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# Conducting Hermeneutic Research: The Address of the Topic

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## Abstract

The conduct of research as guided by philosophical tenets of hermeneutics, in particular the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, is a complex and sophisticated endeavor. In this paper, we offer that one of the things that guides the inquiry is the topic and that most often topics for discovery arrive with the experience of an address. We discuss the notion of the address of the topic, how a researcher discerns a topic to be studied and, from this address, develops appropriate research questions that help to inform how the study will be conducted.

## Keywords

address, Gadamer, hermeneutic research, philosophical hermeneutics, phronesis, research topics, truth

“Understanding begins when something addresses us” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 299). The conduct of a research study, guided by the tenets of Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, rarely has a definitive starting point or endpoint, but if one had to delineate a place where inquiry begins, it is often around the experience of being addressed personally about something at work in one’s life. An address is the feeling of being caught in some aspect of the world’s regard, of being called or summoned. In this paper, we speak to the experience and importance of the address of a topic in the working out of a hermeneutic inquiry.

## What is an Address?

Addresses catch us off guard and break through our regular routines. They cause us to pause and take note, ask not that we speak or do something immediately, but rather that we stop and listen.

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It is through this process of listening, or what Bruns (1992) called “reading with our ears” (p. 157), that the topic of inquiry arrives. To listen when we are addressed means that we are vulnerable and open, that we are prepared to be guided by a topic and its own form of address, rather than assumed versions of it, or by a pre-determined method. It is not the case that there is not a method in hermeneutics, but rather, that *method serves the topic and is informed by the topic*. The question becomes one of how we serve the topic in a disciplined way. How are we to be disciplined by the topic? In other words, the topic asks for rigour from us, an attentiveness, and a discipline to stay with it and stay true to it.

An address functions to interrupt or unsettle our everyday taken-for-grantedness of things. This is why it arrives typically in the form of a question or set of questions. As Dunne (1993) explained: “There is often a *suddenness* about it that makes us say that a question ‘comes’ to us, that it ‘arises’, or ‘presents itself’” (p. 135). There is a case, though, that an address might not always be sudden; instead, it may have lingered for years and nagged in maybe not quite noticeable ways. However, there is a process of actually “waking up” to this or starting to pay attention to it. Bergum (1991) explained what it is that generates questions, and the effects they have:

Questioning indicates the existence of an unsettled issue, a difficult matter, an uncertainty, a matter for discussion. It also invites a reply, a dialogue, a searching out of opportunities and similarities. It opens possibilities and leads, in some sense, to uncertainty, for it throws what may have been thought secure into dis-equilibrium or imbalance. (p. 57)

The address that occurs is a substantive one. We are hailed by subject matter, or better perhaps a *subject that matters* so that, when we are addressed, we are obligated to respond, not in “any old fashion,” but to respond to the best of our abilities, to do the right thing, in the right way, as Gadamer would say.

When a topic shows itself, it haunts us, because it also “hides” itself. It is, as Bergum has alluded to, shrouded in mystery. As a result, we are called to the mystery of the topic, to do justice to the questions that it can raise in us, to approach it care-fully, with both curiosity and suspicion, suspense, and intent, discipline and free play. In hermeneutics, tenants with proper names inhabit topics; they are things of human concern, and also, things that have concern for us, that is, living things that literally make a difference in our lives.

Address, as experienced, can be a breathtaking and breath-sustaining gift. When it arrives it asks that the researcher suffer the mysteries of the topic - and this means to put what they believe at risk, to be open to learning from risking what matters, and most importantly, to speak of this in human terms, to do well by “the tenants” that greet you at the portal. Thus, the servitude demanded by a topic is not primarily methodical, but rather ethical in nature (Caputo, 1993); it is a call of our conscience, that comes with an obligation to respond to the *call of what should be done*, and not simply, as in the natural sciences, what can be done.

Obligation is the event of someone; of something personal in the midst of this inarticulate hum...Events happen anonymously, like the roar of the surf, while obligation is like the cry of a small child who has lost his way on the beach calling for help. (Caputo, 1993, p. 246)

The obligation to respond to the call of the topic is not simply a question of "how do I broach my topic?" but rather, "how do I cultivate what is already there?" — existing, speaking, opinionated, teasing and teeming with mystery. In responding to this address, there is a sense of an opening, or as Heidegger might have suggested, a clearing, and the promise of being transformed by a living, provocative conversation that was already underway. Conversational topics, then, have entrails; they are historically located, and we must listen carefully to pick up on the entrails. In this way, the topics are not new; they are already at play. Hermeneutic inquiry demands that, as late arrivers to a conversation, we both let what is at play move us forward, and that we join in moving it forward.

### The Substance of a Topic

What constitutes a topic? In practice professions, such as nursing, social work, psychology, and education, topics are often grounded in the field of practice. They have a place, a geographical territory so to speak, in which they dwell. For example, a psychologist might be struck by the notion of shame in eating disorders, a nurse by the experiences of having nursed children who sometimes die, an educator by the coding and naming of "slow learners," or a social worker by the issue of child abuse. Practitioners *suffer these things in their practice*.

Within each practice, there are as many topics as there are questions, but not all topics are experienced as a form of address. Even the ones that do address us are partially hidden from us because of our *prejudices*, as Gadamer (1969/1989) would say, or to paraphrase Heidegger (1962), by our practical involvement with the things themselves. To use his example, one cannot properly notice or understand running for the bus when one is running for the bus. One starts to notice a topic, when one is "pulled up short" (Gadamer, 1969/1989), when we miss the bus, so to speak, and are left breathless in its disappearing exhaust. In the same way, one is not often aware of health except in its absence (Gadamer, 1996). Unless something like this happens to us — *and* we do not *will* it to happen — we often continue in our practices in unquestioning ways, assuming taken-for-granted discourses and ways of being around what we do in everyday practice. After all, we have caught the bus many times have we not? We have been successful in our run. It is, however, the disruption of success in our everyday practices that allows a topic to emerge, in completely familiar, but also strange and disrupting ways.

For example, one of the authors (Moules, 2002, 2003, 2009a, 2009b) was involved in family therapy work and practiced using therapeutic letters as a routine part of the clinical work. It continued to amaze her to witness the power of the written communication in a practice that had its tradition in the power of talk, and yet the written communication seemed to have a different and sometimes even stronger influence. She was struck with how even family members who might not immediately been seen as particularly "literary," were captivated by the letters and moved to extremes of keeping them in bedside drawers or, in one case, framing them. This disruption of the familiar and the kind of amazement that goes with it, a puzzlement, wondering, and passion for understanding, represents the call of topics.

As we have said, discerning what constitutes a topic requires that we first listen to its call, and then to work out how we might best answer. At times, the topics are too immense and unanswer-

able; these do not lend themselves to a hermeneutic study. If the topic is, for example, “why do children die?” one can imagine that this is not a question that any amount of hermeneutic research (or any other kind of research) could offer an answer. However, inside of that existential and unanswerable question lies other topics and questions that can be addressed, such as “How might we understand oncology nurses’ experiences of working with children who sometimes die?” or “What is it like for the parents of children who die, or the grandparents of children who die?” Each of these topics is different, but the same in this way: each requires the “voice of the other” (Risser, 1997). For us to understand, each requires that we engage with those who have lived through the experience so that we might learn from them.

Topics involve a phenomenon or sometimes many phenomena, yet hermeneutic research is not the same as pure phenomenological research in that the goal is not to essentialize, define, or even simply describe the topic. The goal is not to carve away at all the extremities of the phenomenon of interest to reach an essence or core, to achieve an uncontaminated description of it stripped of its context. Rather, the desire is to conserve the topic in all of its complexity, in the words of Caputo, “to restore it to its original difficulty” (1987, p. 1). As stated, very often our practices go unnoticed and unexamined, lost to discourse, assumption, and involvement; often they remain in the state of being taken-for-granted. When the address of a topic arrives, it troubles something and problematizes it. When this happens, the work becomes about “exoticizing the domestic” (White, 1993, p. 35), taking what is assumed and unquestioned and looking at it as something new and exotic. This involves looking at it from fresh perspectives, trying to understand it differently, while still preserving the topic’s integrity, the whole of it, as it lives in the world.

The clay bowl resting on the table in front of me meets my eyes with its curved and grainy surface. Yet, I can only see one side of that surface - the other side of the bowl is invisible, hidden by the side that faces me. In order to view that other side, I must pick up the bowl and turn it around in my hands, or else walk around the wooden table. Yet, having done so, I can no longer see the first side of the bowl. Surely I know that it still exists; I can even feel the presence of that aspects which the bowl now presents to the lamp on the far side of the table. Yet, I myself am simply unable to see the whole of this bowl all at once. Moreover, while examining its outer surface, I have caught only a glimpse of the smooth and finely glazed inside of the bowl. When I stand up to look down into that interior, which gleams with curved reflections from the skylight overhead, I can no longer see the sunglazed outer surface. This earthen vessel thus reveals aspects of its presence to me only by withholding other aspects of itself for further exploration. There can be no question of ever totally exhausting the presence of the bowl with my perception; its very existence as a bowl ensures that there are dimensions wholly inaccessible to me - most obviously the patterns hidden between its glazed and unglazed surface, the interior density of its clay body. If I break it into pieces, in hopes of discovering these interior patterns or the delicate structure of its molecular dimensions, I will have destroyed its integrity as a bowl; far from coming to know it completely, I will simply have wrecked any possibility of coming to know it further, having traded the relation between myself and the bowl for a relation to a collection of fragments. (Abram, 1996, p. 51)

In looking to a topic, to understand a topic while conserving its complexity, we are not searching for an essence; rather this is an act of truth-seeking - - of looking for what might be true in the topic. This does not mean to imply that there is one "Truth" to be known about topics but rather that we stay true to the work of aletheia in unconcealing topics in all of their messiness and richness.

### The Hermeneutic Notion of Truth

We admit, up front, that any discussion of truth is difficult and tricky, partly because truth in research, and this holds for a lot of inquiry that would be called "qualitative," is often thought of *only* as correspondence between thought and world, between an "inner" and "outer" representation of the thing itself. There is no inner and outer in hermeneutic research, in the sense of an unbridgeable chasm between self and world. We are, as Heidegger (1927/1962) maintained, always in the world, and hermeneutic research is always about understanding, about what it means to be in the world in a particular way. This is to say that, as practitioners, we are deeply involved in our practices, and it is only through our practical, everyday involvement that the truth, that is, the *meaning of something*, becomes available at all (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Wrathall, 2013).

Truth, at least the truth about being human and human practice, is also tricky because it is located in time and place. It can and does change (and stay the same) over time and between places. Hermeneutic truth is plural, not singular, in this way: *There is not one right way* to help all patients recover from cancer, for example, or a single method for helping every child learn to read. At the same time, *not every way is right*. We *can* get it wrong; we can make people sicker in trying to help them heal. We can make learning to read impossible; while trying to teach, we can deceive ourselves thoroughly and fall into untruth (Wrathall, 2013) in the very pursuit of truth. The history of nursing and education is littered with such examples. Finally (here at least), truth is tricky in hermeneutic work because it disappears as it appears. We never get "the whole truth and nothing but the truth," because *truth is both revealed to us and concealed from us at once*, as is the bowl in the Abram's (1996) example above. This is why Gadamer, following his teacher Heidegger, appropriated the notion of truth as aletheia, for hermeneutic work.

Hermeneutic work is more about conservation than preservation. To preserve something is to hold it in all its sameness, to protect and save it from spoiling, and changing, to *kill it*, whereas to conserve something means to *keep it alive*, to keep it from being damaged, lost or wasted (*Preserve, Conserve*, n.d.). In our efforts to conserve a topic, to not allow it to be lost or forgotten as something simply accepted, the unconcealment and enlivening that comes with truth necessarily comes into play. Hermeneutics is the practice of *aletheia*, the Greek word for "the event of concealment and unconcealment" (Caputo, 1987, p. 115). Heidegger referred to aletheia as *unhiddenness*, in relation to that which is hidden (Coltman, 1998). Aletheia first occurs when we are addressed, when something opens which was once closed, when we become aware of something that was not there as being there. Aletheia can be represented by the metaphor of opening the lid of a well, of flipping the lid open and letting it rest so one can look into what lies beneath it. In this opening of one side, another side is closed, for with every opening there is closure and some things are necessarily left behind. Aletheia comes from *Lethe*, which is a river in Hades, the water of which when drunk produces oblivion of the past; thus it is called the "river of

forgetting” (Hoad, 1986). Lethe is hiding, concealment, amnesia, and it is also tied, etymologically, to the word lethal. Aletheia works against what is dead; it is about enlivening and remembering. Aletheia is the clearing of things into the mystery beneath; it is the “ongoing, historical, epochal process by which things emerge from concealment into unconcealment” (Caputo, 1987, p. 177). The three meanings then of aletheia are a portal or opening, an enlivening, and a remembering. When topics address us, they open something, they call on us to remember why it is that certain things matter, and they ask us to bring these things alive in the here and now of our lives.

### **The Centrality of the Notion of Phronesis to Hermeneutic Work**

Gadamer was committed to staying close to concrete, factual life. His approach focused on *understanding life as it is lived* and, for Gadamer, that meant achieving an understanding of how to act well in concrete, particular circumstances. This is why he based his notion of understanding on the form of knowledge the Greeks called phronesis, because it provided him with a notion of practical knowledge, knowledge in action, that remains *experiential* through and through (Davey, 2006). Dunne (1993) elaborated:

...phronesis is a habit of *attentiveness* that makes the resources of one’s past experience flexibly available to one, and at the same time allows the present situation to ‘unconceal’ its own particular significance - which it may do comfortably within the terms of one’s experience or else only by evincing as insight, which while it could not occur without one’s past experience, still transcends, and so enriches it. (pp. 305-306)

So while it is true that we can be struck by something, addressed in a way that opens a topic for us, it is only through a “habit of attentiveness” that we can keep the topic open, that we can follow the direction implied in the questions that arise, and learn from the event of being addressed. The role of deliberation in this process is key, and holds an important position in Gadamer’s (1989) description of phronesis. In the following, we offer examples of the work of phronesis in its experiential understanding of “life as it is lived” in everyday practices.

### **Examples of Topics and How They Arrived**

#### **Example A**

*Doubled and Silenced: Grandparents’ Experiences of Childhood Cancer* (Moules, Laing, McCaffrey, Tapp, & Strother, 2012; Moules, McCaffrey, Laing, Tapp, & Strother, 2012) Working in pediatric oncology, both Laing and Moules know firsthand how cancer is a family affair. Childhood cancer affects, not only a cell, but a body, a life, relationships, and communities. There has been much research done on the experiences of siblings of children with cancer and parents, but very little attention to the extended family, in this case, the grandparents. A part of the address of this topic was that, a few years ago, Moules had the experience of having her only child in the Intensive Care Unit due to an acute cardiac crisis. He is also the only grandchild of her parents and she became aware of how her parents were not only suffering and worrying for their grandson, but also their own daughter and her fears and concerns. They, however, did not want to burden her with their worries so this doubled concern was suffering silently and alone.

Grandparents of children with cancer live this duality and the study invited voice to an experience that had been, to some extent, silenced.

### Example B

*“It’s not just camp”*: *Understanding the Meaning of Children’s Cancer Camps for Children and Families* (Laing, 2012; Laing, 2013; Laing & Moules, 2013; Laing & Moules, 2014; Laing & Moules (in press); Laing & Moules (in press)). Laing credits a short film about cancer camp, shown in the second year of her undergraduate nursing degree, as the impetus to get into the field of pediatric oncology. It was a simple film showing children with cancer attending camp, supplemented by interviews with several children, and nurses who were attending as camp counselors. While the details are forgettable, she never forgot that moment in time when, as she described, “pediatric oncology chose me.” As she traversed through her clinical career in pediatric oncology, Laing was struck by how important camp was for kids with cancer and their families. She never understood why camp was so important, why the kids started talking about summer camp shortly after Christmas trying to gauge the likelihood they could go the same week as their friends, or that they wouldn’t be too sick to go for one of the weeks. While she did not understand why, the fact that camp seemed such a profound experience for most kids and families always stuck with her. After deciding to take on doctoral studies, and struggling at first to identify a topic for research, Laing eventually came back to the idea of camp. She wanted to understand what it was that made camp so special, so important for these families, and why it mattered. It was camp, after all, that had claimed her in the first place.

### Example C

*Investigating the Disappearance of the “Slow Learner”* (Williamson, doctoral study in progress) (Williamson & Field, 2014; Williamson & Paul, 2012a, 2012b). As someone who, as a student, struggled academically in ways that would align with Alberta’s current definitions of educational disability, as a parent of a child with a Down Syndrome and as a teacher/coordinator of disability services at a large urban high school, Williamson had been experiencing disability for most of his life. His impetus for entering doctoral studies was to interpret the assumptions and practices involved in working with slow learners, a particular category of students who are predicted by way of intelligence testing to struggle in school but for whom the Albertan special education system has granted no formal support. Williamson has been teaching in an instructional tier aimed at these students for many years and has come to see how this category on the border of disability exposes the frequent rigidity of educational thinking about disability and intellectual potential. Though tools meant to address student diversity and disability categories can, ironically, become unwieldy, imposing further restraint on a system that is already too inflexible for all students. Despite this, Williamson has also been privileged to bear witness to the transcendent moments when generous teaching practices meet engaged learners and disability categories, at least in their deficit framings, disappear. It is the appearing and disappearing of categories that finally called out to Williamson, who is also a life-long fan of detective fiction, as way of framing the complexities of this topic. He has chosen to present his research in this area as a detective story: *“The Case of the Disappearing/Appearing Slow Learner.”*

### Example D

*Understanding Nurse-Patient Relationships on Acute Mental Health Units, Buddhist Perspectives* (McCaffrey, 2012; McCaffrey, Raffin Bouchal, & Moules, 2012). While working in an interdisciplinary position on a mental health unit, McCaffrey was struck by contrasting perceptions of how nurses did their work. Nurses saw themselves as having good therapeutic relationships with patients, while team members including occupational therapists, social workers and psychiatrists often felt frustrated that nurses seemed under-informed about patients and their work with them was undirected. After starting to explore more deeply the question of how nurses work with patients on mental health units, McCaffrey became aware of how much his nursing practice was informed by an earlier experience of working in a therapeutic community, in which relationship as the medium of care and change was paramount. The topic was, at the same time, formed by a study of Zen Buddhist traditions of thought and practice, which offered new ways of looking at nursing. Obvious affinities between Buddhism and nursing, such as practicing with suffering and compassion, became a starting point for deeper and more complex exploration.

### Example E

*Marked by Loss: Pediatric Oncology Nurses' Experiences of the Death of a Child* (Morck, doctoral study in progress). Morck's (2009) previous work, which will be described in the following section was looking at the emotional marks that happen to psychiatric nurses after hearing stories of trauma and suffering. As her clinical work shifted to the area of oncology rather than mental health, she became addressed by the impact on pediatric oncology nurses when children die as they can do in this population. The work of Rashotte (2005) in *Dwelling With the Stories That Haunt Us* spoke to her about the ways that loss haunts and marks, not just the family of children with cancer, but also those professionals who care for them.

### Speaking for the Address

How do you write about address? Topics start somewhere and most often they start with an instance. This instance needs to be described in the work as a way of locating and populating the topic with a living example that shows it for all its power. An example of this is the paper published in the *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, "Isn't All Oncology Hermeneutic?" (Moules, Jardine, McCaffrey, & Brown, 2013). Although the paper does not reflect a research study, it is a response to the critique that has been made about the relatively small numbers of participants that are often used in hermeneutic research, and an argument about the fit of hermeneutics as a research method that attempts to understand practice and phenomena that arise within practice. The authors of this work start by describing an instance that gave rise to the discussion – an arrival of the topic. In this case, the topic was about hermeneutics, numbers, power, and verification through numbers in contrast to the "fecundity of the individual case" (Jardine, 1992). Throughout the paper then, the discussion of theory and philosophy had to also be instantiated and the authors did so through two very powerful descriptions of the experience of an oncologist and his patients.

In the introduction of topics in hermeneutic research, most often there is a story around the arrival of the topic, a narrative of dialectic with the topic and a reason as to why the topic matters



to the researcher and an instantiation of the meaningfulness and call of the topic. In a master's thesis hermeneutic study by Morck (2009) entitled "*Right There, in the Midst of it with Them*": *Impacts of the Therapeutic Relationship on Nurses*, she was attempting to understand the topic of the impacts on mental health nurses of hearing stories of pain, suffering, and trauma. In the thesis, she recounted being a young, new nurse and starting her work in a hospital inpatient mental health unit. Very early in her career, she recalled encountering one of the patients she was working with cowering in the corner of her room. As she approached and engaged in conversation with the patient, she was to hear a terrible story of abuse where the patient claimed that the rain outside the window smelled of urine. Following this seemingly incomprehensible statement, Morck gently knelt down with the patient and asked her more about how the rain smelled like urine. The patient proceeded to tell her an event she remembered: she was five years old, just raped by her father and his friend, thrown down the steps, urinated on, and then they left out the door. It was raining outside. Morck discussed how this instance was one of many that had a profound impact on her as a new and young nurse hearing of such suffering. Hearing stories like this one and countless others was then the address that called her to her research, a topic full of complexity and obligation to do well with it.

Topics cannot just matter to the researcher alone; they must be something relevant in the world. They are not selfish indulgences, trying to work out something individually for individual curiosity and gain, but rather a working out that is meaningful in relation to the phenomena that surround it. It is not just Morck who experienced the weight of hearing and bearing stories of pain and suffering but other psychiatric nurses who hear and bear the same responsibility - - and it is not just psychiatric nurses. Social workers bear witness to stories of violence and abuse. Teachers hear stories of children's child abuse, stories of torture and escape from war torn countries. "Vicarious trauma" (see for e.g., Figley, 1995; Mathieu, 2011) is not owned by one profession.

### **Asking Questions of the Address: Developing Research Questions**

Out of topics, one needs to narrow and focus a research question. In hermeneutics, there is a particular kind of flavor to the question. One would not necessarily seek an ontological question such as "What is something," as hermeneutics is not in search of phenomenological essences. It is not intended to shave off extremities to narrow something down to a definition of what it is or is not. Rather than definition or explanation, it is in search of understanding and interpretation, looking for possible and good ways to understand a particular topic.

More hermeneutic in intent than a "what is" question are questions that imply interpretation. A question such as "how might we understand the meaning of children's cancer camps for children and families?" would be a question that aims for meaning, interpretation, and understanding rather than assessment or measurement of impact.

In a similar way, hermeneutics does not set out to develop theories or templates so a research topic that might be described as, for example, "Developing a Theory of New Social Workers Learning" would not be consistent with the way we have taken up hermeneutic research. The title of the study and the guiding research question then must show integrity with the philosophy that informs it. This is an important point of congruency. If one develops a question that is

unanswerable from a hermeneutic perspective, such as “Why do children die?” the credibility of the work is compromised and incomprehensible.

The process of determining one definitive research question is often one that is under the gaze and demand of funding bodies and granting bodies, but in many ways, it is counterintuitive to hermeneutics. Questions beget questions and the answer to a question is only one response. Gadamer (1960/1989) suggested that hermeneutics is the answer to a question that could have been answered differently. The research question that began the research is sometimes forced to change, given the shifts in thinking that arise as the researcher engages with the data. Research questions are only intended to guide the research and serve the topic and often as the study progresses, the question becomes clearer.

### **Speaking to the Address: What Constitutes Data in Hermeneutic Research?**

Understanding *begins* with an address but it only just begins there. Understanding about a topic has to be cultivated. Everything is potential data if it helps to further the interpretation of the questionability of the topic. Data may come in the form of photographs, art, poetry, textbooks, policy, newspaper articles, scholarly literature, philosophical texts, literary texts, conversations, or any other medium. Address spreads outwards as the interconnections of the topic become apparent. It is another mark of the relevance of effective hermeneutic work when a topic is seen to live in worlds of shared cultures.

One can conduct a hermeneutic study without the traditional qualitative method of interviewing participants, but there has to be a good demonstration that researchers have gone beyond only their own perception and reflections of the topic. Very often however, this kind of research strives towards involving conversation, the Latin of which is “*conversa*” which means to turn around together. Gadamer (1960/1989) took up the notion of dialogue as central to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is dialectic, a “fusion of horizons” which cannot happen alone. For example, to understand a topic such as grandparents’ experiences of childhood cancer, there are many portals of understanding but the most obvious is by engaging in research conversations with grandparents directly.

As mentioned, often in hermeneutic research, data is collected through interviews. In conducting interviews, one must consider the issue of the selection of participants, and the nature, skill, and focus of interviews to collect rich data that is fertile for interpretive analysis, and very necessary in the conduct of this kind of research. Understanding only begins with an address; the address then summons the researcher to move into the conduct of the study in order to obtain answers to the questions that arise.

### **Summary**

In the bigger picture of the conduct of hermeneutic inquiry, we start here with the experience of “address” - - the ways one is called by topics, invited into positions of curiosity and wonder, tethered by what is known, and untethered by the possibilities of what remains to be discovered. Address is the call to dis- and un-covery, as well as the call to recovery of what was forgotten. It

is the beacon that summons and lures us to topics, but also the quiet warning and reminder that we are obligated to do well by them.

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