failure. Mine is the only study I am aware of that approaches this

topic heuristically. Mine is also the only study that focuses on the experience rather than on how talking to one's self influences behavior. I will not attempt to determine a model of talking to one's Self. Rather, I will seek to illuminate the themes inherent in talking to one's Self. The process I have chosen to do this is the qualitative process. In particular, the heuristic research model.

Chapter 4

Research Model

When I first began this program at the Center for Humanistic Studies I learned somewhat about the nature of the research paper. My initial conception of this process was one of diminishing the significance of the qualitative research model. I come from a strong quantitative background and the idea that qualitative research could bring about an understanding of any significance was intriguing to me. I looked at qualitative research as soft and unpractical. Despite my feelings and beliefs I found myself in a program that required an understanding and application of this kind. To learn this I had to first drop my preconceptions and ideas of practicality. I resolved to undertake an understanding of qualitative research openly. (Little did I know at the time that this was what is known as epoché. That is the interesting thing about heuristics, most people do it all the time without ever realizing it.)

I will begin by examining the difference between the qualitative and quantitative method. A concern of both the quantitative and qualitative method is the cause and effect relationship. In the quantitative method cause and effect are seen as two separate, isolated events. For example, an event A

causes effect B. By isolating the cause of the event, the quantitative method seeks to uncover the relationship between cause A and effect B. As Siu (1957) states, “Scientists prefer to treat cause and effect as separate entities and to focus attention on their relation” (p. 28). This approach rests on the assumption that every instance of A causes the same effect B. Siu (1957) cites a Marcus Long story to illustrate the problem with this approach:

A little chicken sitting comfortably in the henhouse without a care in the world was startled by the appearance of a man and ran away. When it came back the man was gone but there was some corn lying on the ground. Having a degree of scientific curiosity the chicken began to watch and it soon noticed that when the man appeared the corn appeared. It did not want to commit itself to any theory in a hurry and watched the sequence 999 times. There were no exceptions to the rule that the appearance of the man meant food, so it swallowed its skepticism and decided there must be a necessary connection between the man and the corn. In the language of causality this meant that whenever the man appeared the corn *must* appear. On the basis of this conclusion it went out to meet the man on his thousandth appearance to thank him for his kindness and *had its neck wrung*. (p. 28)

The qualitative method views cause and effect as the same event.

“Every action, thought and feeling is motivated by an intention and that intention is a cause that exists as one with an effect. If we participate in the cause, it is not possible for us not to participate in the effect” (Zukav, 1989, p. 38-39). The chicken in the above story would realize that it had a place in

the experiment and that each corn giving event was unique in some way. If the chicken had treated the cause and effect as one event, it may have discovered the truth behind the phenomenon. This may have not saved the chicken's life, but it would have given it a new meaning.

Another difference between the two methods is the motivation for research. The quantitative method is rooted in the utility of the knowledge. As Siu (1957) notes, "Despite its aspirations for truth, science is not organized around it. Its approach is not necessarily the path to reality but necessarily the path to utility . . . Industrialists invest money in the repeated verification of the concept of the electron" (1957, p.23). In quantitative research the tools, methods and utility of the knowledge are the primary concern while the truth of the phenomenon is often a secondary by-product.

In contrast the qualitative method seeks truth for truth's sake. "The discipline and dedication of the investigator is to discover the truth" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 105). In qualitative research the phenomenon takes priority. Data is used to narrow down or define the entire phenomenon by following the data and not just adhering to a procedure. This contrasts sharply with the idea of isolating the phenomenon by "external rules and

methods of control for objectivity espoused by the scientific method” as Moustakas and Douglas point out (as cited in Moustakas, 1990, p. 105).

One external rule the quantitative method uses is classification. Items that have similar properties are grouped together. This imposed order enables the quantitative method to make assumptions about one item in a group by looking at the group’s properties. However what happens when an item cannot easily be classified? For example, a mammal is an animal that is warm blooded and bears live young. But what of the platypus? Classified as a mammal, but it lays eggs. It is the qualitative method that sees the platypus not as an exception to the mammal class, but as uniquely the platypus.

“Patton observes that qualitative research inquiry attends to the uniqueness of each case” (Moustakas, 1990, p.103). Qualitative research rests on the individual experience of the researcher, co-researcher and their interpretations.

The quantitative method proves useful in providing knowledge that has utility and it structures knowledge. This structure can provide a useful tool to further the exploration of quantitative knowledge and provide fairly accurate predictions. The qualitative method shows itself to be more flexible in

studying the truth of a phenomenon. The method allows a flexible exploration of the truth that is not bound by external rules and procedures. While quantitative research is more mechanistic, qualitative research is more organic. While quantitative research seeks to break down the parts and study them to understand the whole (as in cause/effect), qualitative research explores the whole as one entity. Finally, while quantitative research generalizes and categorizes, qualitative research studies everything uniquely.

In doing this paper I had to decide which research model I was going to employ for my thesis. I had to decide between the phenomenological and the heuristic model. The phenomenological model seemed easier to me since it did not involve a great deal of self disclosure. The heuristic model on the other hand, frightened me because of how much self disclosure involved, yet it also seemed very exciting. I began having internal debates with myself and finally decided to use a form of guided meditation to decide. In this meditation I slipped into a lucid dream. In this dream I went to a place I had constructed internally. I often go there when I am uncertain about which direction I should take. There I consulted my internal journal. There I wrote my question and a woman I had never seen before guided me to a prison.

There I saw a small man who came walking out of a row of cells. He looked me straight in the face and said, “Do not ask me anything.” I shouted after him to explain himself and to tell me what part of myself he represented. He ignored me and walked back into the row of cells.

When I awoke, I was physically shaken and determined to follow the phenomenological model. However, upon reflection and consultation with my thesis advisor, I decided to put aside my fears (and ignore the little man) and plunge into the heuristic model. My confrontation with the small man represents one of the challenges of heuristic research. By using an internal process of inquiry one may run into blocks. Here, fear of disclosure was one of my blocks.

It is my intention to pursue the heuristic model because it shakes me up and evokes various feelings of excitement in me. I came to this conclusion internally which is very heuristic. As a contrast (and perhaps a way of glancing down the road I did not choose) I will mention some differences between the heuristic and phenomenological models. Let us assume there is a phenomenon to be studied. The phenomenological model looks at the phenomenon from the outside and attempts to get to its structure. The

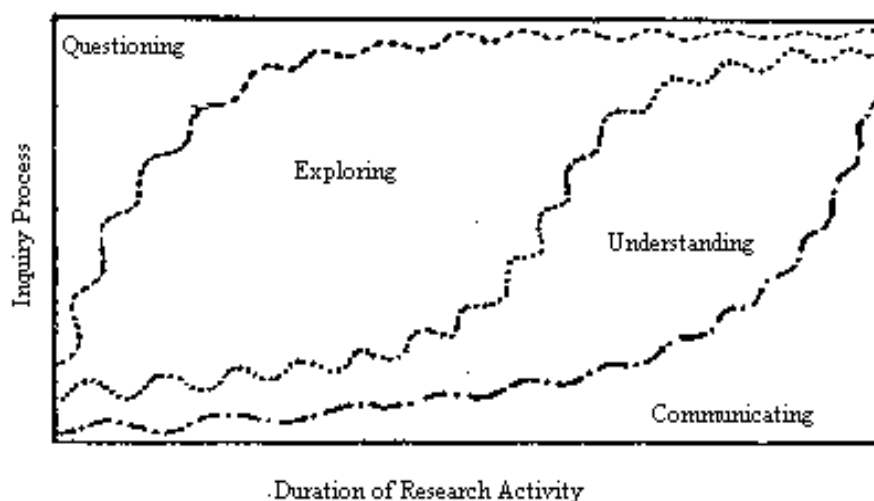
heuristic model attempts to get to the essence of the phenomenon, if fact it seeks to become the phenomenon. Douglas and Moustakas said it like this: “Whereas Phenomenology encourages a kind of detachment from the phenomenon being investigated, heuristics emphasizes connectedness and relationship . . . Whereas Phenomenology permits the researcher to conclude with definitive descriptions of essential structures of experience, heuristics leads to depictions of essential meanings” (as cited in Moustakas, 1990, p. 38).

There are six phases of heuristic research according to Moustakas. They are Initial Engagement, Immersion, Incubation, Illumination, Explication and Creative Synthesis. Craig describes similar phases in his article, *The Heart of the Teacher* (1978, p.39).

- 1) Questioning –The awareness of a subjectively felt question, problem or interest.
- 2) Exploring–The exploration of this question, problems or interest in experience.
- 3) Understanding–The clarification, integration and conceptualization of findings which emerge from exploration.
- 4) Communicating–The articulation of these findings to others.

Every stage is present during any given point in the process, although one stage is salient. There is a flow to the research and definitive lines are

nonexistent. Using his model as an illustration Craig (1978) explains, “The sequencing of phases which I described earlier do not exist as separate, time-limited entities but are rather seen more as ongoing interrelated processes” (p. 40). Craig’s graphical representation of his model looks like:



Heuristics begins with the selection of a research question. “The task of the initial engagement is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications” (Moustakas, 1990, p.27).

This question or problem for the researcher has always been there. It has an enormous amount of personal meaning and waits patiently to be discovered. So I ask myself, “OK, how do I answer a question that has not

been discovered yet?” Polanyi (1962) provides some direction, “The admonition to look at the unknown really means that we should look at the known data, *but not in themselves, rather as clues to the unknown; as pointers to it and parts of it*” (p.127-128). So the question reveals itself by being out in the open. The question is in the last place we look, right under our noses.

Immersion involves the complete surrendering of one’s self to anything and everything related to the question. Polanyi (1962) relates a story about Pavlov:

Asked by his pupils in jest what they should do to become ‘a Pavlov’, the master answered in all seriousness: ‘Get up in the morning with your problem before you. Breakfast with it. Go to the laboratory with it. Eat your lunch with it. Keep it before you after dinner. Go to bed with it in your mind. Dream about it. (p.127)

Whatever some person focuses on becomes larger in their consciousness. In doing this, the entire world and its experiences become a large Rorschach test. The inner become projected onto the outer. “Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion, for staying with, and for maintaining a sustained focus and concentration” (Moustakas, 1990, p.28).

Incubation is the phase of heuristic research when the researcher begins concentrating on something besides the question. It is the time “during which the problem is not consciously entertained” (Polanyi, 1962, p. 122). Instead of the conscious immersion, the unconscious takes over the work. “The period of incubation enables the inner tacit dimension to reach its fullest possibilities” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Remember that word, tacit. I will come back to that. After a time, there is a moment of clarity or brilliant insight for the researcher. This is the next phase, Illumination.

Illumination is a revelation of new information or how information fits together. Rollo May (1975) describes his experience of illumination in relation to his research on anxiety in unwed mothers.

Late one day, putting aside my books and papers in the little office I used in that shelter house, I walked down the street toward the subway. I was tired. I tried to put the whole troublesome business out of my mind. About fifty feet away from the entrance to the Eighth Street station, it suddenly struck me “out of the blue,” as the not unfitting expression goes, that these young women who didn’t fit my hypothesis were all from the proletarian class. And as quickly as that idea struck me, other ideas poured out. (p. 57)

May describes beautifully the stages of incubation and the subsequent illumination. May describes the illumination event as vivid, sudden and brief.

He also credits the hard work or immersion and the period of incubation or rest prior to the illumination.

After illumination the heuristic researcher engages in the process known as explication. Explication is the phase where all the knowledge gathered from the immersion process is coupled with the inner knowledge gained from the illumination process. “The purpose of the explication phase is to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). Relevant themes are pulled out of the data, examined and put in their proper place by using intuition. Finally, the thoughts and ideas are crystalized and written out. Connected closely to the communication of findings is the creative synthesis.

The final stage of heuristic research is the creative synthesis. Here “the researcher is challenged to put the components and core themes into a creative synthesis. This usually takes the form of a depiction utilizing verbatim material and examples, but it may be expressed as a poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). Craig (1978) calls this phase the communication of findings. It is “. . . an act

inspired by an inner desire to assert the significance of his experience and discoveries. It is a projection of one's private quest for knowledge and understanding into the public realm" (p. 52).

Throughout the process, several attitudes or ways of being are necessary according to Moustakas. These are: Identification with the Focus of Inquiry, Self-Dialog, Tacit Knowing, Intuition, Indwelling, Focusing and an Internal Frame of Reference. As with the phases of heuristic research, these concepts of heuristics are present throughout the process, however some are more prominent in some phases than others.

Identification with the focus of inquiry involves seeing the thing being studied from the inside out. "Through exploratory open-ended inquiry, self-directed search, and immersion in active experience, one is able to get inside the question, become one with it, and thus achieve an understanding of it" (Moustakas, 1990, p.15). To know a thing one must become that thing. When I fenced my best bouts, I knew what my opponent was going to do, probably even before he did. My reactions were spontaneous and could change at any moment. It was as if I could see myself through my opponent's eyes.

Self dialog is used in heuristics to examine one's own view of the phenomenon. Heuristic research "requires that one be open, receptive, and attuned to all facets of one's experience of a phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1990, p.16). Self dialog is simply that. A person talks to themselves about the phenomenon. This is the root of my question "What is the experience of talking to one's self?" This talk can take the form of a written discourse or simply an interior dialogue. In my case it is talking aloud. I see it as very similar to the open chair technique in Gestalt therapy. A person sits in one chair and talks about something from one point of view and then switches chairs and looks at it from another point of view. This switching of positions provides an opportunity to look at the parts of the whole. This knowledge of the whole is tacit knowledge.

Tacit knowledge is the foundation of heuristic research. Polanyi (1964) goes as far as to say, "Every interpretation of nature whether scientific, nonscientific or anti-scientific, is based on some intuitive conception of the general nature of things" (p. 10). All knowledge is therefore tacit. The scientist, guided by his interest and passion, attends to the physical characteristics of a phenomenon from an intuitive standpoint and attempts to

derive the essence. “Such knowledge is possible through a tacit capacity that allows one to sense the unity or wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts” (Moustakas, 1990, pp.20-21). This tacit capacity involves the use of two kinds of knowledge, the focal and the subsidiary. The subsidiary elements of tacit knowledge are pieces of a whole that stand out immediately. The focal element is the awareness of what that whole is.

Think how a blind man feels his way by the use of a stick, which involves transposing the shocks transmitted to his hand and the muscles holding the stick into an awareness of the things touched by the point of the stick. We have here the transition from ‘knowing *how*’ to ‘knowing *what*’ and can see how closely similar is the structure of the two. (Polanyi, 1962 , pp. 55-56)

The sensory knowledge of the stick combines with the man’s sense of awareness of that sensory knowledge to infer a sense of space and his position in that space. This inference is intuition.

“In intuition, from the subsidiary or observable factors one utilizes an internal capacity to make inferences and arrive at a knowledge of underlying structure or dynamics” (Moustakas, 1990, p.23). Intuition guides the researcher by making thoughts arise in consciousness that are relevant to the research topic. As the researcher follows these hunches, a pattern emerges,

more clues and hunches arise in consciousness from the tacit dimension. For example, I notice while doing therapy, I have certain guesses about what is going on within the client. I tentatively test these hunches and receive more knowledge about whether I am on the right track or not. Intuition guides my guesses or hunches, but my checking with the client mitigates this the accuracy of my hunches. The more I do this, the closer I get to understanding the person's nature.

Toward the end of the research process, the researcher uses a process known as indwelling. "Indwelling refers to the heuristic process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p.24). The researcher at this point is living the experience he is studying. While the experience is being lived, the researcher studies it from a variety of internal positions and angles.

Focusing is the perceiving of the experience with clarity in its raw form. "Focusing is an inner attention, a staying with, a sustained process of systematically contacting the more central meanings of an experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 25). Focusing, to me, involves seeing uniquely as they

are. Simply that. Not what I am ‘supposed’ to see, not what I want to see, but simply what is there. To do this with anything I use meditation. It sets my mind clear. All the dust settles and things take on clarity.

All of the processes listed above and all of the steps I have described take place within an internal frame of reference. “Only the experiencing persons - by looking at their own experiences . . . can validly provide portrayals of the experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p.26). This is where my background in quantitative science starts screaming . . . loudly. Nevertheless, the nature of the research is internal. As Polanyi (1962) has taught me, “. . . into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and that this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge” (p. vii).

Heuristic research begins with this passion, a question important to the researcher in his or her life. The initial engagement takes place within the internal frame of reference. This initial engagement culminated, in my case, through a process of self-dialog into the question, “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?” The question is developed, and is plunged into using immersion. Through complete concentration and focus, an identification with

the focus of inquiry is developed. After all the explicit and implicit knowledge is gained and wholes are developed using what Polanyi calls the tacit dimension, there is a period of incubation where the unconscious takes over. Then there is the moment when all the dust settles and illumination takes place. Ideas flood out and explored through the disciplined technique of indwelling. Here the ideas are looked at from many angles and perspectives. The researcher explicates the data into meaningful wholes. Finally, a creative synthesis takes place, whereby everything the researcher has learned is put into a meaningful construct. Throughout all this process the researcher is guided by their intuition to a full understanding of the experience. Moustakas (1967), on his inquiry into loneliness:

At this point, loneliness became my existence. It entered into every facet of my world - into my teaching, my interviews in therapy, my conversations with friends, my home life. Without reference to time or place or structure, somehow (more intentionally than accidentally) the theme came up. I was clearly aware that exhaustively and fully, and in careful manner, I was searching for, studying, and inquiring into the nature and impact of loneliness. I was totally involved and immersed in this search for a pattern and meaning which would reveal the various dimensions of loneliness in modern life. (p.104)

This then is the heuristic research model. In the next chapter I will show how I intend to gather my data. The beginning work of finding a

question and immersing myself in that question has been completed. The next step is to interview co-researchers and transcribe these interviews. Also, since this is a heuristic study, I will gather data from myself as well.

Chapter 5

Data Collection

To obtain the data for my research on the question “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?” I used hypnosis (or guided imagery, directive meditation or any of a dozen other names you might want to call it). I prepared a hypnosis script for myself before each interview (see Appendix D) to clear my conscious and unconscious mind of any predispositions or prejudices. I also asked my co-researchers to use a tape I created once per day for at least one week before the interview. This hypnosis script (see Appendix E) was designed to focus their conscious and unconscious mind toward their experience of talking to themselves. All the co-researchers opted to use this tape at least once and reported that it had been helpful to hear the tape. Most co-researchers did not use the tape as much as I would have liked, however, I did not feel it affected the interviews negatively.

My criteria for my co-researchers were based on what I felt to be essential to the examination of my question. Co-researchers were required to have had the experience of talking to themselves directly. Co-researchers must also be willing to share their experience openly. I sought

co-researchers whom I believed could express their internal dialog in a clear way. Some co-researchers were rejected because I felt that they were not willing to be open about their experiences because they felt that talking to themselves was a 'bad' thing or that it was a certain sign of insanity. I also wanted the co-researchers to have the experience of dialog. That is, the conversations they have are meaningful in some sense. This meaning could range from a simple one statement to a full-blown discourse. I selected co-researchers who have a well-developed self talk process.

For my initial contact, I used friends, acquaintances or just about anyone I heard talking to themselves. Part of the criteria was that the individuals actually vocalized their dialogue. Also, I wanted it to be unscripted, unplanned and as spontaneous as possible. Throughout the months I would ask people who I heard talking to themselves how they felt about the experience. If I believed that they thought it was a neutral or positive experience I would ask as to the nature of their self-talk to decide if they meet the criteria. If I believed they had dialogs, I would mention that I was doing a study about talking to one's Self and see if they had a positive response to that. Then I explained what I was doing and what part they

would play in the research process. Next, I got their consent in writing and asked them to use the relaxation tape I provided. Since everyone agreed to use the tape I did not give them the text version of the script.

Following the initial contact and instructions, I arranged a meeting time for the interview in approximately two weeks. I told co-researchers that I thought a quiet place was the best as I had to be able to record the interview. All of the co-researchers deferred to me to choose a place, which I did. One co-researcher was ill and was not able to attend the scheduled session and another forgot about the interview. Fortunately, I had begun the interview process early and there was ample time to reschedule.

Before the interview I had planned to allow twenty minutes to place myself in a state of epoché. Unfortunately, I did not often have twenty minutes due to a hectic schedule. Many times I had at least five minutes and in one case I asked a co-researcher if we could take a few minutes to get settled before we jumped in. I believe I was able to successfully suspend most of my judgements and conduct the interview in a state of epoché.

I conducted the interview as informally as possible. The first ten minutes of the interview I shared my experiences about my question. I shared

my personal story centering around the question. This was done to establish an intimacy around the subject of talking to one's Self. I was careful to leave out any of my thoughts or biases regarding my process of talking to myself and focused solely on my content. This was to allow the co-researcher to present their process in as open a manner as possible, free from any of my biases. I answered any questions they had about the research in an open and encouraging way. From there I let the co-researcher begin to tell me about their experiences. This is, for me, the best way to elicit cooperation and openness. The co-researchers had my total attention and I guided them along in our discovery gently and fully. All thoughts and beliefs were honored and respected including some self depreciating statements made by some co-researchers. These comments I re-framed in as neutral a manner as possible and emphasized that I also talked to myself and did not consider it to be a sign of insanity. However, I also honored the fact that most co-researchers felt this to be considered odd behavior from an outside individuals point of view. This often led to a deeper discussion of what the experience was like. This was the best way to create a climate of relaxation and contemplation.

Sessions were tape recorded and then transcribed into a word-processing program. They were then printed out so I could conduct the research.

Throughout the process I gathered data from myself by sitting quietly with a cup of coffee and some cigarettes or by reviewing the tapes while I drove. I also used my own self talk. I had a recorder in my car that I turned on after leaving class and recorded my current thoughts. I also used guided visualizations to consult my inner self during the handling of the data phase. I have two places where I consistently go for interior knowledge while in a state of relaxation. The first is a cave where I can look at all my personal knowledge. The second is a glass globe by the sea where I can consult with that knowledge outside myself. I document all this activity in a journal. After all the data was gathered, I changed my focus to the analysis of the data.

To conduct the research on “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?” I will use the procedure published by Clark Moustakas. This is a well defined process of analyzing data and explicating themes from that data.

Chapter 6

Data Analysis

When I began this process of data analysis for my question ‘What is the Experience of Talking to One’s Self?’ I was fortunate to be house sitting for a friend. I set aside the entire weekend to re-immense, organize and explicate my data. The house had none of my familiar distractions and I would be the only one there (besides the dog and two cats). I settled myself in with cigarettes, coffee, food, my laptop and my data. I slept when I was tired, ate when I was hungry and wrote these words in between. The process took much longer than I had planned and I found it difficult to maintain concentration for long. I was initially overwhelmed and had to go over the data again and again until it began to coalesce into form.

I will illustrate three types of conversational themes. They are the Rehearsal, the Re-enactment and the Decision. The central theme in the Rehearsal is that of repetition to clarity. The theme in the Re-enactment is triumphant assertion and the theme in the Decision is repetition to peace. All of the conversation types had the themes of a safe, secluded environment,

embarrassment at being caught or thought crazy, the imagined audience, absorption and connection with a bodily feeling.

In analyzing my data I used the procedure devised by Clark Moustakas in his book, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Application* (1990, p. 51-52). Following is my own process within this framework.

(1) I collected all my transcriptions, tape recordings and notes.

(2) I read each individual co-researcher's transcript and pictured them in my mind's eye. Everything I knew and learned about them was brought forth in a calm, non-judgmental manner. Certain parts of each co-researchers experience came into focus.

(3) I napped. I woke, brewed some coffee and read the transcripts again. This time I highlighted the parts that seemed to illustrate the individual co-researcher's experience. I also began to take notes. I did this with each co-researcher and developed a short sketch of the individual's experience. I then meditated and went back to my notes and the transcripts and made sure I had picked out the important parts. I discarded some themes because they did not seem as important.

(4) I studied my notes and reread the transcriptions to make certain that I had as clear a picture as possible of their experience.

(5) I repeated the above steps for each co-researcher.

(6) I then took each of the individual sketches and made a list of themes that were present in all the sketches. Next, I chose some themes that were not in all sketches but that were present in many of the sketches and I felt were relevant. I wrote and re-wrote this list many times until I felt I had a beginning. I then began writing this chapter. As I wrote, a definite structure appeared and I endeavored to explicate the data within this structure.

(7) I then selected one co-researcher who lived the experience and wrote a description of him and how the experience operates through him.

(8) Finally, I created a creative synthesis. For my creative synthesis I again entered into a meditation to allow all my research into the question “What is the Experience of talking to One’s Self” to present itself in a simple form. The idea was to create something that succinctly embodied all the elements of the experience. What came was a picture of me standing on a stage in front of a house full of mirrors. I then sketched the vision and it appears in Chapter Eight.

My data was gathered from eight individuals of varying ages, sex and ethnic backgrounds. I discarded one interview due to its lack of depth and sufficient description. The interview in question had been with someone who I had not been able to create a sufficient level of contact. I believe the other seven interviews contain the essential elements and themes I wish to illustrate. As this is a heuristic study, I also included myself. Four of the co-researchers were male, three were female. Their ages varied from early twenties to late thirties. Two co-researchers were married, four were involved in relationships and one was single. Two co-researchers lived alone, the rest lived with family, friends or significant others. All of the co-researchers had attended college and all but one had at least a bachelor's degree. I will now present individual snapshots of each co-researcher as they appeared to me. I have named my co-researchers after Shakespearean characters because of the bard's penchant for soliloquy.

Lear is a young, Caucasian man in his late twenties. He is married, has two children and is expecting a third. Lear is currently going to graduate school for Psychology. Lear is a soft spoken man who is extremely thoughtful and at times his face lights up with excitement as he describes his

experience. The interview with Lear revealed a man with a devotion to uncovering the essence of the large, esoteric and magical aspects of the human experience. Lear uses his self talk to examine these issues and to explore his own inner world. Being a Buddhist, Lear approaches life in a compassionate way with a respectfulness toward others.

Richard is also a young, Caucasian man in his late twenties. He lives with his girlfriend and has no children. Richard has a degree in Law and works for the government as a network computer contractor. Richard is a gregarious individual who approaches tasks in a focused, disciplined manner. Richard is the most silent of the co-researchers as he does not talk out loud often. He was included in this study because as he described his experience, it became clear that he talks to himself internally in much the same manner as other co-researchers talked aloud.

Juliet is a young, Caucasian woman in her mid-twenties. She lives alone with her cat. Juliet has been in college but decided to put off graduating and focus on work. Juliet works for a major car company in a technical position. Juliet exudes a rare mixture of confidence and sensitivity.

During the interview, I became aware of her presence as a practical and vibrant person who is driven to succeed.

Romeo is a young, Caucasian man in his late twenties. He lives with two roommates and attends graduate school for Psychology. Romeo also works part-time as a direct care worker. Romeo presented himself as a humorous individual who enjoyed making funny comments throughout the interview. Romeo's process was transparent as he continually examines and searches for the correct words for his experience. Romeo readily admits that he talks to himself continuously.

Ophelia is an African-American woman in her late thirties. Ophelia lives with her two children and attends graduate school for Psychology. Ophelia works as a fashion designer and has a rich, spiritual outlook on life. She describes her inner world as one containing many energies which she communicates with and consults. Ophelia uses her self talk with these energies to devote herself to healing both herself and the world.

Hamlet is a man of mixed ethnicity (African-American and Caucasian) in his late thirties. Hamlet lives alone and attends graduate school for Psychology. Hamlet reports talking to himself all the time. The interview

with Hamlet revealed an insightful, passionate seeker of knowledge with a creative understanding of possibilities. Hamlet has a special place for self talk in his life and enjoys it immensely.

Puck is a young, Caucasian woman in her early twenties. She is married and has one child. Puck works in a law office part-time and shares the care of her child with her husband. Puck was somewhat guarded as we began the interview, but seemed to relax when she heard that her experiences were similar to other co-researchers. Puck is a bright, energetic woman who brought a down-to-earth, practicality to the experience of talking to one's self.

From pursuing the steps in the heuristic process I had the impression that people carry on three kinds of conversations with themselves and that these conversations had common themes. I will attempt explain the three types of conversations first and then look at the themes in relation to these conversations. Finally, I became aware that the experience itself had themes that were present regardless of the type of conversation.

Conversation Types

The first kind of conversation I would like to illustrate is the rehearsal.

In this kind of conversation, the individual prepares for an important conversation in the future. Most of these conversations involve a confrontation where the person seeks to assert himself or herself in as clear and calm manner as possible. As with any rehearsal, there is a repetitive process that allows the 'actor' to examine his/her thoughts and feelings over and over again until they reach a clarity. The relevant theme in this conversation is repetition to clarity.

Juliet: . . .in situations when I am very angry with somebody, and I do want to say something to them. Umm. It helps me to prepare the clear minded thought of . . . almost outlining what I am going to say. When I have to confront someone because there is a behavior that they are doing that bothers me, I definitely want to practice it. I wouldn't want to go into that and say just that you are scum for this reason. I would want to prepare the most delicate way of saying it.

Hamlet: "I would sort of rehearse what I would say to this guy the next time he messed with me. And I had it down perfect, I had it down pat, I had rehearsed it 100 times with myself."

Puck: I am an emotional person, so when I know it is a serious conversation, if I don't think about it, I am just going to throw out these emotions and say things I shouldn't say. That are hurtful, or immature or inappropriate in the situation. So I try to calm myself down and think about it first . . . I can be rational, and lay it out. And the more I lay it out with myself the more comfortable I feel about it.

Lear: the obvious example would be when I am afraid I am going to do strongly if I go too fast . . . when I go to talk to myself I'm so unclear because the emotions are involved. If someone says something that I find somewhat offensive or wrong, then I wanna find a way to express that. So I will think it through.

For Richard the repetition serves less as a means for clarity and more as a way to gain comfort with the situation.

Richard: I'm not a confrontational person at that level. So when I see that that is needed, I will go over and over what I am going to say and what the other person is going to say . . . But in rehearsing those conversations, again, it's a situation that I am uncomfortable with, or that isn't one that I find myself particularly suited for, I will go through the steps, prior, I will probably do that hundreds of times until I actually I get up the guts to actually confront someone about it.

The next conversation is the re-enactment. In a re-enactment the individual replays a conversation that has happened in the past. Most researchers report that there is a freedom of expression that lets them play out a conversation in a manner in which they would have wanted but were unwilling or unable to express at that time. This can be a kind of cathartic experience that enables the individual to assert themselves in an often (but not always) compassionate manner. The relevant theme here is triumphant assertion.

Lear: When somebody was rude to you out in the world, ya know, somebody you don't even know, and then you are like listen, ya know, you work here, I don't, you are getting, paid, you might as well be nice, blah, blah blah, those kinds of things. That you say to yourself.

Romeo: "I certainly carry on conversations with people that aren't there. And there's some of that 'oh, I should have said this' or 'should have said that.'"

Juliet: "I have a lot of fights with people who aren't there. I always win. . . It gave me an opportunity to vent."

Puck: "(i)f I am replaying a conversation I just think, 'God, I should have said this.'"

Hamlet described an encounter with his sister where she had said something unkind to him. "I talked to myself unbelievably about what I should have, would have and could have said to my sister." In this situation, Hamlet was able to interact with his sister in a less hostile manner.

. . . talking to myself about that situation was like pretending . . . like I was talking to her in some instances, was helpful, because when the situation . . . when she did call those few times over that period of time, I was very . . . I was ready, and uh... able to explain exactly how I felt and why I wasn't coming and what I expected from her without being angry, it was... so it prepared me...

The last conversation is the decision. This can take the form of a simple, everyday decision making process or a complex exploration of a deep meaning. Puck presents a good example of talking aloud to decide between cans of pears at the grocery store. While she was telling me this story, she was holding two imaginary cans in each hand and raising and lowering them as if on a scale:

I may comment... I try to think of something and I can't. Ya know, maybe if I am trying... at a store or something, 'well ya know, which one should I get?' And I'll just talk out loud... 'Well, this one's got sugar in it...This one's got the natural... pear juice... I guess I'll get that'...when I have talked out loud, a lot of times it has to do with making decisions.

When the subject matter increased in depth, the process involved a more thorough vacillating from one position to the other until clarity is reached. As with the rehearsal, there is a degree of repetition. However, in this case, the repetition sometimes brings a sense of peace. Romeo describes it as:

. . . it's like some conflict there, and go back and forth and back and forth, like I gotta prove something to the one side, or I gotta prove something to the other side, So as I keep going back and forth and back and forth, I kinda get a knowledge of understanding that both sides have something really valid to say, and both sides have, ya know, their position of when that is appropriate to use such and such. Ya know, what's the appropriate action, or what is the best way to think of this. And I think that by just doing this, by having this conversation, that it's

not that one side wins out over the other, it is more like both sides come to an understanding of where each other is coming from.

Ophelia relates a conflict with an inner energy called Veronica about whether or not to go to an event that Ophelia felt uncomfortable about, but that

Veronica very much wanted to go to:

I was more or less in a battle with her . . . I remember, oh, that was a tough, tough tussle. I think I tussled with Veronica all the way until like the day that I was supposed to go . . . I think it was actually about a week or two. . . Talking to my shadow, going back and forth. . . it was a lot of turmoil, it was very stressful, because Veronica was presenting a really good case. I haven't had a problem with Veronica in a while. Cuz I've accepted her, yeah, there might be some things that might be interesting . . . its more of a friendship now where she don't have to break down the doors, scream and yell at me, fiesty. We can sit down like girlfriends and communicate.

Juliet talks about her experience of understanding her emotions through this experience.

. . . it is more of a, almost a peaceful acceptance. It is like I will have these things laying on me, whatever they may be, and as I go through the different iterations of the conversations, which usually take place one right after the other, because it is on my mind, by the time I finished, it is kind of like, the weight is gone and I feel clear again.

Almost all of the co-researchers had this type of conversation. It seems to me that this is the most widely used form of self talk, whether it be aloud or internal. Here is Richard describing the internal process:

. . . those are two polar ends, and you can go back and forth, but they will never be further apart. Go back and forth and reach closer to a middle ground of what probably is the truth, because people do various things for polar reasons. So, yeah, there is more clarity in the middle, or at least honesty.

Regardless of the type of conversation one has with one's self there are common thematic elements throughout the experience. The themes varied depending on the co-researcher or the type of conversation.

Themes

Many researchers described having specific places where they would talk to themselves. These were often places of solitude or where the co-researcher felt safe.

Hamlet reports, "I really sort of created an environment in how I have my furniture and set up my house so that I would have this long corridor in which to pace in."

Juliet says, "I remember back in the house on Clifford, going into the bathroom and having fights with people in school . . . it was my safe spot."

Lear: I have a memory of working at a place, it was like a child development center and I would take lunch in like a kind of a wooded hill there. And there was a kind of a hole in the woods . . . kind of separating yourself out from everything else. I would go back there and eat a bad lunch there, Muncho's or pop or something. And I was

fairly young and I was fairly philosophical and I would have these great debates with myself about the state of the world.

Romeo: A lot of times it takes place in the car, and I think that why that is maybe because I'm the only one in the car, or maybe, ya know, being in the car is kind of that isolating feeling of . . . the world out there, and this is the world in here, and the car is very much a safe place, I think.

Closely linked with this choice of space is, I think, another theme.

That of being rather embarrassed at being caught talking aloud and thought of as crazy or odd. With some researchers there is an acceptance of this as being normal, however almost all the researchers felt somewhat odd.

Puck reports, "Like if I'm out in public and all these people think I'm weird if I'm talking to myself!"

Juliet describes it as, "People driving on I75 think I'm insane. But that's all right."

Romeo: I think no matter how you cut it, if someone is being honest, there is something about being caught talking to yourself, that is kind of a little embarrassing, especially if you are doing it and you are not really aware of what you are doing, and all of the sudden, someone is looking over at you and you are like, 'oh, man, hi, how are ya?' It is certainly not what I think a lot of people consider normal.

Hamlet relates a humorous story to illustrate both the embarrassment and how he might look to others:

Actually, once I was at my mother's house and I thought she was taking a shower and typically she would have to go into her bedroom and have to change her clothes or whatever, and she took the shower, but came out and sat at the dining room table, and I was just going on, and on and on, just talking away, and she sat with her mouth open looking at me, and you know, she did one of those, on of those deals with the eyes, and what ever, and yeah, I was just going on and on. Talking to myself. But I in general make it an attempt not to be observed doing this. It has to look crazy. When I am pacing up and down in my house, and I am making gestures, and I am going on, I must look like a maniac. I must look nuts.

Ophelia describes the question of sanity in talking to one's self:

. . . well there is a little saying that says 'when you talk to yourself that's okay. But when you answer yourself, your in trouble.' And that's funny to me. I talk to myself, I ask the question and then I answer it. And it works out pretty well . . . it's humorous to me. A lot of people think I am crazy.

Co-researchers also describe the experience as one which transcends time and space. That is, while in the midst of talking to one's self, people become absorbed in their own world.

Richard: I ... could easily be driving down the street going 'wow, uhhh I just went half way home and I don't recall any of that'. Ya know, my body was on auto-pilot. I didn't get lost or anything, but geez, I don't remember stopping at those six lights. Umm... so I can loose myself easily in those thoughts.

Juliet: When it starts off in my bathroom it usually starts off with me washing my face or brushing my hair and the next thing I know is that it is 3 hours later. I mean, I will go into this for hours and hours, and

usually the fact that I have been in there for hours is the fact that my feet start to hurt.

Romeo: I do tend to get caught up in it . . .there is that sense of timelessness about it, that I do kind of loose track of time a lot of times, get wrapped up in it, and kinda go with it. And sometimes I don't even recognize that I am doing it until I am in the midst of it and then I'm like 'oh, my gosh' and those are the ones that are more like deep conversations. A lot more interior work gets done, than, other times, and I loose sense of my surroundings.

Lear: The idea's start clicking faster, a little faster. I think it picks up a little pace and then it is kind of like the idea of a horse running, and you have seen those pictures of all four hoofs are off the ground, and it is so alive, and that is the kind of experience it is when it kind of takes off by itself. And uhhh . . . I'm like, I associate the word absorbed with it. It no longer feels like I am doing it, necessarily.

In almost all cases the co-researchers reported that they would dialogue with some kind of audience. It seems that even in a solitary activity such as talking to one's self there is a human need to communicate to another.

Puck says, "I think talking to myself, when I am alone, makes me feel like there's other people around."

Juliet reports that, "Usually there is another person that I am talking to."

Richard describes it as, “. . . it’s a group. Its we, its not talking to a separate thing. All of a sudden it’s not just me working on this, it’s a team effort.”

Romeo: There’s almost always an imagined audience, in my experience. Either I will be giving a lecture on something, or confronting someone about something that they did, or there’s always an ‘other’, I’m never really talking to myself. But I have to imagine something to talk to.

Ophelia has developed an internal cast of characters who regularly take part in discussions.

. . . my different selves... I don’t know... some people might call them split personalities, characters, different energies, so, that’s why I say we. Because I am aware of several, at least six different dimensions of myself . . . there are certain ones that get to talk out loud, and say I call them up to speak, then I’ll hear from them, but, most of the time, most of them are more or less, are in my thoughts or don’t speak out loud.

Lear: when you do use other characters when you talk to yourself, I think that is a technique that is actually employable where they do take on their own personality, because I have had, where that kind of switches over into an intuitive thing, where it seems it is a message coming to me from outside of me. I have had those kind of experiences, too.

Hamlet: Actually, they are less to myself than to the imagined person I am speaking to. I don’t really see myself as talking to myself. I am definitely talking to somebody else, I am definitely talking to the audience, there for my new book or because I have just accepted this award, that I have imagined that I am getting in the future for one of my brilliant ideas about one of my particular subjects. And or to a

specific person out of a situation that I am talking about. But not really to myself. I am not really talking to myself.

Most researchers reported that they connected an emotion or a bodily sensation to the experience of talking to themselves. This feeling was often intense. Lear describes it as:

. . . it kind of comes along with a body sensation of wanting to express. Or desire to express, this is just another distinct time of talking to myself. And uh, I get real agitated in my seat, I can't sit still.

Hamlet reports, "I would talk out loud. And often, actually become so agitated that I would have to get up and do my pacing thing."

Juliet says that talking to herself affects her body because it, "makes me more hyper . . . my heart is racing and my blood is pumping and it takes me forever to get to sleep at night."

The person I have chosen for an individual portrait of my question is, of course, Hamlet. Hamlet actively uses talking to himself in all of the conversational types and illustrated all of the themes mentioned in my interviews with him. As stated before, Hamlet lives alone and has arranged a specific place in his house to pace back and forth and talk to himself. Hamlet has often rehearsed his confrontations with people over and over again and was able to clearly articulate his feelings as well as gain a measure of respect.

The following description illustrates Hamlet's experience of confronting an individual at work who had been antagonizing him for a long period of time.

Hamlet's description contains elements of the rehearsal and the triumphant assertion which is made manifest through the rehearsal:

I am not going to say I wasn't upset by that because he would come up to my table when I was waiting on people and stand nearby and start his racist bullshit. It was really embarrassing. And the management was really into it. They were totally into him. They were very big and still are there. The point I am trying to make is I did talk a lot about in that situation with that guy with myself, to myself. It was just this particular individual and a couple of others that were just unbelievable. And he was short, and they all carried guns, I mean the waiters at *garbled* all carried guns . . . Anyway, that was another situation where I dealt with it in talking to myself quite a bit, about it because it was really frustrating and I had never really been aware of making fun of, with a racist who took pleasure in trying to humiliate me in front of my customers, in front of my co-workers, and I thank God that I was really transcendental, and people saw me as sort of this mystic, while I worked there. So my own nature sort of protected me. But in conversation, I would sort of rehearse what I would say to this guy the next time he messed with me. And I had it down perfect, I had it down pat, I had rehearsed it 100 times with myself, and finally the opportunity presented itself. He was standing there, going at it, ya know, doing his whole routine. And I just sort of looked over with this smile on my face, you know, just sort of shaking my head 'No'. And all of his buddies were there, and all of my buddies were there, and I said to him, I said "John, do you know why guys (and he is short, mind you, as I said) like you carry those guns?" and he was like, "Why, why do guys like me carry guns? Hey, hey, let's hear this, why do guys like me carry guns?" I said "well, you are compensating for your small, your little tiny penis." . . . everything changed from that point on. People who saw me as weird liked me, and because I guess a little

humiliation is what a lot of people respond to. If you are not willing to do this, we are not willing to trust you. And this kid never messed with me again. . . . And, ya know it was very frustrating, and I did talk about it for a while, and I did come up with that and rehearse that little bit about the gun and the penis, and it worked beautifully. It changed everything, in a way, from that point on. I humiliated this guy enough . . . now we can respect him. Short of carrying a gun, maybe he is okay *laughter*. So it worked out.

Interviewer: So you said the perfect thing, at the perfect time.

Hamlet: After I had rehearsed it.

Hamlet's outlook on life has been influenced tremendously by talking to himself. Hamlet enjoys having conversations with himself on the meaning of race, sex and other topics. He also has developed the art of self talk as a way to change his physiology. Hamlet will talk himself into a better mood or will talk to himself to speed up his perception of time when he is bored.

Hamlet's story illustrates what I feel to be a fine representation of having thoroughly gone through all his available options, arrived at an insight and presented it with perfect timing in a situation that was hazardous at best.

There is some level of intuition operating when we talk to ourselves, I believe. In the next chapter I will look at some of the implications of these findings.

Chapter 7

Implications

This research on the question, “What is the experience of talking to one’s self?” will be useful for anyone working with people, especially therapists, researchers and the public. The fact that one person can carry within them their Self and also an imagined audience provides a glimpse into the richness of one’s inner world. This inner world creates the outer as in the koan from Light of the Kensei by G.BlueStone:

The kensei knows that the life within the world of appearances is like being in a room of mirrors -- that what is projected outward into the world inevitably returns. (1999)

Some research has already been done on the application of self-talk in problem solving and therapy. I believe that my research supports and enhances these findings. In particular, I think there is a difference between using structured self-talk and free flowing talking to yourself. These unstructured conversations with one’s Self provide a clearer insight into an individual person’s interior workings and view of the world. Because they come from the person themselves they do not have to be ‘forced’ into an

artificial theory such as the Gestalt open chair technique or other therapies where the characters are created by the therapist, the client is able to own the experience. The cast of characters do not have to be named such as Ophelia's case, but there is no reason they could not be. The important part, I believe, is that the imagined audience is understood to be part of the person and the conversation between the imagined audience and the person are brought into awareness.

This free flowing talk is directed by the client just as in client centered therapy the client directs the therapy. Thus, all unstructured self-talk is owned by the client and provides them with insight into their own process. A therapist can observe this self talk and provide his or her own observations on the client's process and inner world. However, the client is the only one with the unique experience. After all, the imagined audience is the client. As Juliet says, "It was like being not alone . . . It was like . . . this person understood you, you had inside jokes, this person was always there for me and always did the perfect thing, always did the right thing." For a client to operate this way would require a very safe and secure environment to be created by the therapist because of the stigma attached to this behavior.

It is also my hope that this research will remove some of the stigma attached to catching someone talking to themselves. My co-researchers come from many walks of life and none have been diagnosed with a mental illness, yet they all talk to themselves. This activity occurs within everyday contexts and enables the individuals to approach life and situations in a thoughtful, insightful way. By examining one's conversations with one's self, I believe a person can gain insight into the nature of their thoughts and feelings as well as access this inner resource as a therapeutic tool. Until the time when talking to one's Self is not thought of as bizarre, Morrow (1998) offers these suggestions:

--Slide, without transition, into singing softly or humming, as if the soliloquy were simply the spoken part of a musical performance, like an opera. In this way, you give the performance an obscurely higher purpose, as if it were a rehearsal that the bystander was fortunate to overhear.

--Go on talking so volubly to your invisible friend that the overhearer begins thinking he may be the one who is nuts; this works only if you and your nonexistent friend vanish quickly around a corner.

--A tough but effective trick: make yourself dematerialize, or make the talking-to-yourself moment vanish, in the way that Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis used to disappear psychically, even when people were looking directly at her. The overhearer should think that somehow he hallucinated the moment. Remember that in the age of television, reality dissolves, moment to moment, into thin air.

--Carry a cell phone in hand at all times, or a pocket tape recorder, and lift it quickly to your mouth at the embarrassing moment.

--Have a dog with you on a leash. Always address your remarks to the dog.

. Even though they felt weird, most co-researchers described the experience as one which was helpful. Hamlet reports the experience as “therapeutic” in the sense that, “Usually, through that process I was able to clarify what was going on and did gain insight.” Therapists can use this understanding to encourage the client to bring forth their inner worlds in a way that allows a different, hopefully clearer, perspective. The rehearsal type of self talk, for example, is helpful in approaching confrontation in a compassionate, understanding way rather than reacting in a hostile way. The beauty of talking to one’s Self is that it can be done at any time and requires only an understanding therapist to get the ball rolling.

I imagine the therapeutic process would involve first and foremost a therapist who believes that talking to one's Self is a normal activity and not a sign of pathology. Because of the stigma attached to this activity, the therapeutic environment needs to be a "safe place" to use Juliet's words. Next the therapist can share the knowledge that it is a normal activity and encourage the client to observe themselves while they talk to themselves. The client can then gradually become aware of what things they talk about and how they talk about them. Next, the therapist and the client can work together to identify the themes, feelings or associations within the content of the talk and also how that process brings a sense of clarity or calmness.

Researchers investigating the nature of consciousness can also benefit from the use of self talk. I believe that talking to one's self can provide insight into the nature of consciousness. Many of the co-researchers became aware of this fact and at times the interviews drifted into the nature of consciousness, although this data was not included in this study. Lear, for example claims, "I've often wondered how . . . talking to yourself is the active engagement of your thoughts. How do we think ourselves into behaviors?" This active engagement of one's thoughts, I believe, mediates

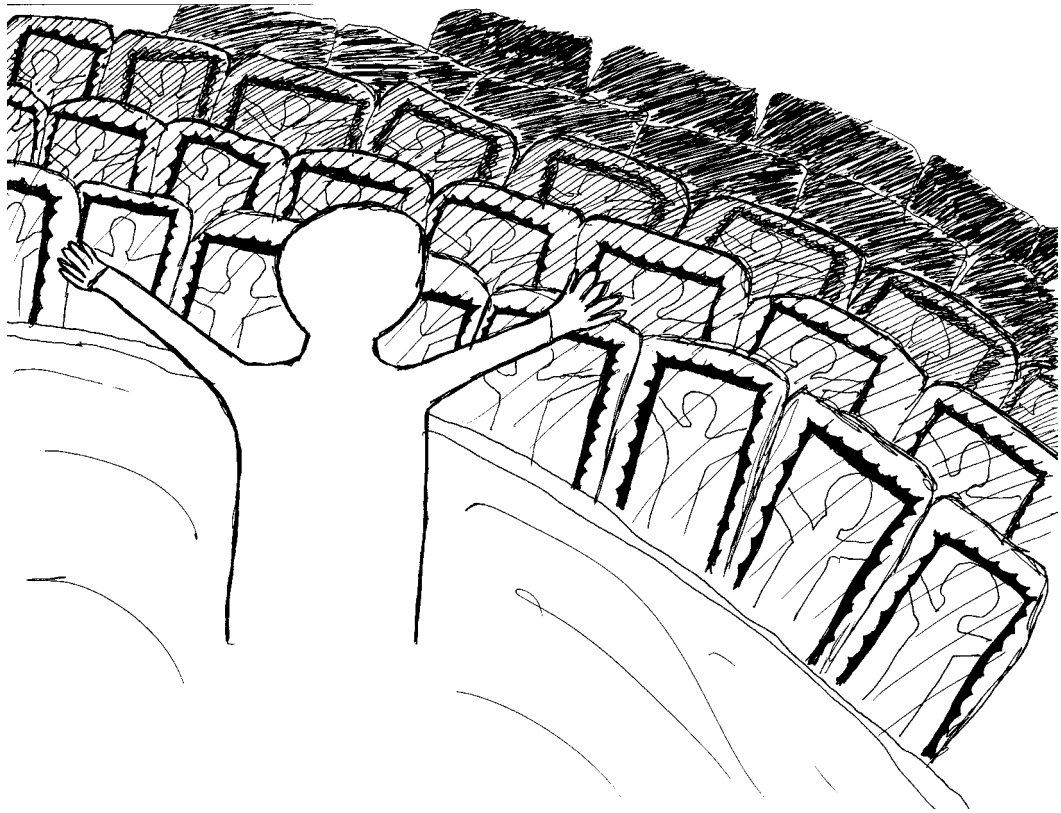
our outlook on life and constructs our world. If talking to one's Self is the active engagement of our thoughts and our thoughts the basis of our behaviors, it seems that talking to one's Self is closer to the flame of consciousness than our behaviors. In a safe environment this spontaneous self talk may point towards the origins of our being. Romeo talks to himself a great deal as a way to consult with himself yet, "I don't know where the answers come from or why even that is, that it is able to do that for me." I imagine the consciousness researcher sitting in a room and allowing himself to bring forth his consciousness in an uncensored, free-flowing way. In a sense, using talking to him or herself as a clear window to what their existence is at that precise moment.

The public could benefit from the awareness that talking to one's Self is an on-going activity that most of us do. By removing the stigma attached to the experience, the public will be better able to engage in an activity that can be used as an inner resource for knowledge and compassion, as many of my co-researchers do. Many co-researchers have stopped talking to themselves because of this embarrassment and cut off a part of them that can be therapeutic.

I see the nature of talking to one's Self as that of a Self standing in front of mirrors of that Self. Each mirror has a different way of bending, amplifying, diminishing and directing the conversation. There are as many mirrors internally as there are possibilities in a person. There are mirrors that reflect all sides of an issue, mirrors that only show the dark, mirrors that show only the light and mirrors that are created in the image of another Self. The entire act of talking to one's self takes place in the "auditorium of the mind" (Morrow, 1998) where the only audience is the one we bring with us.

Chapter 8

Creative Synthesis



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Appendix A: Instructions to Research Participants

Date

Dear

Thank you for your interest in my thesis research on the experience of talking to yourself. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate some of the things that we have already discussed and the secure your signature on the participation-release form which you will find attached.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one through which I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of your experience. In this way I hope to illuminate or answer my question.

Through your participation as a co-researcher, I hope to understand the essence of the phenomenon as it reveals itself in your experience. You will be asked to recall specific episodes or events in your life in which you experienced the phenomenon we are in investigating. I am seeking vivid, accurate, and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you; your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experience. You may also wish to share personal logs or journals with me or other ways you have recorded your experience - for example, in letters, poems, or artwork.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy and effort. If you have any further questions before signing the release form or if there is a problem with the date and time of our meeting, contact information is below.

Sincerely,

Kyle A. Glasgow

kyle@aum-web.com
(248) 541-6671 - home
(248) 399-9833 - voice mail

Appendix B: Participant-Release Agreement

I agree to participate in a research study of what is the experience of talking to yourself, as described in the attached narrative. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a M.A. degree, including a dissertation and any other future publication. I understand that my name and other demographic information which might identify me will not be used.

I agree to meet at the following location _____ on the following date _____ for an initial interview of 1 ½ to 2 hours, and to be available at a mutually agreed time and place for an additional 1 to 1 ½ hour interview, if necessary. I also grant permission for the tape recording of the interview(s).

Research Participant _____ Date

Primary Researcher _____ Date

Appendix C: Questions for Co-Researchers

Questions are meant to provide a structure to the interview and will be used only if needed. Co-Researchers will initially be asked only to describe their experience of talking to themselves.

- When was the first time you remember talking to yourself?
- What kinds of things do you say when you talk to yourself?
- Do you find yourself talking to yourself more in a certain situation?
What situation is it, if any?
- Describe the process of talking to yourself? (Is it a free flowing conversation? A repetition of messages? A way of cheering yourself on? Pointed? Any other?)
- Would you be willing to talk to yourself now? Can I record it?
- Do you have distinct 'voices', if any? Can you give a description of them?
- Are there any feelings while talking to yourself? Any physical sensations?
- How does talking to yourself impact on you or on your relationships with others.

- Any other thoughts?

Appendix D

Epoche Script

I begin by focusing on my body. Noticing any positioning that seems unnatural and altering it. Next, I begin progressively relaxing my muscles, beginning at the feet and working my way up. Tensing and relaxing, tensing, relaxing. I then change my focus to my breathing. I breathe in and out through the nose. Each time I breathe in, I visualize a white golden color swirling around and filling my body. Each time I breathe out, I visualize blackness being displaced by the white-gold and exiting my body. Eventually I am visualizing a gold-white color pulsing with light and growing brighter. At the proper moment the white light spills over the boundaries to my body and I switch my focus to my mind.

To relax my mind I use the discipline I have gained from the practice of Zen. This basically involves letting thoughts and feelings arise and pass without becoming attached or dwelling on them. Once my mind is calm, I can begin to visualize my out come and repeat phrases to myself.

First I allow myself to visualize my question. I allow myself to witness all my desires around this question and the research. All the dreams of glory

and great knowledge I will obtain. I then let them turn to mist and blow away, gradually fading into the distance until I can no longer remember them.

I do this as many times as necessary until they no longer exist in my mind.

Then I picture all my preconceptions about what the co-researcher will say and how they will react. I turn those thoughts to mist and blow them away.

Next I picture the current co-researcher. I bring to mind as many thoughts and feelings surrounding that person as possible. I allow them to arise and parade before me in my mind's eye, and turn to mist and disappear until the person is a stranger to me and all I know is their name and their face.

I repeat the following phrases as many times as needed to ensure emptiness

This question is a new question to me. All thoughts about the question from the past cease to exist during this interview.

This person is a new person to me. All thoughts about this person from the past cease to exist during this interview.

Lastly, I give myself a post hypnotic suggestion to remember all of the non-verbal cues in the interview and to have complete and objective recall of the interview. I also give a post hypnotic suggestion to restore my thoughts and memory completely when I start my car.

Appendix E

Instructions to co-researchers

Thank you for participating in the research question, What is the experience of talking to one's Self? The following message is designed to assist you in focusing on your own experience of talking to yourself. Please refer to this message for the next two weeks before we have our meeting.

You may want to sit somewhere quiet and slowly allow your body to rest comfortably. Quietly bring your attention to your breath. Breathe in and out naturally and notice how that feels. With every breath, imagine your body sinking deeper and deeper into relaxation. Notice how good this feels and go deeper. Follow the path of your breath as it enters and exits your body. If images or thoughts arise in your mind that is OK. Allow them to pass before you as easily as a movie. Take another deep breath and just let go, letting go of all thoughts as you sink deeper, deeper into relaxation.

Now that your body is relaxed and your mind is quiet, gently allow the question we are researching together come into focus. What is the experience of talking to one's Self? Hold this thought gently like a fragile egg and allow its meaning to sink in. What is the experience of talking to one's Self?

Throughout the coming days until our meeting notice how you pay attention to what is happening when you are talking to yourself. Examine as much as possible about the experience. You will begin to be more aware of the experience as you continue through the days until our meeting. Discover what this question holds for you. Delve into the past history of talking to yourself and watch in the present as you talk to yourself. Notice what you talk about and what words you use. Notice anything else that is important for you about the experience of talking to yourself. See what you see, feel what you feel, hear what you hear and smell what you smell. Continue holding the question gently in your mind as you go about your daily activities in your usual manner. Focus on holding the question gently and go over the instructions in your mind again as you enjoy a brief period of relaxing silence.

(Pause for about 2 minutes)

Continue holding the question gently in your mind while slowly shifting your focus into the future. Imagine you and I sitting and talking about your experience of talking to yourself. Notice your thoughts forming easily and effortlessly into words. Imagine our conversation flowing smoothly across

the question until you have told me everything you are willing to share about your experience. Focus softly on this encounter .

(Pause for about 1 minute)

Now gently begin bringing yourself back to your full awareness. Don't think about the question of what is the experience of talking to one's Self and know that you will begin to explore this question more and more in the coming days. Continue bringing yourself back to full awareness where you are wide awake, clearheaded and alert.