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Styles & Techniques of Inquiry – Can there only be one truth?

Critical Inquiry Group 2: John Bell, Gail Cheney, Cindy Hoots, Elaine

Kohrman, Jesse Schubert, Lisa Stidham, Scott Traynor

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Introduction

Based on our analyses of the videos presented in class: *Nature of the Mind - Conversations 1 & 2* (Krishnamurti, Drs. Bohm, Sheldrake 1982) and *How the Human Mind Works: Patricia Smith Churchland* (Moyers, Bill 1990) we (group 2) have selected several cultures and techniques of inquiry that we believe to be effective in critiquing the topic of personal perspective and the nature of truth. We examine the question - Can there only be one truth?

In order to delve further into the examination of personal viewpoint, several team members watched and reviewed the movie *Rashômon* (Kurosawa, Akira 1950)} which presented, entirely in flashbacks, the rape of a woman and the murder of a man from the perspectives of four narrators. The phenomenon portrayed in *Rashômon* in which multiple people observe or participate in the same event, yet have varying conclusions about what occurred, sparked our interest. Two additional films Yimou Zhang's *Hero* (Zhang, Yimou 2004) and *12 Angry Men* (Lumet, Sidney 1957) gave us additional examples of alternate views and perspectives of events. Yimou Zhang's *Hero* uses multiple perspectives to shape an action story about stopping the assassination of a war-lord. The movie *12 Angry Men* suggested the idea that PAR is a method of inquiry that can be used within a group setting of a jury. These movies inspired us to find an example in which we could engage the class in a vivid demonstration of personal perspective.

To this end we will utilize a game to engage the class members in a short role play based on a scenario that demonstrates varying perspectives and possible truths. Following this exercise we will act out a scripted jury trial based

on the same scenario. As the trial unfolds, we demonstrate the following cultures of inquiry: theoretical, hermeneutic, empirical/analytical, comparative/historical and Participative Action Research (PAR). Also represented are several styles of communication and techniques of inquiry such as interview, debate, and skilled discussion.

The following sections describe the scenario in relation to the topic, cultures of inquiry selected, cultures of inquiry applied, and a description of how action technology will be demonstrated.

The Scenario in Relation to the Topic

The following is an example article from a daily newspaper:

POLICE BEAT: IRATE DRIVER KILLS DOG
On or about August 6, 2004 2:37pm Tom Tuttle of Tacoma Washington was traveling North in the 500 block of 6th Avenue going 30-35 MPH in a 25 MPH zone when he struck Lawrence Bourne III, a three year old AKA Poodle.

According to police Lawrence's owner and daughter were walking the family pet after lunch at Applebee's when the dog ran into the street. Lawrence Bourne was not on a leash and was struck by Tom Tuttle of Tacoma, Washington.

The daughter, Rita Wilson age 5, was in tears and could not stop crying. The father just couldn't understand why the dog ran into the street and was seen yelling at the driver for driving too fast.

Our scenario deals with an almost mundane incident of violence that occurs within the human experience. The first stage of our scenario will take place in the courtroom after the incident. Various viewpoints and perspectives are presented and these are filtered through various lenses. The second phase of the scenario is one where the jury, comprised of the audience of our presentation, will deliberate on several questions related to the evidence presented and the perspectives provided. The jury will further attempt to derive an "objective" notion of the events, the phenomenon, from which the scenario

was developed and make some judgments such as who is the apparent victim of violence. These multiple levels of experience and judgment will demonstrate different techniques of inquiry around the perspectives of truth about the scenario.

Different techniques and styles of inquiry will be needed as the courtroom drama unfolds. We will have a Judge, a Prosecutor, a Defender, owner of the dog, pedestrian witness, the Driver of the car, and the Dog.

In addition to all the people involved in the courtroom scene, we will have 12 members of a jury asked to consider the following questions as outlined in the script of our presentation (see Appendix A):

1. What did each character think about the incident of violence and their role in it?
2. What culture of inquiry did each represent?
3. Given the evidence of the witnesses presented in the trial
 - a. Who “actually” did the violence?
 - b. Who was the “victim of the violence?
 - c. Who was to “blame” for the violence?

We will see different techniques of inquiry between the attorneys as they question the witnesses, and notice the style the attorneys use to get to the truth. After the attorneys question all the witnesses, the jury will break for a different kind of inquiry as they search for the truth. The judge and police officers use other types of inquiry that we might not see but are implied. The courtroom provides a great place to apply various cultures of inquiry.

This paper and the class presentation from group 2 depend on one another to create the frame and examples of the types inquiry examined in the paper and demonstrated in presentation. For instance, our paper will describe the process of looking at one event from multiple perspectives and our presentation includes a game that will give participants the experience of viewing one event through multiple perspectives and to realize how their own frames affect how they interpret what they see. Each section of the paper will describe the forms of inquiry that group 2 plans to use to demonstrate that inquiry during the class presentation.

Cultures of Inquiry Selected

We selected the theoretical, hermeneutic, empirical/analytical, comparative/historical and Participative Action Research (PAR) cultures of inquiry to explore various perspectives of the nature of truth about what happened in the dog walking scenario described in the police beat article. As an introduction, the methods of inquiry are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Theoretical, hermeneutic, empirical/analytical, and comparative/historical cultures of inquiry will demonstrate the various perspectives about the nature of truth in relation to the police beat article through the various roles in the courtroom. The theoretical culture emphasizes generating new knowledge through the analysis, critique, and extension of existing theories and concepts such as integration of the law in the courtroom scene. The hermeneutic culture of inquiry interprets and gives meaning to the fabric of data through contextual perspectives such as through the prosecutor and defender interrogating witnesses in the courtroom. The empirical/analytical culture of inquiry

emphasizes using unbiased, rigorous observations and measurements to validate a hypothesis about what happened in the event, such as through the actions of the police officer. The comparative/historical culture of inquiry studies and draws conclusions from comparison of similarities and differences between events that have occurred in the past such as similar accidents in this case.

The PAR culture of inquiry emphasizes utilizing researcher(s) competencies of action and reflection in combination with participative action with a group to bring about a social change. The researcher or facilitator initiates a theoretical framework to structure and guide the process through shared control.

The theoretical framework in this case is the simulation of the courtroom setting. The demonstration and exploration of these techniques and cultures of inquiry will be the foundation of our class presentation. To structure and guide the process, every member of our group (the researchers) has selected a role to play in the court room simulation and will be acting and reflecting on both the process and the truth about the topic from their role. Our class peers will serve as the jury (participative group) and also be engaged in their own action/reflection about the nature of truth around the event.

Cultures of Inquiry Applied

This section will embellish upon and describe in greater detail the applicability of courtroom roles to the theoretical, hermeneutic, empirical/analytical, and comparative/historical cultures of inquiry. Actors assume a culture of inquiry based on his or her individual role in the drama and what they hope to accomplish in the courtroom. They each provide a unique layer of understanding of the accident through their own eyes. All combined, we

see the drama through the eyes of “innocent” victims, alleged perpetrators of violence, random passersby, and the law.

The judge primarily uses the theoretical culture of inquiry. Judges have extensive knowledge of the law and are in the unique position to interpret it as they see fit. Past court cases set a precedent, and the judge will use the knowledge in the current case combined with integration of past decisions on similar cases to generate a new ruling. Existing knowledge of the law is used as a foundation and guide in generating new knowledge (a judgment), for instance a judge determines what evidence is allowed and interprets law in terms of what the jury can consider when making their decisions.

The prosecutor and defender mainly use the hermeneutic culture of inquiry. Their position in the courtroom is as guides and interpreters for the jury.

By calling witnesses and asking specific questions, the lawyers try to paint a picture for the jury that seems plausible and leads to a favorable ruling. Lawyers try to interpret and give meaning to the data gained from each witness. In this way the prosecutor and defender provide a contextual perspective for the jury to follow to a logical conclusion.

Police officers predominantly use the empirical-analytical culture of inquiry. By using tools and scientific procedures police can gain evidence to help them in their work. Observation, measurement, and fact finding are some of the ways in which they operate. Police generally start from a hypothesis and use a process of elimination to find their answers. The courtroom drama highlights this with the police officers language in relating facts and observations.

The pedestrian witness in the drama uses the comparative-historical culture of inquiry. This witness draws upon historical knowledge of the scene of the accident. She knows of past accidents occurring in the same area and attempts to understand the current situation in comparison to the previous similar events. With this historical knowledge, she brings a unique perspective to the courtroom that adds depth of time to the situation.

Lastly, the driver, dog owner, and dog mainly use the hermeneutic culture of inquiry. By being directly involved in the accident, they each give life to the data by giving their unique interpretation of the events. They contribute to the understanding of the accident by relating their personal perspectives.

Describe How Action Technology (PAR) will be Demonstrated:

The goal of PAR is to advance knowledge and practice through collaborative observations, reflection, and action of all participants involved, the jury deliberations of our class peers will engage the class in this process. Although the courtroom setting and our roles are facilitated to a point, our own development and portrayal of our roles will occur in an organic process in front of the class. The jury deliberations will be influenced and guided by our class peers perspectives about what they see and observe in the courtroom simulation without any predetermined outcome.

The action research portion of this inquiry is demonstrated in part by the jury during their deliberations. The jury will uncover their collective understanding of the truth of the situation through skilled discussion, dialogue and reflection and debate.

The jury will follow a process of skilled discussion around the idea of which perspectives of the story rang true from each of the witness descriptions of the incident and which did not. Each person will explain which of the perspectives or part of the perspectives felt like a picture of reality to them. Then the group will uncover hidden assumptions or world-views that give the juror that frame or belief. This process will be followed with each juror.

An example of this process might be that juror number 1 felt that the dog owner told the truth. As more discussion continued, it comes to light that he is an animal lover and has 3 dogs himself. More questions are asked to discover how much his own experience has colored his perception of the witness testimony. Another example might be that one juror believes one perspective but believes the punishment is too severe and so does not say what he believes.

As a group, they work co-creating a picture of reality that feels real to the whole group. After the first step, a dialogue begins about what has been learned so far and possible options for next steps. After some discussion, questions from the first exercise resurface and the jury asks to be allowed to revisit court transcripts, the police reports, and depositions to answer their questions.

A lunch break is called and each juror eats lunch alone reflecting on what he/she has heard and thought about this case. Upon returning an anonymous vote is taken and a majority vote is not reached. The jury continues with further deliberations.

In PAR, all stakeholders participate in the process leading to personal and collective capacity and transformation. Both through acting out roles (court room

and jury) and also personal reflection as members of this class, we anticipate some level of collective meta-transformation about the nature of truth.

Conclusion

Through several cultures of inquiry including PAR, theoretical, hermeneutic, empirical/analytical, and comparative/historical and techniques of inquiry including skilled discussion, dialogue, debate, and reflection we examined the question – Can there only be one truth?

We have concluded though our scenario that there is no such thing as an objective truth. No one person may know the truth, no matter how clearly he/she thinks he/she sees things. It is an ideal to be sought after, but which can never be found, only approximated. This is because perspective distorts reality and makes the absolute truth unknowable.

Appendix A - Presentation

1 Intro

We're group 2. We're too busy singing to put anybody down.

2 Game

A scene of violence in the US

On a normal city street, any town on any day, there is an accident. A dog is hit by a car. The dog, dog owner and the car driver are present. Also present are a pedestrian across the street and a peace officer following the driver's car in a patrol car.

The Driver might be the cause of violence
The Dog might be the victim of the violence
The Owner might be attached to the victim
The Pedestrian might be detached from the victim
The Peace Officer might be responsible to stop violence

The Driver might be a white female
The Dog might be a small female cairn terrier
The Owner might be an african-american male
The Pedestrian might be a female professional/lawyer
The Peace Officer might be an asian-american female

Generally, one might do violence, have violence done to themselves, have violence done to someone/something they care about, witness violence happening to another, miss the act of violence completely or be held responsible for the violence of others. These possible viewpoints are ways each character might have viewed this specific instance of violence, but there's a universe of variations based on prejudice, privilege, connectedness, expectations, etc ...

Each viewpoint has been placed on a 3x5 card. A "spread" of one card from each character's deck will be dealt randomly. The spread of each character's viewpoints will comprise one example of how the scene might have been viewed by those involved.

We will then shuffle the cards and repeat the game.

2 groups, each acting out the game with 3x5 cards.

From each perspective:
what direction is the violence going?
who is the victim?

who does the violence?
who is to blame?

3 Exposition

- a. Cultures of Inquiry
- b. Techniques of Inquiry

4 Trial

We are now going to present a single round of the game you played as a court room drama. We will be the judge, attorneys and witnesses. You will be the jury.

INTRODUCTION

Judge: Court is now in session.

Prosecutor: Your honor, and Jury, we will be presenting evidence to you about a scene of violence in the US. Various witnesses will be asked to provide their account of the events that occurred. After arguments, you will be asked to deliberate on several things. First, what did each witness think about the incident of violence and their role in it? Second, what culture of inquiry did each represent? Thank you, your honor.

Defender: Good morning, Jury and Your Honor. The Prosecutor has attempted to paint a picture for you that suggests your role as the jury will be easy. It will not. After you have heard the witnesses present their versions of what has happened, you will find yourself wondering several things beyond what the Prosecutor has suggested. First, given the evidence before you, who “actually” did the violence? Who was the “victim” of the violence? And further, who was to “blame” for the violence? I think when all the evidence is before you, there will be ample room for reasonable doubt. Thank you.

Judge: Thank you for your opening remarks. Jury, you will be reminded what must be decided in this case in my instructions to you before you are sequestered. Prosecutor, would you like to call your first witness?

THE OFFICER

Prosecutor: I would like to call the Peace Officer. Officer, what did you witness?

Officer: On or about August 6, 2004 2:37pm the Driver was traveling North

down 6th Avenue going 70 MPH ...

Defender: Objection, your honor, this is speculation. The Officer cannot have known the speed of the car, and is clearly analyzing the facts.

Judge: Sustained.

Prosecutor: Please continue ...

Officer: On or about August 6, 2004 2:37pm the Driver was traveling North down 6th Avenue and struck the Dog. The owner walking the Dog. The Dog apparently got loose and ran into the street. I was controlling traffic and was unable to stop the Driver in time to prevent the accident. There was a Pedestrian that also witnessed the event.

Prosecutor: Thank you, no further questions.

Defender: Officer, you mentioned that the Dog apparently got loose. So, you do not know for sure how the Dog got into the street?

Officer: No, I was not looking in that direction. When I did notice the Dog I attempted to stop traffic, but was not able to do so in time. If only I could have stopped traffic, this could have been avoided.

Defender: Thank you.

Judge: You may step down.

THE OWNER:

Owner: This all clearly means something. There's a reason these things happen. I suppose it could be Karma, but ...

Defender: Objection, your honor, the Owner is trying to interpret the facts.

Judge: Sustained.

THE PEDESTRIAN:

Pedestrian: You know, this happens a lot. I've seen it myself. That part of the street has had quite a few accidents. I've seen them and I've heard other people ...

Defender: Objection, you honor. The comparative history of the street is not relevant to this case.

THE DRIVER:

Driver: I suppose, theoretically, the Officer could have signaled me to stop in time or the Owner could have been more careful and not let the dog in the road.

THE DOG:

Dog: Well, from across the street I could see into the window of the pet shop and there was a really fine ... Well, sometimes you just gotta do what you gotta do, you know?

Defender: So, I'm confused here. You say that you were hit by the car.

Dog: Yes.

Defender: So, did you survive?

Dog: No, I am in fact dead.

Defender: I see. Any last words?

Dog: Yes, I would actually like to thank everyone. You see, now that I am dead, I have only 1 billion reincarnations to go until Nirvana! This accident has been very good for me.

Defender: Thank you, you may step ... er, you may ... disapperate.

5 Jury Deliberations

The Jury must now attempt to decide several things.

What did each character think about the incident of violence and their role in it?

What culture of inquiry did each represent?

Given the evidence of the witnesses presented in the trial:

Who “actually” did the violence?

Who was the “victim” of the violence?

Who was to “blame” for the violence?

6 Discussion

Group Q&A, if there's time and interest.

7 Conclusion

This was a demonstration of several cultures of inquiry within the empirical setting of the court room and a participatory inquiry within the setting of the jury. The whole was a meta-participatory event that attempts to demonstrate the multiplicity and complexity of “truth” about even those events in which we are intimately involved. More than merely a claim to provide access to objective truth, or that truth is relative, the observation of the process should elucidate that truth is a map, or mental model, of an infinitely complex territory. Not only do the cultures of inquiry of the participants in events colour their experience of those phenomenon, but the questions used to illicit information from the participants further colours the resultant melange of judged perception. This judged perception must always remain provisional as new elements could always surface.

Appendix B - The Game

A scene of violence in the US
by John Bell

*I am a driver filled with anger.
I am a dog not sensing.
I am a dog owner not watching.
I am a pedestrian not caring.*

*I hit something with my car. If only I had realized the pain I'd cause.
I am hit by a car, out of my control. If only I had sensed that I was in danger.
I watched something I love be hurt. If only I had been more responsible.
I continue walking. Why should I care?*

*I could have been driving more responsibly, and not abused my power.
I could have been more aware, and not been caught up in my own world.
I could have been in more control, and not let this happen.
I could have stopped to help, and not ignored another's pain.*

*But I'm in pain too and no one helps me.
But I'm vulnerable and that means I won't always see danger.
But I'm never going to control everything and that means I can't stop the pain.
But I'm only able to do so much before it's too much.*

On a normal city street, any town on any day, there is an accident. A dog is hit by a car. The dog, dog owner and the car driver are present. Also present are a pedestrian across the street and a peace officer following the driver's car in a patrol car.

The Driver might be the cause of violence
The Dog might be the victim of the violence
The Owner might be attached to the victim
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Generally, one might do violence, have violence done to themselves, have violence done to someone/something they care about, witness violence happening to another, miss the act of violence completely or be held responsible

for the violence of others. These possible viewpoints are ways each character might have viewed this specific instance of violence, but there's a universe of variations based on prejudice, privilege, connectedness, expectations, etc ...

	The Driver
Self	I have been psychologically damaged
By Self To Others	I hate dogs running loose in the city
To Connected Others	I just ran over my neighbor's dog
To Unconnected Others	The owner seems to be suffering
Oblivious / Uncaring	It's just a dog. Who cares?
Responsible	I caused this by not paying attention

Each viewpoint has been placed on a 3x5 card. A “spread” of one card from each character's deck will be dealt randomly. The spread of each character's viewpoints will comprise one example of how the scene might have been viewed by those involved. The group then shuffles the cards and repeats the game as many times as reasonable.

The groups acting out the game tries in each round to determine from each perspective:

- What direction is the violence going?
- Who is the victim?
- Who does the violence?
- Who is to blame?
- Is the dog dead?

One could do this same exercise with characters based on the events at Columbine or any other event. Each character could legitimately view themselves from any of these viewpoints also. For example, all the characters could end up viewing themselves as the victims, or as witnesses to violence by others, or any combination of these views, perhaps even being internally conflicted between several views.

For example, one of the gunmen in Littleton Colorado could perceive violence as something they are doing to others, as violence happening to someone to whom they are connected, to someone they are not connected, as not violence or violence that they ignore. Would it matter if that gunman is one of the Trench Coat Mafia or one member of the SWAT Team? Not really. The answer you get would very likely depend on the questions you asked and how you asked them.

Trench Coat Mafia

Self	I've suffered at this school
By Self To Others	I'm going to make them suffer
To Connected Others	My friends are in pain
To Unconnected Others	These people are in pain
Oblivious / Uncaring	This is all meaningless, no one cares
Responsible	If I weren't worthless, this wouldn't have happened

SWAT Team

Self	My sense of law and order is under attack
By Self To Others	I'm going to enforce law and order
To Connected Others	My team mates are putting themselves on the line
To Unconnected Others	There's a lot of suffering going on here
Oblivious / Uncaring	I have a job to do
Responsible	I should have protected these kids

Appendix C – Directions of Violence

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