



Glossary of Concepts and Terminology

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Introduction: The MIECAT approach to arts based inquiry

The MIECAT approach to arts based inquiry is informed by values that relate to experiencing, relationality, multimodality, and emergence. For Inquirers/researchers using the MIECAT approach, the emergent outcomes are part of an inquiry that is on-going and seeks to find approximations to meanings, choices and actions that are continuously germane to the contexts in which we find ourselves.

The Inquiry Approach

The MIECAT approach to inquiry grew out of a collaborative research activity initiated by four researchers in the mid 1990's at La Trobe University. The key features of this approach to working with others in contexts such as healthcare, community, therapy, education and research are firstly that it is a participatory process. MIECAT's form of inquiry is focused on the wish to understand and make sense of experiencing, and aims for constructions of meaning that lead to choices of ways of being in the world.

It is a multi-modal, arts-based and dialogical epistemology where cycles of inquiry generally begin with representations or expressions of lived experience, rather than with hypotheses or problems. It is an emergent form of inquiry which is flexible and responsive, informed by the **values** of relationality, multimodality, emergence and experiencing. Inquiry **procedures** are practical ways of actioning the values and are applied in support of furthering and scaffolding an inquiry, are adaptive and responsive to circumstance.

An inquiry may include all, or only some of the procedures applied in any sequence responsive to the particularities of the inquiry. For instance this may include: accessing experiencing; choosing an access point, the creation of multi-modal expressions of experience; phenomenological descriptions of these expressions whilst bracketing out what is thought or understood; identifying resonances to the multi-modal expressions; reducing from descriptions and resonances to key elements and clusters;

Intersubjectivity

A core value of MIECAT is that we are **relational beings**. We as individuals do not exist in, nor are we formed in, isolation. Rather we are all connected and are inescapably in an intersubjective relationship with the world (including human and non-human beings in the social, cultural, political and ecological matrixes). In this way we assume that all our **lived experiencing** is relational and Intersubjectivity has to do with both being in relationship and knowing relationally.

When we engage with our lived experiencing of others/world, we are opening up a dialogue of embodied felt experiencing. The intersubjective dialogue has to do with perceiving, **being present** to and responding to another/others. This assumes a connectivity and interaction which is at a different level than spoken dialogue; it is at a level of feeling, sensing, resonating, thinking, and responding. Intersubjective dialogues are fluid, shifting, **emergent**, and ever becoming.

Intersubjective dialogues inform all inquiries. Meaning is made in the meeting of self and other where a dialogue of resonance takes place. The place of intersubjective meeting and dialoguing is an evolving place of co-creation or **co-construction of meaning** where we can move towards connection and understanding. Intersubjectivity has to do with what is of me, what is of you, and what is co-created by us.

Companioning

Companioning (the verb) refers to the actions undertaken with others (usually inquirers) that are informed by MIECAT's emphasis on remaining descriptive, non-judgmental and non-interpretive, being attuned to the other and to one's own resonances and responding to the other in different modalities in service of the inquirer.

This means that the inner and interactive experience is one of constant adaptation or improvisation, where choices are made to respond or not, and how to respond. When there is a sense of being attuned to oneself and the other in the relational field, an inquirer is likely to feel heard, seen, and understood.

Inquiries can proceed in many relational contexts, including the singularity of the companion–inquirer dyad, in group contexts and can take on various forms including co-companioning and co-inquiring.

Procedures of Inquiry

Procedures are, in essence, practical ways of actioning the values and provide a means to support and scaffold an inquiry, as well as to provide bearings during an inquiry as well as articulate and track the process of an inquiry. Procedures relevant to Unit 1 are included below.

1. Access point

When inquiring into lived experiencing of any present moment, or of any aspect of our experiencing, we identify a potential access point from which the inquiry might proceed. This involves a choice to foreground an aspect of the experience. This may be an outstanding or significant aspect of the experience, an image, a sound, a feeling, an embodied knowing, a part of an artwork or of a conversation. In essence anything that resonates strongly with us, speaks to us, beckons us, intrigues us or feels of interest.

2. Expression

When these foregrounded experiences, felt sensings or resonances are in our awareness and multi-modally expressed, they can be opened up for exploration. These expressions are often more pre-reflective and hence the beginning of a process leading to identifying more coherent meanings. Whilst verbalization is one recognized form of expression, as art makers we know that all modes are ways of giving form to and languaging our embodied experiencing.

3. Description

The task of stating exactly what is seen or heard in an expression is called **phenomenological description**. It is a particular task, the purpose of which is to allow the expression in its own form to be seen as directly as possible as it presents to consciousness.

In an inquiry, the value of collaboration and companioning is to support the inquirer to the edge of what they know. We can do this by noticing what arises and describing it in an ongoing way, this is **maintaining a descriptive attitude**. In this work of maintaining a descriptive attitude we do not always stay with what is known and comfortable, rather we make choices of describing things we notice

which may be uncomfortable, dissonant, or lesser known. Being present to something new or unknown is often a step toward meaning making.

It is in **descriptions** of multi-modal expressions and experiences within an inquiry that **key elements** are often identified.

Bracketing: In and Out.

Bracketing is an inherent part of relating to another person, entity or to an artwork/expression. Choices about what takes our attention, what we focus on and attend to, what we say and how we respond as a companion are constantly being made when we are in relationship.

In a companioning relationship, these choices are related to what feelings, thoughts or responses arise, and may be offered to the inquirer (bracketing in) or held aside and not offered (bracketing out). This is always a process of discerning what is appropriate for the inquirer. So often it is necessary to hold aside responses (bracket out) to avoid interpretation or bringing opinions or judgments into play.

Initially it may be quite challenging to bracket out what we think we know in order to be present and attend to what is in front of us experientially. We do need to be attentive to our experiencing and note our responses. This is important as we need to constantly make choices as to what and how much to bracket in of ourselves.

The work of being present to others (including expressions) and staying with what emerges in inquiry, and responding to others, depends on bracketing in (and out) our lived experiencing of the intersubjective dialogue we are a part of.

4. An Intersubjective response: ISR

Within the intersubjective space of an inquiry our response to resonant experiencing may be given any multimodal form and offered to an inquirer (or vice versa). This form, which could be in any mode... such as a drawing, a poem, a photo, a piece of writing, a letter, a collage, a movement gesture, develops from the companion's resonance to the experience of being with an inquirer and the material arising in the inquiry or in the companioning relationship.

There are different kinds of intersubjective responses which serve different purposes. An intersubjective response may be ongoing and incidental offered up in the moment, or it may be considered and created over time. A safe way to respond may be to remain descriptive. Another way of responding may be to offer your resonant experience, or possibly offer a challenge.

At times the response may be to the relationship between companion and inquirer rather than to the inquiry. This can often help in teaching or exploring the value of intersubjective responding.

Reflecting on the experience of giving and receiving intersubjective responses also holds value. Sharing what it felt like to give and/or receive, what the intentions or purpose in giving were, what was gained from it, and how the receiver felt met or not met, can help further the inquiry.

This can teach us something about how best to attune and attend to our resonances. It can also teach us something about how we intersubjectively respond to our resonances and make choices around issues like when to respond, what procedures or modalities to engage, and what type of response to make.

5. Key elements

Key elements are a form of reduction of accrued materials generated during an inquiry (data), or from within a particular expression and supports the focusing of the inquiry towards signification or meaning. Key elements may be words, sounds, gestures, movements, feelings, sensings, images which somehow rise to the surface of an inquiry and feel significant, unfamiliar, intriguing, and/or unknown.

They may be elements which are repeated (such as a shape, a colour, a word), or may feel significant because they take your attention or call out to you. Choices related to significance may be based on the emphasis that can, for example, be indicated verbally by emotional tone, bodily through a physical reaction, visually by form, size, hue or saturation of an image.

Key elements will in some way hold resonance for the companion and/or inquirer. Key elements are potentially valuable **access points** for further inquiry in cycles of amplification or reduction.

6. Clustering

Clustering is a form of reduction and is a means of managing large amounts of information (and data) particularly key elements. Key elements are the first form of reduction where words, feelings, images, gestures, soundings, or sensing may be extracted from any form of multimodal expression.

These may be collected into clusters on the basis of their sensed connectedness or shared meaning. Groups or clusters of information often lead to topics which hold the major elements of meaning structures in a passage of the inquiry. Clusters may be reduced further to **titles** and may begin to point to topics, themes or become the basis for a creative synthesis

A FEW MORE PROCEDURES

Mapping

The procedure of Mapping is a process of amplification. It marks a shift from general inquiry into a consideration and reflection on what is now known. In this capacity its purpose is to facilitate a movement towards clarifying gains in understanding and making conceptual links which may ultimately lead to making choices for change or actioning new knowings

The access point/topic for a mapping may be a cluster/cluster title that feels particularly resonant, a thematic statement, a key new knowing, or the inquiry topic itself, among other things. A mapping differently displays the contents of an inquiry by posing structured questions to be considered and addressed in the context of an inquirer's broader relational experiencing. The questions are about what happens, and brings into awareness the needs, emotions, thinking, values and conflicts that may be attached. These questions are: What happens; when does it happen; With whom does it happen, Where in the world does it happen; What sensations/images/sensings are present ; What emotions are present; What needs are present; What behavior manifests; What values and/or value conflicts are present.

Mapping, or parts of a mapping, may also be explored multimodally.

Relational patterns of being, Thematic statements

Relational patterns of being define our ways of being in relationship, we probably have a limited number of relational patterns of being. A relational pattern will be a repeated way of being in significant contexts of lived experience. Relational patterns may play out in slightly different ways in different relational/situational contexts.

A thematic statement is a succinct statement of how a person characteristically functions in specific relational/situational contexts (e.g. In intimate relationships, with colleagues, with friends). There may be a number of connected, situation specific themes in a relational pattern of being which when considered together may lead to a fuller sense of connected knowing. Thematic statements are specifically relevant to a therapeutic context or personal research inquiry contexts.

Creative synthesis

A creative synthesis is a multimodal expression which describes experiential understandings gained through an inquiry in a movement from patterned understandings into synthesized meaningfulness. It is also a search for the most elegant, aesthetically right, and authentic way of representing coherent meaningfulness gained and articulating what is important. A creative synthesis is the last integrative task of an inquiry.