Back to the Things Themselves: 
The Relevance of Embodied Understanding for Caring Practices

Les Todres, Ph.D. 
Bournemouth University 
United Kingdom

Abstract

Amedeo Giorgi has found in Edmund Husserl’s writings a philosophically consistent way to articulate the illusions of reductionism. Giorgi, furthermore, has explored how Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy could be modified to serve the practice of human science research through a phenomenological psychology. In the context of this phenomenological psychology and in the follow-through of Husserl’s injunction, "Back to the things themselves", there is found a concrete, interrelated world of experience before self and world, mind and body, are differentiated from each other. Such an irreducible world of experience is in need of description if psychological knowledge is to be faithfully informed by an epistemological ground that gives experience its central place in psychology. This chapter explores how caring practices in applied disciplines such as psychotherapy or nursing benefit from a research approach that "goes back to the things themselves". It will particularly emphasize the importance of embodied knowing in both research and practice: how embodied openness to the "things themselves" through phenomenological research is also productive of a kind of embodied understanding that is crucial for caring practices. An embodied emphasis in phenomenological research is then shown to be adequate for a judgment-based care that requires sensitivity to transferable, intersubjective phenomena, as well as to unique persons, contexts, and practices that are always transcending rules and categories.

[...] if language did not in some way express the non-linguistic, it would have fallen into disuse long ago.

– Amedeo P. Giorgi, Theoretical Justification for the Use of Descriptions in Psychological Research.

[...] clinicians have to meet humans and their problems as they find them and so require knowledge that is concrete, person-oriented, holistic and contextual.

– Amedeo P. Giorgi, Towards a New Paradigm for Psychology.
These two quotations begin to say something about how Amedeo Giorgi has addressed both philosophical and pragmatic concerns that are relevant to the direction of the present essay: why phenomenologically-derived qualitative research findings offer the kind of knowledge that is particularly helpful to the practice of care in everyday life (be it psychotherapy, nursing, social work).

With this direction in mind, I would like to develop a view of a kind of understanding that I will refer to as "embodied relational understanding". I will consider why such understanding is important to healthcare practice, and how the findings of phenomenologically-derived qualitative research are particularly well suited for generating such practice-relevant understanding.

**Figure 1:**

Goodness of Fit

I wish to argue that there is a "goodness of fit" between "embodied relational understanding", the practice of care that is judgment-based, and an emphasis in phenomenological description that can better serve such concerns. I finally argue that phenomenologically-derived qualitative research findings can facilitate "embodied relational understanding" and judgment-based care by focusing more attention on the ways in which we express and disseminate our findings, and also by focusing more attention on the potential educative role that such findings may play in supporting the holistic development of the person of the practitioner engaged in caring practices. In order to argue this "goodness of fit", I will proceed in three steps:

1. To outline the particular view of practice that I wish to highlight: judgment-based caring practice.
2. To clarify the nature of "embodied relational understanding", drawing on the writings of Giorgi, Gadamer and Gendlin.
3. To champion a particular emphasis in phenomenologically-oriented qualitative research that could enhance "embodied relational understanding" by attending to:
   a. The way we present our findings.
   b. Their educative/transformational potential for the person of the practitioner of health and social care.

1. A consideration of judgment-based caring practice

In his book, Practice and the Human Sciences: the case for a judgment-based practice of care, Donald Polkinghorne (2004) offers a critique of a technical view of practicing care. He is concerned that this technical view is becoming unquestioned within the so called evidence-based care movement, and he wishes to offer what he believes is a more appropriate epistemological foundation for caring practice, which he calls judgment-based care. He goes back to Aristotle for help in clarifying the difference between the kinds of practices that are appropriate for the physical realm, where one is appropriately trying to make or control some aspect of the physical or natural world, and the kinds of practices that are more appropriate to the complex living situations of human beings who are seeking a life of worth and value. Within this spirit, he is critical of a narrow view of care that conceptualizes it as a technical resource to be controlled or mastered. For Polkinghorne, there is something about caring practice as a human activity in particular that needs judgment or practical wisdom and not abstract evidence. For him, everyday caring practice requires something qualitatively different than the application of technique, rules and standardized behaviors.

Max van Manen (2007) pursues the critique of a technical-rational view of practice in even stronger terms in that it: “[…] too easily involve(s) reifying what escapes re-ification, thematizing what cannot be thematized, and bringing practice within the reach of objectivist technological thought” (p. 18). He feels that this instrumental view of practice pressurizes us to accept “[…] overly simplistic ways of summarizing standards of practice, codes of ethics, and technological solutions to method that belie the tact of enquiry and the limits of control and technological procedures” (p. 19). He further notes how terms such as “excellence”, “potential” and “quality” have lost their substantive meaning and have become quantitative concerns that “can be measured in terms of outcomes, observables and standards” (p. 19).

Polkinghorne (2004) sees judgment based care as requiring:

 […] a kind of thought that can deal with complex and competing goals and take into account the timing and context of the action, as well as the unique and particular characteristics of the situation and person for whom the action is understandable. (p. 21)

Such thought focuses on interactions rather than things, requiring a consideration of multiple values that are sensitive to the intricacies of the human realm.

Polkinghorne (2004) clarifies these notions further. He declares that judgment-based care, “draws on all our human sensitivities including our emotions” (p. 77). Moreover, it "integrates background understandings, felt meanings of a situation, imaginative scenarios, prior experiences and perceptive awareness” (p. 84). Background understandings involve, “not a set of logically ordered rules about what to do and when to do it, but [are] a holistic web of understandings about how to go about and get things done in the world” (p. 113).
These arguments from Polkinghorne and Van Manen thus focus on the kind of knowing and understanding that is most appropriate for judgment-based practice. Eugene Gendlin (1974) also makes a point about the nature of practice in everyday life, and the kind of knowledge and understanding that can support such practice.

For Gendlin, everyday caring practice would benefit from various levels of knowledge, but he is worried that certain kinds of knowing can be too abstract and form what he calls a “thin pattern” which takes the place of a more detailed, “thinking further” into the “thickness of living”, that is, the alive, changing, unique and context-bound circumstance of practice situations. To quote: “If we always listen beyond what we know, we will see in a step or two, both how different and how more detailed is the matter [...]” (Gendlin, 1974, p. 3). Gendlin is cautioning against a reliance of knowing in “thin” ways about any living situation. He is worried that such “thin” knowing can lead to arrogance about engaging in practice. He does not wish to throw out the value of what he calls “thin” patterns for knowing and acting as they can be used as “aids for the much richer and moving flow that constitutes a person [...]” – and I may add, constitutes a situation.

So, attending to "much more" than thin patterns and instrumentality, a judgment-based care requires a sensitivity to transferable, intersubjective phenomena, as well as to unique persons, contexts and practices that are always transcending rules and categories. This says something about the kind of understanding that is needed here: a form of understanding that is relationally alive and open as an ongoing unfinished activity rather than as something we possess. Such understanding does not contain itself; it is not complete as if it can be simply applied in an already formed state. It needs to be mixed with some "not knowing" if it is to be present to the aliveness of living practice situations. And here we come to a consideration of the nature of embodied relational understanding.

2. Embodied Relational Understanding

In this section, I will attempt to clarify what I mean by "embodied relational understanding". In considering the relevance of Husserl’s philosophy for the development of psychology as a human science, Giorgi articulated what I see as the crucial rationale for approaching the psychological realm in a non-reductionistic way. He notes how much of psychology is based on assumptions that are taken for granted such as realism or idealism (Giorgi, 1983). He explores the implications of what Husserl meant by "going back to the matters themselves". For psychology, this would require the kind of knowledge that faithfully expresses the phenomenal realm, a realm of relational presences. The articulation of such relational presences within their living context requires the kind of description that retains this quality of phenomenal presence appearing to consciousness (Giorgi, 1986). This requires a suspension of the natural attitude (Husserl’s epoché) in order to guard the "space" within which the character of phenomenal presence can be respected on its own terms. More than this, because language can express, show and communicate phenomenal presence, it is possible that insights into the general qualities of psychological phenomena can be intuited and articulated.

Giorgi pursued a number of important implications of Husserl’s epistemology for the development of a human science approach to psychology. But the one that I want to concentrate on here, and develop further with help from Gadamer and Gendlin, is how and why phenomenological descriptions are particularly helpful sources of understanding when one is relating to the living situations of caring practice in health and social care contexts.
The overarching argument for this concerns how phenomenological description can better "sensitize" practitioners in practice: how a good description of a human phenomenon in general, such as anger, learning or forgiveness, can enable a practitioner to see better, and to relate to, the living phenomenon in practice, and to engage intelligently and sensitively with such phenomena in both general and unique ways.

In pursuing the productive relationship between phenomenologically-derived findings and their value for relating to everyday practice situations, I draw further on Husserl’s understanding of the lifeworld as a unified totality with horizons of meaning and possibilities that give any understanding its "alive source". I further draw on Gadamer’s view of understanding which, in its emphasis on "application", is centrally concerned with how knowledge stays "in touch" with the aliveness of the lifeworld as it moves in practice. I also draw on the philosophy of Gendlin to consider how the lived body is implicated in any act of relational understanding, and so reveals phenomenological insight as a kind of understanding where "knowing" meets "being", and as such, is intimate to practice.

In order to develop all this, I wish to introduce the phrase "being with that" as a phrase that can indicate the concern to "go back to the things themselves", but to do this in a way that also considers the importance of the embodied person when engaged as a practitioner of care. As such, the phrase "being with that" may provide an important clue to the kind of understanding that may be very relevant for the practice of judgment-based care. I will thus briefly tease out what may be indicated in the term: "being with that".

**Relationality:**

First of all "being with that" describes a concrete relationship between self and other, happening not just theoretically, but actually, as part of a living situation. The term "with" indicates something relational, a happening together and a "being affected". To be "related to" means that what is related, ("self" to "other") has a meaningful connection far richer, and more specific, than a world of objects mindlessly bumping into one another according to simple laws of cause and effect.

"That":

"That" indicates some phenomenon, person or situation beyond oneself – an alterity experienced in the lifeworld. "That", "there", – such as the phenomenon of another’s pain or a family situation of conflict – cannot be reduced to what we already know. If we are open to it, "that" is in excess of what we know because it is alive in time and can always surprise with something new, some new nuance, meaning or texture. The flavor of being called by such "otherness" is well expressed by certain Japanese poets and thinkers. For example, Basho says, “Learn about the pine from the pine, Learn about the bamboo from the bamboo” (Basho cited in Hirshfield, 1988, p. 120).

"That" asks us to go beyond ourselves in order to be present to what is showing itself beyond that which we are constructing. Gadamer (1989) is talking about a similar kind of openness, availability and other-orientation when he says: “For it is necessary to keep one’s gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself” (p. 268). This openness to otherness requires a certain attentiveness and personal availability. Hirshfield (1988), when writing about the mind of poetry, puts it this way:
This is a certain kind of de-centering of the self but not the de-centering of the deconstructionists. To paraphrase Giorgi (1992), it is a de-centering from the side of consciousness rather than a de-centering that pretends to eradicate consciousness or make it unnecessary. With reference to the imagination, Giorgi points out that through a de-centering from the side of consciousness: “[…] one can place oneself in a possible situation that can be actualized through effort” (Giorgi, 1992, p. 430). So "that", as the phenomena, people and situations that constitute the lively world where practice takes place, is what is attended to as part of the task of understanding – to understand "that".

"Being" or "Being There":
But "that" as the direction of understanding is not the only part that makes up the kind of understanding I wish to call embodied relational understanding. Here we come back to the word "being" in "being with that".

I now take a turn that I do not think Giorgi would choose to pursue in his practice of the psychological-phenomenological research method. In his steps of analysis, he wishes to alleviate the tendency of a researcher to project himself into the data (Giorgi, 2006). I am however suggesting that, while descriptive phenomenology should be descriptively robust in all its steps to arrive at an essential structure that focuses on clarifying psychological phenomena in general, it becomes fruitful for a health care practitioner who is utilizing the insights of phenomenological findings to re-project oneself into a living situation when the relevance of the research findings become available to the world of practice.

"Being" in "being-with-that" brings the self to "that". In being present to "that", we are not simply separate from "that". We are not, as human beings originally non-participant observers processing things deep inside. We are more immediately responsive, before distancing ourselves from the "being with". In emphasizing "being with" we bring ourselves to "that". It is not a "that" that is occurring in the space of some neutral consciousness. It is to an embodied person who is "being there" very specifically, that "that" announces itself. Gadamer, in his exposition of the nature of understanding remembers the "self" that is being there when we are present. In understanding the living situation of "that", we do not disregard ourselves. Indeed, Gadamer asserts that for understanding to be meaningful, “we must bring precisely ourselves” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 305). Gadamer further points out that in trying to understand, without bringing precisely ourselves to "that", there is no bond to that. “Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 299).

I would like to emphasize this word "bond" because it merits further reflection. The word "bond" is an embodied relational word. For there to be a "bond" for understanding, a person finds something in "that" with which they can resonate – something in "that" that is familiar to their own historical world of experience that is some variation of "that". And here we come to Gendlin’s (1962) emphasis on the importance of embodiment for making understanding significant in a world of persons. Gendlin builds on a certain trend also seen in the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962) in which understanding requires the whole perceiving body as it is related to all the fleshly textures of the world. In this respect, van Manen (2007) notes that the philosopher, Immanuel Kant had already pointed out that we can only think the
world because we have already experienced it. For Gendlin, embodied experiencing is central for "bonding" with that. Without this bonding that "comes from" relational embodied existence, we would have a knowledge that objectifies the world in a way that sees "that" – phenomena, people and situations, as alien or foreign.

In my book, Embodied Enquiry (Todres, 2007), I elaborate on Gendlin’s philosophy and how the lived body provides the fleshly historical experiences that make any human act of understanding meaningful as follows:

[...] we find a living body that inhabits situations intimately; it interweaves the realms as a matter of being, and is often lost out there in the textures, the senses, the flesh, the histories, and the meanings that come from the flowing excesses of the lifeworld. Yet it also carries personal history and prereflective sediments of historical meanings that shape its openness. One could say that embodying is where being and knowing meet [...]. (Todres, 2007, p. 20)

This is much larger than our traditional conceptions of knowing.

So the "being", or "being there" part of "being with that", emphasizes all the personal and cultural lively textures that the embodied self brings to any event of understanding. Such embodied "being there" or "embodied presence" brings the possibility of intimacy or familiarity to the unfamiliarity and possible strangeness of the "that" and its "otherness"(for example, in the psychotherapy client). As such, our own prior relation to that carries something truthful, the truth of "that" being humanly significant.

In characterizing embodied relational understanding as "being with that" we finally come to Gadamer’s notion of understanding as an open and ongoing conversation, a "play" between self and other. I would like to say just a few more words about the nature of this "play of understanding" as it helps to crystallize why embodied relational understanding is so relevant to the complexities and aliveness of practice.

**Understanding as Play between "Self" and "That":**

One of the implications of my exposition so far is that Gadamer sees understanding, not as an abstract view on things, but as a way of "being present" (Gadamer, 1998, p. 31). The play of understanding between self and other arises out of an ongoing creative tension between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar, between self and other, between the known and the fresh textures of the unknown, between the existing framework of understanding that one brings, and the new and context-specific “reality that surpasses” such a brought framework (Gadamer, 1989, p. 109); between general understandings from the past and the different understandings that come by being present to the otherness of "that" as it lives. In Gadamer’s view, understanding is always, in a sense, a new event and happening that requires the refreshment of a new potential insight or application. This is similar to what Gendlin called a "thick pattern". Understanding would be killed by the "already known" if there were not this play between the excess aliveness of "otherness" and any existing theme or "thought pattern".

This play of understanding is therefore already in practice – its essence requires one to continually bring the known, but to continually give it up in practice. Such understanding itself is a practice in that it connects self with "that otherness" in an embodied way. And this embodied way carries a certain openness in that, to understand, is to understand differently and "more" in living situations. Embodied relational understanding "stands among" rather
than "stands apart from". Also, such understanding involves what Gendlin calls "carrying forward". Embodied relational understanding does not conceptually "trap" situations as if they were frozen in the present. To quote Gendlin: "[...] we do not want our efforts to end in a consistent, stable [and] non-contradictory system. [...] this means that we must always use concept and experience, never just concepts" (Gendlin, 1974, p. 9). The challenge is how to allow the aliveness of ongoing experience to function "in play" with what we might know in any task of understanding.

And here we come back to the relevance of "embodied relational understanding" for judgment-based caring practice. Judgment-based caring practice requires "embodied relational understanding" as "being with that" for a number of reasons:

- The involvement of being with that, gives "heart" and "empathy" for caring judgments.

- The involvement of "being with that" brings the resources of the self of the practitioner into play so that judgment-based caring practice can draw on the thoughtful resources of the practitioner.

- The involvement of "being with that" gives an openness to the alive otherness of what is being addressed so that existing knowledge opens to the "thickness" and complexity of the openness that judgment-based caring practice requires.

- The involvement of "being with that" gives to understanding the resources for transforming "thin" patterns or summarized themes of knowing into sensitizing frameworks that can enter into productive play with living situations of "that".

So we come to the question of whether the active play of embodied relational understanding can be enhanced by the findings of phenomenologically-derived qualitative research. And by implication, we also come back to the question of how the findings of phenomenologically-derived qualitative research, through facilitating embodied relational understanding, can better support the practice of a judgment-based care.

How can the findings of phenomenologically-derived qualitative research help health and social care practitioners practice "embodied relational understanding"? I will approach this question by offering two ways forward, while acknowledging that there may be others:

3a) First of all, I will progress the assertion that more can be done to express the findings of phenomenologically-derived qualitative research in a way that aids practitioners to go beyond "thin" patterns of knowing so that they can engage in "embodied relational understanding". This involves the task to re-present qualitative research in more evocative ways.

3b) Secondly, I will consider why and how such findings of qualitative research can be used for the education and personal/professional development of health and social care practitioners.
3a. Re-presenting qualitative research in more evocative ways

By drawing on the work of Eugene Gendlin I have already considered how "sense-making" requires a knowing with the body, as it is the lived body that connects language to the world of experience. Such "sense-making" is not just logical and populated by bits of information, but is full of textures, “the senses, the flesh, the histories, and multiple meanings” (Todres 1997, p. 20) that cannot be summarized and is more than words can say. Such multiple meanings are there to be felt and not just to be known in abstract ways; it is not just a matter of the "head" but is also a matter of the "heart". (Hillman, 1984). Portraying experiences of self and other is thus not just a scientific concern that aims for truth or validity, but is also an aesthetic concern, which the world of art and literature knows something about. I have thus become increasingly interested in pursuing ways of re-presenting qualitative findings in a way that can show "that" – human phenomena, situations and people – in ways that can evoke their concrete and embodied occasions. The task of such re-presentation of qualitative research findings then focuses on the communicative concern to show qualities with words that work to evoke the "thick" patterns and the textures to which they point. When this is done well in writing, in literature, in theatre, readers and audiences can begin to embody the understanding that is communicated in a way that includes its experiential possibilities – an understanding from within that carries both the generalities of "what it may be like" as well as the possible unique variations and "othernesses" to which one can stay open. This emphasis in re-presenting qualitative research findings may be referred to as the "textural" dimension of articulating qualitative research findings, summarized in Figure 1 as "textured qualitative research findings".

In a previous study on the nature of self-insight in psychotherapy, (Todres, 2007) I expressed my wish for an evocative emphasis in writing up and presenting my findings as follows:

- “It would be more than a definition or series of statements about therapeutic self-insight”.
- It would tell us something that connects with universal human qualities so that the reader can relate personally to the themes.
- It would tell a story which readers could imagine in a personal way.
- It would attempt to contribute to new understanding about therapeutic self insight.
- It would not attempt to exhaust the topic but would attempt to allow it to be seen more clearly: “like shining a light which increases the reader’s sense of contact with this phenomenon without fully possessing it” (p. 49).

More recently, building on some of these sensibilities, my colleague Kate Galvin and I have been developing an approach we call “embodied interpretation” (Todres & Galvin, 2006, 2008; Galvin & Todres, 2009). It uses Gendlin’s practice of experiential focusing as a form of embodied resonance in order to become present to the worlds of our informants so that we can include a sense of thick experiential patterns in our portrayals of situations such as "caring for a life partner with Alzheimer's disease". In this respect, we found Gendlin’s (1992) "philosophy of the implicit" very helpful for taking phenomenology in a more
aesthetic direction towards a body-based hermeneutics that could go back and forth between embodied understandings and the "otherness" of "that". His thought helped us to focus much more on the epistemic body, the body that can implicitly "hold" multiple meanings and significances in ways that are more holistic and interrelated than abstract thought. Such holistic felt meanings in the body are more than thoughts and words, but can become the source of thoughts and words, and attempt to do some justice to the "more" of these meanings coming from the excess of the lifeworld of self and others. I cannot pursue here some of the challenges and nuances of this approach, but just wish to highlight a few characteristics of a more evocative focus when using language that "comes from" meanings as felt and not just thought.

It is not surprising that such pointers towards evocative writing come from poets reflecting on their work. In this respect I have been inspired by the poet Ruth Hirshfield (1988), and have modified her contributions in order to highlight two particular demands of evocative writing:

- Wholeness: this involves a concern to indicate more than is there; pointed to by some of the details; pointing towards a greater whole. This sense of the "world in a grain of sand" is also indicated in the following image of interconnectedness: "one moon shines in many dewdrops". The faculty of language to show interconnection is here emphasized. The greater wholeness can never be fully summarized; but its impact can be somewhat felt and held through the evocative power of words. Such words ask the reader or audience for their imaginative participation and to enter the embodied play between self and the otherness of "that". Such invitation to participation means that the writing, though aiming at coherence, does not wish to be written in such a way that it replaces what it is pointing to. To quote Hirshfield (1988) in relation to poetry: "[...] a good poem can never be completely entered, completely known" (pp. 31-32). Such writing is an invitation for further participation, rather than the transport of completed bits of information from one to another.

- Existentiality: this dimension refers to a desire to be faithful to that which Hirshfield (1988) calls, our "primary life", our concrete human existence, "the prospect of aging, the death of a daughter, the first winter storm in November" (p. 105). Highlighting this existential dimension, the places where we might touch our common humanity, requires a style of writing that goes back and forth between rich particular details that are happening to "this" person "there", and language that connects such specificity to its more general existential significance: for example "the vulnerabilities of illness", "the nature of human comfort". There is a certain intensity or density offered in such writing. The words are not the whole thing but, in Hirshfield’s perspective, are "entrance tokens to large and often slippery realms of being" (pp. 6-7). We are more likely to feel and remember such intensities, where the existential significance comes closer to us, and thus becomes available for our own responsiveness for caring practice. Such existential intensity may function as a significant personal resource for caring, and may fade less as a source of acting than that of the next policy guideline for caring practice.

By attending to more aesthetic, communicative concerns, representing qualitative research findings may appeal to more embodied and less cognitive dimensions of knowing in...
order to provide rich resources for the practice of judgment-based care. Attention to such aesthetic dimensions to knowing may support a judgment based care that: “depend(s) on a sense and sensuality of the body, personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say and do in contingent situations, thoughtful routines and practices, and other aspects of knowledge that are in part, prereflective, pre-theoretic and pre-linguistic” (Van Manen, 2007, p. 20).

Finally, I wish to touch on a point about the educational potential of qualitative research findings to support the personal/professional development of the practitioner of care.

3b. Practitioners' engagement with qualitative research findings for personal and professional development

This final section raises the possibility that qualitative research findings which communicate both the "head" and the "heart" of things can be transformative for the person of the practitioner of health and social care, if they are engaged with in a particular way. Let us imagine a practitioner engaging with qualitative research findings in an actively relational and embodied way. She is interested in carrying forward the process by which she and "that" intersect. Gadamer noted how such intersection is transformational in that the self does not come out of this intersection in exactly the same way that she went in. For Gadamer, we enter the play of understanding by putting ourselves at risk. To be grabbed by "that" is to allow that to affect self as a "thick pattern" in a way that is engaging and participative. What does it take, to be borne along by the subject matter, to participate in such shown findings with imagination and bodily resonance? With regard to reading relevant qualitative research, how do practitioners of care participate in understanding in personal ways that are more complex than the outcomes and conclusions of theoretical explanation – how can such responsive hospitality be facilitated? These questions raise the possibility that qualitative research findings can become more central to the education and development of health care practitioners. This direction would include a consideration of how qualitative research findings can be used in educational curricula for professionals in transformational ways that enhance emotional intelligence, context sensitivity, and empathic and ethical sensitivity. Progressing this concern requires, in my view, much more attention to facilitating an embodied experiential process by which practitioners engage with the meaning of findings that are consistent with embodied relational understanding.

Jennifer Shultz (2006) offers one interesting process for listening and entering into the meanings of others’ writings. I have modified her approach for the purpose of engaging with specifically qualitative research findings. I will briefly point to just one phase of this educative procedure in order to illustrate this direction:

1. In a group situation, participants read or listen to the findings and insights from a study.

2. Each participant highlights words or phrases that resonated bodily for them. At this stage, they just simply underline these words and phrases without stopping to reflect on choices.

3. They spend some time writing further about how they each personally relate to these words and phrases.
4. Each person reads their pieces of personal writing back to the group.

5. Participants listen to each person’s piece and each person writes down how she relates to the words offered both personally and bodily. Each person creates a poem out of her own writing.

6. All read their poems back to the group.

7. A final discussion occurs about whether, and how, their understanding of the issue has changed or not.

This is just one example of the potential for facilitating "being with that" in health and social care professionals through encountering qualitative research findings.

**Concluding Thoughts**

I wished to show a goodness of fit between judgment based care, embodied relational understanding, and qualitative research: how textured qualitative research findings can facilitate embodied relational understanding as "being with that"; and how such understanding sensitizes practitioners for judgment-based care. Consistent with Gendlin, embodied relational understanding draws on ongoing personal resources that are experiential and preconceptual, that are located in the way the body knows, where language is never alone and always mixed with what is more than language. I wish to encourage more attention to the task of formulating our qualitative research findings in a way that can sensitize practitioners to such embodied relational understanding. In facilitating "embodied relational understanding", we are then aspiring towards something larger than propositional knowledge and evidence. It is not a matter of making a picture of something outside of oneself. In conclusion, I believe that one of the distinctive values of phenomenologically-derived qualitative research will be better understood to the degree that we champion its capacity for facilitating judgment based care based on "embodied relational understanding".

**References**


Notes