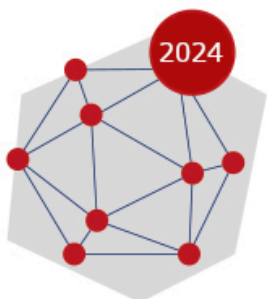


ECQI2024

Participation, collaboration and co-creation:
Qualitative inquiry across and beyond divides

Congress Proceedings



ECQI

7th European Congress
of Qualitative Inquiry

10–12 January, 2024
Helsinki, Finland

7th European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry
10–12 January, 2024
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland

Local Scientific Committee:

Riikka Hohti, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Education
Maija Jäppinen, Faculty of Social Sciences, Social Work
Meri Kulmala, Faculty of Social Sciences, Helsinki Inequality Initiative (INEQ)
Riikka Lämsä, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Public Health
Reetta Mietola, Faculty of Arts, Department of Cultures
Miira Niska, Faculty of Social Sciences, Social Psychology
Sanna Spišák, Faculty of Social Sciences, Helsinki Inequality Initiative (INEQ)
Satu Venäläinen, Faculty of Social Sciences, Social Psychology

Editor:

Sanna Spišák, Faculty of Social Sciences, Helsinki Inequality Initiative (INEQ)

ISBN: 978-952-84-0145-2

Citation: Author Names. 2024. Title of Paper. In Spišák, S. (ed.) *ECQI2024. Participation, collaboration and co-creation: Qualitative inquiry across and beyond divides. Congress Proceedings. 7th European Congress for Qualitative Inquiry 2024*. Helsinki: Helsinki University.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 7

ECQI2024 CONTRIBUTIONS

In whose interest? Participatory research approaches and the (missing?) evidence for the promised social change 10

Meeting in the margins 19

Who are the participants in practitioner research: Excluding the marginalised in a forensic context..... 25

From collaborative to colactive research, reconceiving the labor of knowledge creation through Arendt..... 33

Speculations on force and form..... 41

He kept me safe - A Dream Team to think with performance in qualitative inquiry and tackle intimate partner violence amongst LGBTQIA+ communities..... 52

From research to filmmaking: the collaborative making of the documentary "Complexos" 58

Performing assemblage: A site-specific installation as an affective and embodied methodology for critical leadership becoming..... 65

Abductive methodology: Opening the mystery of generating theory through qualitative inquiry in practice settings..... 74

Poster-ing in and through deep-hanging-out and collaborative multispecies storying: Performing a minor cartography..... 84

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reimagining higher education through multispecies worlds: A post-qualitative plugging-in of more-than-human concepts..... 91

The conceptualisation of the ethnic person: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of how race and ethnicity are constructed in the literature of digital psychotherapies for depression..... 101

Turning victimhood into agency through the power of stories: How survivors make sense of human trafficking..... 109

Doing mental health research differently: Young women's aesthetic encounters with anxiety..... 116

Adolescents with Cystic Fibrosis photographing their transition to adulthood: Changing the gaze to change practices through participatory research..... 125

Understanding 'Home' in alternative care: A multidimensional analysis of practitioner's experience..... 133

Corresponding with Stella and Anorexia in systemic psychotherapy..... 139

"Too risky or too scary?" Drivers of COVID-19 vaccine acceptance or hesitancy among former hospitalized adults..... 145

Exploring the lived experiences of youth in the context of climate change: A geo-social and performative approach to study environmental citizenship..... 154

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Re-imagining schools: Creative transformation of education through the imagination of global youth movements for equitable and sustainable futures..... 162

The benefits of nature-based education in Waldorf schools in the United States..... 171

Participatory research upholding collaboration in research and practice in social work fieldwork education..... 178

Troubling the ways we view teaching and learning in our schools and colleges..... 188

Using a collaborative working group model to develop an ADHD resource for school staff..... 195

Learning circles as a method for participatory inquiry: Steps towards a relational ethics of learning circles..... 201

Views of lecturers at a UK University on hidden curriculum dimensions in higher education..... 209

Snailing the trail of practice-based educational research - An off-road approach to collaborative knowledge production..... 217

What would the trees tell us? Exploring possibilities for an ecosystemic participatory inquiry beyond human actors..... 223

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Navigating spaces of relational rigor for Education Without Walls in Palestine - A post-humanist perspective on craft storytelling in the boundaries of collaboration and struggle..... 231

The problem of augmenting reality for others: XR co-creation in the critical museum..... 240

Co-creating a sensory audit tool with primary schools to review and tailor the physical environment to children’s sensory needs: Reflections on the co-production process..... 250

History of breast by collective work of memory method..... 257

Reflections on participatory research in the cultural sphere: Redrafting the rules..... 264

Becoming with positions of vulnerability through collaborative artwork..... 272

Exploring amateur artistic co-creation in community settings through senses and emotions..... 276

Experiences of participatory approach in the development of a quantitative survey..... 280

Beyond the screen: Nonverbal communication and body language in online interviews..... 288

INTRODUCTION TO THE ECQI 2024 PROCEEDINGS BOOK

**Satu Venäläinen, Meri Kulmala, Riikka Hohti, Maija Jäppinen,
Riikka Lämsä, Reetta Mietola, Miira Niska, Sanna Spišák**

ECQI2024 took place in Helsinki, Finland, where it was held for the first time. The number of participants well exceeded our expectations, and we hope that everyone who participated in the event enjoyed the four full-packed days of keynotes, presentations and workshops.

The theme of this year's congress was Participation, Collaboration and Co-Creation: Qualitative Inquiry Across and Beyond Divides. The motivation behind the theme was the recognition that the range of participatory approaches in qualitative inquiries has vastly expanded in recent years, with such approaches being applied in an increasing number of disciplines as well as across paradigmatic boundaries. Participatory research designs have traditionally been associated with emancipatory, democratic, and empowering aims, and as such, they have been mobilised to involve marginalised groups in knowledge production. Fields such as disability studies and childhood studies have long histories of developing inclusive and participatory approaches. In contrast, several other fields, particularly those ascribing to more positivist paradigms, have been slower in adopting such approaches. Also, post-qualitative and arts-based methodologies have been at the forefront of developing the ideas of participation in research by disrupting the subject/object divides in research settings and by emphasising entanglements and experiments involving knowing, being, doing and feeling (e.g. Koro, 2022).

Furthermore, in recent decades, theoretical viewpoints drawn from feminist new materialisms and multispecies research have challenged qualitative researchers to consider a larger "crowd" of possible participants in research, including various animate, inanimate and networked more-than-human agencies, and to pay attention to the related ethical complexities (e.g. Rautio et al., 2022). These challenges have called for nuanced understandings of what participation is, what it does, and how sustainability, ethics, and justice might be associated with it. Indeed, suppose we, qualitative researchers, acknowledge that doing qualitative research necessarily means thinking with somebody or something (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022). In that case, it can be said that collaboration and participation are at the root of all qualitative inquiries, even though these aspects of methodology are not always explicitly highlighted or reflected on.

The ECQI2024 engaged with these developments, intending to foster dialogues across and in between disciplinary and paradigmatic divides. We invited the presentations to map various possibilities for working across and beyond divides along various intersecting axes of distinction that might shape or obstruct participation and inclusion in research, such as distinctions between human and non-human, academic and non-academic, science and art, activism and research, rational and affective, academic knowledge and embodied experience. More specifically, we invited the presentations to engage with questions such as:

- What does it mean to practice or enact participation in research?
- How are participation, voice and agency linked?
- What are the conditions of possibility for participation in different disciplines and among participants who are differently positioned in society?
- What unites and what separates differently labelled approaches with roots in different traditions of thought – and efforts to break free from them?
- Is participation always innocent?
- How can we work against the hierarchising forces shaping academic research and the positions afforded to researchers and co-inquirers?

The specificities of time and space are inevitably inscribed into the possibilities to engage with questions such as these. The conference took place at the time of multiple violent events across the globe, such as the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, to name just a few. This troubling simultaneity gave rise to complex feelings mixed with a sense of desolation and a recognition of the privilege that holding and attending the congress in many ways implies. The program included explicit efforts to engage with this trouble and the sense of unease and to think in concrete terms about how qualitative inquiry can address the ever-present violent dynamics of distinction and pulling-apart that give rise not only to everyday suppression of alternative forms of life but also to the large-scale violent events we are currently witnessing, and how it can support the flourishing of resistance by intensifying the spread of response-ability and care.

We, the organisers, found the atmosphere and discussions at the congress most collegial, inspiring and refreshing. We were delighted and thankful for the opportunity to host the conference, and we hope that it sparked many new collaborations, insights and novel methodological openings.

In addition to an engagement with a specified theme, such as participation, one of the essential aims of ECQI is to maintain and feed into the vitality of qualitative research across disciplines and to push qualitative methodologies to new directions. The papers included in this proceedings book illustrate the varied ways in which this can be done. They cover a broad range of approaches and touch on various methodological discussions. They include methodological pieces that directly address the congress theme as well as pieces that reach beyond it and focus on other timely topics in qualitative inquiries. We hope that the experience of reading the papers enables a similar sense of collaborative, mutual learning and inspiration that the congress seemed to cultivate.

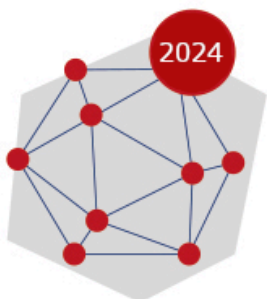
References:

Jackson, A. Y. & Mazzei, L. A. (2022). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research*. Taylor & Francis.

Koro, M. (2022). Speculative experimentation in (methodological) pluriverse. *Qualitative Inquiry* 28(2), 135–142.

Rautio, P., Tammi, T., Aivelo, T., Hohti, R., Kervinen, A., & Saari, M. (2022). "For whom? By whom?": critical perspectives of participation in ecological citizen science. *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 17(3), 765–793.

CONTRIBUTIONS



ECQI

7th European Congress
of Qualitative Inquiry

10–12 January, 2024
Helsinki, Finland

IN WHOSE INTEREST? PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACHES AND THE (MISSING?) EVIDENCE FOR THE PROMISED SOCIAL CHANGE

Dirk Schubotz

Queen's University Belfast (United Kingdom)

Abstract

With this paper I would like to encourage a discourse and reflection on collaborative participatory research approaches and how they have, or have not, fulfilled the promise of social change.

The ECQI conference call states that 'participatory research designs have traditionally been associated with emancipatory, democratic, and empowering aims, and as such, they have been mobilised to involve marginalised groups in knowledge production'. The conference call also reminds us of the recent growth in inclusive and innovative approaches in a range of fields, largely, but not exclusively in the social sciences and humanities, and it notes how these set us apart from fields where positivist thinking prevails.

When they emerged in the early 1970s, participatory and collaborative research approaches came, indeed, partially about because of the frustration with positivist-informed research methods that failed to achieve the promised social change and improvement in the lives of disenfranchised and disadvantaged people and communities. Five decades later, participatory and collaborative approaches are all but mainstream. There is a wealth of diverse engaging cutting-edge approaches to undertaking (social) research *with* rather than *on* participants and their communities. I argue that it is time for a self-reflective assessment of what these research approaches have really achieved regarding their ambition to better positivistic approaches about what tangible and long-term difference they make to the lives of people in these communities. I will consider if researchers involved in participatory and collaborative research studies ought to be more self-reflective about whose interests they serve, and whether we ought to be more ambitious in our research aims.

Keywords: participatory research, legacy, impact

INTRODUCTION

In 1975, the International Council of Adult Education published Issue 2 of Volume 8 of its journal *Convergence - Journal of Adult Education*. The theme of this issue was on *Adult Education and Development* and the editors started their foreword to this issue with a quote by the political theorist Julius K. Nyerere, who, at the time, was president of Tanzania:

'Development means freedom, provided that it is the development of the people. But people cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves.' (p. 1)

The quote set the tone for the articles to come in this issue, two of which are still considered seminal contributions to the 'participatory turn' in research practice that followed, which in the last five

decades has arguably led to fundamental changes in relation to what many now consider good research practice. The first of these two articles was by Budd Hall, who also worked as a book review editor of *Convergence* at the time. In his contribution '*Participatory Research: An Approach for Change*' Hall argued that there was '*a compelling case for alternative research methods*' (1). Guided by Paulo Freire's (2) conceptualisation of education as process of conscientisation and research as education, Hall framed his article as a '*call for assistance*', inviting researchers to offer alternatives to what he called the '*orthodox social sciences methodology*' (p. 24) which was modelled on the way natural scientists undertook research.

The second article - '*Research as an Educational Tool for Development*' - was authored by Marja-Liisa Swantz (3). Swantz, a Feminist social anthropologist and development researcher, had undertaken extensive research in rural communities in Tanzania in the second half of the 1970s during which she applied participatory action research (PAR) methods, linking social theory and research practice. Both Hall and Swantz are regarded as pioneers of participatory research practice. Swantz, a Finnish national born in 1926, worked for many years at the University of Helsinki and still holds a Prof. em. title at this University, at the time of writing.

Fast forward five decades since the publication of that *Convergence* issue: In January 2024, the European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ECQI) is held at the University of Helsinki, and the Congress theme is: *Participation, collaboration and co-creation: Qualitative inquiry across and beyond divides*. In the conference call, the organisers refer to the ambitions of participatory and collaborative enquiry, namely, its association '*with emancipatory, democratic, and empowering aims*', and its involvement of '*marginalised groups in knowledge production*.'

Almost exactly 50 years after Hall and Swantz appealed to the academic community to reconsider their research practice, I feel, the ECQI conference with its focus on collaborative and participatory research practice, held in Helsinki in the very institution where Swantz worked for many years, was the perfect opportunity to step back in order to reflect on the state of the art of participatory research practice and to consider if the ambitions articulated by Hall and Swantz in that issue of *Convergence* five decades ago have been met.

WHY THIS PAPER?

As Professor of Youth and Social Policy I am personally now looking back on 25 years of undertaking mostly empirical research with children and young people, as well as some engaged research with adults in community organisations too. Regardless of career stage or distinction, I strongly feel that self-reflexivity is a good habit to get into for any academic. Arguably, it was that critical reflection on existing research practice that prompted the pioneers of participatory research to look at 'knowledge' and knowledge generation differently and to approach research in a less hierarchical way, as they felt conventional approaches were failing to elicit and deliver the desired social changes in disadvantaged communities. I feel with the growth and diversification of participatory research landscape over the last five decades it is now time to take stock a bit more seriously.

My desire to articulate my thoughts on what I see as today's challenges of participatory research practice arose when I reviewed the landscape of participatory and collaborative research for my own textbook on participatory research methods (4). As nice and validating it was to be approached and invited by a large publishing house to write this research methods monograph, I found it challenging to find the time to write the book alongside the other every-day tasks of academic life. Balancing teaching (with its increasing pastoral care duties) with empirical research commitments, student supervisions and a growing administrative workload that comes with the nature of increasingly bureaucratic large academic institutions, is not easy.

I obviously knew that I could not possibly cover every study, not even every excellent study... However, I was ill-prepared for the sheer number of publications that I found that did, or claimed to, use participatory research approaches. There were tens of thousands! For a while, the volume of material that I needed to review almost caused the infamous writers' block. Where would I even start?! It just seemed impossible, and most of all unnecessary, to add another book to the already astonishing volume of work. The task to synthesize existing material and to try to select studies for inclusion with genuine good practice of genuine participation seemed daunting. Just by way of comparison, the issue of *Convergence* that contained the seminal pieces of Hall (1) and Swantz (3) also published an annotated bibliography of participatory research (5). That bibliography in 1975 contained just 29 titles! Of course, since then, we have seen an unprecedented expansion of academic institutions into 'mass universities' and, therefore, growth in academic output.

Now, five years after my book was published, I know that my book is well used and my synthesis is appreciated, but the main questions I asked myself at the time of writing that book – (1) Has participatory research practice lived up to its promises, and (2) who are we serving with our research? – have not gone away, and I am going to reflect on these questions here.

THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH LANDSCAPE TODAY

Whilst preparing my talk for the ECQI conference in Helsinki, I undertook a quick, entirely unscientific and unsystematic, search to see how many academic publications were produced in 2023 that used the exact phrase "participatory research": I found over 13,000 and nearly 800 which had this exact phrase in their title! I do not need to be reminded that an exercise like this is not an exact science; I am aware that I will have missed some publications that were reporting on genuinely participatory methods but did not mention this in their title, and I will have equally included some that claimed to be 'participatory' without providing any genuine evidence that they were. However, I simply undertook this quick search to support the point I am trying to make here, namely, that participatory methods are now firmly embedded in academic conversations and discourse, and I think it is time that we stop talking about participatory research as if it was novel, or niche. It evidently no longer is! Participatory research practice has most definitely made it into the mainstream of academic research practice and discourse – I would dare to go as far as saying that – for better or worse – it has become a reference point for good practice in research.

In my own area of research with children and young people, nearly a quarter of a century ago, Borland et al. (6) reported how participatory research practice has helped to elevate policy-related research involving children and young people from research *on* children to research *with* children and research *empowering* children. Again, the fact that many of us working in youth research no longer need to defend participatory approaches as a choice when it comes to exploring and addressing issues such as disadvantage and inequality, and that this no longer leads to raised eyebrows amongst colleagues, is to be welcomed. However, the mainstreaming of participatory and collaborative research practice also comes with responsibilities. Being 'niche' and 'novel' and trying out new approaches can come with what some may see as a 'liberty' to be able to be a bit more *laissez-faire* when it comes to rigour and decision trails and processes: we are just pushing boundaries; exploring exciting new ways, we are not sure yet ...

The argument I am forwarding here is that with the mainstreaming of participatory research the time has come for a more serious critical reflection on the landscape of participatory research and to remind ourselves of the ambitions and agenda set out by pioneers of participatory research practice (just as it is time to reflect on whether or not the mass university has delivered the promised equality and social inclusion in access to higher education (7)). Hall (1) and Swantz (3) demanded a different way of doing research because the old ways were not really working. However, the new ways were not supposed to be new ways for the sake of it, but new ways of doing research to live up the challenge to help

improve the lives of the people who we undertake research with, especially in disenfranchised and disadvantaged communities. Hence the two questions if participatory research practise lived up to the challenge doing things differently from 'orthodox' (Hall) or conventional research methodology and if we are indeed serving disadvantaged communities better with our research?

Spelling out the challenges and ambitions: Reflections on an interview with Swantz in *Action Research* in 2015

In October 2015 Swantz gave an interview in her home university in Helsinki where she reflected on her career as a pioneer of participatory research. A synopsis of that interview was published by one of the interviewers (Meier) and a colleague in *Action Research* in 2018 (8). The published material is insightful as Swantz was asked to reflect on the underlying philosophy behind the motivation to approach social research differently from what was practice until then. She is quoted as saying:

'Somehow I actually wanted to create a different way of doing research and so I did not base it on specific theories but looked for ideas how to make people co-researchers and aware of the significance of their own ways of conceiving ideas and making use of their sources of knowledge.' (p. 322).

She recalled the significant time it took her to familiarise herself with the research setting and her frustration and awareness that this may not be enough to become part of the community she wanted to research:

'I became familiar with a traditional healer Salum who adopted me as his daughter. He had understood that even when I spoke good Swahili I could not become part of the community if I was not related to people there. So he said, "I will adopt you as my daughter and then you will be part of the community."' (p. 321).

Later in the interview, she recalls an episode of returning to Tanzania to explore if her participatory research approach actually made a difference:

'I had visited a long time Masai leader until his death. He is a good example because he was alert. He knew that things were changing. He was the Chairman of the group. I asked him, "Did our Jipemoyo project [in Tanzania] really succeed?" He said "No." This is what I appreciated because he did not try to please me. But they became aware of the problem of how their cows were dying. But he was clever enough to know that the changes they needed were deeper.' (p. 335).

The interview with Swantz is still a worthwhile read for participatory researchers (and those with ambitions to become one) today as it reminds us of some of the challenges that we still face. One of the greatest challenges Swantz identified is building trusting relationships with the community in which the research takes place, which is a long-term process that takes time. This is time that must be spent, but in the short-term, fast-paced conveyor-belt type research that characterises much of the world of academia this space to build these trusting relationships that are the foundation for participatory research practice is in very short supply. Claiming back this time and space is not only important, but it is also an ethical question, as Petrie et al.'s article *'If we help you, what will change?'* clearly shows (9).

I often recall a conversation with a group of youth workers at a research engagement event when we were discussing with them implications of the results of a large mental health prevalence study among children and young people that we had undertaken in Northern Ireland that I was involved in (10). On the point of more funding for mental health services and prevention programmes with young people, one of the youth workers whose youth centre was located in a deprived working class neighbourhood stated that he had stopped applying for short-term funding, as he felt that it always ended up with some external person being 'helicoptered' into the area for a short period of time, delivering some sort of short-term programme which had very little tangible outcomes for the young people he worked with and their communities. He was quite vocal that these short-lived programmes mainly benefitted

the people who deliver them, rather than the young people and communities they were supposed to benefit. Because these facilitators had no real stake in these communities; he felt they disappeared as soon as the money was spent. On that day I felt that this criticism could also be levied at much of the academic research that is undertaken in communities like this, including research that presents itself as being 'participatory' and (therefore) 'different'.

In her interview, Swantz made the same observation: She commented on the disconnect between researchers and participants. In her view this is most noticeable among highly educated people who go into the field with preconceived ideas about participants' life experiences, and fail to learn from local knowledge. In her words: *'You cannot claim that your research is PAR when there is a disconnection from the people.'* (8, p. 326). Ultimately, projects which lack that proper connection with participants and their communities end up claiming the use of participatory research approaches when, really, there is no evidence for it, because their projects lack important aspects of PAR such as the people's participation. Swantz sees this gap between theory and practice as major limiting factor for the development of PAR in academia.

Outcomes of participatory research

Participatory researchers have been very convincing in articulating that there are different types of knowledge - academic knowledge being just one of them. Over the last decades, the sense that collaboration with non-academic co-researchers would just muddy the waters of clean academic research designs (11) have virtually disappeared. But how about the ambition to improve people's lives?

There are of course some good examples where participatory approaches have led to the promised changes, as some systematic literature reviews show, but there are not many. Salimi et al.'s 2012 systematic review of one decade of community-based participatory research (CBPR) studies shows that there is no question that there is a 'quantity versus quality issue' (12). Of the 14,222 originally identified articles referencing CBPR as a methodology that Salimi and colleagues reviewed, only 8 (sic!) studies met the inclusion criteria, namely being an intervention that had some measurable impact on communities where the research took place. The authors found that many of the other publications had little information about requirements that help create an impact and had not provided enough detail or a clear audit trail about the 'participatory approaches' that were taken. Salimi et al.'s review casts serious doubt about the capacity of participatory researchers to bring about change in the lives of the communities they research. Another systematic review (13) came to a similar conclusion, namely that audit trails about community engagement processes and their impact must become clearer. And this criticism is by no means new. Cook, whose systematic review focused on how research and action are integrated in CBPR (14), concluded that more community-initiated and action-orientated studies should be funded. The author suggests that 'intended action' should be a criteria required for studies that seek funding.

The term 'impact' is of course relatively closely related to interventions, and not all participatory studies fall into that category. Cook et al. (15) remind us that there are different types of impact or outcomes, and not all of these are immediate, linear, direct, observable and measurable. Less tangible outcomes are also possible, and they may not materialise until after a project has finished. The authors found projects that managed to articulate the insider voices and stories as a key part of their outputs were the ones that were more likely to be noted and ultimately acted on.

Institutional barriers

As most researchers engaged in participatory research studies remain located in academic institutions, it is important to have a look at the institutional context of university structures. Kim et al. (16) remind us that the university context and structures still present institutional barriers for

participatory researchers, for example when it comes to ethical review processes in some institutions that are not adapted to accommodate collaborative research practice. A much more fundamental and damning criticism is levied at academic research structures by Kehey (17). Her systematic review of PAR in sustainable development research concluded that, to fulfil its potential, participatory research must face and tackle the organisational challenges that the business model of mass universities present. She goes as far as saying that the demands of an academic system that neither recognises the value of interdisciplinary approaches, nor provides the support needed to sustain community partnerships, poses a threat to the methodological integrity of PAR. This is a serious concern, but it probably goes a long way to explain why there is such a volume of output claiming participatory approaches and so little evidence for it when we look a bit closer.

As Swantz already knew all these years ago, participatory research and relationship building takes time and endurance, and time is in short supply in fast-paced academic life of mass universities (7). The pressure to produce output to build and maintain an academic career, alongside an increasing number of commercial publishers that are only too happy to publish mediocre papers for a hefty open-access fee poses perhaps the greatest risk to collaborative research practice. Much of the output is produced for fellow academics, not for the communities the research is meant to serve.

This brings us back to the issue of tokenism – i.e. ‘participation’ that sounds and looks good but isn’t real. Swantz also addressed this question of tokenism in her interview (7). She felt that a lot of researchers claimed to be doing participatory research when they were not, largely because their projects fell short of real participation by people, which of course is one of the pillars of PAR. She partially blamed the inability of highly educated people to properly engage with disadvantaged communities. However, Swantz also acknowledged that changing people’s lives is a difficult endeavour, especially if political interests are at stake and a project may threaten the ‘establishment’. Swantz felt that it was one of the main tasks of the researchers to ‘*catch the attention*’ of such influential individuals (p. 335) if they genuinely wanted to make a difference. Evidently this does not happen enough.

Ethically, if there is no space for genuine participation because the research project designs and approaches have to be finalised before the fieldwork commences, which is mostly the case, it wouldn’t really be appropriate to pretend that there is room for participation when there is not. However, in her article ‘In Defence of Tokenism?’ my colleague Laura Lundy reminds us that ‘participation is always imperfect’ and that ‘less than perfect participation’ should not be an excuse to intimidate decision-makers from attempting to engage at all or directly with participants, and we shouldn’t be ‘shutting the door to the engagement’ just because participation is not ‘perfect’ (18).

SUMMARY AND LEARNING: RETURNING TO SWANTZ

In summary, I don’t want to paint too bleak a picture. Much has been achieved in the last five decades. Arguably, there has been a shift in power relations towards co-researchers compared to conventional or ‘orthodox’ (Hall) research. When making policy decisions, there is evidence for greater stakeholder involvement, even though this does not necessarily lead to change. Research participants are also being involved more in ‘*generating ideas, designing and managing the project, and drawing conclusions from the experience*’ (19). Aldridge (20) argues that the facilitation of participant voice has led to a blurring of academic disciplinary boundaries. The fact that academics of different disciplines are talking more to each other is of course also good. Generally, in my view it is beyond doubt that the emergence and mainstreaming of participatory research approaches has changed conventional research approaches. They have become less ‘orthodox’. Even the much-criticised survey researchers (and I am one of ‘them’...) are now much more likely to involve stakeholders in their study designs or to work with co-researchers on the design, sense making and dissemination of survey data (21). The assumption that participatory methods need to be qualitative

interpretive methods has never really been true as the work of Swantz (3) and others shows, but having convened sessions on collaborative approaches to survey research at international survey research conferences, such as at the biannual European Survey Research Association (ESRA) conferences, I can say with certainty and authority that the number of participatory and co-produced survey-based projects has mushroomed over the last few years (e.g. 22, 23, 24). Whilst participatory approaches no doubt remain more used in research with disadvantaged communities, conventional methods have become better in involving co-production approaches with mainstream communities.

In summary then, as I argued above, participatory methods are very much mainstream now and no longer niche. It is fair to say that with the emergence of participatory research methods and co-production approaches, conventional research practice has changed, but the promise to change lives of those at the centre of our research for the better is patchy (25, 26), especially at the macro level. Chevalier and Buckles demand that participatory researchers ought to start to upscale their efforts and tackle the big issues of today, such as sustainable development and serious violent conflicts and war rather than *'to keep things small and close to natural communities and environments'* (27, p. 29). In my view we ought to have a conversation about how the business model of academic research and careers is partially responsible for the failure to tackle the larger social and environmental issues that evidently face humankind in a very existential manner now. Whilst co-production approaches have hugely diversified and boundaries in academic research practice have been pushed, have we lost sight of what really matters? Looking at the world in 2024, does it seem to be a more equal and fairer place than five decades ago? *'Impact'* of participatory research beyond the immediate study participants and communities supported the development is very limited. But is it realistic to expect more? Is it acceptable to expect less?

I would argue that the promise of sustainable and (for some communities) de-colonising social change through participatory approaches has remained largely unfulfilled at macro level. One way of achieving this is to focus more on the longevity and authenticity in relationships with communities, rather than the needs of academic research cycles. As Rosen (28, p. 609) shows this does not necessarily mean that we always spend *more* time with participants, but rather that *'temporality is given due theoretical and methodological attention, [or we] will have limited success and can wind up reproducing exclusions and oppressions'*. There would then be a real risk that participatory methods who were developed to be better and more impactful than orthodox methods may be faced with a real credibility gap. There is strong evidence for the persistent tokenistic involvement of participants and research practice that first and foremost serves the academic researchers and their careers as well as the business model of mass universities and academic publishers with its fast-paced short-term nature that make a living from producing academic output. Again, going back to Swantz (7), nobody says that changing this will be easy.

REFERENCES

- (1) Hall, B. Participatory research: An approach for change. *Convergence*. 1975; Volume 8(2) pp. 24–32.
- (2) Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Seabury Press; 1971.
- (3) Swantz, M.-L. Research as an educational tool for development. *Convergence*. 1975; Volume 8(2): pp. 44–53.
- (4) Schubotz, D. *Participatory research: Why and how to involve people in research*. London: Sage; 2019.
- (5) Ohliger, J. and Niemi, J. Annotated and quotational bibliography of participatory research. *Convergence*, 1975; Volume 8(2), pp. 82–87.

- (6) Borland, M., Hill, M. Laybourne, A., and Stafford, A. et al. *Improving Consultation with Children and Young People in Relevant Aspects of Policy-Making and Legislation in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament; 2001.
- (7) Kamanzi, P.C., Goastellec, G. and Pelletier, L. Mass university and social inclusion: The paradoxical effect of public policies. *Social Inclusion*. 2021; Volume 9(3), pp. 32–43.
- (8) Nyemba, F. and Mayer, M. Exploring the roots of participatory action research: An interview with Dr Marja-Liisa Swantz. *Action Research*. 2018; Volume 16(3), pp. 319–338.
- (9) Petrie, S., Fiorelli, L. and O'Donnell, K. 'If We Help You What Will Change?'—Participatory Research with Young People. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*. 2006; Volume 28(1) pp. 31–45.
- (10) Bunting, L.; McCartan, C.; Davidson, G.; Grant, A; McBride, O.; Mulholland, C.; Murphy, J.; Schubotz, D.; Cameron, J. and Shevlin, M. *The Mental Health of Children and Parents in Northern Ireland. Results of the Youth Wellbeing Prevalence Survey*. Belfast, QUB, UU and HSCB; 2020.
- (11) Krueger, R. A. and King, J. A. *Involving Community Members in Focus Groups. Focus Group Kit 5*. Thousand Oaks: Sage; 1998.
- (12) Salimi, Y., Shahandeh, K., Malekafzali, H., Loori, N., Kheiltash, A., Jamshidi, E., Frouzan, A. S. and Majdzadeh R. Is community-based participatory research (CBPR) useful? A systematic review on papers in a decade. *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2012; Volume 3(6), pp. 386–393.
- (13) McFarlane, J. S., Occa, A., Peng, W., Awonuga, O. and Morgan, S. E. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) to enhance participation of racial/ethnic minorities in clinical trials: A 10-year systematic review. *Health Communication*. 2022; Volume 37(9), pp. 1075–1092.
- (14) Cook, W.K. Integrating research and action: a systematic review of community-based participatory research to address health disparities in environmental and occupational health in the United States. *Journal of epidemiology and community health*. 2008; Volume 62(8), pp. 668–676.
- (15) Cook, T., Boote, J., Buckley, N., Vougioukalou, S. and Wright, M. Accessing participatory research impact and legacy: developing the evidence base for participatory approaches in health research, *Educational Action Research*, (2017; Volume 25(4), pp. 473–488.
- (16) Kim, M., Shapiro, V. B., Ozer, E. J., Stone, S., Villa, B., Schotland, M. and Kohashi, C. University's absorptive capacity for collaborative research: examining challenges and opportunities for organizational learning to engage in research with community partners. *Journal of Community Practice*. 2023; Volume 31(3-4), pp. 397–409.
- (17) Keahey J. Sustainable development and participatory action research: a systematic review. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*. 2021; Volume 34(3), pp. 291–306.
- (18) Lundy, L. In defence of tokenism? Implementing children's right to participate in collective decision-making. *Childhood*. 2018; Volume 25(3), pp. 340–354.
- (19) Reason, P., Torbert, W. The action turn: Toward a transformational social science. *Concepts and transformation*. 2001; Volume 6(1), pp. 1–37.
- (20) Aldridge, J. *Participatory Research: Working with Vulnerable Groups in Research and Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press; 2015.
- (21) Schubotz, D. and Lloyd, K. Children researching children: evidence from the KLT survey. *Childhood through the looking glass*. Brill, pp. 155–167; 2016.

- (22) Parrado, E.A., McQuiston, C. and Flippen, C.A. Participatory survey research: Integrating community collaboration and quantitative methods for the study of gender and HIV risks among Hispanic migrants. *Sociological Methods & Research*. 2005; Volume 34(2), pp. 204–239.
- (23) Orza, L., Bewley, S., Chung, C., Crone, E.T., Nagadya, H., Vazquez, M. and Welbourn, A. “Violence. Enough already”: findings from a global participatory survey among women living with HIV. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*. 2015 18: 20285.
- (24) Peiris-John, R., Dizon, L., Sutcliffe, K., Kang, K., and Fleming, T. Co-creating a large-scale adolescent health survey integrated with access to digital health interventions. *Digital Health*. 2020; 6: 2055207620947962.
- (25) Pratchett, L. et al. *Empowering communities to influence local decision making: a systematic review of the evidence*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families; 2009.
- (26) Tisdall, E.K. and Davis, J. Making a difference? Bringing children's and young people's views into policy-making. *Children & Society*. 2004; Volume 18(2), pp. 131–142.
- (27) Chevalier, J. M. and Buckles D. J. *Participatory action research: theory and methods for engaged inquiry*. London: Routledge; 2013.
- (28) Rosen, R. Participatory research in and against time. *Qualitative Research*. 2023; Volume 23(3), pp. 597–613.

MEETING IN THE MARGINS

Rachel Julia Evans

University of Bedfordshire (U.K.)

ABSTRACT

In the following paper, I explore ethical dilemmas I am encountering whilst undertaking doctoral research in systemic practice. The topic I am exploring considers the challenges of liminal living (1) experienced by younger women with breast cancer. There are many dilemmas encountered by those facing liminal living as participants find themselves in the space between illness and wellness. In the process of meeting with participants, and ethically exploring participant participation, I have myself encountered ethical considerations about meeting across, in and through margins.

When we talk about margins, we often use the term as something to be eliminated; and rightly so in many contexts. However, in this context, the 'liminal gap' can be experienced as more than negative space. In the paper, I briefly explore an appreciation of the liminal space and the dilemmas that can be experienced in it. I will then expand on some of the ethical considerations which researching the liminality of serious illness requires.

Keywords: liminal living, margins, systemic practice

INTRODUCTION

Vikki Reynolds (2) draws attention to the margins in the Book of Kells when discussing themes of marginalisation. In medieval times, monastic scribes' monotonous work involved painstakingly copying text by hand. It was in the margins where their self-expression was evident, with doodles, poems, commentary, and even poetry (3). I will revisit this illustration of the margin throughout this paper. In the following discussion, I will reflect on some of the challenges I am experiencing in participating in research across liminal space. I start by exploring some of the differences between the liminal experiences of doctoral writing and liminal living for younger woman with breast cancer. I will then discuss how these differences are playing out in research practice and some of the ethical dilemmas it is presenting. I include some aspects from my research journal to illustrate this.

CONTEXT

I am a systemic psychotherapist, and many moments in therapy explore transitional and liminal moments. My research enquires into the experience of liminal living for younger women with a diagnosis of breast cancer (1). I am currently engaging in research conversations with younger women with a breast cancer diagnosis using the methodologies of portraiture (4) and systemic inquiry (5). I am inquiring into what Shotter describes as the "*stuff of everyday life and its continuous co-emergent development*" (6) by asking how younger women negotiate the uncertainty of living on fault lines post diagnosis. I am writing portraits following our conversations, which are reviewed and developed by the participants. Core systemic values that influence the practice of my therapy and research include

intra-relationship (7), witness thinking (8), polyvocality and dialogue (9), ethics led practice, an attendance to power and challenging reductionist thinking.

THRESHOLDS

I am writing this in a threshold moment. New Years Eve; the day before new beginnings. Saying goodbye to the old and welcoming the new. From my experience this is less of a 'before and after moment' and more of a pause, reflection, and continuation. This is a gentle threshold. It is a marker along the way rather than a sharp turn. I appreciate a quiet entry into the year. Time to think and reflect on moments well lived; and moments that I would have liked to have lived differently. I find myself ending the year reflecting, amongst other things, on the thresholds and liminal spaces in doctoral writing. When I tune into the experience of writing, there are many times spent in the gap. In the spaces, which at times feel formless. When the blank page stares back uncomfortably, uncertain about what will emerge and show itself on the page. But, as a liminal experience, it is one with low stakes. It may feel all-consuming at some points, but it is not an existential experience. There remain frames of reference; once I close my laptop the frames of my "normality" exist. If doctoral writing enters the doldrums one day, there is always tomorrow. The uncertainty is not one of a threat, but more slight discomfort.

This is contrasted however, with my conversations with women in which I hear the complexity of liminal living after a cancer diagnosis. Negotiating life following a diagnosis at 42, I had struggled with conceptualisations of illness and wellness that would allow me to find a way to make sense of the experience and my life going forward. In research interviews, I hear about existential dilemmas, challenges of coping within health systems, post-treatment fatigue, change in body identity, coping with work and family, infertility, and relational changes after diagnosis. The literature around liminality offers contributions towards making sense of this experience.

LIMINALITY

It seems important here to discuss the background to the theory around liminality. The concept originated with Van Gennep (10) in his work on rites of passage. Liminal times have been described by Turner (11) as being "betwixt and between." We can say that relational living always traverses the space between; there is always space between the threads of the webs that connect. However, there are moments in life when the frames of reference are so unusually different to those which have gone before, and where life takes a ninety degree turn and shapes shift almost unrecognisably. It is this that I see when talking with women about their experiences of liminal living following a cancer diagnosis. One participant has described it as a "before and after moment." One of those moments where life changes in an instant. Turner (11), building on van Gennep's work, described three stages of liminality; the separation, liminal and incorporation phase. Whilst never intended to have firm edges in this context, the suggestion of phases can create dilemmas and lead to further questions. A tension exists in the liminal space; being between that what was, and that which will be. In my research I am seeking to move beyond the binary. Binaries in this context can lead to paradox. Liminal living has very blurry lines. The lines of wellness and sickness, patient and professional, living and dying, all merge in this space.

NO-THING

Time spent in the liminal space has been described as "negative space," or a void. It could be seen as the empty margin in the monastic scribe's book. People speak of being in "no man's land" or "neither here nor there." This could be seen as a binary experience, as someone is in a "nothing" time, awaiting a resumption of life as it was, or as it will be: a destination. From a perspective of Western individualised thinking, the liminal space can be seen as a negative binary space, that is experienced by an individual's inner psyche. However, no-thing is nothing (12). This idea has been described by

Barad (13) and has also been a long-held idea in the Buddhism. That which we perceive to be empty, is always in relationship. The liminal space can only be a relational space, intra-acting with that which has gone before and that which will follow.

When my grandparents died, I selected a Chinese watercolour from their possessions. Large areas of the page are unpainted, but they give the form its shape. It is through the painted areas and unpainted areas that the image makes sense. In Ogasawara's interpretation of the Buddhist Heart Sutra (14), she extends the metaphor of the Chinese watercolour to illustrate the expansive and limitless sky, devoid of boundaries. The Japanese have a concept called Ma which speaks to this. The symbol for Ma is a door and sun. The sun character was originally a moon in both Chinese and Japanese and depicts a stream of moonlight / sun through a gap expressing space, context, and aspect. The opening in the door and the light shining through speaks of creativity and freedom (12). When Ma is seen as a 'negative space' it suggests that Ma or a transition is 'nothing.' If we consider time spent in the in-between as nothing time, we negatively connote the transition only seeing its limitations without perceiving its potential. Yet, this is a misconception. It has been said that Ma is *"the emptiness in which time and space are obliterated, opposites reconciled, thoughts suspended. An invitation to awareness."* (15)

(FORM)LESS

When everything is relational / systemic, there can be no form without formlessness. To return to the parallel of working on a doctorate, it is an experience of settling into "form" in the writing process and the "formless" uncertainty of what is yet to be written. The times when writing takes form are intertwined with the times of uncertainty. Doctoral work is very structured. For example, diaries apply, timetables can be written, time can be planned and then space can be created for the formless and for words to find expression. Doctoral writing, therefore, feels that it is part of a life lived in more structured frames. For patients with a cancer diagnosis however, the tension between form and formlessness is a dissimilar experience. Timetables are less certain, there is often a lot of waiting, outcomes may be less predictable, and the stakes of differing outcomes are high.

DILEMMAS FOR PRACTICE

As I contact participants, I sense this dilemma of traversing the liminal space, from a place of greater structure / differentiation. And when crossing this space, where the formless is experienced more than the form which went before, it can be difficult to connect. I have reflected on the significance of not falling into the trap of perceiving a participant's life to be entirely liminal in contrast to a researcher's life which may be perceived to be outside of the liminal space. I am thinking that we are all fluidly traversing liminality and structure, but that there are experiences that throw us more into each experience. We are all in a fluid state of becoming, uncertainty, and potential. At this point in the discussion, I will describe some examples of dilemmas negotiating the space between the researcher and participants with breast cancer. I will guide the reader through this by exploring with opposing/unifying constructs.

(UN)DIARISABLE

I contact a young woman who is thirty-two and has a diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer. She has responded to a post in an online forum to say that she would like to be part of my research. We struggle to find a time to meet. She is poorly for a few weeks, and then she suggests a time that coincides with a work meeting for me. The following extract from my research journal illustrates this:

Research Journal Extract

N contacts me to ask if I am free tomorrow to talk. I look in my diary and I have therapy clients booked in. Reluctantly, I reply, apologise, and suggest the two following days. She tells me that she has arrived in a new territory in her liminal space, and she wants to discuss it. I suggest we meet on either of the following two days, but they are post-chemo days, and she knows she will be unwell. We arrange to meet in a fortnight. Two weeks later I receive a message; she is unwell and in hospital. My heart sinks. I feel a sense of care towards her, and a sense of responsibility given she had wanted to discuss a new way to conceptualise the situation she finds herself in. Her next message says how hard it is to fit things into a few good days in a chemo-cycle and she would like to rearrange. I reply reassuring her that we can meet when she feels well enough and, in the meantime, I am thinking of her. In a following meeting with her, she notes how one of the most important gifts offered to her is flexibility. She speaks of the way that people, with their best intentions, will say that they will do anything to help. But that this is often at a time that is convenient to them and not necessarily when she needs it. In this moment, I hear her speaking about the differences in time in the liminal space to more structured time.

Some of the participants talk about a life lived without plans. This unbounded sense of time contrasts awkwardly with a highly structured diary. Frequently in research, it may not be too significant if we cannot arrange a convenient time to meet. For example, we might put a later date into the diary, or might suggest meeting in the evening. However, I am very aware that participants who have metastatic diagnoses may not have unlimited time to meet, and their experience of the liminal space may be a rapidly changing and shifting experience. I am aware that time and energy in the liminal space are precious; priorities need to be made about who to spend time with.

(UN)SPEAKABLE

A further dilemma I have experienced has been around the timing of the sharing of a portrait. Following a conversation with a woman, I write up our conversation as a creative piece which I then share with the woman. I have wondered about the experience for a woman of reading a portrait when their physical and emotional well-being is an ever-changing picture. I have wondered about the experience of looking back at words that may already be out of date. The following research journal entry describes my dilemma of sharing a portrait with a woman who was waiting for biopsy results which may or may not confirm whether her cancer had returned.

Research Journal Extract

I begin writing up the portrait. I find myself facing ethical questions about when the best time would be to share this with her. Should it be before she gets her results? However, I know the awful anxious feeling during this time and hear her say that she is keeping herself busy with distractions. To read the portrait and to come face to face with her narrative at this time feels like it may be too much. However, do I show it to her afterwards? And what if then her news shows that her cancer has come back? Will that then be too much to hear her portrait that was written at the time of uncertainty? I also then feel guilty that I am worrying about this when she is facing bigger worries.

It has been difficult, when in a less uncertain place myself, to feel that I might be reminding a participant of their uncertainty. The ethics around this have been challenging. I have been challenged to reflect on my own vulnerability and to ask myself “whose vulnerability is it anyway?” I have needed to challenge myself to reflect on whether I am protecting the participant or protecting myself from the difficult feelings of uncertainty associated with life’s liminal experiences. I have felt that I straddle the world of being both an insider and an outsider in the research.

(IN)OUTSIDER

As a researcher who could be described as an insider, I have been interested in my own experiences of liminality and *communitas* (11). However, I have found the binary construct of being an insider or outsider is limited. Whilst I have been aware that I may share experiences with participants, I have also been aware that each experience is unique and there are places in the liminal space, of cancer

treatment, that I have not encountered. As a researcher, I have felt both inside and outside. Taking a 'not knowing' position in the dialogue has been important. In therapy we talk about knowing too soon and that this can cause us to lose curiosity. I have needed to remind myself to stay curious and when a participant says, "you know," I find myself needed to inquire further into it – for I do not know, unless we communicate across the dialogical space.

(IN)VISIBILITY

There have been dilemmas around visibility, invisibility, and exposure. Participants have spoken about health systems rendering them invisible or reducing them to their cancer, rather than seeing their whole person hood. This has a relationship with the literature on liminality which suggests that the liminal experience is frequently one that involved uniformity and sometimes uniforms, with an idea that the liminar requires both protecting from society, and society requiring protection from what is represented by the liminar (11). This is a challenge in research ethics which require anonymising participants, who have at times asked to be named. Frank (16) talks about the post-colonial ill person wanting their personal and unique suffering to be recognised. The dilemma then over whether participants being named could expose them, their family and the health systems that are treating them. There have been other voices who have challenged this. Mattingly (17) describes how anonymity can be disrespectful when participants are silenced by anonymity. Some of the women are already visible through their activism, and this is a part of their feeling of wanting to leave a legacy. I worry that their anonymity may have the potential to reinforce systems that protect rather than empower.

RESPONDING TO THESE DILEMMAS

The lens of liminality has limitations. To fully expand on these lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, as a lens it has enabled me to address areas of genuinely working **with** participants, and attending to aspects that I may have overlooked.

Firstly, it has allowed me to notice the importance of creating and valuing space as a researcher. To be able to spend time and make space to be able to be flexible enough to meet with participants. Creating space has also allowed me to have a level of flexibility but also space for some creativity. It has also been important to make space within the conversations depending on participant energy levels, but also allow room for the liminal to be expressed. A very structured interview may have made the conversation bounded and limited the space for wider conversations.

A liminal lens has made me aware of immediacy. Time in the liminal stages of metastatic breast cancer may be approached with greater urgency and shifted priorities. I have been reflecting on my inclination to attempt to make this decision for the participant and have thought to myself, "I don't wish to burden them with a research conversation at this stage." I have challenged myself to ask whose vulnerability is it when I find myself doing this. I have been recognising that this tiptoeing is not a helpful stance as a researcher. More than one participant has mentioned the paternal system that "protects" them from seeing their own scans or results and their desire to be able to make their own decisions over this. I have been aware of not wishing to replicate paternal systems within my research.

Liminality has challenged me not to get caught up in binary thinking. I have been working to find ways to articulate my systemic values of the "both/and" and to maintain this value through the conversations. It has enabled me to experience limitation and potential together, rather than as independent constructs. One aspect of this is in attempting to connote a participant's experience neither positively nor negatively on their behalf. When tuning into the space, the gap or the void, our language struggles to find words to explain. I have needed to work to maintain a both / and position and recognise co-existing concepts.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Through the discussion, I have briefly explored the implications of liminality as a lens through which to conduct qualitative research in the margins. I have considered some of the dilemmas that I have faced

and then explored some of my reflections of these implications and ways that I have negotiated the dilemmas. To explore liminality, and times where life feels particularly uncertain, it is important to remember that this is a relational experience. Our lives have different shapes of uncertainty at any time, and we are always in relationship with others' uncertainties. We are all in varying states of illness and wellness and live with the potential of both. Having conversations across these borderlands brings a set of challenges, but like liminality also potential. They offer the potential to explore differing relationships with time and space and to share dialogue over existential strands that have the possibility of extending and challenging our own thinking about the emergence of relational living. I find the systemic language about "ways to go on together" (6) gentler. They do not assume a trajectory or phase or bounded space, nor a positive or negative connotation. It leaves and creates space.

REFERENCES

- [1] Blows E, Bird L, Seymour J, Cox K. Liminality as a framework for understanding the experience of cancer survivorship: a literature review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2012 Mar 27;68(10):2155–64.
- [2] Reynolds, V. Doing justice as a path to sustainability in community work. 2010 Jan 1.
- [3] Moss R, College T. Making and meaning in insular art: proceedings of the fifth International Conference on Insular Art held at Trinity College Dublin, 25-28 August 2005. Dublin: Four Courts Press; 2007.
- [4] Lawrence-Lightfoot S, Jessica Hoffmann Davis. *The Art and Science of Portraiture*. Jossey-Bass; 1997.
- [5] Simon G, Chard A. *Systemic inquiry: innovations in reflexive practice research*. Farnhill: Everything Is Connected Press; 2014.
- [6] Shotter J. in Simon G, Chard A. *Systemic inquiry: innovations in reflexive practice research*. Farnhill: Everything Is Connected Press; 2014.
- [7] Barad K. *Meeting the universe halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press; 2007.
- [8] Shotter J. "Now I can go on:" Wittgenstein and our embodied embeddedness in the "Hurly- Burly" of life. *Human Studies*. 1996 Oct;19(4):385–407.
- [9] Bakhtin M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. University of Texas Press; 1981.
- [10] Van Gennep A. *The rites of passage*. London: Routledge; 1960.
- [11] Turner V. *The Ritual Process*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company; 1969.
- [12] Nitschke G. ma - Place, Space, Void, Kyoto: *Kyoto Journal*. 2020;(98):8-23.
- [13] Barad K. Karen Barad: what is the measure of nothingness? Infinity, virtuality, justice = was ist wirklich das mass des Nichts? Unendlichkeit, Virtualität, Gerechtigkeit. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz; 2012.
- [14] Ogasawara L. The heart of the matter, translating the heart sutra: *Kyoto Journal*. 2020;(98):64- 69.
- [15] Rittenhouse M. Moments of silence and stillness. *Kyoto Journal*, 98, 64-69. *Kyoto Journal*. 2020; 98:64–9.
- [16] Frank AW. *The wounded storyteller: body, illness, and ethics*. Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press; 1995.
- [17] Mattingly C. Toward a vulnerable ethics of research practice. *Health*. 2005;(9): 453–471.

WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS IN PRACTITIONER RESEARCH? EXCLUDING THE MARGINALISED IN A FORENSIC CONTEXT

Dawn Louise Thibert

University of Bedfordshire, UK

Abstract

In this paper, I explore the dilemmas of deciding whom to invite to participate in my research, which is taking place in my work context in an adult forensic mental health service, where I am a family therapist. I show how these decisions were shaped and influenced through navigating the research ethics processes. I describe the context, which was a new work environment for me, where nomadic methodology helped me navigate my position, using Deleuze and Guattari's (1) concept of territorialisation and visiting communities. I take you through iterations of my research proposal and my ethical dilemmas. Ultimately, I could not justify co-production nor ethically find a way to include clients and their families as co-researchers or participants directly. This client group tends to get left out of research because of their complexity and risks. I decided that my research participants would be professionals working with me in family therapy consultations and sessions, where recruitment is through a gatekeeper, which adds complications, and I am not using students I am evaluating. I am studying my therapeutic practice of noticing changes in my bodily sensations in family therapy sessions, the sense I make of these changes, and what I do with the sensations I notice. I am calling this "reflexive intra-embodied practice". I am also studying how other professionals understand and make use of their embodied practice. I draw on Karen Barad's (2) diffractive methodology and concept of intra-action, where everything is connected. I comment on the complexities of research with participants with whom I have an ongoing professional relationship. I also consider how to honour clients' voices and perspectives, highlight their plight and avoid othering, colonising, and pathologising practices. I am striving to ethically and responsibly articulate what clients and their families communicate to me on a non-verbal level, what I do with this information and what effects this has on practice.

Keywords: systemic family therapy, nomadic, forensic, ethics, participation

CONTEXT

I am a systemic family therapist working in a state (National Health Service) forensic mental health service in England, where I am developing a forensic family therapy service. Systemic family therapy is a bespoke relational approach working mainly to improve communication in families, where various family members/networks are seen together. Individuals can also be seen, to understand their family relationships better, and we also think about their relationship to help. The criteria to be considered forensic is to have been diagnosed with a psychotic or affective mental disorder and / or a personality disorder. In addition, clients will have demonstrated a potential risk of serious harm to others in relation to their mental disorder.

I am halfway through a professional doctorate in systemic practice at the University of Bedfordshire, where I am undertaking practitioner research (3) in my work setting.

This paper is about my journey of refining my research design, using changes in my title based on ethical deliberations and the twists and turns navigating committees to gain ethical approval for my research. My methodology is developing into ethical visiting using John Shotter's (4) concepts of *witness* rather than *aboutness* and Wanda Pillow's (5) ethical witnessing, a way of respecting invitations to ethically witness with. This paper is about the decisions I made about who would be my participants and the ramifications of expectations imposed by ethics committees.

ITERATIONS OF MY RESEARCH PROPOSAL SIGNIFIED BY TITLE CHANGES INFORMED BY ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Nomadic Poetics of co-creating new territories and improving practice through attending to multiple performative dimensions of lived experience: Systemic working in adult forensic services

This was my first research title five months into my first role in forensic mental health, where I was the only family therapist across three partnership mental health trusts. I have forty years of practice in various mental health settings across ages, as well as child protection social work. Alongside working in a new team with the most complex clients, I was developing the forensic family therapy service. I felt like a pioneer. This poem reflects how I felt.

I felt like a visitor to a far-away land,
What are the customs?
never stated, just assumed.

A friendly face warned me:
"family therapists don't stay here
They get sacked, or they leave"
Leaving me thinking
How long will I last?
Are they waiting to see
If I'll stay the distance
Or run a mile
Scared of the task.

No clinic no base
No sense of place
Visiting territories,

Inpatient secure settings
Keys, alarm belted to my waist
Too many protocols
Contrasted with floating
Unprotected in the community
Cafes, streets, parks
Hostels with staff.

I was moved by the plight of clients I met. This is a super marginalised group that tends to be left out of research because of their levels of complexity (6). They are mainly racialised, minoritised (1), as Black men of African and Caribbean origin. In my work, because of all the travelling to visit clients in various locations, I developed the idea of nomadic relational support practice, a nomadic methodology (7), alongside Karen Barad's (2) diffractive methodology.

Developing Systemic Practice in Adult Forensics

It is a simpler title. I was getting worried about how colleagues from other disciplines might view my research. I was worried about being seen as weird even if my doctorate supervisors were celebrating the idea of me being a maverick. Gregory Bateson's (8) warning about being too different to make a difference, I did not want family therapy to be dismissed before having a chance to show the benefits of family therapy.

Systemic nomads: pioneering new territories

I was embracing being nomadic and a pioneer.

Exploring the therapeutic space between in a forensic systemic family therapy service

This title reflects how I was getting closer to what I wanted to find out. I kept coming back to wanting to understand better the strong feelings that I picked up as a therapist.

The good, the bad and the in-between: Exploring therapeutic space in a forensic systemic family therapy service

I was becoming more aware of discourses and cultures operating in the forensic context, and systemic thinking seemed to be at odds with this, as noted by (9). I felt uncomfortable about general unspoken expectations to pathologise, infantilise, control and punish clients. I wanted to unsettle the pervasive binary of good and bad. It was too easy for staff to see themselves as good by virtue of their position and for them to see the clients as bad, beyond hope of recovery or rehabilitation.

Tuning in to Space Between: Exploring embodied and beyond sensing in systemic family therapy in an adult forensic mental health service

This was the title of my first progression point writing, and through this writing, I was already finding that the concept of space-between was too vague. I was also not happy with the term embodiment, which is a methodological field pertaining to perception and presence, but it gets conflated with relating to the body (10). I used the term beyond to speak to energies, atomic transfer, for example, and exploration, as an expansive term to move away from pre-conceived ideas.

Tuning in to significant moments in family therapy in an adult forensic mental health service using insights from felt bodily sensations and poetic methodology

I wanted the poetic methodology I was developing to come through in the title.

An exploration of non-verbal communication in family therapy in an adult forensic mental health service

As I was getting worried about how the staff might view my research, I agreed with my work supervisor that the staff would not generally understand my title and could then treat me with suspicion. Staff would be more familiar with the idea of non-verbal communication, and I made the title as simple as possible. I was planning to use clients, families, and professionals involved in the forensic family therapy service as participants. I was going to use interviews and focus groups to consider significant moments in therapy, using arts-based methods and poetry as method, methodology and in analysis.

Developing embodied knowing in an adult forensic mental health service

Six weeks after submitting my university ethics application, I got a four-page response expressing major concerns. I was floored and wondered if practitioner research in my work context would be

possible. The concerns raised seemed insurmountable. I went on a writing retreat run by Dr Gail Simon, and she helped me realise that I needed to explain my practice more clearly and reassure the ethics committee that I was not doing anything different from my usual practice. I knew that the forensic context would raise too many concerns about risk, even if the feedback did not say that. I realised I could not ethically justify using clients and families as participants. If my research had been more straightforward, I would have persisted in reassuring the various ethics committees that clients and families would not come to harm through the research. I wanted to keep the focus on what gets communicated on a bodily level, which is hard to explain, with plenty of room for miscommunication and the potential for paranoid thoughts about what I am picking up beyond what someone is intentionally communicating with words. I realised that I would not be able to explain what I am researching clearly enough to people who have so many worries about what professionals think about them. Professionals often present limited choices in treatments, making it hard to gain informed consent (11). I could not answer the questions about how participants understand what we are doing as researchers (12).

It was painful to let go of using clients and families as participants. Then, I was relieved. I then became excited at the possibilities of studying the professional discussions after family therapy sessions with one or two focus groups to go into more in depth. The ethics committee raised concerns about using students that I am evaluating as participants, and I picked up an expectation that I would still use a gatekeeper, even for professionals. The term knowing was to get at the tacit knowledge and different ways we know. Developing seemed more focused than exploring.

Developing reflexive intra-embodied practice in an adult forensic mental health systemic family therapy service

In re-writing my research proposal and amending my ethics application, I was still grappling with what I was getting at. I was not comfortable with using the term, knowing. I wanted the back-and-forth communication between bodies to come through, so I included the reflexive concept. I did not want embodied to be on its own; it has too many connotations. Putting intra in front of and hyphenated to embodied is a way of including Karen Barad's (2) concept of intra-action, where nothing is considered separate, and interaction comes from within.

I felt more freedom in being able to be more creative in my title and more confident about explaining it by having professionals as participants.

Reworking my research proposal took three months, and the university ethics committee responded by wanting a report on how I had addressed their concerns, which I submitted a month later seven pages long. I got a quick response. Approval was given with the comment that not using clients and families as participants had addressed their concerns! I felt sad about this. This is an under-researched and marginalised client group. Because of the experience of pretty much automatic refusal of ethical approval for research proposals in the forensic setting, the service has set up a local National Health Service ethics committee, which includes professionals working in the forensic setting. They prefer to call any research that does not involve a change in service delivery service evaluations, as the ethical approval process is less complicated, so research can happen in the forensic context.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

All the changes to my research proposal have been centred on ethical considerations regarding the potential impact on clients. I wanted clients and their families' experiences to be central, acknowledging the entanglement with everything, including my experiences. I decided to use composite vignettes to ethically incorporate the situations and perspectives of the clients and families I work with.

As it took so long to gain university ethical approval, I was keen to get my application into the local National Health Service monthly ethics panel, which was a week later. It was a tight schedule, and I

had a family therapy session booked that clashed with the time the committee met. My fine calculations as to how I could manage both did not work out and I ended up having to end the overrunning family session abruptly when the online committee kept calling me in before my allocated time slot. I was on a ward in a secure unit, and as soon as I started to summarise my research, the alarms went off, mine attached to my belt, about an incident on another ward. There is no off switch. I gained approval a month later after adjusting information about identifying data being stored on my work server rather than the university server.

The client disengaged, and I was told that he had self-harmed. I got a cold, and when I tuned in to my body, I wrote this poem highlighting how much the ethical process had impacted me.

Wake up call!

Feeling depleted

The enormity of the task

Overwhelming

As I try to juggle

Competing demands

What is my body

trying to convey

Cold symptoms

Tiredness

Coughing

Not covid

Trying too hard

To achieve

The impossible

Sit back feel it

Let go of the task

Heart beating fast

Blood pressure high

Quieten

I feel sick

Upset

Demands of ethics committee

Impinged on a session

Rudely ended

Client self-harmed

The poem brought home to me how mortified I was that I let the ethics committee's time constraints interrupt my usual good practice around the end of a session. I then needed to repair any damage caused, and therapy resumed.

I was disappointed that despite all my attempts to ethically protect clients and families from being adversely affected by my research by deciding not to include them, that they had still been impacted. This was a wake-up call moment for me. A powerful reminder that my research could indirectly impact clients and families even if they are not included as participants. I need to think about the potential impacts on staff in general, professionals participating in the research, my students and last but not least, myself and my family.

The current iteration of my research, which has gained full ethical approval, involves inquiring into my usual practice. Family therapy practice has developed the use of reflecting teams (13), where around four professionals wanting to develop their systemic practice will listen in on a session, and then about three-quarters of the way through, the lead therapist will invite the reflecting team to share with each other what in the conversation has resonated with them. This is listened to by the lead therapist and family, who comment on the reflections. The lead therapist and reflecting team, along with any other connected professionals, meet before and after family therapy sessions. My research involves recording and transcribing the post-session discussion and at least one focus group. I have multiple roles: lead therapist in the session, systemic supervisor, researcher, and participant.

I am researching the aspect of my therapeutic practice where I notice changes in my bodily sensations in family therapy sessions, the sense I make of these changes, and what I do with the sensations I notice. I am calling this "reflexive intra-embodied practice". I am also interested in how other professionals understand and make use of bodily sensations evoked in them during family therapy.

Even though I feel comfortable with my research design, I am left with some questions, which I raise by way of a conclusion.

PROVOKING QUESTIONS

Why can't I use forensic clients and their families as participants?

I appreciate that clients are vulnerable, embody many protected characteristics, have sensitive information attached to them and that their capacity to consent is complex. I also realise that the vulnerabilities of family members would be unknown. In my work setting, this population is mainly Black men with severe mental health problems and criminal records, and many have histories of drug use. As staff we constantly work with risk issues. I am an experienced therapist who is used to navigating complex interactions, evaluating risk, and doing no harm, which are the skills I draw on as a researcher. Even though the university ethics committee raised many concerns about my research proposal, their comment that all of these had been addressed by not using clients and families suggested to me that they had become so alarmed about the risks in the forensic context that this alarm seeped into my research proposal in its entirety, to the extent that I got the impression that I would also need to use gatekeepers to recruit professionals as participants, which I ended up including in my ethics application.

Even though I am not able to use clients and their families in my research, they are central to my research, where the post-session discussion is about a family therapy session that has just taken place. The outcomes will be composite vignettes of scenarios in family therapy sessions.

Why can't I use students that I am evaluating as participants?

The university ethics committee was keen for me not to use students or staff with whom I have an evaluation role as participants. This is a shame. I currently have a master's level clinical forensic student working with me two days a week, as well as a master's qualifying clinic for four trainees in family therapy, who are also qualified professionals in other disciplines such as psychology, social work,

nursing, occupational therapy, and so on. Getting families in the forensic context engaged in a family therapy clinic with a reflecting team is a huge achievement; all the students understand and are enthusiastic about my research. There are rich, interesting, and informative discussions going on in the professional discussions after family therapy sessions, which I cannot directly use in my research. I also can not use the post-session discussions involving my student. This creates a dilemma for me because this student is involved in sessions where the other professionals are participants, and then I cannot use those post-session discussions. This student likes being involved in the most interesting work, which is a great learning opportunity. Again, I am not then researching my usual practice. I proposed a compromise to my supervisors that I record the first ten minutes of a post-session discussion with my student not talking and with the camera off if the session was online. My supervisors did not like that idea. Then, I found out that other doctoral researchers have been able to use their students in their research. Is this again a reaction to the forensic context? My doctoral supervisors agree that I should seek a change in ethical approval to invite my students to participate and make the point that it is unethical not to. I will not analyse the data that includes my student until after the evaluation process is completed. I will invite the four family therapy students to participate in a focus group for just them after the evaluation process is completed.

Why am I expected to use a gatekeeper with participants who are professionals?

Professional colleagues working with me in family therapy sessions are my participants. Even though they are not vulnerable and capable of giving informed consent, I have been expected to use a gatekeeper, perhaps a remnant of the nervousness about the forensic context. Using a gatekeeper has become a complicating factor, even though they are meant to make it easier for participants to decline to be involved. My gatekeeper is a senior manager (my supervisor) and does not know all potential participants. I gave my gatekeeper the name of a potential participant, and they emailed asking if they would like to find out more about my research. Because everyone is so busy, these emails have sometimes remained unopened. This then puts me in a dilemma about how to progress this. Everyone so far has been enthusiastic about my research and keen to participate. It would be a lot easier if I could give a brief outline and make it clear that there is no expectation about participating.

Why can't there be more of a dialogue with university ethics committees?

I attended the ethics committee in my service directorate, and we were able to have a discussion. Why can't it be like this for university ethics committees? I could have easily clarified many of the questions they raised. I spent a lot of time trying to help members of the university ethics committee understand points that were irrelevant to the ethical considerations needed. Ethics are complex beyond meeting the requirements of ethics committees, where ethics of care requires researchers to reflexively ask how participants understand the extent to which they consent (12); not every risk can be prevented. So far, I have been negotiating unanticipated ethical issues.

Why am I using the concept of participant rather than collaborator and co-producer?

Because of the context of my research, where I am still establishing my role as a relatively new professional discipline in the forensic system and the ethical considerations, I felt the need to own and take responsibility for all aspects of my research. Therefore, I am using the term participant. My participants already work very hard and would not welcome additional tasks or responsibilities. Because of the sensibilities in the system, including in staff dynamics, I thought that by being clear that I am researching my practice removes any worry about their practice being scrutinised. Researchers should be the most vulnerable (14). I hope to facilitate collaborative discussions in the focus groups, but co-production does not feel possible.

What are my roles in this research?

I realised that in writing the abstract for this paper, I was so preoccupied with clients, families and professionals as participants that I neglected to mention myself as a participant, even though my evocative auto-ethnography (15) runs throughout, and it is my practice that I am researching. I have

multiple roles. The terms participant, co-researcher, collaborator, and co-producer imply distinct and separate roles, whereas they are entangled (2). Maybe I can take inspiration from Donna Haraway's (16) tentacular thinking; I have tentacles everywhere, and maybe I am a composter (16).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I did not expect the ethical processes to be easy. I wanted to try at least to find a way to elevate the marginalised voices of a population often excluded from research. I realised, too, that practitioner research emphasising connectivity and emergence would be a challenge to positivist, individualistic, and separateness thinking. I had not anticipated the extent to which my integrity, competence, ethics, responsibility, sensitivity and care would be questioned by the university ethics committee. I learned a major lesson that my honesty about potential risks created more anxiety and that I needed to provide more reassurance. As a family therapist, I am used to navigating complexity. I had not anticipated how much the university ethics committee would find this confusing. Working in forensics and, previously, mental health and child protection has acclimatised me to working with risk, which could be alarming to those unfamiliar with what this means in practice. Perhaps bringing in a reviewer more familiar with the context could help, as has been done in my work context, where the ethics committee has been created to include forensic practitioners to avoid automatic refusal to invite forensic clients to participate in research. Perhaps ethics committees also need some help in evaluating the ethical considerations for research that is emergent, connected, indeterminate and intra-active.

REFERENCES

- (1) Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London / New York: Continuum International Publishing Group; 1987/2004.
- (2) Barad, K. *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press; 2007.
- (3) Simon, G. Distinctions in Practitioner Research between Professional Practice and Research Practice. *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice*, 2022; Volume 5(2), pp. 82–119.
- (4) Shotter, J. *Social Construction on the Edge: 'Witness' Thinking and Embodiment*. Chagrin Falls, Ohio: Taos Institute Publications; 2010.
- (5) Pillow, W. S. Epistemic witnessing: theoretical responsibilities, decolonial attitude and lenticular futures. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2019; Volume 32(2), pp. 118-135.
- (6) Larner, G. Family therapy and the politics of evidence. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 2004; Volume 26(1), pp. 17-39.
- (7) Braidotti, R. *Nomadic Theory: The portable Rosi Braidotti*. New York / Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press; 2011.
- (8) Bateson, G. *Steps to an ecology of mind*. St Albans: Paladin Reprinted with a new foreword 2000, Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press; 1972.
- (9) Gatherer, C., Dickson-Lee, S. & Lowenstein, J. The forgotten families; a systematic literature review of family interventions within forensic mental health services. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 2020; Volume 31(6), pp. 823-836.
- (10) Csordas, T. J. Introduction: the body as representation and being-in-the-world. In Cordas, T. J. (ed), *Embodiment and experience – The existential grounds of culture and self*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press; 1994.

- (11) Knapp, S. J. & Fingerhut, R. Informed consent or empowered collaboration. In *Practical ethics for psychologists: A positive approach*, 4th ed. Washington DC: American Psychological Association; 2024.
- (12) Edwards, R. & Mauthner, M. Ethics and feminist research: Theory and practice. In Edwards, Rosalind & Mauthner, Melanie (Eds.), *Ethics in qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd; 2002.
- (13) Andersen, T. The reflecting team: Dialogue and meta-dialogue in clinical work. *Family Process*, 1987; Volume 26(4), pp. 415-428.
- (14) Reynolds, V. A solidarity approach: The rhizome and messy inquiry. In Simon, Gail & Chard, Alex (eds) *Systemic Inquiry: Innovations in reflexive practice research*. Farnhill: Everything is Connected Press; 2014.
- (15) Bochner, A. P. & Ellis, C. Crafting evocative autoethnography. In Bochner, A. P. & Ellis, C. (Eds.) *Evocative Autoethnography. Writing Lives and Telling Stories*. London: Routledge p.75-119; 2016.
- (16) Haraway, D. J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making kin in the chthulucene*. Durham and London: Duke University Press; 2016.

FROM COLLABORATIVE TO COLACTIVE RESEARCH, RECONCEIVING THE LABOR OF KNOWLEDGE CREATION THROUGH ARENDT

Chloé Dierckx , Karin Hannes (Contributor)

KU Leuven, Belgium

Abstract

Inspired by Hannah Arendt's distinction between labor, work and sensemaking, and the related proposition that the creation of knowledge should be considered as acting rather than labor, I propose the term 'Colactive' research as an alternative to collaborative research. Related to the ideas of ethico-onto-epistemology and communicative action, I use this term to situate knowledge creation as dynamic, non-hierarchical and more than human. Colacting is a response to the project-related academic logic of predefined research proposals and outcomes that underpin most of our collaborative efforts in studying complex social-behavioural phenomena.

Keywords: collaborative research, labor, acting, Hannah Arendt

AUTHOR'S POSITION AND MOTIVATION

Being trained in art school and having spent some years working as an artist before starting a PhD in Social Sciences, I have often felt at odds in academia. The strict research plans, protocols and timeframes contrasted with the open and intuitive way of working I was used to. As an artist, I have learned that there is a huge difference between an initial idea and an outcome and that the final artwork is the result of a dialogue between many different actors: artist, materials, friends, public, technological equipment, and many more. I learned to appreciate how serendipitous events enriched my practice. I have learned to be patient with myself, others, my materials, and the environment, for a deeper understanding of things often requires time. Throughout my exploration of arts-based research, it became clear that many arts-based researchers take an intra-active, material, and embodied stance towards research. They plea for research processes that acknowledge the close entanglement of the researcher and the object of study (1, 2), that allows for the unexpected to enter a research process (3,4), move beyond project-bound timelines (5,6), and that consider non-conventional data that is fluid and moving (7,8). Some researchers set up research consortia that allow for more open-ended research processes, blend boundaries between different researcher identities and look for ways of academic knowledge production that are playful, interactive, and non-hierarchical (9). Some researchers seem to be testing the boundaries of conventional scientific practices. During the 6th European Congress of Qualitative Enquiry in 2023, a group of scholars challenged the norms of Keynote lectures and thereby also aimed to push the boundaries of what constitutes knowledge and its institutional practices (10). Keynote lectures traditionally come with an aura of scientific authority. The CG Collective decided to question this by inviting all members of the public to actively contribute to the content of the lecture and create its content spontaneously and collaboratively through playing games, making animal noises, writing messages on paper, or coming up on stage to say a few words. Though many of these initiatives are still in an experimental phase, their call towards a rethinking of

the authority of traditional scientific practices and evolving towards a more inclusive, relational, affective, and spontaneous way of academic knowledge creation is clear.

Inspired by these initiatives and by my own experience as an artist, I started to reflect upon research as colactive:

To Colact: from the Latin com "with, together, in combination" + actus, past participle of agere "to set in motion, perform"; to colact, to set and to be in motion together, the dynamic process of being and performing in combination with other people or things, to make sense together, to be together, to share.

To colact is an adjustment of the term to collaborate: "to labor together", a term often used to describe various people working together.

MAKING SENSE IN INTRA-ACTION

In her book *The Human Condition* (11), philosopher Hannah Arendt made a distinction between the necessary, the useful and the acting. With 'the necessary', Arendt refers to labor, which is the production of what is consumed and needed to survive, e.g., food production. With 'the useful', she refers to work, to the construction of things that are meant to last, e.g. the construction of buildings or protocols. For Arendt, 'acting' has nothing to do with playing a role in a theatre. It refers to sensemaking, for example, the gestures you make and the things you do. It relates to those things that give meaning to life, e.g. the love we feel for the other, be it human or thing. To act is to show who you are. When truly showing oneself to the other, Arendt explains, 'the "who" which appears so clearly [...] to others, remains hidden from the person him- [or her]self' (11, p 197). This revealing aspect of acting disappears as soon as 'the act' becomes a means to an end when one acts in a conscious manner and works toward a preset goal. Acting in Arendt's terms goes against the Platonian separation of the idea and its implementation in practice, where one can first imagine a desired outcome and then undertake the steps to realize that outcome. Arendt starts from the premise that people today cannot guarantee who they will be tomorrow and that the things that give sense to our lives, such as our relations with others, are fleeting. They only exist the moment they are acted.

This way of defining sensemaking is closely related to Karen Barad's (12) proposal of reconsidering knowing as an ethico-onto-epistem-ology, starting from the premise that what we know (epistemology) cannot be separated from who we are (ontology) and how we relate to others (ethics). She thereby implies that knowing is a dynamic process shaped by intra-action. Rather than interaction, which refers to separate subjects acting and reacting to each other, intra-action refutes the idea that there is such a thing as separate entities in the first place and points out that the relation is within (intra) rather than between (inter) the subjects. Consequently, knowledge cannot be separated from the knowing subject, and this knowing subject cannot be separated from the world it intra-acts with. Barad describes this as 'exteriority within', knowing the exterior world within oneself. While Arendt argues that knowing the world is a dynamic act, fleeting and difficult to grasp, Barad illustrates that this knowing of the world only exists in intra-action. Making sense is not only about showing who you are but also about being open to who or what others are.

The study of how people inter- or intra-act has a strong tradition within social science. Building further on social constructivism developed by Berger and Luckman and the theory of communicative action by Habermas, German scholars have proposed the concept of communicative constructivism (13). Social constructivism states that meaning is constructed through social actions, whereby social actions are defined as actions oriented towards others. Habermas has described one way of acting socially as communicative action. Communicative action aims to realize shared understanding amongst different actors and should lead to a common definition of these actors' shared situation. While Habermas's theory of communicative action is limited to linguistics, scholars redefined the theory by acknowledging the importance of the body and materiality in communicative action (13). The body is central to communicative action, when expressing something through e.g. speaking or drawing, but also when sensory perceiving something. Similarly, the objects or materials that are used to communicate, e.g. the keyboard we type on or the artwork we see, are crucial for communicative action. When meaning is made, this meaning does not exist independently from the material form or style it is communicated in.

While Arendt argues that knowing the world is a dynamic act, fleeting and difficult to grasp, and Barad illustrates that this knowing of the world only exists in intra-action, the reconceptualization of communicative action shows that this fleeting intra-active meaning making is situated in material and bodily practices. Members of a colactive are, therefore, not only human. Following Jane Bennett's (14) idea of 'thing-power', a rising number of researchers are highly aware of the influence of the environment on their research. They recognize that each 'thing', be it human, animal, plant, object or something in between, has an influence. To regard such 'things' as col-labor-ators in a research project is difficult since they most likely do not actively work towards the research goal set forward by the researchers. They are just there, being themselves, acting. Regarding research practices as colactive practices, however, would allow each 'thing' to have a place in the colactive.

TOWARDS AN IMMANENT RESEARCH PROCESS

Regarding research as acting rather than labor requires a rethinking of both research methods and research context. A fixed methodology very often determines the course of a research process beforehand, making it difficult to deviate from it throughout the research. This has an impact on researchers' sensitivity to alternative and progressive methods that allow them to respond to unexpected events. To regard research as a colactive inquiry requires an immanent approach (15, 5, 16). Such an approach breaks free from the idea that it is possible to determine the research process beforehand. It regards a research process as a constant renegotiation of methodology, ethics, research findings and social relationships. The methodology should be considered 'a series of emergent techniques' (2), where the researcher is fully embedded in the research environment and ongoingly reinvents the research methods in response and in relation to all members of the colactive.

To colact is to listen to the other members of the colactive and be willing to change what you know - and thus who you are- accordingly. To colact does not require each member of the colactive to strive towards a preset goal. On the contrary, once certain members enforce an outcome on other members, the colactive ceases to exist. This openness allows each member to take with it their own dynamic concerns and desires so that they can function as catalyzers which bring life and movement into research.

A SENSEMAKING TOGETHERNESS, THE ETHICS OF COLACTING

To colact means not to enforce a meaning on other members of the colactive. While this is often already a challenge within communication amongst humans who can elaborately explain themselves, it becomes even trickier when we include 'things' that do not speak the same language or do not speak at all. Caitlin DeSilvey (17) attends us to the danger of constraining the meaning of things. She proposes to consider an 'indifferent' attitude, not in the sense of not caring, but in the sense of respecting difference. By respecting differences, one can engage with other things in a 'shared vulnerability'. Such engagement 'does not appropriate or intervene in the lives of other things, but instead leaves open the possibility that we may be 'redone' through our contact with them, whatever form that may take' (17, p 228). She proposes the act of touching (with all our senses). Touching should not be done with the intent to change the other, nor with the intent to grasp and categorize the other fully; touching should be done with the intent to change oneself and following Barad's notion of ethico-onto-epistemology, thereby changing one's understanding. The act of touching is an ethical act in the Levinasian sense (18) and presupposes that responsibility towards the other is an intrinsic part of our relational being in the world (1, 19). It exposes you to the other and, by that alone, gives you a sense of responsibility towards the other. Rather than relying on pre-approved ethical constructs, research ethics could rely on the idea of virtue (16) or a moral compass of values that guides researchers through the research process and is adaptable to changing circumstances.

To truly touch something requires a vulnerability of the one who touches, an openness to be exposed. To touch something, however, also beholds the risk of violence. When touching, one should be aware that there is always something in the other which cannot be touched. It requires respect for the limits of the other and oneself and acceptance of differences (18, 20). When colacting, interest in and responsibility towards the other should be balanced with respect to the other's differences and individual needs. It is to be together, be inspired by the other, be changed, and gain understanding through your encounter with the other, but refrain from forcing the other to change, steering others in a certain direction, or imposing meaning on others' actions. For this, one has to respect the private sphere of others. The ability to withdraw in isolation might even be a precondition to participating in a colactive life. Protection of the private allows for time and space to reflect upon one's own needs, remain aware of one's individuality and differences, and share one's ideas only when one feels ready to share them (11). In colactive research projects, this means respecting the private life of members of the colactive, possibly ensuring a space that is separated from the daily living environment and allowing members time and distance when needed (6).

COLACTIVE TIME, THE ART OF LINGERING

Allowing yourself and others time and space to withdraw, automatically means that one sometimes must wait. To wait until the other is ready to act, to wait for the right encounter, to wait until your own experiences and those of others have transformed into coherent thoughts, to wait until you understand each other, or until you realize that you do not understand each other. It is not a passive waiting but a lingering waiting that remains alert, keeps searching, and stays with the trouble (19).

When one lingers, one is attuned to that with which one lingers, unconcerned with the passing of time. Time is then not experienced as something one has to race against or closely monitor in order to achieve a certain outcome within a predefined timeframe. When lingering, time does not constrict but allows you to be with the people and things that surround you in that moment. Such an experience of time relates to Aion. Aion is a conception of time that is driven by curiosity and open to the unexpected. It is different from Chronos, or institutional time, monitored and bound by protocols. Aion is 'the pure empty form of time, free of content, which is shot through with the vibrations of becoming' (5, p. 190).

The notion of becoming points towards change, and though acting is not goal-oriented, it can be a catalyst for change when different members of the colactive are affected by each other and adapt their actions accordingly, in the near or the far future. However, This change is hard to predict, and it is difficult to know how, where, whether and when it will occur. Consequently, the process of colacting is hard to monitor, and the changes it inspires are difficult to measure. In a society that focuses on monitorable processes and measurable outcomes, the idea of colacting is too easily sacrificed for goal-oriented forms of labor or work. Even a sensemaking activity such as research is supposed to run according to a preset timeframe and have measurable results that can efficiently be compared and assessed. Research proposals often give an indication of the expected results and the future changes that the project will enable. The predicted change is what justifies the research. When adhering to Aion, however, change is in the now, in a permanent becoming, and not in the predicted future.

PUSHING DISCOURSE, WHY WORDS MATTER

The way we speak about the world, our practices within the world, and our experience of the world are intrinsically connected (1, 22, 23). Recognizing the power of discourse on how we experience and act in the world, I believe a name change can influence a change in practice and experience. With the verb 'to colact', I have aimed to offer an alternative to 'to collaborate'. My intent is not to replace all collaborative research with colactive research, but I argue that they can complement each other. Referring back to Arendt, to work is to produce things that are meant to last. Some research projects will be goal-oriented, and some colactive research processes will lead to writing an article or setting up guidelines for research and thus to work. While such labor leads to the production of new information, I believe the actual act of sensemaking, or knowledge creation, is always colactive. It is a fleeting, dynamic and contextual act. Reconsidering research practices as colactive could not only lead to more inclusive, egalitarian research practices with an awareness of materiality and environment, but it could also shift the focus of academic research to knowledge creation rather than the production of information.

CONCLUSION

In this contribution, I propose colacting as a new verb to make sense together. *To colact* - as opposed to *to collaborate* - is not goal-oriented but is a catalyst for change in the present. By truly being together and sharing with the mere intent of sharing, members of the colactive (human, plant, animal, thing or in between) will change. Colacting embraces the complexity and unpredictable dynamics of knowledge

creation. It requires us to step away from predefined or protocolized research plans and take an immanent approach towards research. Methodology, output and ethics should constantly be renegotiated in response to the dynamic and possibly unexpected movements of the colactive. Colacting takes the ethical stance of touching, respecting boundaries, and giving each other time and space if needed, thereby striving to be an inclusive, non-abusive, and non-forced way of making sense. Renaming academic research as colactive could shift the focus from producing information to creating knowledge.

REFERENCES

- (1) Barad, K. Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Diss/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come. *DerridaToday* 3.2:240-269, 2010
- (2) Carey, Fairchild, N., Taylor, C., Koro, M., Elmenhorst, C., & Benozzo, A. *Autopsy as a site and mode of inquiry: de/composing the ghoulish hu/man gaze*. *Qualitative Research : QR*, 146879412199900. 2021
- (3) Koro-Ljungberg, M. & MacLure, M. Ulmer, J.' *d...a...t...a, data++, data, and some problematics*'. Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, S.Y. (ed.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. SAGE publications. 2018.
- (4) Swift, A. *Creative with resources in qualitative research*. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design* (Vol. 1). SAGE. 2022.
- (5) Braidotti, R. *A Theoretical Framework for the critical posthumanist*. *Theory, Culture and society*. 36(6), 31-61. 2018
- (6) Dierckx, C., Hendricks, L., Coemans, S., & Hannes, K. *The third sphere: Reconceptualizing allyship in community-based participatory research praxis*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(4), 473–497. 2021
- (7) St. Pierre, E.' *The Appearance of Data*'. *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies* 13(4). SAGE Publications. pp. 223–227. 2013.
- (8) Gale, K. *Madness as Methodology, Bringing concepts to life in contemporary theorizing and inquiry*. Routledge; 2018.
- (9) Fairchild, N., Taylor, C. A., Benozzo, A., Carey, N., Koro, M., & Elmenhorst, C. *Knowledge Production in Material Spaces*. Taylor and Francis; 2021.
- (10) The CG Collective. *Un-key-noting*. 6th European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Retrieved from <https://www.europeannetworkqi.org/past-ecqi-editions#ecqi-2023> on 6/01/23. 2023.
- (11) Arendt, H. *The Human Condition*. Chicago (Ill.): University of Chicago Press; 1998.
- (12) Barad, K. *Meeting the universe halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke university press. 2007
- (13) Knoblauch, H. *Communicative Constructivism and Mediatization*. *Communication Theory*, 23(3), 297–315. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.120>. 2013.

- (14) Bennett, J. *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Duke University Press. 2010
- (15) Manning. *The Minor Gesture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2016.
- (16) Kuntz, A. *Qualitative inquiry, cartography, and the promise of material change*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 2019.
- (17) DeSilvey, C. (*Foundered: Other Objects and the Ethics of Indifferenc*. In Olsen, Burström, Desilvey, Pétersdottir (ed.) *After Discourse, Things, Affects, Ethics*. Routledge, London & New York. 2021.
- (18) Introna, D. *Touching tactfully, The impossible community* in Olsen, Burström, Desilvey, Pétersdottir (ed.) *After Discourse, Things, Affects, Ethics*. Routledge, London & New York. 2021.
- (19) Haraway, D. *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press. 2016
- (20) Puig de la Bellacasa. *Matters of care, Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. University of Minesota Press, Minneapolis & London. 2017.
- (21) Braidotti, R. *Transpositions: On nomadic ethics*, Cambridge: Polity press. 2006
- (22) Keller, R., & Jenner, B. *Doing discourse research: an introduction for social scientists*. Sage. 2013
- (23) Hekman, S. J. *The material of knowledge: feminist disclosures*. Indiana university press. 2010.

SPECULATIONS ON FORCE AND FORM

Helen Bowstead

University of Plymouth (United Kingdom)

Abstract

Erin Manning (2) says that '[t]ransversal operations for the creation of ways of knowing emerge from the ground up. They are singular and speculative all at once, emboldened by the creativity of the everyday' (p. 12). The singular and the speculative. The creativity of the everyday. These are the concepts that fizz and schizz. How to explain the creative force generated by the act of hanging the washing on the line? Or the speculative potential of cleaning a shit-stained toilet bowl? Or why the writing tends to sprout after a long, hot bath? For Margaret Oliphant (1), it was not the everyday and mundane that posed the greatest risk to her writing and her creativity, but the severing of her connection to it. Oliphant said that both she and her writing profited from the 'difficult, obscure, chancy connection between the artwork and the emotional/manual/managerial complex of skills and tasks called "housework"' (p. 223). So, is it the lack of time, space, and opportunity that puts writing at risk, or is it these very limitations, these impositions, these obstacles, that enable, as Alice Ostriker (1) argues, an 'immediate and inescapable contact with the sources of life, death, beauty, growth, corruption' (p.229)? Is it possible to work generatively with the menial and mundane to produce (extra) *ordinary affects* that 'pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds' (3, p. 3)? This paper exemplifies how writing with, and writing to, the everyday encounters experienced by this middle-aged, menopausal, overworked, undervalued "artist-housewife" (1) has generated a PhD thesis that celebrates the speculative potential of the most humdrum of *enabling constraints* (4).

Keywords: speculation, research-creation, enabling constraints

KING DEATH ON THE STAGE.



TIGHT LACING !

" Good God, Harry, undo me ; I'm dying," gasped poor Kittie Tyrrel, who was playing in the Elephant and Castle pantomime.
The Coroner : What did she mean ?
Harry : She was laced very tightly.
A post-mortem examination showed that death was due to syncope.
The Coroner : What caused this ?
Witness : She was very tightly laced, and I think this had brought on failure of the heart's action.

Wellcome Images

The figure of a skeleton in a shroud is pulling the laces on a girl's stays (5)

Like many PhD students, at times, I felt like poor Kitty Tyrrel (5), tied up so tightly by institutional imperatives to conform I could hardly breathe. But the world called to me. Everyday acts and encounters lured me into writing, and through writing to the not-yet-known, the writing got free of itself in ways that were generative, joyful and liberating. Reimagining my doctoral studies as a mode of existence enabled me to open up my thinking and writing to moments defined by what my senses were compelled to attend to. For Manning, 'writing is an act, alive with the rhythms of uncertainty and openings of a speculative pragmatism that engages with the forces of the milieu where transversality is most acute' (4, p. 42). This is writing that emerges *out of time*, as though it 'only really knows what it's after once it has begun to make its way into the world' (p. ix).

This paper, presented at ECQI2024, works to exemplify through fragments of text how writing with and writing to the everyday encounters experienced by this middle-aged, menopausal, overworked, undervalued "artist-housewife" (1) generated a PhD thesis that celebrates the speculative potential of the most humdrum of *enabling constraints* (4).

Have you ever run in a thunderstorm? I have. The rain was so heavy, I could hardly see. Thunder crashed. Lightning flashed.

Red-faced and sodden, I ran along the deserted Hoe.

I am a changed person.

I have stretched out my legs. I have uncurled my heart. I have let the words flow. ⁱ

Beginnings and endings. Endings and beginnings. Of course, there is no such thing. The end of the thesis is where it begins. The beginning is where it ends.

This thesis that begins and ends with a reckoning. A realisation. A shift.

The tide is high. The waves throw spray up onto the walkway around the old harbour. A group of fishermen are gathered near the Antony Gormley statue. There are women in the sea. Swimming and laughing.

As I run, I think about lines. And linearity. About chronicles and chronology. And force and form.

In the distance the breakwater is almost fully submerged. It forms an invisible line in the ocean. Separating the turbulence of the open water from the relative calm of the harbour.

Beyond the breakwater. The sea feels different. Smells different. The air is thick with ozone. And the sound of water.

The sound of water. The smell of water. The shape of water.

Water fills whichever container it is poured into. A bucket. A bottle. A bay.

Into what shall I pour these words? What will contain them? Constrain them? Hold them? This leaky, porous, body of work.

This thing which cannot be contained. But must.

The shape of a thesis. The work of a thesis. Form and force. Force and form.

Time is running out. I have two hundred and forty-four days remaining.

Two hundred and forty-four days.

And, then what?

I am in the gloaming. The twilight of the thesis. Of the thesising.

It is the witching hour. Light and dark meet and mingle. The dying sun. The rising moon. The greyness, tinged with light. All is shadow. All is aglow.

September is nearly done. Autumn is in the air. My hands feel the chill of the cooling sea when I swim. The wind whips across the grey waters of the Sound when I run. The lido has been drained for the winter.

The writing has changed. I can feel it. It senses an ending. A finishing up.

What happens after the story ends? It goes on, of course.

What happens before the story starts? Everything, of course.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, Jeanette Winterson (7) tells the stories of the twelve dancing princesses. Of what came to pass once they had married their princes. Living out their happy ever afters.

Murder and mermaids. Rape and regret. Passion and poison.

Fairy tales always begin in the middle. And end in the middle. Everything happens in the middling.

Before and afters. Force and form. Afters and before. Form and force.

The force of the writing. The form of the written.

I drive home.

I need a bath.

The bathroom is looking grubby. The grouting is blackening again. The toilet bowl is smeared with shit.

I rub at the grouting so hard that the old toothbrush snaps. I squirt cleaner at the tiles. I pour bleach into the toilet.

Seven years I have been writing this thesis. Seven years. And here I am. A naked, middle-aged, post-menopausal woman, still trying to scrub the bathroom clean.

Twenty-five years after *The Perfect Mango* was first published, Manning (8) writes:

Many of us are taught that age reduces us, that it depletes us. This is not my experience. Growing older has come with a sense that the multiplicity of I which was so difficult for me as a child is truly the richness life brings. There is no single identity, only a policing of the category. This is what changes: we may become less willing to fit into the categories imposed on our bodies.

(p.12–13)

Nearing her fiftieth birthday, Manning (8) writes that many of the changes she has experienced in herself have come through years of practice. Engaging in a 'mode of experimentation that produces orientations life can unfold.' For Manning (8), practice includes art and writing, and it includes working with materials and crafting concepts. But it also includes the work of the quotidian. For this is where the world worlds (p.14). Though I have described, labelled, and categorised myself as a middle-aged, menopausal, overworked, undervalued "artist-housewife" (1), I am all of these things and none. Like Manning, I find that this is the age of change. Of flux. Of possibility.

Let me introduce you to Sutton Harbour. It is a small marina packed with boats, mostly yachts. From the car park, a narrow path snakes around its edge. On my daily walk to work, I became fascinated by the entanglements of human and non-human matter that appeared and disappeared with the tide. The dead gull. The Starbucks cup. The burger carton dancing in the wind. For five years, I photographed

the flotsam and jetsam that arrived and left with the tide. Never the same. Always changing. These entanglings of matter called out to me and invited me in (9).

Like the tangled debris in Jane Bennett's (10) storm drain (p.4), these *disposable bodies* (11, p.2) seemed to embody vital materiality that spoke to me of the world and its worldings. Images of overflowing bins, floating refuse, littered streets, and dead things amassed on my phone. These were the dregs of advanced capitalism and its human-nonhuman cost. This was the matter that no longer seemed to matter.

And I began to write. Sitting at my desk, short paragraphs would emerge. Tiny bursts of emotion, sadness, anger, fear, and disgust bubbled forth. Sometimes joy. But rarely. Not in the early days. I was haunted by bodies. Vulnerable bodies. Mobile bodies. Disposable bodies. Edible bodies. Leaky bodies. All the bodies that find themselves exploited, excluded, or silenced. Stark inequalities made their presence felt as the detritus spoke to me of capitalism's insatiable thirst for material profit and the ever more toxic systems, policies and discourses it fuels. Everywhere I looked, the world hissed and seethed.

Have you ever experienced the *flood*? You'll know if you have. You feel it coming. But there is not enough time to act. No hope of stemming the flow. Who knew a womb could hold so much blood?

Some days, I would only make it halfway around the harbour before I had to turn back. I kept an old towel in the car to sit on so I could drive home without staining the seats.

Ursula Le Guin (1) says menopause is 'the least glamorous topic imaginable' (p. 3). Half the world's population (should they live that long) will experience "the change", and yet, as Le Guin (1) notes, its mention is still mostly met with uneasy silence (p. 3).

But, Le Guin (1) says if she were asked to choose the occupant to take the last remaining seat on a passing spaceship, she would go to the local Woolworths and select a woman. Not a young woman, not a well-educated woman, but a woman who has lived: for only women accept, experience and enact the entire human condition, 'the essential quality of which is Change' (1, p. 6).

I like reading writers writing about writing. In *The Fisherwoman's Daughter*, Le Guin (1) describes how giving up the burden of domesticity is rare among women who write. Margaret Oliphant (1) said that 'she profited, that her writing profited, from the difficult, obscure, chancy connection between the artwork and the emotional/manual/managerial complex of skills and tasks called "housework" and to sever that connection would put the writing itself at risk' (p. 223).

Le Guin (1) says women cannot (or do not want to) surrender themselves fully to their art and instead manage the "double-tightrope trick" (p. 233) of the *artist-housewife* (1). What a terrible, wonderful term! The *artist-housewife*. The hyphen hooking up and binding these somehow incongruous words togetherⁱⁱ. My instinct is to pull them apart. Rip them asunder. But as Sarah E. Truman (12) writes at the end of her book, *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research-Creation*:

a hyphen is a forced milieu. A place where two different logics or practices are brought together to create a third. In this milieu, different movements, ideals or entities become co-implicated while still maintaining their difference: affecting while also affected.

(p. 158).

If the housewife is uncoupled, we will be left only with the artist in all [his] self-indulgent, self-serving, self-made glory. The imperious master who has consigned life to the margins.

Through the hyphenation of research and creation, Manning (4) sets out a challenge to the theory/practice divide and the methodological straightjacketing of knowledge production processes. Research-creation rejects the institutional imperatives to define the value of artistic practices by the finished object. Instead, it requires us to engage in what William James calls a "radical empiricism" (4) and to let go of what is capable of already being known, valued and measured. It is a process concerned with what knowledge *does*, as opposed to what knowledge *is*: process over product, force over form. Research-creation is interested in the creative trajectory of practice and how the constitution of new processes creates 'the conditions for new ways of encountering study – forms and forces of intellectuality that cut across normative accounts of what it means to know' (4, p.27).

Writing *is* world-making. Writing *is* a generative force. Writing *is* living otherwise. Lured by the ordinary, the everyday and the mundane, the writing process has taken on a liveliness, a *jouissance*, that enables a reimagining of who and what can be valued. And though the thesis, *this* thesis, has been submitted and examined, the writing goes on. For as Donna Haraway (13) reminds us, the fight against sexism, racism, colonialism and all the other isms is like cleaning the toilet – "it's never work that's finished".

She sits, reading Deleuze and Parnet, down by the sea. The rock is cold against her back, but the early spring sunshine is warm on her face. The tide is out. The beach deserted. As she gazes across the Sound towards the breakwater, there is a shift. ⁱⁱⁱ

All at once she knows what the wind is behind her witch's broom. ^{iv}

The anarchiv^v bubbles and brews. Stews and sweats. It is a cauldron of spells and sorcery.

Everything is still *in*-formation.

The readings volume.

The writings lace.

Ribbons stirred by wind. ^{vi}

Every writing, an AND.

Every reading, an AND.

Reading and writing. Writing and reading. Intertwined.

Not read first, write later.

Nor write first. Read later.

Read AND write. Write AND read.

Read *with*. ^{vii}

Write *with*. ^{viii}

Break the idea of thesis! ^{ix}

Break the idea of study! ^x

Break the idea of research! ^{xi}

Throw off your corset.

And do a cartwheel in the classroom. ^{xii}

REFERENCES

- (1) Le Guin, U. K. *Dancing at the Edge of the World*. Grove Press. 1989
- (2) Manning, E. *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*. Duke University Press. 2020
- (3) Stewart, K. *Ordinary Affects*. Duke University Press. 2007
- (4) Manning, E. *The Minor Gesture*. Duke University Press. 2016
- (5) The figure of a skeleton in a shroud is pulling the laces on a girl's stays. Wellcome Collection. No date; <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/mvemv2w>
- (6) Cannon, S.O. Making kin with comprehensive exams: Producing scholar in intra-action. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 2020; Vol. 26 (1), pp. 36–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419869962>
- (7) Winterson, J. *Sexing the cherry*. Vintage Books. 2014
- (8) Manning, E. *The Perfect Mango*. Punctum Books. 2019
- (9) MacLure, M. The wonder of data. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*. 2013; 13 (4), pp. 228–232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708613487863>
- (10) Bennett, J. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press. 2010
- (11) Braidotti, R. Posthuman Humanities. *European Educational Research Journal*. 2013; pp. 1-19.
- (12) Truman, S. E. *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research-Creation*. Routledge. 2022
- (13) Haraway, D. Making Oddkin: Story Telling for Earthly Survival. 2017; [online] Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-iEnSztKu8>
- (14) Manning, E. Anarchive - Concise Definition. Available from: <https://3ecologies.org/immediations/anarchiving/anarchive-concise-definition/> [Accessed 30/08/2023]
- (15) Deleuze, G., and Parnet, C. *Dialogues II*. Continuum. 2002
- (16) Haraway, D.J. and Braidotti, R. The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Utrecht University. 2017; [online] Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXQTex0a3dc> [Accessed 29/08/2023]
- (17) Haraway, D.J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in Chthulucene*. Duke University Press. 2016
- (18) Manning, E. Wondering the world directly – Or, how movement outruns the subject. *Body and Society*. 2014; 20 (3&4), pp. 162–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X14546357>
- (19) Moten, F., & Harney, S. The University and the undercommons: Seven theses. *Social Text*. 2004; 22 (2), pp. 101–115. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-101
- (20) Manning, E. and Massumi, B. *Thought in the act: Passages in the ecology of experience*. University of Minnesota. 2014

ENDNOTES

ⁱ In her poem, Cannon (6) rails against dis-abling constraints designed to keep us in line.

What's a girl to do
When she's told to put her joy In a box
Tied up tight, kept controlled, disciplined
Who's got the paddle
Ready to keep me in line
What's a girl to do
When she wants to be seen
But can't quite get through
Shall I run interference for you
Make it harder for you to see through the line to me
Give you some things to hold on to
That make me sensible
That make me easy to
Categorize and
Count
And
Control
What's a girl to do
When she doesn't want to be controlled
Where can she be
And stretch out her legs
And uncurl her heart
And let her words flow

(pp. 44-45)

ⁱⁱ Sarah E. Truman (12) ends her book, *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research-Creation*, with some thoughts on the hyphen. She writes:

a hyphen is a forced milieu. A place where two different logics or practices are brought together to create a third. In this milieu, different movements, ideals or entities become co-implicated while still maintaining their difference: affecting while also affected.

(p. 158)

ⁱⁱⁱ "Movement always happens behind the thinker's back, or in the moment when [s]he blinks" (15, p.1)

^{iv} Of his own approach to study, Deleuze writes 'It was on Spinoza that I worked the most seriously according to the norms of the history of philosophy – but he more than any other gave me the feeling of a gust of air from behind each time you read him, of a witch's broom which he makes you mount' (15, p. 15).

^v Manning (14) defines the anarchic thus:

The anarchival is made of the formative movements going into and coming out of the archive, for which the objects contained in the archive serve as springboards. The anarchival as such is made of formative tendencies; compositional forces seeking a new taking-form; lures for further process. Archives are their waystations.

^{vi} In *Dialogues II*, Deleuze and Parnet (15) say of writing:

Writing has no other goal: wind, even when we do not move, ‘keys in the wind to set my spirit to light and give my thought a gust of air from the backyard’ – to release what can be saved from life, that which can save itself by means of power and stubbornness, to extract from the event that which is not exhausted by the happening, to release from becoming that which will not permit itself to be fixed in a term. A strange ecology, tracing a line of writing, music or painting. These are ribbons stirred by wind. A little air passes. A line is traced, the stronger for being abstract, if it is quite restrained, without figures. Writing is made of motor agitation and inertia.

(p. 75)

^{vii} In conversation with Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway describes sympoiesis as simply meaning ‘making with’ (16). But, as Haraway (13) argues in *Staying with the Trouble*, this is what also gives sympoiesis radical potentiality:

Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organising ... That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding with, in company. Sympoiesis enfolds autopoiesis and generatively unfurls and extends it.

(p. 58)

^{viii} Of the writer, Deleuze and Parnet (15) say:

The author is a subject of enunciation but the writer – who is not an author – is not. The writer invents assemblages starting from assemblages which have invented him, he makes one multiplicity pass into another ... The author creates a world, but there is no world which awaits us to be created. Neither identification nor distance, neither proximity nor remoteness, for, in all these cases, one is led to speak for, in place of . . . One must, on the contrary, speak *with*, write *with*. With the world, with a part of the world, with people.

(p.51-52).

^{ix} “Break the idea of clothes” has been fashion designer Rei Kawakubo’s call for over 40 years. For her, the only way to approach fashion design is to try to think and feel and see as if she isn’t making clothes (18, p.91). Instead of seeking to create a garment that can be worn by a preexisting body, Kawakubo works with a series of enabling constraints to create a ‘propositional field that activates what a body can do in its co-constitution with an emergent environment’ (4, p. 92). So, when I say, break the idea of thesis, it is in the spirit of this approach to creative practices. Thesis as process cannot be subsumed by thesis as object. The purpose of the thesis (this thesis) is not the production of the thesis itself, but the potential for transformation offered by the process of not-knowing-in advance.

^x In a conversation with Stephen Shukaitis and Stephano Harney, Fred Moten (19) says:

When I think about the way we use the term “study”, I think we are committed to an idea that study is what you do with people. It’s talking and walking around with people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – these are various modes of activity. The point of calling it “study” is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present. These activities aren’t ennobled by the fact that we now say, “oh, if you did these

things in a certain way, you could be said to have been studying.” To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice. What’s important is to recognize that has been the case – because that recognition allows you access to a whole, varied, alternative history of thought.

(pp 109-110)

To break the idea of study, there needs to be a *will full* embracing of the infinite ways in which we come to *know*. The thesis is the real and symbolic representation of a very particular set of study practices that work to exclude and constrain. Like Manning (2), I am committed to the belief that even the doctoral thesis, a process of knowledge production so deeply entwined with neurotypicality and all the ‘valuations that accompany it, might have the capacity for doing the work differently’ (p. 225).

^{xi} To break the idea of research, Manning (4) argues that there needs to be a dismantling of method and its stranglehold on educational practices:

In working as an apparatus of capture, method gives reason its place in the sun: it diagnoses, it situates, it organizes, and ultimately it surveys and judges... Despite its best intentions, method works as the safeguard against the ineffable: if something cannot be categorized, it cannot be made to account for itself and is cast aside as irrelevant. The consequences are many: knowledge tends to be relegated to the sphere of “conscious knowledge,” backgrounding the wealth of the relational field of experience in-forming; the force of change that animates a process is deadened; the uneasiness that destabilizes thinking is backgrounded or effaced completely.

(p. 32).

^{xii} In *Thought in the Act*, Manning and Massumi (20) explore the ways in which neurotypicality backgrounds expressive potential. The chair is for sitting. The sidewalk for walking. The computer for email checking. The classroom for learning.

In neurotypical spaces, bodies must be stilled. There can be no cartwheels in the classroom.

HE KEPT ME SAFE – A DREAM TEAM TO THINK WITH PERFORMANCE IN QUALITATIVE INQUIRY AND TACKLE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONGST LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES

Edgar Rodríguez-Dorans¹, Steven Maxwell²

¹*University of Edinburgh (UNITED KINGDOM)*

²*University of Glasgow (UNITED KINGDOM)*

Abstract

This Dream Team session centred on the use of performance as a tool for interpreting qualitative data and delving into the complexities of intimate partner violence (IPV) within LGBTQIA+ communities across diverse geopolitical contexts. The session showcased the performance *He Kept Me Safe*, based on the research 'Experiences of Scottish men who have been subject to intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships' (1). The performance, employing the methodology of 'narrative portraiture' (2), brought to life this research's transcripts in the form of six roles within the play: Jeff, Matt, Will, Ryan, Ollie, and Johnny. The stories of gay men's experiences of IPV, including the abuse, the impact, and trauma, but also hope and resilience, were portrayed. In the play, six actors re-enacted the narrative experiences of four survivors in a conversation with a mental health practitioner in the format of a survivor group support session. The re-enactment served as a catalyst for discussions among the session's delegates, including researchers, activists, and/or policymakers. The facilitators guided delegates in exploring how performance methodologies can enhance data analysis, research dissemination, and public engagement. The Dream Team fostered discussions on translating observational notes, interview transcripts, or focus group data into embodied, performative perspectives for comprehensive data analysis. Delegates highlighted the vicarious emotional response that the performance had, reflecting the key purpose of narrative portraiture. This method creates a more effective process for creating an impact on public policy and health practice stakeholders than traditional research outputs. Furthermore, the session encouraged researchers to contemplate the integration of narrative portraiture into their work to vividly convey research findings through the body, voice, visual imagery, space, and personal interaction. The collaborative exercise consolidated insights on the application of narrative portraiture in diverse research projects and identified manifestations of IPV in LGBTQIA+ communities, discussing strategies for promoting healthier relationships.

Keywords: intimate partner violence, gay men, LGBTQIA+, performance, narrative portraits

INTRODUCTION

Within the 90-minute timeframe of Dream Team sessions at the European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ECQI), which took place in Helsinki, Finland, in January 2024, this session aimed to address the pressing issue of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) amongst gay men and to discuss how qualitative inquiry can serve this purpose. This Dream Team session brought delegates together to think about (a)

using performance to interpret and analyse data and communicate findings in qualitative inquiry and (b) understanding Intimate Partner Violence amongst the LGBTQIA+ communities in different geopolitical contexts. We used a performance entitled *He Kept Me Safe* as a springboard for thinking and discussion on how researchers, activists, and policymakers can come together to advance the ways we think about embodied data and how we understand the phenomenon of intimate partner violence.

The World Health Organisation (3) defines IPV as behaviours by a former or current intimate partner that involve physical violence, sexual abuse/violence, psychological abuse, and/or controlling behaviours, leading to significant wellbeing harm. Evidence highlights that 1 in 3 LGBTQIA+ individuals will ever experience IPV, which is equally high when compared to cis women in heterosexual relationships (4). Research demonstrates that LGBTQIA+ communities' IPV experiences have culturally distinct risk factors and barriers to accessing support (4-5).

He Kept Me Safe brings visibility to issues of IPV experienced by gay men, given that a narrative of IPV is not accessible to men under traditional constructs of masculinity. Heteronormative notions of masculinity create barriers for gay men in recognizing and addressing intimate partner violence, leading to fear of seeking help and experiencing prejudice when accessing support within the LGBTQ+ communities. (1). Thus, *He Kept Me Safe* is based on the research 'Experiences of Scottish men who have been subject to IPV in same-sex relationships' by Maxwell, O'Brien, and Stenhouse (1), which aimed to inform policymakers, mental health professionals and other professionals working with gay, bisexual, and queer men on often ignored aspects of intimate partner violence in this population.

He Kept Me Safe was devised through the methodology of 'narrative portraiture' (2) using verbatim material from the research interviews. This allowed us to locate and operationalise the instances of IPV amongst the complexity of narrative data through a mapping process of the phenomena of interest. Using this performance as an exemplar, the facilitators invited delegates in the Dream Team to explore how this methodology can be used for data analysis and knowledge exchange, highlighting that 'a portrayal of a sole story can be, not only a medium to understand a research phenomenon but also a valuable research output in itself' (6, p.619).

To engage with embodied data in qualitative inquiry, in this session, we worked with six actors, who are crucial in the task of bringing the participants' voices to life and reminding the public that, although the sensitivity of participants' stories requires their identities to remain anonymous, research findings emerge from full-fleshed people. The performance re-created stories of resilience in the face of oppression through the stories of Matt, Will, Ryan, and Ollie, four of the participants in the study by Maxwell, O'Brien, and Stenhouse (1). The play also brings the story of Johnny, a character we only see through the narratives of Ollie, who was in a relationship with him and experienced abuse from him. As such, this performance is concerned with how these men narrated their experiences of violence at the hands of their partners and evokes the voices of others who have experienced similar situations in their relationships.

While a full script of *He Kept Me Safe* (forthcoming) is being prepared for publication, ECQI delegates were invited to experience the play in a live performance and think about how performing arts can be relevant to their work with intricate qualitative data and how this artistic work converges with social science. Delegates were asked to reflect on how observational notes, interview or focus group transcripts can be thought about from an embodied, performative perspective to develop tools for data analysis, research dissemination and public engagement.

THE PERFORMANCE

He Kept Me Safe was devised from verbatim interview transcripts as a play that tells poignant and candid stories of gay men who survived IPV. It allows the audience to witness the unheard insights of gay men's victim and survivor journey. The narratives explore the traumatic nature of the abuse, the health impact, the societal invisibility, and the endemic stigma. Based on a group counselling session,

the survivors disclose their experiences of unsettling acts at the hands of partners. They take the first step in identifying that a coercive relationship is not love but abuse.

Setting the play within a group environment was a deliberate choice that brings the research participants together in an act of defiance to the isolation, shame, and silence they have been subjected to as part of the violent dynamics of their relationships. Thus, the participants sit in a circle to talk about their experiences within the therapeutic space. The play created a fictional character in the form of a Mental Health Practitioner, a person who helps connect the segments of the interview transcripts in a cohesive way, and he also offers empathic responses that model what a supportive response could be in a therapeutic setting.

The following segment of the script shows a mental health practitioner inviting the participants in a peer support group to explore and process their experiences within the brave space that constitutes the community group.

*

He Kept Me Safe

Characters:

Will – a gay man in their 30s

Matt – a gay man in their 20s

Ryan – a gay man in their 30s

Ollie – a gay man in their 30s

Johnny – a gay man in their 30's

Jeff (Mental Health Practitioner) – gay man, 30s – 60s

[Text in square brackets] It signifies the words are not part of the verbatim transcript but are added for practical reasons to connect the dialogues.

*

The stage gets lit up, and the actors can be seen. A group of four men sit in a semi-circle as part of a peer-support group in a community centre.

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER: (Speaks to the men in the support group in a kind way) Welcome back, everyone. Thank you for coming.

The men greet him and nod. There is silence and tentativeness, although they have a level of familiarity that makes them feel sufficiently comfortable around each other.

Last session, we talked about how you realised that the first step is to identify that one might be in a violent relationship. Realising that it is not okay, so then you can seek help and support. And that's what you've done. You've taken that first step.

RYAN: [You know, it took me some time to get to this place because] I didn't really know, until quite near the time when I broke up with him. [But before] I wouldn't have been able to say "this is intimate partner violence", I wouldn't have been able to label it, I didn't have the... it didn't occur to me.

MATT: [Yeah] It's very weird, like I know it's wrong now, but at the time it felt... I don't know, I didn't know anything different.

RYAN: You can see it from the outside. When you see someone who is with someone who is doing that [to them], and it's obvious; these are all forms of intimate partner violence. But it wasn't obvious to me at all. You can see it from the outside. I knew I wasn't that happy. I knew things were quite hard sometimes. [I knew] that I avoided him sometimes – I just stayed away sometimes. I'm aware of it

NOW, and I think I have come to [it the] hard way in the sense of, I'm now an adult, and I feel like I'm learning how to have these skills, just now.

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER: From what you're saying, it sounds like, at the time, there was a feeling that something wasn't quite right, but there didn't seem to be a label or a concept or a narrative that validated what you experienced.

*

The work of the mental health practitioner centres around facilitating a 'dialogical space' in which those who attend the group can talk about their experiences of intimate partner violence in a way that their ideas about those experiences can be processed and transformed. Anderson (7) describes this dialogical space as 'a metaphorical space between and within the conversation participants' (p.112). In practical terms, the character of the mental health practitioner allows the performance to connect the narratives of each participant to a coherent group discussion. Since the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, integrating the conversation fluidly was crucial. However, the mental health practitioner also serves the purpose of modelling what an empathic, therapeutic response could look like when working with people who have experienced IPV. In the scene above, the mental health practitioner helps process what Ryan and Matt shared by summarising their experiences, as they did not conceive that they could be the object of abuse before. However, they have processed the experience at the time of discussion in the session.

*

In the following excerpt from the play, the mental health practitioner responds to Matt, a character who represents the verbatim narratives of a research participant who dealt with the dilemma of wanting his story to be of help to others as a way of spreading awareness about the experiences of violence he lived through at the hand of his partner because he did not want others to face the same difficulties he encountered. However, for his story to do that, he would have to become public, for which he did not feel ready. In this way, the performance allows for this narrative and for the words of Matt to be heard without compromising his identity and his right to anonymity.

*

MATT: I always wished that I could have done something about it, been more proactive and shared my story, but I can't do that without becoming out in public.

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER: What you all are doing right here right now is very helpful. By creating this non-judgmental space to access help and personal information, your story is helpful – for me, and I feel this might be true for others too – for Will and Ryan here...

He stands up and signals towards the audience. All of them look at the audience, and from now on, they address them directly.

...and perhaps for others too.

MATT: I don't want people to think like I'm any less because this has happened to me. I don't want people to view me as an injured puppy. I don't want people to be like: "oh I'm so sorry for you that that happened." I don't want [you] to feel sorry for me, I just want [you] to learn from it and be like:

WILL: 'Actually, it's not okay what's happened'.

MATT: I want people to focus on WHAT'S happened to me rather than who I am. This has happened to me, and it's my experience, but I don't want [you] to feel sorry because it's not about me, it's about WHAT HAPPENED to me, and ultimately it's about him. HE's the issue here, the issue isn't with me, it's with HIM [and his twisted idea of masculinity].

*

THE UNFOLDING DISCUSSION WITH THE DREAM TEAM

The two fragments of the performance presented in the previous section are representative of some of the issues brought about by the research participants. Now, we write about how the session unfolded after the performance and how we discussed it with the audience, which was comprised of academics from various disciplines.

In the Dream Team session, the facilitators focused on:

1. Showing the performance *He Kept Me Safe* by inviting six actors to perform at the congress. Actors Daniel Orejon, Mark Kydd, Samuel Lee Johnston, Mark Benedict Murphy, and Philip Moore have participated in various iterations of the play, which has allowed them to enter a relationship with the narratives and develop a deep understanding of the experiences of the research participants.
2. Facilitating a reflective group on the topics of (1) intimate partner violence and (2) the use of narrative portraits in data analysis and research communication. In these groups, the facilitators invited Dream Team participants to (1) reflect on the specific aspects of Intimate Partner Violence recognised in the performance and think about how the issue could be addressed from their disciplinary perspectives and (2) reflect on how narrative portraiture could help bring their research findings to life in an embodied way by using the body, voice, visual imagery, space, and personal interaction as a medium to show the research participants' stories to audiences.

The two aims of this session were facilitated through an open table conversation between the actors, the researchers, and the attendees of the session. We asked everyone how watching the play contributed to getting an understanding of the phenomenon of IPV. One of the unanimous conclusions from that conversation was the helpfulness of the performance in research communication, as it expanded the ways of knowing about this issue, as knowledge was not only seen as a cognitive process but also as an affective, immersive one. The narratives of the research participants were presented in an embodied way.

We identified how the issue of Intimate Partner Violence manifests in a wide range of LGBTQIA+ communities and its extensive psychological, physical, and relational consequences. We discussed different ways in which organisations and professionals can promote diverse, healthier relationships. Finally, we reflected on how narrative portraiture can be applied to their research projects as part of the analytic process and knowledge exchange to form an in-depth understanding of each participant's or case's story.

FINAL REFLECTIONS WITH THE DREAM TEAM

The Dream Team session sought to foster an interactive and collective environment. To promote this interactive quality, Rodríguez-Dorans and Maxwell invited a discussion with ECQI delegates aimed at advancing understanding and strategies for tackling the topic of intimate partner violence and how qualitative inquiry serves this purpose. The joint efforts of presenters and participants brought valuable insights that elevated awareness and action in addressing intimate partner violence within the gay communities and beyond. After the performance of *He Kept Me Safe*, we invited the audience to share any responses they had in relation to the show. These responses were free-flowing and immediate, based on the attendees' experiences of the performance.

Some of the responses centred on the affective aspects of the show, which were around feeling unease, fearful, and unsettled. The discomfort and unpleasant emotions experienced in the play were recognised as helpful in connecting with the research on an emotional level. This emotional affectation was seen as necessary for the understanding of the experience of Intimate Partner Violence. One of the participants shared in the session that the characters seemed to have confronted the shame surrounding the issue of being the target of intimate partner violence. Recognising, talking about it, and accepting the shame was discussed as an essential process for the participant in the Dream Team.

Based on the discussion, the play seemed to have provided a real, emotional impact, evoking emotions, which helps to better understand the narratives, as one cannot fully understand the experience without the emotional component surrounding the issue of Intimate Partner Violence.

A member of the Dream Team discussed in the session how for her, one of the main takeaways from the performance was the realisation that the available narratives around Intimate Partner Violence and domestic abuse tend to exist within discourses dominated by heteronormativity, where the experiences of the men showcased in the play were not represented. For example, a discourse of masculinity that is equated to power makes it difficult for men to recognise that they can be as well victims of violence.

The role of fiction was also highlighted by one of the members of the Dream Team. She wondered what type of work the fictionalisation of the narratives did. This was discussed by everyone, and some reflections were shared around the idea that the fiction allowed the narratives to exist within the dramatic space created by the play, at the same time that it created a space for emotions that the audience experienced by immersing themselves in the play but having a sense of safety. A Dream Team member expressed how unsettled she felt by the fictional presence of Johnny, a character who embodied an act of abuse in real time. She mentioned how the fear was 'palpable' but acknowledged how the performative space allowed the 'experience of abuse' to be felt in a safe enough way, as it was witnessed within the realm of the fiction.

This Dream Team session might resonate with researchers' experiences of engagement with written data who realise that the sense-making process demands them to engage with what participants tell with their words as much as what they show with their bodies. We thus invited delegates to think of how data analysis and interpretation needs to consider how the body communicates beyond words and how performance can be used to better understand research phenomena.

Finally, the Dream Team discussed how the play allowed them to see the narratives in a complex way, as the characters showed a range of emotions in which the research participants were not seen as unidimensional characters – just as the 'victims' of violence – but as multifaceted characters that engaged with their own vulnerability while showing resilience as they recovered their confidence and agency.

REFERENCES

- (1) Maxwell, S., O'Brien, R., Stenhouse, R. *Experience of Scottish men who have been subject to intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships: Research Report*. Glasgow: Glasgow Caledonian University; 2022. Available at: <https://www.waverleycare.org/resources/ipv-in-gay-and-bisexual-mens-relationships/>
- (2) Rodríguez-Dorans, E. *Narrative Portraits in Qualitative Research*. 1st ed. United Kingdom: Routledge; 2022.
- (3) World Health Organisation. *Violence Against Women*; 2021. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.
- (4) Rollè, L. Giardina, G. Caldarera, A. Gerino, E. Brustia, P. *When IPV meets same sex couples: Review of same sex intimate partner violence*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2018; Volume 21(9), pp. 1506. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01506>
- (5) Calton, M., Cattaneo, L., Gebhard, K. *Barriers to Help Seeking for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence*. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 2016; Volume 17(5), 585–600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838015585318>
- (6) Rodríguez-Dorans, E, and Jacobs, P. "Making Narrative Portraits: A Methodological Approach to Analysing Qualitative Data." *International Journal of social research methodology*, 2020; Volume 3(6), pp. 611–623.
- (7) Anderson, H. *Conversation, Language, and Possibilities: A Postmodern Approach to Therapy*. New York: Basic Books; 1997.

FROM RESEARCH TO FILMMAKING: THE COLLABORATIVE MAKING OF THE DOCUMENTARY "COMPLEXOS"

Leonardo Custódio

Åbo Akademi University (FINLAND)

Abstract

This paper is based on my keynote talk at the 7th ECQI Congress, in which I presented a detailed account of the collaborative making and dissemination of the documentary "Complexos" (Finland/Brazil, 2020). "Complexos" is a 26-minute short film featuring interviews with journalists, photographers, street artists, poets, actors and filmmakers who act for human rights and justice in the marginalized, discriminated and predominantly low-income favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The making and streaming of "Complexos" have resulted from an ongoing process of dialogue and collaboration with the favela-based filmmaking collective *Cafuné na Laje* and *Bombozila*, Brazil's largest online platform for social movement documentaries. This process started during the critical ethnographic research for my doctoral studies (2009-2016). In his article (?), I (a) discuss the Latin American tradition of collaboration and participatory communication between academia and social movements, (b) analyse the potential of "dialogue" to overcome challenges in power relations between "the researcher" and "the researched", and (c) reflect about the longitudinal character of collaboration in contexts of historical struggles against inequalities.

Keywords: collaboration, communication for social change, dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a reflexive analysis of how dialogue between researchers and "researched" activists can lead to collaboration and co-creation. In my field of communication for development and social change, multiple authors have previously written about collaborative and co-creative research. One example is the book "Communications Research in Action: Scholar-Activist Collaborations for a Democratic Public Sphere", edited by Philip Napoli and Minna Aslama (1). Looking at interactions between scholars and activists in the media sector, social movements and advocacy communities, this book is a collection of examples of scholar-activist collaborations and analyses of how these collaborative processes happen in practice.

A second example is the book "Communicating Social Change: Structure, Culture and Agency", by Mohan J. Dutta (2). Dutta analyses in compelling detail how development, modernization, privatization and commoditization have contributed to the creation of marginalization of impoverished and underprivileged peoples across the globe. In this context, he argues, processes of communication and dialogue play a fundamental role in the formation of community networks and the global/local politics of social change. Regarding collaboration between scholars and activists, the author uses the epilogue to make a case for communication scholars to enter what he defines as "praxis of social change communication" (2, p. 287-300). In doing so, Dutta emphasizes the importance of reflexivity – "the turning of the lens on the self and on the methods of knowing that have created the academic expert to question the capacity of methods to dialogically engage with subaltern communities" (2, p. 288) – and co-creative initiatives to enact the dynamic interrelation between theory and (subaltern) practice.

Another example is the book "Media Activist Research Ethics: Global Approaches to Negotiating Power in Social Justice Research" edited by Sandra Jeppesen and Paola Sartoretto (3). Together, the contributions to this book create a rich mosaic of practice-based ethical reflections about what it means to conduct what the editors call "media activist research". They also probe into the power relations between the researcher and the "researched". For example, the chapter "Dealing with ethical dilemmas in activist research on social movement media" (4) dedicates a whole section to discussing how researchers can turn dialogue into a practical instrument for respectful collaboration between researchers and activists.

I find the decades-long tradition of dialogue, participation and cooperation between scholars and communication practitioners as collective actions against historical inequalities across the Global South particularly crucial for participatory scholarship. Latin America, for example, has a history of politically engaged communication scholarship dedicated to denouncing the cultural and geopolitical harms of imperialist mass media in the region while promoting innovative participatory methods and dialogue with grassroots movements for political awareness, local mobilization, regional movement articulation and political resistance (5; 6).

This paper is a new addition to my continuous contribution to this body of literature in which I focus on the challenging nuances that exist in the relationship between "the researcher" and "the researched". In that sense, my "case study" has consistently been my own process of researching and gradually collaborating with the media activist initiatives of favela-based communication practitioners in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Initially (7), I reflected on the dilemmas and decisions I experienced doing ethnographic work as what I called a "local outsider". That is, the fact that I was similar in terms of race and (peripheral) culture to the people in whose activism I was interested, but at the same time, I was very different in terms of social class, education and resources. In this contradiction, I decided to engage in dialogue, which led to trust and mutual interest in collaboration, but at the same time, disrupted my systematic planning to make a career in the very restrictive academia in the north of the North. Then, anguish led me to write an essay entitled "Does it ever end? A (self-) reflection about collaboration between academia and activism" (8). In this essay, I review my career until that point to discuss how my position as a scholar between the "academic North" and the "activist South" creates a very thin line between extractivism and solidarity in collaborative efforts.

Now, I continue in this reflexive path by discussing the collaborative making and dissemination of the documentary "Complexos" (Finland/Brazil, 2020)¹. The word "Complexos" has two meanings. It is Portuguese for the word "complex". It is also a noun that designates a cluster of favelas to form an urban sub-region. "Complexos" is a 26-minute short film featuring interviews with journalists, photographers, street artists, poets, actors and filmmakers who act for human rights and justice in the marginalized, discriminated and predominantly low-income favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The making and streaming of "Complexos" have resulted from a longitudinal and ongoing process of dialogue and collaboration with the favela-based filmmaking collective *Cafuné na Laje* and *Bombozila*, a Brazilian online platform for documentaries by social movements and activists.

As I write about the experience of making "Complexos", I pose multiple questions for reflection. These questions can be useful themes for discussions with colleagues.

The first question relates to precarity in academia. At the time I delivered my keynote speech at the 7th ECQI congress, I had been unemployed for over one year. As the rejections to job applications piled up, my levels of concern and anxiety increased. At the lowest emotional points of this journey,

¹ The documentary "Complexos" (with English subtitles) is available for free viewing at <https://bombozila.com/video/complexos> (a free registration is required).

I kept wondering if I had made the wrong decision prioritizing collaborative and pedagogical experiences with marginalized and underprivileged people instead of dedicating more time to the traditional steps in the pursuit of an academic career (e.g. submitting articles to top-ranked journals, applying for funding with "trending topics" among funding institutions, and so on.). Considering the context in which you work and your academic experience, I ask: **how viable – in terms of securing jobs – do you consider participatory, co-creative and collaborative research to be for PhD students and early-career scholars?**

The documentary "Complexos" features interviews in which the people behind and in front of the camera talk about how their creative work contributes to local social change. Most people associate Brazilian favelas with class inequality, poverty and violence. Of course, there is a factual, societal reason for this association. However, "Complexos" presents other favela experiences – favela journalists, photographers, artists and actors, rappers, poets and street artists. They talk about motivations, dreams, actions and interactions that have shaped them as agents of local politics, culture and social changes.

This brief description of the participants in the film leads me to the second question. It is clear that activists from favelas played a central role in the making of "Complexos". Unfortunately, none of them were present during *my* keynote talk and the screening of *our* film that followed the talk. Their absence indicates the imbalance in our collaborative and co-creative relationship. After all, a keynote speech is a prestigious and legitimizing ritual meant to acknowledge and celebrate someone who has done something remarkable. Since making the film – the main reason for me to receive an invitation – was collaborative and co-creative, it would be fair that the favela filmmakers were also present. Because they were not present, giving the keynote contributes to the idea that I – the researcher – played an authorial role in the process, which, in fact, I did not. Then, I ask – **in your experience, how can we guarantee the presence of *all* authors in presentations of collaborative and co-creative research processes?**

FROM RESEARCH TO COLLABORATION

In presenting collaborative work, it is very important to explain as much as possible about the roles each collaborator played in the process. If, as I mentioned before, "Complexos" results from the labour of favela filmmakers and the narratives of favela activists, what role did I – the researcher – play in making the documentary? It is undeniable that this film would not have happened if I had not done research about the media activist practices in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. At the same time, I cannot claim that making a film crossed my mind at any point during my six-year research process. As I write elsewhere (7), this collaborative and co-creative production resulted from years of construction of mutual respect and trust through dialogue that started during my critical ethnographic research. It took a lot of time to overcome confrontational suspicion and discomfort. It took multiple moments of power negotiations in the very hierarchical researcher-researched relationship. There were also multiple strokes of luck. In short, *"Complexos" results from an unplanned – but not random – process of collaboration and co-creation grounded on dialogue, respect and political solidarity.*

I emphasize that the process was not random because the field of communication for development and social change had already informed me about theories and empirical examples of participatory, collaborative and co-creative practices. In my graduation years in Brazil, I learned from and about the collaborative relationships that some professors had with social movements. During my Master's studies in Finland, I read research and reports on "participatory communication", "critical pedagogy", "participatory action research", "citizens' communication", "liberation theology", "*comunicación popular*", "community media", "social movements' media", "participatory action research" and other similar theories and methods. Reading these texts was

exciting and inspiring because they all carried in them a strong commitment to political solidarity. That is, a sense of collectivity pulling individuals to act together for social justice in contexts of inequalities, discrimination and violent social hierarchies. (9)

However, despite all this knowledge and excitement about participatory and collaborative methods, I chose critical ethnography as a methodological framework. In retrospect, part of this decision had to do with concerns and confusion among students and early-career scholars from the colonized South whose perceptions of academic knowledge production may have been deeply affected by colonial legacies (10) (11). I would have loved to do collaborative work. That would have fulfilled my drive to act in political solidarity for change at home in Brazil while also experimenting with the collective making of research-based knowledge. However, I also believed that ethnography sounded more "serious" and "scientific". A classic research method in the social sciences, I thought, would allow me to prove my worth as a PhD student in Europe. Even though I was already critical of colonial histories and had already built a deep-seated anger towards the enslavement of my ancestors, I still felt a strong sense of obligation to convince European institutions that I was a "good researcher" according to their terms.

This leads me to my third question. **In your experience, how common is it for researchers who conduct participatory, collaborative and co-creative work to problematize their own methodological decisions?** I ask this question because I know times have changed drastically in the past fifteen years since I had to decide what methods to apply in my doctoral research. Decolonial debates abound and inform ethical and methodological discussions in most academic forums. In addition, these days, participatory, collaborative and co-creative research is not only valuable but also preferred by funding institutions. In Finland, for example, the Kone Foundation – the country's biggest private funder of research in the humanities and social sciences – has emphasized for years its support for multidisciplinary, cross-sector, collaborative work². I wonder, then, how much collaboration and co-creation in research is driven by an effort to political solidarity or by a reaction to the current financial incentives for this kind of work. I am not claiming that these motivations are mutually exclusive – one can take an opportunity to combine funding opportunities with collective action research for change. The problem, in my view, is that these discussions about what motivates methodological choices do not seem as common as they should be.

Even though I chose critical ethnography in my doctoral research process, the lessons on collaborative and co-creative methods as tools to engage research in political struggles remained strong in my mind. Admittedly, there was no collaborative, participatory or co-creative element in this whole process. I started the fieldwork in 2010. I would go to Brazil, stay two or three months building relationships and conducting interviews, and then return to Finland. From a distance, I would strengthen these relationships and learn more about activist practices through social media and, later, mobile applications. The challenging questions, uncomfortable confrontations, and conflicts related to my research started with the first person I met. Because I am Black and I also come from a peripheral working-class town, they felt comfortable sharing their annoyances with me. They would often say something like:

"Researchers come, steal our histories and struggles, and then go on to publish and build their careers without acknowledging us. We are not objects!"

Their anger served as a warning to me. I started asking myself how I could respect these people as a researcher from a European institution doing ethnographic work about initiatives and actions so valuable to them and their communities. My practical answer was to act in reciprocity. Since they

² In their statement of values, Kone Foundation informs that "we want different voices to be heard, and we encourage collaboration. In our funding decisions, we emphasise projects and topics that are multidisciplinary and novel and seek to challenge prevailing views". Read here: <https://koneensaatio.fi/en/grants/grantapplicants/for-what-purposes-does-the-kone-foundation-grant-funding/> (last accessed Feb. 23, 2024).

voluntarily shared their time with me, I thought the least I could do was to share my time with them. I joined them in multiple processes: I acted as a reviewer in a favela-based newspaper. I provided guidance and informal supervision to their own studies in higher education. I supported the media efforts of the people I had interviewed (including donations). I also participated in and documented protests against police violence. None of these makes *my* research "*our research*", of course. However, they felt respected, and that felt enough for all of us. As we interacted in reciprocity, we built mutual trust, leading to occasional moments of excitement that ended with us having cold beers and, over the loud music playing in the background, shouting at each other's ears that *we should definitely join forces and do something together*.

We did not, though. Not during *my* PhD. I had to focus on finishing *my* PhD (8). This leads me to my fourth question. **How have you built a balance between your individual career-building production and the collective demands in co-creation and collaboration?** For example, I remember feeling very anguished when activists requested my immediate reaction to something urgent to them while I had to focus on *my own* research work. I still wonder, to these days, if there is a healthy way to balance the slow and individualist nature of building a career with the fast-paced and collective nature of activism, especially in contexts of state violence and steep socio-political inequalities.

All these experiences and interactions during the research process – combined with guilt for not being as supportive of the activists as I thought I should have been – gave me an idea. In 2016, once I submitted my PhD draft for external review, I asked my department at Tampere University if they would support and publish a pocket version of my PhD thesis in Portuguese for me to distribute among the people I had interviewed in Brazil. Heikki Hellmann, the dean at the time, agreed. Riittä Yrjöinen, the communications officer, excitedly supported the whole process. Once the book was ready, the department printed 500 copies. After my defence, I spent six months in Brazil. They shipped the copies to my house, and I immediately started distributing them. Each person I had interviewed received 30 copies. My objective was to give them something to support their studies, work and income. On a couple of occasions, for example, I organized workshops with schoolteachers in my hometown and invited people I had interviewed. We spoke together about the book. After the conversations, they sold copies to participants.

In one of the conversations, a filmmaker I had interviewed went through the pages and said that we could make a film out of the book. We laid the seed for "Complexos" there. However, making the film effectively started with a stroke of luck in Finland. After the PhD defence, I started applying for the new project. In 2017, a Finnish foundation awarded me 20 thousand euros as a personal grant for my new research plan: anti-racism communication in Finland and Brazil. A while later, I got a two-year contract for postdoctoral research in a research institute. That meant I could not make personal use of the grant anymore. Thus, I asked the foundation if I could use it to make a collaborative film instead. They surprisingly accepted my proposal immediately. *Our collaboration started once the funds were available*. Because they lacked an official organizational status, the activists indicated that a trusted NGO would receive the money. Therefore, I sent the whole grant to them. With the grant money, they bought equipment, paid themselves salaries and hired services (translators, editors, artists, musicians and so on). This leads me to my fifth question. **How often do you discuss the role of money (for income, not profit) in collaboration and co-creation between researchers and under-salaried/unemployed and underprivileged activists?**

The film was made and finalized between 2018 and 2020. I am not able to speak much about the making of the film because I acted more like a remote "writer" and "executive producer". JV Santos, the director, and I developed the storyline based on my research and his activist experience together. The actual making of the film – booking interviews, deciding the locations, filming, cutting and editing the scenes, as well as the post-production – happened fully in Brazil. Occasionally, I participated in meetings, but the activists led the filmmaking process, including budgetary decisions. Once the film

was ready, I revised the English subtitles. Initially, the activist collective decided not to share the film publicly online because they wanted to participate in some festivals.

Meanwhile, we all worked on the distribution campaign. Some ideas did not work. For example, I tried to organize paid sessions in Finland. The goal was to generate revenue for the filmmakers in Rio, but my new research process prevented me from having the time necessary to organize the sessions. We also planned a trip for the filmmakers to show the film at festivals in Finland and Sweden, but the pandemic happened, and they never came. They did a good job publicizing the film in Brazil, though. They even presented it at some festivals. The interviewees featured in the film also participated in many promotional activities. However, gradually, we all got busy with our own stuff, and the more practical actions in our collaboration died down. This brief description of the making of the documentary shows that the leading positions changed. Once the money got to Brazil, the activists – who initially were "the researched" – became the people responsible for the management and conduction of the process. I, "the researcher", turned into a supporting collaborator instead. This leads to my last question. **How often does the leadership of a collaborative and co-creative process shift from "the researcher" to "the researched"?**

After a moment of idleness, we had another stroke of luck in 2021. Through a common friend, I met Vitor Ribeiro. Vitor is a restless Rio-based videomaker who co-founded the streaming platform Bombozila. The platform focuses on productions by or about Latin American social movements and grassroots struggles. When I told Vitor about "Complexos", he immediately asked if we wanted to stream the film on the platform. In a conversation, the filmmakers and I decided to accept the proposal. What followed was another amazing wave of collaboration. Bombozila organized press conferences. We all participated – the researcher, the filmmakers and the people featured in the film. They also created professional-level advertising materials that we all shared on social media. Some of the photographers featured in the film produced the images for the campaign.

At the time of giving the keynote speech, we were finalizing a limited web series featuring the complete interviews as individual episodes. Having the film and soon the series on Bombozila is a win-win situation for everyone involved. The platform expands its portfolio of productions. We all hope that they will increase the number of optional paid subscriptions to be able to maintain the website active. The filmmakers can see their production reach people across Latin America and beyond. The interviewees can also stream the video to present their own work to other audiences in and beyond favelas. Finally, I have this amazing audiovisual production to present as an example of how important it is to embrace collaboration and co-creation as powerful processes of political solidarity, even if unplanned.

REFERENCES

- (1) Napoli, P. M., & Aslama, M. (Eds.). *Communications Research in Action: Scholar-Activist Collaborations for a Democratic Public Sphere*. New York: Fordham University Press; 2011.
- (2) Dutta, M. J. *Communicating social change: Structure, culture, and agency*. New York: Routledge; 2011.
- (3) Jeppesen, S. and Sartoretto, P. (Eds.) *Media activist research ethics: Global approaches to negotiating power in social justice research*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan; 2020.
- (4) Sartoretto, P. and Custódio, L. Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas in Activist Research on Social Movement Media. In S. Jeppesen and P. Sartoretto (Ed.) *Media Activist Research Ethics: Global Transformations in Media and Communication Research*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan; 2020.
- (5) Gumucio-Dagron, A. and Tufte, T. *Communication for Social Change Anthology: Historical and Contemporary Readings*. South Orange: Communication for Social Change Consortium; 2006.

- (6) Suzina, A.C. (Ed.). *The Evolution of Popular Communication in Latin America*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan; 2021.
- (7) Custódio, L. *Favela Media Activism: Counterpublics for Human Rights in Brazil*. Lanham: Lexington Books; 2017.
- (8) Custódio, L. Does it Ever End? A (Self-) Reflection about Collaboration between Academia and Activism. In Avaia, E. and Avaia, R. (Eds.) *How to Work Together: Seeking Models of Solidarity and Alliance*. Helsinki: Museum of Impossible Forms; 2020.
- (9) Scholz S.J. *Political solidarity*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press; 2008.
- (10) Maldonado-Torres, N. On the Coloniality of Being. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 240-270; 2007.
- (11) Bonilla-Silva E. and Zuberi, T. (Eds.) *White logic, white methods: racism and methodology*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; 2008.

PERFORMING ASSEMBLAGE: A SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION AS AN AFFECTIVE AND EMBODIED METHODOLOGY FOR CRITICAL LEADERSHIP BECOMINGS

Jo Townshend

Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

Abstract

In seeking to challenge conventions of theorizing the managerial in education and produce alternative leadership futures, arts practice as a new materialism with Deleuze (1) sets dynamic, qualitative possibilities in motion. Participatory artworks challenge us to engage with our surroundings in new and unforeseen ways and afford methodological opportunities to pool material understandings and knowledges from our senses and intelligent bodies with education as assemblage. The nature of assemblage allows multiplicities, linkages, and flows to co-function, overlap, and entangle while generating non-data, non-spaces, and voids. In this qualitative inquiry, a site-specific installation of remediated education data is materialized to catalyze performative acts for alternative leadership. This practice approach to re-making education enables the stuff of leadership — the people, places, policies, and practices, to be situated as education matter. Beyond the dominant structures of text, language and publication formats, an installation methodology disrupts, entangles and repositions dominant matters of education and human-centric powers through a spatial and embodied exploration of inter-relational becomings. Performing (as a maker, individually or as a group) in this material-immaterial environment progresses methodological understandings for discussion. Furthermore, physically encountering the thresholds, peripheries and intra-spaces of this material-immaterial environment challenges existing managerialism and shifts our attention beyond the confines of the free-market knowledge economy to somewhere different. In this way, performing assemblage acknowledges the complex, relational nature of education and manifests the architectural spaces for embodied interactions as a critical leadership lab.

Keywords: leadership, affective embodied arts-based methodology

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary complexity, advancing technological innovation, and global challenges underscore the need for leaders to educate for the hitherto unimaginable. Moreover, in seeking to deliver education that is fit for 21st-century uncertainty, a turn from the current status quo is needed. In challenging existing conventions of theorizing the managerial and leadership structures of the marketised English state system, I suggest a departure from the fixed and singular field of education research may be useful. Opportunities afforded by practice research within the field of arts and humanities are already in the act but less so in the domain of education leadership research. And so this paper presents the case of how arts practice with Deleuze sets useful, dynamic, and qualitative possibilities in motion and how Performing Assemblage as an affective and embodied methodology contributes to critical leadership becomings.

MAKING EDUCATION BEYOND THEORIES OF MANAGERIALISM

A comprehensive body of education research literature (Ball (2); Gulson, Rawolle & Linguard (3); Strom and Martin (4)) evidence performativity, accountability and managerialism as policy enactments of governmentality within the free-market education economy. In moving beyond the narrative of deficit models produced through a singular theoretical lens, different modes of creative practice for producing new and different leadership opportunities may offer imaginative and dynamic insights. The use of art and arts-based methods in qualitative inquiry, as well as the distinct field of arts-based research and arts-based education research, are making significant contributions, and critical approaches afforded by feminist new materialisms with education are advancing ways of thinking and making. However, the entanglement of new materialisms with visual methods and Deleuze to expand critical possibilities for leadership is underinvestigated. Furthermore, a 2020 report examining arts-based and embodied methods of leadership development by Woods et al. (5) found a critical perspective to be missing from leadership studies. In eschewing the dominant linguistic modes of managerialism, which may have contributed to the deficit of alternatives, new materialism affords embodied-affective-material possibilities for resistance and re-making leadership. Therefore, in seeking to contribute to this gap in existing research and move beyond theory, this practice research considers the affordances of a participatory artwork for re-making leadership.

Exploring possibilities to work with Deleuze as assemblage using arts methods in the production of a matters to function, overlap and entangle in different and potentially helpful ways for leaders. Moreover, practicing with Deleuze enables us to rethink the world differently and re-make the world materially and relationally. This study explores an entanglement of leadership matters - the people, places, policies, and practices of education- as a critical, embodied-affective-material ecosystem for resistance. In a generative turn from managerialism, this performs different ways of rendering visible prevailing webs of power and tools to actualize alternative education leadership.

As an artist-researcher-leader (the hyphens acknowledge the inter-relational becomings of practice), I draw upon ways of making using arts methods from my studio practice and ways of leading with arts-based methodologies from English school, college and academy centres of education. This has informed the following practice research as a new materialism to explore the making processes of this qualitative inquiry, the transformative capacities of matter, and seeks to make the case for the wider adoption of this approach for education leadership and other fields.

WAYS OF MAKING FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE STUDIO

This practice research begins with processes of making in an artist's sketchbook. It is the site for continuous making (data collection, experimentation, material research, analysis, reflection) and makes theory. The generative act of data collection as a contemporary art method within the sketchbook is performed in multiple iterations with matter transforming matter. Rather than residing solely in the academic norm of lexical matter and word formats, drawing and making methods produce a mode of investigation to examine existing structural power inter-intra-relations. Using this approach, a dataset of school operating models was selected from online sources and interrogated using visual arts methods. Color coding and layering of mixed media allowed for differentiation of human-non-human inter-intra-actions within the force fields of a pyramid, inverted pyramid and flat structures whilst handling the data and tacitly surfacing new knowledge allowed new questions to be asked of inter-relational education matters and catalyzing material provocations for further consideration (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Mixed media sketchbook: mode of data collection, processing and analysis. 15 x 21cms. 2021. ©The artist.

The exploration of education leadership as a new materialism allowed the piecing together of printed education phenomena selected from leadership and studio practice and set material education encounters in motion. These sketchbook encounters produced emergent visual understandings, which then shaped the development of a mode of visual analysis. A critical visual analysis was produced to reveal different and critical understandings of complex power relations and surface methodological possibilities. A data set of the Department for Education's 2015- 2020 strategy (6), education operating models (7, 8) and Marden's Etchings to Rexroth (9) was selected and transformed into visual provocations to examine the interplay of power as line, text and symbol (Fig.2).

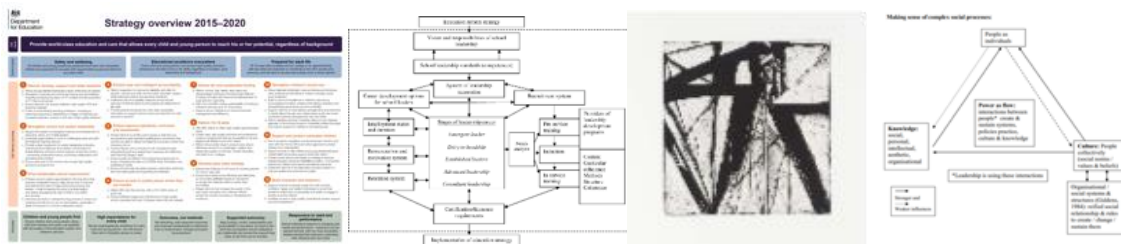


Figure 2. Department for Education (6); Kontautienė & Melnikova (8); Marden (9) and Busher (7).

American Abstract expressionist artist Brice Marden (9) was selected to inform the methods for investigation. Marden, most well-known for his paintings in mid-century America, has a significant body of printmaking that includes the series Etchings to Rexroth. The collection of 25 etchings on paper was produced when Marden sought to transform his work. In a turn from his paintings of flat color on canvas panels, he moved to use drawn marks and the transformative process of printmaking. This shift in practice focused on gesture, the incidental and accidental mark; these were produced by drawing with tools using extended handles and processes of printmaking that allowed the materiality of ink-paper-machinery to contribute to the picture making process. Inspired by the calligraphic style and the poem of Tu Fu, Marden developed ideagraphs (10), an example of how making and re-making in iterative processes of printmaking move a single, simple notion into a material becoming. Taking print '16' from the series of etchings as a starting point, a re-making of the education data set was produced in the transformation of policy enactments into a balanced composition of form, space, mark, line and

tone. In this way, methods and materials informed by Marden transformed managerial hierarchies into abstract motifs in micro compositions.

Using this approach, making with arts materials employs the incidental, soft marks, slices, collages and assemblages to create artworks as a methodology for re-modelling education. A single carbon print composition on paper surfaced new material understandings of power structures. It informed the making of a series of prints, with each composition examining existing power relations or repositioning these power relations to catalyze alternative possibilities. In one example, hierarchical pyramid constructs of school staff, students and governors were re-made with lithographic stones, etchings and carbon ghosting to re-configure the said patterns of power relations. These inky lines and printed marks allowed different questions to be asked about the impact of government discourse. The compositions visually documented the flow of power from A to B held within the dynamics of the triangular motif and illuminated the binary structures of power and the lack of routes beyond the fixed strictures of hierarchies. This was to demonstrate ways of how mingling policy, theory and art as a materialist act elicits new understandings, agential alternatives and points for departure.

THE MICRO EDUCATION ASSEMBLAGE

What began as a single inquiry expanded into multiple material transformations as a dynamic material methodology for critical leadership, a Micro Education Assemblage (Fig.3). Importantly, this approach is open and produces toolkits without intentions. The tiny, interactive tool holds more than thirty compositions and the cumulative space for multiple linageages and lines of flight as provocations for leaders to critically reflect on their school structures, rebalance acts of oppression within them, and catalyze rethinking anti-oppressive alternatives.

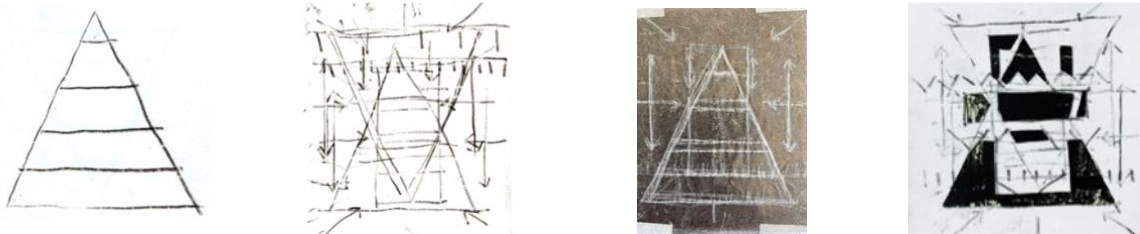


Figure 3. Carbon transfer print, Carbon transfer print, Carbon transfer & negative print. Prints are on acid-free cartridge paper and spiral bound. 10 x 10 cms 2021

The material encounters with the education data performed unforeseen acts; handling the people, places and spaces of education with my fingers surfaced tacit understandings of the power relations in education structures and, in doing so, informed new re-imaginings for equitable, operating models. Furthermore, participating in an embodied data analysis revealed the dominant human position in this material act. Through the processes of making, I was learning from the materials but remained in control, which was to emphasize the dominant human position. Working with this embodied knowledge material understandings and contributing to anti-oppressive structures, a re-making and scaling of the data as a participatory artwork was conceived. This was to take the form of a site-specific installation to spatially decentralize the human, render further architectures of power visible and examine the performative potential of assemblage for leadership resistance.

As already mentioned, the making processes are sited in the sketchbook. In reviewing the material investigation and data analysis that had already been set in motion through the Micro Education

Assemblage, I had to physically turn the collaged and printed paper pages to examine the space within and through the material manifestations. Handling the printed surfaces, collaged papers, tapes, spaces, and non-spaces of these material discourses slowed down the act of analysis and drew attention to the micro, performed, and embodied inter-intra-actions. This directed further performative interaction: the repeated slow and small movements back and forth with materials and negative space produced the opportunity to question the material nature of the data, what it is and what it does. Working with these emergent findings set visio-tacit knowledge in motion and directed the conception of a material methodology investigating transformative ways to spatially rethink education as a participatory artwork.

PERFORMING ASSEMBLAGE

In looking for relevant methods and materials for this materialism, a shift from monographic study moved beyond the singular focus on the American male artist to the practice and materials of an assemblage of artists was necessary. Artists whose practice spans material dimensions, geographies, genders, and time (more than 60 years of art history) included Hirschhorn (11), Parker (12), Ryman (13), Rauschenberg (14), Lovelace O'Neal (15), Simmons (16), Yang (17) and Steir (18) (Fig. 4) and stimulated spatially expanded ways of making the re-making leadership as a site-specific installation.



Figure 4. Sketchbook, 2021; Lovelace O'Neal (15); Rauschenberg, (14); Steir (18); Ryman (13); Simmons (16); Hirschhorn (11); Yang (17); Parker (12) (left to right).

Moving from the portable micro-education assemblage to performative artwork demanded new material considerations. Marden's (9) concerns for surface, mark-making, and action were expanded at scale by Lovelace O'Neal (15) and Steir (18). Whilst Rauschenberg (14) and Ryman (13) informed the possibilities of re-making immaterial encounters within 2-dimensional constructs through modes of drawing and erasure. Contemporary artists Simmons (16) and Yang (17) perform a re-conceiving and re-making of text and artefact at an environmental scale, which was to assist with considerations of repositioning the human. Cornelia Parker's *Cold Dark Matter* (12) elicited further understandings of matter-non-matter possibilities beyond managerialism for leadership resistance; this artwork captures time in the moment of exploding a garden shed and challenges concepts of our relation to our immediate and constellatory environments, the universe and spaces beyond our current existence. Lastly, Thomas Hirschhorn's *'Roof Off'* (11) use of recycled and upcycled materials directed the selection of sustainable media for construction (papers, tape, et al.) and installation as a socially engaged practice to inform further re-imaginings and trajectories for material methodological innovation with intentional and unintentional participants. Collectively, this research informed the making of a more-than-human scale participatory installation as a mode for re-making leadership resistance.

Making the site-specific assemblage using arts-based methods began by using the repeated motif of an organizational structure - a pyramid hierarchy. Power flows that had been identified in the sketchbook processes were drawn onto more-than-human-size sheets of cartridge paper and fixed to the wall. The selected artists informed methods of drawing that re-produced the flow of power in binary directions from A to B as marks, lines and tone that explore the forces and dynamics within educational institutions. Working with pencil, charcoal and inks, material knowledge from the sketchbook and the Micro Education Assemblage made and re-made complex social processes (7) and education constructs; the motif was repeated, constructed and re-constructed, transformed onto a

wide range of papers to produce material differences. In addition to the handmade mark-making, making technological transformations, projections, tracings and mappings performed digital acts of material data processing and produced multiple scapes to materialize structural possibilities.

Through these arts-based processes of making and re-making, the scale and the structure of the assemblage expanded, and a necessary performance with the data began. Physical and material processes mutually inform the other, and in performing materially with the data, charcoal sticks are filed fingernails away whilst shaping organizational hierarchies. Multiple layers of material and immaterial interrogated structural oppressions and possibilities for working against the various hierarchizing forces that shape education and research. Working with the aim to decentralize, reposition and neutralize these forces, the pyramid was inverted, reversed, overlaid, scaled up and down and layered in multiplicity and in each iteration, revealed new understandings of the power plays (Fig. 5). The different papers constructed the expanding environment in opaque, translucent and transparent papers in a myriad of shapes and sizes and layers. This produced a breaking of hierarchies and changing spatial environments for the maker to perform with and through, and always producing affective and embodied knowledges through the making. These dynamic assemblage interactions produced glimpses of policy enactments, which then disappeared behind neutral thresholds in a re-materialization of education matters. Furthermore, edges and peripheries were foregrounded by affective and embodied interactions with materiality-immateriality.



Figure 5. Performing Assemblage, in the making (ii), 2021. ©The artist.

Significantly, the positive enactments of making were countered with the introduction of drawing negative spaces with craft knives. Abstract acts of scalpel cutting literally made space for resistance and facilitated the disruption and transformation of policy impact. Looking through these emergent openings led to a discovery and rediscovery of education matters (Fig. 6); this immaterial encounter cut through, inverted and dislocated hierarchies to resituate architectures, communities and staff in a set of unforeseen becomings that hint at affective opportunities of the new. Cutting across dimensions of time and space informed relational understanding of othering and the verdant opportunities of the edges, peripheries and thresholds as torn extremities of yet unformed notions. In doing so, the cutting away, reducing and dematerializing neoliberal constructs as assemblage became positive acts of resistance.



Figure 6. Performing Assemblage (detail), 2021. ©The artist.

The Performing Assemblage was produced through multiple iterative making and material processes. The making and re-making of the assemblage in its spatial, co-functioning, becoming surfaced ways that liminal, quantum and negative spaces as assemblage de-centre the human, the managerial, hierarchizing forces and oppressive structures. Performing with and through the emergent built environment allowed a physical mingling with the education matter and generated embodied inter-intra-action as a critical leadership lab. Material data processing directed new considerations that were previously unimagined but were now set in motion through embodied interaction.

Bodies as spaces within the education assemblage enfold the Deleuzian concept of body without organs (19) and Haraway's cyborg notions (20) to generate new spatial and temporal possibilities for leadership entanglements. Notably, managerialism, performativity and accountability remain within the assemblage but are repositioned within its ecology through material acts. In doing so, resistance is surfaced through space-non-space for alternative possibilities. This dynamic process was continuously captured in a blend of digital and analogue formats and through continuous and critical reflection in the sketchbook performed as meta data and brought to light new understandings. And so, in the making, it becomes evident that the methodological making process generates theory in a mode of production that is worthy of further investigation.

PARTICIPATING WITH THE MAKING AND RE-MAKING WITH PARTICIPATION

In the making of a material methodology as a participatory artwork, visual arts methods informed by Rauschenberg (14), Parker (12), Simmons (16), Yang (17) and Hirschhorn (11) shaped ways of making body-matter-scale-becoming for education. This installation mode of assemblage moved material-discursive practices beyond managerialism and performed as a leadership lab to progress methodological possibilities in the production of human-non-human-material-immaterial provocations. Moreover, the affective and embodied Performing Assemblage methodology materialized liminal spaces for critical re-imagining, which is to signpost new directions beyond dominant strictures of language as text and research in standardized publication formats. Participation

with these spatial becomings generates embodied knowledge with the methodological material-immaterial. Walking, moving, and turning through the multiplicity of data reveals and mobilizes the peripheries of the education structures. As intentional and unintentional participants, we bring our embodied knowledge and experiences to assemblage becomings. Performing Assemblage with our intelligent bodies may contribute to different and equitable leadership becoming. Affective participation is relational, subjective, ambiguous, and therefore potentially contingent on personal praxis, which brings into question whether one comes to theory in any other way.

CONCLUSION

The Performing Assemblage, a site-specific installation as an affective and embodied methodology for critical leadership becomings, generated, and is generating, new ways of thinking and (re) making for the field of qualitative research. Studio practice choreographed leadership beyond theoretical management conventions and the confines of the free-market knowledge economy discourse; participation between our intelligent bodies and data matters produced spatial-non-spatial becomings that, once vacated by managerialist performativity, presented heterotopic space for new interdisciplinary possibilities. In particular, the multiplicities, linkages and flows performed as assemblage were found to produce material-immaterial spaces for the affirmative, actualization of education rethinking.

The creation of Performing Assemblage underscores the value of the methodological process for the maker whilst conference proceedings and the production of this paper further extend access to the possibilities of this material methodology. Through the exhibition, the Performing Assemblage affords expanded participatory opportunities for intentional and unintentional audiences. Bringing specialist knowledge from material, education or performing qualitative research will further expand the assemblage becomings. Moreover, those without knowledge in the field will bring their education-non-education bodies to mingle with the assemblage to produce unforeseen knowledge-creation possibilities. Opportunities for re-creating the site-specific installation within a school, with a leadership development cohort or other education community, will catalyze unimagined dialogic possibilities and further extend participation in iterations of material research-creation. What this produces for leadership and leadership development is yet to be fully understood, but in tending to the need for different nodes of knowledge creation and education futures, Performing Assemblage suggests affirmative education becomings. Furthermore, Performing Assemblage acknowledges the complex, relational nature of education. It manifests the architecture for affective-material-embodied interactions as a critical leadership lab which is to move the field of education theory production to somewhere different and evidences the contribution of art practice to qualitative inquiry and wider domains.

REFERENCES

- (1) Deleuze G. *The Logic of Sense*. New York: Columbia University Press; 1969.
- (2) Ball SJ. Labouring to Relate: Neoliberalism, Embodied Policy, and Network Dynamics. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 2017; 92 (1): 29-41.
- (3) Gulson KN, Clarke M, Peterson EB. Introduction: Theory, Policy and Methodology. In Gulson KN, Clarke M, Peterson EB., editors. *Education Policy and Contemporary Theory: Implications for Research*. New York and London: Routledge; 2015. p1-12.
- (4) Strom K., Martin AD. editors. *Becoming Teacher: A rhizomatic look at first-year teaching*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers; 2017.

- (5) Woods PA, Culshaw S, Jarvis J, Payne H, Roberts A, Smith K. Arts-based and Embodied Methods of Leadership Development: Report of a Literature Review. Hatfield, Hertfordshire, UK: Centre for Educational Leadership, School of Education; 2020.
- (6) Department for Education. DfE strategy 2015 to 2020: world-class education and care. [online]. London: Gov.UK; 2019. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-strategy-2015-to-2020-world-class-education-and-care>. [Accessed 19 August 2020].
- (7) Busher H. Constructing Cultures of Inclusion in Schools and Classrooms: hearing voices, building communities for learning. British Educational Research Association Annual Conference; 2005 September 14-7; Pontypridd, Wales: University of Glamorgan; 2005. p. 16.
- (8) Kontautienė R, Melnikova J. Designing the system of school leadership competences development in Lithuania: theoretical background. [online]. Semantic Scholar; 2010. p. 85 Available from: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Designing-the-system-of-school-leadership-in-%3A-Kontautien%C4%97-Melnikova/9f89cfe2baf83a7b806496db4bd8e113943c8887>. [Accessed 19 August 2023]
- (9) Marden B. 21 Etchings to Rexroth [Etching and aquatint on paper]. London: Tate; 1986. © The artist.
- (10) Lewinson J. Brice Marden Prints 1961-1991: A Catalogue Raisonné. London: Tate; 1992. p.145. © The artist.
- (11) Hirschhorn T. Roof Off [Installation]. Venice: Venice Biennial; 2015. © The artist.
- (12) Parker P. Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View [Installation]. London: Tate; 1991. © The artist.
- (13) Ryman R. #11(White). [Photograph]. New York: Robert Ryman/Artists Rights Society (ARS); 2003. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/feb/11/robert-ryman-painter-appreciation> © The artist. [Accessed: 25 August 2020].
- (14) Rauschenberg R. Erased de Kooning. [Drawing on paper]. San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art; 1953. © The artist.
- (15) Lovelace O'Neal M. (1973) Little Brown Girl with Your Hair in a Curl/daddy # 5. [Charcoal and pastel on paper]. Michigan: Mott-Warsh Collection Flint; 1973. Available from: <https://nmwa.org/blog/spotlight-mary-lovelace-oneal/> © The artist. [Accessed: 26 August 2020].
- (16) Simmons G. Fade to Black (exhibition view) [Installation]. Photo: Brian Forrest. Los Angeles, California: California African American Museum; 2017. © The artist.
- (17) Yang H. Sol LeWitt Upside Down - Structure with Three Towers - Expanded 23 times – Split in Three [Installation]. London: Tate; 2018. © The artist.
- (18) Steir P. Secret Waterfalls: The Barnes Series XI [Oil on canvas]. Philadelphia: The Barnes Foundation; 2018. © The artist.
- (19) Deleuze G, Guattari F. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; 1987.
- (20) Haraway, D. Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge; 1990.

ABDUCTIVE METHODOLOGY: OPENING THE MYSTERY OF GENERATING THEORY THROUGH QUALITATIVE INQUIRY IN PRACTICE SETTINGS

Hofmann, Riikka¹, Paavola, Sami², Rainio, Anna Pauliina²

¹ Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge (UNITED KINGDOM)

² Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki (FINLAND)

Abstract

The paper investigates abduction as a methodology for theoretical discovery in qualitative social and educational sciences. Abduction is now an established concept in the methodological literature. Abduction gives means for 'theorising', to describe and help to explain how theoretical concepts are constructed during the qualitative research process. Methodologically, abduction is also trying to respond to the challenge of generalisation in qualitative research that is based on the singular and unique. However, the actual practice and nature of abductive inquiry remain somewhat mysterious in the methodological literature. In this paper, we discuss and develop different interpretations of abduction as a basis for forming a solid methodology of abductive analysis. Abduction operates at different methodological 'layers', which makes it challenging but, at the same time, a fruitful methodological concept. In this paper, we discern three layers of abduction in the methodological literature: 1) Abduction used for opening up methodological questions on theory construction with related epistemological and philosophical challenges, 2) Abduction interpreted as a methodological model that delineates long-term processes of concept formation (within one research project, or also across individual research projects), 3) Abduction helping to conceptualise detailed analytic steps and processes in qualitative research. We explicate the role of abduction in each phase of the research process, from lived through experiences in the field to generating concepts in working with data to articulating and testing new concepts to and with wider audiences and settings. We give examples of practical decisions related to abduction during the research process through our own work doing participatory ethnography and discourse analysis.

Keywords: abduction, theorising, concepts, generalisation, qualitative analysis.

INTRODUCTION

How do theoretical insights 'emerge' from qualitative data analysis? And how do they turn into 'theories' which might have something wider to say about social/educational phenomena? Is abductive methodology a way to conceptualise these processes?

This paper brings together researchers developing language and methodology for rigorous theory construction in and through empirical qualitative fieldwork involving educational practitioners in schools, early years settings, healthcare and beyond. The paper investigates *abduction* as a methodology for theoretical discovery in qualitative social and educational sciences.

Abduction is now an established concept in the methodological literature. We argue that abduction gives means for theorising, to describe and help explain how theoretical concepts are

constructed during the qualitative research process. Methodologically, abduction is trying to respond to the challenge of generalisation in qualitative research that is based on the singular and unique. However, the practice and nature of abductive inquiry remain somewhat mysterious in the literature. This may be partly because abduction combines seemingly contradictory elements in the analytic process. How these contradictory elements come together and what such analytic engagement may look like is often less clear. The aim of this paper is to explore different interpretations of, as well as ways of engaging in, abduction in qualitative analyses to outline a productive framework for theory-generating qualitative educational research on/in practice. Our focus is particularly on actual 'logic-in-use', how it fits or contrasts to 'reconstructed logic' contained in methodological literature (to use Kaplan's (1), classic distinction).

Abduction operates at different methodological 'layers', which makes it challenging but, at the same time, a fruitful methodological concept. In this paper, we discern three layers of abduction in the methodological literature: 1) Abduction used for opening up methodological questions on theory construction with related epistemological and philosophical challenges, 2) Abduction interpreted as a methodological model that delineates long-term processes of concept formation (within one research project, or also across individual research projects), 3) Abduction helping to conceptualise detailed analytic steps and processes in qualitative research. We discuss and develop different interpretations of abduction as a basis for forming a solid methodology of abductive analysis, exemplified through empirical examples.

WHAT IS ABDUCTION?

Abduction seems to include contradictory claims. What are the dynamics of abduction depicting insightful theorising as a part of methodological processes?

Abduction was originally presented by Charles Peirce in the 1860s as a third main mode of reasoning alongside induction and deduction. Peirce was a logician and semiotician developing various formulations of abduction during his long life (see (2), 21-30, 46-47). Abduction was a long-neglected topic in methodology but slowly gained prominence with growing interest in the so-called context of discovery ((2), 31-45).

Peirce described abduction as a 'weak' form of inference. It "merely suggests that something may be" when deduction "proves that something must be" and induction "shows that something actually is operative" ((3) 5.171-172, 1903). One basic formulation of abduction is ((3) 5.189, 1903, (4)):

The surprising fact, C, is observed;

But if A [a hypothesis] were true, C would be a matter of course.

Hence, there is reason to suspect that A [the hypothesis] is true.

Abduction is the reasoning used by detectives (see (5)). Detectives recognise little cues (surprising facts based on observation). They are good at finding explanations or ideas with meticulous inquiries that make originally surprising or anomalous observations (or disturbing details) understandable as a matter of course.

While abduction is a promising form of reasoning, several controversies, or ambiguities, exist (see (6)):

1. Abduction is often presented as a 'logic of discovery', but its critics have maintained that formulations of abduction do not seem to clarify how ideas are generated but rather operate with ideas that have already been discovered (by some other means).
2. Basic formulations of abduction seem to start from observation (or data), but, on the other hand, abduction seems to require theoretical concepts (like hypotheses). Does abduction then start from observations or theoretical concepts?
3. Abduction is supposed to be a mode of reasoning but is often formulated based on operations (also by Peirce) that do not seem to be reasoning, like a 'guessing instinct' or insight.

4. Good examples of abduction seem to be momentary insights (with a lovely hypothesis explaining surprising details of the case). Yet, abduction seems to require a long-term search and development of ideas.

5. Peirce, especially in his later works, argued that abduction is based on a guessing instinct; however, many commentators nowadays highlight that a basis for fertile hypotheses and abduction is social interaction (see, e.g. (7)).

We think that these seemingly contradictory claims on abduction are mainly based on too narrow and static views of abduction. Questions on the validity of abductive reasoning are often highlighted in the philosophy of science. However, a dynamic view of abduction requires *strategies* that involve several phases and move together ((2), 206–211). If abduction is interpreted dynamically, those elements that might initially seem contradictory actually function together. For example, abduction does not start either from observation (data) or theoretical concepts but is based on back-and-forth movement with hypothetical elements between observation and theoretical ideas. Similarly, the dynamic view requires that the long-term development of ideas is considered even when the process includes some crucial and central insights happening at a specific time and place. The abductive process of searching for fertile hypotheses can also be based both on detailed insights by individuals (with non-conscious reasoning) and on conscious social interaction.

Methodological literature on qualitative research has somewhat different interpretations of abduction. This is not a surprise when both Peirce's original formulations and later developments have left room for different emphases. Different methodological articles also complement each other when depicting abductive elements as part of theory construction. We briefly present three influential examples.

Timmermans and Tavory ((7); see also (8)) analyse theory construction in qualitative research. They start with grounded theory, which has been a natural methodological approach to discussing the role of abduction in qualitative research. They maintain that theoretical innovation is scarce with grounded theory, which is why abduction is needed. Their approach "rests on the cultivation of anomalous and surprising empirical findings against a background of multiple existing sociological theories" ((7), 169). Instead of a natural instinct, they emphasise social interaction as a basis for theory construction. Abduction is about iterative, back-and-forth movement between data and theory requiring theoretical sensitivity.

Dubois and Gadde (9) write about the methodology used in case research and how it deals with theory development. They developed an approach called "systematic combining" grounded in abduction. While they do not specify abduction in detail, it is a part of long-term processes (often multi-year case studies) where the theoretical framework, empirical fieldwork, and case analysis co-evolve. They argue that the framework in this kind of research is not prestructured and tight (deductive approach) nor loose and emergent (inductive approach), but rather "tight and evolving" (abductive) ((9), 558). The emphasis is not on theory generation, but rather on theory development where the original framework is successively modified with unanticipated empirical findings, but also with theoretical insights during the process. Systematic combining "can be described as a nonlinear, path-dependent process of combining efforts with the ultimate objective of matching theory and reality" (ibid, 556).

Kelle (10) also discusses conflicting understandings of the relationship between data and theory in grounded theory, maintaining that grounded theory has suffered from an "inductivist self-misunderstanding" and naive empiricism. He points out that the qualitative analysis requires theoretical sensitivity (see (11)). Kelle does not detail abduction but has good descriptions of research processes aligned with abduction. In making abductive inferences, researchers depend on previous knowledge but not as something into which empirical facts are forced. Kelle also highlights that

contrary to inductivist understanding, the research process based on abduction is consistently fallibilistic.

While the three articles differ somewhat in their interpretations, they depict research processes as dynamic and iterative, fallible, combining and reinterpreting different elements, based on path-dependent evolution of ideas and back-and-forth movement between a theoretical framework and insights, research case and data.

Next, we give two concrete examples of our dynamic view of abduction in action. We highlight the processual nature of developing what often starts from 'weak' empirical notions into stronger theoretical concepts that have the potential to develop into theory.

ABDUCTIVE CONCEPT FORMATION IN AND THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDIES

How do 'hunches' emerge, and how does the abductive movement between data and theory happen?

This section describes how a new theoretical concept ('ambivalence as a form of student engagement, (12)) was born in a series of ethnographic case work. The process started from weak (but still haunting) 'instinctual' remarks and notions during fieldwork, evolving into a more conceptually driven systematic analysis of video-recorded interaction, and finally developing into a theoretically defined new concept that was then 'tested' in new empirical settings and discussions with academic and practitioner audiences.

Abductive reasoning seems particularly needed – or well-suited – for ethnographic research, which has suffered from "theoretical ambivalence" (13). Ethnographic case studies aim to understand phenomena "in their whole" from the participant perspectives (14), (15). One research paradigm is thus often not enough to grasp this 'whole'. Consequently, a common misunderstanding is that ethnographic tradition is eclectic or atheoretical. Instead, ethnographic research has offered science strong new theoretical concepts of different social phenomena (see (13)). Ethnography's strength lies in its potential to connect 'messy' everyday expressions and experiences from real life with long-developed 'neat' academic theories. Abduction can work with everyday terms and articulations that often play a crucial role as middle-level analytical concepts or sensitising concepts (11) that bridge the (too) neat theory and (too) messy real life (16), (17). In ethnography, theory development is strongly embedded in real life. *How* this happens, and particularly how this kind of lived-through singular knowledge becomes *generalisable* (that is, knowledge instead of information or a story), remains poorly explicated in methodological literature. We aim here to give a glimpse of one such process.

Step 1: Living through the field and 'guessing from cues': The researcher, Anna, participated in youth theatre workshops as part of larger multi-disciplinary research on children taken into care in Finland (18). The idea of the sub-study was to understand the process of participation in art-based theatre activities from the young people and the theatre instructors' perspective: what did the young people experience while participating in the arts-based project? What phases, change processes and emotions did the group face as a community, and what kind of processes did the individual participants undergo? Anna was an active participant in the workshops and collected, together with the young people, video data from the art sessions.

Early on, the adult participants noted that the participation of these young people in the activities was contradictory and unpredictable. Certain questions were repeated in Anna's mind during her participation in the workshops. For example, *why did Sean always talk of "jumping out of the train on his way to the workshops" but then choose to join us at the last minute? Why was it so hard for the theatre instructors to reach these youth or to be sure whether they would even show up – but then suddenly get very close to them?* The theatre instructors spoke of this difficulty, too. When Anna

discussed these empirical notions in a research seminar, a colleague noted that the participants seemed quite *ambivalent*. This same ambivalence had also become a very embodied experience for the researcher. Anna felt herself often *torn between mixed feelings* during and after the fieldwork. Also, it was something that the existing literature on children's participation, agency, engagement and coping did not capture very well. The picture was often too neat, too either-or, in the literature.

Step 2 (finding a 'telling case' to seize the 'lived through' phenomenon, to make it visible and workable): Anna then asked herself: *Where or when did I (as a researcher) feel this ambivalence most strongly?* This led her to go through data from one evening, final rehearsals of the shadow theatre performance: a 10-minute video episode in which Sean, one of the participants, repeatedly challenges the other participants by pulling away and getting involved. This interestingly leads to theatre instructors embracing his provocations and building on them, with the episode ending up with more sustained participation of Sean and even new ideas for his role in the performance. How Sean expresses his ambivalence and how it turns into a productive force in this social interaction with the young people and the theatre instructors – and how this interaction develops Sean's agency in the activity - s analysed closely elsewhere (19). The episode can be thought of as a crystallisation of something very telling of the mode of being in this activity. It can be named as a "telling case" (20) of the potential of ambivalence for developing young people's agentic engagement in social life. However, before reaching this interpretation of ambivalence in this data set, Anna read a considerable amount of literature in psychology, sociology, and even philosophy, in which the term ambivalence had been defined theoretically. The notions from the data did not spring out inductively but were a result of simultaneous theorising.

Step 3 (testing and developing the concept). After the first case study, Anna widened her examination of the newly developed concept of ambivalence in different data sets, such as young children's engagement in play-based activities in classrooms (21). Also, speaking about the concept to different practitioner audiences in the field of education often encountered strong resonance. The concept was developing, and one particularly useful remark was that *improvised play between adults and children* seemed to be a context in which ambivalent participation was developing children's agency (12).

Step 4 (generalisation of the research findings, developing into a theory): The concept of ambivalence is potentially becoming a generalisable concept that helps us understand how teachers and children co-regulate their ways of being in educational institutions that struggle to accept ambivalence (see (22)) and how this relates to a theory of student (dis-)engagement in education (read more in (2), (23)).

WORKING WITH DATA, ANALYTIC PROCESS AND STEPS: EXAMPLE 2 OF THE CONTEXT OF DISCOVERY

How can these iterative back-and-forth analytic movements be described beyond the conceptual context of the discovery of specific research?

We suggest that the *difference-within-similarity* analytic approach outlined by Hofmann (24) presents an intermediate approach to working with qualitative data that illustrates abductive processes. This approach builds on a set of key ideas, which here are related to the principles of abduction. Traditional qualitative analyses often focus on grouping things into different categories (such as different ways vulnerable young people engage with arts-based activities), which may all describe a bigger thing (like their ways of engaging in educational activities). Such a process assumes that these 'things' are somehow distinct (e.g., young people either engage or disengage). Instead, the difference-within-similarity approach foresees insights into practice emerging from "*identifying things that are similar, and then identifying and examining differences within those*" ((24), p.44).

The challenge is knowing what similarity might be *analytically productive* (24). Abduction highlights that a linear, one-directional approach to analysis (where a 'similarity' is identified either from the data or from theory) often does not open the most fruitful context of discovery. In the above example, notions of 'engagement' in the literature seemingly presented a starting point ('similarity') from which to compare young people's different actions in relation to arts-based activity. However, such an analytic approach would have grouped those actions in a dichotomous manner, either as getting involved or pulling away. Such an interpretation was not helpful for addressing the observation that instead, young people's actions were often both; moreover, it was this movement between going in and pulling away that the researchers and the practitioners needed to come to understand and work with (cf. (19), (12)). Identifying the concept of ambivalence – through the back-and-forth movement between specific instances in the data, the researchers' and participants' intuitions about those instances, the literature, and wider theory – enabled the development of a new context of discovery, a new (simultaneously conceptual and empirical) 'similarity' from which to 'gaze towards' (24) its different manifestations in the data.

This iterative back-and-forth movement overcomes the apparent contradiction in abduction, between starting simultaneously from data and theory (6). While individual instances may play a key role in early analysis stages, the abductive analysis further involves lateral movement across the data to identify and compare different forms of the 'same' thing to understand the phenomenon studied (what Hofmann called 'differences-within-similarity'). We now illustrate the principles developed in Hofmann's (24) earlier work through an example from our shared work.

Hofmann (24) has referred to the analytic processes through which this iterative and lateral abductive trailing takes place as 'weaving' and the types of analytic steps this involves as 'repeats' and 'chaining'. Considering these analytic processes in relation to abduction highlights the systematic manner of this process – how the apparent contradiction between intuition about individual instances and systematic work with the (wider) data is overcome. We use an example from research on a year-long school-based 'Change Laboratory' intervention in a Finnish secondary school aimed at helping the teachers address issues concerning students' disengagement (25), (26).

At the start of the project, when the participating teachers talked about their students, we initially observed two different explanations for why things were how they were: status quo ('this is how it always is in this village') and moral statements ('we should not try to change our students'). Working backwards from these observations, we identified them to be differences within the *same* underlying conceptualisation of (their) students: 'This is how these kids are (disengaged)'. The two ways of explaining this underlying conceptualisation drew on different reasons why this situation could not change (that the teachers could not, or should not, try to change how things – their students – were). However, we argued that the underlying understanding behind these was the 'same' – that their students are disengaged and 'that's that'. (25) Reading the theoretical literature alongside the analysis led us to consider this talk in relation to the concept of stabilisation and possibility knowledge (27).

Through what we suggest can be considered a 'repeat' in the sense of Hofmann's (24) difference-within-similarity approach, we took this 'similarity' ('this is how our pupils are' (disengaged)) as a starting point. We looked for other instances of that to examine if the same/different things happened when this idea was evoked by the teachers when discussing their experimentation with new approaches to teaching in the Change Laboratory context. While 'stabilising' talk was common at the start of the project (status quo and moral statements), particularly by the middle of the year, new observations became apparent. While the starting point for the teachers' talk remained the same (this is how our students are, disengaged), we differentiated (see 25) between several different new types of discourse within it.

Firstly, a discourse we referred to as dilemmatic tension (28) ('this is how our students are, and we don't know how to change it') opened a potential of seeing the original assumption ('this is how our

students are') in a more open way (it might be changeable). Secondly, we identified surprise talk (students were suddenly engaged). This further challenged the idea that students' engagement was unchangeable while continuing to explicitly link it back to the original assumption ('we all know how our students are, so this was a real surprise'). Thirdly, we identified a form of talk which, while still using the same idea as its starting point, framed that idea as a focus of the teachers' work instead of a barrier ('this is how our students are, and that is what we should work on').

Initially, based on the original concept of possibility knowledge, we considered all three as examples of the same new 'difference' in how the teachers were changing their stance towards their starting point – a move away from stabilisation to possibility discourse, opening new possibilities in how they viewed their students and the opportunities in their work. However, further analysis, which we suggest is akin to what Hofmann (24) called 'chaining', led to significant nuancing of the concept.

Starting from one of the findings of the previous stage and then moving laterally, we took one of the 'differences' identified above, surprise talk, as a new analytic similarity, our starting point to 'analytically gaze from' (24) and identified and compared differences in teachers' talk about their surprise in their observations about their students. This analytic process led us to identify different things that can happen *after* a surprise (i.e., evidence to contradict the idea that the students are disengaged and that is unchanging/unchangeable). This analysis identified that rather than stabilising talk giving way to possibility talk, possibility openings could be closed down (which we referred to as 're-stabilisation') or sustained without a solution (which we referred to as 'de-stabilisation') (25). Both represent new conceptual insights regarding possibility talk. This difference-within-similarity led us to the most interesting 'explanatory' element in the teachers' talk that helped to explain – at the level of discourse – why interventions often fail to change existing circumstances even in the face of evident success of those interventions for their participants (cf. (29), (30)), in this way, contributing to theory development in the field of teacher professional development (25).

CONCLUDING WORDS: OPENING UP A COLLABORATIVE CONTEXT OF DISCOVERY

This paper aimed to outline a collaborative methodological programme of inquiry to understand theory-generating practice-based analytic work. We argue that abduction opens up "the context of discovery" (see (31), (6)), that is, the area of research where hunches, insights, and creativity can be explored and linked with the theoretical literature in ways that are simultaneously open and systematic, to guide the methodological search for novel conceptualisations and ideas. Our paper contributes to methodological knowledge in qualitative research by addressing and illustrating through examples how engagement with abduction can enhance and make transparent our processes of thinking with qualitative data.

We began by identifying apparent contradictions relating to abduction and illustrated the kind of analytic work that overcomes these. Abduction has been criticised for operating with existing ideas rather than generating novel concepts. Our examples illustrate how abductive analyses, working with existing concepts, can significantly contribute to developing more nuanced theoretical understandings. Another puzzle related to the starting point of abductive analysis. We argue that from the perspective of research in and with practice, the idea of starting simultaneously from theory and practice/data is no contradiction at all: research has clearly demonstrated that to transformatively engage at and with the dynamic interface between research and practice, academic and practitioner' voices' need to be in an ongoing dialogue throughout the research process (32), (33), (23). Our examples illustrate through concepts and analytic processes how this dynamic work happens. The third puzzle concerned the relationship between instinct and reasoning in abductive analyses. We illustrated the importance of instinct (or 'insight') in practice-based work and the systematic processes utilising such instincts to develop and probe hypotheses in the data (19). Lastly, we demonstrated an analytic approach, the

difference-within-similarity approach (24), which ties together the key role of momentary insights with systematic iterative and lateral movements across wider and longer-term data in the search and development of ideas, hereby offering a way of making originally surprising or anomalous observations understandable within a revised theory. Our discussion illustrates a dynamic and holistic interpretation of abduction (cf. (2)) in which seemingly contradictory elements function together to develop conceptual insights.

REFERENCES

- (1) Kaplan, A. *The Conduct of Inquiry. Methodology for Behavioral Science*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company; 1964.
- (2) Paavola, S. *On the origin of ideas. An Abductivist approach to discovery. Revised and enlarged edition*. Saarbrücken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing; 2012.
- (3) Peirce, C. S. *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. 1–6, Hartshorne, C. and Weiss, P. (eds.), vols. 7–8, Burks, A. W. (ed.). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press; 1931-1958.
- (4) Hanson, N. R. *Patterns of discovery*. University Press; 1958.
- (5) Eco, U. and Sebeok, T. A. (eds.). *The sign of three. Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*. Indiana University Press; 1983.
- (6) Paavola, S. *Abduction as a Logic of Discovery*. In: Magnani, L. (eds) *Handbook of Abductive Cognition*. Springer, Cham; 2023, p. 43-60.
- (7) Timmermans S, Tavory I. *Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis*. *Sociological theory*. 2012 Sep;30(3):167-86.
- (8) Tavory, I. and Timmermans, S. *Abductive analysis: Theorizing qualitative research*. University of Chicago Press; 2014.
- (9) Dubois, A. and Gadde, L. E. *Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research*. *Journal of Business Research*, 2002; Volume 55(7), pp. 553-560.
- (10) Kelle, U. "Emergence" vs. "Forcing" of Empirical Data? A Crucial Problem of "Grounded Theory" Reconsidered. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2005; Volume 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-6.2.467>
- (11) Blumer, H. *What is wrong with Social Theory?* *American Sociological Review*, 1954; Volume 19(1), pp. 3-10.
- (12) Rainio, A. P., Mälkki, K., Mäkinen, M. *Embracing' the stranger' in us: Heterogeneity and ambivalent ways of being in classrooms*. In: Talvio, M. & Lonka, K. (Eds.) *International Approaches to Promoting Social and Emotional Learning in Schools: A Framework for Developing Teaching Strategy*. Routledge, Oxfordshire, UK, 2021, p. 15-36.
- (13) Puddephatt, A., Shaffir, W. and Kleinknecht, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Ethnographies Revisited: Constructing Theory in the Field*, Routledge, London; 2009. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203876503>
- (14) Rainio, A. P. & Hilppö, J. *The dialectics of agency in educational ethnography*. *Ethnography & Education* 12(1), 2017, p. 78-94.
- (15) O'Reilly, K. *Ethnographic Methods*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2012.

- (16) Rainio, A. P. Lionhearts of the playworld: An ethnographic case study of the development of agency in play pedagogy. *Studies in Educational Sciences* 233, 2010.
- (17) Engeström, Y. Kehittävä työntutkimus. Perusteita, tuloksia, ja haasteita. Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995.
- (18) Heino T., Eronen T., Kataja K., Kestilä L., Känkänen P., Paananen R., Pösö T., Rainio A. P. Suojassa, syrjässä, selvinneenä - huostaan otetut ja sijoitetut lapset Suomessa. In Reivinen Jukka, Vähäkylä Leena (toim.) Ketä kiinnostaa? Lasten ja nuorten hyvinvointi ja syrjäytyminen. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 50-68, 2012.
- (19) Rainio, A. P. and Marjanovic-Shane, A. From Ambivalence to Agency: Becoming an Author, an Actor and a Hero in a Drama Workshop. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 2013; Volume (2): 111.
- (20) Mitchell, J. C. Case Studies. In R. F. Ellen (Ed.), In: *Ethnographic research: A guide to general conduct* Orlando, FL: Academic Press, Inc, 1984, p. 237–241.
- (21) Ferholt, B. & Rainio, A. P. Teacher support of student engagement in early childhood: Embracing ambivalence through playworlds. *Early Years*, 36(4), 2016, p. 413-425.
- (22) Bauman, S. Ambivalence and modernity. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- (23) Ferholt, B., Rainio, A. P., Watanabe, R., Miyazaki, K., Grankvist, A. K., Johansson, E., Thure, J., Lecusay, R., Nilsson, M. & Dr. Smartypants. Playworlds as ways of Being: Romantic science of care, art and play. Brill, in press / 2024.
- (24) Hofmann, R. Dialogues with data: generating theoretical insights from research on practice in higher education. In: M. Tight & J. Huisman (eds.) *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*. Emerald; Vol. 6, 2020, pp. 41-60.
- (25) Rainio, A. P. and Hofmann, R. Teacher professional dialogues during a school intervention: From stabilization to possibility discourse through reflexive noticing. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 2021; Volume 30(4-5), p. 707-746.
- (26) Rainio AP, Hofmann R. Transformations in teachers' discourse about their students during a school-led pedagogic intervention. *The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences*. 2015 Jan 5.
- (27) Engeström Y. From stabilization knowledge to possibility knowledge in organizational learning. *Management learning*. 2007 Jul;38(3):271-5.
- (28) Rainio, P. Tietotyön malli koulun kehittämisessä. Muutoksen esteet, edellytykset ja mahdollisuudet opettajien puheessa. Research reports 7. Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, University of Helsinki, 2003.
- (29) Hofmann R, Ruthven K. Operational, interpersonal, discussional and ideational dimensions of classroom norms for dialogic practice in school mathematics. *British Educational Research Journal*. 2018 Jun;44(3):496-514.
- (30) Maine F, Hofmann R. Talking for meaning: The dialogic engagement of teachers and children in a small group reading context. *International Journal of Educational Research*. 2016 Jan 1;75:45-56.
- (31) Reichenbach, H. Experience and Prediction. An Analysis of the Foundations and the Structure of Knowledge. Chicago, Illinois, USA: The University of Chicago Press; 1938.
- (32) Hakkarainen K, Bollström-Huttunen M, Hofmann R. Teacher-researcher dialogue and expansive transformation of pedagogical practices. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*. 2009 Jan 26;3(3):157-78.

- (33) Hofmann R. Leading professional change through research(ing): Conceptual tools for professional practice and research. In: P. Burnard, T. Dragovic, J. Flutter and J. Alderton (Eds.). *Transformative Professional Doctoral Research Practice*. 2016 (pp. 141-154). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

POSTER-ING IN AND THROUGH DEEP-HANGING-OUT AND COLLABORATIVE MULTISPECIES STORYING: PERFORMING A MINOR CARTOGRAPHY

Andrie Savva

Researcher Practitioner, UK and Southeast Mediterranean

Abstract

This contribution emerges from research-creation experimentations arising from the provocations “what does poster-ing do” and “how does poster-ing come to matter?” It braids deep-hanging-out, collaborative multispecies storying, and poster-ing while thinking mainly with the work of Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Vinciane Despret, Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing, Erin Manning, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Édouard Glissant mattering the generative potentials of their intersection. As part of a multispecies ethnographies project, I travel-hop (in Karen Barad’s explication) through projects with children, communities, and the more-than-human world and enact poster-ing as a methectic practicing of deep-hanging-out and collaborative multispecies storying. Such a practicing performs a respectful, careful, and collaborative minor cartography highlighting the process of power relations, interrogating the major and animating potentials for new and unpredictable ways of living and doing. It transcends conventional utilizations of the poster format for the reporting on past events and research through knowledge transmission associating the poster with rigid positivist paradigmatic assumptions and takeaways. Instead of subverting the concept of the poster as a planned end-product containing a complete understanding though, this contribution suggests poster-ing as-&of-relation, performing an artful minor cartography that is lively and co-created, haunted and emergent, specific and immanent. Such a process animates an opaque a-disciplinary space where pedagogy and curriculum inquiry; art and philosophy; objects, people, and heritages of life and death; deep-hanging-out and collaborative multispecies storying intra-act through unruly temporalities that maintain rootedness while surpassing the need for the central root. As you deeply hang-out with this contribution, you are invited to wallow in, open up, and imagine with what glows for you, intra-act and co-create by adding to its rhizomatic nature.

Keywords: poster-ing, deep-hanging-out, collaborative multispecies storytelling, minor cartography

WELCOMING

This contribution stories my Artistic journey with multiple kin through deep-hanging-out as performing minor cartography. I re-turn, in Karen Barad’s [1] explication, to Southeast Mediterranean and attend to multiple kin zooming on the donkey as an animal inextricably linked with stories of life and death, work and play, struggle and care. Such re-turning and attending to stories enables research-creation experimentations arising from the provocations “what does poster-ing do?” and “how does poster-ing come to matter?” In deeply-hanging-out and thinking-with such stories and theory, poster-ing is enacted as a methectic Artistic practice. Such practice performs a minor cartography and matters what thinking- and creating- with multiple kin makes possible in human and more-than-human assemblages

actualising performative relational approaches. As a collaborative storying with multiple kin through deep-hanging-out, it actualises a thinking- and doing- otherwise of educational and Artistic research and practice in general and in conference spaces in particular.

In times where *Anthropos* has placed himself at the top of the species hierarchical pyramid, the witch-hunt for growth and profit has rendered lives as expandable commodities. In the name of human progress, multispecies interdependencies and connections have been destroyed or altered to the point where many species have been extinct or are close to extinction. At the same time, the universal ideal Man as the privileged archetype against which the rest are measured highlights not only the negative connotations ascribed to difference but also the binary logic between contemporary and historical, urban and rural, sophisticated and naïve, culture and nature. In a world focused on discourses of development, ways of living, thinking, and doing that do not serve linear narratives of progress have been mutated, withering in dusty archives and blurry distant backgrounds.

These thoughts actualize a welcoming entry point for this contribution. Situated at the posthuman turn, the convergence of post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism challenging both the exceptional place of *Anthropos* in the species hierarchy and *Man* as the universal archetype of the human [2], this contribution enacts poster-ing as Artistic practice. Through such approach, forms of life and practice matter the affective relationality of bodies of knowledge, ideas, materials, languages, stories, atmospheres, theory. In deeply-hanging-out with this storying of what poster-ing does, you are invited to open up, dwell in, imagine with the embodied, haptic, and multisensory affects that glow for you, intra-act and even co-create by adding to its rhizomatic nature.

POSTER-ING: ARTISTICALLY AND ARTFULLY PRACTICING DEEP-HANGING-OUT AND COLLABORATIVE MULTISPECIES STORYING

Conventional approaches utilise the poster as a format for easy give- & take- aways of past research. This stance considers the construction of the poster as an off-the-shelf, step-by-step standard practice associating the poster with rigid positivist paradigmatic assumptions of much social science. As such, the poster functions as a transparent and methodical visual report, description and presentation of key information on past projects. The logics structuring this format aim at knowledge transmission, at presenting a single truth and (reproducible and verifiable) ways of doing and their results. Such an approach though effects a Ford-ian type of linear, mechanical, and limiting production, a solitary sterility diminishing creativity and multiplicity in education and in conference spaces. Through this contribution, the poster is re-imagined as an Artistic act of relation. Re-imagining the poster beyond the structured format and planned end-product holding a complete understanding to an Artistic practice and beyond the isolated and bounded visual report to a collaborative and relational performative minor cartography enacts a methectic practicing of deep-hanging-out and of collaborative multispecies storying.

Deep hanging out, as Renato Rosaldo [3] discussed, suggests the researcher spending a lot of time in the sites of inquiry, immersing and engaging closely with people, environment, ways of living; becoming an active member of the local society, studying-with instead of studying-about, around, without. Although deep hanging out has been approached as a means to an end, that is, instrumentally, for the purposes of gathering data and understanding actors from their referential frame, it has also been approached as a way of relating. Jayne Osgood and Sid Mohandas [4] suggest a move away from ethnographic observation and representation towards situated evocation “embracing the liveliness of the material world” (p. 3) through partial connections and relations. Their feminist posthuman rereading of early childhood observations views world-making as a process attuning to the liveliness of matter and valuing the inseparability of matter and discourse. Margaret Somerville and Sarah Powell [5], also working in the early childhood field, propose deep hanging out

with children and their worlds “without any particular purpose or assumptions [...] by exploring ways to observe without intruding, but inevitably become enlisted as participants in sand, mud, water, toys, and the living things of children’s play” (p. 20). Deep hanging out in the fields of early childhood and education has been re-imagined as a posthuman practice, a way of relating with children and their worlds valuing matter.

Deep hanging out is also inextricably linked with the indeterminate encounters of collaborative multispecies storying. Engaging deeply, carefully, respectfully in inquiring multispecies ethnographies draws attention to non-linear journeying through time and space unleashing a rush of stories and actualizing various connections. Anna Tsing [6], in *The mushroom at the end of the world*, inquires the Matsutake mushroom as part of interrelated stories at the intersections of capitalist practices, international relations, and ecology. By contrasting the sugarcane colonial plantations with the Matsutake forest, the difference between colonial market plantation logics and transformative mutual relations glows. The colonial plantations in Brazil during the 16th and 17th century, as Jill H. Casid [7] underlines, required the clearing and removal of local native biodiversity – people and plants – preparing unclaimed empty land, and bringing isolated crops, including sugarcane and coffee, for production as well as people enforcing their dis-&re-location through slavery for labour in the *New World*. Such colonial practices cultivated logics of standardizing alienation, expansion, and commodification as a means to great profits. Envisioning the world through the plantation lens suggests the interaction of self-contained and interchangeable units, the logics of functionality and profit positing utilitarianism and exchangeability at market value. Unlike sugarcane clones, as Anna Tsing highlights, Matsutake mushrooms live and thrive through mutual transformative relations. The cultivating conditions of the plantation are impossible for the Matsutake as they require the dynamism of diversity and affective relationality. This extends to the Matsutake foragers; they are independent - far from disciplined alienation and formal employment dependencies - displaced from industrial economies. Such contrast highlights how colonial and capitalist logics exist in relation with transformative mutuality and affective relationality. The call for indeterminate encounter-based collaborations surpassing the envisioning of the world through the plantation lens is prominent. The need to open our imaginations, revitalise the art of noticing and listening to the cacophony of stories, and embrace curiosity for collaborative survival glows through indeterminate encounters of multispecies storying.

In this contribution, I approach such encounters as a form of curious and kind Artistic practice. In thinking-with the philosophies of Donna Haraway [8] [9] and Vinciane Despret [10], such encounters are considered an interesting thinking-feeling-trying-creating with multiple others including non-natal kin. It is a venturing-off known paths and a making-kin with various others in shared, imaginative, and unpredictable ways. Such a practice is entangled and collaborative, with humans and more-than-humans rendering one-another capable and re-inventing the conditions for mutual flourishing. In thinking-with Erin Manning [11], I also propose such practice as artful, as a methectic and intuitive dwelling-in the process and its manner of becoming. Manning suggests intuition as a relational movement introducing in experience a rift in knowing and perception and as a process that pushes technique at its limits revealing its outdoings, that is, what makes the more-than experience felt. This relational movement enfolds present and future invoking art as “the manner in which time is composed” (p. 51), a question of something present that has been felt but not acted. In approaching such curious and kind practicing as Artistic, I highlight its inseparability from the field activated; a methectic performance of cartography. Such performance does not materialize linearly, as pre-existing the artistic event of expression, or as an interrogation of the poster as a grasped and positioned form. Poster-ing as the performing of cartography is attentive to the event it activates; ecological, collective, in-movement; unquantifiable, lived, felt. Such Artistic practice is an elastic opening onto the qualitative difference that intuition, sensations, and affective forces activate.

PERFORMING A MINOR CARTOGRAPHY THROUGH POSTER-ING AS ARTISTIC AND ARTFUL PRACTICE

In this contribution, *deep-hanging-out*¹, as situated at the posthuman turn, suggests a way of relating with the human and more-than-human world that is both transhistorical and transcorporeal. Such relation refutes the confines of a specific moment in time at a specific place and suggests the relationality of the human and more-than-human world, ideas, materials, heritages, bodies of knowledge highlighting how past, present, and future are not linear successive points in spacetime but rather enfolded in relations. In deeply-hanging-out with archival material, literature, and pedagogical documentation from my practice with children and communities as well as my grandparents' stories the importance of the mundane and the earth-bound comes to matter. Non-industrial farmers engaging in agriculture, salespeople engaging in small-scale trade, seasonal workers engaging in salt-collection with donkeys and the more-than-human world in general as collaborators highlights how humans and more-than-humans lived, worked, played, even died together. Stories of careful co-existence through work and play are inextricably linked with stories of violence, greed, and destruction. Working with the donkey in the fields, the salt-lake, the watermill, living with the donkey in mountainous villages, and journeying with the donkey through the rural and the urban intra-acts with transforming the donkey to a useful commodity for laborious work and transporting the donkey to other countries for reproduction in the name of human progress. The plantation logics materialising the extraction and transplantation of humans, plants, and animals comes to matter in Southeast Mediterranean through stories of the donkey and of nature in general. As Walter Mignolo [13] highlights, capitalism and imperialism drive the development of colonial power transforming live nature into inanimate resources. The donkey, among others, uprooted and exploited as a resource with capacities and capabilities (strength, stamina, low maintenance) that could be bred and exploited for profit generated and mobilised a new global market. The transplantation logics materialise not only in the export of the donkey but also in the import of seeds and plants for cultivation in islandic Southeast Mediterranean. The abstraction of life into resource and commodity highlights the transformation of the plantation logics into industrial capitalism in the Anthropocene, what Donna Haraway and colleagues [14] express in the concept of the *Plantationocene*. The careful and respectful relation of people and Land has been distorted, transforming anything and everything into resource to be mined for profit. A way of relating comes to matter that inspires new understandings and practice of how capitalism and coloniality comes to matter in life and education.

The connection of people and Land is inextricably linked with notions of memory and (un)belonging. Such connections - transcorporeal and transhistorical - surpass linear time and space; account for the imperial, colonial, capitalist naturecultures; enfold and are enfolded in the everyday and the mundane, in stories of life and death. Such connections glowed in photographs of personal and family archives embodying the careful and respectful relationality of people, animals, land, water. Such connections glowed in querying natureculture heritages and instigating further inquiry of colonial, imperialist, and capitalist practices in the name of human progress and growth. Such connections glowed for Μιχαήλ Κάσσιαλος, the prominent naïve artist, when painting scenes of rural life with the donkey in islandic Southeast Mediterranean in the early-20th century. Such connections glowed through *deep-hanging-out* when a student felt the need to share her concern over her noticing a donkey alone-d, perhaps abandoned, in the fields during a weekend journey. Such connections glowed when another student shared how villagers were taking care of their donkey. Such connections glowed when inquiring how people were caring for their donkeys unveiled the

¹ I employ the differentiated writing *deep-hanging-out* to emphasise the collective 'I' that a transhistorical and transcorporeal posthuman practice suggests. In considering it as one word, I also emphasize the engagement through open assemblages. As such, the researcher is also part of the assemblage rather than viewing it and inquiring it from outside and above, a "view from nowhere" in Donna Haraway's [12] explication.

traditional practices and wisdom of *καλλικάς*, a rare profession nowadays. Such connections glowed when, following the flow of such matters of care and concern, the students and I engaged with material highlighting how the donkey is quickly becoming inconsequential for *Anthropos*. Such connections glowed in my re-turning to pedagogical documentation in general and in students' posters in particular raising awareness for the donkey as an endangered species and for the cruel treatment of a personal life. The practice of poster-ing forms an inquiry into how we are related not just to other humans but also to matter and to *earth others* [15]. Moving beyond anthropo- and human- centric ways of thinking and doing, poster-ing Artistically challenges conventional notions of belonging and performs a minor cartography by asking how *we* are connected to more-than-human life and who belongs in such *we*, unveiling the process of power relations accounting for one's locations and in a form that is inseparable from the process through which it moves. The poster is not actualised as a functional planned step-by-step construction to be presented but emerges through a methectic practice of (un)belonging that, in actualising the aesthetic and the political, critiques anthropo- and human- centric ways of thinking and living.

Such practice performs a minor cartography. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari discuss the notion of *minor* in their works. Drawing on Kafka, they explicate an approach to writing that can be extended to literature, theatre, cinema, and, in this contribution, cartography through poster-ing as Artistic practice. Deleuze and Guattari [16] argue that minor literature is created within a major tradition, experiments with and deterritorializes language, ignores canonical models, "connects the individual to a political immediacy" (p. 18), and fosters collective action. Whereas in a major literature authors usually seek to develop a unique voice expressing themselves as individuals, in a minor literature authors try to articulate collective voices of minorities determined as such through established power-relations. Such relations may be perpetuated if there is no engagement in a becoming-other that reconfigures established positions. In minor literatures, the political deterritorialization is inextricably linked with the deterritorialization of language. Writing in a minor language deterritorializes – deforms and transforms - regular patterns, contests and undoes the power-relations immanent within the major function of language, thus any experimentation with language is a practice with a political dimension. Similarly, minor theatre experiments not only with language but with all dimensions of drama including voice, gesture, movement, sound, costumes, styles, settings. Minor cinema experiments additionally with dimensions of seeing. The *minor* does not promote or represent fixed programmes of action and does not function to affirm stable group-identities but rather, in blending the political and the aesthetic, interrogates and unsettles established power-relations and opens new possibilities through processes of becoming-other. Such engagement fertilises conditions for the activation of lines of becoming and the formation of an active collectivity. As such, in performing the minor, the world emerges as a rhizome of relations activating possibilities for what we might become.

In this contribution, poster-ing as an Artistic practice experiments with artful ways of doing poster and cartography in conference spaces and in educational and Artistic research and practice. In such performing cartography, Édouard Glissant's [17] poetics of relation are entangled through poster-ing as Artistic practice. At the heart of Glissant's philosophy is the proposition of Relation as an everlasting fluid process of interconnecting counter to linear and dualistic models of thought. As "the thought of that which relates" (p. 20), Relation values opacity and irreducible difference, dismantling the universalising and transparent tendency of "arrowlike nomadism and the Western project of knowledge" (p. 57) legitimising discovery, conquest, classification of the world, and justification of the subjugation and appropriation of the *Other* through positivist assumptions of scientific objectivity and the totalitarianism of the one. In deconstructing the totalitarianism of the one, Relation values multilingualism, the practice – thinking, writing, creating – with the awareness and in the presence of all the languages of the world. Such aspect of Relation was performed in not re-writing the name of *Μιχαήλ Κάσσιαλος*, the naïve artist, with Latin characters. Such aspect of Relation was performed in not translating the traditional profession of *καλλικάς* who, among others, would remove the old horseshoes, clean the donkey's hoofs, and attach the new horseshoes. I also chose *καλλικάς*, the word expressing such an occupation in a dialect of islandic Southeast Mediterranean instead of *πεταλωτής*,

the word expressing the profession in the major tradition of modern Greek language. Such performances of the *minor* entangled with the congress space's multilingual practices, along with the title and storying in English language render the diversity visible, audible, legible, felt and transform imperialist, colonial, and capitalist imaginaries highlighting rhizomatic connections generating an appreciation of difference. Such performing moves beyond the canonical tradition of the poster constructed through the positivist paradigm inviting the audience to discover-along the world and the truths presented. It proposes the Artistic practice of poster-ing as-&of-relation, asking how poster-ing - as a way of relating - becomes a conduit for relation where everyone and everything partake and share in the life of the world.

Such a process animates an opaque a-disciplinary space where pedagogy and curriculum inquiry; art and philosophy; objects, people, and heritages of life and death; deep-hanging-out and collaborative multispecies storying intra-act through unruly temporalities that maintain rootedness while surpassing the need for the central root. In thinking-with Glissant's philosophy, the notion of opacity is at the heart of the poetics of Relation. Opacity resists the Western's "project of knowledge" (p. 56) need for transparency that grasps and positions the *Other* in categories and protects the irreducible difference of the *Other* from melting pots and assimilation. As such, it resists the isolated autarkic plantation logics of bounded and established disciplines scrutinizing and distinguishing what does and what does not *belong* in their area. Instead, such a performing of a minor cartography animates an opaque relationality destabilizing fixed notions of 'belonging' to a discipline and their conventions, rituals, and constraints. The Artistic practice of poster-ing performing a minor cartography is an act of Relation and of making-kin with multiple others, actualizing lines of becoming and the formation of a collectivity.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN...

This contribution emerges from research-creation experimentations arising from the provocations "what does poster-ing do" and "how does poster-ing come to matter?" It inquires experimentations with poster-ing as part of my practice and extends other works where I experimented with digital rhizomatic poster-ing [18] and with poster-ing as a collaborative practice with children as part of various projects in Southeast Mediterranean. In blending the political and the aesthetic, it develops techniques instigating poster-ing as an Artistic practice that performs a minor cartography challenging human- and anthropo- centric ways of thinking and living. Such an Artistic practice, as an act of Relation and of making-kin with multiple others, is a transhistorical and transcorporeal remembering and (un)belonging. It is an invitation to deeply-hang-out, wallow in, open up, and imagine with what glows for you, intra-act and co-create by adding to its rhizomatic nature. It extends an invitation to make-with and imagine new ways of thinking, living, creating, and belonging beyond the human- and anthropo- centric that no longer serves the complexities of our predicament.

REFERENCES:

1. Barad K. Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: Re-turning, re-remembering, and facing the incalculable. *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*. 2017;(92):56–88.
2. Braidotti R. *Nomadic theory: The Portable*. New York: Columbia University Press; 2011.
3. Clifford J. *Anthropology and/as Travel*. *Etnofoor* [Internet]. 1996;9(2):5–15. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25757889>
4. Osgood J, Mohandas S. Grappling with the miseducation of Montessori: A feminist posthuman rereading of 'child' in early childhood contexts. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. 2022;0(Special Issue: Risking Erasure? Posthumanist Research Practices and Figurations of (the) Child):1–15.

5. Somerville M, Powell S. Researching with children of the Anthropocene: A new paradigm? In: Reyes V, Charteris J, Nye A, Mavropoulou S, editors. *Educational Research in the Age of Anthropocene*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global; 2019. p. 14–35.
6. Tsing A. *The Mushroom at the End of the World. On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press; 2015.
7. Casid HJ. *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; 2005.
8. Haraway D. A curious practice. *Angelaki*. 2015;20(2):5–14.
9. Haraway JD. *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham & London: Duke University Press; 2016.
10. Despret V. Sheep Do Have Opinions. In: Latour B, Weibel P, editors. *Making Things Public Atmospheres of Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; 2006. p. 360–8.
11. Manning E. *The Minor Gesture*. Durham, NC; 2016.
12. Haraway D. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*. 1988;14(3):579–99.
13. Mignolo W. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press; 2011.
14. Haraway D, Ishikawa N, Scott FG, Olwig K, Tsing LA, Bubandt N. Anthropologists are talking - about the Anthropocene. *Ethnos*. 2016;81(3):535–64.
15. Braidotti R. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, USA: Polity Press; 2006.
16. Deleuze G, Guattari F. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press; 1986.
17. Glissant É. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press; 2010.
18. Savva A. Reconceptualizing 'Reading for Pleasure': A New Materialist approach. In: British Educational Research Association (BERA) Conference - Digital Rhizomatic Poster-ing [Internet]. Online; 2021.

REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH MULTISPECIES WORLDS: A POST-QUALITATIVE PLUGGING-IN OF MORE-THAN- HUMAN CONCEPTS

Becky Bate

Aston University, UK

Abstract

Making use of postqualitative thinking and challenging the normative conceptualisation of what counts as research, and indeed data, I seek to think otherwise about assessment practices within Higher Education. This approach supports engaging multispecies concepts as machines with which to think with and includes some storytelling of/with multi-species companions, including my dogs, horses, the fields and the family (non-blood relations) of the Yard where the horses live. I begin by mapping assessment as a place of friction, continuing by overviewing how postqualitative and multispecies thinking can offer new perspectives on these stuck areas of education, opening up new lines of flight along which to travel. By thinking with multispecies encounters, the concept of attunement presents itself as a machine with which to plug into the data. The data itself emerges as a co-constituted event, presenting itself both alongside and entangled with the concept of attunement. The plugging-in is intended to make something new, specifically by refusing the confines of traditional methods. This is an approach that lies within an emerging scholarly field and has been generative in uncovering exploratory questions, hopes and emerging considerations rather than concrete findings.

Keywords: postqualitative, assessment, multispecies

ASSESSMENT AS A PLACE OF FRICTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

There is an imperative within HE, especially in UK Business Schools, to recognise that obsession with assessment, performativity, and 'misapplied commercialism' (1) is harming our young adults. Examination-related stress is linked to a range of mental health difficulties, further exacerbated when students enter university with a pre-existing condition of this nature (2). At particular risk of harm are students who do not meet the normative profile privileged by the institutions, and the university is a fragile space for students with disabilities. I intend to interrogate one specific area of Higher Education that presents as a vehicle of institutional violence and harm – *assessment*.

Although the promise of authentic assessment practices has begun to generate positive change in the last few decades (3), it is not alone in its relative newness to the field of assessment, and the dominance of examinations is a more recent development than one might think. Only for the last two hundred years has the traditional written exam as we know it has been in favour (4). In this relatively short space of time, we have become institutionalised to believe that exams are the gold standard of assessment. Universities are compliant in supporting the narrative that 'exams remain the fairest and best form of assessment' (5), yet we know that they create barriers for disadvantaged students, particularly those with disabilities (6).

We highlight in assessment boards the significance of gender, disability, ethnicity, and deprivation. We see first-hand that students from underrepresented groups perform less well, in terms of both progression and completion. Of course, milestones such as progression and completion cannot exist as realities in higher education without assessment, so the connection is important. Students from the most deprived areas of England (as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation) have a completion rate of 6 percentage points below that of their counterparts from the least deprived areas. Students from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, as well as mature and disabled students, also experience lower completion rates. Progression data tells a similar story (7).

Our assessment practices privilege certain student groups (8). Yet we continue with our contradictions, our evidencing of student progress limited to numbers and statistical averages - the rich detail and nuance that really *matters* conspicuously absent. As educators, we are responsible for resisting this performance in a world where 'value replaces values' (9) – we must strive to think differently about assessment practices.

Happily, there are glimmers of hope and evidence of minor shifts emerging. For example, pass/fail grading and its positive impact on wellbeing are being documented (10). These small agitations are tiny acts of rebellion, of *thinking* rather than reproducing – in line with Deleuzean thought, they operate on the outside and 'incite the new' (11). It is the new that we need.

POSTQUALITATIVE INQUIRY AND A REFUSAL OF METHOD

Universities find themselves in stuck places because of the way that they think, increasingly driven by a global competitive ethos (12), rewarding knowledge that meets 'quality' criteria. This work seeks to make use of postqualitative thinking – both to offer a new way of researching and also to think about assessment practices. A disruptive approach that causes us to think *anew*, with fresh tools to tread previously untrod ground. Postqualitative inquiry offers the potential to refuse and resist traditional modes of qualitative research, which, despite its initial intentions, has been unable to break away from 'entrenched positivism' and clings steadfastly to terms such as bias, objectivity and data (13).

What does the doing of postqualitative inquiry look and feel like? It is at this point that I find myself in a stuck place, and in seeking to become unstuck, I turn to writing.

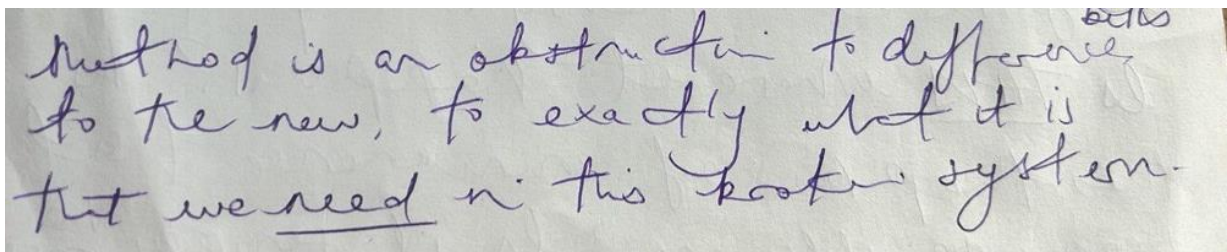


Figure 1: Writing to become unstuck

Postqualitative inquiry then supports refusing a method, considering methods to be reductive, limiting, mechanisms of capture, repetition, reproduction and doing the *same* thing. It creates a space of freedom from the 'epistemological imperatives of knowledge production and a conventional dependency of procedural method' (11).

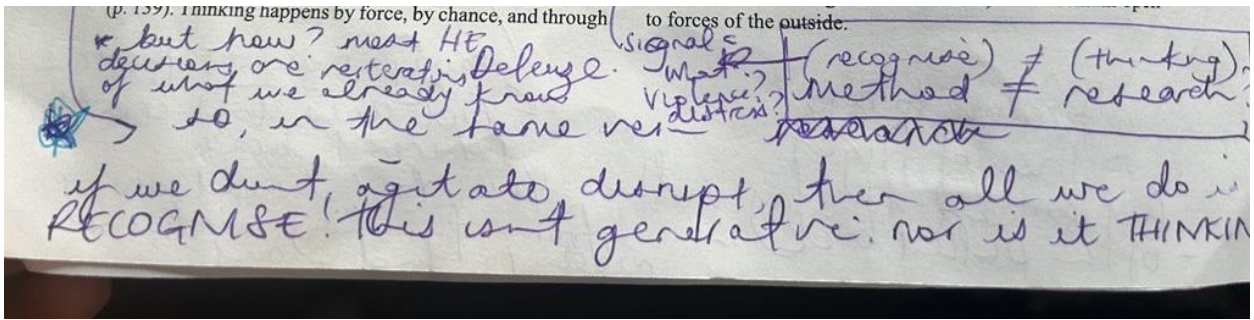


Figure 2: Writing to disconnect recognising and thinking

I made note of the (dis)connection here between recognising and thinking. Recognising cannot, by definition, be generative. A method is a process that seeks to recognise. We must resist the lure of trying to understand, of making sense of the world - let go of our humanist desire to *know* and instead begin to *think without method* and open the way for new possibilities to emerge (11).

Therefore, this work uses theory to *think through* the data (14) by 'plugging in' - using theory as a machine with which to read data in a different way. By plugging different theories into the same data set, they 'put data and theory to work in the threshold to create new analytical questions.'

Such an approach will likely lead to a different becoming to that of traditional qualitative research. Rather than pursuing answers, this work may produce further questions that 'emerge in the middle of plugging in' (14), giving rise to hopes, thoughts, layers of meaning, considerations, and entanglements previously not noticed or encountered. The intention is not to close down knowledge, to find an end or an answer, but to open up and *roam freely*, noticing along the way previously unthought thoughts.

WANDERING AT (WONDERING WITH) THE YARD

The Yard as our Home; 'our' in this context means not just myself and the girls, but the horses and the dogs too. Danny – our equine companion – daily and without fail, welcomes us to The Yard with a whinny. In return, Katy – his human – asks him how his day was. She uses her words, and he his. He answers her in the complex way horses do, a subtle dance of expressions, twitches, movement, and noises that Katy understands and responds to accordingly. Negotiating their horse->human conversations - an ongoing partnership, a knotting together of companion species (15).



Figure 3. Lucy and Danny.

The horses have taught us patience, kindness, sensitivity, empathy, courage, curiosity, compassion, humility. The girls have learned to listen and understand, both a cognitive and physical act – they watch, observe, and respond to embodied communications. *Ear twitches, tail swishes*. Sometimes, they just *feel* that their horse is worried or concerned, the air thick with undeterminable energy - something new exists in the atmosphere, co-created, occupying the spaces between, and generated by the human and non-human (16). The girls respond carefully, aware of their bodies, sounds and utterances – material-discursive intra-actions (17),

Thinking with multispecies entanglements offers us new tools with which to interrogate assessment, seek out other modes of existence (18), and foreground response-ability in enabling the other – the more-than-human – to respond (19).

IN SEARCH OF THE CONCEPT

Various possibilities emerged here - would I follow Haraway's companion species or perhaps the concept of kin? The potentials of Umwelt and its notion of surroundings felt appealing (20), as did James Bridle's (21) discussions of the soul. Eventually, the concept that I will use presents itself in moments spent with the horses, although I am not sure yet how I will name it.



Figure 4: Danny as leader (left) and follower (right)

These glorious ears belong to Danny. When we ride out, we tend to shift between leading and following. In the picture above on the left, Danny is leading us, finding his way. Although familiar with the territory, it is in a constant state of change – the leaves, animals, insects, traffic, and construction work – never twice the same. In the picture on the right, he is following, and our other companion, Sunny, leads instead.



Figure 5: Sunny as leader (left) and follower (right)

Another day, another opportunity to roam, another set of ears – Sunny this time. Exploring familiar territory, but always changing, becoming. Leader, then follower.

The girls and I pay close attention to the horses' ears. They offer insight into how our companions feel, think, and know, communicating emotions, fear, pain, and intentions. They can move them both together or individually, and each flick and movement of the ear offers an invitation for us to listen. Noticing is a doing that requires close, careful attention (22), an art that requires cultivating (19). Like most art forms, noticing allows us to see *beyond*.

Sometimes, their ears are pricked forward – attentive, alert, engaged, and receptive to their environment. It is their *response-ability in action* – as a leader, their bodies act accordingly. When they follow, they need not be alert to what is ahead. Instead, we notice their ears are flicked back, surveying the environment that is needed to protect us all, the edges of the fields and what lies behind our little herd. At first, I think of this as embodied knowledge – what is thought if not an embodied practice (23)? Perhaps intuition and a feeling of *just knowing* (24)? Eventually, I am drawn to attunement.

Attunement speaks of a connectedness between us, whether the 'us' is human, more-than-human, or otherwise. With the horses, attunement 'captures the sense of connection between them' (25) as well as their interaction with elements - or elements-to-be - in their environment. These connections and interactions are not static – they change continuously, so attunement is a constellation of responses to stimuli that are often unknowable to humans until they are embodied by the horse.

Brigstocke and Noorani (26) consider attunement to be a form of embodied relationality and offer us Lasher's (27) perspective: 'The primary mode of communication between human and animal is attunement, the mutual picking up of, and responding to, the subjective state of another creature'. The horses' bodies work together in harmony to co-create their surveillance of the environment.

Erin Manning highlights the potential for attunement to work alongside becoming, as an event, a minor gesture that changes the course of the future. Attunement as a composition is more like a choreography that is executed most effectively precisely when thinking is not employed (28). Attunement, then, could be considered an assemblage of the forces that come together to co-create this relationality – a bringing together of bodies, senses, environment, things.

THE DATA THAT PRESENTED ITSELF FOR THINKING WITH ATTUNEMENT

It is common in universities in the UK for faculty staff to support professional services teams with activities relating to assessment periods, including acting as Chief Invigilators. Acting in this capacity, in the Summer of 2023, I was present for an undergraduate examination. This data is a recollection of that event.

The classroom was laid out in a traditional format, a repeating pattern of a single desk and chair at which the students would handwrite their exams. The walls were white, and cracks trace the minor shifts in the building over the years. The windows were open due to the air temperature outside, yet there was still no air.

The bodies about to enter the room would only serve to make a warm room warmer still. At the front of the room is a lectern, PC and whiteboard, a tangle of wires – a nod to the learning activities that usually occur here. At the front of the room, feeling somewhat of an oddity, is a grand piano. It is covered, presumably for protection, and a glance underneath reveals that it is has a glossy black shell.

It will not make any music today.

The students file in, and we invigilators pace the room, checking identification cards and the legitimacy of calculators and other personal items. The students are quiet and solemn with stress, and I know them from my classes this past term.

They are different today – no smiles, no moments of excitement in shared understanding, no lightness to their being. The room feels heavy, and I feel the heaviness seep into my being too.

The exam begins, and the room is filled with the somehow deafening yet still quiet scratching of pens on paper, only punctuated by the snap of calculator buttons being pressed and the occasional movement of a chair. A student arrives late and is brusquely ushered to their desk. Someone coughs. There are men outside, talking loudly, unaware of what is occurring beyond the threshold of the exterior wall. Construction noise begins – it sounds like drilling, like one of those large machines that breaks up concrete. It stops, relief. It starts again. Some students are restless. A few strain their necks to see what the noise is, as if willing it to stop. It does stop, another moment of calm and the students settle back into their thoughts. Pens write. The noise starts again. This cycle continues for nearly two hours, the noise rupturing simultaneously the concrete, students' thoughts and the warm air of the classroom.

I considered some provocations that would open up my thinking shift to decentering the human rather than regress to meaning-making (29).

- How does attunement appear in this data? Where and in what moments?
- How has attunement co-created what happened in this exam room? Where and what has it influenced and co-constructed?
- What has been my role in creating attunement or creating a barrier to it?
- Has an absence of attunement been evident, and is that productive or unproductive? What does that look or feel like?
- What direction does thinking with attunement send us in? What does it highlight or bring to the surface?
- Who or what is tuned in and tuned out?

Attunement and objects

As I re-read (and re-feel?) this data again, the classroom objects seem to be acting with their own agency. The piano as an object that does not belong, the walls with cracks tell their slow story of movement, and the isolation desks feel violent somehow in their enforced solitude. As I am plugging in here, I am also making more connections, and data continues to emerge. I question whether this laptop, this document, is a space of becoming (30), and it works against the force of the classroom objects to restore attunement. Things produce affects (31), and so affect, and attunement seem to be entangled, with affective things both fracturing and co-creating attunement.

Attunement and disruptions

This connection feels too obvious, but again, I am presuming that thinking in relation to the obvious does somehow not feel important. Perhaps the obvious needs to be foregrounded again – is it overlooked precisely because we deem it too dominant already? Alternatively, perhaps I can interrogate my own agency here and my power to be a force that opposes disruptions such as construction noise. There is a reminder here, I think, to acknowledge the disconnect between intention and effect (14). The effect of the construction noise, the *affect* too, exceeds the intention of the builders, which presumably was limited to their task at hand. How often do we assure ourselves that our intention is valid without adequately considering the effect and affect that it might have? In writing assessments, I intend to determine students' engagement with the learning resources and make a

judgement as to their demonstrated competency. What effects flow from this intention? What or who is affected? Moreover, are these effects/affects always desirable?

Additionally, what of my power here, and what of the students? We all have a voice, and we could have raised concerns about the noise, but none of us did. Thinking with Foucault and power as a productive effect, I consider how my deployment of power was productive, but not in a way that was attuned to the students. Rather, my reluctance to challenge, to intervene, was *affective*. I wonder what the students thought when I recognised their discomfort and did not act.

Attunement and desire

These were final-year students, so it was their last assessment period before graduation. The stakes are high, as are tensions and nerves. Certainly, students tune into their assessments more keenly in this final opportunity to gain marks that will ultimately decide their degree classification. I see first-hand how desire propels students. I am not sure that these effects are in question – desire as propulsion both towards engagement with their studies and to less positive states of anxiety, worry and restlessness – all present in the data above. Desire creates and undoes attunement. It is present in student commitment to preparing for the event of assessment and also drives the stress levels that can undo this good work. However, where does desire come from? Moreover, does its source influence attunement to student learning and assessment?

Furthermore, who does that work for? I worry that it is a strange paradox that it works for the student least of all and instead serves the pride of parents and the league tables of universities. How could we seek to understand desire as a force? What are the motivations for students engaging with the course and, by default, the assessments? Where do these motivations come from? Moreover, what could this offer to us when rethinking assessment?

DOING THE NEXT THING

For me, this has been my first venture into using concepts to think with, and I am sure that there is much more work for me to do on thinking with and more deeply about the data. However, the plugging in has allowed me to work differently in this space and sitting with this discomfort, which I know will be generative.

On thinking with attunement, I expected to focus on the student experience of assessment. Whilst the postqualitative theory has supported me also to foreground the more-than-human – the horses, the walls, the piano, the room temperature, the construction noise – I am left with a feeling that for now, what glows and presents itself is still the human. This human, though, is me.

In each plugging-in, my contribution to attunement comes to the surface. By thinking with attunement and the other themes that emerged (objects, disruptions, desire), I am left reflecting on my contribution, agency, and responsibilities. Dall’Alba (2020) proposes the notion of responsive attunement as a *modus operandi* for educators, curricula and pedagogy. In her writing, she emphasises that responsive attunement goes beyond noticing towards developing ‘informed, care-filled responses’. (32)

For this educator, care-filled responses, teachings, practices and indeed, assessments feel like the next thing to do.

REFERENCES

1. Collini S. *Speaking of Universities*. London: Verso; 2017.

2. Jones E, Priestley M, Brewster L, Wilbraham SJ, Hughes G, Spanner L. Student wellbeing and assessment in higher education: the balancing act. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. 2021 Apr 3;46(3):438–50.
3. McArthur J. Rethinking authentic assessment: work, well-being, and society. *High Educ*. 2023 Jan 1;85(1):85–101.
4. Blum SD, Kohn A. *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press; 2020. (Teaching and Learning in Higher Education).
5. Department for Education. Education Secretary congratulates students on A level results day [Internet]. Press release; 2021 [cited 2022 Jan 9]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-congratulates-students-on-a-level-results-day>
6. Tai J, Mahoney P, Ajjawi R, Bearman M, Dargusch J, Dracup M, et al. How are examinations inclusive for students with disabilities in higher education? A sociomaterial analysis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. 2023 Apr 3;48(3):390–402.
7. Office for Students. A statistical overview of higher education in England - Office for Students [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2024 Feb 1]. Available from: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>
8. Stommel J. Jesse Stommel. 2018 [cited 2024 Feb 1]. How to Ungrade. Available from: <https://www.jessestommel.com/how-to-ungrade/>
9. Ball SJ. The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *J EDUC POLICY*. 2003;18(2):215–28.
10. Bloodgood RA, Short JG, Jackson JM, Martindale JR. A Change to Pass/Fail Grading in the First Two Years at One Medical School Results in Improved Psychological Well-Being. *Academic Medicine*. 2009 May;84(5):655.
11. Jackson AY. Thinking Without Method. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 2017 Nov;23(9):666–74.
12. Taylor CA. Knowledge Matters. In: *Navigating the Postqualitative, New Materialist and Critical Posthumanist Terrain Across Disciplines: An Introductory Guide*. Milton: Taylor and Francis; 2020. (Postqualitative, New Materialist and Critical Posthumanist Research).
13. Pierre ES. A Brief and Personal History of Post Qualitative Research: Toward “Post Inquiry”. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* [Internet]. 2014 Dec 5 [cited 2024 Feb 1];30(2). Available from: <https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/521>
14. Jackson AY, Mazzei LA. Plugging One Text Into Another: Thinking With Theory in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative inquiry*. 2013;19(4):261–71.
15. Haraway D. *When species meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; 2008. (Posthumanities ; 3).
16. Lucie S. Atmosphere and Intra-action: Feeling entangled agencies in theatre spaces. *Performance Research*. 2020 Jul 3;25(5):17–23.
17. Gravett K, Taylor CA, Fairchild N. Pedagogies of mattering: re-conceptualising relational pedagogies in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*. 2021 Oct 21;1–16.
18. Mcphie J, Clarke DAG. Post-qualitative inquiry in outdoor studies: a radical (non-)methodology. In *Routledge, Taylor & Francis*; 2019.
19. Murriss K. *A Glossary for Doing Postqualitative, New Materialist and Critical Posthumanist Research Across Disciplines* [Internet]. 1st ed. London: Routledge; 2021 [cited 2024 Feb 1]. Available from: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781003041153>

20. Schroer SA. Jakob von Uexküll: The Concept of *Umwelt* and its Potentials for an Anthropology Beyond the Human. *Ethnos*. 2021 Jan 1;86(1):132–52.
21. Bridle J. *Ways of being : animals, plants, machines : the search for planetary intelligence*. UK: Penguin Books; 2023.
22. Dooren TV. *The Wake of Crows: Living and Dying in Shared Worlds* [Internet]. Columbia University Press; 2019 [cited 2024 Feb 1]. Available from: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7312/van-18282/html>
23. Seigworth GJ, Gregg M. An Inventory of Shimmers. In: *An Inventory of Shimmers* [Internet]. Duke University Press; 2010 [cited 2024 Feb 1]. p. 1–26. Available from: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9780822393047-002/html>
24. Barrett MJ, Harmin M, Maracle B, Patterson M, Thomson C, Flowers M, et al. Shifting relations with the more-than-human: six threshold concepts for transformative sustainability learning. *Environmental Education Research*. 2017 Jan 2;23(1):131–43.
25. Charalambous E, Djebbara Z. On natural attunement: Shared rhythms between the brain and the environment. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*. 2023 Dec 1;155:105438.
26. Brigstocke J, Noorani T. Posthuman Attunements: Aesthetics, Authority and the Arts of Creative Listening. *GeoHumanities*. 2016 Jan 2;2(1):1–7.
27. Lasher M. A Relational Approach to the Human-Animal Bond. *Anthrozoös*. 1998 Sep;11(3):130–3.
28. Manning E. *The minor gesture*. Durham: Duke University Press; 2016. 1 p. (Thought in the act).
29. Taylor C, Hughes C, Mizuta H. *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK; 2016.
30. Koro-Ljungberg M, Löytönen T, Tesar M. Disrupting data in qualitative inquiry : entanglements with the post-critical and post-anthropocentric. New York: Peter Lang; 2017. (Post-anthropocentric inquiry, Vol. 1).
31. Skreland LL, Steen-Johnsen T. The lamination machine and laminating as thing-power in early childhood pedagogical practice. *Children's Geographies*. 2021 Aug 11;1–13.
32. Dall'Alba G. 2. Toward a Pedagogy of Responsive Attunement for Higher Education. 2020 Jan 1;2(2):21–43.

THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE ETHNIC PERSON: A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HOW RACE AND ETHNICITY ARE CONSTRUCTED IN THE LITERATURE OF DIGITAL PSYCHOTHERAPIES FOR DEPRESSION

Edgar Rodríguez-Dorans¹, Joanna Omylinska-Thurston², Shaun Liverpool³,

Laura Viliardos², Vicky Karkou³

¹University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom), ²University of Salford (United Kingdom), ³Edge Hill University (United Kingdom)

Abstract

Race and ethnicity constitute demographic data often collected in mental health research. However, their conceptualisation is unclear and their categorisation inconsistent, which affects how they are reported, analysed, and evaluated against research objectives. Using data from a systematic review of Digital Psychotherapies for Adults Experiencing Depressive Symptoms, this study interrogates how race and ethnicity data are conceptualised, collected, and used in designing, delivering, and evaluating digital interventions. Considering the relevance of race and ethnicity in health disparities, the uneven prevalence of depression and comorbid psychiatric disorders across ethnic groups, and ongoing debates that question the extent to which existing treatments are effective for diverse ethnic populations, this study seeks to interrogate how researchers on mental health engage with current debates on race and ethnicity and whether these inform their digital interventions for depression. Using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, the current paper focuses on the analysis of four out of ten critical articles reporting on digital psychotherapies for depression to explore the discourses researchers draw on to conceptualise race and ethnicity and the implications and functions of such constructions. The analysis shows a diverse and complex spectrum of racial and ethnic conceptualisation. While, altogether, studies reported a sophisticated range of ethnic classifications, some researchers did not collect ethnic information, others ascribed to essentialist views, and others drew on geopolitical descriptors such as nationality. These varied approaches draw attention to how researchers – implicitly or explicitly – participate in co-creating discourses around race and ethnicity. Finally, this study poses the question of how and to what extent researchers in mental health consider ethnic data to be significant for the experience of depression in individuals using digital psychotherapies.

Keywords: race, ethnicity, discourse analysis, digital psychotherapies, depression

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THIS STUDY

Research has demonstrated the relevance of race and ethnicity in health disparities, as they have been documented as having an intricate relationship with the likelihood of experiencing depression (1,2,3), and there is a growing body of research interrogating the extent to which current interventions for depression are effective for diverse ethnic populations (2). These findings make collecting and using race and ethnicity data to generate and evaluate clinical interventions essential. Although race and

ethnicity data is often collected in mental health research, their conceptualisation is unclear and their categorisation inconsistent, which affects how they are reported, analysed, and evaluated against research objectives. The current paper addresses the preliminary workings of a research team aiming to explore how race and ethnicity are conceptualised in the literature on the treatment of depression using digital psychotherapeutic interventions for adults. This paper, presented at the European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry 2024, which took place in Helsinki, emerges from a systematic review of Digital Psychotherapies for Adults Experiencing Depressive Symptoms (4) that aimed to explore (a) what the most common types of digital psychotherapeutic interventions for adults with depression are, (b) helpful and unhelpful aspects of such psychotherapeutic interventions, and (c) their effectiveness. A multidisciplinary and multi-institutional team worked on this systematic review between 2021 and 2024 to produce it.

The systematic review included 126 studies and used a mixed-methods approach to tackle these questions. Part of the quantitative analysis involved the review of demographic information, including age, gender, race and ethnicity, the setting where the study took place, and the clinical characteristics in terms of the severity of depression. Data was gathered in terms of general characteristics of the studies and population. An overview of the quantitative analysis revealed the following findings: the most common years of publication were 2018 and 2020. The studies were mostly conducted in the USA (38 studies) and the UK (17 studies). The place of recruitment involved healthcare settings (47 instances) and online methods (37 studies). The overall sample used for the systematic review size included 50,209 participants, from which 87.3% of studies reported age, with 37 years being the mean age. In terms of gender data, the sample consisted of 72.3% females and 23.5% males, with no information on non-binary and gender-expansive people. 49.2% of studies reported race and ethnicity, including 47.2% Hispanic and 19.3% White people; the rest did not report race and ethnicity data. In terms of clinical characteristics, the reviewed research included participants with depression and anxiety (29 studies) as well as mild to moderate (29 studies) and moderate to severe depression (24 studies).

The quantitative analysis of the demographic data in the systematic review was the entry point for a qualitative exploration of how the collected data is used and how it informs digital interventions for depression. As we engaged in the analysis of demographic data, we started to notice that the data on race and ethnicity was remarkably heterogeneous across the studies; some studies did not report whether they collected race and ethnicity data at all, while others collected this information from their participants, but reported it in different ways. These omissions and different ways of engaging with race and ethnicity data are salient in a context where inequalities in health have been observable among ethnically diverse groups (1), and efforts have been made to adapt treatments for depression for different cultural groups (5,6). The observation of these differences in how data was collected, used, and reported made us feel curious about how the concepts of race and ethnicity were understood and conceptualised by the researchers involved in these studies. Thus, for the present paper, we used data from the systematic review of Digital Psychotherapies for Adults Experiencing Depressive Symptoms to interrogate: How are race and ethnicity data conceptualised, collected, and used in designing, delivering, and evaluating digital interventions for depression?

Problematising how race and ethnicity are used and collected in research

This issue of inconsistency in collecting race and ethnicity data in research is not new. A study by Morning (7) involving a global data set by the United Nations Statistical Division on ethnic enumeration found that, while 63% of the included national censuses considered a form of ethnic cataloguing, their data collection formats varied as they followed regional systems. Morning asserts that this heterogeneous landscape obscures how ethnicity is conceptualised. For example, data is sometimes reported as 'race' and sometimes as 'nationality'. Still, their research concludes that despite the variety of approaches, a basic taxonomy of ethnic classification can be elucidated.

In our engagement with the literature of the systematic review, we observed this diverse approach to categorising ethnic data, too. Given our professional backgrounds, we did not see these diverse categorisations as an issue, as different disciplines have different requirements and uses of particular concepts. However, we were interested in comprehending how researchers understood these terms in their specific studies and what the implications of such understandings are.

Rationale for the current study

While the findings discussed above yielded a comprehensive overview of existing literature on digital psychotherapies, a discourse analysis allows for a more nuanced exploration of how language is used to construct meaning of race and ethnicity within that literature. Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) was identified as a suitable methodological approach to explore how researchers understand, collect, and use race and ethnicity data, given that this approach allows for a close analysis of the ideas underpinning the concepts used by researchers in their research designs and the writing of the articles. Building on the review, selecting a sample of studies was discussed as an opportunity for further critical exploration. This approach had several strengths, including the availability of a comprehensive search and synthesis of a large body of evidence. Access to a robust, previously screened sample of literature since searching, screening, selection, extraction, and quality appraisal of the reviewed literature was also conducted by at least two independent reviewers, which helped to take a critical approach to the review. The review also allowed the team to identify significant gaps and priorities in the existing body of evidence in relation to how race and ethnicity were conceptualised and reported. Subsequently, the current study can be viewed as an efficient resource allocation which maximises the impact of research efforts and contributes to the advancement of knowledge in a resource-efficient way. By analysing the discourses present in the reviewed studies, we can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying ideologies, power dynamics, and social constructions related to digital innovations as a therapeutic intervention.

METHODOLOGY

From the sample of articles included in the systematic review (2), we selected ten articles to analyse under the principles of the FDA. The articles were chosen because they represent diverse ethnic groups that follow different categorisations depending on the context in which the studies were conducted, see Table 1.

Selected articles to analyse under FDA principles

Study no.	Location of the study	Ethnic groups reported in the study
(9)	New Zealand	European New Zealanders, Māori, and Other.
(10)	USA	African Americans and White participants.
(11)	UK	White British, European, Mixed Race, Asian, Black, American, and Other.
(12)	Mexico	Mexicans and Other.
(13)	USA	White, Black, Hispanic, and Other or multiracial.
(14)	Canada	First Nations, Inuk, Métis, Asian, African, Caribbean, or Black, White, and Other.

(15)	England	White participants were reported and comprised the majority of the sample. The ethnicity of the rest of the participants was not reported.
(16)	USA	American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, White, Other, Hispanic or Latino.
(17)	USA	White, Asian, and a number of participants preferred not to say.
(18)	USA	White non-Hispanic participants were reported and comprised the majority of the sample. The ethnicity of the rest of the participants was not reported.

Table 1. Overview of the articles selected for review under FDA principles.

Considering that the FDA focuses on examining the social, psychological, and physical effects of discourse, the availability of discourses within a culture, and the implications of such positioning for subjectivity and social practice (8, p.887), this methodological approach was selected as it would allow us to identify the ideas underpinning discourses of health in connection with race and ethnicity.

Following Ussher and Perz's (8) guidelines for the FDA, the team read the selected articles for in-depth analysis centring on the discourses underpinning the approach to race and ethnicity in these texts. In particular, we were interested in understanding the function of constructing race and ethnicity, as well as the ethnic person, in certain ways within the studies. We discussed the implications of specific subject positions offered by the text and how power relations were influenced by these constructions (e.g. ethnicity as data to be collected, but it is not clear how it is used in the study). We discussed the consequences of taking up or resisting subject positions and how discourse either opened up or closed down opportunities for action (e.g. if studies did not record demographic information regarding race and ethnicity, it is not possible to explore how different groups and individuals experience and are affected by mental health issues in different ways).

The team also sought to explore whether hegemonic discourses were present in the reviewed studies (e.g. what discourses are in place in studies that only report the data for majoritarian groups?) and how these discourses play a role in shaping the research and clinical interventions that are produced (e.g. are there clinical implications for the intervention if a particular ethnic group of participants is not reported?). These discussions took place between the research team on a monthly online meeting. Each session had one article to be reviewed based on the analytic questions. A team member took notes of the discussion, which would then be integrated into the analysis of preliminary findings.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The presentation of our work in progress at ECQI 2024 showcased our preliminary analysis and brought up some important questions. Altogether, the studies included in the FDA analysis of how race and ethnicity data are conceptualised, collected, and used in designing, delivering, and evaluating digital interventions for depression reported 30 ethnic groups. Despite the diversity of ethnicities, which would suggest a nuanced understanding of these concepts, the review of individual papers shows that hegemonic views of race and ethnicity are still widely used in which interventions are studied in white populations (18, 15). Other papers show a binary distinction in ethnic information by focusing only on people of African American and White descent (10). Furthermore, although some of the studies recorded race and ethnicity data in terms of observable physical characteristics such as skin colour, the impact of depression and the effectiveness of the interventions to treat it across different ethnic groups was not discussed.

The reviewed literature shows contradictory discourses of how, on the one hand, race and ethnicity matter in how depression is experienced and treated. On the other hand, it is unclear how to implement this information in the interventions. Finer ethnic distinctions beyond the Black/White binary are offered by some studies (e.g. they provide further distinctions such as African, African American, and African Canadian), which implies that geopolitical context may impact depression in what otherwise would be seemingly homogenous racial groups (if nationality is considered as a monolithic category). Furthermore, data collection on Indigenous groups (e.g. native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Māori, Aboriginal), as considered by some specific studies (16), calls for a finer distinction of ancestry, culture, and geographical context as these aspects shape depression.

The ethnic individual appears when the authors seek to distinguish and contrast participants with a defined 'Other' such as a global population. The reviewed articles tend to use the majoritarian group in the sample as the referent for the analysis. For example, in the study by Lara and collaborators (12), the ethnicity of Mexican individuals becomes prominent when a global population is mentioned. As described in the article, a majority of participants were reported as Mexican, while a minority were an unidentified 'Other' (12, p.402). A similar distinction occurs when the authors contrast their sample with the population from the USA. The ethnic individual seems to be conceptualised through points of difference such as language, geography, and politics. They write: 'Although online interventions in Spanish developed in the United States for mental health problems have been well received among Spanish-speaking Latinos in the United States and in other populations, in Latin America, there is as yet no published research on Web-based interventions designed in the region that consider populations with a wide range in educational and economic levels.' (12, p.400). This quotation suggests that the researchers recognise that the interventions for depression they studied needed to consider the ethnicity of individuals as well as other sociodemographic data. The highlighted need for regional intervention in Latin America seems to suggest that cultural and geopolitical differences have a relationship with how depression is experienced and, thus, how it should be treated. However, an important question remains regarding the level of detail to which these cultural and geopolitical differences should be considered, given that the Latin American population comprises a wide range of nationalities and cultures and the Mexican population itself is ethnically diverse.

In the article by Hatcher and collaborators (9), we observed a clear distinction in how ethnic data was recorded, with three main categorisations: Māori, European New Zealander, and Other. While the ethnic groups are registered in a table of baseline data, within the text itself, it is difficult to identify whether the ethnicity of the participants was analysed in relation to the intervention and, if so, how. Ethnicity in the text tended to be subtly mentioned as a demographic identifier, but it was not engaged throughout the study. The article does not provide specific information about the main findings regarding Māori participants. An important aspect of the study is that the European New Zealander participants outnumbered the Māori participants, making us question whether the Māori participants were considered a core part of the study and whether there could have been a more active, deliberate process to involve this population. Further exploring the recruitment website for this study, it showcases a Māori approach to depression, which suggests there is an awareness and engagement with Indigenous ways of understanding mental health relevant to the context of the study. Since one of the exclusion criteria for this study was the inability to read and write in English, this poses a barrier to participation, further signaling aspects of power in which potential participants from diverse cultures would have to learn English to access the intervention.

DISCUSSION

Our analysis has shown that the design of the interventions for mental health obscure 'the personal' qualities of the individuals/service users. The practices we identified range from ignoring race and ethnicity altogether, collecting this type of demographic data without discussing their implications, to studies that do recognise the relationship between depression and ethnic diversity. However, none of the reviewed studies articulated how to respond to ethnic differences.

The digital subject erases the ethnic subject. When reviewing the articles, we observed that the data collection of demographic information was not connected with the development of the intervention, or at least, it was not articulated in the article. For instance, when the authors in the study by Lara and collaborators (9) discuss the mental health application for depression, the subject is defined as a 'user', and the demographic characteristics such as gender, age, race and ethnicity are lost. This poses the question of how the digital subject is conceived, as they are disposed of their demographic characteristics and are given a monolithic identity. Similarly, Segal and collaborators (16) suggest that the digital intervention being evaluated is helpful for the majority race in the location where the study took place. However, they acknowledge that results cannot be generalised. Therefore, the intervention may or may not be helpful for minoritised groups. It could be argued that when the researchers pay attention to the digital subject/user, the ethnic subject becomes irrelevant.

We observed a certain awareness of the need to consider ethnicity in mental health research. Still, the collected data on race and ethnicity is not used in the analysis or design of the interventions. Although demographic data is gathered, the digital intervention is to be used indistinctively by users of all ethnicities. At the time of presenting this work in progress at ECQI 2024, the research team continues with the FDA of the selected articles.

CONCLUSIONS

The studies we have reviewed so far are concerned with an intervention for treating depression that was used in a particular region with a specific population. It could be expected that the intervention and the paper would speak more clearly about the specific population. However, the writing often described what could be anywhere in the world. The potential for something that feels local and specific to the studies (e.g. the Northern and Southern islands in the New Zealand context or the rich ethnic diversity within the Mexican population) is lost when writing for an academic global audience. We wondered whether the revised studies had a more nuanced understanding of race and ethnicity, but this was not conveyed in the final articles published in academic journals.

We will continue exploring whether there are any counter-discourses in the reviewed articles. A counter-discourse can challenge hegemonic conceptualisations based on dominant understandings of a particular topic. Since the term 'depression' itself has Westernised connotations, by recording demographic information on race and ethnicity, researchers are already engaging in a data collection practice that suggests different ethnic groups might have various ways of understanding depression. This perspective emphasises that collecting demographic data on race and ethnicity is not only recommended but perhaps necessary. Such awareness can create counter-discourses that help promote more inclusive practices, cultural awareness, and more tailored treatment interventions.

REFERENCES

- (1) Smedley and Smedley, B. D. Race as Biology Is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem Is Real: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race. *The American Psychologist*, 2005; Volume 60(1), 16–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.1.16>
- (2) Le, HN, Boyd, R, Lara, MA. "Treatment of Depressive Disorders and Comorbidity in Ethnic Minority Groups." In Richards, S. and O'Hara, MW. (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Depression and Comorbidity*. United States: Oxford University Press; 2014.
- (3) Lee, Hyunjung, and Gopal K. Singh. "Monthly Trends in Self-Reported Health Status and Depression by Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status during the COVID-19 Pandemic, United States, April 2020 – May 2021." *Annals of Epidemiology* 63 (2021): 52–62.
- (4) Omylinska-Thurston, J., Aithal, S., Liverpool, S., Clark, R., Moula, Z., Wood, J., Viliardos, L., Rodriguez-Dorans, E., Farish-Edwards, F., Parsons, A., Eisenstadt, M., Bull, M., DubrowMarshall, L., Thurston, S.,

Karkou, V. Digital Psychotherapies for Adults Experiencing Depressive Symptoms: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis [Internet] JMIR Preprints. 2023. [cited 2024 February 29] Available from: <https://preprints.jmir.org/preprint/55500>

- (5) Husain, A. & Hodge, D. R. Islamically modified cognitive behavioral therapy: Enhancing outcomes by increasing the cultural congruence of cognitive behavioral therapy self-statements. *International Social Work*, 2016; 59(3), 393–405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872816629193>
- (6) Bernal, G., Jimenez-Chafey, M. I., & Domenech Rodríguez, M. M. Cultural adaptation of treatments: A resource for considering culture in evidence-based practice. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. 2009; 40, 361–368.
- (7) Morning, A. Ethnic Classification in Global Perspective: A Cross-National Survey of the 2000 Census Round. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 2008; 27(2), 239–272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11113-007-9062-5>
- (8) Ussher, J.M. and Perz, J. Critical Discourse/Discourse Analysis. In Liamputtong, P (ed.) *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*. Springer, 2019; pp.881-896.
- (9) Hatcher, S., Whittaker, R., Patton, M., Miles, W. S., Ralph, N., Kercher, K., & Sharon, C. Web-based Therapy Plus Support by a Coach in Depressed Patients Referred to Secondary Mental Health Care: Randomized Controlled Trial. *JMIR Mental Health*, 2018; 5(1), e5–e5. <https://doi.org/10.2196/mental.8510>
- (10) Jonassaint, Gibbs, P., Belnap, B. H., Karp, J. F., Abebe, K. Z., & Rollman, B. L. Engagement and outcomes for a computerised cognitive-behavioural therapy intervention for anxiety and depression in African Americans. *BJPsych Open*, 2017; 3(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjpo.bp.116.003657>
- (11) Kingston, Becker, L., Woeginger, J., & Ellett, L. A randomised trial comparing a brief online delivery of mindfulness-plus-values versus values only for symptoms of depression: Does baseline severity matter? *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 2020; 276, 936–944. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.07.087>
- (12) Lara, Tiburcio, M., Abrego, A. A., & Sanchez-Solis, A. A four-year experience with a Web-based self-help intervention for depressive symptoms in Mexico. *Revista panamericana de salud pública*, 2014; 35(5), 399–.
- (13) Levesque, Van Marter, D. F., Schneider, R. J., Bauer, M. R., Goldberg, D. N., Prochaska, J. O., & Prochaska, J. M. Randomized Trial of a Computer-Tailored Intervention for Patients with Depression. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 2011; 26(2), 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.4278/ajhp.090123-QUAN-27>
- (14) MacLean, Corsi, D. J., Litchfield, S., Kucharski, J., Genise, K., Selaman, Z., Testa, V., & Hatcher, S. Coach-Facilitated Web-Based Therapy Compared With Information About Web-Based Resources in Patients Referred to Secondary Mental Health Care for Depression: Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 2020; 22(6), e15001–e15001. <https://doi.org/10.2196/15001>
- (15) Richards, Enrique, A., Eilert, N., Franklin, M., Palacios, J., Duffy, D., Earley, C., Chapman, J., Jell, G., Sollesse, S., & Timulak, L. A pragmatic randomized waitlist-controlled effectiveness and cost-effectiveness trial of digital interventions for depression and anxiety. *NPJ Digital Medicine*, 2020; 3(1), 85–85. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41746-020-0293-8>
- (16) Segal, Dimidjian, S., Beck, A., Boggs, J. M., Vanderkruik, R., Metcalf, C. A., Gallop, R., Felder, J. N., & Levy, J. Outcomes of Online Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Patients With Residual Depressive Symptoms: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Psychiatry (Chicago, Ill.)*, 2020; 77(6), 563–573. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.4693>

- (17) Silva Almodovar, Surve, S., Axon, D. R., Cooper, D., & Nahata, M. C. Self-Directed Engagement with a Mobile App (Sinaspriite) and Its Effects on Confidence in Coping Skills, Depression, and Anxiety: Retrospective Longitudinal Study. *JMIR mHealth and uHealth*, 2018; 6(3), e64–e64. <https://doi.org/10.2196/mhealth.9612>
- (18) Whiteside, Richards, J., Steinfeld, B., Simon, G., Caka, S., Tachibana, C., Stuckey, S., & Ludman, E. Online cognitive behavioral therapy for depressed primary care patients: a pilot feasibility project. *Permanente Journal*, 2014; 18(2), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.7812/TPP/13-155>

TURNING VICTIMHOOD INTO AGENCY THROUGH THE POWER OF STORIES: HOW SURVIVORS MAKE SENSE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Victoria Wozniak-Cole, Stephan Parmentier, Jean-Marc Hausman

KU Leuven (Belgium)

Abstract

In the aftermath of human trafficking, survivors try to make sense of what has happened to them. In this article, we combine feminist standpoint theory with narrative victimology to argue for a term we coin "situated storytelling". We then ask ourselves how "situated storytelling" can contribute to the sense-making of survivors of human trafficking experiences. We will answer this question based on a narrative thematic analysis of five interviews with human trafficking survivors. We will discuss our threefold findings: 1) the embodied self: physical coping strategies during and after trafficking and physical reactions surrounding interactions with the authorities; 2) the narrative self: how survivors made sense of their experiences, how they look back at it, and the impact it had on them, including their views on justice and their job as experienced workers, and 3) the autonomous self: their relationship with their family and community, and peers, and mental health professionals. Until today, the idea of the vulnerable, passive, and weak victim prevails. This article will try to counter this, which can influence practice, policy, and future research. This article will highlight how survivors individually can turn this perceived vulnerability into agency through the power of storytelling. This can potentially restore their embodied, narrative, and autonomous selves.

Keywords: survivors, human trafficking, vulnerability, stories

INTRODUCTION

Maya Angelou used to say that there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story. Also, in the aftermath of human trafficking, people will try to make sense of their experiences and may share their stories with others. Stories have a beginning, a middle, and an ending. However, in the face of adversity, people oftentimes lose, distance, or break this temporal connection. Take the example of victimization, which can be described as an event that disrupts the continuity of the life story and diminishes the life story as a meaningful whole (5). It thus reduces the extent to which one experiences being the author of one's own life (5). In the field of narrative victimology, this is called narrative rupture, which refers to how one sees the continuity between victimization, the past, and the future (5).

Furthermore, narrative victimology suggests time as an element of the experience itself. Living through the event and its aftermath also alters oneself, even if full recovery is reached (5). This ties in with narrative foreclosure, which refers to the fact that humans usually are past, present, and future at once. During victimization, as Levi puts it: "we were like animals, confined to the present moment" (4).

While narrative victimology focuses on the consequences of trauma on the self, feminist standpoint theory recognizes the unique perspectives survivors have gained. Therefore, this article draws on feminist standpoint theory to approach storytelling as an epistemic approach to make sense of situated experiences. Standpoint theory recognizes that knowledge is generated through the experience of discriminated communities. It suggests that women and other marginalized groups have acquired (hidden) forms of knowledge by experiencing oppression throughout history. By translating this knowledge into practice, a more equal and inclusive society could potentially be achieved (2). Examples may be translating this knowledge into policy documents and new research projects.

Haraway's notion of 'situated knowledge' especially guided our thinking (3). Finding its origins within the broader field of feminist standpoint theory, situated knowledge entails that knowledge is embedded in the experience of a knowing person. The concept critiques the never-ending quest for objective, universal knowledge. Situated knowledge emphasizes that the knowing subject and the object that is known can be treated separately but are in constant interaction with the unique and dynamic context: "Situated knowledges are immanent to an event, account for intersectional markers such as race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, etc., and relational" (7). It highlights that various individuals and groups can have different understandings and unique insights based on their particular experiences and societal positions. It emphasizes the importance of considering diverse perspectives and contexts contributing to one's understanding of the world (8). In doing so, the notion of situated knowledge challenges dominant epistemic approaches that search for a single objective truth (3). We combine Haraway's notion of situated knowledge with a narrative psychology perspective to gain profound insight into the potential value of what we call 'situated storytelling.'

Brison, a survivor of sexual violence, describes the consequences of her victimization as a threefold attack on herself: the embodied self, the narrative self, and the autonomous self. In this article, survivors' first-hand perspectives will be used to discuss their embodied, narrative, and autonomous selves. (1) The embodied self refers to the body we have (which we cannot control) and the body we are (which we can control) and how when someone else takes full control over the body, such as during victimization, it leaves the body vulnerable and helpless. (2) The narrative self refers to how victimization can be described as an event that disrupts the continuity of the life story and diminishes the life story as a meaningful whole. Constructing self-narratives requires more than just having the words to tell our stories. It also necessitates an audience that is both willing and able to listen and comprehend our words as we intend them (1). The autonomous self refers to how others create and sustain the self, but that can also be destroyed by them (1).

Brison relies heavily on scholarly work in the field of trauma psychology, in which trauma is faced with a fight, flight, freeze, or, more recently, a low reaction. For a trauma survivor to undergo recovery, they need to regain control over themselves, exercise control over their environment within reasonable bounds, and reestablish connections with humanity. She highlights that the descriptions of the embodied self, the narrative self, and the autonomous self can coexist harmoniously, each emphasizing distinct facets of the self. Additionally, she contends that delving into trauma offers further substantiation for the perspective that each of these facets of the self is inherently relational.

This article will argue that victimhood can be turned into agency through the power of stories by relying on three scholarly frameworks. Firstly, narrative victimology argues for the potential of narrating life stories in the aftermath of victimization. Secondly, in line with feminist standpoint theory, survivors have unique insights. Thirdly, in the field of trauma psychology, scholars argue for the reaction of flow, which is contrary to negative responses towards trauma.

This article will contribute to filling the gap in narrative victimology, which has argued that more attention is needed on how victimization experience is embedded in people's life stories to learn more about the self (5). Also, this article will fill the gap in the field of trauma psychology in the need for qualitative research to describe the state of "flow". This article will do so by using a narrative approach to analyze how victimization experiences are embedded in the life story, its impact on the self, and its

empowering potential in line with feminist standpoint theory. This leads us to our research question: How do the narratives of human trafficking survivors contribute to the sense-making- process within their life story?

The next section will elaborate on the methodology used and participant information. Then, we will discuss our threefold findings: the embodied, narrative, and autonomous self. In the end, in the discussion and conclusion section, we will explain the implications of this study for practice, policy, and future research.

METHODOLOGY

The five survivors were Dutch women trafficked in the Netherlands when they were between 12 and 19 years old. They all safely resided in the Netherlands at the time of their interviews, and their ages ranged from 30 to 44 years old. The period of trafficking for sexual exploitation ranged from several months to more than five years. Their educational level ranged from Secondary Vocational Education and Training to obtaining a diploma from the University of Applied Sciences. Their disciplinary background ranged from animal care to spiritual care to social pedagogical work. All survivors were either part-time or full-time experience workers (In Dutch: Ervaringsdeskundige) either for an organization or working for themselves. These details can be found in (Table 1. Participants information). Experience workers of human trafficking are survivors of human trafficking who now use their experience to support current victims or survivors of human trafficking, give workshops, and work together with professionals to raise awareness and prevent human trafficking.

The study entailed face-to-face, in-depth interviews; one interview was conducted online through video conferencing. The interviews were conducted between May and October 2022. The study was approved by SMEC (Social and Societal Ethics Committee at KU Leuven). All interviews were performed following the World Health Organization's ethical and safety recommendations for interviewing trafficked women (Zimmerman & Watts, 2003). Recruitment consisted of emailing, social media, networking, and snowball sampling method. Demographic data were obtained through a short survey asking for gender, age, nationality, educational level, disciplinary background, and current job position and organization. The type and duration of trafficking they experienced were not asked in this survey but assigned post hoc based on extensive information gathered during the interviews. Since they are survivors of domestic sexual exploitation and experience workers, they were more accessible to reach. In addition, the survivors are nationals of the country they were exploited in; thus, contrary to non-national survivors of trafficking for sexual exploitation, they faced no risk of being sent back to their country of origin and thus might have been more willing to disclose their experiences.

Based on the research question and the theoretical framework, we decided to use narrative thematic analysis to analyse the interviews. Narrative analysis originates from narrative psychology, and one form of narrative analysis is narrative thematic analysis. A constructionist approach is used, which considers that the social world shapes people's narratives. In line with these methodological choices, narrative interviews were conducted, referring to that meaning being co-produced by participants and interviewers. For the interviews, questions were posed as open-ended as possible. In line with the theoretical framework of this article, respondents were empowered by asking less restrictive open-ended questions and attentive listening.

Narrative thematic analysis was conducted in four stages, and it was followed. This form of analysis focuses on the content of stories and the themes around which stories are told (3). Firstly, all relevant sections of the transcript relevant to the research question were coded. Open coding was used. Secondly, themes were identified across the selected sub-text. Thirdly, separate sentences across the narrative texts were assigned to relevant categories. In this way, different parts of narratives were grouped under the defined thematic categories. Fourthly, the narrative content collected in each thematic category was used to describe the meanings in the content of the narrative text (3).

Positionality Statement of the first author, who has conducted and analysed the interviews: I am an outsider regarding their human trafficking experiences. However, I do have insider experience when it comes to related crimes such as abuse and violence, as well as interactions with the police, lawyers, and other professionals as a victim of crime. I am a victimologist, research victimology, and part of various networks that deal with victimology-related topics. Therefore, I may emphasize more with survivors than with offenders or professionals, which may have influenced my data analysis.

Table 1. Participants information

Participant	Gender	Profession	Educational level	Educational background	Nationality and Trafficking location
Participant 1	Female	Experience worker	Secondary Vocational Education and Training	Experiential expertise	Dutch, the Netherlands
Participant 2	Female	Experience worker	University of Applied Sciences	Experiential expertise	Dutch, the Netherlands
Participant 3	Female	Experience worker	University of Applied Sciences	Experiential expertise	Dutch, the Netherlands
Participant 4	Female	Experience worker	University of Applied Sciences	Experiential expertise	Dutch, the Netherlands
Participant 5	Female	Experience worker	University of Applied Sciences	Experiential expertise	Dutch, the Netherlands

FINDINGS

We use the three classifications of the self by Brison to categorize the findings (3): The embodied self (3.1), The narrative self (3.2), and The autonomous self (3.3). The findings demonstrate survivors' narratives and how they have been communicated to the first author.

The embodied self

The embodied self refers to how the body (the physical self) experiences victimization and its aftermath. This section will highlight two aspects of the physical self: (1) how survivors, although being physically abused, managed to display physical coping strategies that contributed to their survival and recovery and (2) how survivors commonly experience negative physical reactions surrounding interactions with the authorities, these experiences helped them make sense of what would be best for them, e.g. to decide to no longer cooperate with the police.

Firstly, three survivors stated how life besides victimization helped them to cope, and they described various coping strategies concerning their embodied self, for example [I always went to school, it was my haven, Participant 3]. Secondly, two survivors describe how the acts were so cruel that they tried to numb themselves with drugs and alcohol [I needed alcohol to numb myself, I always had a small bottle of alcohol with me wherever I went since they could show up anytime, Participant 2]. At the same time, three survivors described how the traffickers also used drugs and alcohol to make them more "compliant". Thirdly, some survivors described how traffickers might show up at any moment and that they had to resort to the survival instinct of flight, fight, or freeze.

All survivors gave various examples of these survival instincts. An example of flight is the following: [In public, someone (a member of the trafficking network) came to me and threatened me with a knife, I ran for my life because I knew if I let myself be threatened, I would not get out of there anymore]. Some survivors were too afraid to tell someone about their trafficking experiences because they were afraid that they and especially their families would get harmed. Some survivors tried to escape, and they describe it in this way [Many times I tried to escape, but he had men everywhere that would put me back in the situation, Participant 3]. Often, they describe how in front of their house [where survivors lived with their families) the traffickers would be waiting]. An example of a fight would be [When one of the clients said to me: If you do not want to have sex with me, you will have to fight with me, and that is what I then did, I tried everything to keep my own respect, Participant 2]. Often, survivors also described how they froze, became numb, and disassociated with the present. For example, [My vulnerability was used against me. You cannot show weakness, you get laughed at if you cry. You get laughed at if you get raped. You learned that vulnerability is dangerous, and people will use that against you, Participant 2].

Four of the survivors interviewed reported their trafficking experiences to the police. Almost all survivors describe how they were not encouraged by the police to give a statement as a victim of human trafficking. The police described various aspects of the process, such as how it would be a burden to give a statement, that most often there is not enough evidence to prosecute his crime, and that it would take years. Even if it comes to prosecution, the sentence will be low. However, four survivors nevertheless decided to give a statement. Some explained how they had to answer many questions to different police officers and that it was also perceived as a strain on their physical self. All survivors pointed out that their need for physical protection, health, and well-being was ignored [I was 15, and the police took me, they asked me lots of questions, but no one asked me what I needed, the focus was on the perpetrator, Participant 2]. All survivors also pointed out how their need for protection and support was ignored; for example [I made a statement, but it had no purpose since the police did nothing, I did not receive protection, and they did not go after them (the traffickers) because they were afraid because it is such a big network, Participant 1].

The narrative self

The narrative self refers to how survivors made sense of their experiences, how they look back at it, and the impact it had on them. This section depicts how, although survivors' life stories were interrupted and their sense of identity impacted, they found various strategies to make sense of their experiences, including how they look back at it, the impact they think it had on them, and their views on justice. Moreover, survivors wanted to use this unique experience in the aftermath of the crime and decided to become experience workers.

Almost all survivors looking back at their victimization experiences describe it as something incomprehensible and as something from a movie. They describe how their life is so different now than it was back then, so it is hard to think about it. All survivors were surprised that no one in their environment noticed that they were being human trafficked [Looking back, it's kind of crazy that this could happen. I lived at home, I went to school, I had friends, and at the same time, I was trafficked. How could that happen, Participant 4]. Even when they exhibited noticeable differences in behaviour, they felt they did not receive much support from their environment; for example, [How did nobody notice? I often did not eat or drink, I looked sick, and it's very strange that no one noticed. In school, the teachers were complaining because I had bad grades and I was falling asleep in class, but no one realized I was a victim of human trafficking, Participant 3]. Survivors pointed out how no one in their environment noticed and, therefore, they had to fully rely on themselves while being trafficked and that this self-reliance was crucial throughout their recovery as well.

In every interview, all the survivors stressed that they wished these experiences would have never happened to them. They often describe it as [I look back at it as the darkest period of my life; Participant 4]. Survivors also often mentioned that although they can now do something positive with their experiences, e.g. help current victims, they are against the belief that some people have that negative experiences make them stronger and can be seen as something positive. One survivor puts it this way [I would give anything not to know how it was. I am not the person who says I am happy it happened because now I am stronger, Participant 4].

Three survivors describe how they transitioned from being victims to survivors and the importance of getting their identity back. One survivor described how victimization is only one part of their story, that their story is full of other aspects as well, and that the rest of their story is still unwritten, [What happened to me is just a part of me and my past, it's not everything, Participant 4]. A survivor also stresses how the identity of a person is made out of different parts [I am not only a victim, I am also a daughter, a sister, a friend, and so on, Participant 2]. Another survivor described how she was able to empower herself by telling these experiences to others [I wanted to show who I am. I can talk, I can be myself. This part of me I can show. I was told how very brave I was that I survived it, and that I had come so far. So I wanted to show this to others, Participant 1]. Surviving through human trafficking was often seen as a sign of strength and building resilience for survivors. One survivor describes how she looks at the future [I am not forever a victim, I look at the future and the opportunities the future can bring, Participant 2].

The autonomous self

The autonomous self refers to the need for connection with others. This section will highlight vulnerabilities before becoming a victim of human trafficking relating to relationships with others. Examples will be given of how survivors turned these vulnerabilities into survival strategies. It illustrates that although their relationship with others was often troublesome, they managed to find support mainly from family and community, peers, and mental health professionals.

Almost all survivors mentioned preexisting vulnerabilities before becoming a victim of trafficking. These were experiences that individuals thought made them more vulnerable to being trafficked. Most

prominently featured in the data were dysfunctional family background and involvement in destructive relationships.

The most frequently cited vulnerability (four survivors) was originating from a troubled family environment. These households were marked by parental conflicts, substance abuse, and, most commonly, childhood abuse and neglect. These previous vulnerabilities in life were reinforced by the trafficker, who would tell them that no one cared about them and threatened to hurt their family members if they would not comply.

Despite these negative childhood experiences, family played an important role in enduring the victimization. When asked what made them survive their victimization, many times, a family member was mentioned. A survivor mentioned, [Of course, it is awful what happened to me, but I was always threatened that they would do something to my family, so I preferred to go there than that something would happen to my family, Participant 4]. One survivor mentioned how only one family member was crucial to them [I just knew I had to do it to keep my brother alive, Participant 3] since she often received threats that if she did not comply, her family would be harmed. One of the survivors had a young child, and she described how she only stayed alive for her child.

CONCLUSION

All three aspects (the embodied, narrative, and autonomous self) show that the term situated storytelling has potential due to its empowering potential of sense-making for survivors in the aftermath of crime. The way they tell their story can contribute to restoring their embodied, narrative, and autonomous selves. However, in society, victims are oftentimes described as vulnerable, passive, and weak (Christie, 1986) by society. This article tried to counter this image of victims, which can influence practice, policy, and future research. It has highlighted how survivors individually have turned this perceived vulnerability into agency through the power of storytelling. In practice, survivors should be empowered and not become re-victimized by the criminal justice system, mental health institutions, shelters, and other bodies that work with victims (Connelly, 2015). In policy documents, survivors should not be described as vulnerable, passive, and weak. In future research, more stories of survivors should be researched, which has the potential for changes in law, policy, society, and how we think about survivors.

REFERENCES

- (1) Brison SJ. *Surviving sexual violence: A philosophical perspective*. Springer International Publishing; 2019.
- (2) Haraway D. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. In *Space, gender, knowledge: Feminist readings* 2016 Apr 29 (pp. 53–72). Routledge.
- (3) Levi P. *The drowned and the saved*. Simon and Schuster; 2017 Jun 20.
- (4) Pemberton A, Aarten PG, Mulder E. Stories as property: Narrative ownership as a key concept in victims' experiences with criminal justice. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. 2019 Sep;19(4):404–420.
- (5) Pennebaker JW, Seagal JD. Forming a story: The health benefits of narrative. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 1999 Oct;55(10):1243–1254.
- (6) Truman SE. SF! Haraway's situated feminisms and speculative fabulations in English class. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. 2019 Feb 15;38(1):31–42.
- (7) Toole B. Recent work in standpoint epistemology. *Analysis*. 2021 Apr 1;81(2):338–350.

DOING MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH DIFFERENTLY: YOUNG WOMEN'S AESTHETIC ENCOUNTERS WITH ANXIETY

Raewyn Tudor¹, Shanee Barraclough²

¹*University of Canterbury (NEW ZEALAND)*

²*University of Canterbury (NEW ZEALAND)*

Abstract

In the field of mental health and wellbeing, art-making is more well-known as a therapeutic practice, where it is conceptualised as an aesthetic tool for exploring indefinable and unspoken experiences. Recently, art-making methods have emerged as inclusive and participatory approaches in mental health research. Methods such as drawing, poetry inquiry, collage, and photography have been shown to be useful in research concerning sensitive topics such as anxiety, allowing participants to express their thoughts, opinions and experiences on difficult issues while remaining relatively distant from those issues. In this paper, we discuss an arts-based research project utilizing zine-making as a method to explore young women's lived experiences of anxiety. A zine is a handmade (DIY), small circulation, and self-published and distributed magazine, first emerging within science fiction (1930s), punk (1970s) and feminist (1990s) cultural movements. Drawing on feminist new materialist theory, which understands knowledge-creation through research as an event enabling new understandings and experiences to emerge, we consider how the participatory processes offered by zine-making afforded opportunities to explore new/different knowledge of anxiety. Importantly, we discuss the way in which the young women created their own collaborative methodology for transforming anxiety beyond its preconceived limits. These are vital considerations in mental health research where we are interested in how new knowledge can alleviate human suffering. As we will discuss, with/in the aesthetic, materialist-discursive encounters of art making, the young women were able to disrupt the reductive gendered identities assigned to them as 'anxious persons' and affirm alternate practices of being together and living well in the world.

Keywords: anxiety, arts-based research, young women, mental health, feminist new materialism

INTRODUCTION

This paper emanates from work we have been engaged in utilising the arts-based research method of zine-making with young women with experiences of anxiety or anxious affects. We recognise fear and dread as central features of human experience, configured and reconfigured over time and across cultural contexts. In contemporary life, these features manifest through discourses of anxiety, worry, stress, nervousness and the physiological and psychological turbulence of panic. These affects continue to be voiced by young people, in particular young women, with twenty-first-century trends demonstrating substantial increases in generalized anxiety (1). Myriad explanatory factors have been proposed, including increasingly digitalised lives, discourses of success and perfectionism, vulnerability and fragility, rising global economic and climate precarity, and COVID-19 (2). Despite growing recognition of the complex interactions of these cultural, social and material realities, young women's moods, emotions, thoughts and desires are regularly reduced to diagnosable conditions. Feminist

critics have long argued that such diagnostic and individualising approaches medicalise women's misery and fail to address political, economic and discursive dimensions of distress (3).

Our desires in this work have been to explore possibilities for becoming different to, and for generating knowing beyond, the dominant biomedical, individualized and universalized diagnostic categories of anxiety. Connecting with feminist materialist, posthumanist and postqualitative approaches, we situate arts-based research as knowledge creation, as a 'practice of being inside a research event' such that the art-making encounter activates new relations of thought, affect and experience (4). From this vantage, mental health research becomes experimental, and the forms of knowledge it creates are happenings or events that emerge from relational research practices rather than being pre-formed or pre-determined (5).

The arts-based methodology we are using in our project is zine-making. Zines, short for "fanzines" or "magazines," are self-published, non-commercial publications that are often produced by individuals or small groups with limited resources. The history of zines can be traced back to various social movements, including Riot Grrrl zines, which addressed issues such as gender, sexuality, and activism, providing a platform for feminists to share their thoughts and experiences (6). The study and use of zines in research have placed primary emphasis on discourse, identity and meaning that emerge through and within zines, with little interest placed on the materiality of zines and zine-making practices (7).

MATERIAL-DISCURSIVE BOUNDARY-MAKING PRACTICES

Exploring anxiety through zine-making and feminist materialist theories brings attention to matter without resorting to nature-culture, human-nonhuman and matter-discourse binaries (8). Drawing on agential realism, we conceptualise zines as a material-discursive boundary-making practice – or, as Karen Barad says, a "specific material (re)configuring (of the world) through which "objects" and "subjects" are produced... through the determination of boundaries (9). This conceptualisation of zines draws on Barad's ethico-onto-epistemology and their notion of notion of intra-action. As a concept, 'intra-action' contrasts with that of 'interaction', which describes how elements, when in contact with each other, continue to have pre-existing boundaries and maintain a level of independence. Intra-action understands agency not as a form of property or as only belonging to individuals but as co-emergent with/in the entangled, co-constitutive relationships between entities. Taking up intra-action involves giving up on cause-and-effect explanations, dichotomies between human – non-human and notions of agency as fixed. As Hickey-Moody notes, "(a)ll designated "things" are constantly changing, exchanging, and diffracting, blending, mutating, influencing, and working inseparably" within the dynamic reconfiguring of the world" (10, p. 725).

Engaging with a feminist-materialist framework entails a relational ethics which offers significant potential for rethinking and enlarging notions of researcher accountability, responsibility and commitment to what comes to matter in the research (process and outcomes). Through thinking with Barad's concept of intra-action, it becomes clear that our ethical obligations are also inseparable from and co-emergent with/in our intra-active participation in the research process. Barad states, "(p)articular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world's becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering" (9, p. 827). Feminist materialist ethics, in this sense, is located not in humanism's self-contained, moralising individual nor in the inter-play only of the personal and the social. Rather, ontologically relational, intra-active ethics exist with/in boundary-making practices – exclusions and articulations – that we enact as we generate new knowledge, new practices, and new worlds.

Our research interest centres around what new knowing might be produced when we orientate to zine-making, young women and anxiety as intra-active processes, where boundaries, agencies and knowing are co-emergent with/in such practices. What kinds of alternate past-present-futures might intra-active zines and zine-making make imaginable and possible? What more can 'anxious' feelings be and do that might be necessary for our times? How can we collectively attend and attune to what and how zines might call to us to know differently?

RESEARCHING WITH ZINES

Our project involved zine-making with five women - university students aged 18-25 years who came from diverse backgrounds: two were from North America, one from the Philippines, one from Brazil and the other from New Zealand. All were studying and living in New Zealand at the time of the research. Participants were recruited via flyers exhibited around noticeboards across the university campus.

Three workshops (two hours each over consecutive Friday afternoons) were held in a private space on campus where all five participants and three co-researchers sat together around a table with felts, pens, magazines, glue sticks, stickers and scissors. Workshop One included introductions, ground rules, and an opportunity to learn about zine-making and have a go at making one, which is not necessarily connected to anxiety. Workshop two invited participants (and researchers) to each make a zine exploring an aspect of their lived experience of anxiety. We did not define anxiety but offered prompt questions. At the end of workshops, one and two, participants (and researchers) were invited to share their zines with the group. Workshop three consisted of a co-designed (researchers and participants) collaborative zine-making workshop, still with the theme of lived experience of anxiety.

Across the workshops, participants co-produced visual and audio data (workshops were recorded) consisting of ten individual zines and one collaborative zine.

This presentation focuses on the collaborative zine made in the third and final workshop. For this workshop, we had colour-copied all of the zines produced by participants the previous week and offered these as additional materials for making a collaborative zine. In the remaining presentation, we focus on thinking about this collaborative zine with theory, sharing the generation of three interesting findings, including that of bodies in relation, the material-discursive 'I', and the notion of non-linear transformation.

In the following section, we map some of the intra-acting forces and entangled patterns we have subsequently traced within the zine-making workshops and the zines. We focus on the collective, collaboratively made zine. Utilising the concept of intra-action, we consider three material-discursive moments in the workshops. Working with the collective zine and theoretical concepts, we seek to affirm some vital moments of relationality within the complex entanglement of young women and researcher body-minds, anxious affects, tables, and art-making materials.

MATERIAL-DISCURSIVE DEMARCATIONS

Bodies in relation

In the third workshop, our process as researchers was to enable the women themselves to develop the collective zine method in a way that they led. The women were excited by this invitation and developed a zine and process for it where meaning and matter entangled in ways that none of us could have predicted.

In their initial discussion on developing the zine, the women noted how the representation of the eye/I was apparent in their individual zines. They decided to develop a collective zine that centred on this image, not just as in I selfhood but the eye as in the corporeal eye. They quickly developed this idea and decided on a structure for the zine that followed the movements of the eye's transitions from

closing to opening. They decided that each of the pages would correspond with the movements of the eye (in relation to anxiety), and we would each individually or in pairs take turns to contribute to one of the pages, using the materials available and passing each page around the group members. A timeframe of ten minutes was set for each transition, and a timer was used to facilitate this process. In the space of the first ten minutes, the broad sketch of the collective zine materialized and as each page changed hands and moved through the circle of women, it became denser in matter and meaning.

In accordance with feminist materialist insights on art and craft making, the collective zine method disrupts any hierarchical notion of participants and researchers (11). This built on the previous workshops where the researchers had also participated in zine-making and sharing of their own anxiety-relationalities as women, thus also working to rework traditional researcher-participant boundary-making practices. As a group, in this third workshop, we cut, glued, drew and wrote together and moved the pages around the circle, talking, laughing and sharing insights as we crafted. The collective, collaborative zine-making method was co-emergent with/in the space, as part of the table and all its materials, and with our hands, minds, senses and bodies in motion, offering relational, material, and temporal processes within which we explored, and each experienced differently, a collectively remade and reconfigured sense of selfhood. That is not to say that we all became somehow the same.

While the self, or agency, becomes decentred when we bring a feminist materialist lens to bear on the process of self- and/or world-making, this does not mean identities disappear. If anything, the intersectional identities of the participants (and researchers) became more present and vivid as intra-active forces in the (re)making of anxieties, selves and knowledge. However, identities such as gender, ethnicity, and age are not viewed as fixed. Rather, their fluid boundaries are remade with/in each intra-action. For example, as a group of younger and older women in a hierarchal, patriarchal institution, we attempted to both recognise and re-shape the marginalised possibilities and potential for 'women with anxiety'.

Interestingly, one participant commented at the end, '*I personally liked speaking with older and more experienced women who have lived.. with experiences like this... it was really helpful to see the three of you thriving, functioning...*'. In this way, gender and age as intra-active forces become remade, their boundaries are re-drawn, and new possibilities emerge for becoming-woman-with-anxiety within different social milieu. This can be seen exemplified in Figure 1, which depicts the collective identifying of multiple identities, of the self as a multiplicity and emerging with unlimited possibilities.

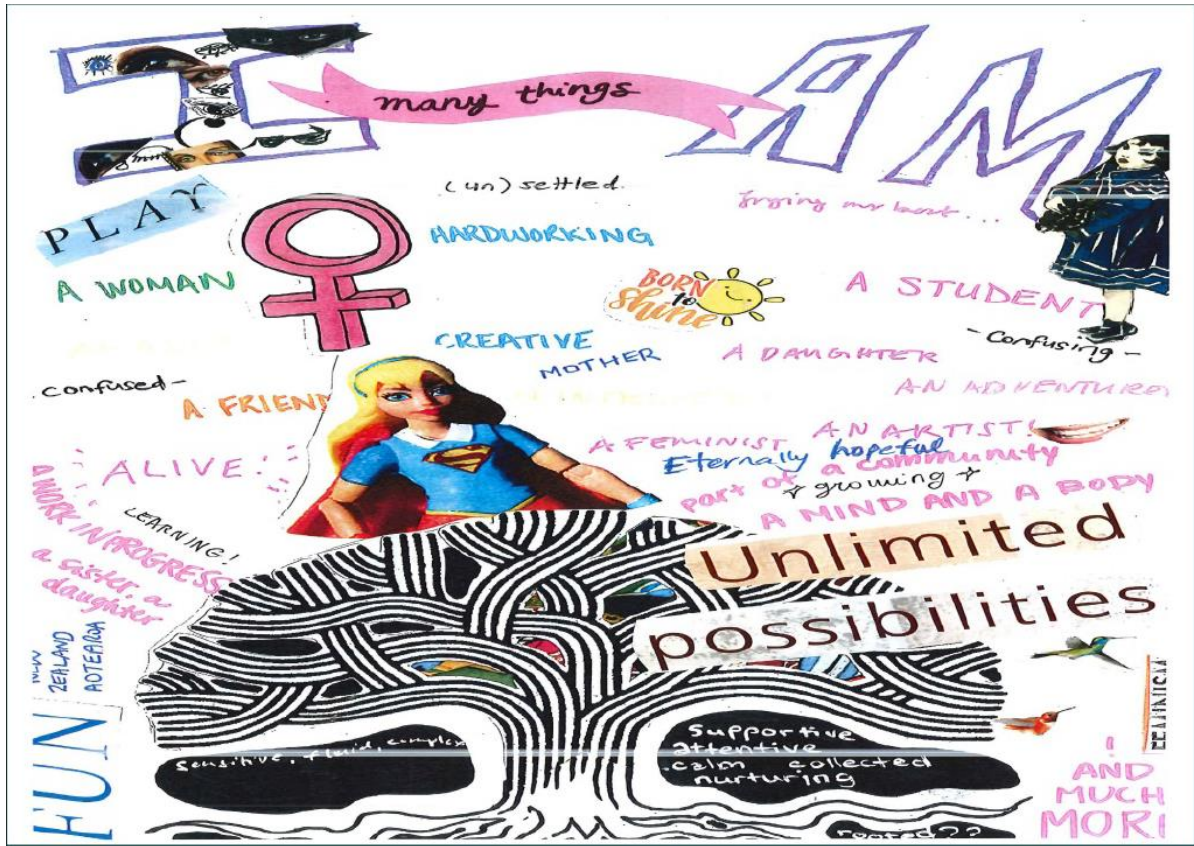


Figure 1. The intersectional eye/I; The material-discursive eye/I

As discussed, the woman developed the collective zine around the image and concept of the eye/I. The image of the eye discursively represents the public gaze through which the women experienced themselves as objects of desire and scrutiny. However, their own sense of self is as marginal as the invisible experience and selfhood of anxiously affected women. This is the eye/I, which Haraway says represents the subjugated perspective which inscribes "all the marked bodies, that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent but not be represented" (12, p. 680).

The eye/I in the zine does not merely represent the women's experience of their subjugated positions of which anxiety is a symptom but also the sensing, perceiving e-y-e. The corporeal eye materializes within the zine, shifting in transitions from half closed to half open (or peripheral vision) to fully open.

Figure 2 depicts one mo(ve)ment - the body-mind intra-actions of the closed eye/I within anxiety. Attending to the materialist becoming of the eye in this intra-action, we trace the function of the corporeal eye to neuroscience and find that eye movement plays a significant role in somatosensory perception. As a neurobiological, bodily set of functions, the somatosensory system informs us about objects in our external environment through touch and about the position and movement of our body parts through the stimulation of muscles and joints (13). Somatosensory systems also monitor external objects and the environment and are used not only to classify and understand one's own emotions but also those of others.

Just as visual forms of knowing dominate cultural and social science, somatosensory perception is interrupted by visual dominance in neurobiological processes, with cortical perception overshadowing other senses is a well-known phenomenon (14). However, recent research shows that closing the eyes can enhance somatosensory perception by switching off various aspects of visual dominance. Eye

closure switches the brain from thalamo-cortical networks that include visual dominance to a non-visually dominated processing mode, resulting in a superior perception of somatosensory stimuli (15). Neurobiological accounts of somatosensory perception provide mechanistic insights that support embodied accounts of emotions revealing the moving, always in motion; the corporeal eye is uniquely suited to reveal the potential of affects and relationality. Within a feminist materialist framework, the knowing eye/I becomes a set of entangled intra-actions – a relational ontology which Lenz-Taguchi proposes as the effects of connections within and between different bodies, affecting other bodies and being affected by them (16). In collapsing the binary between the real and the

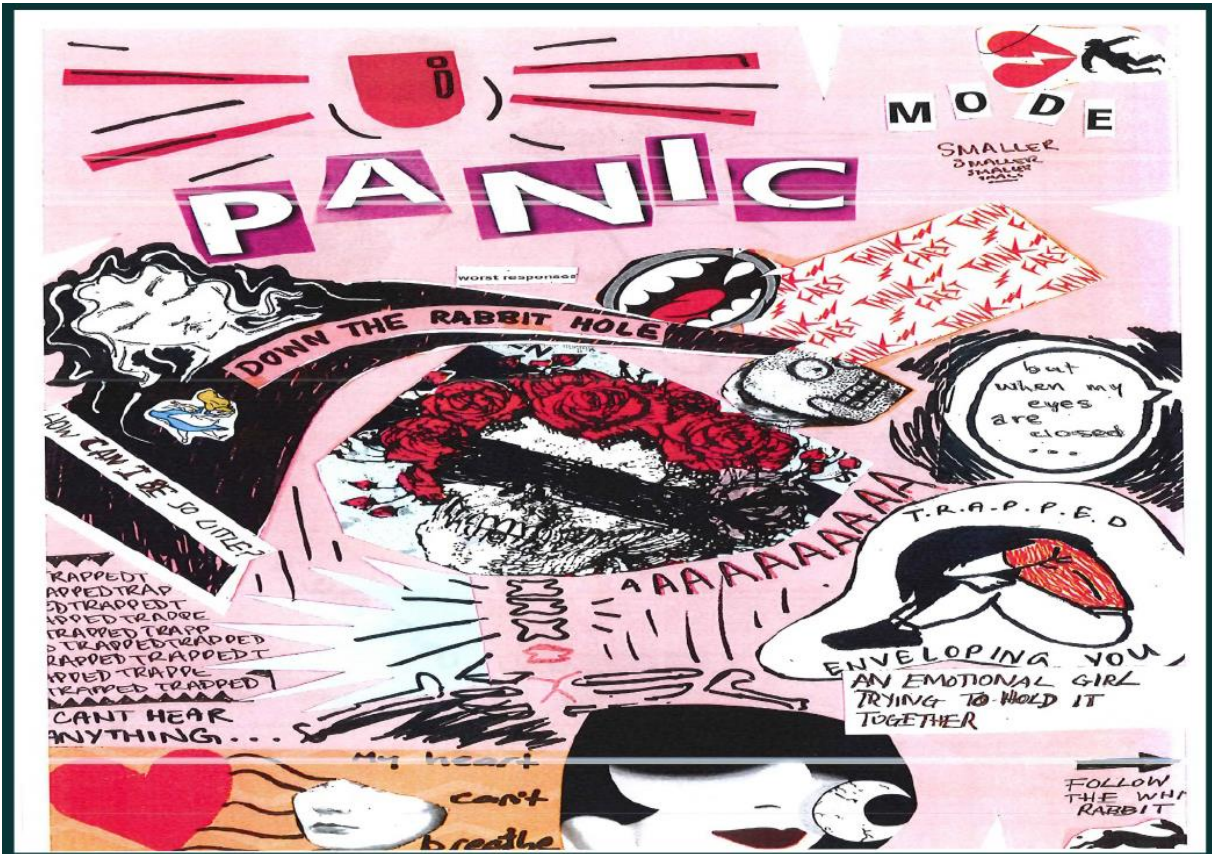


Figure 2. The closed eye/I

representational, the eye/I is neither material nor discursive, neither organic nor image, but rather a mode of relationality that constitutes intra-active meaning and becoming within and beyond anxiety.

Non-linear transformation

Anxiety is in itself a temporal, future-oriented phenomenon. Characterized as a state of being that arises from general and non-specific stimuli, perceived as being potentially threatening in the future. Thus, with anxiety, the fear of the future manifests in the present. In making the collective zine, the women were keen to rework this temporal dynamic and bring about a different kind of future, as depicted in Figure 3. They were invested in a shift from the closed-in, unsettling and distressing experience of anxiety to a transformative future in which they would be able to be open to the world and all that it offered to see, feel and become different.



Figure 3. Becoming worldly

In some ways, speculating upon future events is similar to the ways in which anxiety operates in that it effectively brings the future into the frame of the present moment. Discursively, as Loewen-Walker points out, this process reflects neoliberal constructions of time as a linear and cumulative movement forward and a focus on the free-thinking, self-aware human (with eyes open) as the sole means by which we can bring about the anticipated future (17). Feminist materialisms emphasise that as a concept, time is not captured by humanistic, self-actualizing representations of progress that sequentially progress from the past to the present to the future. Barad makes the point that the future is indeterminate and that materiality, space and temporality are inextricably entangled (18). Colebrook adds that immanent renditions of time are non-linear, and transformation does not unfold unidirectionally; instead, it is multiple and recursive (19).

The transformational images in the collective zine recognise that the potential of a different future is part of the present. The zine could be read in reverse, out of order, started in the middle as if the eyes, the bodies, the places and spaces are moving simultaneously in presents that could be. The future in the zine is not a far-off distant future but felt in the present, as the regular, ongoing and continual movements of the eye, where there is no beginning or end point. They work within time, where time does not (only) move from the present to the future, but where the worldly future is experienced in and as the present, as that which can be acted on now (20).

CONCLUSION

Using Barad's concept of intra-action, we understand zines as co-emergent with/in the ontological inseparability and ongoingness of intra-acting agents and objects, human and non-human, matter and

meaning. We come to understand that the nature of reality is not fixed, but rather, it is in part co-constituted by the very physical arrangement through which we experience it. Such thinking brings a de-centering of humanism's self-contained individual, reconfiguring distressing feelings not as personal but as an ongoing materialization of the world's iterative intra-activity.

We also recognise that posthuman co-production is not a matter of us as researchers "representing" participants' lived experiences of anxiety or enabling space to hear the multiplicity of their "voices". Rather, zine-making is about inviting, enabling and co-creating space and time for the multiplicity of what matters to unfold and become materially realized. These are relational ontologies, which, as McPhie states, in posthuman informed mental health research, the focus is "on relations rather than substances, emergence rather than structure, how things become rather than what they already are and are creative of new conditions and spaces in the world" (21, p 28). Within our research event, zine-making is an entangled material-discursive practice, where women's anxious body-minds come together, becoming inseparably entangled with each other's, intra-acting with/in matter, time and space, co-constituting, or cutting-together-apart the not-yet-known present-futures.

REFERENCES

- [1] Wellbeingindicators.stats.govt.nz. Mental health status [online]. Retrieved from <https://statisticsnz.shinyapps.io/wellbeingindicators/Mental-health-status-psychological-distress>
- [2] Zimmermann, M., & Papa, A. (2020). Causal explanations of depression and treatment credibility in adults with untreated depression: Examining attribution theory. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 93(3), 537–554. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12247>
- [3] Lupton, D. (2019). 'It's made me a lot more aware': A new materialist analysis of health self-tracking. *Media International Australia*, 171(1), 66-79.
- [4] Springgay, S., & Truman, S. E. (2018). On the need for methods beyond proceduralism: Speculative middles, (in) tensions, and response-ability in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24(3), 203-214.
- [5] Springgay, S. (2022). *Feltness: Research-creation, Socially engaged art, and affective pedagogies*. Duke University Press.
- [6] Duncombe, S. (1997). Notes from underground: Zines and the politics of alternative culture. *Verso*.
- [7] Hroch, M., & Carpentier, N. (2021). Beyond the meaning of zines: A case study of the role of materiality in four Prague-based zine assemblages. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 14(2), 252-273.
- [8] Verran, H. (2014). Working with those who think otherwise. *Common Knowledge*, 20(3), 527-539.
- [9] Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(3), 801-831.
- [10] Hickey-Moody, A. C. (2020). New materialism, ethnography, and socially engaged practice: Space-time folds and the agency of matter. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(7), 724-732.

- [11] Bae-Dimitriadis, M. (2016) Corporeal Pedagogy: Transforming café and refugee girls' post-agency. *Studies in Art Education*, 57(4), 358-371, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2016.1204526>
- [12] Haraway, D. (2002). The persistence of vision. In *The Visual Culture Reader*. (Chap. 58, 677-684). Mirzoeff, N. (Ed.). Psychology Press.
- [13] Pleger, B., & Villringer, A. (2013). The human somatosensory system: From perception to decisionmaking. *Progress in Neurobiology*, 103, 76-97.
- [14] Brodoehl, S., Klingner, C., Stieglitz, K., & Witte, O. W. (2015). The impact of eye closure on somatosensory perception in the elderly. *Behavioural Brain Research*, 293, 89-95.
- [15] ibid
- [16] Lenz Taguchi, H. (2012). A diffractive and Deleuzian approach to analysing interview data. *Feminist Theory*, 13, 265–281.
- [17] Loewen Walker, R. (2014). The living present as a materialist feminist temporality, *Women: A Cultural Review*, 25:1, 46-61, DOI: 10.1080/09574042.2014.901107
- [18] Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.
- [19] Colebrook, C. (2009). Stratigraphic time, women's time. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 24(59), 11-16.
- [20] Ibid
- [21] Mcphie, J. (2019). *Mental health and wellbeing in the Anthropocene: A posthuman inquiry*. Springer.

ADOLESCENTS WITH CYSTIC FIBROSIS PHOTOGRAPHING THEIR TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: CHANGING THE GAZE TO CHANGE PRACTICES THROUGH PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Maxime Morsa¹, Adélaïde Vincent², Julie Haesebaert^{3,4}, Catherine Llerena⁵, Lucie Pelz¹, Philippe Reix^{4,6}, Rémi Gagnayre², Quitterie Reynaud^{3,8}

¹Psychology Department, Adaptation, Resilience & Change (ARCh) Research Unit, University of Liège, 4000 Liège (BELGIUM)

²Laboratoire Éducatif et Promotion de la Santé (LEPS UR3412), Université Sorbonne Paris Nord, Bobigny (FRANCE)

³RESearch on HealthcAre PErformance (RESHAPE), INSERM U1290, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, 8 avenue Rockefeller, 69373 Lyon Cedex 08 (FRANCE)

⁴Hospices Civils de Lyon, Pôle Santé Publique, Service Recherche et Epidémiologie Cliniques, F-69003 Lyon (FRANCE)

⁵CHU Grenoble-Alpes, Grenoble (FRANCE)

⁶ Centre de ressources et de compétences pour la Mucoviscidose. Site pédiatrique. Hôpital Femme Mère Enfant. Hospices Civils de Lyon (FRANCE)

⁷ UMR5558. Equipe EMET. Université Claude Bernard Lyon1. Villeurbanne (FRANCE)

⁸ ERN-Lung Cystic Fibrosis Network, Frankfurt (GERMANY)

Fundings: Association Gregory Lemarchal, Filière Muco-CFTR

Abstract

During the transition to adulthood, adolescents face the challenge of developing their identity under the threat of being socially assigned to the role of a sick person. There is a lack of knowledge about interventions that promote the self-determination of adolescents' identities. We conduct participatory research to develop, implement and evaluate a new peer-support program aimed at supporting the transition from pediatrics to adult care for adolescents living with cystic fibrosis within two hospital centers in France. Longitudinal qualitative research was conducted over a one-year period from April 2022 to August 2023. We used the *photovoice* technique to facilitate the narration of adolescents, who photographed and recounted what "*becoming an adult*" means to them. With the adolescents, we decided to organize a photo exhibit that aims to show the subjective experience of the transition to adulthood of adolescents living with cystic fibrosis to support adolescents' agentivity on the narratives about the transition. We discuss the theoretical frameworks and ways of implementing a photo exhibit as a lever for changing practices through participatory research, where dominant discourses can reign implicitly, hindering the empowerment of those involved.

Keywords: longitudinal qualitative research, photovoice exhibit, cystic fibrosis

INTRODUCTION

The transition from pediatrics to adult care is a new field of study and practice (1). Supporting adolescents during this period face specific challenges related to identity development and learning to take care of oneself. Living with a chronic condition indeed threatens the narrative identity of

adolescents, understood as the ability to narrate one's life events, reconstruct an autobiographical past, and imagine a future (2). Self-narrative and exploration of future selves may risk being reduced to the role of a sick person, limiting the transformative learning processes necessary for identity development (3).

In this perspective, we currently conduct participatory research to develop, implement, and evaluate a new peer-support program aimed at supporting the transition to adulthood for adolescents living with cystic fibrosis within two hospital centers in France (CHU Grenoble and CHU Lyon). Adolescents, young adults, parents, healthcare providers, and researcher are all involved in the research. Cystic fibrosis is a rare genetic disease that mainly affects the respiratory and digestive systems, occurring in about one birth in 2,500 in Europe and North America (4). This systemic chronic disease, in which respiratory damage is at the heart of the prognosis and treatment, requires regular monitoring throughout patients' lives in a specific cystic fibrosis center, initially for children and then for adults. The research is composed of 3 steps: [1] a study aiming to explore the needs of self-determination in narrative identity among adolescents with cystic fibrosis during the transition to adulthood, [2] a study designing the intervention, and [3] the implementation and evaluation of the pilot intervention.

In this paper, we will take a closer look at the first part of the project, which concerns a better understanding of the psychosocial development needs of adolescents during the transition period. We will present the setting up of a photographic exhibit to support the adolescent narrative that emerged during the study, and its methodological challenges. We will discuss the theoretical frameworks and ways of implementing a perspective-shifting system as a lever for changing practices through participatory research, where dominant discourses can reign implicitly, hindering the empowerment of those involved.

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES: STUDYING REALITY AND ITS POSSIBILITIES

In recent years, research has undergone a "(re)turn to realism(s)" that situates knowledge production within a natural context, considering the methodological challenge of making reality intelligible (with its protean, contingent, and inaccessible nature in its entirety) without "mutilating" it. This approach also recognizes the essential consideration of power dynamics in knowledge production, along with the performative or transformative intent of research (5).

Examining the identity development of adolescents with cystic fibrosis transitioning to adulthood, the "reality" of this process is dynamic, evolving, and creative. Indeed, identity is a constantly evolving socio-psychological construction (6), requiring an exploration of its dynamics rather than a static determination or definition. However, most studies on the identity development of adolescents with chronic conditions are positivist, quantitative, and cross-sectional, aiming to identify constants in adolescent identity development. In these studies, adolescents do not control the narrative about themselves and are subject to the gaze of adult experts regarding their experience of change.

Fox and Ward (7) emphasized that studies on identity in health act as a social learning process that informs the person about themselves and often reduces the participant's identity to their health condition. The study then prevents the participants from envisioning themselves as other than a sick person and contributes to their assignment. Using the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, the authors suggest exploring "*what a body can do*", that is, exploring with the person the possibilities and the means to achieve them. This approach relates to the psychological concept of "possible selves", defined as representations of what individuals can hope to or fear becoming (8).

Therefore, we situate the (re)turn to realism(s) in conjunction with a philosophy of possibility (9) to account for reality as propelled by individuals' abilities to transform it, to contemplate what does not

exist, to imagine alternatives, and to defy statistical predictions. While the narrative identity of adolescents living with cystic fibrosis develops under the threat of a reduction of possibilities and alternatives to the role of a sick person, the transformative aim of the research is to investigate the conditions of self-determination in self-narration and identity possibilities. In this perspective, we propose an "infra-realistic" approach (*understanding and changing reality from within oneself*), focusing on the lived experience, sensations, and the adolescent's capacity for self-invention. The goal is to document not so much "*what is*" or "*what is lacking*" but "*what can be*". In other words, *how can an intervention facilitate change and self-determination capacities?*

METHOD

Longitudinal qualitative research (LQR) was conducted over a one-year period from April 2022 to August 2023. LQR is centered on the experience over time, with a focus on analyzing changes. It aims to explore how and why change occurs, considering a specific socio-cultural context. LQR postulates that human experiences are rarely composed of time-limited events but change over time. Therefore, LQR is particularly suitable for studying transition processes (10).

Adolescents aged 15 to 17 living with cystic fibrosis were recruited from the University Hospitals of Grenoble and Lyon. A purposive sampling approach was applied to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, and location of participant care.

We conducted three individual semi-directed interviews with each adolescent every six months.

Adolescents' imagination and expression of possibilities call for the mobilization of complex creative and cognitive abilities. Narration is their sole avenue of access (11). Emphasizing the becoming and the new requires methodologies that allow one to "*engage in the possible*" and aim "*both to become aware of it and to explore it actively*" (12) (p.519). While imagination is the underlying ability enabling any reflection on the future, the establishment of elicitation techniques that not only reflect *what is* but imaginatively create *what is to become* is essential (13). We used the **photovoice** technique to facilitate adolescents' narratives. They took photographs and shared what "*becoming an adult*" means to them. The literature has shown that photovoice is useful for describing concepts or experiences that are difficult to express in words, structuring people's thoughts and narratives, offering new perspectives, and working on transformation processes (14). Its feasibility and acceptability in research with adolescents with chronic conditions have been demonstrated (15). This methodological design made it possible to access narratives on adolescent development with cystic fibrosis. It focused on identity and changes that departed from the dominant discourse (produced by healthcare providers and researchers, for example).

We conducted an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the verbatim (16). The approach is idiographic and involves analyzing each individual case before identifying points of coherence between adolescents.

The study was approved by the ethics committee from the University of Paris (IRB 00012021-95).

FROM PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH TO EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH

Eight adolescents participated in the study (five girls, three boys, three from Grenoble, five from Lyon, 15–17 years old). The attrition rate is 0%. In total, twenty-four interviews were conducted. In this paper, we will not present all the results of the study, but we will detail an important finding related to the concept of "gaze" that emerged in the adolescents' discourse. We will highlight how this result

triggered a new action in the project (an exhibit) and discuss its methodological implications for qualitative and participatory research.

« The Hell of Eyes »

Among the mechanisms of self-determination involved in the development of narrative identity, the results reveal that adolescents actively seek a narrative about *being-sick* that belongs to them, one they can control and evolve. Consequently, adolescents explicitly reject master narratives ("*culturally shared stories that guide thoughts, beliefs, values, and behaviors*" (17) (p.2) about cystic fibrosis.

"I don't like being seen as a model of resilience, as someone fighting against a disease when, in fact, I just take medications, go to physiotherapy, and wash my hands." (Maud¹)

"I think what annoys me the most is my family caring about my health, but they couldn't care less about everything else. But, guys, I'm not dying, I'm never going to die from this, at least not for now. So stop calling me, I don't want to." (Sarah)

The concept of "gaze" emerges as central in the discourse of adolescents. Our analytical work has revealed that adolescents express a desire to break free from "The hell of eyes," as conceptualized by Mita (18). According to the Mita, individual transitions are shaped by societal expectations that assign individuals to a spectrum of roles, both limited and contradictory (such as autonomy or responsibility linked to adulthood, and simultaneously, the duty of wisdom and motivation to manage their health tied to the sick role). This social assignment manifests in individuals as self-rejection or rejection of others. The narrative identity of adolescents living with cystic fibrosis, observed over a year, thus aligns with the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, used by Mita (18) to generate insights into social phenomena. According to this philosophy, the "hell" begins with the inability or hindrance to cast one's own gaze upon oneself and imagine alternatives to social assignment. Achieving agency over this gaze—living experiences of self-reflection by oneself—is, in fact, part of the strategies or needs of adolescents to develop their narrative identity.

*"I realized this lack of confidence in myself when I was climbing and **filmed myself** doing a fairly complex route (...). Watching the video, I saw that I was doing a split, whereas if I had confidence in my abilities..." (Maud)*

Similarly, the experience of illness can be distinguished by its social aspect (under the gaze of others) and its intimate aspect (outside the gaze of others).

*"In fact, the disease doesn't change anything in my life. But inevitably, in the **backstage**, there are small changes, you see. The backstage is taking medication, the fact that I'll sleep less, that I'll have to be more available for the hospital, that I'll have to think about the repercussions. For example, when I go out (...) I have to think if I go out, I need to take salt, etc., so I don't get dehydrated, etc. Yeah, that's it, before I do something, I have to think about a lot more things. That's the backstage." (Nathan)*

In this quote, the adolescent introduces the concept of "backstage" to evoke life beyond the reach of others' gaze, implicitly linking it with Erving Goffman's notion of the "frontstage" (19) to understand social life and document situations of stigma among people living with a disease or disability. Once again, the adolescent's experience of self with the disease is influenced by the nature of the gaze used to interpret it.

¹ All names mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

However, if adolescents refuse to limit their identity to the attribute of *being-sick* they question what it means to be sick. This questioning becomes even more pronounced when they have less and less of a sensation of being sick due to the emergence of a new therapy (Elexacaftor-tezacaftor-ivacaftor triple therapy) that has significantly reduced symptoms in cystic fibrosis. *What does it mean to be sick when you don't feel sick?*

"I feel like I'm not legitimate in being sick because I'm not that affected." (Maud)

"I consider myself a regular person. I just have cystic fibrosis but I don't feel like it handicaps me in life... In fact, I feel like other kids, well, like other people my age. And otherwise, yes, I'm a fairly typical person." (Yannick)

As master narratives on disease limit them to roles of vulnerability or stereotyped dolorism, adolescents seek alternative perspectives through cultural and social mediations (movies, books, peers with another disease). The phenomenon of searching for a narrative about cystic fibrosis and the chronic condition is accentuated by the fact that the feeling of being sick is not very present. The self-determination of narrative identity, therefore, is not only expressed through the formulation of alternatives to the sick identity but is also supported by the adolescent's ability to make sense of what it means to "*be sick*" and "*become an adult with a disease*", extending beyond social discourse. In this perspective, cultural mediation (11) acts as a mechanism for acquiring self-knowledge that accompanies adolescents' transition.

An Exhibit to Share the Adolescent Gaze

Our study results highlighted that during the transition to adulthood, adolescents with cystic fibrosis undergo changes under the gaze of the protagonists they encounter. Additionally, they learn to develop their own perspective on themselves – a perspective that aligns with their individual quest and is free from master narratives.

We discussed these results with all stakeholders in the project (adolescents, young adults, parents, healthcare providers, and researchers). These discussions led us to contemplate how to convey these results while closely respecting the adolescent's gaze on their own transition to adulthood. The identified objectives were to avoid creating a new "scientific" or "expert" gaze that would dominate adolescents and to be able to transform the adults' and experts' points of view on the adolescent experience. The idea emerged to invite adolescents who participated in the study to share their own gaze on themselves during the transition to adulthood, organizing an exhibit showcasing new photos taken by adolescents about what "adolescence" and "change" mean to them, narrating "what they have never expressed before".

The organization of an exhibit is supported by several theoretical arguments. Firstly, Teti and Myroniuk (20) emphasize that the exhibit is a crucial step in the photovoice process toward individual and community empowerment and social change. Exhibits have the potential to alter community perceptions and enhance understanding of individuals living with a chronic condition. They facilitate self-reflection and identity construction, serving as forms of empowerment and avenues for change (e.g., changes in public perception) (21). Villatte et al. (22) demonstrated the feasibility and relevance of such actions by implementing a digital exhibit (on a website) sharing the photographic narrative of young people transitioning to adulthood with a parent affected by a mental disorder.

Secondly, images have become a widely used language in contemporary society. Rose (23) refers to the "centrality of the eye" to describe contemporary society as a visual culture; both consumed passively and actively produced, constituting a distinct language conveying our thoughts, feelings, or life experiences. Indeed, millions of image-based contents are exchanged daily via the internet, social

networks, or phones in the form of conversations, signaling a language that has marginalized text. Everyday life is inundated with images. The widespread accessibility of digital cameras has transformed our relationship with perceiving and representing reality. Humans have become both "photographers" and "photographed," with photography now being a specific mode of representation that regulates the practices and social interactions of our world (15). This is particularly true for children and adolescents, who have been immersed in a world of images since birth, occupying a central place in their daily lives, play, communication, and learning. In this sense, if knowledge is power, the image is undoubtedly a constitutive element of knowledge construction. Several social science researchers have explored the connections between image production and power relations (24). For example, Riboni (25) described the process of control and invisibilization of images challenging the established order by those in power, aiming to maintain their gaze on the situation. Therefore, being able to produce and share one's perspective on oneself and lived situations is part of the conditions of self-determination and empowerment.

Finally, research on attitude and behavior changes has shown that content presented in narrative form is more effective than that presented in scientific information. Photo narration could thus better transform the perspective of healthcare professionals than theoretical content. In the case of rare diseases, patient narratives have been shown to challenge established knowledge and reveal insufficiently explored areas or the inaccessibility of certain resources (26). Experiential knowledge of vulnerabilities is shared with the goal of influencing the world, and the exhibit becomes a bridge between participants and change-makers (27). In this sense, the research aligns with an emancipatory aim, involving collective work by participants and researchers to identify and dismantle the structures of domination that create and maintain conditions of identity assignment among adolescents with cystic fibrosis (28).

Three adolescents participated in the project and produced new photos. The pictures will be presented at a congress organized in France in June 2024 by a cystic fibrosis association (*Vaincre La Mucoviscidose*) that brings patients, parents, and professionals together. A website presenting the pictures has also been created. The photos can be viewed at this link: <http://en-quete.muco-cftr.fr>. The site is intended to become participatory, allowing all adolescents with cystic fibrosis to tell their stories of transitioning to adulthood. The project is supported by a network of stakeholders in cystic fibrosis in France (*Filière MUCO-CFTR*).

Our study and the exhibit project have limitations, including the fact that out of the eight participants in the study, only three adolescents were involved in the exhibit. Several adolescents initially agreed to participate but later dropped out, expressing a lack of time or motivation. Indeed, the exhibit faced the difficulty of asking adolescents to narrate their transition experience linked to the disease, even as they seek to emancipate themselves from the assigned identity of *being-sick*. While the exhibit aims to counteract identity assignment through the narration of possible selves, it may not entirely avoid identification with the role of a sick person, which can be perceived as unattractive for adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Participatory research operates on the principles of empowering those involved. However, this empowerment can be limited by processes of identity assignment, sometimes implicit and involuntary. In health research with adolescents, there is a risk of reducing the adolescent to their disease while they are undergoing a developmental process that leads them to imagine various possible selves to get to know themselves and understand social life. We need to be attentive to the gaze placed on adolescence and engage in dialogue to discuss different perspectives. Photography is a medium of self-narration that can enable the sharing of a new perspective on phenomena. The exhibit and the website presenting the photos of adolescents provide an opportunity to consider a creative way to stimulate

self-narration by adolescents living with a chronic condition and to envision the transition to adulthood as a process of creating new possibilities.

REFERENCES

- (1) Betz CL, O’Kane LS, Nehring WM, Lobo ML. Systematic review: Health care transition practice service models. *Nursing Outlook*. 2016;64(3): 229-43. Available at: <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0029655416000130> [Accessed: 9 January 2024]
- (2) McAdams DP, McLean KC. Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 2013;22(3):233-8. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0963721413475622> [Accessed: 1 February 2024]
- (3) Vanderhaegen J, Raymaekers K, Prikken S, Claes L, Van Laere E, Campens S, et al. Personal and illness identity in youth with type 1 diabetes: Developmental trajectories and associations. *Health Psychology*. 2024; Available from: <https://doi.apa.org/doi/10.1037/hea0001366>
- (4) Scotet V, L’Hostis C, Férec C. The Changing Epidemiology of Cystic Fibrosis: Incidence, Survival and Impact of the CFTR Gene Discovery. *Genes*. 2020;11(6):589. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4425/11/6/589> [Accessed: 3 February 2024]
- (5) Le Grange L. Leading article: What is (Post)qualitative research? *SAJHE*. 2018;32(5). Available at: <http://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/sajhe/article/view/3161> [Accessed: 26 January 2024]
- (6) Packer D, Bavel JV. The dynamic nature of identity: From the brain to behavior. In 2015. Available at: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-dynamic-nature-of-identity%3A-From-the-brain-to-Packer-Bavel/2ddba4029ad5872e4ced3c9b9f7c44823f673bbf> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (7) Fox NJ, Ward KJ. What are health identities and how may we study them? *Sociology Health & Illness*. 2008;30(7):1007-21. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9566.2008.01093.x> [Accessed: 6 January 2024]
- (8) Markus H, Nurius P. Possible selves. *American Psychologist*. 1986;41(9):954-69. Available at: <http://doi.apa.org/getdoi.cfm?doi=10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954> [Accessed: 20 January 2024]
- (9) Garcia T. *Laisser être et rendre puissant*. 1re édition. Paris: PUF; 2023. 555 p. (MétaphysiqueS).
- (10) Tuthill EL, Maltby AE, DiClemente K, Pellowski JA. Longitudinal qualitative methods in health behavior and nursing research: assumptions, design, analysis and lessons learned. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2020;19. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1609406920965799> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (11) Zittoun T. A sociocultural psychology of the life course to study human development. *Human Development*. 2022;66(4-5):310-28. Available at: <https://karger.com/doi/10.1159/000526435> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (12) Glăveanu VP. The possible as a field of inquiry. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*. 2018;14(3):519-30. Available at: <https://ejop.psychopen.eu/article/view/1725> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (13) Sools A. Back from the future: a narrative approach to study the imagination of personal futures. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. 2020;23(4):451-65. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13645579.2020.1719617> [Accessed: 6 February 2024]
- (14) Keats PA. Multiple text analysis in narrative research: visual, written, and spoken stories of experience. *Qualitative Research*. 2009;9(2):181-95. Available at:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1468794108099320> [Accessed: 10 January 2024]

- (15) Sibeoni J, Costa-Drolon E, Poulmarc'h L, Colin S, Valentin M, Pradère J, et al. Photo-elicitation with adolescents in qualitative research: an example of its use in exploring family interactions in adolescent psychiatry. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*. 2017;11(1):49. Available at: <http://capmh.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13034-017-0186-z> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (16) Smith JA, Flowers P, Larkin M. *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. 2nd edition. London ; Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE; 2022. 225 p.
- (17) Syed M, McLean KC. Who gets to live the good life? Master Narratives, identity, and well-being within a marginalizing society. *Journal of Research in Personality*. 2022;100:104285. Available at: <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0092656622000988> [Accessed: 6 February 2024]
- (18) Mita M. *L'enfer du regard: une sociologie du vivre jusqu'à consommation*. Paris: CNRS éditions; 2023. (Collection Réseau Asie).
- (19) Goffman E. *Stigmate : les usages sociaux des handicaps*. Les Editions de Minuit. 1963.
- (20) Teti M, Myroniuk T. Image to action: past success, ongoing questions, and new horizons for photovoice exhibits. *Health Promotion Practice*. 2022;23(2):262-6. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15248399211054774> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (21) Koch T, Kralik D. Chronic illness: reflections on a community-based action research programme. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2001;36(1):23-31. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.01939.x> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (22) Villatte A, Piché G, Habib R. Comment soutenir la résilience des jeunes en transition vers l'âge adulte qui ont un parent atteint d'un trouble mental ? Ce qu'en pensent les jeunes concernés. *IJCAR*. 2021;8(1). Available at: <https://ijcar-rirea.ca/index.php/ijcar-rirea/article/view/239> [Accessed: 6 february 2024]
- (23) Rose G. *Visual methodologies: an introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. 2nd ed. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications; 2006. 287 p.
- (24) Rose G. On the relation between 'visual research methods' and contemporary visual culture. *The Sociological Review*. 2014;62(1):24-46. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1111/1467-954X.12109> [Accessed: 6 February 2024]
- (25) Riboni UL. *Vidéoactivismes: contestation audiovisuelle et politisation des images*. Paris: Éditions Amsterdam; 2023. 203 p.
- (26) Gross O. Les enjeux de la narration dans les maladies rares: *Santé Publique*. 2021;Vol. 33(3):309-10. Available at: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-sante-publique-2021-3-page-309.htm?ref=doi> [Accessed: 2 february 2024]
- (27) Liebenberg L. Thinking critically about photovoice: achieving empowerment and social change. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2018;17(1):160940691875763. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1609406918757631> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]
- (28) Evans-Agnew RA, Rosemberg MAS, Boutain DM. Emancipatory photovoice research: a primer. *Health Promotion Practice*. 2022;23(2):211-20. Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15248399211062906> [Accessed: 2 February 2024]

UNDERSTANDING 'HOME' IN ALTERNATIVE CARE: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF PRACTITIONER'S EXPERIENCE

Lucia Carrieria

University of Milan Bicocca (ITALY)

Abstract

This contribution presents the analysis process and the first results of the doctoral project 'The Home Dimension in Alternative Care'. The project was designed as a multiphase qualitative study (1). It aimed to explore how educators use physical space and the idea of 'home' in educating children in the Residential Care Homes (RCH). The project collaborated with two RCHs from the Lombardy region and a total of 12 professional educators. The analysis process follows the trajectories indicated by the phenomenological philosophy of research (2)(3). It focuses on the interpretative dimension that sees the researcher as a mediator of the meanings of the participants' lived experiences (4). Given the multidimensional and multilayered nature of meaning, the analysis process was also articulated on different levels and explored a wide variety of texts - including participant photography. Emerging themes were the result of a circular process that intertwined Van Manen's (3) proposal for textual analysis and the matrix developed by Hannes & Wang (5) for the exploration of visual material. To reduce the risk of flattening and ventriloquism, follow-ups were conducted with the research participants to share and discuss the initial findings. In this sense, the research journal (6) played a crucial role in developing a reflexive posture. In conclusion, the contribution will present the three macro-themes that emerged, which can be summarised as 1) Materiality, 2) Practices of 'making home', and 3) Meanings of 'home' in the lived experience participants.

Keywords: alternative care, research with practitioners, phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, visual languages, home

INTRODUCTION

The contribution presents the analysis process and the first results of the doctoral project 'The Home Dimension in Alternative Care'. The project was designed as a multiphase qualitative study (1) using a collective case study strategy (7). It aimed to explore how educators use physical space and the meaning of 'home' in educating children in alternative care, particularly in residential care settings. The project collaborated with two RCHs from the Lombardy region and a total of 12 professional educators.

The research object lies in pedagogical research: a horizon that embraces the human context is characterised by complexity. For this reason, we developed a research design of a qualitative nature. The following direction is given by phenomenological philosophy. More specifically, we were guided by the hermeneutic approach, which is appropriate for exploring the research questions. Hermeneutic research sees in Gadamer one of its main exponents and considers knowledge built in the established hermeneutic dialogue (2) between researcher and object of investigation. The project was designed as a multiphase qualitative study, presenting four main phases.

- Exploration of the relationship between 'individual meanings of home' and educational work (using interviews, N=12)

- Representation of one's 'idea of home' in educational work (through photography), N=54;
- Exploration of the relationship between meanings and practices of home-making in daily work in residential care services for the involved educational team (Focus group discussion using photographs and maps), N=3
- Sharing (and re-discussing) the first reflections that emerged with the research participants (Follow up with focus group discussion), N=2.

For further details on the research design and the research tools, see the publication (8). In the following paragraphs, the following analysis model will be explored. However, with the delicacy of the research object's horizon and the epistemological foundation underpinning it, it is crucial to refer to the ethical dimension of the research, which is not exhausted in the fieldwork phases.

Ethics and the Role of Research Journal in Knowledge Co-Construction

The brief consideration of the phenomenological philosophy of research above centers on the role of the researcher since this cannot be separated from the object of investigation. This recalls an attitude of strong vigilance and closeness to the phenomenon, strictly intertwined with a dimension of ethics and rigour in research. Quoting Baldacci and Frabboni (9), 'Rigour corresponds to diligence in following the game's rules. In other words, each game has its rules, and the moves one makes within its framework must conform to them. Rigour, in qualitative research, does not refer to the standardisation of procedures or the generalisability of results but rather to the production of reasoning supported by precise assumptions. It is founded on systematic reflection of the thought processes introduced and the ability to enter into communicative relationships, in which reflections and insights are circulated and dialogue within one's research community (10). Rigour, we might say, is closely linked to the ability to describe the why of one's methodological choices, tools, processes and so on.

Thoughtfulness and reflexivity are also linked to the ethical dimension of research. While recognising the importance of the procedural dimension of research (this project was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Milan Bicocca, Protocol Application No. 695), it does not end there. As already mentioned, the ethical dimension should first and foremost translate into the attitude of the researcher, which, within the ecological research paradigm, translates into caring for all research participants (11). This opens up a dimension of unpredictability, so much so that we can speak of an 'ethics in practice' (12) or situational ethics (13). This attitude requires constant training in reflexivity.

Within this framework, the research journal has been a fundamental tool. The researcher's journal has a long-standing tradition in literature. This tool addresses the need to keep track of all the elements, events, or phenomena on the cognitive, emotional, affective, social, and ethical levels throughout the process crosses through the project in all its phases (11). In this case, the researcher used field notes, audio recordings, and photographic documentation by an external observer. The journal supported the practice of self-understanding and aided the researcher in documenting her positioning in the knowledge-building process. In this regard, engaging in a dialogue with the research diary was a very interesting exercise. The researcher revisited the diary in its entirety, re-reading its sections and then questioning them, highlighting particularly resonant passages and overlaying transparent sticky notes to emphasise how certain concepts or interpretations had evolved and, in other words, continually re-engaged in an epistemic dialogue with her research subject. This dimension of ethics, rigour and constant reflexivity also ran through the analytical process. During the analysis process, the researcher finds herself reading and interpreting the voices, representations, and lived experiences of participants. This also pinpoints the dimension of responsibility in research, in guaranteeing transparency, proximity to the phenomenon under investigation, as well as an adequate degree of depth that can capture the multidimensionality of its meanings.

THE ANALYSIS PROCESS

With this reflexive posture and sensibility in mind, the analysis process follows the trajectories indicated by the phenomenological philosophy of research (2)(3). It focuses on the interpretative dimension that sees the researcher as a mediator of the meanings of the participants' lived experiences (4). Given the multidimensional and multilayered nature of meaning, the analysis process was also articulated on different levels and explored a wide variety of texts – including participant photography (14) (15). Emerging themes were the result of a circular process that intertwined Van Manen's (2016) proposal for textual analysis and the matrix developed by Hannes & Wang (5) for the exploration of visual material.

To explore the phenomenon in its multilayered complexity, the analysis followed the thematic analysis model proposed by Max Van Manen, as elaborated in his renowned work, "Researching Lived Experience" (3). The thematic analysis examines themes embodied and represented within the evolving meanings and images of work (3 p. 78). Initially, the researcher underlined statements or phrases that appear particularly essential or revealing of the phenomenon or experience being described. This phase aims to establish an initial framework for the phenomenon. The second step looks for connections between the identified themes (3 p.93). Once this is completed, the researcher can sketch and outline interpretive considerations of the studied phenomenon, drawing from the identified themes, relationships, and connections, thereby identifying semantic pathways and traces within the collected material. The NVivo software was chosen to assist the researcher in analyzing the gathered material and ensure the rigorous execution of this research phase. This was particularly functional for archiving collected materials and facilitating the intricate tasks of coding and analysis.

This outlined model of analysis is primarily addressed (but not reduced) to textual material. However, this project produced a substantial amount of visual material, in particular photographic material taken by participants (16). In this sense, the researcher aimed to grasp better and enhance photographic data's epistemic value. This aspiration stems from a desire to move beyond viewing photographic data as subordinate to or merely accompanying textual data. As Hannes and Siegesmund state: 'We argue that visual data can do more than just illustrate ideas or concepts, particularly in the process of research where participants contribute to the data collection phase. Visual images record the tacit meanings of the person who makes them, and they can, with the help of a researcher skilled in qualitative reasoning, form another stream of textual analysis.' (17 p.278)

At the same time, how is it possible to undertake a path of visual material analysis without having a specific expertise and/or an artistic background? Despite the human basic visual literacy (e.g., the human perceptual ability to recognize colour or patterns), this might not suffice when embarking on a research journey with images. For this reason, the researcher approached the fundamental theories of design and colour (18) in order to understand how to recognise visual elements of image. However, this challenge is not solely tied to understanding the inherent characteristics of visual data in its composition. Images are inherently intertwined with historical, political, and economic dimensions influencing their outcome (19).

Another potentially critical dimension arises from the notion of interpreting images. An image is more than just a symbol; it is a tangible object, and the interaction we feel with it (19 p.22) is like a tangible object that invites us to interact. The focus on the composition of the image is not merely limited to its aesthetic dimension. Alternatively, the possibility of grasping this aesthetic dimension makes it possible to identify a new layer of meaning. Grasping the perspective from which the subject is portrayed offers information on the positioning of the subject about the object of its investigation. Again, the choice of whether or not to include details of space in the image opens up new possibilities for interpretation, as does the choice of whether or not to modify an image. In this context, the visiting program at KU Leuven was pivotal, during which an initial introduction to the framework developed by Wang & Hannes (5) was possible. The matrix was conceived as a tool for analyzing material produced in photovoice processes but is highly flexible and potentially applicable to projects rooted in

or informed by photography. The matrix is not a rigid tool for image interpretation but rather a support for developing best practices. Indeed, it can serve as a valuable guide for justifying one's choices in photovoice projects and, more broadly, in projects utilizing visual languages. This tool comprises three overarching areas, also referred to as 'sites': Production site, Photography site, and Audience site. Each of these three areas is explored through three 'modalities': technological, compositional, and social. These approaches are not to be understood as separate. They are part of the same circular process, built on a dialogue that made it possible to identify the three macro-themes of analysis that will be presented in the final conclusions. The visual analysis of the material offered a new layer of meaning interwoven with the textual one, just as the captions of the images, interviews and focus groups informed the reading of the photographs. In presenting analysis themes, direct quotes and images taken by the participants were included. However, it must be declared the 'imbalance' between textual material over visual material. This decision is also related to ethical and privacy reasons. In that case, an attempt was made to describe the image or to justify its non-inclusion.

CONCLUSION: PRESENTING THREE STRUCTURING THEMES

Considering this, and having in mind the research question '*How educators use physical dimension and the idea of home in education children in alternative care*', three major themes—deeply interrelated—arise and structure the investigated phenomenon:

1. *The Physical Dimension of Home*: The physical description of the investigated contexts characterized the initial phase of the analytical journey, but it did not end there. The analysis highlighted primarily the lived dimension (24) (25) of space: how are these spaces traversed, lived in, and imbued with meaning by their inhabitants? What roles and functions do these spaces assume in the educational trajectories within the setting? This perspective resonates with Palmieri's (23) notion of attending to space from an educational care perspective, seeking to understand how these spaces can be "lived in" and claimed by individuals or remain as spaces of others. With this theoretical premise in mind, the researcher explored the physical dimension from three dimensions: a 'macroscopic' one, which can be identified with the architectural variables of the contexts (to which has been added a specific reflection on the territory in which the service arises and develops); a 'mesoscopic' one, that is, focused on the domestic spaces that make up the services; a 'microscopic' one, with a specific focus on the objects that seem to take centrality in the educational practice and in the lived experience of its inhabitants.

2. *Meanings of Home in the Lived Experience of Professional Educators*: attention was given to the metaphors presented by participants and the connotations that make 'home' a specific experiential territory of possibility and learning (22). In educators' experiences, home is where they can exercise freedom, make mistakes, and reveal their most authentic selves. Participants frequently used metaphors in the literature, such as 'safe harbor,' 'swallow's nest,' or even 'beanbag chair' (understood as a soft chair where one can lounge comfortably). Narratives also referred to a more sensory dimension connected to their understanding of home, like warmth and light. Interestingly, elements of discontinuity characterized the lived experience of a home compared to the community experience, including educator turnover, external regulations affecting actions, and the sometimes limited ability to truly make a shared space one's own.

3. *Home-making practices*: The notion that 'inhabitants create home' recurred in educators' words. Thus, it is challenging to speak of a singular way of 'making' given the diverse inhabitants. However, focusing on educational actions, the dimension of hospitality emerged as crucial for 'making home.' There was also a strong emphasis on the educational importance of orderliness and education through aesthetics (21). In one of the investigated settings, with children aged 4 to 7, the fundamental practice for 'making home' was providing security through predictability, from creating rituals to establishing small traditions. There was also a recurring theme of personalizing spaces as a mechanism of ownership and belonging.

Even if presented separately, the three themes are not understood as watertight compartments, as they are linked by a bond of interdependence. For example, a specific reflection on the kitchen – as a place where certain types of actions take place, where precise educational experiences are initiated – intercepts reflections on the meanings of home assumed in the experience of professionals and becomes the territory of certain practices for 'making home'.

In conclusion, the project highlighted the importance of questioning the lived dimension of space, which is composed of practices and meanings. While recognising the importance of establishing structural and architectural standards that prevent the risk of institutionalisation, it is essential to reflect on the lived experience of living 'the home' offered in the RCH. Reflecting on the intentional and non-intentional dimensions that compose the educational pathway in the RCH means recognising the 'home' as the place where the educational action comes to life and as a pivotal educational actor. This vision of dwelling is linked to a perspective founded on the rights of childhood, "a right to be understood, not only as the satisfaction of the basic needs to live and survive but also as the possibility of seeing all emotional, intellectual and expressive potential recognised and being able to expand in well-kept and non-random environments, conceived [...] also involving those who inhabit them every day." (20 p.15)

REFERENCES

- (1) Denzin, N. K. (2010). *The Qualitative Manifesto: A Call to Arms*. Left Coast Press.
- (2) Gadamer, H.-G. (1983). *Verità e metodo*. Bompiani.
- (3) Van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching Lived Experience, Second Edition: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. Left Coast Press.
- (4) Artoni M. & Tarozzi M. *Fenomenologia come metodo e filosofia di ricerca nelle scienze umane, Encyclopaideia*, n. 27 XIV.
- (5) Wang, Q., & Hannes, K. (2020). Toward a more comprehensive type of analysis in photovoice research: The development and illustration of supportive question matrices for research teams. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19,1609406920914712.
- (6) Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Wiley.
- (7) Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Sage.
- (8) Carriera, L. (2023). The home dimension in residential care homes': exploring through visual methodology educator's practices and imaginary of 'home' in alternative care spaces. First reflection on methodology. In Nikki Fairchild (a cura di), 6th European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry: *Qualitative Inquiry in the Anthropocene: Affirmative and generative possibilities for (Post)Anthropocentric futures*. (pp. 228-239). University of Portsmouth. [ISBN: 978-1-86137-677-0]
- (9) Baldacci, M., & Frabboni, F. (2013). *Manuale della ricerca educativa*. Utet. (p.50-51)
- (10) Sità C. (2012), *Indagare l'esperienza. L'intervista fenomenologica nella ricerca educativa*. Carocci (p.34)
- (11) Mortari L. (2016). *Cultura della ricerca e pedagogia. Prospettive epistemologiche*. Carocci
- (12) Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity and "ethically important moments" in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2),261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1077800403262360>
- (13) Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Wiley-Blackwell.

- (14) Clover D.E., Out of the dark room. Participatory photography as a critical, imaginative, and public aesthetic practice of transformative education, in "Journal of transformative education", vol. 4, n. 3, 2006, pp. 275-290.
- (15) Daniels D., Learning about community leadership. Fusing methodology and pedagogy to learn about the lives of settlement women, in "Adult Education Quarterly", vol. 53, n. 3, 2003, pp. 189-205.
- (16) Holm, G. (2014). Photography as a research method. The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research, 380-402. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.26>
- (17) Hannes, K., & Siegesmund, R. (2022). An analytical apparatus for visual imagery applied in social-behavioral research. International Review of Qualitative Research, 15(2), 278-302. (p.278)
- (18) Weber, E. A. (1980). Vision, Composition, and Photography. De Gruyter.
- (19) Freedman, K., & Siegesmund, R. (2023). Visual Methods of Inquiry: Images as Research. Taylor & Francis Limited.
- (20) Mantovani in Malatesta S.,(2015) Geografia dei Bambini, Luoghi, Pratiche e Rappresentazioni. (pp. 1-172). Guerini Scientifica
- (21) Bertolini, P., Caronia, L., Barone, P., & Palmieri, C. (2015). Ragazzi difficili. Pedagogia interpretativa e linee d'intervento. FrancoAngeli.
- (22) Benetton, M. (2019). Lo spazio educativo della casa come strumento di libertà e di pace: dall'ambiente familiare alla Casa dei Bambini di Maria Montessori. Pedagogia Oggi, 17(1), 245-266.
- (23) Palmieri, C., & Prada, G. (2008). Non di sola relazione. Per una cura del processo educativo. Mimesis.
- (24) Iori V. (2008). Lo spazio vissuto: luoghi educativi e soggettività. FrancoAngeli.
- (25) Frémont A. (1974), "Recherches sur l'espace vécu", Espace géographique, 3(3), pp. 231-237

CORRESPONDING WITH STELLA AND ANOREXIA IN SYSTEMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

Christopher Loh¹, Federico Albertini²

¹Royal Holloway, University of London (UK)

¹Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (UK)

²University of Bergamo (Italy)

²Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

Abstract

We are two social scientist-practitioners (FA in Italy and CL in the UK). This is a collaboration between us and an Italian woman 'Stella' who is receiving treatment for anorexia nervosa in Milan. Our research interest is built on Stella's request to connect with her systemic psychotherapist through physical touch. The dilemmas of responding to such a need in the Italian and British contexts bring to question the ethics and politics of touch between a systemic psychotherapist and a client. As we began collaborating with Stella, we realised it was extremely hard to 'fully' participate in Stella's world. Thus, we problematise the possibility of participating in a world different from ours without potentially misunderstanding or colonising it. We also problematise the complexity of creating the relationship with the research participants. Our theoretical standpoint is that there are no single but rather multiple ontologies. We suggest that qualitative researchers in systemic psychotherapy should be more tentative when the worlds of others. Therefore, we pose the following questions: Can we fully participate in more than one world? How can we access Stella's ontological world as a point of departure from our own? How can we bridge the researcher's world and those we are co-researching with? We draw upon Tim Ingold's correspondence to consider these provocations by shifting from the betweenness of beings and things to their in-between-ness. With Stella, we focus on how to *go along together* instead of the interaction between the three of us. In doing so, we designate a more sustainable research collaboration that invites us to join the flow of the process rather than observing it from the outside.

Keywords: systemic, haptic, affective, co-researching, anorexia

INTRODUCTION

There has been an increased interest in co-researching across social sciences and humanities. There is no one way of co-researching, and this depends largely on the discipline and paradigm. This paper aims to discuss the complexity of co-researching and proposes a corresponding approach that bridges the gap between co-researchers in the field of systemic psychotherapy. We argue that (1) a research inquiry is similar to a systemic clinical inquiry and (2) co-researching in systemic psychotherapy is a corresponding and relational process of *becoming with* our research participants and clients.

CONTEXT

Chris is a Chinese Singaporean man who lives in London. He is a social worker and a systemic psychotherapist. Federico is an Italian man based in Italy with the professional backgrounds of a clinical psychologist and sexologist. Both Chris and Federico are doctoral students in the research and practice of systemic psychotherapy at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (a course accredited by the University of Essex). We share an interest in co-researching with our research participants and clients. Stella¹ is an Italian woman who is in the process of recovery from Anorexia Nervosa (AN). The project emerged from Federico's conversation with Stella about his doctoral research interest in how systemic psychotherapists use their bodies in therapy with families. This led Stella to share with Federico about her request to her systemic psychotherapist to use physical touch with her in therapy. At the time, Federico and Chris met on several occasions to share ideas on their common research interest in affects, emotions and bodies in systemic psychotherapy. The conversation between Federico and Stella, and between Federico and Chris subsequently led the three parties to have a joint discussion. This eventually led the three of us to embark on this joint venture of co-researching.

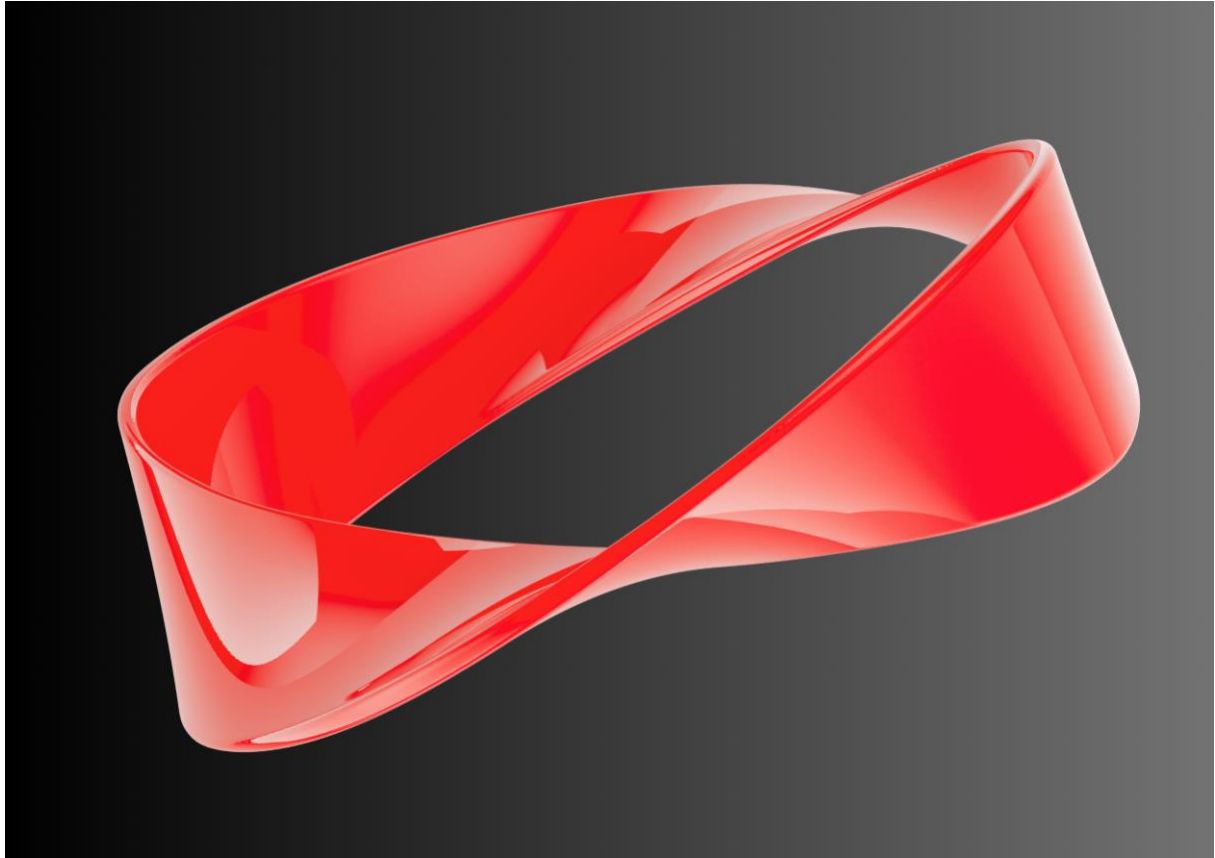
THE COMPLEXITY OF CO-RESEARCHING

Being in the double position of a clinician and a researcher has influenced how we think about co-researching. At the initial stage of the work, we met on multiple occasions without Stella. The outcome of our discussion was then fed back to Stella by Federico. Stella was consulted and had significant input in the direction of the project. This is how many co-researching projects would engage their participant co-researchers. Although Stella was part of the co-researching work, she was still operating on the 'outside', but we would like her to be on the 'inside'. Subsequently, a three-way meeting was initiated, which has continued this way. Over the course of the work, we realised that Stella and ourselves were working from different positions. We see Stella as a co-worker and a co-researcher, and we see all of us as a team. Stella, on the other hand, sees us as the clinical experts. She described us as being at the front of the project, but we thought we were walking alongside her. This raises the question, 'How can we co-research when we are seen as the experts in clinical and research practices?' As we explored this further with Stella, she commented on the research process that gave us insight into the complexity of co-researching: She said that as we do not have an eating disorder and talk about it, it inadvertently produces the clinician-client relationship. So how 'co' is the 'co' in 'co-researching'?

RESEARCH AND CLINICAL INQUIRIES IN SYSTEMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

To answer the above question, we take the standpoint that research inquiry is the same as a clinical inquiry in systemic psychotherapy. This is because the process of inquiring, the curiosity and the dynamics between the persons involved, and the context of the inquiry are key elements of co-researching and, more broadly, systemic research. These key elements are also central to systemic psychotherapy. We argue that binding research and systemic clinical inquiry in research practice is a form of 'post qualitative research'. Systemic psychotherapists come from a tradition that sees things in relations and context. We need to attend to and keep all these relationships together. Like a Mobius strip (see picture below), the role of a systemic researcher is closely intertwined with the role of a systemic psychotherapist. We find the Moebius strip useful in navigating the challenges we face as researchers and clinicians in this project. The Moebius strip is a looped surface with only one side and only one edge. As mentioned earlier, we were in the disposition to be considered by Stella as her co-researchers. However, she considers us as clinicians under many circumstances which leaves us in a non-orientable situation. The Moebius strip is defined as a non-orientable surface as one cannot decide whether they are inside or outside, whether they are 'up' or 'down'. We found ourselves in a non-orientable situation because we could not understand the moments when we were researchers and the moments when we were clinicians.

¹ Stella is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the co-researcher.



Whilst the Mobius strip is a useful metaphor for these positions, it does not come without limitations. The trouble with considering the research and clinician positions is that the person and personhood of the researcher becomes in the shadow. Therefore, we would like to add a third dimension to the Mobius strip, which is that of the person and personhood. Drawing upon Bateson's idea that context gives meaning (1), we hold the view that there is little difference between a researcher and a systemic psychotherapist, and the meaning of these positions depends on the context in which the events and the relationships are situated.

CORRESPONDING AND BECOMING

We now turn to the key events of our research process. We draw upon the concept of correspondence (2) to 'co-research' with Stella and to get close to Stella's world. We also want to argue that co-research is a process of becoming (3) with our participants and clients. The more we meet and the more conversations we have, the more we become with Stella.

The co-researching process began only when we started to correspond with Stella. Stella spoke about the world she has created with AN (her relationship with AN) and how AN has taken her away from her social relationships. In one of the meetings, Chris asked Stella: *'No eating disorders are the same. By being part of this co-research project, what do you want to change in this world?'* Stella struggled to answer this question, which made Chris realise that this was a huge question. There were several layers of context to this question: firstly, it invited Stella into a co-researcher position (although one that she may not see fit); secondly, it brought forth differences in eating disorders (i.e. her relationship with AN is not the same as someone else's relationship with AN); and thirdly it emphasised potential change on multiple levels (i.e. change in her world with AN and her social world as well as the worlds of others). A sparkling moment occurred when she broke down in tears and said that she could sense that something positive was going to happen in her journey with AN, but she could not pinpoint exactly

what it was. This episode highlights how we correspond with Stella by going along with her. We asked about the in-betweenness of AN and her, AN and her social relationships, and other people's experience with AN. We assume that AN is not the same with anyone, anywhere, and at any given time. This event also illustrates that the research inquiry is the same as a systemic clinical systemic inquiry. To us, Stella is a participant, a client, a co-researcher and most importantly, a person. We argue that we cannot relate to and attend to one aspect of Stella without the other aspects of co-researching. Likewise, we cannot inquire from the position of a researcher without the position of a clinician. Indeed, both aspects are relevant and fused for us and Stella. To correspond with Stella, we need to speak to the in-betweenness of these positions for us all. Otherwise, we would be merely interacting (not corresponding) with Stella and relating between us, which could result in a disconnect between the co-researchers and the illusion of collaborative co-researching.

Co-researching is a process of *becoming* in-between us all. A second sparkling moment came when Stella asked Chris what made him work with AN. The immediate response from Chris was to give a professional account of his work. Following this conversation, Stella's question sat with Chris, who reflected further after the meeting and made a connection to his previous struggle with body image, weight, shape, eating and exercise, which has informed his belief that all people or young people should feel comfortable in their bodies. This was a new insight for Chris, and it has helped him professionally and personally. Chris shared this reflection with Stella, who was affected and moved; she said it made her 'feel better'. This episode depicts the process of becoming where Stella shares about hope (she felt something positive was going to happen), and Chris gains a new insight (a connection between his personal life and professional work). The process of becoming is also a process of transformation and healing. It is also worthwhile to point out that self-disclosure is a form of touch; co-researching, therefore, is also about touching each other. A learning point for us is the importance of building a relationship where both researcher-clinician and client within this context are asking each other questions, rather than the usual uni-directional clinician-to-client questioning process. The more we ask each other questions, the more we become. This correspondence is also about bravery and vulnerability.

ETHICS IN CO-RESEARCHING

Last but not least, we want to discuss ethics, which, in our view, is the most important and difficult aspect of the work to navigate. Several ethical questions came up for us, which we are in ongoing discussion and reflection on with Stella: Are we leading Stella? Are we colonising Stella? Is Stella colonising us? What about anorexia? How can we ensure that Stella's voice is represented as a co-researcher?

This work's most critical ethical issue relates to power and the difference between us and Stella. We are mindful of the power and privilege embedded within our positions as a man and a research-clinician (an expert). The differences in our spoken language and geographical location also intersect with gender and profession to produce power differentials in our relationships. Chris speaks English and Mandarin. Federico speaks Italian and English. Stella speaks predominantly Italian and knows some English. We are met with the challenge of language as our joint conversation, and Federico translates emails to bridge the communication between Stella and Chris. Ethics is embedded in the cross-cultural dimension of this work, which includes gender, language, geography (sociopolitics of the UK and Italy contexts), health status (with or without AN), and professional (clinician-client and researcher-researched relationships). These are facets of ourselves that are different. Some of these facets are visible, and some are invisible.

Whilst we think that we need to name and have an ongoing conversation about these differences to connect with each other, we are also aware that addressing these differences could reinforce the very power differentials that we want to address. How do we know if Stella really does not experience being

colonised by us even when she says no? How equal can we be in a co-researching relationship when we are embedded within a large institution where power is inherent in its social structure? For instance, we asked Stella how we could ensure that her voice was represented in this project as a co-researcher. We asked this question several times, and it was striking that Stella struggled to answer it. Her struggle shows the power dynamics between the researcher and the researched as well as between the clinician and the client. When we attend to these social differences, we see what is in front of us: our gender, language, profession and health come before how we behave and what we do. Despite the difficulty and discomfort of such a conversation, we must think about how we relate. Otherwise, we will be colonising in our politics, gender, geography, profession, health status, language, etcetera. Stella told us that she needed time to see herself as a co-researcher. What we have learnt from her is that, like any relationship, it takes time to build a co-researching relationship. We cannot assume that we can start to co-research right at the beginning of the research process. We need to place our differences in the foreground of the co-researching relationship and process. Thus, if we want to co-research, we need to take care of the relationship.

Researchers may not know the burden of a clinician where we need to attend to these social differences as well as to hold and manage risks. This then takes us back to the research and clinician split which is the second key ethical dilemma we are tussling with. We propose that being a clinician is the same as being a researcher. The ethical dilemma lies primarily in the non-orientable position: is it ethical for us not to be able to distinguish our positions? Is it ethical to state that my questions are both research questions and clinical questions? This dilemma is tough; maybe the answer to these questions is non-orientable, too, and the ethical dilemma lies in staying in this non-orientability. However, a partial response could be that we can be both a clinician and a researcher as long as we stay in the disposition of taking care of the relationships we are building. Different drivers might move research questions and clinical questions, but we conceptualise them all as perturbations that try to take care of the other. What does this mean? Maybe it means, as suggested by De Castro (4), that we always need to leave Stella 'a way out'. In this case, her way out has been that of placing the two of us in the position of being clinicians. She has colonised us, and we need to take responsibility for the context in which that could happen. Maybe from all this discussion about ethics, we need to remember that we should not reduce paradoxes because when we do so, it reduces the complexity and richness of this double position. Perhaps ethical practice means staying in the paradoxes as well as the Moebius band by accepting the non-duability of this choice.

STELLA'S POSITION

Stella reflected on her experience working with us. In her own words, she wrote,

'I am experiencing the collaboration with Federico and Chris as a collaboration on several 'levels', not as a circular or co-research collaboration. This is due to the fact that although I already knew Federico in another context, I am entrusting my experience and my person in their hands in this circumstance. How is this possible? A connection has been created between us (me as the patient and them as the psychologists). I see the connection as getting to know the other in a human aspect. At the beginning of each of our meetings, in fact, there was always a moment of 'personal knowledge', which also really allowed for new considerations and personal revelations. I never saw Federico and Chris as researchers, but always as psychologists; that is, people who could look after my story, my experience. In fact, initially the purpose of my sharing was purely a confrontation. Subsequently, the acquaintance between us, including through our video calls, allowed my voice to be heard. The connection allows an in-depth study of the topic at 360 degrees, taking into consideration not only studies and research, but also the human side and the emotions that characterise every human being. The researcher is always looking for

something new, but if he does not connect with the other, how can he find it? Why stop at co-research, when one can make connections and go further, into goals/spaces/collaborations never imagined?'

CONCLUSION

Our stance on this co-research endeavour is one of greater tentativeness: we aim to go along together with the individuals involved in our research project, attentively nurturing the evolving relationship with them. Initially, we held a strong assumption regarding Stella's perception of us, and we were almost certain that she viewed us solely as researchers. However, we discovered that she still regards us as clinicians. This revelation evoked parallels to Alice in Wonderland, who found herself in the situation of playing croquet with flamingos:

"The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo: she succeeded in getting its body tucked away, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down, but generally, just as she had got its neck nicely straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it would twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting out laughing: and when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away: besides all this, there was generally a ridge or furrow in the way wherever she wanted to send the hedgehog to, and, as the doubled-up soldiers were always getting up and walking off to other parts of the ground, Alice soon came to the conclusion that it was a very difficult game indeed." (5)

We assert that the differences (maybe disparities) between ourselves and Stella extend beyond mere epistemology – how we perceive and discuss phenomena through language. There is an ontological distinction that we strive to navigate and comprehend with her. From this point of ontological difference, we are advocating for a more tentative approach. Drawing upon De Castro's advice to always allow others 'a way out' (4), we acknowledge that in our (re)searching endeavours, we must relinquish the prejudice that we can fully grasp the world of others. The world of the other is always fundamentally different, not just epistemologically but ontologically, too. Therefore, we prefer to describe ourselves as researchers in this correspondence with Stella as being caught in an *asymptotic disposition*: whilst we can move closer to Stella's world through careful nurturing of our relationship, we can never fully intersect with it. Though sobering, this realisation is the essence of difference and, thus, freedom.

REFERENCES

- (1) Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and nature: a necessary unity*. Dutton.
- (2) Ingold, T. (2021). *Correspondences*. Polity Press.
- (3) Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus*. Bloomsbury.
- (4) De Castro, E. V. (2015). Who is afraid of the ontological wolf?: Some comments on an ongoing anthropological debate. *The Cambridge journal of anthropology*, 33(1), 2-17.
- (5) Carroll, L. (2023). *Alice in Wonderland*. E-Kitap Projesi & Cheapest Books.

"TOO RISKY OR TOO SCARY?" DRIVERS OF COVID-19 VACCINE ACCEPTANCE OR HESITANCY AMONG FORMER HOSPITALIZED ADULTS

Gabriela Aissa Suciu, Adriana Baban

Department of Psychology, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for public health and has taken millions of lives globally. Vaccination initiatives have played a pivotal role in mitigating severe illness and fatalities. Nonetheless, there is a considerable difference in vaccination rates across different countries. This study explores the perspectives regarding COVID-19 vaccination among individuals previously hospitalized for severe COVID-19 to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing vaccine acceptance and hesitancy within this cultural context. Qualitative methods provide critical insights into understanding the complex motivations and perspectives underlying individuals' decisions. Semi-structured interviews conducted from November 2022 to April 2023 engaged 30 Romanian participants (50% female) who were previously hospitalized for severe COVID-19, with 16% requiring intensive care. Prior to COVID-19 infection, 80% had pre-existing conditions, and 26.6% were vaccinated. Thematic analysis identified three main themes: (1) Fear-based vaccine decisions, (2) Rationalizing vaccine decisions, and (3) Trust and confidence. The COVID-19 vaccination decision-making process proved complex, with participants weighing intense negative emotions, physiological reactions, positive and negative vaccine perceptions, conflicting information sources, medical system trust, and informal theories, rumors, and narratives. However, many survivors chose to get vaccinated following their discharge from the hospital. This in-depth qualitative inquiry substantially enhances comprehension of the complexities inherent in COVID-19 vaccination decision-making.

Keywords: severe COVID-19, vaccination, qualitative research.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for public health and has taken millions of lives globally (1). Recovering from severe COVID-19 illness emphasized the health challenges that individuals face, from cardiovascular, hematologic, renal, central nervous system, and gastrointestinal complications to mental health symptoms or even death (2–4).

This public health threat has prompted an unprecedented global vaccination need, ramping up vaccination on a global scale. However, vaccine hesitancy remains a significant barrier to controlling the virus, underscoring the need to understand the perspectives of vulnerable groups. Vaccination initiatives have played a pivotal role in mitigating severe illness and fatalities. Nonetheless, there is considerable divergence in vaccination rates across different countries. Significant disparities are evident in vaccination rates among countries in Europe. The European country boasting one of the highest vaccination rates, with over 95 individuals vaccinated with at least one dose per 100 population, contrasts Romania's second lowest vaccination rate, with only about 43 individuals vaccinated with at least one dose per 100 population. Only 41 % of Romanians had received a single

vaccine dose. This stark contrast underscores the need to investigate the factors influencing vaccine decisions within this population (5-9).

Previous studies have identified fear as a key factor shaping COVID-19 vaccination decisions, including anxiety over side effects or concerns that the vaccine was rushed (10,11). Trust in health experts and systems facilitates vaccine acceptance, while medical mistrust breeds hesitancy (12,13). Additionally, social influences through community narratives and norms influence choices (14,15). However, few studies have qualitatively investigated how these factors manifest among populations hospitalized with severe COVID-19.

While research has explored general drivers of vaccine acceptance and hesitancy, perspectives of vulnerable groups severely impacted by COVID-19 need deeper investigation. Findings aim to uncover barriers and facilitators to vaccination specific to this high-risk group. Gaining insights into the factors influencing vaccination among those hospitalized with severe COVID-19 can inform targeted strategies to boost vaccination rates where most needed.

This study fills a crucial gap in understanding by exploring the perspectives regarding COVID-19 vaccination among individuals previously hospitalized for severe COVID-19 infections. Through inductive thematic analysis, we investigate the rationale, influences, and dynamic perceptions that shape participants' vaccine decisions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design

To address the research objectives, one-to-one telephone interviews were conducted. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) history of hospitalization due to severe COVID-19 and (b) adults over 18 years.

Recruitment

A purposive sample comprising Romanian individuals who had previously contracted COVID-19 ($N = 30$) was recruited through social media advertisements, snowball sampling, and through referrals provided by medical practitioners.

Data collection

To explore participants' perceptions regarding COVID-19 vaccination, a semi-structured interview guide was utilized. The interview questions focused on participants' COVID-19 illness experiences, general and specific beliefs about COVID-19 vaccination, their decision-making process regarding getting vaccinated, and future vaccination intentions. At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were provided an opportunity to share any additional meaningful reflections. Interviews were conducted from November 2022 to April 2023, lasting approximately 40 minutes on average. Verbatim transcriptions were created from audio recordings of the interviews, which were subsequently anonymized.

Data analysis

For the thematic analysis, an inductive thematic approach was followed (16). Guided by the research aims, relevant sections were extracted from the interview transcripts pertaining to (a) participants' rationale for their vaccination decisions, (b) shifts in their COVID-19 vaccine perceptions over time, (c) perceived barriers and facilitators influencing their decision-making process, (d) any reported changes in their perspectives. These identified paragraphs were compiled into one document, coded, and subjected to collaborative analysis by the research team.

Oral informed consent was obtained prior to all interviews. To protect confidentiality, participants were assigned numbers and results were presented anonymously.

RESULTS

Participants

We conducted interviews with 30 Romanian participants, with a mean age of 66.4 (SD=12.5) (see Table 1). All participants have been hospitalized for severe COVID-19 prior to interviews. 80% were suffering from chronic disease, and 50% gave up vaccination after at least one dose of vaccine.

Table 1. Characteristics of study participants.

Category	N	%
Gender (%)		
Male	15	50.0
Female	15	50.0
Other	0	0
Age Group (%)		
31-45	3	10.0
46-60	2	6.7
61-70	11	36.7
70+	14	46.7
Residence (%)		
Big town	9	30.0
Medium/small town	11	36.7
Rural area	10	33.3
Marital Status (%)		
Single	2	6.7
Married/living with partner	20	66.7
Divorced	1	3.3
Widow	7	23.3
Education (%)		
Less than Highschool	9	30.0
Highschool	15	50.0
Higher Education	6	20.0
Vaccinated Status (%)		
Yes	23	76.7
No	7	23.3
Number of vaccine doses (%)		

0	7	23.3
1	7	23.3
2	8	26.7
3	8	26.7
Vaccination Moment (%)		
Before contracting the Disease	4	13.3
One dose before, the others after	4	13.3
After contracting the disease	15	50.0

Findings

Three main themes were identified from the qualitative analysis: (1) Fear-based vaccine decisions, (2) Rationalizing vaccine decisions and (3) Trust and confidence. The main themes are described below, accompanied by illustrative quotes.

In this research, the term "prior-infection acceptance" is used to denote individuals who have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccination before contracting the virus. In comparison, "post-infection acceptance" refers to those who received one or more doses after contracting COVID-19. Participants who declined COVID-19 vaccination or articulated clear intentions to abstain from it are categorized as "hesitating", aligning with the definition of vaccine hesitancy (17).

Fear-based vaccine decisions

Many participants emphasized fear as a significant factor influencing their decisions regarding COVID-19 vaccination. The fear propelled these individuals to overcome various obstacles, such as concerns about the vaccine, potential adverse reactions, stories, and pressure from acquaintances or even travelling long distances to receive the vaccine. As one participant stated:

"I'm telling you straight, after going through what I went through in hospitals, I was willing to get five vaccines, not just one, just to know that I have some freedom to be able to go to work without the thought of getting Covid again." P.6 Accepting after disease

Reports of adverse reactions from acquaintances intensified fears of experiencing similar symptoms post-vaccination. Some participants expressed fear of the vaccine's side effects, sharing stories of vaccine causing unusual or strange symptoms. Others expressed concern over new press articles about negative effects, fearing the reports were proving true. Some participants mentioned acquaintances who died, fueling fears that the vaccine could be fatal. Others knew people who fell ill after getting vaccinated or worried about longer-term side effects that are still unknown, which made them wary. As one participant stated:

"I haven't been vaccinated, and I don't intend to, because from the neighbors, a grandmother died after the third dose, and someone from our village died two weeks after the first dose. I wouldn't get vaccinated. I'm telling you honestly, no." P.8 hesitating

The inability to participate in desired events also competed with side effect fears. For some of the participants, the fear of being unable to participate in events or go to work without proof of vaccination motivated the decision to accept the vaccine. One participant got the single dose to obtain the certificate but felt vindicated and angry when they got COVID-19 shortly after. As one participant stated:

"I didn't believe in the vaccine, and I still don't, I felt forced to do it. They said I had to get vaccinated because I needed that certificate to be able to attend events. I got vaccinated with that single dose. And exactly 14 days after the vaccine, I got Covid. And I got very upset, being convinced that it was because of the vaccine." P.14 Accepting before disease

Several participants expressed hesitancy towards the COVID-19 vaccine due to previous negative experiences with vaccines, particularly the flu shot, which fueled their present hesitancy. Concerns arose regarding the rapid development of the vaccine, leading to perceptions of inadequate testing and the use of individuals as unwitting experimental subjects, particularly in communities where rumors of vaccine-related deaths circulated. Elderly individuals, fearing their age might heighten susceptibility to severe side effects, expressed reluctance to vaccinate, with some citing fear of death after hearing reports of fatalities post-vaccination. Meanwhile, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, particularly neurological issues, harbored heightened worries about vaccine-related exacerbation or new health complications, deeming their health too fragile to risk vaccination. As one participant stated:

"Some consider themselves healthy, I believe the biggest fear everyone has is that they don't want to be experimented on. If the vaccine is good, great, but if it's not, what does it lead to? What doesn't it lead to? That's the whole problem. That's what I think. Do I know? Maybe others say differently, but anyway, experiments have been done and will continue to be done worldwide." P.13 hesitating

Rationalizing vaccine decisions

Some participants were heavily influenced by informal theories, rumors, and anecdotes about the COVID-19 vaccines from people around them. Their decisions often stemmed from trying to make sense of conflicting information and adopting informal theories that resonated with their existing views. Several mentioned acquaintances who got vaccinated but still got severely ill or died from COVID-19. This fed doubts about vaccine effectiveness and made them question if it would prevent severe disease. Stories about side effects and deaths provided explanations for when they remained unwell and when personal health worsened after vaccination. Uncertainty about potential risks weighed heavily on their decision-making, prompting some to reverse their decision after initially accepting. As one participant stated:

"I got infected from the vaccine. And my husband was almost to die after 2 doses." P.16. accepting prior disease

or as another one stated:

"I didn't know much about Covid. I thought maybe we shouldn't get vaccinated because of our age and the uncertainty surrounding the situation. Stories were circulating in the countryside, and people were discussing them. Some believed they could recover naturally, and if not, they preferred to remain as they were, fearing potential consequences of the vaccine." P.12 accepting prior disease

Moreover, individuals draw upon personal experiences or preconceived notions to rationalize their decisions. For instance, attributing symptoms or adverse health outcomes post-vaccination to the vaccine itself reinforces existing beliefs against vaccination. Additionally, the lack of perceived effectiveness, as some individuals still contracted severe illness despite vaccination, fuels skepticism about vaccination's efficacy in preventing severe outcomes. As one participant explained:

"Many people were saying they got the vaccine and still got sick, maybe not as severely. I've heard others say negative opinions, that they are not getting vaccinated because who knows what these vaccines are, and nobody knows." P.22 Accepting after disease

The narratives also highlight the role of misinformation or misunderstandings surrounding vaccines, with concerns expressed about potential adverse effects or doubts about vaccine efficacy. Such narratives contribute to a broader discourse of skepticism and mistrust surrounding COVID-19 vaccines. Overall, the impact of these social theories and common explanations is multifaceted, initially

shaping individuals' perceptions but also serving to rationalize decisions made based on personal experiences and external influences.

Trust and confidence

Many of the accepting participants expressed trust that getting vaccinated would reduce their chances of severe illness confidence in its benefits, often citing recommendations from healthcare professionals as a key factor. Participants recount instances where medical professionals strongly advocated for vaccination post-illness due to complications or vulnerabilities observed during treatment. Others describe getting multiple doses without hesitation, believing in the importance of vaccination. Some participants who initially harbored doubts but ultimately decided to get vaccinated often credited their trust in health experts for guiding them past their initial hesitation. Despite any initial reservations, their overall confidence in healthcare professionals remained steadfast. This indicates the persuasive power of medical authority in influencing vaccine decisions. As one participant described:

"I decided to get vaccinated about a month after I got out of the hospital. The doctor kept encouraging me to go. He told me not to be afraid of the vaccine. The doctor himself encouraged me. And I went and got two doses." P.17 Accepting after disease

Getting the annual flu vaccine showed an underlying trust and habit of vaccination. Those who regularly got flu vaccines thought they were protected against seasonal illnesses. The familiarity with annual vaccination behavior prepared them to accept the COVID vaccine as well. As one participant stated:

"I get the flu vaccination every year. Same thing this fall when I went for the vaccine, the doctor asked how wanted to be vaccinated, to write it down in the table. Some want, others don't. We did." P.5 accepting prior disease

A few had been scheduled for vaccination before falling ill and regretted not getting vaccine doses sooner due to illness. Their general openness reflected an underlying assumption that vaccination is an essential tool for safeguarding health despite occasional instances where vaccination did not provide complete immunity. A few expressed calm in the fact they were vaccinated when hospitalized, feeling it had saved them. They cited luck and expressed gratitude despite others discouraging vaccination. Their doctors' validation reinforced confidence in their choice. As one participant explained:

"Like the doctor said, I was lucky. I was lucky because I got vaccinated, he said. And I listened to him. Others condemn vaccination. But I don't know what to believe that." P.30 Accepting prior disease

Overall, many of the vaccinated participants voiced stalwart trust and confidence in COVID-19 vaccines to reduce disease severity, hospitalizations, and deaths. Their certainty stemmed from scientific optimism, faith in doctors, personal belief in benefits, and family influence.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed three predominant themes shaping COVID-19 vaccine perspectives: fear-based vaccine decisions, rationalizing vaccine decisions and trust and confidence. Many participants described intense fears influencing their vaccine decisions, whether anxiety over reinfection or, conversely, concern about adverse reactions. Stories of vaccine harm circulating in communities compounded hesitancy. However, some overcame doubts by trusting health experts' advice. Additionally, participants leveraged theories that resonated with their views to justify decisions post-hoc. These narratives highlight the complex interplay between vaccine misconceptions, social influences, evolving risk assessments, and confidence in public health measures that underpin high-stakes medical decisions.

Gaining insights into the reasoning behind COVID-19 vaccine choices among those severely impacted can inform public health communication and interventions to address hesitancy. Our findings suggest nuanced, empathy-based messaging from trusted sources may resonate more with hesitant groups. As vaccines remain central to managing COVID-19 moving forward, incorporating diverse perspectives into public health strategies promotes informed, voluntary decisions.

This study offers valuable qualitative insights into COVID-19 vaccine perspectives among Romanian adults hospitalized for severe COVID-19 infections. Through in-depth interviews, we identified fear, rationalization, and confidence as major themes underlying participants' vaccine decision-making processes.

Overall, intense fear shaped many participants' decisions, whether it was fear of reinfection driving them to vaccinate or, conversely, fear of side effects preventing vaccination. Negative past experiences with vaccines also fed into fears. Anxiety over short and long-term side effects posed a significant barrier to vaccination for many participants. Past negative experiences, age, health status, and stories of harm heightened hesitancy stemming from fears of adverse impacts. Fear stood out as a prominent influence, consistent with previous research [10]. However, our findings reveal nuances within this high-risk group. Intense anxiety over reinfection due to the trauma of severe illness drove some participants to vaccinate, reflecting greater risk salience. However, stories of vaccine harm circulating in communities also heightened hesitancy, especially in rural areas.

Trust emerged as another salient factor shaping vaccine acceptance, with many participants expressing confidence in scientific progress and doctors' advice. This aligns with the literature on the key role of public trust and healthcare provider recommendations in facilitating vaccine uptake [11]. Distrust and medical uncertainty also perpetuated misconceptions about side effects and efficacy, highlighting ongoing challenges in combating misinformation.

Additionally, we found participants leveraged theories reinforcing their pre-existing vaccine leanings to justify decisions post-hoc. This rationalization process highlights how social narratives shape vaccine perceptions before, during, and even after choices are made. Our findings also emphasize the interplay between evolving risk assessments, emotional drivers, and practical needs influencing high-stakes medical decisions under uncertainty.

The study's strengths include the in-depth qualitative approach and sample representing those most severely impacted by COVID-19. As vaccines are a global priority for managing the pandemic, our results can inform public health communication and interventions to address hesitancy among vulnerable groups in Romania and beyond.

This study offers valuable insights into the complex factors influencing COVID-19 vaccination decisions among individuals who have experienced severe illness. The findings have important implications for public health communication and interventions aimed at addressing vaccine hesitancy, particularly among high-risk and vulnerable groups.

First, the study highlights the importance of acknowledging and addressing intense emotions that drive vaccine decision-making, such as fear of reinfection or adverse reactions. Public health messaging should acknowledge these fears and provide empathetic guidance rather than relying solely on statistics and facts. By fostering a sense of understanding and validation, communication strategies may be more effective in building trust and rapport with hesitant individuals.

Second, the findings underscore the need for ongoing dialogue and two-way communication with hesitating groups. Providing opportunities for individuals to voice their concerns and receive tailored responses from trusted sources could help address misconceptions and uncertainties. Collaborative conversations may prove more effective than one-way messaging in promoting voluntary vaccination decisions.

Third, the study emphasizes the significance of combating misinformation and acknowledging uncertainties surrounding vaccination. Public health strategies should focus on restraining the spread

of inaccurate information while simultaneously acknowledging the complexities and evolving nature of scientific knowledge. By embracing transparency and addressing concerns with empathy, communication efforts may resonate more effectively with hesitating individuals.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of tailoring public health interventions to the specific needs and perspectives of vulnerable populations. Public health authorities can foster informed decision-making and promote equitable vaccine uptake by incorporating these insights into communication strategies.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations to understand the scope of the findings. First, the sample size, although appropriate for a qualitative study, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the broader population. Second, the study focused specifically on individuals who had been hospitalized for severe COVID-19 infections. While this population represents a high-risk group, the perspectives and decision-making processes of individuals who experienced milder or asymptomatic infections may differ and were not captured in this study. Third, the study relied on self-reported data from participants, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias, potentially influencing the accuracy and completeness of the information provided. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable qualitative insights that can inform public health strategies and interventions to address vaccine hesitancy among high-risk populations.

Funding: This research was funded by the Alliance on International Science Organizations (ANSO), grant number ANSO-CR-PP-2021-10.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendment and approved by The Ethical Committee of the Institute for Population and Human Studies Bulgarian Academy of Science (PD-2-140/15.08.22).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets used and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. The funders had no role in the design of the study, in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data, in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

REFERENCES

- (1) Worldometer. Coronavirus: COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic - Coronavirus deaths. Available at: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> (Accessed on 12 February 2024).
- (2) Pan, K. Y., Kok, A. A., Eikelenboom, M., Horsfall, M., Jörg, F., Luteijn, R. A., ... & Penninx, B. W. (2021). The mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people with and without depressive, anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive disorders: a longitudinal study of three Dutch case-control cohorts. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 8(2), 121-129.
- (3) Higgins, V., Sohaei, D., Diamandis, E. P., & Prassas, I. (2021). COVID-19: from an acute to chronic disease? Potential long-term health consequences. *Critical reviews in clinical laboratory sciences*, 58(5), 297-310.

- (4) Del Rio, C., Collins, L. F., & Malani, P. (2020). Long-term health consequences of COVID-19. *Jama*, *324*(17), 1723-1724.
- (5) World Health Organization. Overview Vaccines: WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard. 2023. Available at: <https://covid19.who.int> (Accessed on 12 February 2024).
- (6) World Health Organization. COVID-19 advice for the public: getting vaccinated. 2022. Available at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines/advice> (Accessed on 12 February 2024).
- (7) World Health Organization. Romania Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics. 2023. Available at: <https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/ro> (Accessed on 12 February 2024).
- (8) Code for Romania. Official Data. 2023. Available at: <https://covid19.datelazi.ro> (Accessed on 12 February 2024).
- (9) Habersaat, K. B., & Jackson, C. Understanding vaccine acceptance and demand—and ways to increase them. *Bundesgesundheitsblatt, Gesundheitsforschung, Gesundheitsschutz* **2020**, *63*(1), 32.
- (10) Paul, K. T., Zimmermann, B. M., Corsico, P., Fiske, A., Geiger, S., Johnson, S., ... & Van Hoyweghen, I. (2022). Anticipating hopes, fears and expectations towards COVID-19 vaccines: A qualitative interview study in seven European countries. *SSM-Qualitative Research in Health*, *2*, 100035.
- (11) Freeman, D., Lambe, S., Yu, L. M., Freeman, J., Chadwick, A., Vaccari, C., ... & Loe, B. S. (2023). Injection fears and COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. *Psychological medicine*, *53*(4), 1185-1195.
- (12) Ahluwalia, S. C., Edelen, M. O., Qureshi, N., & Etchegaray, J. M. (2021). Trust in experts, not trust in national leadership, leads to greater uptake of recommended actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy*, *12*(3), 283-302.
- (13) Silver, D., Kim, Y., McNeill, E., Piltch-Loeb, R., Wang, V., & Abramson, D. (2022). Association between COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and trust in the medical profession and public health officials. *Preventive medicine*, *164*, 107311.
- (14) Aissa Suci, G., & Baban, A. (2024). Vaccine Decision-Making Influences-Insights from Severe COVID-19 Survivors: A Qualitative Study. *Medical & Clinical Research*, *9* (1), 01, 9.
- (15) Latkin, C., Dayton, L., Miller, J., Yi, G., Balaban, A., Boodram, B., ... & Falade-Nwulia, O. (2022). A longitudinal study of vaccine hesitancy attitudes and social influence as predictors of COVID-19 vaccine uptake in the US. *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics*, *18*(5), 2043102.
- (16) Clarke, V., & Braun, V. Thematic analysis. *A practical guide*. SAGE Publications Ltd: 1 Oliver's Yard 55 City Road London, UK, 2022; pp. 60–110.
- (17) Butler, R., & MacDonald, N. E. SAGE Working Group on Vaccine Hesitancy. Diagnosing the determinants of vaccine hesitancy in specific subgroups: The Guide to Tailoring Immunization Programmes (TIP). *Vaccine* 2015, *33*(34), 4176-9.

EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE: A GEO-SOCIAL AND PERFORMATIVE APPROACH TO STUDY ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

Turkan Firinci Orman

Aalto University (FINLAND)

Abstract

This paper explores the lived experiences of youth in the context of climate change, using a geo-social and performative approach to youth citizenship. It argues that relational orientation in the study of childhood and youth allows for genuine interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary collaboration with other relational disciplines (e.g., geography, anthropology) and challenges essentialist ontologies. Drawing on two relational disciplinary perspectives that acknowledge youth's political agency (i.e., children's geographies studying children's political agency and citizenship studies theorising on children's lived citizenship), this paper critiques the adult-led conceptualisations of green values and environmental ideologies. It proposes new methodological agendas to study youth environmental citizenship that trace the lived worlds of early youth and explore their critical environmental agency. The paper presents two complementary bottom-up approaches to studying youth critical agency in the everyday environmental context, along with the partial data and results of a pilot study conducted through them. Employing these strategies in a digital ethnography, data is collected through online mapping activities, online in-depth interviews, and essay writing. The paper distinguishes between developing (socialisation and subject formation) and performing (enaction) critical environmental agency: The former aims to reveal youth's environmental socialisation by analysing the politico-spatial dimensions of their social life comprising friends, family, school, and other social circles. The latter focuses on the active roles and decision-making that young people perform individually or collectively concerning consumerism and the environment. The paper further argues that critical studies focusing on the embodied and relational everyday experiences of young people enable studying citizenship across spaces and places, revealing different relational and spatial patterns by adopting critical geographical perspectives.

Keywords: everyday environmentalism, geo-socialisation, youth lived citizenship, relationality, performativity

INTRODUCTION

While the consumer perspective of environmental citizenship demands responsible individuals who partake in society through market logic, the green approach desires responsive people who change their lifestyles and challenge ecological injustices. However, neither of these approaches rightly recognises young people's environmental experiences and practises despite their becoming key players in both global consumerism and climate change mitigation. Focusing on this complexity of

political positioning and agency, this paper introduces a research project that aims to establish a novel perspective on 'youth environmental citizenship'.

The research project hypothesises that young people's critical agency related to consumerism and climate change, whether individually or collectively performed, does not develop by adapting to adult-led green values or top-down ideologies; rather, it is derived from lived experiences through which young people face their victimised consumer positions. This agency may recultivate youth-initiated awareness, responsibility, and responsiveness toward a greener and more sustainable future.

Theoretical Background

The research project is interdisciplinary, combining two critical traditions:

First, in the past decades, studies on children's political geographies have criticised the tokenistic practises of children's adult-led public political participation (1,2,3,4,5,6). They argue that children's lives are affected by both global processes and local realities, which are closely bound together and blurred in the micro-politics of everyday life (7,8). Hence, the development of youth environmental citizenship relates to formal, public politics (big-P) as well as nonformal, everyday politics (little-p) (9,10,11).

Second, in citizenship studies, with the perspective of 'acts of citizenship', Isin (12) has emphasised the performative dimensions of citizenship, contra legal conceptions. In line with this, attention to children's and young people's societal life— 'lived citizenship'—recognises embodied and relational dimensions of being a young citizen (13,14).

Conceptual framework

The study builds on the concept of lived citizenship, which has been explored by several studies (15,5), demonstrating the intersubjective, performed, and spatial character of children's everyday environment (11,14).

Lived citizenship highlights the significance of citizenship as it is experienced and enacted in various real-life contexts (16). According to the lived citizenship perspective, political participation should not be limited to formal and institutionalised practices but rather encompass informal and everyday modes of civic engagement (14), which allows for capturing the complexity and plurality of socio-spatial attachments that young people experience in their lived worlds.

INTERDISCIPLINARY DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The intricate nature of young people's political involvement requires a comprehensive and interconnected approach to unravel their dual roles as proactive agents and environmentally conscious citizens. Alanen (17) suggests that adopting a relational perspective in the study of children allows for genuine collaboration across disciplines, such as geography and psychology, moving beyond essentialist ontologies. This approach, influenced by Actor-Network Theory, facilitates interdisciplinary dialogue (16).

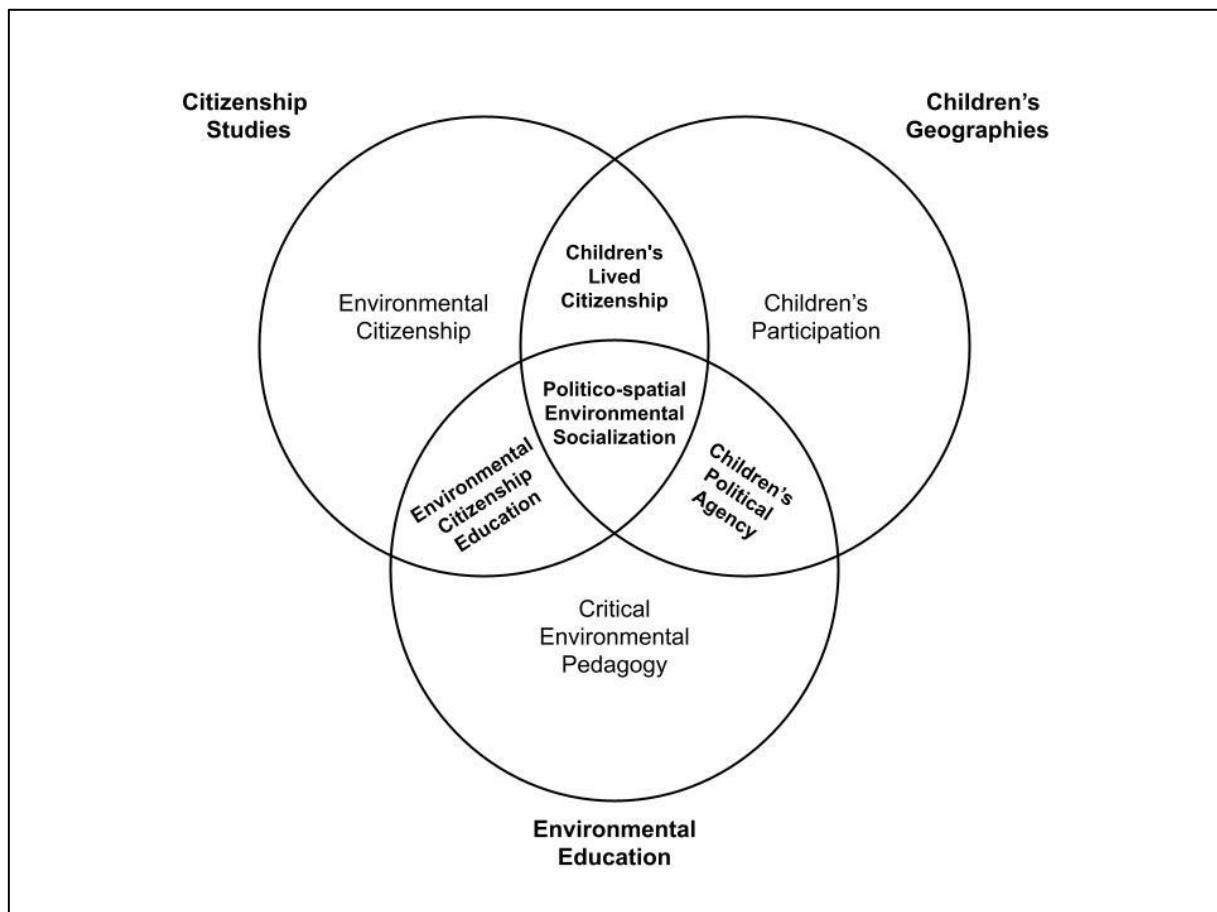


Figure 1. Interdisciplinary design of the study

Connecting relational disciplinary viewpoints that acknowledge youth's political agency, such as children's geographies and citizenship studies, is crucial. While my interdisciplinary approach and bottom-up viewpoint on youth's environmental citizenship engage in a conversation between these relational perspectives, my focus is on offering a practical analytical lens for studying youthful agency within the realm of environmental citizenship rather than delving into the meta-theoretical foundations of relationality (see Figure 1).

Geo-Social Methodology

Methodologically, the research project employs the geo-social approach developed by Kallio (18,14). This approach offers a nuanced understanding of agency, emphasising the dynamics of everyday life in communities where young people are active (19,20,18). Geo-socialisation redefines socialisation by considering inter-subjective (intergenerational) dynamics, spatial (topological) relations, and political dimensions as integral components within people's lived worlds. These three dimensions serve as analytical layers within the geo-social methodology. In Kallio's (18) theoretical framework, the political agency of young people extends beyond age, geographical limitations, and structuralist objectivity. The impetus for political agency is dynamic, shaped by human experiences and interactions that contribute to the development of selfhood and subject formation. As such, pivotal societal and individual life experiences during childhood are understood to expedite subjectivity formation significantly.

Performativity and Political Participation

The intricate landscape of youthful political agency within a sociopolitical framework showcases diverse modes of political participation (Figure 2). This includes both formal avenues, such as institutional participation in planned political processes, and nonformal or informal approaches like activism, civic action, and nonpoliticised practices (see 19). Noteworthy instances include the 2019 strikes organised by school children demanding climate action in various cities, emphasising the significance of nonformal everyday politics. Other examples highlight children's engagement through play, friendship dynamics, and contested politics. The figure underscores the importance of a situational/geographical perspective, emphasising the influence of sociospatial contexts on children's political agency. This suggests the importance of acknowledging and considering children's lived experiences and recognising the nuanced relational aspects of their political participation.

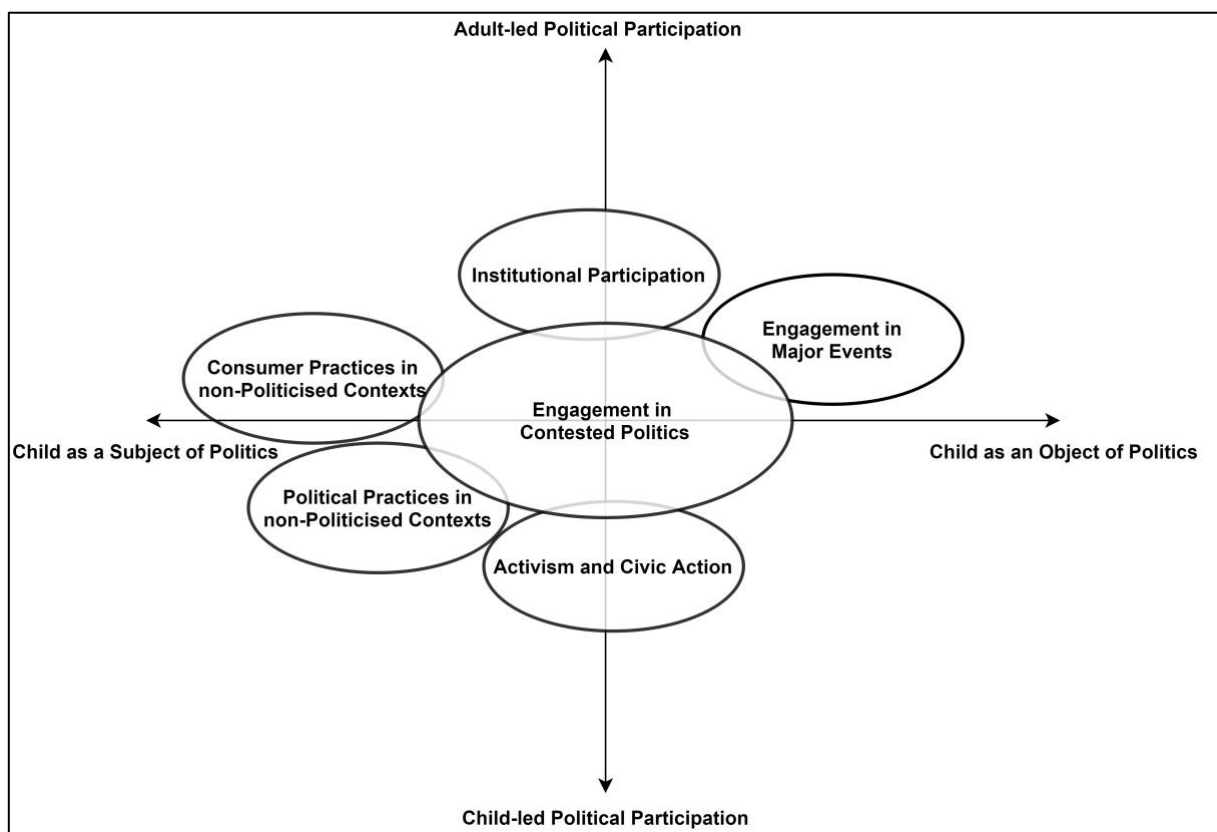


Figure 2. Political participation and positionings of young people (16).

When examining the intersection of youth agency and climate change within the political landscape, the conventional perspective fails to capture the nuances of young individuals' daily experiences and their active involvement with climate change issues. Drawing upon the performativity concept of citizenship (16), I propose a more comprehensive framework for understanding youthful political agency and participation in the realms of climate change and consumerism. I introduce four fundamental lived political stances – 'victim,' 'voter,' 'rejecter,' and 'interpreter' (see Figure 3). Additionally, I contend that young people enact their interpretive agency through practices of everyday

activism and embracing eco-friendly lifestyles, thereby challenging conventional adult-driven interpretations of environmental ideologies (16).

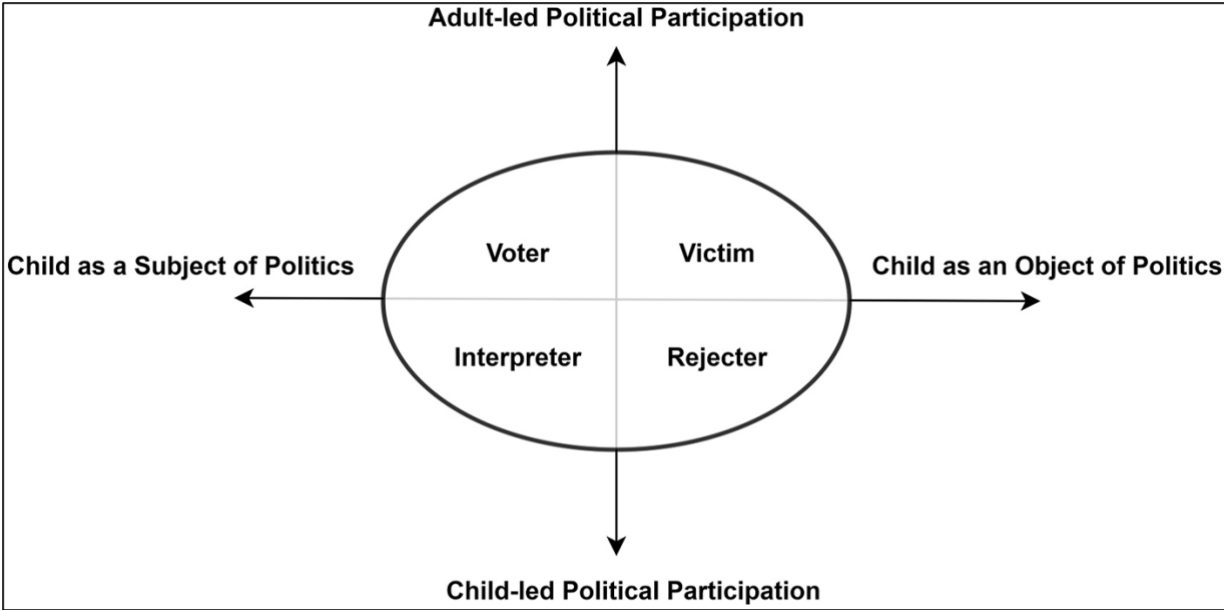


Figure 3. Performative aspects of youth environmental citizenship (19).

Data Collection and Analysis

The research materials on the project are collected and analysed, including personal maps (accompanied by interviews), written essays, outputs of the art-based workshops (accompanied by the focus-group discussions), and a general literature review (Table 1).

Activity	Theme	Data Collection	Data Type	Analysis
Country Specifics	- Youth consumerism - Environmental movements and youth participation - Citizenship studies	- Academic publications - Policy reports - Media	- Written texts - Photographs - Audio and visual records	- Literature review
Mapping and interviews	- Consumer practices - Actions for climate change mitigation	- Google maps (local, regional, global) - Semi-structured interview forms	- Personal maps - Voice records and transcriptions of the interviews	- Social, spatial, and political layers of the geosocial methodology
Essay writing	- Me as consumer - Me as citizen (environmental)	- Essays based on lived experiences and environmental knowledges	- Written texts	- Standard transcription and coding (4 performative analytical categories)
Workshops and focus groups	- Consumerism - Climate change	- Collective (art) projects (recycled materials) - Focus group discussions	- Outputs of the collective projects - Voice records and transcriptions of the group discussions	- Social, spatial, and political layers of the geosocial methodology -Standard transcription and coding (4 performative analytical categories)

Table 1. Data collection and analysis

First, a country-specific literature review is conducted in addition to a general review of the subject. Second, a mapping exercise (based on the Padlet map function) is conducted. Mapping is suitable to identify young people's key social relations and spatial relationalities and to explore their political realities from their subjective perspectives. The activity enables data collection of youth's local (neighbourhood, school environment, district, and city), regional (country, neighbouring countries, etc.), and global (the world and an international system) environmental experiences. Accompanied interviews are to unpack the mapping activity and better understand young people's situated consumer and environmental knowledge. Third, children's narrations from the essay-writing provide further information about their lived consumer and environmental citizen experiences. At each site, one thematic workshop will be organised to study the children's collective and critical environmental agencies. Fourth, undetermined but themed (consumerism and climate change) workshops with collective art projects to enable the participants to express their experiences creatively and critically. Presentations and group discussions follow in relaxed, informal ways. All interviews and group discussions will be recorded where appropriate, and essays will be analysed through a standard transcription and coding method to assess young people's agency performances (see Table 1). Maps and other visual outputs from the organised workshops will be examined according to the geo-social methodology's analytical layers (social, spatial, and political dimensions) (see Table 1).

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The methodological notes are based on the pilot study and two recent publications (22,23) on one of the study sites (Turkey), among the four total planned countries. The first publication (22) reports on this pilot ethnography-like study uncovering how young people in Turkey develop environmental awareness and citizenship, emphasising the exploration of intersectionality. Through online mapping and interviews, the geo-social methodology delves into the lived experiences of 21 diverse youth, addressing climate change and consumerism. The study highlights how their environmental subjectivities are shaped by social, spatial, and political factors contextualised within the intersectional dynamics of environmental socialisation. The findings offer valuable insights into the perspectives of young individuals in authoritarian Turkey during an economic recession.

The second publication (23) reports on the performative aspects of youth environmental citizenship, drawing on digital ethnographic data, and explores how young people in Turkey, despite constraints on civic engagement imposed by an authoritarian regime, exhibit critical agency in response to consumerism and climate change. The report examines the interpretive agency of diverse early youth. The analysis delves into the intersubjective, spatial, and affective aspects of their everyday environmental practices, revealing how these actions shape their sense of belonging, empowerment, and shared environmental values.

Studying Youth Socio-Spatial Socialization and Subjectivities Through Geo-Social Approach:

- Illuminates the complex dynamics in youth climate activism and consumption practices that are not always prominently manifested in the public sphere.
- Gives further insights gained through exploring political realities from subjective viewpoints.
- Reveals the contextual nature of environmental identity formation of young people, that is influenced by intricate power relations in everyday experiences.
- Showcases how youth identities are shaped by close relationships, immediate environment, spaces, and intersectional factors (gender, class, religion, ethnicity, etc.).

The geo-social methodological approach is significant to studying youth environmental citizenship from the bottom up:

- Redirecting attention towards everyday environmentalism and the geo-social dimensions of identity formation is crucial for understanding how young individuals evolve into environmentally conscious citizens in diverse geographic settings, including rural localities, particularly in contexts marked by inequality, imbalance, or marginalisation.

Adapting a performative approach to examine youth environmental citizenship within a specific geographical, social, and economic setting, the project:

- Sheds light on how young people express their environmental identities through relational connections and empowering actions.
- Demonstrates the proactive efforts of young individuals in maintaining meaningful connections with people, places, and issues.
- Shows how young people's environmental agency and sense of belonging unfold across different cultural and social landscapes.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through multi-country and multi-site data, the project aims to employ a logic of comparison and contrast in case selection, albeit in a practical rather than straightforward manner. This relational bottom-up approach embraces the diversity of youth experiences, specifically incorporating places with distinct cultural and political contexts.

The project adopts an ethnographic approach, enabling a comparative analysis of early youth's lived consumer and environmental experiences and studying youthful subjectivities in different countries as planned stages. Welfare regimes, such as social democratic (e.g., Finland), liberal (e.g., England), post-socialist (e.g., Bulgaria), and authoritarian (e.g., Turkey) systems, may influence youth participation and citizenship practices in various ways, as noted by Walther et al. (21). This unique methodological approach, as documented by published reports on one of the country sites, has great potential to provide insights into youth and environmental policies under different welfare regimes. Thus, the study offers evidence through in-depth geosocial data, bringing forth subjective and youthful perspectives.

REFERENCES

- (1) Skelton T, Valentine G. *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*. London: Routledge; 1997.
- (2) Philo C, Smith FM. Political Geographies of Children and Young People. *Space and Polity*. 2003;7(2):99–212.
- (3) Percy-Smith B, Thomas N, eds. *Handbook of Children's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge; 2010.
- (4) Kallio KP, Häkli J. Are There Politics in Childhood? *Space and Polity*. 2011;15(1):21–34.
- (5) Kallio KP, Mills S, eds. Geographies of Children and Young People's Politics, Citizenship, and Rights. In: *Politics, Citizenship, and Rights (Geographies of Children and Young People-7)*. New York & London: Springer Reference; 2016.

- (6) Lundy L. In Defense of Tokenism? Implementing Children's Right to Participate in Collective Decision-Making. *Childhood*. 2018;25(3):340–354.
- (7) Katz C. *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; 2004.
- (8) Punch S, Tisdall EKM. Exploring Children and Young People's Relationships Across Majority and Minority Worlds. *Children's Geographies*. 2012;10(3):241–248.
- (9) Skelton T. Taking Young People as Political Actors Seriously: Opening the Borders of Political Geography. *Area*. 2010;42(2):145–151.
- (10) Kallio KP, Häkli J. Children and Young People's Politics in Everyday Life. *Space and Polity*. 2013;17(1):1–16.
- (11) Percy-Smith B. Negotiating Active Citizenship: Young People's Participation in Everyday Spaces. In: Kallio KP, Skelton T, eds. *Politics, Citizenship, and Rights (Geographies of Children and Young People-7)*. UK: Springer Reference; 2016.
- (12) Isin E. Theorising Acts of Citizenship. In: Isin E, Nielsen GM, eds. *Acts of Citizenship*. London, NY: Palgrave Macmillan; 2008. p. 15–43.
- (13) Lister R. *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan; 2003.
- (14) Kallio KP, Wood BE, Häkli J. Lived Citizenship: Conceptualising an Emerging Field. *Citizenship Studies* (Online First). 2020.
- (15) Bartos AE. Friendship and Environmental Politics in Childhood. *Space and Polity*. 2013;17(1):17–32.
- (16) Firinci Orman T. Youth's everyday environmental citizenship: An analytical framework for studying interpretive agency. *Childhood*. 2022;29(4):495–511.
- (17) Alanen L. Childhood's relationality: identifying a new research programme for the study of children and childhood. *ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΙΚΗ - θεωρία και πράξη [Pedagogical Theory and Practice]*. 2012;5:27–42. <https://pedagogy.gr/images/tefxoi/teuxos5.pdf>
- (18) Kallio KP. Citizen-subject Formation as Geosocialization: A Methodological Approach to Learning to Be Citizens. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*. 2018;100(2):81–96.
- (19) Firinci Orman T. A society-centric approach to child rights governance in the EU context: how to strengthen the political presence and participation of children? *Children's Geographies*. 2022;20(5):633–647. DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2021.1949435
- (20) Habashi J. *Political socialization of youth: A Palestinian case study*. Palgrave Macmillan; 2017.
- (21) Walther A, Lüküslü DG, Loncle P, Pais A. Regimes of Youth Participation? Comparative Analysis of Youth Policies and Participation across European Cities. *YOUNG*. 2020;29(2):191-209.
- (22) Firinci Orman T, Demiral S. Youth environmental citizenship formation: Struggled political subjectivities and everyday experiences of young people in Turkey. *Children & Society*. 2023;37:1337–1355.
- (23) Firinci Orman T. Enacting Everyday Environmental Citizenship: Youthful Interpretations of Belonging and Empowerment. *Youth and Globalization* (published online ahead of print 2023). <https://doi.org/10.1163/25895745-bja10032>

RE-IMAGINING SCHOOLS: CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION THROUGH THE IMAGINATION OF GLOBAL YOUTH MOVEMENTS FOR EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Marcia Donadel¹, Simon Sharkey², Day Sanchez³, Morna McNulty⁴, Diane Kuthy⁵, Francine Kliemann⁶, Penny Hay⁷, Irmin Durand⁸

¹ *Platô Cultural (BRAZIL)*

² *The Necessary Space (UK)*

³ *Solarpunk Generation (GLOBAL)*

⁴ *Towson University (USA)*

⁵ *Towson University (USA)*

⁶ *Platô Cultural (BRAZIL)*

⁷ *Bath Spa University (UK)*

⁸ *AIME/Imagination Circle (GLOBAL)*

Abstract

This paper gathers the experiences from the Dream Team session at ECQI2024, which focused on questions of the imagination, such as "What if..." and "Then what?" It brought together a collection of six projects from across the globe that share a vision to re-imagine education (and schools) for a more equitable and sustainable future. The team's guiding principle is that we must use imaginative approaches toward scholarship that engage the visions and voices of the youth to bring about change. Each project engages with creative and critical qualitative methods for developing and disseminating actions that can transform our existing and possible global conditions. Each member (or team) from this dream team shared a little about the project they are currently conducting in their respective country or region. The projects reflect a diverse range of arts-based methodologies, case-study analysis, and phenomenology in representing data (outcomes from projects) and evaluating their success. Following presentations from each team, the Dream Team led the audience/participants in an interactive discussion and creative activities to encourage imaginative futures for global education.

Keywords: schools, youth empowerment, imaginative learning, global sustainability

INTRODUCTION – OVERVIEW OF THE DREAM TEAM'S FOCUS

This Dream Team focuses on questions of the imagination, such as "What if..." and "Then what?" It brings together a collection of six projects from across the globe that share a vision to re-imagine education (and schools) for a more equitable and sustainable future. The team's guiding principle is that we must use imaginative approaches toward scholarship that engage the visions and voices of the youth to bring about change.

Background and Context

Each project engages with creative and critical qualitative methods for developing and disseminating actions that can transform our existing and possible global conditions. The Dream Team projects are rooted in collaboration, sustainability, equity, inclusivity, diversity, planetary health, and regeneration. Each project emphasises the transformative potential of imagination, recognizing it as a powerful and dynamic force for innovation and global change. We view imagination and creativity as tools that can empower learners, nurture collective intelligence, and help envision new possibilities for a more just, healthy, and equitable world.

Introducing Questions for Imagination in Education

The collective project consisting of six individual projects from across the globe shared a quest to address the following questions:

1. What should the purposes of education be? Who decides? Who benefits?
2. In a world of shifting populations and climate change, what are the necessary resources and tools that educators and youth must consider to meet the needs of our collective uncertain future?
3. How can creativity and imaginative modes of qualitative research empower research-advocates across the globe to manifest a system for education?
4. How can immersive arts and modern technologies help youth imagine new ways of learning and developing their agency into the world?

Purpose of Education: Decision-makers and Beneficiaries

One goal of the Dream Team is to use art and imagination to impact wider global education policies and to challenge the powerful people who have "a seat at the table" by inviting young people to articulate and visualise, or embody, the issues, thus elevating the social imaginary (1). Social imaginary is "the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life" (1, p. 56). As such, the projects invoke critical discussion of third spaces for justice and equity in an educational redesign that could impact real-world policymakers and share a space in the global conversation.

Education is to "educate" or "draw out" the intrinsic and latent ways of knowing, being and becoming in the world in a fully embodied, connected, creative, critical, responsive and rational way. It should be the space where "applied imagination" can flourish and give shape to "ways of being and becoming in the world." Its purpose is to nurture and care for an intrinsic, primal human instinct to learn and connect that learning intrinsically and extrinsically to self, society and nature. It is The Necessary Space to flourish. Its purpose is to give space to intrinsic drives and desires and process extrinsic impacts on the body and mind so that we are equipped to deal with and shape the impacts of the randomness of the world. It should do this by generating states of play and flow in real and imaginary spaces.

The world is not reacting well to the latest paradigm shift of globalisation, technology and digital connectivity. The reductionism through systemic algorithmic dopamine-driven interactions and exam-driven education are problematic because they reduce the practice and value of the world's creative and responsive understanding and interactions and measure the outcomes through attainment through a set curriculum. Creativity and artistry in education balance the equity and availability of gaining and expressing knowledge and exercising the multiplicity of intelligences.

The role of the teacher as an artist and the artist as the teacher must change and complement each other. It is the verbs of art (2) that support the flourishing of the individual in understanding and knowing their world. It is the states of play (3) and "Flow" (4[a] and [b]) brought forth through an artistry that creates the best conditions for learners to enter the "zones of proximal development" (5) where adults can be genuine collaborators in discovery and contextualising the learning. Who decides how to build these spaces and set the adventures? It should be a combination of guided exploration designed by the artists and teachers and informed by their knowledge of the learners and their environment, culture, and potential. Everyone benefits from the proximity of knowledge, skill, narratives, and potentials that are gained. Education should not be contained in schools; it is a cultural and societal lifeblood that, when siloed and driven by hierarchical meritocracy, debases the intrinsic ability of the human being to imagine.

Resources and Tools in a Changing World: Shifting Populations and Climate Change

The world is a global network of actual and virtual possibilities. It is a chaotic maelstrom of sensory overload where systems try to tame the chaos into manageable pathways and routes through power struggles. This has been changed completely with the introduction of social media, immersive technologies, AI and gamification. The consciousness of our children is being shaped by the lives they lead in the virtual world, whilst the impacts of the real world are creating a disconnect of body, mind and community. We must harness the potential of the real and digital worlds and bring them together as a force for imagining our new paradigm into a designed and deliberate space, other than a default random collapse. For this, we need tools and programmes that deliver both creative and critical modes of learning. We need a clear balance and connection between the physical and digital worlds and technology, which is distinct from the tools of technology, that brings the way of doing things and the expression of what we are doing into the same space.

We often confuse the idea of technology with digital tool kits. Our creative technology is more of a programme where we lean more towards the arts, skills, crafts, and ways of doing rather than allowing the kit to dominate the design of the experience. For example, in the Dream Team projects, Platô's "Immersive Learning Adventures" and TNS's "Theatre of Opportunity", we harness the potential of technology to open new worlds of possibility and imagination in the real world. We move through a chaotic paradigm that requires emotional, kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, linguistic, logical and visual-spatial (6) intelligences.

Furthermore, thriving in this changing world requires the social and emotional infrastructure and wisdom of intergenerational and cultural intelligences, such as those from indigenous knowledge systems. Resources should transcend fixed curricula and age-specific learning, promoting collaboration between teachers and artists to explore innovative forms of discovery.

Empowerment through Qualitative Research: Global Advocates for Education

Fresh from the European Congress of Qualitative Enquiry at Helsinki University, where we delved into the global landscape of post-human and post-qualitative research and its applications in education and society, we believe this juncture in history is opportune for a transformative shift. We propose a return of the arts and sciences, humanities and physics, logos and mythos to their rightful home in the arts, and follow artistry as a mode of inquiry. We are at the birth of a new enlightenment that can incorporate the unknown unknowns, open the enquiries to post-reductive measurements, and reach for qualitative research on generative, creative ways of knowing, being, and becoming. In practical terms, we advocate that every classroom, school, university, and college would have an artist-researcher embedded in the creation and inquiry, and every studio, rehearsal room, gallery, and virtual world would have a researcher embedded as part of the iterative process. As a starting point, we could inspire the next European Congress of Qualitative Enquiry to focus on practical qualitative research through arts and creative activities.

Role of Immersive Arts and Modern Technologies: Enhancing Learning and Agency

There are a plethora of examples across the world where arts and teaching have combined to enlighten and educate by awakening wonder and creating contexts for learning beyond curriculum outcomes. It is in the exchanges of imagination and the creation of narratives and landscapes, artefacts and identities that the child excels. In these spaces, they become the experts in learning adventures and protagonists in shaping the narratives. The inherent hierarchy of the "zone of proximal development" is flattened in these spaces. Teachers can enter the space as equals through play and discovery and add purpose and context in search of the learning that is in every opportunity. The artistry opens the potential for cross subject and cross experiential learning so that the context and activities are experienced as holistic embodied, connected (to class and to self- inter and intra-physical and cognitive conjoining) growth.

The tools and skills to introduce these experiences in classes are much more defined and developed than those of the days of Heathcote (7) and Bolton (8), whose "mantle of the expert" and "process drama" (8, p. 4), they rightly identified as being limited in terms of agency as the curriculum binds it. We are now in a paradigm where the children are faster, more open, and more adept at the meta and digital worlds and their place in reality. As guides through these possibilities, they can gain more robust political and moral agency in navigating these immersive experiences. It is vital that teachers and artists guide rather than dictate, that they offer direction and reflective practices that contextualise through imagination.

Vision for Re-imagining Education and Schools: What Brings Us Together

It is through the imagination that we "map our world" (9) and hence "our moral obligation" (9, p. 24) to others. All Dream Team projects share the common thread of embracing innovative, interdisciplinary, and holistic learning approaches. We generate creative exchanges during our monthly engagements in the Imagination Circle. Our projects integrate various interactive elements and disciplines, such as art, storytelling, and immersive experiences, to foster a sense of responsibility and agency among individuals of all generations to co-create imaginative solutions for learning and environmental action. We believe that it is possible to reshape society and manifest new education systems rooted in life-affirming values by engaging the visions and voices of the youth and the support of their communities and adults. By offering intergenerational communities and experiences beyond traditional boundaries, our projects seek to elicit unique imaginative capacities that traditional educational environments cannot. These capacities have the power to create alternative futures that are more aligned with the well-being of the planet and the people.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECTS

Forest of Imagination (UK)

Forest of Imagination is a long-term participatory contemporary arts and architecture event in Bath, UK, reimagining familiar spaces, inspiring creativity, and heightening nature awareness in response to the ecological emergency. Forest of Imagination is an experimental site of pedagogical innovation, a new aesthetic imaginary highlighting the complexities of learning in and with the natural world. The project engages children and young people in aesthetic learning and artistic expression, re-imagining learning in 'spaces of possibility' (10). Together, we are developing a community of practice with artists, researchers, and educators who work alongside children and young people. These spaces of possibility invite creative and reflective practice that places the arts, creativity, imagination, nature, and well-being at the heart of a future, innovative pedagogy. Learning in, about, for, with and through nature involves observing, noticing, feeling, choosing and acting in social connection, so inviting children to be stewards of the environment. A focus on imagination, creativity, well-being and shared

compassionate values invites hopeful action, envisioning change and achieving transformation. Social and environmental justice, the enhancement of sustainable thinking and action and 'skills for green transformation' are at the heart of the project, engaging everyone in seeking imaginative solutions for the future planet.

Solarpunk Generation (Global)

Designed to catalyse innovation, regeneration, and collective intelligence through arts, storytelling, intergenerational engagement, and holistic experiential learning. It seeks to empower individuals with skills and emotional tools, aligning their talents with regeneration and climate action efforts and guiding them to recognize their distinct roles in shaping this sustainable future.

Reimagining Schools (in Baltimore, USA)

Nine- and ten-year-old students from Samuel Taylor Coleridge School in Baltimore, Maryland (USA) illustrated and wrote about their "dream schools" and then were paired with Towson University art majors who will construct 3-D renderings of their drawings. The illustrations, 3D renderings, and reflective writing will be shared with the university and k12 school communities to spark critical dialogue. The aim is to have young people use their imagination to empower their voices in articulating what kinds of schools we should create for sustainable and equitable futures. The goals are twofold: first, to empower young people to use their creative voices to share in meaningful ways what matters to them in education. The arts are often underutilised in public schools in the USA, particularly in economically challenged neighbourhoods. The hidden message/curriculum to children in low-income schools is that their creative minds matter less than children in wealthier communities (11). The second goal is to radically listen to young people to elevate the conversation about what schools can be and how design tools are a vehicle for provoking policy-level dialogue around what *should* matter in the schools of the future.

The School of the (Im)Possible (Brazil)

School of the (Im) Possible is an immersive learning adventure for primary school children about climate change. The project brings a fictional world to the classroom for youth and teachers to play together, discover new ways of learning, and connect to a world that urges reinvention. It is an arts- and play-based educational initiative for 8- to 10-year-old students. Both Brazil and Scotland were introduced to it, and it is expanding to other parts of the world, thanks to a collaborative endeavour between Platô Cultural in Brazil and The Necessary Space in Scotland. The project was initially developed by Platô Cultural and spearheaded by director Francine Kliemann and Head of Education Marcia Donadel. This marked the establishing and validating of the educational approach called "immersive learning adventures", which integrates Immersive Theatre, Education, Technology, and social impact aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and Inner Development Goals. Its founding inspirations are the exploration of immersive and multisensory experiences through the perception of the world (12) and Morin's (13) approach to exploring connections into understanding complexities. It was also inspired by flow (see Csikszentmihalyi), John Dewey's (14) philosophy of experiential learning and art integration, Vygotsky's (4) foundations and the importance of embodied interactional learning, and the libertarian nature of Freire's (15) approach. Enactive principles, as proposed by Varela, Thomson, and Rosch (16), further enhanced the approach, as well as the understanding of abstract concepts through an "extended body" Kepes (17). The project sought to engage students in holistic learning experiences that transcend conventional classroom boundaries.

The Necessary Space (UK)

TNS was formed in 2019 when Simon Sharkey left The National Theatre of Scotland, where, as one of the company's founding directors, he pioneered the "Theatre without Walls" approach. Taking his work further by engaging and making art with identified communities, he gathered a local and global

network of associates working in the field of arts for impact and focussed their efforts on the urgent need to address the paradigm changes of the late 20th and 21st centuries. Using artistry in all aspects of life and building connections across seemingly unrelated peoples, issues and ideas, his "Theatre of Opportunity" found new purpose and direction in addressing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and Inner Development Goals. It was inspired by *Theatre of The Oppressed* (18) with one big difference. It did not start with the idea of Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed; it instead focussed on the idea that we are authors of our narratives, and if we are going to cast ourselves as oppressed, then we will be received and defined that way. If we open ourselves to the myriad identities we inhabit, we will live in our chosen narrative and seize opportunities that are presented. The physical and liminal space to practise and bring the identity and opportunity to life is what we call The Necessary Space. Here, we can exercise empathy, build connections, and rewrite our narrative pasts and futures. The Necessary Space- the space of "proximal development" (see Vygotsky) or what Edgar Morin calls the paradigm of complexity (13) or what the Greeks referred to as Metaxis-the place to be betwixt and between, where reality and imagination have the same presence and affect.

AIME/Imagination Circle (Global)

The Imagination Circle is a global community of practice leading inquiry and initiatives on how we nurture and activate imagination in teaching and learning, in school and the wider world, so we can design and adopt more just and equitable ways of living on the earth.

USE OF CREATIVE AND CRITICAL QUALITATIVE METHODS

Diversity of Methodologies

The methodological framework for our Dream Team draws largely from arts-based inquiry (19–23), to name a few. By challenging the boundaries of more traditional inquiry methodologies, the projects are united in arts-based pedagogies, re-align educational inquiry with empathetic, empowering, community-oriented approaches to representing knowledge.

Our individual and collective efforts are grounded in basic principles: 1) that art is context specific, thus emphasising the inter-relationships between art within particular language and cultural spaces; 2) creativity that de-centres the notion of the "individual" in favour of critically collective and community-oriented ways of knowing the world, and 3) that art is never "neutral." In other words, if "art has played a key role in forming our society's definition of reality", Gablik (24) contends that it also "has the power to re-define that concept." (p. 12)

The projects follow an inquiry design that is relational, emergent, (and) transformative. (25), which suggests that to be empowering, the inquiry process must become a dialogue between the research and the researcher to create sites of "negotiation" (26) of meaning similarly argues that we need to "develop a politics of the imagination in schools and universities that strategically uses the power of the image to 'unframe' the serious issues that we face today by asking critical questions that envision alternative just futures" (27).

Our work may seem chaotic, but chaos theory, focused on relationality rather than unity, offers a metaphor for redefining solidarity through inquiry. Merging ideas of science and faith, chaos theory encourages embracing the unknown. We need not dictate our destination, as chance, serendipity, and dissonance redirect plans. The emphasis should be on the process, not the end goal.

Gleick (28), the father of chaos theory, said that "it is the science of process other than state, of becoming other than being" (p. 131). Within this idea, we can rest, measure, and be aware of the state. However, applying the Heisenberg principle (29) of only being able to measure one aspect of an atom

at a time, we must incorporate the unknown, the ambiguous, and the understanding that we are in the process of eternal discovery. The arts are the perfect container to incorporate the sciences in contexts that enhance a holistic understanding, a communal, embodied wisdom recognized by indigenous knowledge systems.

Representation of Data and Evaluation of Success

The methodology mirrors the intended outcomes: to inspire students and communities to experiment with raw artistic materials, explore their own techniques, and explore and invite discussion around the crisis facing public schools in these difficult times. Data collection and analysis focus on ways that participating in the Imagining Education Redesign: 1. shape young persons' perceptions of equity and accessibility in education redesign, 2. consider how educational designs are organically intertwined with environmental and economic systemic concerns, and 3. develop their imaginative capacities for expressing their visions via creative learning methods. The goals of the Dream Team include engaging young people creatively for imagination justice, creating wider collaborative exchanges with an ever-widening circle of stakeholders, and engaging with emergent creative designs that foster mycelial global connections.

Modes of engagement and data collection included the Dream Team Helsinki session, during which we asked for collaborative ideas from conference participants. The Dream Team also holds regular meetings between members to exchange progress notes on our respective ongoing projects. We anticipate that threads across and between projects will grow as we continue to work individually while exchanging data. Additionally, we hosted a writing session for the Learning Planet Festival (Jan 2024) with students in Africa, during which children responded to writing prompts centred on "the schools of their dreams." Finally, we have created an open call for art submissions, inviting people to "Reimagining Schools." We remain committed to using an "emergent design" for inquiry that includes all of these data sites, from which we are coding for words that overlap across texts, correspondences between images and texts, and relatedness between themes.

CONCLUSION

The interactive discussion and activities engaged the audience and encouraged group work to delve into and explore the overarching questions presented during the session. These activities served as a means of collecting data and evaluating the success of the interactive elements integrated into the Dream Team session. Suppose education is to have the power to transform. In that case, participants (students and teachers alike) must be armed with the tools to be seen and heard as agents of change and active participation rather than empty shells consisting of statistics, projections and generalisations.

As we navigate deeper into the era of technology and globalisation, we must undergo a radical overhaul of our educational systems and move away from industrial modes of education and factory-like methods that treat individuals merely as data processors. We must bring forward the role of imagination, creativity, and embodied intelligence. We are already seeing signs of collapse and compounding economic, environmental, mental health, and well-being crises. We have a choice: either continue to serve the reductive rational enlightenment model of global capitalism and plug ourselves firmly into the digital realm (some would argue we are already deeply embedded, given the average screen time of 13-18-year-olds) or design spaces of possibility and programs that prioritise inquiry, curiosity, intuition, intrinsic drives, collective connectedness, and diverse modes of expression and communication.

Our Dream Team's collaborative and emergent process suggests a form of layered re-presentations that exist in the experience of ongoing creation. This refracts both place and time, blending past

achievements with synchronistic revelations extending beyond existing knowledge. Our "text" expresses multiple connections emerging from alchemical mixtures, creating a "strange new language" to be "read" as a web of intricate, aesthetic, chaotic patterns from which numerous meanings may be revealed.

It is our shared desire that the outcomes of our collaborative initiatives and emergent processes have a groundbreaking impact on educational research and practice. Specifically, the implementation of arts-based methodologies and creative qualitative methods combined with imaginative approaches and dissemination of tangible actions hold the potential to influence educational practices worldwide. By following artistry as a mode of enquiry, our projects aim to provide template ideas for future research endeavours. The Dream Team projects seek to inspire and pioneer the confluence of science and artistry, unravelling collective imagination, artistic expression, and creativity in service of the well-being of people and the planet.

REFERENCES

- (1) Thomson J.B. *Studies in the theory of ideology*. Oakland: University of California Press; 1984.
- (2) Booth E. *Making change: Teaching artists and their role in shaping a better world*. New York: Better yet Press; 2023.
- (3) Brown S., Vaughan C. *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. Avery: Penguin; 2010.
- (4) [a] Csikszentmihalyi M. *Flow: The psychology of happiness*. London: Rider; 1992. [b] Csikszentmihalyi M. *Creativity, flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers; 1996.
- (5) Vygotsky L. *Thought and language*. London: MIT Press; 1986.
- (6) Gardner H. *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books; 1983.
- (7) Heathcote D. *Collected writings on education and drama*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press; 1991.
- (8) Bolton G. *Acting in classroom drama: A critical analysis*. Portsmouth: Heinemann; 1999.
- (9) Rethorst J. Art and imagination: Implications of cognitive science for moral education. *Philosophy of Education Archive*. 1997: 278-284.
- (10) Hay P. *Teaching art creatively*. London: Routledge; 2021.
- (11) Jackson P.W. *Life in classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press; 1990.
- (12) Capra F. *The turning point: Science, society, and the rising culture*. New York: Bantam Books/Simon and Schuster; 1988.
- (13) Morin E. *On complexity (advances in systems theory, complexity, and the human sciences)*. New York: Hampton Press; 2008.
- (14) Dewey J. *Art as experience*. New York: First Perigee Printing; 1980 [1934].
- (15) Freire P. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc; 2000[1970].
- (16) Varela F. J., Thompson E., Rosch E. *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge: The MIT Press; 2016.

- (17) Kepes G. *Arts of the environment*. New York: G. Braziller; 1972.
- (18) Boal A. *Theatre of the oppressed*. London: Pluto Press; 1979.
- (19) Slattery P. *Curriculum development in the postmodern era*. New York: Garland; 1995.
- (20) [a] Jagodzinski J. Curriculum as felt through six layers of an aesthetically embodied skin: The arch-writing on the body. In: Pinar W.F., Reynolds W.M. (eds.) *Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text*. New York) : Teachers College Press; 1992: 159-183. [b] Jagodzinski J. *Postmodern dilemmas: Outrageous essays in art and art education*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum; 1997.
- (21) Finley S. *Teacher education faculty as researchers: Composing lives in context, a blend of form and content* [dissertation]. Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan; 1998. Available from: First Search: 0127. Source: 59, no. 07A, 2439.
- (22) Diamond CTP., Mullen CA. (eds.) *The postmodern educator: Arts-based inquiries and teacher development*. New York: Peter Lang; 1999; p. 15-36.
- (23) Davis D., Butler-Kisber L. *Arts-based representation in qualitative research: Collage as a contextualizing strategy*. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting; 1999 Apr; Montreal, Quebec. Session 17.12.
- (24) Gablick S. *The reenchancement of art*. New York: Thames & Hudson; 1991.
- (25) McDermott M. *"Flinging the piano" of critical post-avant-garde arts-based inquiry: A study of four pre-service teachers' collaged representations of self and pedagogy* [dissertation]. University of Virginia; 2001. AAT 3020375.
- (26) Lather P. How research can be made to mean: Feminist ethnography at the limits of representation. In: Ibanez-Carrasco F, Meiners E, (eds.) *Public acts: Disruptive readings on curriculum and research*. New York, NY: Routledge; 2004: 181-188.
- (27) Desai D. Imagining justice in times of perpetual war: notes from the classroom. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*. 2009; 6(2): 6-25.
- (28) Gleick J. *Chaos: making a new science*. London: Penguin; 2008.
- (29) Cassidy D. *Uncertainty: The life and science of Werner Heisenberg*. New York: W.H. Freeman; 1992.

THE BENEFITS OF NATURE-BASED EDUCATION IN WALDORF SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

Tessa Palmer

Kutztown University – DSW student (UNITED STATES)

Abstract

There is extensive literature on the benefits of nature-based education for children, from physical and mental health outcomes on an individual level to societal stewardship of the environment. However, most public schools in the United States have not integrated these methods into their practices, making nature-based practices alternative and not available to all students due to geography or cost. This narrative qualitative study explored the websites of Waldorf schools in the United States that implement nature-based approaches to discover how they share information about the benefits provided by their methods. Thirty Waldorf schools were pulled from a search on the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America website as having elementary, middle and high schools comparable to public schools. The text from their websites was copied and pasted into Word documents and then uploaded to NVivo for coding. A deductive approach using a codebook created during the literature review was used to code the data. Constant comparison analysis was used to evaluate the data as the text for each school was analyzed independently and then compared to the previous schools that had been coded. The coded sections were then also combined across the schools to demonstrate larger themes in the data. The findings show that Waldorf schools promote their nature-based methods through text and pictures on their websites and that many discuss the benefits for both individual students and the environment by fostering stewardship. The schools utilize the local green spaces or create their own to provide these nature-based experiences for students regardless of the geographic location. This exploration offers some insight into how more awareness of the benefits might support nature-based methods to be incorporated into mainstream educational settings, potentially providing more universal access for students to combat environmental racism and inequality in the United States.

Keywords: environmental racism, nature-based education, Waldorf

THE BENEFITS OF NATURE-BASED EDUCATION

The number of people living in urban areas increased by 25% between 1990 and 2000. It is estimated that 6 out of 10 people will live in cities by 2030.¹ This global urbanization has increased access to healthcare but comes at the cost of threats to public health, including "increase in social inequalities and lifestyle-related risk factors, such as lack of physical activity and unbalance dietary habits, pollution and traffic, and the environmental degradation of natural areas; which, in turn, increase the incidence of a vast spectrum of diseases and conditions." ^{1(p. 1)} Children living in urban areas experience the same health disparities as adults, which means lack of time spent in nature is disproportionately impacting children of color and those from low-income homes.² This structural racism leads to higher exposure to toxins and pollutants, less access to clean drinking water, and a lack of safe green spaces for these

children.^{3,4} Nature is considered a luxury due to safe accessibility and transportation issues that limit access,⁵ and children of color spent more time on electronics or doing indoor activities like going to the mall than their white counterparts.⁶ The amount of time children spend on screens increases yearly, while time spent outside decreases with each generation.^{4,6-9} Our environment plays a large role in our development and research has found that children have improved health and wellbeing outcomes from time spent in nature, better academic outcomes, and demonstrate more ecological awareness and stewardship.^{3,7,8,10-12} So how do we make nature more accessible to children regardless of their location?

Incorporating nature-based activities into school programs would provide students time outside while already at school in a safe setting. Sprague and Ekenga found improvements in health-related quality of life scores for low-income youth in St. Louis, MO, who participated in a 15-week nature-based educational program.² "The Waldorf method has been shown to be very effective in providing quality education for low-income students,"¹³ likely due at least in part to the nature-based curriculum. There might be more support for incorporating existing nature-based approaches into public schools if the benefits to students were more widely publicized. This qualitative study explored the narratives of Waldorf schools around the benefits they offer students through nature-based approaches.

Literature Review

Health Benefits of Time in Nature

In 2008, Richard Louv wrote *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, where he introduces the lack of nature interaction as a phenomenon that needs to be addressed for the wellbeing of children.⁸ He discusses how "naturalist intelligence" was included by Howard Gardner in his theory of multiple intelligences and that Montessori and Waldorf schools were already making the connection. Since then, many research studies have examined nature's benefits on mental and physical health. Participation in school gardens demonstrated better physical and mental health as well as more "cooperation (including intercultural integration), development of planning skills, teaching patience, loyalty and perseverance, and the ability to think critically."^{11(p.35)} The Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University printed a report by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child entitled *Place Matters: The Environment We Create Shapes the Foundations of Healthy Development* in 2023 that stated, "Access to safe green spaces – such as parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas – is associated with better physical and mental health, lower stress, and lower rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes, among many other health benefits."^{3(p.3)} Schools have the ability to provide these safe green spaces for students and teach the importance of this interaction with nature.

Environmental Racism

Sprague and Ekenga noted that there are health disparities because low-income youth do not have the same access to nature.² "In the natural environment, structural racism leads to segregated communities in which minoritized children are exposed to more excessive heat and toxicants and have less access to clean drinking water and violence-free green spaces."³ This inequity means low-income children have higher exposure to toxins and pollutants as well as less access to green spaces and nature.⁴ They note that proximity to parks cannot demonstrate access because the quality of these "green spaces" may not allow them to be enriching environments, and parents may not even allow their children to spend time there. Birch et al. calls for "urban green equity" because the city parks are not safe places for children to play and experience nature.⁵ Larson et al. reported that children of color were more likely to cite issues with transportation, safety, and access as reasons to not go outdoors than their white counterparts.⁶

Technology

Many see technology and nature at odds because children are increasingly being encouraged to look at screens at school and choose to look at screens instead of being outside in their free time.^{8,14,15} In 1984, Wilson explored the biophilia hypothesis that humans are innately connected to nature. Pergams and Zaradic (2006) countered with the idea of "videophilia" as the human focus shifted from nature to digital.¹⁵ Balmford (2002) expressed concerns that children in England were able to identify Pokémon characters more readily than actual wildlife.¹⁵ Nature is often presented as an alternative to the stress children experience from technology-based peer interactions as it can provide opportunities for more positive, in-person social interactions.⁵ Other researchers see technology as a way for children to connect with nature through apps promoting engagement with nature or activities like taking pictures outdoors.^{7,15-17}

Stewardship

Teachers can promote a responsibility to protect the environment through exposure to nature via their curriculum. They can create the space for "Meaningful experiences of interaction with and within natural environments that appear to foster a caring and protective attitude towards nature." ^{12(p.1410)} Dopko et al. found that "allowing children time for unstructured activities in nature seemed beneficial for children's positive affect, attitudes towards nature, and pro-sociality." ^{10(p.137)} Crawford et al. had students explore local parks, and "76% of the children agreed that visiting the park made them want to take better care of it." ^{16(p.973)} Simply spending time outdoors created positive feelings towards nature and fostered the desire to care for the environment. Birch et al. found that even older youth expressed concern for the natural environment, though these teens also shared that "run down" parks were sometimes detrimental to their mental health because the youth were frustrated that no one cared about these green spaces.⁵ Jagiello et al. discussed how nature-based programs like Waldorf fostered more "ecological awareness" through experiences with nature.¹¹

Waldorf

Waldorf Education was started in the early 1900s by Rudolf Steiner as a more holistic alternative to traditional education that addressed the needs of students' entire bodies, the whole person, instead of just their minds.^{13,18} Waldorf incorporates more activities that address naturalistic intelligence, including caring for green spaces and gardens outdoors,¹¹ as well as bringing "nature spaces" into classrooms.¹⁸ Jagiello et al. note that "we owe the pedagogical foundations for the opening of the school to the external environment to Rudolf Steiner." ^{11(p.29)} Students in Waldorf schools have been found to have more responsibility, be less aggressive, and have generally better mental and physical health than their peers in traditional educational programs.^{13,19} Providing children with nature-based educational experiences has lasting positive effects on their mental and physical health.

The narrative of Waldorf schools could be an avenue for disseminating the research showing that exposure to nature can improve children's mental and physical health, encouraging their approaches to be integrated into mainstream education. This qualitative study aims to explore the narratives of Waldorf schools around the benefits they offer students through nature-based approaches.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

From the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America website (www.waldorfeducation.org), 30 Waldorf schools that provide high school, middle school, and elementary school were selected to be comparable to public schools in the United States. Maximum variation purposive sampling was utilized because the schools were chosen intentionally to be able to provide the most relevant information and heterogeneity across the sample. A cross-sectional design was utilized because this study focused on the current text of the schools at the time of data collection, recognizing that these websites are

living documents that can be changed as the school desires. No informed consent was needed because the data were publicly available.

Coding and Analysis

Text with content about school programming was collected from the website pages and pasted into Word documents, which were uploaded into NVivo. A deductive approach was utilized because the purpose of the study was to explore the way the benefits of nature are portrayed by the schools. A priori codes from the codebook created during the literature review were used to code the data in NVivo. Word-by-word coding allowed for text to be used as quotes to let the schools speak for themselves. Constant comparison analysis was used to evaluate the data as the text for each school was analyzed independently and then compared to the previous schools that had been coded. The coded sections were then combined across the schools to demonstrate larger themes. There could be some variation in the schools pulled by the search and the content on the websites at any given time, but this study could easily be replicated following the steps outlined above.

Limitations

Data analysis was done in NVivo by the sole researcher, so there was no ability for inter-coder agreement. There may be selection bias as purposive sampling was used to identify a relevant population. The findings of this study only reflect the narrative for Waldorf schools in the United States that are members of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America and cannot be generalized to other populations. They may indicate the benefits available to all students who receive nature-based educational programming in school, but additional research would be necessary to solidify this connection.

FINDINGS

Nature-based Learning

The homepage for The Hartsbrook School read, "A Few Minutes Outside is Not Enough", and then continued, "You know that childhood and adolescence should be full of outdoor experiences, in rain, sun, and snow, to forge a long-lasting connection with nature and to build resilience, perspective, and life long health." This encompasses nature, stewardship, and health outcomes in one sentence. Placement on the homepage showed it is clearly important to this school that they communicate the impact that nature has on students and their wellbeing. Many of the schools talked about how younger students spend time outside daily, regardless of the weather. For some, the involvement of nature dwindled as the students aged, but others highlighted dedicated time outside regardless of educational level. Lake Champlain Waldorf School stated, "Our students are immersed in the outdoors from early childhood through high school. Science tells us about the benefits of extended time spent in nature, and we know this truth from our own experience." Many talked about the educational experience that nature offers students and how they relate to the larger world. "The environmental stewardship and gardening program at Seattle Waldorf School feeds the sense of wonder and curiosity about the natural world that is innate to human beings." Multiple schools chose to include quotes from Richard Louv, including Santa Fe Waldorf, "The future will belong to the nature-smart—those individuals, families, businesses, and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of the transformative power of the natural world and who balance the virtual with the real. The more high-tech we become, the more nature we need." They speak of striving for a balance between nature and technology in school and in life.

Technology

Waldorf schools do not introduce technology in the classroom until the students are older because they feel it is not developmentally appropriate. "At Rudolf Steiner School, technology is gradually introduced during the middle school years in a meaningful curriculum, and both media and

technology are fully integrated into our high school program to prepare students for college and beyond. Research indicates that the impact of electronic media can have detrimental effects on a young child's healthy growth and development." Highland Hall Waldorf in Northridge, California, spoke of the benefits of their approach; "Waldorf education believes in limiting the use of technology in the lower grades, allowing children to develop better concentration, critical thinking, and retention of the subject matter." They went on to cite sources supporting that "Studies show that far more brain development occurs when a child is poking at the ground inspecting insects in the garden than when he is engrossed with an educational TV show or a 'developmental' computer game." Emerson Waldorf spoke of this difference between learning through nature and learning through technology; "Nature is inherently therapeutic. Sensory experiences in nature do not overwhelm the central nervous system and instead promote a calm and alert state to better process the information and form an accurate picture of the world around us." While they are not anti-technology, they are purposeful about its use.

Educational Outcomes

This structure around technology did not present as a problem for the educational outcomes of these schools. Waldorf School of the Peninsula shared that "Waldorf high school graduates have an established reputation for critical, analytical, and imaginative thinking and are highly sought after by leading colleges and universities throughout the country." Cincinnati Waldorf School shared the results of a study by Stanford University that "found significantly higher positive student achievement outcomes on standardized state assessments by Waldorf students, greater engagement and significantly lower disciplinary action and truancy." The Waldorf School of Garden City pointed to the nature-based curriculum as contributing to student outcomes. "Outdoor play, in particular, offers children diverse environmental stimuli that contribute to increased experimentation and use of the senses. Research now points to the fact that experiences in nature are more important than facts and book learning about nature."

Health Benefits

Few schools spoke directly of the health benefits that are a result of learning through nature. "You might be interested to know that other scientists and researchers have found that outdoor learning also boosts academic performance in the classroom, improves children's emotional, physical, and intellectual development, and shows measurable physical and mental health benefits while connecting us to nature" (Seattle Waldorf). More common was a general discussion of "nature as a teacher. A considerable amount has been written recently about the important role that nature plays in healthy human development and as an important aspect of education. The Waldorf curriculum seeks to help students develop a healthy connection to the natural world and to develop a sense of awe and wonder that later can develop into a sense of responsibility for the natural world" (Kimberton Waldorf).

Stewardship

Most of the schools discussed fostering stewardship, which is a founding tenet of Waldorf from Rudolf Steiner; "To truly know the world, look deeply within your own being; to truly know yourself, take real interest in the world" (Green Meadow Waldorf). This can be found in Waldorf school mission statements; "children are surrounded by striving adults and strengthened individually and socially to meet the challenges of life. Students emerge as creative, independent thinkers who meet the world with initiative and purpose" (Portland Waldorf). It is in their curriculum "a powerful and inspired curriculum that has the potential to change the world, one child at a time" (Pasadena Waldorf). They include statements like "Social Justice: We work together to promote equity and inclusion for all community members. We respect and revere the natural world and embrace our responsibility as stewards of the earth" (Emerson Waldorf). They are clear that their purpose is to "educate with the intention to spark interest in the world so that students are inspired to serve the global community now and in the future" (Waldorf of Saratoga Springs). The message is the same regardless of

geographic location and setting. From downtown Chicago, "Our children learn to care for each other, themselves, the classroom, and nature, so that they can become dedicated, compassionate stewards of the world around them," to rural Pennsylvania, "We have respect and reverence for the natural world and embrace our responsibility as stewards... We believe we have a social and moral responsibility to strive to make this world a better place" (Kimberton Waldorf). They are teaching children to take care of our Earth.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The most prominent theme was teaching children stewardship through interactions with nature. Many of the schools talked about the green spaces that they have created intentionally to provide students with these experiences to feel that connection to the land. Maine Coast Waldorf School states, "We measure our classrooms in acres instead of square feet. Our playgrounds, fields, and trails are also our classrooms." This is easier for the schools with acres of land, but there are Waldorf schools in urban cities that must be more creative with their outdoor experiences. The Rudolf Steiner School in New York City has a forest kindergarten based in Central Park, which they can walk from their building. Despite their location in Manhattan, they feel that "nurturing a connection to the Natural World is found to be critical to children's wellbeing, healthy development and academic achievement. Spending many hours outdoors playing, gaining a sense of balance and moving in the world, gives the child a healthy preparation for the next stage in their life." Chicago Waldorf School is also located downtown in a metropolitan city and stresses "whether through in-class demonstrations or outdoor, natural observation, students learn not only *about* the world around them, but *in* the world around them." They also speak about the integration of their gardening program where students, "cultivate a reciprocal relationship with the world around them." Even in very urban areas, Waldorf schools are finding creative ways to incorporate nature into their curriculum. Some nature-based activities would require funding, like creating gardens, but some utilize existing green space, like city parks.

CONCLUSION

It would seem like an additional burden for already strained schools to incorporate nature-based approaches, but the strategies already exist. The idea of nature-based education is not new; it has always been more alternative than mainstream education in the United States. Programs incorporating nature tend to be private institutions that are cost-prohibitive for many families. Edwards and Larson noted that nature-based programs have "a history of being exclusionary."^{15(p.956)} These teaching and learning methods could improve the health and wellbeing of all children equally if they were integrated into all schools. Nature should not be a luxury, and all children should have the opportunity to spend time outdoors regardless of geographic location and socioeconomic status. They need to feel safe in the green spaces they can access to feel more connected to the world they live in because it is the only one we have.

REFERENCES

- (1) Gianfredi V, Buffoli M, Rebecchi A, et al. Association between urban greenspace and health: A systematic review of literature. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 2021;18(10): 5137. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105137>
- (2) Sprague NL, Ekenga CC. The impact of nature-based education on health-related quality of life among low-income youth: Results from an intervention study. *J Public Health*, 2021; 44(2): 394–401. doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdaa243
- (3) National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. Place Matters: The environment we create shapes the foundations of healthy development: Working Paper No. 16. 2023. www.developingchild.harvard.edu

- (4) Strife S, Downey L. Childhood development and access to nature: A new direction for environmental inequality research. *Organ Environ*, 2009; 22(1): 99–122. doi:10.1177/1086026609333340
- (5) Birch J, Rishbeth C, Payne SR. Nature doesn't judge you – how urban nature supports young people's mental health and wellbeing in a diverse UK city. *Health and Place*, 2020; 62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2020.102296>
- (6) Larson LR, Green GT, Cordell HK. Children's time outdoors: Results and implications of the National Kids Survey. *J Park Recreat Admi*, 2011; 29(2): 1-20.
- (7) Kawas S, Kuhn NS, Sorstokke K, Bascom EE, Hiniker A, Davis K. When screen time isn't screen time: Tensions and needs between tweens and their parents during nature-based exploration. CHI '21: Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 2021; (474): 1-14. Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445142>
- (8) Louv R. Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder. Workman Publishing; 2008.
- (9) Scogin SC, D'Agostino SR, Trent-Brown S, Gall A. Perspectives from Caregivers on the Advantages of Nature-Based Education Before and During COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education*, 2022; 9(3): 3-20.
- (10) Dopko RL, Capaldi CA, Zelenski JM. The psychological and social benefits of a nature experience for children: A preliminary investigation. *J Environ Psychol*, 2019; 63: 134–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2019.05.002>
- (11) Jagiello M, Malkusz G, Szostek S. School and kindergarten gardens as a place of education: History and contemporary design trends. *Architectus*, 2021; 2(66): 27-38. DOI: 10.37190/arc210203
- (12) Rios C, Menezes I. 'I saw a magical garden with flowers that people could not damage!': children's visions of nature and of learning about nature in and out of school. *Environmental Education Research*, 2017; 23(10): 1402–1413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2017.1325450>
- (13) Curry TJ. Benefits of the Waldorf educational model on students' academic success. Capstone Projects and Master's Theses, 2020; 802. https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/802
- (14) Blatt E, Patrick P. An exploration of pre-service teachers' experiences in outdoor 'places' and intentions for teaching in the outdoors. *Int J Sci Educ*, 2014; 36(13): 2243-2264. DOI: 10.1080/09500693.2014.918294
- (15) Edwards RC, Larson BMH. When screens replace backyards: Strategies to connect digital-media-oriented young people to nature. *Environmental Education Research*, 2020; 26(7): 950–968. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2020.1776844>
- (16) Crawford MR, Holder MD, O'Connor B. Using mobile technology to engage children with nature. *Environment and Behavior*, 2017; 49(9): 959–984. DOI: 10.1177/0013916516673870
- (17) Sultana R, Hawken S. Reconciling Nature-Technology-Child Connections: Smart Cities and the Necessity of a New Paradigm of Nature-Sensitive Technologies for Today's Children. *Sustainability*, 2023; 15(6453). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086453>
- (18) Nordlund C. Waldorf education: Breathing creativity. *Art Education*, 2013; 66(2): 13-19.
- (19) Paschen H. Waldorf Education and Rudolf Steiner Schools as a Topic of Educational Science. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 2014; 16(1): 191-215.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH UPHOLDING COLLABORATION IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN SOCIAL WORK FIELDWORK EDUCATION

Joanne Rose¹, Dr Monica Short², Dr Erica Russ³, Ass Prof Melissa Petrakis⁴,
Dr Carmel Halton¹

¹*University College Cork (IRELAND)*

²*Charles Sturt University (AUSTRALIA)*

³*Southern Cross University (AUSTRALIA)*

⁴*Monash University (AUSTRALIA)*

Abstract

Internationally, minimum standards for social work education specified by the International Federation of Social Workers include the ability to demonstrate a critical understanding of social research and the principles, ethics, and applications of scientific inquiry. Co-operative inquiry is a collaborative research methodology suited to field education research as, consistent with social work principles, it is respectful and participatory, and upholds the unique dignity of each person involved in the research. An inquiry process is grounded in the idea that research can be conducted *with* people, not *on* people. Co-operative inquiry highlights the principle of the equality of voices within the co-authoring process; this is made possible because students and academics have power over what is written and published. It brings students and academics together as co-authors, co-participants, and co-researchers. A community of trust is developed, combining participants' values with their professional or personal knowledge and experience.

Considering the tensions and pressures inherent in neoliberal higher education, this paper will remind us of the codes of ethics of the Australian Association of Social Work, the Social Work Registration Board (CORU), and the Irish Association of Social Workers and emphasise the importance of collaboration and respect concerning social justice, and social theory research. The outcomes of three student inquiries will be shared, including how they led to students connecting to an international research network, presenting at international conferences, and publishing their work in international academic journals.

Student participant feedback indicates the value of their involvement in co-operative inquiry, as traditional research typically does not include student voices, which is why this research was special because it was led by students and gave them more significance.

Keywords: co-operative inquiry, student-led research, work integrated learning, fieldwork, social work.

INTRODUCTION

This paper shares the opportunities and challenges that the authors believe exist for contemporary social work education, fieldwork, and research internationally. It presents our experiences and outcomes from participation in three student-led, rural-focused research projects conducted across three different placement cycles between 2020–2023. The first was Australia-based (1), and the second and third inquiries (2,3) were transnational. We argue for the importance of collaboration and respect concerning social justice and social theory research in social work fieldwork education.

Despite the numerous opportunities that student engagement in the three research projects offered, questions and challenges to student participation exist, such as how to support students' learning, practically and academically. How to mitigate the risk of students feeling overwhelmed and ensure that their primary placement learning objectives are met and not compromised by their engagement with the project? How to overcome the practical challenges of time zones and geographical distance?

Transcending Potential Risks

In 2019, colleagues from the International Network of Co-operative Inquirers (INCIInq) examined emergent themes from four innovative international social work placement scenarios from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland. The findings pointed to "enablers, markers, and aspects of quality learning" that helped to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by placement innovation and learning (4). Challenges identified included placement scarcity, rapid placement innovation, and the mitigation of risk while preserving placement quality. The authors concluded that creativity and innovation, guided by well-articulated educational principles, clearly identified learning outcomes, and evidence-based pedagogical practices, promote the construction of quality placements that help to transcend risks (4). How to deliver quality placements in a pandemic posed both challenges and opportunities for all involved in social work education. This inquiry was followed by three student-led, rural-focused co-operative inquiry projects. In social work, practice research is a collaborative and negotiated process of inquiry that involves practitioners, researchers, service users, and educators. Participants in co-operative inquiry work as co-inquirers, co-researchers, and co-subjects in this practice-based research approach that involves cycles of reflection and action. Work-integrated learning has been studied using the co-operative inquiry approach, and our student-led inquiry projects have demonstrated that it can be applied as a technique as well as a method, promoting power sharing, teamwork, and participants' transformative learning. Our outcomes support broadening the scope of placements accessible to students, which goes some way toward meeting unmet needs, and validate the ability of placements incorporating experiential research to prepare students for professional practice (5).

METHODOLOGY: CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY

These unique student-led research projects were undertaken fully online and led by seventeen social work students completing their placements in Australia and Ireland. Students aimed to co-write journal articles on mutually agreed topics, focusing on issues affecting rural social work services. Students were on placement in Australia (twelve fully online placements, two on-site placements with an online research component) and Ireland (three on-site placements with an online research component). Supported by academics, students met online to conduct in-depth conversations that involved sharing their knowledge, observations, and experiences. Available literature was accessed by students and linked with themes emerging from the online conversations. The research data constituted the collective wisdom of all participants.

The projects were designed and enacted using co-operative inquiry as the research methodology. Co-operative inquiry is participatory, inclusive, highly collaborative, and action-based (6). The process uses

"critical friends", where knowledge and experiences are analysed by the group. The process is grounded in the idea that research can be conducted *with* people, not *on* people (Russ et al., In press) and highlights the principle of the equality of voices within the co-authoring process, where the researchers are also participants in the research. This methodology aims to promote equality in research, where everyone is on equal footing and all opinions are sought (7).

Co-operative inquiry methodology involves four phases that are cycled through providing opportunities for reflection and sharing ideas (Fig 1.). This process of reflection and action allows for the development of the research topic while adding to the depth of the data.

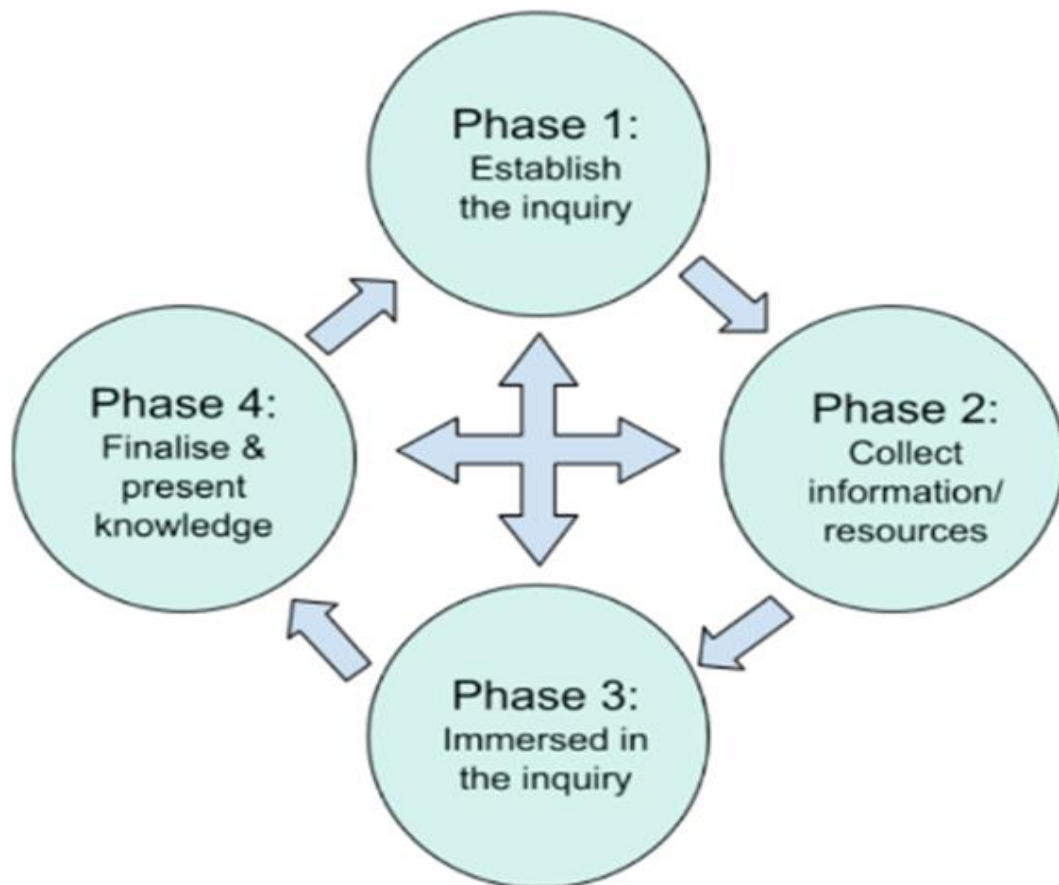


Fig. 1 A co-designed graphic representation of the four phases of Co-operative Inquiry (8)

In phase one, the group comes together as a new research team. They establish ground rules to facilitate a cohesive group process and enhance member participation. The method of data collection and details of the project are discussed and agreed upon, and agreement is reached on the focus of the research and how the data will be collected (6).

In phase two, information is collected, with further discussion of the research topic (9). Members share their opinions and experiences with the group, thus generating data collection and discussions. Their combined knowledge informs the inquiry, and central themes begin to emerge, laying the foundations for the resulting article.

In phase three, the team becomes immersed in the research topic. They explore the information gathered, share ideas, and discuss practice experiences and personal lived experiences to fully engage themselves in the topic being researched. Reflective processes are used to enhance engagement with and exploration of the topic from multiple perspectives.

The fourth phase consists of the team critically reviewing the data and the themes that have emerged (9). Patterns in the data may be identified to discover common themes and interpret meanings. They begin to write the journal article or to collate other dissemination materials (e.g., conference presentations). This process is collaborative, ensuring all voices and opinions are heard and respected. There follows an extensive and collaborative editing process to produce the final article.

STUDENT-LED, RURAL-FOCUSED INQUIRY PROJECTS

These projects started during COVID-19. Australian colleagues initiated the first project to support social work students undertaking isolated, remote research projects for their placement. Students required more opportunities to collaborate and build skills relevant to their social work placements, and co-operative inquiry provided an opportunity to do this. Following the success of the first project, there followed two further student-led, rural-focussed projects and University College Cork joined three universities from across Australia. The second project examined the challenges and opportunities of rural social work practice, and the third explored issues of disasters and social work practice within the disaster, response, and recovery context.

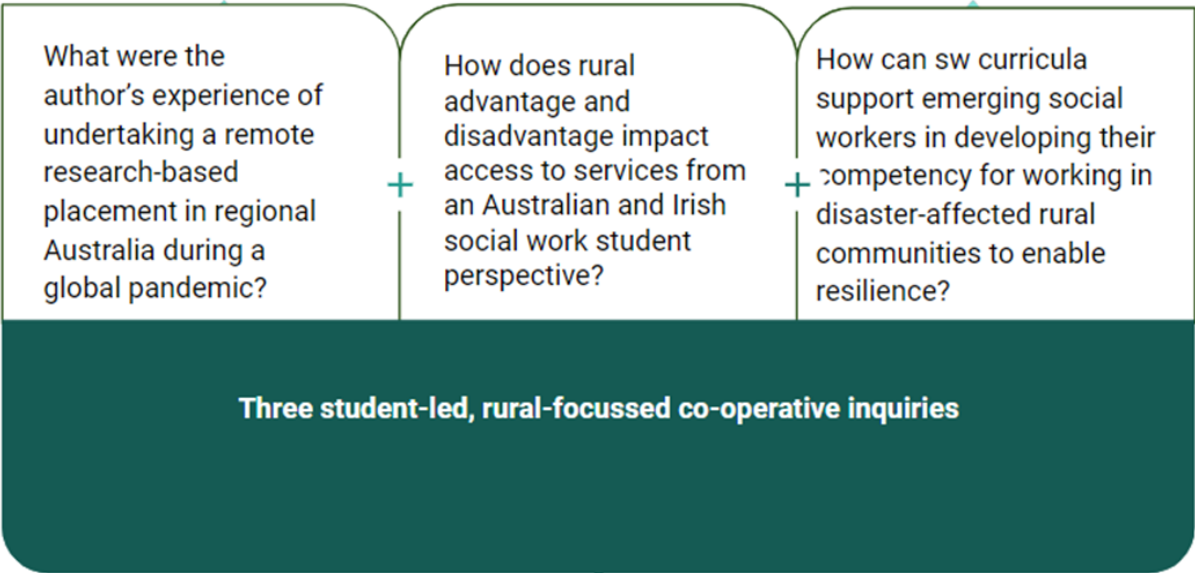


Fig. 2 The three projects (8)

Funding support was secured from the University Centre of Rural Health-Sydney University and Charles Sturt University, and two inquiries also received funding from University College Cork. Together, students learned a research methodology that aligns with social work ethics. They engaged with an international research network, co-produced and co-presented at international conferences, and co-produced and co-published in international journals (8). Our research demonstrates that the strengths of the inquiries greatly outweighed the challenges.

The inquiries contained some administrative challenges. Each participant and institution had different needs and reporting requirements. The project coordinator from Charles Sturt University, Australia (also known as the chief investigator as per the funding process) had to learn about receiving, reporting, and administering funding in multiple currencies and across institutions so that all involved could access resources and opportunities for example, the payment of conference fees for an online international conference in American Dollars or Thai Bhat so people from numerous institutions could attend was not straightforward. Another challenge was ensuring that all key stakeholders were comfortable with the inquiries, their setup, progress, and outputs while keeping to the numerous timelines, institutional requirements, and professional bodies' standards. The strategies that helped

overcome the challenges were a) to ensure that everyone agreed with the same aims, goals, and objectives, b) everyone involved having a can-do attitude and c) belief that together we can find a win-win solution for every institution if we think about it as a community activity. The administrative burden became easier with each project.

A common challenge for all participants was working across time zones and cultures. This was also a strength because it grew our social work knowledge and skills. One member described how they found it inspiring as an educator to see people grow in cultural responsiveness, including cultural sensitivity and cultural humility, and enhance their positive problem-solving skills. Cultural responsiveness ensures cultural safety and "is what is needed to transform systems; how individuals and organisations work to deliver and maintain culturally safe and effective care and services" (10)

Much like their Australian colleagues, participation by Irish colleagues in the projects was self-directed. The Irish coordinator found herself learning about and transferring social work skills to her fieldwork role and making sense of "integrated practice", which has emerged as a concept for professionals working in higher education where the "blended professional" can naturally cross boundaries and often has both professional and academic credentials (11). This concept of the 'third space' as the interface between academic and professional activity in higher education was first articulated by Celia Whitechurch in 2013 (11). This helped them transition professionally from social work practice to working within social work higher education, ever mindful of maintaining professional standards during a pandemic.

RESEARCH ETHICS AND LEARNINGS

The authors' engagement with this project promoted an alternative perspective based on the codes of professional social work ethics (12,13,14). It emphasised the importance of collaboration and respect concerning social justice and social theory research in applied research on fieldwork placement. This project is an example of how these principles apply to all contexts of social work practice, education, and research.

Co-operative inquiry represents a collaborative research methodology suited to field education research as it is consistent with social work principles, is respectful, participatory, and upholds the unique dignity of each person involved in the research. The value base within higher education is a collective responsibility for individual human rights, which is in keeping with the Global Definition of Social Work articulated by the International Federation of Social Workers (15). The project data was analysed using a thematic approach to identify key findings;

1) Facilitation: In the group, generative conversations were facilitated by participating academics who scaffolded the group process.

"This environment allowed us to get creative with this new research method and share our opinions freely without fear of judgment. However, we knew the academics were there as a soundboard for our ideas and as a safety net."

(student reflection (11))

2) Confidence Building: Trust and confidence building between students and academics is a major feature of Co-operative inquiry methodology. However, students acknowledged that it took time for them to believe in and engage in the egalitarian research process.

"Before this my confidence would have been low, but after...my confidence is high."

(student reflection (16,8))

3) Safe Space: A safe, collaborative space was created for students and academics to work together, share ideas and knowledge, and learn collaboratively about the research process and the topic. The collaborative space bears all the hallmarks of Freire's democratic learning space, where responsibilities are shared, and roles are given equal status (11)

"It's a really safe space because it's embedded. I wonder about hidden power dynamics in other research models."

(student reflection (17))

4) A Pedagogy of Practice Research: Taking teaching and learning of research out of the classroom into an applied placement setting.

"The CI project highlighted the differences between learning research in the classroom versus in practice."

(student reflection (11))

5) An experiential approach to learning practice research: The methodology is founded on principles of collaboration, participation, equality, and social justice (18).

"I had not had the opportunity to do collaborative research before and I learned a lot about myself and how I work as part of a group. I learned skills from this project that I wouldn't have had by doing research on my own. I felt more confident about doing research, as this experience made research accessible to students in a very non-intimidating way..."

(student reflection (11))

Co-operative inquiry promoted the *"dismantling [of] boundaries"* between students and academics as articulated by one student participant (11). In the research process, students experienced that traditional roles of academia were turned on their heads, and they were facilitated to lead the process. Students described this as a new way of thinking for them, as they were used to being taught by academics who *"know better"* than we do.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Consistent with social work values and educational focus internationally, the collaborative and transnational nature of the student-led co-operative inquiry projects provided rich learning opportunities for students. Some consistent features evident across these projects include:

- Sustainability through technology
- Building student understanding, use, and confidence in research
- The integration of ethics and social justice principles in action

The sustainability, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness of using technology were central. Using standard technology platforms, including Zoom®, Google Docs®, and One Drive® were easily accessed by participants. Using the Zoom® video conference platform for regular meetings, students got to know each other and developed effective collaborative relationships. Zoom® could record meetings and provide transcripts, enabling those who missed meetings to view discussions. In Australia, telehealth is a strong trend in rural and remote practice, so technology builds student skills in communicating and working with others through online platforms. Google Docs® provided easy access to research documentation and allowed live-time simultaneous use during meetings and the journal writing processes. Students could add reflections, comments, or observations during or following meetings, enabling active engagement for those who missed a meeting, and it enabled further

exploration of the topic between meetings. The geographically diverse collaboration was able to be effectively managed and rendered cost-effective and sustainable over time. Hence our ability to continue to complete further research projects.

Secondly, co-operative inquiry has built the understanding, connection, engagement, and confidence of students in research. The projects are an experiential introduction to research methodology. They helped students to understand how valuable research is in developing and drawing on practice knowledge through their placements in the research context and how research can inform practice. Thus, building student understanding of the interplay between knowledge, practice, research, and application of research in practice.

These projects demonstrate ethics and social justice in action, as one academic mentor stated:

“It's our values to practice that underpin the way we've used technology...throughout the co-operative inquiry processes, ethics and issues of power were an ongoing conversation, embedded in the egalitarian process of this participatory research approach.”

The project groups worked from the position of academics as guides and mentors rather than principals or leads. Through this process, a shared approach was developed, empowering students who, as they worked through the project, felt that they were operating as equals, could raise issues, and each lead particular elements. Students engaged through consistently reflecting on, developing an understanding of, and addressing ethical concerns and issues of power in the group dynamics.

Co-operative inquiry is an action-based participatory methodology. Not only were these projects beneficial from the perspective of student learning, but they also resulted in multiple research outputs that disseminated the findings of each project. Outputs include the publication of two student-led research journal articles, with a third article in press at the time of writing this paper. Consistent with the principle of the student-led approach, all outputs have the students as lead authors.

The first project produced a paper on student perspectives on undertaking remote research-based placements, published in a first-quartile international social work education journal (1) with 2,394 views at the date of writing this paper. The second project on rural social work practice produced an article in a regional journal (Australasia) (3). In addition to the publication, student participants also presented an e-poster at the 26th Asia-Pacific Regional Social Work Conference (19). Building on the success of the first two projects, the third project examining social work curricula for working in rural communities in contexts of disaster resulted in publication in a first-quartile international social work journal with 699 views at the date of writing this paper (2), and an online oral conference presentation (20) and a poster presentation at an Australian national conference (16).

In October 2023, the project received a research award from ANZSWWER (Australian & New Zealand Social Work & Welfare Education & Research) for achievement in *Research about Collaborations between Communities and Education Providers in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)*. The award recognises that INCInq and the inter-university teams from Australia and Ireland (University of New England, Charles Sturt University, Southern Cross University, University of Sydney, and University College Cork) use an empowerment framework, mentoring social work students to lead in their social work research using co-operative inquiry methodology, while fully supported by the academic staff. The awarding committee acknowledged that the inquiries extended the leadership, professional, research, and collaboration skills of the participating students.

CONCLUSIONS

As our research demonstrates, student-led, rural-focused co-operative inquiry is a sustainable, cost-effective

research method through the application of online technologies. It has prompted more creative and diverse student learning and placement experiences. The collaborative nature of co-operative inquiry fits well with the values of the social work profession: social justice, inclusion, cooperation, open communication, and collaboration (14,15). The international reach of the project was facilitated by technology and the upskilling of all involved, and our challenge is to harness its use in optimising educational and learning experiences. The authors assert that co-operative inquiry is a creative and innovative research pedagogy. As students have attested, it is an effective template for teaching social work research that reaches beyond the classroom into placement, thus promoting research-ready social work graduates (13) with the skills needed to engage in practice research. The process of engaging in co-operative inquiry aligns with the philosophy of Schon (11), and the practice of reflection sits well with the social work mission. It can be easily included in social work curricula.

The three student-led, rural-focussed research projects supported critical inquiry into variations in values, practices, and principles across different institutions and cultures. Co-operative inquiry is an action-based methodology where outputs have been achieved successfully with publications and conference presentations. The students state that the co-operative inquiry process facilitated and empowered them to spearhead publications and take charge of their research. The co-operative inquiry environment allowed them to be creative with this new research method and share their opinions freely. Students acknowledged the importance of support given by the academics who provided a scaffold for their ideas and a safety net if they became disheartened during the process.

As (16) evidenced in this paper, the project design can be replicated and developed to help transform ways of teaching and doing practice research. For student-led research projects to develop and thrive, they require the support of academics, researchers, and organisational funding.

REFERENCES

1. Lomas, G., Gerstenberg, L., Kennedy, E., Fletcher, K., Ivory, N., Whitaker, L., Russ, E., Fitzroy, R., & Short, M. Experiences of social work students undertaking a remote research-based placement during a global pandemic. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*. 2022.
2. Doyle, K., Pascoe, E., Donnarumma, S., Anderson, M., Stoye, K., McDaid, D., Morley, L., Russ, E., Hawkins, P., Doyle, P. & Short, M. A transnational student-led, rural-focussed inquiry: social work educational competency in disaster management. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*. 2023; 1-22.
3. McLaughlin, A., Pascoe, E., Lawson, J., Parker, L., Whalan, T., Safdar, T., Beeton, G., Kennedy, R., Ivory, N., Morley, M., Halton, C., Russ, E., Gartshore, S., & Short, M. New Perspectives Regarding the Impact of Rural Disadvantage on Accessing Services: Hearing the Australian and Irish Social Work Student Voice. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*. In press.
4. Short, M., Halton, C., Morris, B., Rose, J., Whitaker, L., Russ, E., Fitzroy, R., Appleton, C., Adamson, C., Woolven, M., Rush, E., Ivory, N., Berger, L., Morton, N., Duncombe, R., & Boyd, B. Enablers, markers, and aspects of quality innovative placements across distance: insights from a co-operative inquiry. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*. 2023; 42(8): 1526-1545.
5. Julkunen I, Joubert L, Fouché C, Webber M, Short M, Whitaker L, et al. Practice research partnerships in social work: Addressing impact and credible evidence. *Research on Social Work Practice*. 2024 February.

6. Short, M. & Healy, J. Writing 'with' not 'about': Examples in co-operative inquiry. In Gair S&LAV, editor. Sharing qualitative research: Showing lived experience and community narratives. United States: Routledge; 2017. p. 215-231.
7. Whitaker, L., Russ, E., Petrakis, M., Halton, C., Walters, C., Woolven, M., & Short, M. Co-operative inquiry online: investigating innovation in work-integrated learning across four countries. In SAGE Research Methods: Doing Research Online.: SAGE Publications, Ltd; 2022.
8. Pascoe, E., Short, M., Whitaker, L., Morris, B., Petrakis, M., Russ, E., Gersbach, K., Evans, S., Rose, J., Fitzroy, R., Reimer, L., Halton, C., Walters, C., and Berger, L. International Network of Co-operative Inquirers: Vision Document. ; 2023.
9. Reason, P., & Heron, J. Co-operative Inquiry. In Harre R,SJ&VLL, editor. Rethinking Methods in Psychology.: Sage; 1995.
10. Cranney M. Cultural Responsiveness in Action: an IAHA framework. [Online]. Deakin, Australia.; 2015 [cited 2024 April 27. Available from: <https://iaha.com.au/workforce-support/training-and-development/cultural-responsiveness-in-action-training>.
11. Halton, C., Rose, J. & McLaughlin, A. The Application of Co-operative Inquiry to a Student-Led Research Project on Social Work Placement: A Student, Professional Placement Coordinator, and Academic Tutor Reflect on their Experience. The Irish Social Worker. 2023 December.; 74-85.
12. AASW. Code of Ethics. [Online].; 2020 [cited 2023 September 13. Available from: <https://www.aasw.asn.au/about-aasw/ethics-standards/code-of-ethics/>.
13. SWRB. swrb-standards-of-proficiency-for-social-workers.pdf (coru.ie). [Online].; 2019 [cited 2023 September 11. Available from: <https://www.coru.ie/files-education/swrb-standards-of-proficiency-for-social-workers.pdf>.
14. IASW. Code of Ethics. [Online].; 2023 [cited 2023 September 11. Available from: <https://www.iasw.ie/publications-for-social-workers>.
15. IFSW. Global standards for social work education and training, International Federation of Social Workers. [Online].; 2023 [cited 2023 November 08. Available from: <https://www.ifsw.org/global-standards-for-social-work-education-and-training/>.
16. Pascoe., E, Doyle, E., Fitzroy, R., Russ, E., & Short, M. Utilising inclusive student-led research methods transnationally for successful work-integrated learning: Developing student capacity and identity regarding practice with disaster-affected rural communities. In Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia [HERDSA] Conference; 2023; Brisbane.
17. Russ, E., Petrakis, M., Whitaker, L., Fitzroy, R., & Short, M. Co-operative Inquiry: Qualitative methodology transforming research 'about' to research 'with' people. Qualitative Research. 2024; 0(0).
18. Alston M. & Bowles, W. Research for social workers: an introduction to methods. 4th ed.: Allen & Unwin; 2018.

19. Lawson, J., Pascoe, E., & Ivory, N. Student-led co-operative inquiry: Inquiring into rural disadvantage and advantage. In 26th Asia Pacific Regional Social Work Conference; 2021.
20. Donnarumma, S., Doyle, K., Stoye, K., Anderson, M., McDaid, D., Pascoe, E., Morley, L., Russ, E., Doyle, P., Hawkins, P., & Short, M. Beginning a journey: A transnational student-led rural-focused co-operative inquiry into promoting resilience in disaster-stricken rural communities. In 9th ICSD Asia Pacific Conference Book of Abstracts; 2022; Thailand.

TROUBLING THE WAYS WE VIEW TEACHING AND LEARNING IN OUR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Greg Campbell*¹, Katja Hiltunen*²

**Both authors contributed equally to this paper*

¹*University of Sussex (UK)*

²*University of Eastern Finland (FINLAND)*

Abstract

This paper draws from our article (1) that seeks to trouble classroom expectations in both Finland and the UK. We employ speculative fabulation and poetic inquiry in connection with our doctoral research to dream up feminist futures where embodied learning is at the forefront of our work as educators. Too often, the young people's needs are secondary to the demands of the curriculum and behaviour policy. We use examples from both Finland and England to ask who benefits from the current mainstream education and what could be done differently. We suggest that there is room for more subversive teachers in our schools and colleges, disrupting and subverting the stream expectations. After all, they have been created for homogenised 'professional' students and teachers who, in all likelihood, do not exist.

Keywords: poetic inquiry, education, new materialism

INTRODUCTION

Our presentation at the 2024 Congress titled "Creating feminist futures by imagining lessons differently: using speculative fabulation and poetic inquiry as methods to trouble classroom expectations" drew from our article by the same name in *Australian Feminist Studies* (1).

As doctoral researchers and education professionals we are both troubled by and keen to trouble secondary and further education (FE) provision in both Finland and the UK. In the article and, subsequently, in the presentation, we wanted to explore what speculative fabulation (2) and poetic inquiry (3) would bring to our understanding of everyday life in our schools and colleges.

We are both at the beginning of our journeys in employing creative methods in research and we acknowledge that it is a shortcoming in our work thus far that we have not been able to genuinely co-create poems and stories with our students and/or teachers. Nonetheless, we believe that by highlighting the emotions present in the transcripts of student interviews through poetic inquiry or speculating on what lessons done differently would look, sound and feel like, we can trouble the classroom expectations prevalent in our mainstream education.

Theoretically, we have been inspired by Donna Haraway (2), Karen Barad (4), Rosi Braidotti (5) and Jane Bennett (6), in particular. A great inspiration in applying posthumanist and new materialist thinking to education has been Kay Sidebottom, whose lectures and guidance at the Utrecht Posthuman Summer School brought Greg and me together in the first place. Damian Page's and Sidebottom's (7) article "The Sensorium and the Fleishy School" brought us further into the troublesome mind/body binary in schools where looking and listening are usually given priority over the rest of the sensorium, i.e. movement, smell-taste and the haptic. Most, if not all, teachers know how difficult it is to maintain students' interest in one lesson, let alone a double. This becomes even more difficult when we are teaching students with special educational needs. It is

easy for us as teachers who are on the move for most of the lesson to forget how difficult it is to sit still. Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (8) write about 'professional pupil skills', which include the ability to sit still and listen. Yet they themselves acknowledge as researchers the difficulty of being confined to a standard classroom chair for the whole lesson. Why, then, do we expect this from our students irrespective of their shape, size and physical and emotional needs?

There are, of course, places that do it differently, such as Reggio Emilia in Italy. Instead of relying on adult-led meaning-making, children are co-creators whose myriad forms of knowledge-creation are appreciated equally (9). Democratic schools (10) also offer a more holistic approach to education where they are available and for those who can afford them.

In this paper, we look at examples of teaching and learning from Finland and England and consider ways of doing teaching and learning differently.

NOTES FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FINLAND

In mainstream schools, there are pockets of freedom for students who have somehow negotiated these freedoms for themselves. Sometimes it is the boys who claim the classroom space more visibly and audibly while girls remain still and silent (8). In other instances, it is the high-achieving and/or socially skilled students who dominate the space (ibid.). In Katja's doctoral research into the impact of selective streaming in Finnish secondary schools, she has found that students in selective streams (selected through aptitude tests in specialist subjects such as sports, art or sciences) tend to have more freedoms regarding the sensorium as described by Page and Sidebottom (7). It is often the nature of the specialist subject they have chosen that creates opportunities to move: Milla is painting on the floor because that stops the paint from dripping; The science students are baking cookies to identify chemical processes that take place during baking (observations during ethnographic fieldwork in secondary schools in Finland). However, for these students, the movement is not restricted to the specialist subjects alone. In career guidance, "Samuli goes to show something to the girls at the round table and then dances for a while by his desk" and "Lotta lies on top of the table, and Silja stretches her leg on top of the round table" (extracts from field notes).

In addition to the freedom to move, the selective stream students in Katja's research differ from the non-selective groups in their positive attitudes towards school in general and especially towards their selective stream peers. They tend to stick with students from their own group and know very few if any, students from outside their group. On the whole, they suspect that students in other groups are not as highly motivated or as high achieving as they are. This is a message they also hear from their teachers, who often compare them to their non-selective peers: "It took them half an hour, but you can do it in ten minutes.". The students are aware of the expectations placed on them because of their status as selective group students, but they also receive frequent praise for being "lovely" and "trustworthy".

In our presentation at the conference and the article it draws from, we used poetic inquiry to highlight the key experiences and emotions expressed by the non-selective group students. In doing so, we hope to create shared feelings and memories (3) of what it is like to be in a lesson where you are stuck at your desk listening to a teacher, wishing it was not so. However, on this occasion, we want to focus on the selective stream using poetic inquiry to help share the emotions present in the everyday lives of students deemed gifted and talented. The following poem, created from an interview with a 15-year-old selective stream student, demonstrates well the pleasure the students find in being "in their own zone" but also the pressures that come with being in the selective group:

Our school has a good atmosphere.

We don't try too hard but we're still really good.

We just get on with it and we usually do well.

But

It depends on the person

You can just roll with it

And cry if you feel like it

Basic stuff.

Because we're in the selective stream

We're in our own zone

We have our own thing

We want to do well

"The nerds in the selective stream"

The good guys

"It took them half an hour but you can do it in ten minutes."

It's hard to take time off

When will you have time off?

You have to have a deadline

But if you don't sleep, nothing works.

I want to get to graduation.

Reetta (all student names are pseudonyms), the girl whose words form the poem above, is a neurodiverse student who talks openly about the challenges that brings to school life, which is also reflected in the poem: "It's hard to take time off ... But if you don't sleep, nothing works." At both of the Finnish research schools the teachers see the selective streams as safe spaces for students with special educational needs. In the words of one teacher:

It's not an exaggeration to say that we've done a good job with accommodating students with special educational needs in the selective groups. They would've had it much harder in non-selective groups and probably been bullied. In the selective groups it's ok to be different. As I've been a class tutor for many of these groups I know what I'm talking about. The group supports and carries these students. The social side of things is important too.

In an ideal world, *every* group would support their members the way the selective groups are described to do above. In our article (1) we imagine lessons where *all* students are comfortable and cared for. Greg, a neurodiverse teacher and researcher, has focused especially on creating learning environments that are filled with joy, taking into account the diverse needs of often marginalised students with special educational needs and/or negative experiences in education. In one of our stories, we imagine a lesson where students are free to choose where they sit (floor, chairs, bean bags, etc.) and whether they want to stay still or move around (1). It was prompted by comments made by 15-year-old students in a group interview about the disappointment they had felt when they found out that the bean bags they had been promised for a music lesson were not, in fact, provided:

I wonder what Malla is doing. I open my eyes and look around to see. She is lying flat on the floor, staring at the ceiling, tapping her fingers on the floor to the beat of the music. She always kicks off her shoes first thing. Today's socks have penguins on them! The penguins look like they are dancing as her feet swing from side to side. It looks funny and a bit weird, sort of energetic and lazy at the same time. (1)

In another story, Greg remembers times when there were balloons and laughter and screaming and tries to forget the reproach that followed: "Did you think it was appropriate to let them act like animals?" (1). Underlying in the comment is the assumption that education makes us human (11). However, as all posthuman scholars know, being 'human' is not unambiguous (12). Too often, 'human' is understood to mean white, heterosexual, able-bodied, Western and, usually, male. Being human is also often understood to be synonymous with being an adult. Children and teenagers have not quite yet achieved a fully human status (13), and education is seen as a crucial part of the journey of becoming an adult.

NOTES FROM FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES IN ENGLAND

Greg's current research is a materialist exploration of the dynamics of teaching and learning in the construction department of a further education (FE) college in England. Increasing attention is being paid to embodied ways of learning and knowing among social scientists, educators, and cognitive and neuroscientists. Greg's research aims to add to this growing pool of knowledge by exploring the dual nature of teaching trade subjects and the tension between being a professional tradesperson and a professional teacher. In doing so, he hopes that the knowledge generated supports ways of offering a richer, more tailored teaching and learning experience for both teachers and students.

Further education colleges are transitional spaces. They can be seen to act as a gateway from being a 'young person' to becoming an 'adult'. Many of the students who attend FE have not had a great experience of secondary school and may have 'failed' their end-point examinations (14). Subjects (Construction, Health and Social Care, etc.) emphasise the generally working-class nature of the sector (15), offering training to feed local employment needs, generally from age 16 upwards. Many of the people who teach in FE are expected to have experience working in their field and 'trade' skills, which suggests that they come from similar backgrounds to the students and quite possibly had their own issues with schooling. Greg is particularly interested in who these people teaching vocational subjects are, where they come from, what motivates them, what choices they have made and how they view teaching and learning in FE in the UK.

The following poem is made up of interviews with eight teachers who participated in Greg's research. The poem paints an overall picture of a lack of school engagement, disruption, boredom, and disaffection. We can see that these people may all be 'in this together, but [they] are not one and the same' (12).

I'm one of six and didn't like school.
All I wanted to do was leave and go to work.
And then I was a carpenter
When I left school.

I didn't care when I was at school.
Just don't remember a great deal.
Setting light to a student playing with the gas taps.
I think most people remember the good stuff.

I didn't really enjoy school.
For me, it was very boring.
The early years I was quite disruptive

I class them as my better years.

Trained from the age of four
Trained to get up early
I didn't do it.
Because I never went to school.

Oh, yeah, I did enjoy school.
I could have done better, but
I didn't get it, I just didn't get it.
No excuse, I didn't try hard enough.

EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY

There is a tendency to view teachers and young people as homogenised groups who will act and behave in expected ways. We structure our teaching and learning practices around notions of certainty, and there are myriad ways of doing and being that we codify and set in stone. The curriculum is decided for us, what we can and cannot say is decided for us, and what is considered acceptable behaviour is decided for us. Alongside 'professional pupil skills', we also have, of course, 'professional teacher skills'. These are bound up in notions of 'authority', 'playing a role', 'managing behaviour' and 'outcomes', which are predetermined and generalised ideas about what appropriate knowledge might be. Appropriate for whom? In whose best interests are these notions formed? In a testament to the ubiquity of codified and formulaic practices, we can reference the huge number of books and articles on behaviour management and the rise of the 'teacher's toolkit', the very notion of which conjures images of performative and instrumental teaching practices. Recently, there have been calls for us as researchers and teachers to embrace uncertainty (16), loosen curricular restrictions to allow uncertainty (17) and thereby open cracks for student agency to root itself in fertile soil (18). For Rix (16), education systems seek to impose certainty, yet those at the 'chalk face' have to deal with uncertainty on a daily basis. Moreover, this drive for certainty (lesson plans, behavioural management schemes, time-bound learning outcomes, etc.) invites uncertainty. Nothing is certain.

Everyone Has a Plan...

At times being in a construction classroom is like being in a sensory maelstrom. The pounding of hammers, the rasping of saws, the whine of electric screwdrivers and drills, the roar of the dust extraction system and the smell; of wood shavings or plumbers' solder or plaster or cement, that can get into your clothes, your skin, your mind. At times like this I stand as a human being, a producer of language and meaning, of abstract thought, and I am never more aware of how inextricably entangled in the material world we are (extract from Greg's doctoral thesis).

We become used to the sounds, the smells, the feel of the space, yet the noise and sensations call to us. They rattle our senses and alter our perceptions, and they are a call to the "wild beyond...the structures we inhabit and inhabit us" (19). This wildness can be found all around us and can manifest at any moment:

I'm in a construction workshop, feeling very pleased with myself. I have six boys, all with social, emotional and mental health issues, making bird-boxes. This is their very first practical task. They've designed their own boxes and are now measuring and cutting. Billy is doing a brilliant job; he has made a lovely bird-box and is super proud of himself, of it. I have bought some bird seed and give him a bag to take home. I suggest he hangs the box up outside his house where his mum and dad can see it in use. I walk around the workshop. Amongst the noises of sawing and hammering I hear a sound that does not quite fit: Billy is smashing his bird-box. Billy's face a picture of

concentrated fury, his body tense and his movements febrile. Mixed reactions from the others, a couple laugh and another calls for Billy to stop. I am confronted with the choices I need to make in the moment, do I intervene? Do I let it blow over? Will the behaviour spread to the others? Billy stops smashing the birdbox. He looks confused. He looks at me, drops the hammer and shrugs. If this was a building site Billy would be on his way, with no job to come back to. But it's not a building site and I'm not a 'boss'. I'm a teacher in a room full of boys with special needs and what I need to do now is find the learning in this 'moment' (extract from Greg's research diary).

It turns out that the learning at this moment was not for the students but for Greg.

Billy had refused what had been offered. As a student in 'Alternative Provision', Billy knows his place; he is not a 'good boy'. He will not wear that mantle. Greg planned to get these young people to make something they could be proud of and to show them that they could do it if they 'tried'. He had missed the point. Billy did not want to try what was imposed on him. He had refused this 'call to order' (20). He had been refusing it for years.

Refusing the Call to Order

Of course, the first thing Greg did was reach into his 'teacher's toolkit' for a behavioural technique to control Billy and naturally, things got worse. Billy refused again. Greg was stuck; there was nothing he could do or say that would make the situation better.

From that moment on, Greg has also refused the 'call to order', endeavouring to give students the choice of what they do in a lesson (with the proviso that he is paid to get them to some sort of outcome, just not always the predetermined one). Rather than reaching into a 'toolbox' for a 'technique', he reaches into his 'toybox' to see what might happen. Sometimes, the toybox quite literally contains toys; at other times, it contains games, occasionally music blasts out, and then again, it may contain whatever the students want it to. However, it is not the 'toy' that is important. It acts as a gateway. Once through it, the being together and thinking together, the relational nature of the activity becomes important. Harney and Moten (20) talk of the undercommons, those who have been colonised, sexualised, racialised, naturalised, set outside the bounds of society, defined as less than: black people, indigenous people, poor people, LGBTQ+ people, young people, neurodiverse people, disabled people...the list goes on. It is for these people that we must refuse the call to order, disrupt the status quo, and raise a cacophony of noise. As subversive teachers, we sneak into the school and steal what we can. We exploit its generosity, disrupt its purpose, join its fugitive band, and be in but not of. We fade into the undergrowth, into the undercommons of understanding, where the work gets done, where the work gets disrupted, where the revolution begins (20).

CONCLUSION

Out of a desire to trouble the way we view teaching and learning, we have shared snippets of our doctoral research and experimented with speculative fabulation and poetic inquiry. In the feminist future we dream of, we will reach into the toybox more often and embrace uncertainty. Underlying our work is the desire to recognise embodied learning and the needs of the young people in our schools and colleges. We also look forward to seeing more signs of disruption by subversive teachers sneaking around in our institutions. In the words of Ivan Illich: "Liberation from the grip of schools could be bloodless" (21).

REFERENCES

- (1) Hiltunen K., Campbell G. Creating Feminist Futures by Imagining Lessons Differently: Using Speculative Fabulation and Poetic Inquiry as Methods to Trouble Classroom Expectations. *Australian Feminist Studies*. 2024; Online first. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2024.2315419>

- (2) Haraway, D. J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press; 2016
- (3) Denzin NK. Reading and writing the experimental text. In Jacobsen MH., Drake MS., Petersen A. (eds.) *Imaginative Methodologies in the Social Sciences: Creativity, Poetics and Rhetoric in Social Research*, London: Routledge; 2017: 93-106
- (4) Barad K. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press; 2007.
- (5) Braidotti R. *Posthuman Feminism*. Cambridge: Polity; 2022.
- (6) Bennett J. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press; 2010.
- (7) Page D., Sidebottom K. The sensorium and fleshy schools. *British Educational Research Journal*. 2022; 48(4): 771– 784.
- (8) Gordon T., Holland J., Lahelma E. *Making spaces: Citizenship and difference in schools*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited; 2000.
- (9) Dahlberg G., Moss P., Pence A. *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of Evaluation*. London: Routledge; 2013.
- (10) Aquarone F. Student experiences of democratic education and the implications for social justice. *Theory and Research in Education*. 2021; 19(1): 40–64.
- (11) Snaza N. Bewildering Education. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*. 2013; 10(1): 38-54.
- (12) Braidotti R. " We" Are In This Together, But We Are Not One and the Same. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*. 2020; 17: 465–469.
- (13) Murriss K. *Karen Barad as Educator: Agential Realism and Education*. New York: Springer; 2022.
- (14) Hadawi A., Crabbe MJC. Developing a mission for further education: changing culture using non-financial and intangible value. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 2018; 23(1): 118-137.
- (15) Lebor M. *Classroom management in the post-school sector: Student and teacher perspectives on the battle against being educated behaviour*. London: Macmillan; 2017.
- (16) Rix, J. *In Search of Education, Participation and Inclusion: Embrace the Uncertain*. Abingdon. Routledge; 2024.
- (17) Kirby P., Webb R. Conceptualising uncertainty and the role of the teacher for a politics of climate change within and beyond the institution of the school. *Educational Review (Birmingham)*; 2023; 75(1): 134–152.
- (18) Dixon C., Martin LM., Betser S. Making Uncertainty Work: How youth manage uncertainty to shape learning trajectories in a school makerspace. International Conference of the Learning Sciences; 2018.
- (19) Halberstam J. The Wild Beyond: With And For The Undercommons. In Harney S., Moten F. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions; 2013.
- (20) Harney S., Moten F. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions; 2013.
- (21) Illich I. *Deschooling Society*. London: Marion Boyars; 1970.

USING A COLLABORATIVE WORKING GROUP MODEL TO DEVELOP AN ADHD RESOURCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF

And a new application with looked after young people

Rebecca J. Ward¹, Hanna Kovshoff¹, Jana Kreppner¹

¹University of Southampton (UK)

Abstract

Inclusive education for children with ADHD (attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder) presents challenges for school staff, and professional development is lacking. Training is not always available when needed, strategies suggested by external experts can be impractical, and staff lack autonomy in choosing the best way of being resourced. Additionally, the experience and knowledge of the range of school staff is not utilised. A collaborative working group of school staff and a researcher explored an alternative method of ADHD resourcing. Co-construction of knowledge defines how the group discursively identified actionable knowledge from the different perspectives and knowledge brought by individual group members. A systemic framework was used to reflect on the collaboration critically. The framework enabled reflection on four areas to understand how and why the collaboration led to a published web-based school staff ADHD resource. Firstly, starting conditions and assumptions were considered to identify and articulate the rationale for the resource. Secondly, the context and system dynamics enabled consideration of the socio-cultural and political landscape of the project, as well as the impact of COVID-19. Thirdly, the different voices of participants and power dynamics were reflected. Finally, a frame in which to elucidate knowledge production and changes in practice emerged. The collaborative working group addressed the research-practice gap and the need for diversity of voices to be heard across the school. Knowledge co-construction positions staff as knowledge-bearers and, together with different forms of knowledge, be empowered to create new, contextualised, evidence-based knowledge. This useful model of co-construction can be applied in different contexts to enable knowledge sharing and power redistribution, encouraging greater representation in knowledge production. One such application is a planned collaborative project with 'looked after' young people (children who live away from their families, supervised by a social worker from the local authority). Shockingly, large numbers of young people leaving this local authority care (usually around 18 years old) experience homelessness, and it is estimated that a quarter of adults experiencing homelessness have been 'looked after' children. This planned collaborative project is designed to provide opportunities for young people to share ways in which they feel prepared and underprepared for independent living. The collaborative model will be used to shape the project and enable effective knowledge co-production. The young people and researchers will co-produce recommendations for policy and practice to be shared with policymakers and practitioners, enabling more effective support for 'looked after' young people when moving towards independent living.

Keywords: ADHD, collaborative, knowledge, young people

INTRODUCTION

Key insights

What is the main issue that the paper addresses?

The gap in relevant and timely ADHD (attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder) training for school staff has led to a need to improve how school staff are equipped to support children with ADHD. I (Rebecca Ward) participated in a collaboration to address this need and build a new style of resource. The critical reflection enables the use of a similar model in a new collaboration with young people.

What are the main insights that the paper provides?

ADHD resourcing for school staff is more effective when school staff share tacit knowledge with academic/ clinical knowledge. This collaborative project describes the co-construction of a website about ADHD in the classroom, which is available when needed, gives autonomy to staff, and provides tried and tested classroom strategies.

The collaborative working group model can be applied to other projects and used to shape a knowledge co-construction project throughout its design, implementation and review. One example of the model being used in the design of a new project is the planned collaborative project with looked after young people as they move towards independence.

The collaboration: the ATTIC project

Context

Our project involved a group of school staff, including a head teacher, SENCOs (special educational needs coordinators), classroom teachers, and a teaching assistant, together with me, a researcher. Interestingly, some of the school staff had experience in research and had completed Masters or doctoral degrees, and I am also a qualified teacher and have worked in schools. This helped our understanding of each other's positions and points of view. The school staff wanted to create an ADHD resource to equip themselves and colleagues better to support children with ADHD better. Academic literature also suggests that school staff identify a lack of high-quality professional development opportunities in this area (1). The main problems with current ADHD training are the timing of it, suggested strategies or approaches that do not fit a classroom context, and a lack of autonomy for staff to choose how and what they learn about ADHD (1,2).

The project was designed to enable the co-creation of an ADHD resource for school staff. Then, a critical evaluation of the collaboration was conducted to understand what went well, what could have gone better, and what we learned about knowledge co-construction.

The big question when the group came to create this resource was, 'Where is knowledge found?' So, in writing the resource, 'Where do we get the knowledge?'. There is explicit knowledge, such as academic or clinical knowledge. However, then the group also wanted to recognise the tacit knowledge developed through the skills and experience of the school staff working with children daily. Tacit knowledge is seen when staff understand a situation very quickly and know what to do even when that knowledge is not written down or explicitly stated in some way.

The aim, then, was to bring this knowledge together and create something new addressing this research-practice gap. The barrier to research-informing practice and more tacit forms of knowledge informing research has been extensively documented (3,4). The group aimed to bring this knowledge together and demonstrate how tacit and explicit knowledge can be brought together. Research can inform practice and help practice to develop and try new things. However, practice can also advise research for where information is needed and what evidence is needed or desired (3,5,6,7).

In terms of building the ADHD resource, the group felt that bringing together a range of school staff and a researcher would bring greater diversity in terms of experience, perspectives, and knowledge. The resource would also be designed by those using it, i.e. school staff supporting children with ADHD. As a diverse group, members would consequently challenge each other, reflect and consider alternative perspectives and build something better as a result.

The group felt that this project was an innovative approach to the production of educational professional development ADHD resources and addressed this research-practice gap. The resulting web-based ADHD resource is entitled ATTIC – an acronym for **ADHD Tips and Tricks In the Classroom**: <https://attic.org.uk>.

Co-construction of knowledge

Co-constructed knowledge is based on the ideas articulated in the following quote: 'Teachers collaboratively constructing knowledge, using different sources, such as the practical knowledge of colleagues, educational research literature, knowledge of external experts, and/ or collaborative research activities' (8, p.31).

So, different sources of knowledge are needed to co-construct something new. Practical knowledge is needed alongside academic knowledge. We did not consider one form of knowledge to be better than the other, but each was recognised for their unique contribution. Each person needs to collaborate so that knowledge is shared and built upon.

Critical reflection of collaborative work using a systemic framework

Fransman et al.'s (9) systemic framework from international development was used for critical reflection on collaborative work, particularly for recognising power dynamics and how power might be shared (Fig. 1). Four areas of reflection are outlined in the framework: starting conditions and assumptions; context and system dynamics; difference; and emergence.

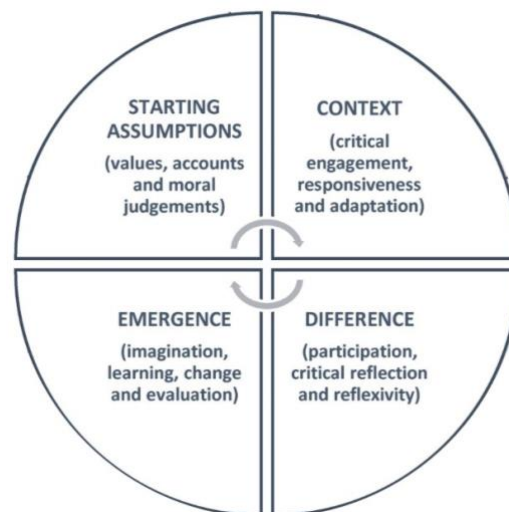


Figure 1 Systemic framework to critically reflect on research collaboration (9)

The systemic framework based on complexity theory (9) was used to understand the collaboration and how it led to co-constructed knowledge. Interviews, field notes, meeting transcripts and reflective questionnaires were used in the analysis.

The starting assumptions covered the initial motivation for people to get involved, what the purpose of the group was seen to be, and what would ultimately be achieved. Assumptions included how group members viewed ADHD and the school system. It was found that individuals joined the project because they felt that children needed help to enjoy school and that there were not enough resources available for ADHD. Staff might have had training once, for one hour, at the beginning of their teacher training

and never again. So, five years later, they cannot remember what was taught, it did not make sense, or it was too clinical. The group felt that sharing broader experience was important and that they wanted to recognise the democratic value of knowledge in different places. There was a common agreement that ADHD resources for school staff are needed, and inclusion helps all children thrive. However, time came up as an anticipated barrier to participation.

The context was used to explore the current state as well as what caused disruption. Time was reiterated as a barrier to participation, and there was an assumption that the project would suffer from staff not being able to commit enough time. Although online meetings hindered interaction and engagement, they also facilitated attendance when time was limited. Coordination and communication across online platforms did increase involvement, and the researcher continually updated the group on developments and outcomes from meetings. The online space where notes could be compiled and shared overcame the time barrier to democratic involvement even when a participant could not attend a session.

The hierarchy within school roles was the main difference. All of the participants were women, but of different ages and from different school settings and roles. So, some diversity, particularly around ideas and the direction members wanted to take. The group identified change occurring when there was a range of ideas and discussion, so some instability, but where there was enough common ground on which to agree. Staff felt that we can always learn by thinking differently, with different schools, roles and experience represented, and that input from all areas helps all areas. However, we saw new barriers being created as gaps were bridged when this diverse group found it difficult to find a common time to meet. Interestingly, the project was a dynamic process. As people contributed, the group changed, and individuals' opinions changed, so the difference was a continuous phenomenon.

Finally, relating to emergence, we found that staff felt that what they had created was a way of helping children get involved in deciding what matters, as discussed below. They felt more confident as staff and that they had also involved children in the process. So, they felt that this project had been very positive for them and that they had created a resource which was going to be useful.

Knowledge transfer, knowledge by participation, knowledge creation?

To underpin this idea of knowledge, it was not a knowledge transfer where one person told the others what they thought, and it stopped there. It was not knowledge by participation where everybody joined in and contributed their knowledge but then went home with their bit of knowledge. Nevertheless, we decided that knowledge co-construction brought all this knowledge together. Everybody was an expert in their own way, and each person's contribution was equal as one type of knowledge was not elevated above others (10). By working together, this interaction created something new. Here are some examples of how the collaboration created something new in the project.

Ownership

At the beginning of the project, it was very much me going to the staff and asking them if they wanted to do this and how we should do it. I suggested that the teachers have a voice in creating the resource. However, the staff said they wanted the children's voices to be heard and understood so that they could better support them. Right at the beginning of the project, there was a strong sense of the staff beginning to own the resource and how it should be created.

Democracy

There was quite a hierarchy of roles within the schools. However, it became clear that each member respected the other members of the group and recognised that different people had valuable experience and expertise to share. However, one member of the group who is not a qualified teacher said that they had never had this opportunity before because it was always for teachers. They also felt

that, in the past, teachers had judged them as having less knowledge to share because they were not qualified.

Power shifts

One group member said, 'What I did learn was things about myself that, actually, I do know more than what sometimes I give myself credit for.' The traditional hierarchy was disrupted, which was particularly important for staff members with fewer years of experience or those who were in less senior positions who sometimes felt they had less power in decision-making because of their status. Staff explained that being on the project had given them currency and confidence to provide evidence as a rationale for their proposals.

A NEW APPLICATION WITH LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE

Using what we have learned from this project, I want to use this framework with a new collaborative group to plan a project with 'looked after' young people under local authority care. In the UK, when these young people are approaching 18 years old, sometimes younger, they leave this care and live independently. Some of these young people feel very underprepared and are at risk of becoming homeless (11).

For young people leaving the care system, recent figures report that at least 40% have experienced homelessness (11). Some of these young people describe leaving care as a cliff edge as they are thrust into tenancy agreements, budgeting, cooking, laundry and emotional challenges, such as loneliness and fear (12).

However, protective factors have also been identified, including feelings of personal control and positive social relationships (1, 12). Youth voice is associated with both personal control and positive relationships. It describes the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes by allowing them to share their experiences and ideas (13). Step by Step Partnership Ltd is a supported lodging organisation based in the south of England. In partnership with the Centre for Homelessness Research and Practice at the University of Southampton, the Speak Out youth voice group from Step by Step will have the opportunity to share their experiences of moving towards independent living and co-create recommendations for policy and practice in this area.

This project will use the framework to help looked after young people work with us to identify how they feel prepared and underprepared for independent living. Then, it will co-create some recommendations for organisations so that the local authorities can better support them in this transition period. The framework will help us think through how we can work together with the young people to take ownership and guide this project, thinking through our assumptions and context, recognising the differences within the group and thinking about what we want to produce. Therefore, we will use this framework when we meet together at the beginning of the project.

REFERENCES

- (1) Ward, R. J., Kovshoff, H., & Kreppner, J. School staff perspectives on ADHD and training: understanding the needs and views of UK primary staff. *Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties*. 2021: 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2021.1965342>
- (2) Braude, S., & Dwarika, V. Teachers' experiences of supporting learners with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder: Lessons for professional development of teachers. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*. 2020;10(1): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/SAJCE.V10I1.843>
- (3) Rynes, S. L., Bartunek, J. M., & Daft, R. L. Across the Great Divide: Knowledge Creation and Transfer between Practitioners and Academics. *The Academy of Management Journal*. 2001;44(2): 340–355. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3069460?seq=1&cid=pdf->

- (4) Watling Neal, J., Neal, Z. P., Kornbluh, M., Mills, K. J., & Lawlor, J. A. Brokering the Research–Practice Gap: A typology. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 2015;56(3–4): 422–435. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10464-015-9745-8/FIGURES/2>
- (5) Honingh, M., Bondarouk, E., & Brandsen, T. Co-production in primary schools: a systematic literature review. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*. 2018;86(2):222–239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852318769143>
- (6) Lau, S. M. C., & Stille, S. Participatory research with teachers: Toward a pragmatic and dynamic view of equity and parity in research relationships. *European Journal of Teacher Education*. 2014;37(2):156–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2014.882313>
- (7) Nastasi, B. K., Varjas, K., Schensul, S. L., Silva, K. T., Schensul, J. J., & Ratnayake, P. The Participatory Intervention Model: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Promoting Intervention Acceptability. *School Psychology Quarterly*. 2000;15(2):207–232. <https://doi.org/10.1037/H0088785>
- (8) van Schaik, P., Volman, M., Admiraal, W., & Schenke, W. Approaches to co-construction of knowledge in teacher learning groups. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 2019;84:30–43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TATE.2019.04.019>
- (9) Fransman, J., Hall, B., Hayman, R., Narayanan, P., Newman, K., & Tandon, R. Beyond partnerships: embracing complexity to understand and improve research collaboration for global development. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*. 2021;42(3):326–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2021.1872507>
- (10) Paavola, S., Lipponen, L., & Hakkarainen, K. Models of Innovative Knowledge Communities and Three Metaphors of Learning. *Review of Educational Research*. 2004;74(4):557–576.
- (11) Centrepoint. (2017). *From care to where? Care leavers' access to accommodation*. Centrepoint. <https://centrepoint.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/from-care-to-where-centrepoint-report.pdf> [Accessed 30th January 2024].
- (12) Palmer, A., Norris, M., & Kelleher, J. Accelerated adulthood, extended adolescence and the care cliff: Supporting care leavers' transition from care to independent living. *Child & Family Social Work*. 2022;27:748-759. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12922>
- (13) Havlicek, J., Lin, C-H., & Braun, M.T. Cultivating youth voice through participation in a Foster youth advisory board: Perspectives of facilitators. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 2016;69:1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.07.018>

LEARNING CIRCLES AS A METHOD FOR PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY: STEPS TOWARDS A RELATIONAL ETHICS OF LEARNING CIRCLES

Maja Lotz (mmlo@pha.dk) and Marie Kirstejn Aakjær (maaa@pha.dk)

University College Absalon (DENMARK)

Abstract

In this paper, we scrutinize the concept of learning circles as a potential method for participatory research. We ask: 1) How is knowing being co-produced in learning circles? 2) What is the play of power in learning circles? 3) Which relational ethics do learning circles call for? Our backdrop for this line of inquiry is our enmeshment in the preliminary phase of a qualitative research project aimed at engaging elderly care professionals in learning circles to co-create more attractive and inclusive work communities and career paths as a response to the increasing recruitment challenges. In the project, learning circles are applied not only as a method to evoke the co-creation of learning among circles' participants but also as a method to co-create scientific knowledge among practitioners and researchers involved in joint qualitative inquiry. In the Nordic countries, learning circles have been developed as a model for adult non-formal education (1), (2). Within this view, the learning circle is a formalized model for the co-creation of learning across various divides, e.g. across professions, across workplaces and/or across different forms of expertise (3), (4). Critique has been that the model neglects the 'role of power' and romanticizes learning as a collaborative and power-neutral process or encounter. As an example, Phillips et al. (5) point to the tensions in the "with" in "research with, not on, people" and the "co" in "co-creating knowledge. Such critical, reflexive analysis illuminates the processes of co-creating knowledge through the tensional, power-infused co-constitution of knowledge and subjectivities (6). Applying the model of learning circles as both a tool to facilitate learning among practitioners as well as a 'gateway' to participatory research – i.e. as a joint venture between practitioners and researchers - pay heed to the inherent yoke between power and knowledge. Our aim in this paper is to develop a more critical and reflexive awareness of how knowledge and power relations are co-created in learning circles among researchers and practitioners as co-researchers. We hereby propose some first steps towards a relational ethics of learning circles (5).

Keywords: relational ethics, learning circles, power

INTRODUCTION

Learning circles aim to engage practitioners and researchers in joint inquiry and co-create practical and scientific knowledge. In this paper, we scrutinize the concept of learning circles as a method of participatory research. We ask how we work with relational ethics and 'walk the talk' of participatory research when using learning circles as a method to co-create knowing. This question guides our paper. Participatory research entails understanding research that does not give primacy to academic

knowledge but legitimizes multiple ways of knowing. It also implies a stand towards research as an endeavour where participants (e.g. of learning circles) engage in mutual learning across differences aimed at contributing not only to academic investigation but also to practical solutions and social change (7), (8), (9). Despite ideals of inclusion and equality, participatory research is evidently always also riddled with tensions and ethical dilemmas arising from the play of power in any knowledge-creating process (e.g. Foucault (10), (11)). For example, Phillips et al. recognize the inevitable play of power in collaborative research relations. Accordingly, they stress the need to work reflexively with the development of relational ethics in participatory research that anticipates the role of power and builds on mutual learning among participants (6), (12). Yet, within the literature on learning circles, little attention has been given to power tensions and dilemmas (e.g. Marquard et al. 2023 (13)). In this paper, our objective is to contribute to this field by developing critical and reflexive awareness of (and an analytical approach to) how knowledge and power relations are co-created in learning circles among researchers and practitioners as co-researchers.

But what are learning circles more precisely? Learning circles are defined as an organizational framework that fosters learning processes by utilizing the expertise and practical knowledge among a group of organizational members (practitioners) and a facilitator (researcher or consultant) (13). Functioning as a formalized framework for the co-creation of knowledge, learning circles facilitate collaborative learning across diverse professions, workplaces, and areas of expertise (3), (4). Still, learning circles are not just a framework to organize collaborative learning but also a participatory approach to research and knowledge creation. The knowledge 'co-created' in a circle aims to be both practical and scientific. However, research that advances perspectives on power tensions in the co-creation of knowing (and learning) in learning circles and how they may privilege certain ways of knowing is currently limited. Similarly, our understanding of the potential power imbalances that arise through the participation of both practitioners and researchers aimed at the co-creation of both practical and scientific knowledge is sparse. Hence, there is a scarcity of insights into how learning circles, as a method for participatory research, can promote inclusive, caring, and equal co-research among participants, thereby addressing the inherent connection between power and knowledge in the research process. Below, we call attention to these matters by asking: 1) How is knowing being co-produced in learning circles? 2) What is the play of power in learning circles? and 3) Which relational ethics of mutual learning and care do learning circles call for? In this way, we hope to contribute with some first reflections and steps towards the relational ethics of learning circles.

The starting point of our inquiry and its aim

Our backdrop for the paper's line of inquiry is our enmeshment in the preliminary phase of a qualitative research project aimed at engaging elderly care professionals in learning circles to co-create more attractive and inclusive work communities and career paths as a response to the increasing recruitment challenges. In the project, we used learning circles as a participatory research method. They are applied as a method to evoke co-creation of mutual learning among circles' participants (practical knowledge/solutions) and as a method to co-create scientific knowledge among practitioners (co-researchers) and researchers (facilitators) involved in joint qualitative inquiry about future sustainable solutions to the recruitment challenges in elderly care. Since the development of learning circles is part of the project's research design, our study offers a potent context for investigating the knowledge and power-relations among participants. It is our initial work with the organization and facilitation of learning circles with elderly care professionals that have triggered an inquiry into how we as scholars navigate the many power tensions of learning circles – and search for ways of working with ethical concerns that nurture mutual learning and mutual care throughout the research process. Hereby, we hope to advance learning circles as a caring participatory research method.

LEARNING CIRCLES AS A METHOD TO CO-CREATE KNOWLEDGE IN, ACROSS, AND ABOUT PRACTICES

Literature on learning in 'circles' traces back to the US civic democratic movements in the 19th century, when the concept of 'study circles' took shape and was later travelled to Scandinavian countries. Research circles, reflection spaces, and learning circles are later origins of circle models. While all these models focus on reflection, critical thinking, and the inclusion of participants' experience and knowledge, variations appear to the degree to which the learning content (topic or focus of a circle) is decided in a bottom-up process or predefined top-down (1). Aakjær and Wegener sum up the work on which the concept of learning circles is based:

'The circle, as a model for practice-based learning, has several disparate areas of application and can be described as a family of approaches (Lahdenperä and Marquard 2019). However, across the literature on circles models, the central features are that circles are highly participatory, builds on the experience and knowledge of its participants, and that the learning content in various degrees is decided and formed collaboratively (Bjerkaker 2014; Hiebert 1996; Lahdenperä 2014). Whereas study circles and research circles appear to be well described, learning circles, however, have gained less scholarly attention' (1, p. 2).

In the Nordic countries, learning circles have been applied across a range of empirical contexts associated with non-formal and formal learning institutions. They are typically structured as bottom-up processes where responsibility for learning, inclusion, and forming a common focus is distributed across participants (1), (4), (14), (15). Recent scholarly work based on company studies in Denmark and Sweden (13) stresses that learning circles serve as the foundation for collectively developing sustainable and forward-thinking solutions and actions. It further highlights that the inclusive approach of learning circles promotes interaction among, for example, frontline personnel, users/citizens, and decision-makers, allowing for interdisciplinary collaboration and the integration of different experiences and perspectives across and beyond many organizational divides. This work emphasizes that learning circles, as a method to enhance participatory qualitative inquiry in organizations, comprise four basic ideas: 1) they involve exploring experiences and developing actionable possibilities in practice among a group of participants, 2) they rely on the foundation of participants' experiences and knowledge, 3) the learning content of the circle is collectively decided and shaped by the participants themselves and 4) the process is facilitated by a circle leader (a researcher or consultant) (13).

HOW IS KNOWING (AND LEARNING) CO-CREATED IN LEARNING CIRCLES?

A learning circle is seen as a learning process where the core lies in employees' specific expertise and specialized knowledge of workflows and where concrete challenges serve as the basis for the collective development of forward-thinking solutions to the organization's/institution's challenges (1). Previous work on learning circles lists several reasons to work with learning circles, such as continuous knowledge and skill development, enhancing collaborative competencies, involving employees in problem-solving and organizational development, strengthening collaboration, and developing a sustainable model for learning and development (13). But how do these qualities of learning circles come about? The key theoretical underpinnings of learning circles are social practice-based learning theories such as situated learning, communities of practice and adult learning that emphasize practices of social interaction (collaboration) as the basic trigger of learning and knowing (16, p. 682). While these theoretical perspectives account for the collaborative and harmonious learning dynamics of learning circles, we still know little of the play of power in such collaborative research. For example, how is knowing among practitioners and researchers having unequal roles and positions co-created and managed, and what kinds of knowing and learning are privileged in learning circles? To advance the relational ethics of learning circles, we believe that further clarification/theorizing on these matters is an important starting point. We do so by turning towards more recent practice-based theories of

knowing, learning, and becoming, as they underline the role of power in learning relations and call attention to the many (sometimes competing) ways of knowing in collaborative research. These theories are informed by the sociology of translation, which emphasizes the role of power inequalities in the deployment of practices and incorporates a posthumanist and socio-material stance that grants equal status to the humans and more-than-humans linked within a practice (16, p. 692).

Within this tradition, knowledge is understood as a product of situated, relational practices of representation (rather than a neutral, context-independent foundation/objective acquisition of information) that gives rise to multiple ways of knowing and being (e.g. cognitive, bodily, affective, and aesthetic) permeated with power (17), (5). According to Silvia Gherardi, knowing (situated knowing) is deeply intertwined with practice, which encompasses the everyday activities, routines, and actions carried out by individuals (and more-than-humans). Through practice, individuals engage in active learning, problem-solving, and sense-making. In this way, knowing is a social and embodied process that occurs through interactions (intra-actions) with others within specific contexts (18). Drawing on a poststructuralist, Foucauldian understanding of power, this theoretical perspective stresses that power is always in play in the co-constitution of knowledge and subjectivities, as certain ways of knowing and being dominant and others are marginalized (5). Within this view, practices of knowing are always situated within specific views of the world and power relations vis-a-vis the other practices. Therefore, they produce tensions and discontinuities just as much as they produce negotiated meanings and collaboration (19, p. 433). In addition, Gherardi emphasizes that knowing is not a static state but rather an ongoing and dynamic process that emerges through learning. Learning is a fundamental component of knowing, and it is through engagement in various learning experiences/activities (shaped by both collaborative and contested relations) individuals expand their ways of knowing and possibly marginalize others (18). Applying this theoretical lens to learning circles directs attention to the play of power when knowing is co-produced in participatory research and offers a starting point to develop a more critical reflexive awareness and sensitivity towards the tensions and ethical concerns in collaborative research relations.

LEARNING CIRCLES AND THE(IR) PLAY OF POWER

Learning circles imply the democratization of knowledge production among practitioners and researchers. Yet, power is always at play in the research process itself, notwithstanding the democratic, collaborative, dialogic ideals. As emphasized by Phillips et al., research relations are '*riddled with tensions arising from the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the "relational becoming" of knowledges and subjectivities*' (5, p. 4). Accordingly, they argue that buzzwords of "collaboration" and "co-creation/coproduction" may falsely imply equitable and symmetrical power relations, which in turn romanticizes collaborative research as straightforward processes of inclusion' (5, p. 2). This makes it difficult to take notice of and critically attend to tensions arising from the inexorable play of power in the practices of such discourse. Consequently, they propose a distinctive critical, reflexive approach to relational ethics in "collaborative, democratic and transformative" research that works with relational ethics by analyzing the tensions in the "with" in "research with, not on, people" and the "co" in "co-creating knowledge":

'This critical, reflexive analysis homes in on the processes of co-creating knowledge and establishing collaborative research relations through the tensional, power-infused co-constitution of knowledge and subjectivities. It attends to the performativity of the terms themselves in the relational becoming of the collaborative project and project "we"' (5, p. 5).

Such critical, reflexive analysis illuminates the processes of co-creating knowledge through the tensional, power-infused co-constitution of knowledge and subjectivities, and it highlights how the tensions in research relations are themselves permeated with power and bounded by the discourses within which we as researchers construct meaning (5, p. 4). We draw on and aim to contribute to this body of critical, reflexive work. We do so by introducing a set of sensitizing ideas or resources that

direct our attention to the role of power in learning circles and help attune us to how learning circles may be developed and enacted as caring collaborative research practices. According to Herbert Blumer (1954), sensitizing concepts are not definitive but offer 'a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances [and] suggest directions along which to look.' (20, p. 7). We suggest 'tension zones' and 'aspects of care' as our starting point in thinking about (and looking for) future ways to work with relational ethics in learning circles. Inspired by Ann Cunliffe (17), we refer to them as resources or ideas that sensitize us to how power and care are actively lived and felt (given empirical meaning) in participatory research. In this way, we introduce them to sharpen our sensitivity towards the play of power in learning circles as they pay heed to the inherent yoke between power and knowledge not only within learning circles – but also in our ways of employing them *with care* as researchers and circles facilitators.

Mapping 'tension zones' – as ways to work with relational ethics in learning circles

Developing a relational ethics of learning circles that do not neglect the 'role of power' and attend to the potential power tensions among participants – as well as to the wider organizational context and networks of power relations of which they are part – we believe, a first outline of the potential tensions of learning circles can be helpful. 'Tension zones' direct attentiveness/focus to these matters. Mapping possible zones of tensions, for example, between co-researchers and us as academic researchers, between co-researchers themselves due to differences in positions and interests or between co-researchers and their wider organizational contexts sharpens the gaze for analyzing what ways of knowing that are a privilege in learning circles and who benefits (or do not benefit) from them. This gaze provides us with an outset for more explicitly considering the play of power in learning circles. It stimulates continuous inquiries into what forms of knowledge/knowing do I/we/they privilege and who benefits from the knowledge co-created in the participatory research that we conduct. Another possible tension zone worth mapping when using a leaning circle as a participatory research method is the human-to-non-human relationships of such practices. What power tensions play out regarding the socio-material relations of learning circles? How do we critically acknowledge the role of power in the interplay between social and material elements in collaborative research? Understanding the power tensions of socio-material relationships present in any practice, we need to perfect our gaze for how material artefacts (such as technology, objects, research tools, infrastructures, bodies, and physical design) involve distinct power relations and orders of control that favor particular ways of knowing while marginalizing others (16), (21).

Considering these power relations and using 'tension zones' as a sensitizing resource, we hope to cultivate a heightened awareness of (and care for) how we, as researchers, engage in research 'with' rather than 'on' practitioners from the field of elderly care.

Embodying 'aspects of care'

Our current project aims to promote joint qualitative inquiry with elderly care professionals, emphasizing collaboration rather than studying them from a distance. Being enmeshed with this empirical field, we find inspiration in Tronto's call to expand the concept of *care* beyond its traditional association with personal relationships to a broader societal context (22). Here, we consider it a second resource to sensitize us to the caring (or not caring) practices in the collaborative research that we initiate.

According to Tronto (22), power is inherent in the act of care and is essential to its practice. She argues for a politicization of care in which care is studied as closely linked to societal inequalities. Care is not a solely private or personal matter but closely intertwined with broader societal and intersectional perspectives that involve power inequalities and vulnerability based on factors such as gender, class, and race (22). Tronto emphasizes that recognizing and addressing these power dynamics is essential in maintaining ethical and equitable relationships in caregiving contexts.

When we apply learning circles as a participatory research method, the circles become a context for the coproduction of practical and scientific knowledge that implies aspects of caregiving/-receiving across roles (cf. Phillips et al. (5)). To sensitize us to a more reflexive and reciprocal understanding of care between participants of learning circles requires, paraphrasing Tronto, a "deep and thoughtful knowledge of the situation, and of all of the actors' situations, needs and competencies" (22, p. 136). Accordingly, we propose Tronto's four moral aspects of care as sensitizing concepts: *attentiveness*, *responsibility*, *competence*, and *responsiveness* linked to four analytical phases of care: caring about, taking care of, caregiving, and care-receiving. Tronto elaborates:

- 'care is a process initiated by **attention**, i.e. from 'noting the existence of a need and making an assessment that this need should be met'.
- 'for care to be actualized, attention must be followed by assuming **responsibility** 'for the identified need and determining how to respond to it'.
- 'care requires **competence** in the 'hands-on' work of responding to needs'.
- '**responsiveness**, which 'recognizes that the object of care will be affected by the care it receives' (23, p. 5-7).

In this way, Tronto's ethics of care directs attention to some basic ethical components that are also relevant to participatory research practices. This is taken up by Kordovsky and Pallesen (23), who discuss drawing as a caring research practice in relation to Tronto's four aspects of care. Inspired by their work, we propose using the four moral aspects of care as sensitizing resources that attune us to working more deliberately with relational ethics in learning circles. This gaze suggests four distinct aspects of care, which one should look for and attend to when working with learning circles as a caring participatory research method. Firstly, caring implies *attention* to what needs to be cared about. Secondly, it involves assuming a sense of *responsibility* for and *responding to* the identified needs. Thirdly, caregiving requires the presence of *competence* to respond to present needs. And fourthly, a practice of care entails *responsiveness* towards how care is received in the given situation. Each of these four sensitizing lines provides guidance to work more purposefully with relational ethics in participatory research. Embodying the four moral aspects of care, we therefore suggest heightened awareness of the inherent link between care and power in learning circles – and it offers directions for how to foster a more reciprocal understanding of relational ethics among us as researchers as well as circles participants.

STEPS TOWARDS A RELATIONAL ETHICS OF LEARNING CIRCLES

According to Phillips et al., practising relational ethics is a way of working with ethical concerns throughout the research process (5, p. 11). Mapping tensions zones and embodying aspects of care are ways of attuning us to the lived and felt experiences of power and care - and of doing research 'with' instead of 'on' participants - in learning circles. As sensitizing concepts, they pose suggestions or possible ways to work with relational ethics in learning circles that do not provide a fixed description of what to see, do, or sense. Still, they help us make inquiries and raise critical questions about relational ethics throughout our empirical endeavors. We believe these can be useful first steps to elaborate research approaches and methods that enable us to critically analyze and stay sensitive towards the play of power in our research project. And become more reflexive about specific power inequities between us as academic researchers and the practitioners/co-researchers involved in the project's learning circles or collaborative research practices more broadly.

References

- (1) Aakjær M, Wegener C. Theorizing learning circles – a Nordic tradition revitalized in times of social innovation imperatives. *Journal of Education and Work*. 2023; DOI: 10.1080/13639080.2023.2231351.
- (2) Lahdenperä P, Marquard M. Handbok: Lärandecirklar i nordisk kontext. Nordic Council of Ministers, NVL – the Nordic Network for Adult Learning; 2019. Available from: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/>.
- (3) Aakjær M, Wegener C. Læringscirkler - en generisk model for voksenlæring. 2022. Available from: <https://nvl.org/rapporter/laeringscirkler-en-generisk-model-for-voksenlaering/>. Accessed December 10, 2023.
- (4) Lahdenperä P. Forskningscirkeln: en mötesplats för samproduktion: mänskliga rättigheter i offentlig förvaltning. Mälardalen, Sweden: Mälardalen University; 2014. Available from: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:762093/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.
- (5) Phillips LJ, Christensen-Strynø MB, Frølund L. Thinking with autoethnography in collaborative research: A critical, reflexive approach to relational ethics. *Qualitative Research* 2022;22(5):761-776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211033446>.
- (6) Phillips L, Larsen A, Mengel L. What "coproduction" in participatory research means from participants' perspectives: A Collaborative Autoethnographic Inquiry. *Journal of Participatory Research Methods*. 2022;3(2).
- (7) Edwards R, Brannelly T. Approaches to democratising qualitative research methods. *Qualitative Research*. 2017;17(3):271-287.
- (8) Groot B, Haveman A, Abma T. Relational, ethically sound coproduction in mental health care research: epistemic injustice and the need for an ethics of care. *Critical Public Health*. 2020; DOI: 10.1080/09581596.2020.1770694.
- (9) Phillips L, Kristiansen M, Vehviläinen M, Gunnarsson E, editors. *Knowledge and Power in Collaborative Research: A Reflexive Approach*. London: Routledge; 2013. (Routledge Advances in Research Methods Series).
- (10) Foucault M. Truth and Power. In: Gordon C, editor. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf; 1980.
- (11) Foucault M. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge; 1972.
- (12) Phillips L, Frølund L, Christensen-Strynø MB. Confronting the complexities of "coproduction" in participatory health research: a critical, reflexive approach to power dynamics in a collaborative project on Parkinson's dance. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2021;31(7):1290-1305.
- (13) Marquard M, Brandt U, Mikkelsen H. *Håndbog i Learning Labs: En metode til mobilisering af innovationsevnen hos ledere og medarbejdere*. Århus: Aarhus Universitet; 2022. 36 p.
- (14) Bjerkaker S. Changing Communities. The Study Circle—For Learning and Democracy. *Procedia Social & Behavioral Sciences*. 2014;142:260–267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.625>.
- (15) Hiebert JL. Learning Circles: A Strategy for Clinical Practicum. *Nurse Educator* 1996;21(3):37–42. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00006223-199605000-00011>.
- (16) Gherardi S. To start practice theorizing anew: The contribution of the concepts of agencement and formativeness. *Organization*. 2016;23(5):680-698. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508415605174>.

- (17) Cunliffe AL. Must I Grow a Pair of Balls to Theorize about Theory in Organization and Management Studies? *Organization Theory*. 2022;3(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877221109277>.
- (18) Gherardi S. Practice-Based Theorizing on Learning and Knowing in Organizations. *Organization*. 2000;7(2):211-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135050840072001>.
- (19) Gherardi S, Nicolini D. Learning In A Constellation of Interconnected Practices: Canon or Dissonance? *Journal of Management Studies*. 2002; 39:419-436. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.t01-1-00298>.
- (20) Blumer H. What is wrong with social theory? *American Sociological Review*. 1954; 19:3–10.
- (21) Orlikowski WJ, Scott SV. Sociomateriality: Challenging the Separation of Technology, Work and Organization. *Acad Manag Ann*. 2008; 2:1, 433-474. DOI: 10.1080/19416520802211644.
- (22) Tronto J. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. Routledge; 1993.
- (23) Kordovsky J, Pallesen E. Drawing as a caring way of practicing research: towards a methodological framework. EGOS short paper; 2024.

VIEWS OF LECTURERS AT A UK UNIVERSITY ON HIDDEN CURRICULUM DIMENSIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Celal Akdeniz

University of Portsmouth (UNITED KINGDOM)

Abstract

This study examines the opinions of lecturers, as employees of a higher education institution, regarding the impact that the institution they work for has on the teaching process and professional development. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are institutions where assumptions and expectations for participation, collaboration and co-creation activities are intense and contextual but not always explicit. Due to the nature of the activities carried out in HEIs, it is possible to develop an understanding of the unique aspects of the 'hidden curriculum'. This understanding includes the differences clustered in the context of teaching, curriculum expectations, communication and interaction, personal and professional development and organisational culture. In the study, which had a mixed-type design, interviews were conducted with 13 lecturers and a questionnaire was administered to 46 lecturers.

Lecturers drew attention to the problems that arise and may arise in teaching practice and emphasised how the institution can strengthen the teaching process. Six-tenths of the participants expressed positive and four-tenths negative opinions about the university's impact on the teaching process and professional development. While a small number of lecturers thought that all higher education institutions have universal traditions and more or less similar characteristics, the majority emphasised that each institution has distinctive features that affect the functioning of the institution. Like other higher education institutions, the University of Portsmouth deeply feels the effects of the post-Covid era, which affects relationships between staff and administrators.

Keywords: higher education, hidden curriculum, teaching process, organisational culture

INTRODUCTION

The main reason that led the researcher to do this study was this primer question: "What are the reasons that make a higher education institute differ from other ones?". Some discussions in the field focus on the fact that the hidden curriculum can be more effective than the specified curriculum. The relevant literature defines the hidden curriculum as the socialisation of students in a certain direction and the gain of unplanned skills by processing subjects not mentioned in school and other learning environments and not officially accepted (1, 2). The hidden curriculum consists of all the knowledge, ideas and practices that are determined in writing in the formal curriculum, apart from the targeted goals and activities, that are not written but not clearly stated, planned or spontaneously emerged within the learning-teaching process. Although a hidden curriculum is not written and not seen clearly, its effects are noticed on students, and it can generally be more effective than the official curriculum in achieving educational goals. Since the hidden curriculum is not written in a written form, it can be applied to students with gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact (3, 4, 5, 6, 7). Higher education institutions differ from other institutions, such as primary, secondary, and further education, in

structure and operation. It can be said that the effect of university administration, teaching staff, students, and other stakeholders in the functioning of higher education institutions is more evident. Many elements in higher education can directly affect the basic values, attitudes and worldview conveyed to students: the nature and organization of extracurricular activities; individual, socio-cultural and economic differences between students from different social backgrounds; the competitive environment that is tried to be expanded in the university; the environment and processes that shape students' perceptions of power; venue setup at the university, etc. (8, 9).

It has been evaluated that topics such as teaching process, communication and interaction, individual and professional development, and organizational culture can also be taken into consideration regarding the hidden curriculum in higher education. In addition to how communication between employees in an institution is shaped, how the individual and professional development of the staff is supported can be discussed within the scope of the hidden curriculum. As a higher education institution, how lecturers carry out the teaching process at the university and how the values, expectations and approaches established in the institution where they work are effective in carrying out the process are also issues that need to be emphasised. In line with these views, the researcher evaluates that examining the effects of the education and training activities carried out at the University on the teaching process in the context of the hidden curriculum will contribute to the personnel development and teaching activities.

This research aims to examine the views of the lecturers of the University of Portsmouth (UoP) about the dimensions of the hidden curriculum seen in higher education. Depending on the purpose, the objectives aimed to be achieved in the study are as follows:

1. To explore what are the areas that can be evaluated in the context of the hidden curriculum at the higher education institutes and the possible effects of the established culture at the institutions on the teaching process.
2. To understand the effects of the hidden curriculum on the teaching process.
3. To reveal the effects of knowledge, values and views specific to the institution on the personal and professional development of lecturers.

METHODOLOGY

A convergent parallel design was adopted in this mixed-type study, which examines the effect of hidden curriculum on the teaching process and the individual and professional development of lecturers. In the study, the findings of the questionnaire and the interview function as mutually supportive. According to Creswell and Clark (10), "in the convergent parallel design, the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research are performed independently, and their results are brought together in the overall interpretation. Depending on the purpose and objectives, this study seeks the answers to two questions:

1. How does the hidden curriculum at the UoP affect the teaching process?
2. How does the organisational culture at the UoP affect the personal and professional development process of the lecturers?

While the first research question focuses on the learning and teaching process, the second focuses on the effects of organisational culture. Two study groups were formed from the sample group using a stratified random selection method to find answers to the research questions and apply the data collection tools. According to 2023 data, the total staff population of the University of Portsmouth is around 3500. The information of around 1600 lecturers working in all faculties and schools affiliated with these faculties was accessed on the university's website (11). To ensure maximum diversity in the study, 13 lecturers were selected for interviews by stratified random sample selection. 46 lecturers participated in the study's quantitative section.

Each data collection tool has two sections: Teaching process and Organisational culture. The simple representation of the tools is as follows:

- *Questionnaire (50, five-point Likert items from very little to very much): Teaching process (25) + Organisational culture (25).*
- *Semi-structured Interview Form (19 Qs): Teaching process (7) + Organisational culture (12).*

Questionnaire data was analysed using frequency and rate techniques. Descriptive analysis was undertaken to analyse the interview data. Consistency of approach was ensured by using thematic analysis (12) to analyse the interviews. The datasets were inductively coded in iterative cycles, from which overarching themes were extracted. The identified themes explored lecturers' perceptions of the hidden curriculum dimensions and how the University of Portsmouth supports them in the context of professional and individual development. Once themes were established, they were compared across participants.

RESULTS

Interview and survey findings were analysed separately and then combined. Based on the analysis, the results were clustered into two main themes: teaching process and organisational culture. The results show that the lecturers who participated in the study had opposing views on the impact of the University on the teaching process and their professional development. It can be said that some lecturers have completely positive opinions about the institution, while others have relatively or fully negative opinions.

TEACHING PROCESS (A)

The first question sought to be answered in the research was: *How does the hidden curriculum at the University affect the teaching process?* To find the answer to this question, the lecturers were asked *the first 25 items* of the questionnaire and *the first seven questions* in the interview form. Interview transcripts of the lecturers were analysed, and their opinions on the teaching process were clustered under the sub-themes of *being a lecturer, leading the teaching process, values and expectations of the institution, and teaching and evaluation approaches.*

Being lecturer (1)

Lecturers think working in higher education institutions means struggling with many difficulties. Although the institution offers many opportunities for lecturers to improve themselves, increasing pressures cause them to not benefit from these opportunities sufficiently. "Constantly having to achieve more with less and not having enough support in this process", tyres lecturers. It is thought that an academician working in higher education institutions is expected to possess some characteristic features such as "effective communication, engaging, inclusive, aware of diverse learners, open to student's voice, ethical, fair, tendency for co-creation, guiding through timely constructive feedback, continuously developing". In addition, it is important to make complex concepts understandable, be aware of developments in the field, and be an active researcher (*characteristics of well-qualified lecturers*). The lecturer should be able to organise the classroom for F2F activities, make maximum use of the library for self-directed learning, arrange technology infrastructure for academic research and collaboration, coordinate work areas for individual and group studies, and use outdoor facilities effectively for social interaction. Students are expected to develop skills in organising the teaching environment, such as "being able to use it" and so on (*physical environment*).

Leading the teaching process (2)

To lecturers, to align instructional content and materials with the University's values and expectations, it is important to consider the institution's mission, goals, and the specific values outlined in its strategic plan or academic policies. It is important to develop course materials that are academically rigorous, intellectually stimulating, and aligned with the course's learning objectives. They also

emphasised using textbooks, articles, case studies, and multimedia resources that reflect current research and scholarship in the field (*instructional content*).

Values and expectations of the institution (3)

Lecturers say they would use content with real-world implications and diverse perspectives to ensure consistency with the University's values because, as a university, they aim at not only the home students but also international students. They must make sure that what they offer is appealing to people of different backgrounds." The courses that they teach are accredited by professional bodies who dictate the content and assessments to a very large extent, so there is very little University involvement. Professional engagement with these professional bodies for the staff is mandatory and encouraged for the students. Results show that the majority of the teaching staff (66%) think that the institution's values and expectations they work for impact how they conduct the teaching process. (*values*). Results indicate that lecturers are typically rewarded for complying with a range of values and expectations that align with the university's mission and goals. These rewards may take various forms, including recognition, career advancement opportunities, tenure consideration, salary increases, and institutional support for professional development. Lecturers who demonstrate excellence in teaching by engaging students, fostering active learning, and achieving positive student outcomes are often recognized and rewarded. This may include awards for teaching excellence, positive teaching evaluations from students and peers, and opportunities for teaching-related professional development. However, some lecturers are not sure if the university has a clear "reward mechanism" (*rewarding*).

Teaching and evaluation approaches (4)

Lecturers evaluate the programs in several different ways. One is the student's feedback through a national student survey, that is, the experience of the university as a whole. They have also got a survey, which is done in each module and course. They emphasised that they recognised supporting students to be able to do that just, and not expecting them just to come with the skills. The majority of lecturers (31%) think that they are directed to teach student-oriented by their institutions. A teaching and evaluation approach that aligns with the University's values and expectations prioritises academic excellence, student-centred learning, diversity and inclusion, and continuous improvement. It is seen across the university that a learner-centred approach to teaching should be adopted that focuses on actively engaging students in the learning process and promoting deep understanding and critical thinking. Lecturers also emphasised designing the instruction process that encourages active participation, collaborative learning, and student autonomy (*teaching/assessment approach*). Based on the responses, it can be said that about half of the lecturers (54%) think that they are not encouraged to carry out extracurricular teaching activities by their institutions. For example, some of the lecturers said that they cancelled some field trips or museum visits for BEd primary teaching undergraduates. They emphasised that they sometimes get forced into straitjackets by their faculties over the design of their Moodle pages, assessment top sheets, etc. They believe individual lecturers should be given more freedom (*Ignored activities*).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE (B)

The second research question asked about the *effects of the organisational culture at the University of Portsmouth on their personal and professional development process*. When the data was examined, it was seen that the participants' opinions on the impact of organisational culture were clustered under the sub-themes of *professional and personal development, success criteria, communication type and source of institution-specific culture*.

Professional and personal development (1)

In terms of professional development, lecturers think that they would not say it tremendously contributes to their professional development. However, there are certain areas that they do

appreciate, such as feeling listened to and heard and encouraged. They also emphasised that they feel like their professional development is considered important by their colleagues.

To lecturers who have positive thoughts, being at the University of Portsmouth offers numerous opportunities for professional development that contribute to the growth and advancement of faculty members, staff, and students. The University offers a wide range of continuing education and training programs to support professional development needs. These programs include workshops, seminars, conferences, webinars, and certificate programs covering various topics such as teaching pedagogy, research methodologies, leadership skills, and technology integration. On the other hand, one-third of lecturers (32%) think that their institutions are not sufficient to support their individual development. Based on this finding, an expectation can be developed that higher education institutions will focus on the professional development of the staff rather than their individual development. Some colleagues consider cooperation to be a contributing factor. To them, the collaborative work of colleagues in higher education institutions may be related to the personal characteristics of academics as well as being expected. The answers of these lecturers show that they have different views on this issue (*institution's contribution*).

Success criteria (2)

Lecturers believe that as a success criterion, the more they contribute to their fields, the more the university thrives. Also, improving students' experiences is seen as a success criterion. To colleagues from positive sciences, success in academic work at the university depends on access to a variety of resources that support learning, research, and professional development. Laboratory facilities are essential resources for conducting experiments, research, and hands-on learning activities for students and faculty in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Some lecturers from humanity and social sciences believe that writing retreats, research away days, attending conferences, digital sources, and the library can be counted as supporting resources for success. In addition to these, training opportunities, diverse academic staff, successful organisational management, and even other colleagues are the main sources **of support** (*resources of success*). Some lecturers see the University's student-centred education, emphasis on innovation, and support for diversity among the success criteria. To others, the institution measures success in terms of student satisfaction with their academic experience, including teaching quality, support services, and campus facilities. Success is also evaluated based on student retention, progression, and graduation rates. Funding further research, covering conference expenses, and financially supporting PhD training were given as examples for rewarding lecturers (*success/rewarding knowledge production*).

Communication type (3)

To lecturers, formal/informal communication and information sharing are encouraged between lecturers and students at the institution. Informal rules, or "institutional norms," often emerge from the collective experiences, traditions, and culture of the institution. These informal rules shape behaviours, expectations, and interactions among members of the university community. Historical events, traditions, and legacies contribute to the formation of informal rules at universities. Established practices, customs, and rituals passed down over generations shape the behaviour and expectations of members of the university community.

In terms of communication, lecturers feel like more formal information sharing is encouraged because there has to be a distinction between them and students. They are always there for them, but they are not their friends. They would rather have a formal relationship with students to maintain professional relationships (*formal vs informal*). However, according to some colleagues working at the London Campus, both formal and informal communication and sharing are encouraged as long as they are respectful. Results suggest that the institution has led the lecturers to prefer more formal communication with the students. While some participants thought that it was not possible to categorise their interactions with students, others stated that they mostly interacted informally or formally.

Moreover, some have stated that they see out-of-class activities that foster interaction as a thing of the past due to COVID-19. Some of them use informal activities in interaction with students, such as encouragement, motivation, and personal tutoring outside the classroom. They evaluated the facilitation of peer learning, addressing student voice activities as formal interaction. Furthermore, they indicated active blended learning and feedback as the most formal way of interaction (*interaction between lecturers and students*). To some lecturers, colleagues at the university often share anecdotes, stories, and jokes related to their academic experiences, research, teaching, and campus life. Some lecturers said that the following joke was made among some colleagues: "Welcome to Portsmouth - the home of speedy processes and agility". "Don't take risks without permission... this is Portsmouth after all!" (*anecdotes/stories/jokes*).

Institution-specific culture (4)

Lecturers have opposing opinions about the factors distinguishing this institution from other higher education institutions. According to positive seers, several factors distinguish the University from other UK universities. The University has a distinct mission and set of values that guide its priorities, goals, and institutional culture. The university prioritises research excellence, teaching quality, community engagement and/or social responsibility. To them, the university does not have a toxic competitive environment; unlike others, it has high-quality training. Some lecturers emphasised that they do not see any distinguishing factors because the university does not have a USP. They ironically stated that they saw layoffs, the construction of shiny new buildings, the opening of the London campus, and high salaries paid to managers to distinguish the university from others. They believe managers care less about their staff than any other higher education institution. One of the lecturers said, "*There is no hidden curriculum. Please don't invent one.*". According to that colleague, almost everything in higher education institutions is universal, and it is unthinkable for a structure called "the university" to have a hidden curriculum (*distinguishing factors*). Some participants indicated that it might not be written down. However, there are expectations here, and colleagues and leaders are the sources of institution-specific culture: "*Some colleagues are working here more than 10 years, and we see them as a living history. They are "the institution" actually because their habits, tendency, and gestures give you some ideas how can you follow the rules. Their mimics and suggestions also give you some ideas. We see them, we accept them as the source of informal rules.*" (*source of institution-specific culture*).

According to the participants, meetings, emails, focusing literature, and quality guidance are among the important supporting factors in this institution. To some lecturers, to ensure that staff engage with the institution's values and expectations, the University often implement various strategies to support and encourage staff members to align their actions and behaviours with the University's values. The University recognises and rewards staff members who exemplify the institution's values and make significant contributions to its mission and goals. This may include awards, commendations, bonuses, promotions, and other forms of recognition for outstanding performance and adherence to organisational values. In addition, continuous training, encouraging approaches, stance and communication from managers/leaders, open communication and discussion, and team-based development opportunities are also factors that can be counted within staff support. However, half of lecturers (%45) feel that their institution does not support them very much in the face of adversity. They do not believe the institution supports them in becoming more resilient in the face of professional challenges (*work culture / supporting staff*).

While half of the participants thought that the university's management style encouraged them to participate in decision-making processes, the other half stated that it was impossible to discuss such a thing. Results suggest that lecturers generally do not have difficulty reaching the institution's managers, and they feel comfortable talking to managers such as the head of school, dean, or rector when they need to talk. Half of the lecturers think that the University leadership promotes open and transparent communication channels that encourage stakeholders to share their ideas, concerns, and feedback. They also emphasised regular communication through town hall meetings, forums,

newsletters, and online platforms, creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration (*management style*).

According to lecturers, there is no need to get the approval of any manager to do or decide something in the institution. Managers and colleagues are not there to "approve behaviours". One hopes they are there as part of an academic community to enable mutual growth. However, some lecturers expressed the opposite opinion. To them, lecture plans are continuously enhanced by peers and managers to be more innovative, inclusive, and diverse. Participants also believe that managers and colleagues generally approve of and value several behaviours in the university setting. These behaviours contribute to a positive work environment, foster collaboration, and support the institution's mission and goals. To them, behaving with professionalism and integrity is highly valued in a university setting, and this includes demonstrating honesty, accountability, and ethical conduct in all interactions and decision-making processes (*approval by managers and colleagues*).

To most lecturers, events and social activities play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community, collaboration, and well-being among staff in a university setting. The types of events and activities that are considered important are usually those that meet the needs of staff members. Workshops, seminars, writing retreats, staff away days, meetings, a larger team, school, faculty meetings, social events, team building activities, recognition, and training sessions on topics such as leadership development, career advancement, and skills enhancement are valued by staff seeking opportunities for professional growth and learning. Some lecturers, who argued that institution-specific events and activities were quite limited, thought the post-COVID-19 period was effective with this issue (*rituals/routines/practices*).

Half of lecturers (54%) think that the institution they work for has an organisational climate that allows them to talk about social and cultural issues with their colleagues easily. They emphasised that freedom of thought and expression is a fundamental principle that is central to the mission of any university, and the institution is no exception. Freedom of thought and expression is upheld and protected at various levels at the University. They indicated that freedom of speech can be seen at the individual level, in academic freedom and curricular freedom. Half (46%) of lecturers think that their managers are not tolerant. On the other hand, six participants avoided answering the question supporting this idea. Some colleagues believe a lot of criticism goes on behind the scenes as people are afraid of putting their real thoughts into emails because there is generally too much email (*freedom of thought*).

CONCLUSION

According to lecturers, universities serve as socialisation agents that introduce students to the norms, values, and expectations of academic culture. Students learn about the importance of academic integrity, critical thinking, and intellectual curiosity through interactions with faculty, staff, and peers.

Most lecturers expressed positive opinions regarding the institution's impact on the teaching process. Although the post-Covid-19 period has reduced outdoor learning activities, UoP's efforts to support the teaching process continue. Half of the lecturers think that the institution creates an active and lively working climate with the academic activities it organises and that the organisational culture supports their professional development. Having to follow more procedures than necessary from time to time has come to the fore as a complaint issue.

As most of the participating lecturers admitted, although the activities carried out at the University of Portsmouth involve intensive procedures, they are very valuable in terms of supporting both the teaching process and individual and professional development.

REFERENCES

- (1) Snyder, B.R. *The hidden curriculum*. New York: Knopf; 1971.
- (2) Portelli, J.P. Exposing the hidden curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1993, Volume (25, 4), pp.343–358.
- (3) Calarco, J. M. *A field guide to grad school: Uncovering the hidden curriculum*. Princeton University Press; 2020.
- (4) Gair, M., and G. Mullins. *Hiding in plain sight*. In *The hidden curriculum in higher education*, ed. E. Margolis. New York, NY: Routledge; 2001, pp. 21-41.
- (5) Margolis, E., M. Soldatenko, S. Acker, and M. Gair. *Peekaboo: Hiding and outing the curriculum*. In *The hidden curriculum in higher education*, ed. E. Margolis. New York, NY: Routledge; 2001, pp. 1–20.
- (6) Wren, D. School culture: Exploring the hidden curriculum. *Adolescence*, 1999, Volume (34), pp.593–596.
- (7) Sambell, K., and L. McDowell. The construction of the hidden curriculum: Messages and meanings in the assessment of student learning. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 1998, Volume (23), pp.391–402.
- (8) Barnett, R., and K. Coate. *Engaging the curriculum in higher education*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press; 2005.
- (9) Bergenhenegouwen, G. Hidden curriculum in the university. *Higher Education*, 1987, Volume (16): 535–543.
- (10) Creswell, J.W. and Plano Clark, V.L. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, Los Angeles; 2011.
- (11) About Us: Retrieved on 8th of November 2023. <https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/structure-and-governance/our-people/our-staff>
- (12) Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

SNAILING THE TRAIL OF PRACTICE-BASED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH – AN OFF-ROAD APPROACH TO COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Kerstin Löf Catini, Lisa Jakobs, Moa Frid

Lulea University of Technology, Department of health, education and technology (SWEDEN)

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to map and trouble how collaborative knowledge production comes into being, both in academic studies and research. As doctoral students in a graduate school for Practice-based Educational Research (PROFS), we find ourselves in the middle of a growing movement that emphasizes an array of participatory research approaches. The notion that practice-based research creates bridges between practitioners and academics assumes a built-in progression and a cumulative development of collaborative ends, but what is the change addressed, and what outlets are possible beyond goal completion? We unwind from conversations and workshops in a co-created third-cycle course on post-qualitative methodologies and shape connections to educational, participatory research. In order to slow down, we make use of a Stengerian snailing approach and work towards problematizing our own participatory research projects. Snailing through the coursework, we try to stay with the trouble, as encouraged by Harraway, and re-imagine, re-link and re-direct our perspectives, practice and philosophy. Swirling into and out from different original texts and elements of inter- and intra-action, the course becomes a basis for 'acting-out' academically and methodically. As we agentially swirl on and off the trodden trail, the frictions and off-road opportunities become productive and a pause for the uncertain.

Keywords: post qualitative methodologies, practice-based educational research, slow science.

INTRODUCTION

In the Arctic north, in the northernmost part of Sweden, Lulea University of Technology stands poised on the highest shoreline of the coastal plains at the mouth of the Lulea River. Approximately 7000 years BC, the inland ice sheet receded, and deglaciation transformed the morphology of the landscape, inundating the land with water and arctic clay, thus creating boreal forests for grazing reindeer and an archipelago of thousands of islands along the Gulf of Bothnia. The geohistorical transformation of Lulea, and the whole region of Norrbotten, is to this day a conduit of material and immaterial processes, alluded to in the University's place branding slogan; "Great ideas grow better below zero" (1).

On this ground, we find ourselves with the irking suspicion that the porous firmament all too easily betrays its appearance of extended flatness as human activity tickles the outer end of its perpendicular surface. Pushed, pulled, and attracted to a research apparatus, we, as doctoral students in a Graduate School of Practice-Based Educational Research, have gravitated towards the alluring promise of scientific progression to find ourselves on loose footings. Joining the recent flurry of practice-based approaches which hope to furnish experiential learning and improvement as foundations for continuous professional development, we trouble the assumption that the scientific touch leads to built-in progression and a

the cumulative development of collaborative ends. This article explores how junior researchers can suck hold of the ground, mitigating the locomotion of naïve beliefs through twining intelligent relationships with matters of concern (2). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to map and trouble how collaborative knowledge production comes into being, both in academic studies and research. The following questions are asked:

- What opportunities for acting-out academically and methodically are produced?
- What became productive frictions that allowed us to re-imagine, re-link and re-direct our practice-based research endeavours?

Tentacular participation

For there to be a journey, there must be a possible point of departure, a zone of intensity where material and immaterial resources sufficiently group to allow an itinerary on the outskirts of the contingent day-to-day social and economic urgencies of society (2). We were three doctoral students, adhering to two generations of the same Graduate School in Practice-Based Research, converging with the desire to better grasp how socio-material perspectives and methods could be made useful in local municipal partnerships and thesis manufacturing. The applied approach was, and remains to this day, built into the Technical University's social imaginary of what should constitute groundbreaking post-industrial research on a larger scheme. As junior researchers in Education, we desired to understand better how practiced-based research was entangled and untangled from the applied provision of service- or product-oriented solution generation. Our mode of 'getting to know' was to tentatively probe and latch onto opportunities of tentacular participation across matters of concern that emanated in relation to both coursework and practice-based research endeavours.

Throughout their candidature, Swedish doctoral students are expected to exhibit the ability to acquire and assess information (3) autonomously. The doctoral pedagogy of our department's third-cycle study program is underpinned by a coursework component of at least 90 credits. The University offers a shortlist of general courses as a meta-schema of pertinent research skills and research knowledge. However, to access specialized courses, doctoral students often need to locate relevant contexts and course components individually. Consequently, opportunities for distance forms of learning either serendipitously guide the selection or the doctoral student undertakes a 'doctoral reading course' in collaboration with the doctoral supervisor or the thesis advisors.

Traditionally, the information literary approach in a doctoral reading course begins with the drafting of a list of seminal and current discipline literature, which is curated by the supervisor. As an example of a template reading course at its barest, the candidate-supervisor structure is a case of one-on-one direct instruction coupled with self-paced seminars or tutorials, abutting in a written paper. The appeal of this basic structure is its flexibility, accessibility, and conservation of actors' time. However, the quickness appeared unsatisfactory by a reversed standard, as our motives for doing a reading course were to branch out, slow down and fine-tune our methodology to an ecology of life and death problems. But to opt for a scheme beyond the sequenced and prescribed would require both doctoral supervisors and doctoral students, as the 'mortal critters' we are, to 'stay with the trouble', and re-work practices that unfold in the "myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters and meanings" (4, p.1).

Between classes during a Graduate School workshop, the final details of a joint reading course started falling into place. The group's two initiators brought in a third member, with the combined ambition to make something more interactive than a sequestered reading of central texts. The inclination to test the limits of moving beyond the scripted place was kindled. What coursework could be laced with interventions that allowed us to 're-turn' our practice, digging with care of the consequences, as defined by Barad; "Responding—being responsible/response-able—to the thick tangles of spacetime-matterings that are threaded through us, the places and times from which we came but never arrived and never leave" (5,

p.184). Was this a re-solve that could move us beyond the path-bound grid of the already-not-ever-invented sameness and economical sparseness of a generic doctoral reading course? Here was a cause to apply ourselves in a mode of participation that tentacularly palpitated the uncertain terrain as we desired to go off-course.

A SNAILING APPROACH

The desire to swirl through the practice-based research movement that we are part of, but has, to some extent, begun to itch in our researcher-becoming bodies, prompted us to explore a Stengerian snailing approach (2). However, an inclination to slow down does not amount to suspension. Even grinding to a halt involves the friction of bodies in the middle of the always-already connected, as the codependent entanglement of space, bodies, time, meaning, and discourses all constitute agentic possibilities of mattering (6). Slowing down is presumed to do the being, the reading, and the centering differently. Swirling between original texts, empirical experiences, and the crafting of artwork, we created a pace that enabled us to open for difficult ethical, ontological, and epistemological questions and being able to "stay with the trouble", as Haraway (4) suggests. The snailing approach, the going off-road, that we elaborate on in this article is, therefore, a way of not only "staying" with troubles but also 'getting things done' off the technological track. Getting somewhere 'off-road', thus becomes, in relation to Stengers (2, p.3), "a matter of concern" rather than "a matter of fact" that can be measured and quantified.

To swirl through the notion of change, beyond the idea of goal completion, we draw on Barad's (5; 6) concept of re-turning and attending to change as continuous movements of re-turning - not about going back reflecting on the past, but rather "turning it over and over again – iteratively intra-acting" (5, p.168). In this text, imagine re-turning, in reference to Barad, as a "multiplicity of processes", which enables us to re-imagine, re-link and re-direct our perspectives, practice and philosophy as the open-ended processes of inter- and intra-acting that produce differences that break apart in different directions. Picking up the notion of development, with Barad's concept of re-turning, as the turning over and over again, like the composting of soil, a space opened for us. A space of thinking development as an unfolding that brings out possibilities for something new. In the paper, we, therefore, draw on the older notion of development, from the French word 'desveloper' – undo, or wrap up, (7) in line with the etymology of the word before it acquired the meaning of expanding and growing in progressive stages.

In our troubling of the notion of expanding measurable progression, Barad's concept of ethico-onto-epistemology became productive to re-think collaborative knowledge production, both in our coursework and in our respective research projects. 'Ethico-', because "each intra-action matter" (6, p.185) and because ethical concerns always are entangled with research. It matters, quoting Haraway's elaboration of Strathern's claim, "what thoughts think thoughts", "what knowledge know knowledges", and "what relations relate relations" (4, p.35). 'Onto-' because research always makes up worlds, and us being part of that world. Moreover, '-epistemology' because research as a practice of knowing is always entangled with being and mattering. Pulling together-apart the notion of practice-based and scholarly development, the motion to unwind together, beyond any presumed goal outcomes or academic publications, twined into stories, strings that pulled, slacked, and tied back to a desire with no end to attend to learning and life.

THREE STICKY STRINGS

Unwinding from the coursework, in spaces where we could act-out and seek alternative approaches to practice-based and scholarly development, allowed us to (re-)imagine, (re-)link and (re-)direct our perspectives, philosophy, and practices. The sluggish movement diffused the viscosity of our travel, smearing adhesion and lubrication across material and immaterial surfaces, smudging forms that stuck or slipped from under us. That snailing is manifestly storied into the sticky strings that hold together- apart the result section, authored by us individually and collated together.

Lisa's string: beyond beginnings

A summer breeze tugged at the colourful mind-maps spread out on the porch floor. Despite the small rocks placed on top, the sheer sheets of paper strained, bulged, and pulled loose. Stepping carefully onto the bright markings of felt pens, the mischievous wind was culled, and the papers relaxed under our feet. As we started to slowly walk across our scribbled swirls, some words were obscured from view, and some appeared closer than ever. Seven big A0 papers, six of them crafted during our literature seminars and the seventh a joint synthesis, created by us and a few of the in-house scholars who attended a higher seminar where we had presented gleans from our coursework.

That summer day, we physically shifted atop the muted inscriptions, looking at them and wondering what kind of re-turn this was, how this kind of coursework could engage us responsibly towards matter and the potential washback effects of substantializing significations such as outcome and progression. We all seemed to struggle with the pre-scripted forms of educational development that always seemed to chafe against the asymmetrical brew of practice-induced materialities, discourses, and beliefs. What alternatives were presented when the value of the grounded forms of coming to know needed to be acknowledged? Stoically standing to the side of impatiently engineered structures seemed bleakly opportune. We all agreed, as we physically circled the small, clustered scribbles, that there had to be other ways of "staying with the trouble", swirling out of the hall of mirrors which homogenized research outcomes, and to diffract that interiority pulling us into such positions (6).

It was not a question of how we could think differently but how we could act differently in a world that needed us to do better and extend us into more worthy forms of scientific practice. As I write this, the same printed reproductions weighed into the floorboards that day are spread out on my linoleum carpet. Blocked by my computer, I move them with my feet and wonder how we, as a constellation of scholars, have walked on and off them performatively in participation with matters of concern during the passing months. Suppose we, in practice-based science ventures, seek to walk towards livable collaborations, as Tsing described (8). In that case, the embedded materiality of education cannot hinge on individual critique but needs a collective move to make it noticed, acknowledged and acted upon.

It follows that to *practice* the practice-based research, we need to take half a step back into the contingent life and death problems of education and play at the string figure stories that 'enact patterns for participants to inhabit' (4, p.10). In the storied re-imagining underhand, the string figures, the science fiction and the speculative fabulation compost progression into a mongrel companion, which familiarly accompanies researchers' of and in the soil' (4, p.11). Guided by this mottled beast, 'progression', we trace a story of giving and receiving beyond the applied provision of practice-based educational research and move through it as a terraformed performance of sympoietic ongoingness. Being in participation, we activate the stochastic swivel of our lived practice-based accounts, acting- out determination and cutting into the sequence that holds us together. There is trouble coming to un-know the road even when the familiar path is cared for, not for the sake of deviation but progress.

Kerstin's string: an open-ended space for change

Researching in the middle of disparate practices, overlapping, extending and contaminating each other, unfolds as a constant composting of thinking-doing-being, where the familiar and certain are at risk. The very first collaborative steps of my doctoral project, with the purpose of 'researching-with' rather than 'on' preschool practice, brought me to participate in a joint working day at one of the preschools, framed as a 'day of development'. At the end of the day, despite having a common interest –in exploring educational evaluation in preschool– I found myself worrying about whether our joint working day had met the teachers' expectations. Anxiety and a bit of discomfort were germinating in my researcher-body since we only had put in movement a few workshops digging, composting and re-turing the question of educational goals. When the clock turned 4 pm, and the air felt consumed by our doings, thinkings and relating, the teachers'

to-do list for the day was still there to be covered. My bodily memories of working as a preschool teacher, constantly in lack of time, reached me as the past unfolded into the lively landscape of presence. While taking a breath of the remaining air in the room, I decided to open up with my worries about 'stealing their time' or hindering them from accomplishing what they had on their list in favour of my research endeavours. Had they become my study objects? Did they find the workshops relevant and meaningful? More itching questions emerged and materialized in my body, putting myself for a moment on loose footing: Who is participating in whose practice? Where does participation begin and end? Furthermore, who owns the agenda? While trying my best to explain my concerns, the practitioners interrupted me, saying: 'Usually, we don't get this much done!'

This moment became a sticky moment, a sticky string in my tentacular thinking and doing that made me trouble the notion of time and what 'getting much done' might be beyond accomplishing pre-planned outcomes or ticking the boxes on a list. In the middle of ongoing preschool-teacher-researcher-entanglements, this moment became a re-linking of the notion of development, resisting the idea of expanding progression. During the sticky moment, we seemed to have generated a sense of accomplishment beyond cumulative means, creating an open-ended space for change in-between research-preschool-practice. In that space, mutual participation with a common 'matter of concern' (2) was materialized in a practice of un-folding, where the question of goals in preschool was composted and re-linked in intra-active iterations with the practitioners. Where the planning for the unplanned might bring us cannot be foreseen or ticked in, and thus put us at risk, both me and the preschool teachers. However, perhaps this agentic risk is not only worth the struggle but is inescapable to undertake as part of our response-abilities (5) for the common world-making-projects we inevitably are a part of.

Moa's string: productive frictions

In educational settings, there are many predetermined expectations regarding how chairs, children, teachers, researchers, and research should be or be positioned. Within the collaborative project I had been working on, some arising frictions that challenged these expectations became productive. It was at the end of a planning and reflecting meeting; we were sitting around a table and had followed the windings of the ongoing preschool project, just to notice that that the planned teaching when the children are divided into *buddy groups* produced children-with-no-questions and for that reason also preschool-practitioner-frustration. The idea of working in small buddy groups was to create a space with the possibility for every child to be heard and listened to. Of course, no one around the table considered the buddy groups to be the single answer on how to create meaningful and playful teaching where children were involved. The air in the room where the meeting was held was thick. Thoughts, minds, and questions were spinning, grasping, and entangling both present, past, and future preschool practices. Then, suddenly, a cautious and hesitant proposal was posed, 'we throw out the buddy groups', followed by a joint laughter. The throwing-out practice appeared as a promise of the possibility of doing something completely different when questioning the ideas taken for granted of what is *good* in preschool practice.

This friction made us re-direct: escape certain terrain and steer off-road, with no trodden track at first. Through consciously making space for a slower pace, an exploration was made possible, resulting in not throwing out but instead re-directing the doings of preschool teaching and education, now aiming to make the buddy groups go from a place for planned teaching to a space for collaborative work starting from the ideas and interests of the children. All of us sitting around the table were pleased; today, we had accomplished something. One of the teachers said to me, 'It is so good when you are here. You make us see things differently'. Comforting, of course, but at the same time, I felt something itching. To this day, I resist and refuse to be addressed as an agent of change or a representative of science itself. My presence, then, is a guarantee that the ongoing developmental work, in line with the educational act, rests on a scientific foundation. Instead, let it be the co-creation and the collaborative acting and doings, the chosen togetherness, with both human and non-human agents that bear potentialities.

CONCLUSIONS

Stringing through parts of the stories, re-turning tidbits of there and here, the sticky accounts are composted by us, them, and things that matter. Haraway (4) writes about how telling stories compares to the bag-lady's netted bag. Like her, we collect, slightly oblivious to when things fall out through the open mesh fabric, whilst some remain. Our readers are now a part of the stories. Collecting and loosing. Collecting and loosing. Sometimes, we turn back and find something we may have forgotten was worthwhile.

Acting-out, academically and methodologically, in a generative space beyond the linearity of the pre-planned or the quality-stamped, a different notion of change is put into movement. Meeting up, separating, conscripting fellows, crafting, and finding other audiences all begets a notion of change as a space for change, where it is possible to collaboratively, and with caring critique, wrap up, un-do, and un-fold the itching issues of education that we are a part of ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically. Looking "around rather than ahead", as encouraged by Tsing (8, p.22), might enable an open-ended space for change, embracing the unexpected and the ambiguous, too often left aside as it is not part of progress. As doctoral students in a practice-based research school, we walk the fine line between reliance on 'technofix' solutions (4, p.3) for best practice and the rigours of science imposed on scholars as we try to challenge dystopian or sanitized positions. We, therefore, ask ourselves what possibilities there are to academically go off-road, resisting the monorail of fast-track thesis generation or individual means and goals alluring ahead.

The stories told in this paper about where we find ourselves at our university and in our region are, of course, not only a backdrop but also the prevailing conditions for living and dying in today's Norrbotten. So, by staying with the trouble, as encouraged by Haraway (4), practice-based educational research might be a space that can be productive in writing and telling alternative stories of education, research, life and living, both now and in the future. To be part of, to participate, opens to the collaborative struggle of making out the smallness of things which easily fall to the side, which invites us to value the slowness of the multiple and to trust that resilience does not settle travelers but moves us beyond fixes. Inspired by Braidotti (9), the question of 'Are we in this together?' has resonated all through the sticky assemblages of the leaky coursework, the teacher-researcher swivels, and the cut-together-apart writing. Trudging on, the question remains - could we really afford to lose that?

REFERENCES

- (1) LTU. (n.d.). *Press*. Available at: www.ltu.se/ltu/Press [Accessed: 18 September 2023].
- (2) Stengers I. *Another Science is Possible - A Manifesto for Slow Science*. Cambridge: Polity Press; 2018.
- (3) SFS 2010:1064. *Höskoleförordningen (1993:100)*. Available at: www.riksdagen.se. [Accessed: 8 January 2024].
- (4) Haraway D.J. *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press; 2016.
- (5) Barad K. Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart, *Parallax*. 2014; 20(3):168-187.
- (6) Barad K. *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press; 2007.
- (7) Online etymology dictionary. Available at: www.etymonline.com/word/development [Accessed January 2024].
- (8) Tsing A. L. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 2015.
- (9) Braidotti R. *Posthuman knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity; 2019.

WHAT WOULD THE TREES TELL US? EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES FOR AN ECOSYSTEMIC PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY BEYOND HUMAN ACTORS

Styn Grieten¹, Marc Craps¹, Bert Verleysen², Griet Bouwen³

¹*KU Leuven University (BELGIUM)*

²*Hasselt University (BELGIUM)*

³*Independent eco-facilitator (BELGIUM)*

Abstract

In today's disruptive era marked by unprecedented climate events, we explore the evolving relationship between humans and the more-than-human world, emphasizing the need for a transformative shift in our understanding and approach to the global ecosystem. Currently, humans tend to act as the omnipotent master, superior to the more-than-human world, instead of acting as a component within the whole system. Several national legal initiatives, such as adopting the Rights of Nature by Ecuador and Bolivia and incorporating ecocide into Belgium's criminal code, provide stepping stones toward a sustainable global future (1). Authors like Peter Wohlleben (2), advocating for plant sentience, and the Earth Species Project's exploration of AI for animal communication (3), highlight diverse approaches to reconnect with the ecological fabric of life. This paradigm shift challenges traditional research concepts, methodologies, and practices. While participatory qualitative research has a strong tradition of giving importance to listening and respecting others, including actors whose voices are silenced, we aim to reflect on how this approach can be broadened to initiate an ecosystemic dialogue beyond human actors. Despite potential scepticism within the academic community, the authors propose an exploration of high-quality ecosystemic dialogical inquiry, inviting conference participants to share their stories and experiences in a collaborative workshop called a Dream Team. The methodology of the workshop is inspired by the principles of appreciative inquiry (4), U-theory (5) and action research for transformation (6). We engaged participants in appreciative 'trialogues' to explore their own experiences of respectful connection and/or conversation with the more-than-human world. Through reflections on these experiences and cases, the workshop seeks to redefine participation and dialogue. The participants co-created inspiring group performances to share their insights and explored how to incorporate these insights into their own research processes.

Keywords: more-than-human world, ecosystemic dialogical inquiry, appreciative inquiry, triologue, participatory research methodology

INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR ECOSYSTEMIC PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY

Today, we find ourselves in the very heart of a disruptive era, with unusual heatwaves, unseen hurricanes and devastating inland flooding. Nature seems to raise its voice. Studies suggest that, with the appearance of the human system in the more-than-human world, disasters have not only been caused by geophysical events but also by humans, impacting their own and others' natural environment. This growing penetration of humans into the more-than-human world manifests a distorted relationship: humans do not act as a component within the whole system but as the omnipotent master, superior to the more-than-human world. We need a transformational change within our understanding of the world to regenerate the capacities of the fabric of life (6).

New ideas and initiatives in different realms of society offer already steppingstones on a pathway towards a sustainable global future. Over the last decade and a half, the Rights of Nature have been adopted in countries globally, particularly in emerging and nature-rich countries like Ecuador and Bolivia (1). In 2022, Belgium included ecocide in its new criminal code (1). Peter Wohlleben, author of the bestseller *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate: Discoveries from a Secret World* argues for plant sentience and calls attention to the interactions among trees and with the other species in their environment (2). The Earth Species Project explores the possibilities of Artificial Intelligence to decode and understand animal communication(3).¹ Certain animals have been "talking" to one another for millions of years. What do they have to tell us, newcomers, who have only been speaking for a couple of hundred thousand years?

If we could involve plants and animals respectfully in our dialogical research, we might become more aware of our human interconnectedness with the ecosystem and the ecological wisdom around us.

These ideas urge fundamental rethinking of our commonly accepted research concepts, methodologies, and practices. Qualitative Inquiry has a long tradition of giving importance to careful listening and respecting others (4), 'giving voice to the voiceless' (7), and participation and co-creation (5) (6) (8). Now, we should reflect on how we can broaden the applicability of these valuable principles beyond human actors to initiate an ecosystemic dialogue. There still are many communities and societies, mostly in the Global South, that continue to live in close connection and harmony with their natural environment. What can we learn from their experiences, and how can they inspire our research practices? We are aware of the scepticism with which these ideas might be confronted in the academic community for being considered excessively 'romantic', 'idealistic' or 'unscientific'. For that reason, we also have to reflect on adequate criteria for high-quality ecosystemic dialogical inquiry.

This article presents a creative workshop methodology in the format of a "Dream Team", demonstrating possibilities for participatory research methods in the context of working with more-than-human voices.

CO-CREATING AWARENESS FOR ECOSYSTEMIC PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY IN A CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

The workshop we organized was one of the "Dream Team sessions" offered by the ECQI2024 conference organizers. According to the call for abstracts, Dream Teams "are meant to bring delegates together around a specific topic of interest in an open session to advance their thinking on a particular subject, challenge or theme. Dream Team sessions are meant to be interactive, inviting delegates into a thinking or working exercise. Preferably, Dream Team sessions should result in a writing collective to

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tUXbbbMhvk>

valorize the outcome of the session in a joint effort of presenters and participating congress delegates. They can be dissolved afterwards to create space for new Dream Teams at upcoming congress editions. The time slot provided for a Dream Team is 90 minutes".

In seven steps, we will outline our workshop methodology. The number of participants for the workshop was limited to sixteen. For each step, we will explain what we did and how we did it, sometimes followed by some observations. Also, the time frame for each step is indicated.

Introduction and aim of the workshop

After welcoming the participants and briefly introducing ourselves, the theme of the session and the way of working was delineated. Broadly speaking, our introduction to the participants aligned with the ideas outlined in the first section of this article. Following this brief introduction and explanation of the theme, we outlined the structure of the session. We explicitly conveyed that it diverged from a conventional conference format by which presenters' knowledge is rather passively transferred to the audience. We emphasized that the session was designed for collaborative knowledge generation, where all participants were invited to think and work together around the topic. We also mentioned that we aimed to produce a shared outcome jointly and that it was our hope that the outcomes would not only reach the participants of the session but also the other conference participants. This first step took 15 minutes.

Mindfully being present

Inspired by ideas on the importance of mindfulness for ecosystemic interdependence (9), as a next step, we invited participants to become mindfully present in the session, with their whole body, mindfully aware also of others and of their connection with nature. The rationale of this way of working was to obtain focus to engage in such a creative workshop jointly. In a calm and relaxed atmosphere, the instructions were literally as follows:

Sit down comfortably and relax. Let's start by arriving here in this space. Feel at ease. We are not meditation teachers, and this is not an exercise in mindfulness. However, being present with our full attention here and now is an important condition for becoming aware of our ecosystemic interdependence. When we feel connected to nature, we feel that we are part of it.

So we will take just a short while to become aware of ourselves and everything around us, of which we are just a tiny part and on which we depend.

Let us bring our attention to ourselves. What do you experience in your body? Maybe there are tensions in certain parts of it. Pleasant or unpleasant sensations? You may feel some pressure in your buttocks, or your shoulders, or your feet. No matter how you are seated, the earth is holding you up

Which emotions do you feel? Maybe you arrived with some haste, or you experienced some restlessness because there were messages waiting to be answered, or somebody surprised you or disappointed you

Which thoughts are filling your mind? Intentions, plans, things you still have to do?

Focus on your body. Breathe in and breathe out, calmly and consciously. Center yourself in the middle of all those thoughts and feelings. Allow them to be there, observe them and let them go. You don't have to force anything. Just focus on your calm breathing in and breathing out, being completely present here in this place, now in this moment.

Now, expand your attention from your body to the space around you. Imagine your breathing in, which is a mixture of nitrogen, oxygen and other gases, and how that flows through your

veins, giving energy to all those different parts of your body. And when you exhale, carbon dioxide leaves your body, which will feed plants in their photosynthesis to grow.

This is what interdependence looks like. Imagine where all that oxygen comes from, the extensive Scandinavian woods, the rich nature globally, the oceans – we couldn't survive without it. And it is provided to us by nature unconditionally and effortlessly. The very source of life comes from outside us. What we eat, what we drink, what we wear, everything comes from nature. We, humans, participate together with all other species in this complex system. We are part of nature.

Do you feel ready for our exercise?

What stood out during this instruction was not only the complete silence in the room except for the calm voice that read the instructions but also the focus of all participants, often with closed eyes, in this unconventional start of a workshop session. This step took 15 minutes.

Individual reflection

Participants were instructed to consider a concrete personal experience where they were mindful of their ecosystemic interdependence as a researcher or in their private lives. They were asked to visualize a moment where they felt part of nature, where they felt addressed or called by nature. A moment when they felt a profound connection with nature. We stressed that for some, a special moment would immediately pop up in their mind, but for others, there possibly wasn't such a clear peak experience or *aha-erlebnis*. It was emphasized that *all* experiences would be equally valuable in enriching our shared understanding of what it implies to enter into a dialogical inquiry with nature.

Participants were asked to re-live the identified experience, focusing on their feelings, thoughts, and actions at that particular moment. The instruction advised me not to think about the story that would be shared in the next step. We aimed to encourage them to delve deeply into their own experiences without stifling the spontaneity in conversation that would take place in the next step. Five minutes were foreseen to engage in this individual reflection.

Appreciative dialogues

Building on the insights of Appreciative Inquiry (4), we established appreciative conversations. In Appreciative Inquiry, these conversations are typically done in duos as a first step in the so-called 4D cycle of **D**iscovering positive experiences, **D**reaming of the wished-for future, **D**esigning possibilities and actions, and sustaining all plans and ideas in the **D**estiny phase. In the Discovery phase, typically, duo-conversations are set up. In our workshop, this meant that one person initially shared their experience, which was visualized in the first voice. The other person was explicitly asked to listen to this experience and try to understand why it was such a significant experience for the storyteller. The listeners were invited to ask questions of genuine interest that delved deeper into the experience. Some examples of good questions were shared:

- What exactly happened? What were you doing at the time?
- What made this experience special for you?
- What particularly helped you be sensitive to the call of nature?
- How did or how could your experience inspire practices of ecosystemic inquiry?

After ten minutes, the roles were reversed. Storytelling, and specifically sharing positive stories with people you do not (yet) know well but who are fully attentive, typically generates a great deal of energy. Sharing stories connects people. It is a very tangible and concrete action. Moreover, stories tend to stick better and are more easily remembered than theoretical abstractions (4).

The third member of what we call the "appreciative dialogue" is the voice of nature. We symbolize this voice by means of an empty chair that is added to the conversation. This chair for nature is an invitation to represent the voice of nature in the conversation. How this voice was incorporated was free, but we said it would be possible to take place on that chair to try to wonder what the shared experience could mean or imply from the perspective of nature.

Observing the dialogues, we found an incredible amount of energy in the room. People were in close connection to each other, and we noticed some people either touching the chair of nature or taking place on it. When we attempted to draw the attention of the group to change the roles of interviewer and interviewee, they enthusiastically kept on telling and listening. Also, after twenty minutes, when the time was up, it was hard to break the conversations, but in order to stay close to the schedule, we insisted on preparing for the next step.

Individually building a metaphor

After the dialogues, people were asked to reflect on the experience individually and put something on a piece of paper that could grasp the experience. This could be a powerful statement, a poetic verse, a drawing or a symbol. The idea was that what was learned from the dialogue about connecting to the voice of nature was condensed on a sheet of paper in five minutes.

Co-creating a shared outcome in two subgroups

For the next step, the group was divided into two subgroups, each consisting of eight people. It was not necessary to stay together in the duos from the previous step. Each subgroup was invited to co-create with the individual statements and drawings an inspiring outcome about listening to the voice of nature and involving the more-than-human voice in participatory research. The participants had to explore how their statements related to each other (or not), how they spoke to each other, and complemented each other. We provided each subgroup with an empty A3 flipchart poster, some coloured markers and glue. Only twenty minutes was foreseen to co-create an outcome that could be shared with the other subgroup.

What we noticed during this step was beyond our expectations. Tons of energy and excitement in the room, combined with a very tight schedule, allowed for a vivid process of sharing and co-creating. In one subgroup, individual sentences and drawings were transferred to the A3 sheet with markers in different colours. After that, the participants explored the sentences and drawings by turning around the sheet and indicating connections by drawing lines and symbols in different colours between the elements on the poster. Also, some new expressions and statements were added. All participants were simultaneously and actively engaged. The second subgroup chose to explain the individual inputs one after the other, and they then started tearing their sentences or drawings into pieces in order to glue a collage on the A3 sheet.

As we asked each subgroup to share a brief presentation of their output with the other subgroup, the final minutes of the group work were dedicated to figuring out how actually to present this. Even though we hadn't explicitly requested it, both subgroups came up with a creative approach for the presentations. The first subgroup divided their presentation into three parts, each of which was thirty seconds long. They requested us to time these parts and signal with a clap when the time was up. The first part consisted of silence, allowing everyone to look carefully at the poster. In the second part, the group members explained each in their own language - Finnish, French, German, English, Swedish, and Dutch all mixed together - what was on the poster, generating a cacophony of voices that could hardly be understood. In the third part, one presenter expressed some core elements of their poster and how they approached it. The presentation thus turned out to be an embodied expression of what the group learned through the different parts of the workshop: the importance of silence and taking time for careful attention and reflection, then the energy coming from the vivid interaction for the exchange

of experiences and ideas, and finally the unavoidable simplification of a clear presentation to an external audience of a limited selection of insights from the complex and rich experiences.

The second subgroup also started their presentation in silence – highlighting the importance they attributed to it in connecting with nature –and then each group member portrayed a sound from nature, ranging from the rustling of trees to the cracking of a branch, the chirping of a bird, the blowing of the wind, to the flowing of water, without giving further explanation to the other subgroup about the collage they made.

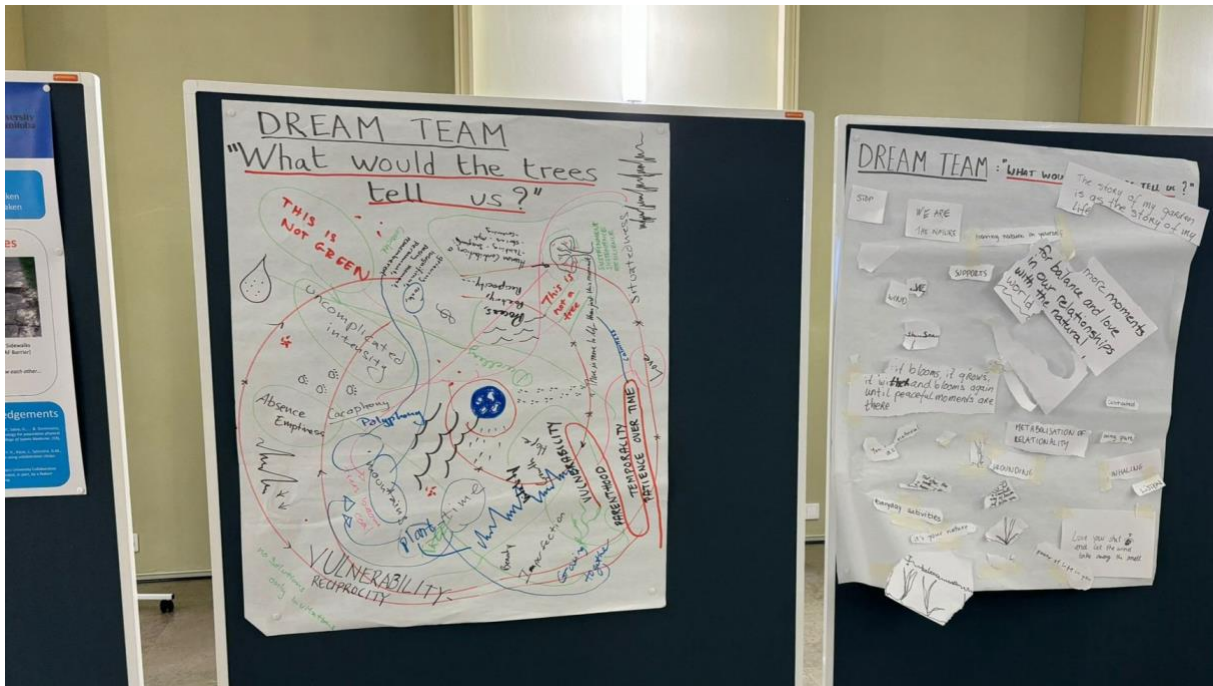


Image 1. Co-creating a shared outcome in two subgroups

Brief evaluation with the entire group and closing of the session

Due to time constraints, there was no real opportunity to thoroughly engage in joint analysis and reflection on the implications of the workshop experience for participatory research, including the voice of nature. Almost everybody expressed how much they had enjoyed the session in a brief last plenary part. They, like us, were surprised by the incredible boost in creativity and energy and were proud of the results they achieved. Some participants dropped the idea of presenting the posters after or in between plenary sessions for the full audience of the ECQI. This idea was abandoned because other participants argued that the acquired insights were too locally embedded and impossible for outsiders to capture their meaning because they had not been part of the workshop process. There was another suggestion to display the posters in the conference hall, as a way to share them with other conference participants. This proposal was accomplished, and the posters were eye-catchers in the entrance hall, sparking questions from many conference participants.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES FOR ECOSYSTEMIC DIALOGUE

Unfortunately, as facilitators, we had to focus on organizing the process during the workshop, which caused us to miss most of the content that unfolded in the conversations among the participants. Ironically, this sidelined us as researchers in this vivid process in which the participants themselves engage in the co-creation of new insights.

Some lessons we derived as facilitators of the workshop:

- 1) Thorough preparation and tight time-keeping helped to facilitate an in-depth process within a limited time frame. Notwithstanding the time limitation of 1,5 hours, the participants expressed that they felt at ease and not under time pressure. They experienced this as an important condition when it comes to opening oneself for the presence of nature.
- 2) Limiting the number of participants was a prerequisite for creating enough space for everybody to interact and speak up. It also helped the group to generate a shared outcome.
- 3) A mindfulness exercise at the beginning helped to generate the 'presence' of the participants and to focus their attention on the topic of ecosystemic participatory inquiry.
- 4) The Appreciative Inquiry-based dialogues generated a boost of positive energy and connection among the participants, which enabled their constructive contributions to the group co-creation.
- 5) Incorporating the voice of nature through an empty chair turned out to be a powerful mechanism to explore the perspective of the more-than-human world

In the oral feedback we received from various participants throughout the remainder of the conference and in a few written post-conference evaluations, participants showed enthusiasm about how the participatory workshop methodology opened perspectives for giving voice to the more-than-human. Some thanked us extensively because, as they said: "we never had such an active input as participants during a conference". They emphasized the importance of the mindfulness exercise at the beginning of the session as it created the right conditions to start an in-depth relational process. Statements such as "we discussed the theme and the workshop throughout the entire conference dinner (organized that same day, later that evening)" illustrated the potential of the workshop methodology to engage participants in exploring how the voice of nature can have a greater presence in ecosystemic participatory research.

REFERENCES

- (1) Lake, O. and Biggs, S. Rights of Nature. A white paper prepared for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP28 in Dubai, UAE, November 2023. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AHBpW35FWxYcTy1MzCCogEyKB9gGh6_s/view [Accessed: 12 February 2024].
- (2) Wohlleben, P. The hidden life of trees. Why they feel. How they communicate. Discoveries from a secret world. Vancouver: Greystone Books; 2016.
- (3) Available at: www.earthspecies.org [Accessed: 13 February 2024].
- (4) Grieten, S., Lambrechts, F., Bouwen, R., Huybrechts, J., Fry, R., & Cooperrider, D. Inquiring into Appreciative Inquiry: A Conversation with David Cooperrider and Ronald Fry. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 27(1), 101–114. 2018
- (5) Scharmer, O., & Kaufer, K. Leading from the emerging future: from ego-system to eco-system economies (1st ed.). Berret-Koehler; 2013

- (6) Bradbury, H. How to do action research for transformations at a time of eco-social crisis. Edward Elgar Publishing; 2023
- (7) Freire, P. *Pedagogia del oprimido* (1st ed.). Siglo Veintiuno; 1970
- (8) Craps, M., Grieten, S., & Bouwen, R. Co-creating the future now. In V. Achten, G. Bouckaert, & E. Schokkaert (Eds.), *A truly golden handbook. The scholarly quest for Utopia*. (pp. 248–261). Leuven University Press; 2016
- (9) Available at:
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/contemplating_our_interdependence_with_nature_with_dekila_chungyalpa

NAVIGATING SPACES OF RELATIONAL RIGOR FOR EDUCATION WITHOUT WALLS IN PALESTINE – A POST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE ON CRAFT STORYTELLING IN THE BOUNDARIES OF COLLABORATION AND STRUGGLE

Marianna Vivitsou¹, Hille Janhonen-Abuquah²

¹*University of Helsinki, FINLAND*

²*University of Eastern Finland, FINLAND*

Abstract

This study aims to better understand the process of building relational rigor for education without walls within the framework of a collaborative project between Finnish and Palestinian universities. To meet its purposes, the study uses visual geo-ethnographic methods and adopts a post-humanist perspective to discuss and analyse audiovisual stories about Palestinian craftwork. Audio recordings, videos and still images resulting from encounters in professional and private spaces are planned and emergent. The analysis of the audiovisual storytelling shows that the craftwork is inseparably tied to life histories, memories and the sufferings of the Palestinian people in the participants' accounts. The researchers' testimonies also focus on craftwork displayed in short videos and still images. The visual stories offer researchers the possibility to ground their testimonies conceptually and empirically and deal with potential biases.

Keywords: relational rigor, education without walls, storytelling, craft, Palestine

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to discuss the process of building relational rigor within the framework of a Global North-South development project. In this study, we see relational rigor from a post-humanist perspective (e.g., Barad (1)) as the process of understanding how phenomena are co-constituted in the intra-action of humans with non-human elements. More particularly, the study draws from experiences and activities of the OLIVE project that aims to develop higher education curricula through the collaboration of Finland-based and Palestine-based researchers, teachers, students, and staff. Based on these experiences, we claim that relational rigor should be a necessary dimension of such efforts happening in high-intensity contexts (such as the Palestinian) and should involve a diversity of geo-cultural, both personal and private, spaces.

The project aims for education without walls. The word 'walls' refers to actual and virtual challenges, including injustices and bans at the educational, socio-political, historical, and cultural levels in Palestine. The ongoing (at the moment of writing) war on Gaza is the peak of turmoil that has been taking place under occupation since 1948 (Nakba, also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe). Therefore, education without walls in Palestine has a symbolic and pragmatic meaning, as Palestine needs to re-imagine what education and higher education will look like in the future.

When it comes to OLIVE project implementation, the war on Gaza has radically influenced its activities with the forced displacement, fatalities, and life and environmental destruction that it imposes. It has

also made the need for building relational rigor even more pressing. We see relational rigor as a process that is tied with education without walls and the need to do education otherwise. Education without walls is future-oriented and, as such, calls for the need to imagine the post-war rebuilding process. This should also entail a socio-environmentally sustainable future in Palestine, Gaza and the West Bank.

In this study, we propose that, given the current situation in Palestine and globally, the need for holistic education aiming for deep engagement and an approach to learning that is historically, socially, and geo-politically grounded is more pressing than ever.

Relational rigor, therefore, cannot be only about the ways human entities relate. Instead, the aim should be to understand how phenomena are co-constructed in the intra-action of humans with non-human elements. In this sense, human and non-human elements cannot be seen or understood as separate entities; they are inseparable (1). Craftwork is one such non-human element that, as we argue in this study, co-constitutes relational rigor in intra-action. The map of Palestine, for example, can be worn by Palestinian women as a necklace or used as a tapestry to decorate walls. Craftwork evokes emotions and memories that are tied to the daily lives, the sufferings, the fears, and the day-to-day non-violent resistance of the Palestinian people. The crafted map of Palestine can be seen anywhere: in the home, the headquarters of unions, the walls of university departments. Their omnipresence is tied to daily lives and, thus, acts as inanimate agents in the shaping of modern Palestinian identity.

As the role of craftwork in the daily life of Palestinians is instrumental, it can, therefore, be seen as an actant/agent in the shaping of modern Palestinian identity. Considering this, in this study, we look into craftwork as part of relational rigor. To further explore the agential co-constitutive role of craftwork, we use visual ethnographic methods to better understand relational rigor in the boundaries of collaboration and struggle.

To this end, we will focus on audiovisual storytelling about craftwork by discussing and analysing the researchers' encounters with colleagues in the West Bank and Palestine in spaces where the personal and the professional intertwine.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This multi-dimensional collaboration co-exists with the Palestinian people's struggles in the oppressive system in which they live and work, which bears implications to the process of doing research and the storytelling that arises from this experience. The discussion and analysis in the study will focus on these implications and, in this way, offer fresh perspectives on the process of doing ethnographic research in emergencies and explore the ways researchers and research participants' storytelling of craftwork intersect and interrelate.

Palestinian craftwork can be handmade or machine-made, with traditional patterns, some depicting the land and its boundaries, some colorful, and some made with different qualities of fabrics. The art of Palestinian craft (including weaving, quilting, dressmaking, and others) is inherited through intergenerational dialogue at home or at the workplace. It is, at the same time, a commodity, a source of struggle in daily life and a reminiscent of the history and the oppressive regime. It is also connected with the origin, availability, and accessibility of raw materials, as well as movement bans that restrict, for instance, the Bedouins' travel and transfer of raw materials and products.

The study of Palestinian craftwork, therefore, draws from cultural geography (e.g., 2; 3) and heritage studies (e.g., 4).

A geo-ethnographic approach to relational rigor

Bearing the above in mind, in this study, we apply a geo-ethnographic (5) approach to education without walls in Palestine.

Education without walls is a metaphor (6) associated with the development of higher education in Palestine that takes place amid multiple educational, socio-political, historical, and cultural changes, challenges, and conflicts. The metaphor has evolved in OLIVE implementation.

In the initial stages of the project, the aim was to build online and blended methods and learning environments to meet the constraints of movement restrictions imposed by the occupation regime. The need for relational rigor emerges along with the awareness that mutual understanding and trust require not only cognitive but also affective and bodily elements (6).

Real-life visits open up horizons for a plurality of experiences with affective—embodied elements at play and raise expectations for deeper learning engagement. It is then made possible to familiarize with 'facts on the ground' (5, p. 75). Getting to know the facts and separating myths from reality needs to be based on reasoned argument. Masalha (5) proposes geo-ethnography, a method that has served this purpose since ancient times (e.g., Herodotus 500 BC).

Based on evidence provided by geo-ethnographic studies and writings, Palestine has been the route of international trade and a source of wealth throughout the centuries, providing the network of major ancient land and sea trading routes and linking the Mediterranean world with eastern and southern sources of incense, spices, and other luxury goods. Therefore, its strategic, commercial, and cultural importance has attracted the attention of philosophers, scientists, traders, travelers, and leaders since Classical Antiquity.

The name was used by ancient Egyptians and Assyrians, classical Greeks, Romans, Byzantines and Medieval Arabs, and its manifestations are traced in Semitic and European languages (e.g., Greek: Παλαιστίνη, Latin: Palaestina, etc.)

Herodotus writes about Palestine in *Histories* (450-420 BC), and Aristotle, the First Teacher (according to Muslim scholars), also mentions Palestine in his work *Μετεωρολογικά* (340 BC).

Scripts, coins, and other archaeological findings provide evidence that the evolution of Palestine as a distinct political geography has happened over time, from the late Bronze Age onwards. As Swyngedouw (3 (p. 12-13) argues, the Palestinian national identity is derived from the attachment to the past and to Palestine as a country and adds further modern overarching layers to the already multi-layered identities and history of the country that are interwoven in its pluralist, multifaith and shared traditions.

Craftwork, such as weaving and quilting, are shared traditions and ways of livelihood for Palestinians. Craftwork products are markers of status, collectable artistic, and everyday life objects. They are linked with identity and combine the qualities of ethnographic objects and commodities.

In this study, we see weaving, quilting and other forms of Palestinian craftwork as manifestations of what Barad calls (1, 7) phenomena in an agential realist ontology. Phenomena are not the mere result of human intervention. Rather, they evolve through such practices that the differential boundaries between "humans" and "nonhumans," "culture" and "nature," the "social" and the "scientific" are constituted (1, 7, 8). Weaving, quilting and other crafts (e.g., embroidery, jewelry, and other forms of art) are, thus, phenomena that are co-constitutive of the multidimensional and textured identity of Palestine and the Palestinians (5).

The origins of craftwork and material practices evolve through the depths of history. Material practices evolve with discursive practices that enact identity and, thus, the modern Palestinian identity. Material (i.e., matter, such as craft, art, etc.) and discursive practices (i.e., meaning) are, then, co-constituted and mutually articulated, which means that neither can be explained in the absence of the other (7). Matter and meaning are thus related rigorously to one another. Alternatively, we can claim that they are in relational rigor. To this end, we take a post-humanist/new-materialist point of view, drawing from Barad's agential ontology that assigns agency to both material and discursive practices. In this school of thought, matter and meaning, craftwork and identity are co-constituted phenomena.

Visual methods for education without walls

Based on Barad's conceptualization of phenomena, in this study, we aim to trace manifestations of relational rigor with a focus on stories about Palestinian craftwork.

In order to further understand relational rigor, we will combine geo-ethnography with visual ethnographic methods. Geo-ethnography has been used since the Classical era and has provided evidence-grounded narratives through the discussion, documentation and classification of texts and objects.

Visual geo-ethnographic methods also allow for interdisciplinary approaches to research through methods, approaches and techniques to 'read' and interpret visual representations. Studies, for example, on art-based expressions and ethnographic research methods (9) discuss the camera as a shared tool that not only records but forces a decentering of points of view. In their work, Preisig et al. (9) argue that the camera does not have to be a documentation instrument only. It can also enable new forms of collective authorship and collaboration.

These elements add to the possibility that visual methods offer to research to understand and interpret images and enhance the richness of data. Importantly, visual methods seem to have an impact on the researcher-participant relationship, as they can enhance rapport building, enable the expression of emotions and tacit knowledge, and encourage reflection (e.g., 10, 11, 12, 13, 14).

They then offer the opportunity to examine the ways researchers, participants and storytelling intersect in the process of building relational rigor.

AIMS OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study discusses audio-visual stories of Palestinian craftwork as a manifestation of relational rigor. Relational rigor is seen here as a phenomenon shaped by the encounters of researchers with research participants and the material world of craft (e.g., weaving, quilting and dressmaking). The researchers and the research participants in the study have both personal and professional relationships that grow in a high-intensity struggle situation (or emergency) in Palestine. This means that the relational rigor here takes shape in the boundaries of collaboration and struggle.

To gain a deeper understanding of the situation, in this study, we will apply visual geo-ethnographic methods to discuss and analyse the storytelling of craftwork and, thus, seek responses to the following research questions:

- What spaces of relational rigor open up in the intersections of researchers and participants in audiovisual storytelling about Palestinian craftwork?
- What types of storytelling emerge in these encounters?

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

As we discussed in previous sections, visual methods offer the opportunity to ethnographers grow more conscious of the roles of power, history, and political economy in shaping cultural realities and of the relationships between large-scale, often global problems and the local worlds of the people and institutions they study (15). These are significant efforts to decolonize ethnography by decentering the canons and historical traditions (15) and reversing the roles of the researcher and the researched (see also (11)). Visual methods allow research participants to be acknowledged as experts in their own lives, facilitating empowerment and collaboration (10). Cultural bias becomes, thus, less likely. Visual ethnography, therefore, has the potential to offer more equal opportunities for marginalized groups (12).

These insights from the literature are particularly relevant to this research situation, which draws from an education development project. In fact, the OLIVE project is used here as a reference point to place

activities in time and illustrate the study-related events, i.e., when they happened, how the material (i.e., the data) was collected, what the role of researchers was and how researchers and the participants relate.

To avoid tokenizing the project, being researchers-authors of the study, we turn to Sara Pink's (13, p. 179) observation that the different disciplines engaging with the visual increasingly share an interest in questions such as reflexivity on research ethics. Such a shift arises from the pressing need to serve both the search for deep engagement and authenticity as well as the need for rigor and elimination of bias in ethnographic research.

Being researchers-authors from a Northern European context, we aim for rigor and credibility by making visible aspects of the research experience to deal with the challenge of bias(es). Biases can be rooted in our Western background and the fact that this research experience takes place within the framework of a so-called export Finland-funded project. The overall focus of export projects is on marketing technologies and pedagogies. This project experience, however, digs deeper by seeking to understand the process of building relational rigor that goes beyond the exploitation of human and non-human entities as resources.

Further than the conceptualization of the study principles, another way to deal with bias is by discussing and analysing audio-visual material from different situations, environments, and circumstances.

The research material in this study is audio-only or audio-visual, including still and moving images. The analysis focus is not only on the internal 'meanings' of, for instance, an image but also on how the image was produced (13, p. 186) and what the role of our interlocutors was to the shaping of the material (e.g., close-ups, long shots etc.).

FINDINGS

Data collection

There were two phases of data collection in the form of audiovisual material (see Fig. 1 below), and both relate to the OLIVE project. One phase (April 2019) happened while planning the project, meeting with partners, and setting project objectives and activities. The material consists of still images that were shot in a private home during a visit.

Another phase was during project implementation (May-June 2023). In this case, recordings and images were not always planned. Some emerged in the heat of the moment or were shot/recorded to meet the needs of the discussions and topics unfolding. Some discussions were parts of the study, and the participants had agreed to have their accounts of experiences and perspectives recorded (e.g., cooperative and union). Other discussions emerged as part of sharing time with Palestinian colleagues.

In some cases (e.g., discussions in East Jerusalem), the visits were planned, but the discussions with the entrepreneurs were emergent. The three entrepreneurs gave permission to have their talks recorded. One agreed to be on camera, while all agreed to have their shops and contents (dresses and other craftwork) photographed and video recorded.

Fig. 1. The audio-visual material of the study.

	Planned: East Jerusalem – entrepreneurs	Planned: Ramallah/periphery – cooperative	Planned: Ramallah/city center - youth union	Emergent: Ramallah - private home	Storytelling
Videos (28)	12	7	8	-	Participants' accounts
Audio-recordings (14)	4	5	5	-	Participants' accounts
Still images (131)	38	51	6	5	Researchers' testimonies

Analysis

For the analysis, video scenes included conversations with researchers, unionists, activists, and private entrepreneurs, some running shops in the Old City of Jerusalem and some selling craftwork to the market with the support of agricultural cooperatives and activist nongovernmental organizations. The recordings helped to get a clearer understanding of the background and, depending on the situation, preceded or followed the video recordings. The audio recordings served as a pre-emptive for a video or for re-formulating a question. Audio recordings were also used to protect individuals' privacy. For similar reasons, the camera is used to document textiles and craftwork instead of recordings of faces and persons.

Stories and themes

The initial analysis of the material shows that the planned recordings and discussions bring forward the participants' perspectives, while emergent material represents the researchers' testimonies. Fig. 2 below shows the topics/themes that emerged in participants' accounts and researchers' testimonies.

Fig. 2. Themes in the stories of the study

	Accounts	Testimonies
Focus on the material	fabrics, patterns, material, origin	'like a fashion show but more than that; ... more than photos. You could touch those dresses... we were able to try them on...'
The future of the profession	creating opportunities for expansion, development and employability, traditional and modernized craftwork, the future of the profession-shrinking	
The political situation	the role of tradition and the Islamic movement in women's rights and empowerment; activism and advocacy	
History	Nakba; occupation;	'The dresses brought out stories of family celebrations, weddings ... stories of who had made them... who had given them as presents and how they had traveled in the family across generations'
Life histories and memory work	sustainability, livelihood	'... felt like sharing family pictures in a photo album... You don't share your family photos with everyone; you choose who you want to share with ...'
Recurrent themes	occupation and oppressive structures; intergenerational dialogue	intergenerational dialogue

As Fig. 2 above shows, there are thematic overlaps in the participants' and researchers' storytelling. Both accounts and testimonies focus on the material, the Palestinian history, as well as life histories and memories. In addition, the participants' accounts make references to the future of craft-related professions and the political situation. The occupation and its oppressive regime is a recurrent theme in the participants' accounts, while intergenerational dialogue is discussed in both accounts and testimonies.

DISCUSSION

Storytelling: accounts and testimonies

The first cycle of thematic analysis (16) of findings makes two intertwined and interrelated types of storytelling visible: the participants' accounts of events and the researchers' testimonies. They are intertwined in the sense that both participants' and researchers' storytelling can be an account and a testimony. However, we draw a distinction here.

Accounts are used in Ricoeur's narrative theory (e.g., 17) to indicate an illocutionary act (i.e., as in 'to give an account' is to do something) and a perlocutionary act (i.e., to yield an effect, as in to raise awareness, draw a conclusion and so on). In this sense, when the participants interact with the researchers, they give accounts of events, experiences and memories rooted in their own conceptual and contextual framework.

Testimonies, on the other hand, are part of the legal jargon. For instance, the word 'testimony' is used in court when a witness provides testimony of a crime. The term is found in (18) in its adjectival form (i.e., testimonial) to refer to certain types of injustices. Testimonial injustices can be written, spoken, or expressed in multimodal formats. What they do is allow for stereotypes and prejudices, thus putting people's identities and wellbeing at lesser or greater risk (18, pp. 17-28). Researchers, however, have the responsibility to put an effort to avoid culpability, epistemic or other bias.

In this research experience, the researchers are both white Western women. In order to remove possible biases resulting from their backgrounds, the researchers examine the contextual circumstances by digging into the literature and through encounters with the research participants in private/personal and professional spaces, thus building relational rigor.

Combatting bias, therefore, requires testimonies in addition to giving accounts. Giving an account is about events at first-level proximity (i.e., the agent and the conceptual framework of the event are inseparable (19). In this study, for example, the participants' stories come from their own context, whether lived or narrated. This differs from the researchers' storytelling, whose testimony needs to be grounded both conceptually and empirically, being at second-level proximity with the contextual framework. This kind of testimony requires both witnessing (e.g., participating in events) and documenting. The audiovisual element contributes to the latter.

Documentation – audio, visual, stills

The audiovisual material conveys narratives that are built around the craftwork with an emphasis on the documentation of traditional Palestinian dresses with short clips and still images. The audio recordings are mainly used to document discussions with the study participants.

As mobile devices make geographical positioning possible, visual ethnographic methods seem to be a legitimate way to think of and do ethnography and geo-ethnographic research nowadays. The ability to geographically position audio-visual recordings on mobile devices allows researchers to work with the material and retrieve the time and place independently from the when/where of the actual recording. Transcripts can be linked and interlinked with multiple locations. At the same time, visuals, audios, moving and still images can be seen as paradigmatic (i.e., when an audio can be substituted by a video recording) or syntagmatic (i.e., when an audio and a video recording can be grouped together) for analysis or screening purposes.

Both short videos (i.e., less than a minute duration) and stills focus on fabrics, patterns, colors and materials. In comparison, longer videos and audio recordings host life histories and reflections and involve deeper analysis of, for example, the current political situation in Palestine and women's status in society. Both short and longer videos convey emotions that reveal the entanglement of the human element with the material world and its incremental role in understanding modern Palestinian identity.

Although it is the researchers who hold the camera in this study circumstances, it is not always the ones who handle it. In cases such as the meetings with women at the cooperative and the entrepreneurs where the material is more in the foreground of the discussion, the participants use body language (e.g., eyes, gestures, etc.) and verbal expressions to direct the focus of the camera. In this way, a space for collaborative storytelling and 'authorship' opens for participants and researchers. For instance, the opening of wardrobes during the private home visits allows the sharing of stories of family history and how the craftwork intra-acts to maintain and rebuild family relations and bonding.

CONCLUSIONS

This study uses visual geo-ethnographic methods and storytelling to better understand the geo-cultural, personal and private spaces of relational rigor for education without walls in a high-intensity context with Finland-based and Palestine-based researchers and participants. As the analysis shows, the visual geo-ethnographic approach allows researchers to ground conceptually and empirically the insights that the Palestinian craftwork and modern Palestinian identity are in intra-action and, thus, inseparable.

The focus of the analysis is on audio and video recordings and still images of planned and emergent encounters with entrepreneurs and activists in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The analysis reveals accounts of events rooted in the participants' memories, life histories, the oppression of the occupation and the current situation in Palestine. The analysis also reveals testimonies that result from the researchers' encounters in private spaces and homes.

The visual geo-ethnographic methods allow positioning the research encounters in time and place on demand and, thus, offer one way to deal with possible bias. Moreover, visual methods allow the study participants to direct the focus of the camera, which creates a power shift in the researcher-participant relationship.

In addition, this study provides evidence that deep engagement and relationally rigorous learning are sine qua non in education without walls, being vehicles to get closer to truth, thus combatting, for example, fake news and disinformation.

Finally, this study attests to the need for further research in the Educational Sciences that draws from the Arts and Humanities and Cultural Studies. As the ongoing war in Gaza has tragically shown, technical infrastructure and labs can be bombarded and disappear in a moment. At the same time, the need to understand the context and look for sustainable ways to rebuild education in post-war Gaza and a socio-environmentally sustainable future for Palestine remains.

REFERENCES

- (1) Barad, K. *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press; 2007.
- (2) Boast, H. *Hydrofictions: Water, Power and Politics in Israeli and Palestinian Literature*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press; 2020.
- (3) Swyngedouw, E. *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water – Flows of Power*; 2004. Oxford, online edn, Oxford Academic, 12 Nov. 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198233916.001.0001>, accessed 14 Feb. 2024.
- (4) De Cesari, C. Creative Heritage: Palestinian Heritage NGOs and Defiant Arts of Government. *American Anthropologist*, 2010; 112(4), pp.: 625-637. DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1433.2010.01280.x

- (5) Masalha, N. *Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History*. I. B. Tauris: London, UK; 2021.
- (6) Vivitsou M, Hamad FK, Janhonen-Abruquah H. A Metaphorical Analysis of Mentoring for Education without Walls in Palestine and Finland with the OLIVE International Project as a Key Example. *Education Sciences*, 2023; 13(3):290. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13030290>
- (7) Barad, K. Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs*, 2003; 28(3), 801–831. <https://doi.org/10.1086/345321>
- (8) Ennser-Kananen, J., Saarinen, T. Towards Socio-material Research Approaches in Language Education. In: Ennser-Kananen, J., Saarinen, T. (eds) *New Materialist Explorations into Language Education*. Springer, Cham; 2023.
- (9) Preisig, B., von Niederhäusern, L. and Krusche, J. *Trading Zones: Camera Work in Artistic and Ethnographic Research*. Archive Books; 2022. Available online https://www.archivebooks.org/trading_zones/ [Accessed 14.02.2024]
- (10) Glaw X., Inder K., Kable A., & Hazelton M. Visual Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Autophotography and Photo Elicitation Applied to Mental Health Research, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2017; 16(1).
- (11) Jauhola, M. Visual Methodologies: Theorizing Disasters and International Relations. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, 2022.
- (12) Noland C. M. Auto-photography as research practice: Identity and self-esteem research. *Journal of Research Practice*, 2009; 2, 1–19
- (13) Pink, S. Interdisciplinary agendas in visual research: Re-situating visual anthropology. *Visual Studies*, 2003; 18(2), 179– 192, DOI: [10.1080/14725860310001632029](https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860310001632029)
- (14) Pink, S. *Emerging Technologies / Life at the Edge of the Future*, 2023. Routledge: New York.
- (15) Bejarano, C. A., López Juárez, L., Mijangos García, M. A., & Goldstein, D. M. Decolonizing ethnography: Undocumented immigrants and new directions in social science; 2019. Duke University Press.
- (16) Saldaña, J. *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2. ed.); 2013. Sage.
- (17) Ricoeur, P. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*; 1976. The Texas Christian University Press: Fort Worth, Texas.
- (18) Fricker, M. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*; 2007. Oxford, UK: OUP.
- (19) Borisenkova, A. Narrative Refiguration of Social Events: Paul Ricoeur's Contribution to Rethinking the Social. *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies* 2010; 1 (1):87-98.

THE PROBLEM OF AUGMENTING REALITY FOR OTHERS: XR CO-CREATION IN THE CRITICAL MUSEUM

Joanna L. Rivera-Carlisle

University of Oxford (United Kingdom)

Abstract

As more cultural institutions embrace immersive technologies (XR) to facilitate visitor engagement, long-standing questions of who is being represented, whose perspectives are being centred, and who gets to participate in curatorial choices, have found renewed urgency. On the one hand, XR promises a blending of online/offline engagement which may facilitate long-distance collaborations, increased origin community engagement and public participation which is unprecedented by other media. On the other hand, its seemingly low-access barriers and collaborative potential mask its equally high potential to reproduce established hierarchies of power and further stabilise historical categories of who is speaking, and who is spoken of. This paper analyses three AR applications – Open Cabinet, Unfiltered Histories and Looty – which seek to critically contextualise contested artworks in British museums. It focuses on co-creation in the design, development, and implementation of these three apps, contrasting the roles performed by origin communities, commercial companies, educational programmes, activists, and cultural institutions play in each case. Based on these examples, it formulates critical questions to guide co-creation processes for XR content in heritage institutions. These questions highlight the interplay of language, power dynamics, funding, collective agency, compensation, and differing epistemological underpinnings in these participatory processes with the aim of providing a workflow for researchers, practitioners, and activists to use in future projects.

Keywords: co-creation, XR, heritage

BACKGROUND

Emerging technologies present exciting opportunities for cultural institutions to increase accessibility of their collections and establish new routes to engagement through ‘contact zones’ (1). This allows an unprecedented variety of perspectives to be represented in heritage sites and institutions, and fosters experimental ways of approaching long-standing issues within these spaces (2). From bypassing accessibility issues to engaging younger audiences, mobile immersive technologies (XR¹) have received attention as a ‘hypermedium’ (7). As such, they hold the potential to fundamentally change how audiences interact with heritage. However, in one of the areas in which this change of engagement is

¹ Extended Reality (XR) is an umbrella term which encompasses Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR) (3). VR is commonly understood as a virtual space which alters a user’s perceptive experiences across multiple sensory modalities (audio-visual, haptic, somatosensory, etc.) whilst entirely obscuring their material environment (4). AR overlays physical environments with a virtual layer of information (5) to create a virtual-material co-presence. MR denotes a seamless blending of virtual and physical elements in a user’s perception (6) which is currently not fully implementable.

most urgently fostered – the critical contextualisation of contested artworks in heritage sites – the use of immersive technologies poses significant challenges.

A heritage site² provides ‘an interface between the imaginary forces it embodies and the real form that it takes’ (8) in the sense that its cultural significance transcends its material presence and links it to a larger context of collective meaning-making. Thus, it embodies the ideological underpinnings of a culture, both past and present. As Richard Drayton argues, the way contemporary societies choose to protect, maintain, and present monuments of the past is a reflection of present ideologies (9). The hierarchies of gender, class, race, education, space, and time which are embedded in heritage sites therefore solicit attention, as not addressing them may reproduce unconscious biases and reinforce existing planes of exclusion. To counteract this, it is important to treat heritage sites as ‘sites of conscience, for the present as well as the past, not frozen end-points but ongoing processes’ (10).

Immersive technologies provide an excellent tool to further this critical engagement. XR content can tailor information to specific interests and needs (11–13), thereby mitigating long-standing accessibility issues like dyslexia (14,15), visual and audio impairments (16,17), a variety of learning disabilities (18,19), memory loss issues like Alzheimer’s (20), autism (21,22), language barriers (23–25), and attention barriers (26,27). Moreover, it can display a wide array of perspectives simultaneously, in as many languages as needed, provide hyperlinked sources, and highlight thematic connections to other spaces. Therefore, it can contextualise, critique, or counteract the narratives already embedded in existing spaces (8). Augmented Reality (AR), which overlays material environments with virtual information is particularly suitable for this task. Its use – whether through mobile devices, smart glasses, or AR contact lenses – promises increased user engagement, better memory retention, and more empathetic responses (28).

However, the question is less whether AR can provide critical contextualisation, and more *how*. Without thorough theoretical underpinning of critical perspectives, there is a risk that XR interactions provide superficial engagement at best (29) or insensitively gamify trauma at worst (30). While simplified accounts of complex political issues can be helpful introductions to more differentiated literature, it is essential to draw connections to the deep-rooted epistemic changes which decolonial³ movements seek. Otherwise, XR interactions risk becoming a virtual bumper sticker, rather than a change of gear.

Moreover, careless virtual engagements may negatively impact material change in heritage spaces. If a virtual intervention is put in place instead of material alterations, this may perform a symbolic move which ultimately proliferates a permeation of injustice. However, there is also ample historic evidence that symbolic change can have material impact (33). This indicates that the implementation of a critical XR experience needs to be tailored to the specific needs and sensitivities of a given heritage site. While this might sound obvious, there is a staggering amount of XR productions which are produced off-site and with no community involvement.

In order to understand the dimensions of potential harm – who is being harmed, by whom, and why – one needs to understand the guiding factors of agency, interest, and priority at play. These vary for each location, even if they are part of a series, or connected to the same origin community. Thus, it is essential to recognise who is being presented, by whom, and to whom. As Linda Alcoff (34) argues in her seminal text *The Problem of Speaking for Others*, this cannot be done without the active

² For this paper, any physical locality which focuses on public engagement with heritage falls under the umbrella of a ‘heritage site’. This can mean a museum, a memorial, or a site of historic significance. Heritage institutions encompass any organisation which runs or maintains a heritage site.

³ Decolonial approaches describe ‘analytic and practical options confronting and delinking from (...) the colonial matrix of power’ (31), which is a definition other writers might apply to ‘postcolonial’ or ‘anticolonial’ approaches. My preference for ‘decolonial’ is based on the terminological connotations of the word and its usage in activism contexts. As Madina Tlostanova (32) argues, the postcolonial may be considered a condition, ‘a geopolitical and geohistorical situation’, whereas the decolonial is an ‘option, consciously chosen as a political, ethical, and epistemic positionality and an entry point into agency’.

involvement of the communities being spoken about. Ideally, there would be no speaking for others at all – however, the realities of exclusion often necessitate that those privileged enough to be heard in a space speak on behalf of those who are not. It is essential, however, that assumptions over other people’s objectives are kept to a minimum. Co-creation processes which actively involve communities are one way of mitigating the risk of misrepresentation.

Mobilising a ‘diversity of knowledge and learning interests requires researchers to consider a multitude of approaches to collaboration and to embrace opportunities which enable collaborative learning exchanges among researchers and research partners’, Parsons et al. (35) attest, describing the ramifications of co-creation processes. This includes a confrontation with the ‘lingering imperialism ... embedded in self-proclaimed critical methodologies’, Coombes et al. (36) add. Thus, co-creation approaches in which ‘decision-making power and ownership are shared between the researcher and the community involved, bi-directional research capacity and co-learning are promoted, and new knowledge is co-created and disseminated in a manner which is mutually beneficial for those involved’ (37), lends itself to decolonial work (38,39). However, beyond a mutual understanding and knowledge exchange about the ramifications of a research undertaking, such as ‘ethical guidelines and university-based protocols of (for example) informed consent’ (37), what ethical practice in co-creation entails varies from project to project. Even the commonly invoked five Rs – *respect, responsibility, reciprocity, rights* and *regulations* (38–41) – which seek to guide ethical co-creation practice, may be interpreted in a vast variety of ways. One aspect of the potential challenges arising from this openness is that the interpretative power predominantly lies with the researcher, curator, or funding source of a project, and that ethical frameworks are set by institutions which support these actors’ legitimacy (39).

This study compares three apps with contrasting positionalities which use different approaches to engaging communities in heritage sites through XR technologies. The first, *Open Cabinet*, is positioned within a cultural institution. The second, *Looty*, challenges and collaborates with institutions. The third, *The Unfiltered History Tour*, presents itself as counter-institutional and is commercially funded. By analysing the affordances and challenges embedded in these three apps, this paper formulates questions to guide co-creation processes for XR content in heritage sites and institutions.

POSITIONALITY

I am a White, European researcher at a UK university, and most of my research draws on decolonial and postcolonial theory in relation to digital technologies. This is the political, ethical, and epistemic position which underpins my arguments. I explicitly engage with decolonial discourse from a perspective of Critical Whiteness (10) and do not speak for any community of which I am not myself a part. I have not been funded by any of the projects or organisations discussed in this paper, but have consulted on *Open Cabinet*, which was initiated by my PhD supervisor.

SELECTION OF APPS

This study draws on three apps with contrasting positionalities to illustrate some of the challenges inherent to engaging communities in heritage sites through AR technologies.

The first is *Open Cabinet*, an AR web tool developed for the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) in Oxford, UK. The PRM houses the archaeological and anthropological collections of the University of Oxford in the tradition of Eurocentric⁴ collection museums, with densely packed display cases which showcase artworks from around the globe. *Open Cabinet* was designed to increase visibility and interaction, enabling visitors to virtually place individual artworks in their hands. Encoded with commentaries, video and audio material, and enhanced accessibility features, this AR app was developed in 2018/19,

⁴ Eurocentric, in this context, connotes centring White, predominantly cis-male, heteronormative, Western perspectives in the tradition of Enlightenment scholarship (43).

and has been receiving a content overhaul since the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 (42). *Open Cabinet* is included in this study because its challenges exemplify the position many European heritage institutions find themselves in. Despite the PRM's long-standing history of trying to engage with decolonial discourse, its ability to prioritise the interests of origin communities is extremely limited. *Open Cabinet* is trying to mitigate this, but adds its own set of limitations.

Looty, founded by Chidi Nwaubani in 2021, is a London-based art collective which is positioned outside of heritage institutions, but has, in the past, engaged in collaborations with various heritage spaces. It pioneers innovative approaches in blockchain and NFT (Non-Fungible Tokens) technology to address repatriation issues and strongly encourages collaborations with young African diaspora artists. *Looty* has worked with the Milele Museum in Rwanda, represented the African Futures Institute at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2023, and staged digital heists at the British Museum in London. They are included in this analysis because they have pioneered several best practice approaches, and continue to use disruptive innovation to challenge colonial, economic, political, and cultural systems.

The *Unfiltered History Tour* was created by Dentsu Webchutney for VICE Media. It is a self-lead AR experience which can be accessed through an Instagram filter to engage with video and audio content about contested displays at the British Museum 'as told by people from the countries they were removed from' (44). According to VICE, their team involved restitution advocates from around the world in the content creation (45), and was aiming to contribute to repatriation efforts (46). Because this was not entirely successful (29), this app demonstrates the potential shortcomings of well-intended virtual interventions which do not thoroughly engage with the questions outlined in this paper.

I chose three UK-based heritage AR applications to make the framing comparable. AR content is highly site-specific, which makes comparing it across different cultural regions prone to generalisations and mistranslations. While these three apps by no means represent the wide range of possible XR heritage engagements, they serve to outline some of the core questions which shape community-based XR content creation in heritage spaces.

PARTICIPATION

Open Cabinet demonstrates that considering a project's stakeholder communities is essential. At the PRM, there have been repeated conflicts of interest between the museum, the university it is a part of, and the origin communities⁵ of displaced artworks. This is enigmatic of many UK heritage institutions which hold contested artefacts from other parts of the world. The first issue is that the power differential between origin communities and the museums which hold their cultural artefacts is often prohibitive for a mutually beneficial exchange (47). Even if an institution is committed to involving an origin community in decisions on how their cultural heritage is being displayed, treated, and curated, the fact that the museum holds all the material power, and gets final veto rights on every choice, makes for an uneven negotiation ground.

A second major issue is that the interests of origin communities are routinely weighed against the commercial interests of cultural institutions, rather than positioning the institutions as serving origin communities. Instead, local communities, larger institutional connections (like the University of Oxford in the case of the PRM), and national interests have, historically speaking, been prioritised over the welfare of origin communities (48). As a result, the trust origin communities are expected to put into institutions which do not have a history of prioritising their needs over those of Western⁶ stakeholders

⁵ In this context, origin communities comprise (1) the artists who created the artworks in question, (2) the communities to which these artists belong, and (3) the current practitioners in the lineage of craft which these artworks represent.

⁶ Originating from the 'West', conceptualised by Stuart Hall (49) as a set of ideas, historical events and social relationships which privilege Eurocentric ways of knowing.

is disproportionate to the risk museums take in return (50,51). Additionally, collaborations between museums and origin communities normally require significant amounts of free labour on the part of the origin community. There are, at present, no established principles to ensure this labour is proportionate to benefits communities gain in return. Moreover, performative acts of change and tokenism are not critically framed in a way which ensures that these do not become the dominant paradigms across origin community collaborations.

These factors do not apply to the same degree to other areas of community co-creation, such as projects which involve local communities, visiting publics, or educational programmes. Their risks differ and are, in terms of historical lines of exclusion, less linked to epistemic oppression (52). This does not seek to diminish the considerable issues which may complicate these projects. However, given that especially in the context of European museum culture, Western interests have historically been centred, it is important to recognise the unequal distribution and accumulative nature of existing barriers.

This extends to technological interventions. *Open Cabinet* demonstrates that while immersive technologies can mitigate some of the exclusionary dynamics present in the PRM, they also introduce new barriers. An example for this is that *Open Cabinet* allows for users to engage with artworks in their own time, on their own terms, and from any location of their choosing, but only as long as they have access to the internet. Especially for generations which feel less comfortable with digital technologies, the access barriers which are hypothetically mitigated by *Open Cabinet* are negated by this larger barrier. Additionally, whether or not certain technologies should be used depends on the affordances and limitations imposed by spatial configurations and epistemological framings. For instance, whilst Western researchers tend to frame AR as non-intrusive (53), this is not necessarily true from other epistemological perspectives (39). Thus, we must ask whether we should digitise, and if yes, what the ramifications of storage and distribution are. Who has access, and who are these digital interactions intended for?

COMPENSATION

Looty has employed innovative approaches to these questions across several of their projects. Particularly tackling the free labour issue which negatively influences power dynamics between origin communities and institutions, they sought to embed a solution in the very technologies their projects employ. By leveraging Blockchain and NFT (Non-Fungible Token) technologies, they made various 3D renderings which they produced buyable and used the profit to fund young African Diaspora artists to participate in *Looty* projects. The same principle could be used for repatriation activism, to fund activist groups through digital replicas of the artworks they seek to return to their origin communities.

It is worth noting that *Looty* is a collective which was founded and is led by members of the African diaspora, which means they engage with the institutions they collaborate with from a very different position than a project like *Open Cabinet*. They belong to groups which are Othered by Western cultural institutions, and part of their agenda is a reclaiming of agency in these spaces. This contrasts their collaborations with African cultural institutions which inhabit a different positionality on the global cultural spectrum than European museums do. That this difference matters is evident from how *Looty* has navigated its interventions in these contrasting spaces. 'The Digital Heist' was staged as an opposition to the British Museum, which continues its uncompromising stance on retaining stolen artworks. 'Treasure', in contrast, was a collaboration with the Milele Museum in Rwanda, and involved collaborators from Nigeria, Kenya, and Rwanda to co-create virtual environments as part of an exhibition.

ENGAGEMENT

The *Virtual History Tour* is neither part of an origin community nor the cultural institution it engages with. Also intended for use at the British Museum in London, this AR application provides contextual information about some of the contested artworks held by the museum. It provides an excellent example of why the *how* of critical contextualisation is crucial. Firstly, its lack of navigational features and detailed descriptions within the app poses a considerable hurdle for users trying to locate specific artworks in a museum with thousands of displays and a constant flow of visitors. Content immersion does not begin at the display – rather, XR content creators need to think about the entire journey the user takes through a heritage site, and how this plays into the narrative of individual interactive options. This is essential to consider when co-creating such content: depending on the spatial configurations of a co-creation team and the given site, content creation might have to be sub-divided by different categories of access and expertise. For instance, if part of the co-creation team is from an origin community of one of the contested artworks which they seek to contextualise, but does not have access to the museum where the artwork is held, this needs to be factored into divisions of labour within the co-creation process. Claiming that content is presented ‘by people from the countries they were removed from’ (44), when in actuality, different groups advised on singular artwork contextualisations whilst having no input on how those displays are connected within the app navigation is misleading.

A second issue *Unfiltered* grapples with is that the app does not effectively consider the spatial specificities and practical limitations of the museum environment, such as crowded areas or the absence of public WiFi in certain areas. This, too, underlines the importance of considering spatial ramifications in co-creation processes for XR. *Who is this meant for?* and *How are people meant to engage?* are central considerations for designing accessible, inclusive XR experiences. For co-creation processes, this means clearly defining whose needs are at the forefront of the team’s considerations, and who the target audience is. This is where power dynamics management is crucial: for most heritage sites, it might not be an attractive option to say ‘Our target audience are 50 elderly community members who speak a specific dialect and who will likely never visit this site’. However, from a community perspective, this might be the most valuable answer. In decolonially motivated heritage collaborations it is vital to step away from capitalist stakeholder thinking, and into community value-based stakeholder thinking. How profitable a target audience might be, how numerous, or how likely to improve the image of the institution, should not be key factors in these choices. It is thus of utmost importance that prior to content creation, the existing power dynamics are acknowledged and navigated in a way which enables origin communities to define their own priorities.

A third point which creates a gap between *Unfiltered’s* aims and its delivery is the insufficient contextualisation of content. Its audio-visual output conforms to established communication methods which users might expect in a museum, and does little to challenge traditional information authority. While the app claims to provide a subversive perspective on the exhibits, it ultimately lacks material engagement with repatriation efforts. It is not clear whether audio speakers are activists or actors, where they are from, which community they represent, what the repatriation demands of these communities are, or how app users may support these efforts. The disparity between the representation of origin communities and transparency about their input and perspectives fosters a passive consumption of information. By making transparency, origin community interests, and interactivity core pillars of content co-creation, decolonial AR apps for heritage sites can ensure that they fully realise the potential of the technological tools at their disposal.

Below is an overview of the key questions which have emerged from analysing these three applications:



Figure 1: Overview of Workflow Questions for Co-Creation of XR Content at Heritage Sites

CONCLUSION

Apps like *Open Cabinet*, *Looty*, and the *Unfiltered History Tour* highlight the complexities involved in co-creating XR content for heritage sites. They emphasise the importance of stakeholder engagement, equitable representation, and transparency at every stage of the co-creation process. As Alcoff (34) suggests, 'we must ask further questions' about the intentions of apps and institutions, 'questions that amount to the following: will it enable the empowerment of oppressed peoples?'. Addressing key issues surrounding agency, interest, and priority in co-creation processes is essential for realising the transformative potential of immersive technologies in fostering inclusive heritage experiences. By embracing collaborative approaches which centre the voices and needs of marginalised communities, cultural institutions can harness the power of XR to take meaningful steps towards decolonising, promote social justice, and reimagine the role of heritage sites in contemporary society. Co-creation processes which prioritise the interests of origin communities are only a first step towards thoroughly acknowledging the legacies of colonialism and oppression in our shared heritage spaces. With this acknowledgement, restitutions, and a commitment to ongoing learning, XR content co-creation for heritage sites can create dynamic spaces for fostering empathy, understanding, and reconciliation across diverse groups.

REFERENCES

1. Geismar H. *Museum Object Lessons for the Digital Age*. UCL Press; 2018.
2. Kenderdine S. Experimental museology: immersive visualisation and cultural (big) data. In: *Experimental Museology*. Routledge; 2021.
3. Doolani S, Wessels C, Kanal V, Sevastopoulos C, Jaiswal A, Nambiappan H, et al. A Review of Extended Reality (XR) Technologies for Manufacturing Training. *Technologies*. 2020 Dec 10;8(4):77.
4. Lanier J. *Dawn of the new everything: encounters with reality and virtual reality*. First edition. New York: Henry Holt and Company; 2017. 351 p.
5. Furht B, editor. *Handbook of Augmented Reality* [Internet]. New York, NY: Springer; 2011 [cited 2023 Sep 22]. Available from: <https://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-1-4614-0064-6>
6. Benford S, Giannachi G. *Performing mixed reality*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press; 2011. 296 p.
7. Weijdom J. Performative prototyping in collaborative mixed reality environments: an embodied design method for ideation and development in virtual reality. In: *Sixteenth International Conference on Tangible, Embedded, and Embodied Interaction*, 2022.
8. Jacob S. *Make it Real: Architecture as Enactment*. Strelka Press; 2012. 52 p.
9. Drayton R. Rhodes Must Not Fall?: Statues, Postcolonial 'Heritage' and Temporality. *Third Text*. 2019 Sep 3;33(4–5):651–66.
10. Hicks D. *The British Museums: the Benin Bronzes, colonial violence and cultural restitution*. London: Pluto Press; 2020. 345 p.
11. Simon-Liedtke JT, Baraas RC. The Need for Universal Design of eXtended Reality (XR) Technology in Primary and Secondary Education. In: *Virtual, Augmented and Mixed Reality: Applications in Education, Aviation and Industry*, 2022. p. 121–41.
12. Di Blasio I, Emig J, Niederwieser E, Siegele D, Matt DT. Extended Reality Product Configuration for Flexible Production Systems: A Case Study. In: *Extended Reality*, 2023. p. 505–16.
13. Vasilchenko A, Li J, Ryskeldiev B, Sarcar S, Ochiai Y, Kunze K, et al. Collaborative Learning & Co-Creation in XR, CHI EA, 2020. p. 1–4.
14. Miró-Mediano À, Alier Forment M, Mora Serrano FJ. XR as a Forward-Looking Tool for Mathematics Learning of Secondary School Students with Dyslexia and ADHD: A Thesis Plan. In: *Proceedings TEEM 2022, 2023*. p. 1279–88.
15. Pong S, Wah W. *Adaptive Experiential Learning with Virtual Reality*. 2019.

16. Guarese R, Pretty E, Zambetta F. XR towards tele-guidance: mixing realities in assistive technologies for blind and visually impaired people. In: 2023 IEEE VRW, 2023. p. 324–9.
17. Moustafa RS, Karhu H, Andberg S, Bednarik R. Seeing Through Their Eyes - A Customizable Gaze-Contingent Simulation of Impaired Vision and Other Eye Conditions Using VR/XR Technology. In: ETRA Proceedings, 2023. p. 1–2.
18. Dutt S, Sharma R, Suyal P, Thapliyal M. An Investigative Study of Long-Term Implication of Extended Reality Applications in Educational Pursuits for Learning-Disabled Population: A Recommendation Approach. In: SMART, 2022. p. 69–74.
19. Lukava T, Morgado Ramirez DZ, Barbareschi G. Two sides of the same coin: accessibility practices and neurodivergent users' experience of extended reality. *Journal of Enabling Technologies*. 2022 Jan 1;16(2):75–90.
20. López-Ojeda W, Hurley RA. Extended-Reality Technologies: An Overview of Emerging Applications in Medical Education and Clinical Care. *JNP*. 2021 Jul;33(3):A4-177.
21. Bauer V, Bouchara T, Bourdot P. Extended Reality Guidelines for Supporting Autism Interventions Based on Stakeholders' Needs. *J Autism Dev Disord*. 2023 May 1;53(5):2078–111.
22. Chen Y, Zhou Z, Cao M, Liu M, Lin Z, Yang W, et al. Extended Reality (XR) and telehealth interventions for children or adolescents with autism spectrum disorder: Systematic review of qualitative and quantitative studies. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*. 2022 Jul 1;138:104683.
23. Kaplan-Rakowski R, Papin K, Hartwick P.L. Language Teachers' Perceptions and Use of Extended Reality [Internet].
24. Lai M, (Hongbo) Chen R, Evanyshyn A, Shaltout Z, Alfred M. Applications of Extended Reality (XR) in obtaining informed consent: A narrative review. *ISHFEHC Proceedings*, 2023 Mar 1;12(1):43–4.
25. Miller L, Wu JG, Zhang D, Thomas N. Editorial: Into the uncharted territory of XR in second/foreign language education: psychological contributors and barriers. *Front Psychol*. 2023 Jun 22;14:1215548.
26. Goharinejad S, Goharinejad S, Hajesmaeel-Gohari S, Bahaadinbeigy K. The usefulness of virtual, augmented, and mixed reality technologies in the diagnosis and treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children: an overview of relevant studies. *BMC Psychiatry*. 2022 Jan 4;22(1):4.
27. Pons P, Navas-Medrano S, Soler-Dominguez JL. Extended reality for mental health: Current trends and future challenges. *Frontiers in Computer Science*. 2022 ;4.
28. Dima M, Hurcombe L, Wright M. Touching the Past: Haptic Augmented Reality for Museum Artefacts. In: *Virtual, Augmented and Mixed Reality Applications of Virtual and Augmented Reality*, 2014. p. 3–14.
29. Rivera-Carlisle J. Contextualising the contested: Xr as experimental museology. *Herança*. 2023 Mar 8;6(1):84–100.
30. Towns AR. Gamifying blackness: from slave records to *Playing History: Slave Trade*. *Information, Communication & Society*. 2021 Sep 10;24(12):1814–28.
31. Mignolo WD. The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference. *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 2002 Jan 1;101(1):57–96.
32. Tlostanova M. The postcolonial condition, the decolonial option, and the post-socialist intervention. In: *Postcolonialism Cross-Examined*. Routledge; 2019.
33. Von Tunzelmann A. *Fallen idols: twelve statues that made history*. London: Headline Publishing Group; 2021. 264 p.
34. Alcoff L. The Problem of Speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique*. 1991;(20):5–32.
35. Parsons M, Fisher K, Nalau J. Alternative approaches to co-design: insights from indigenous/academic research collaborations. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*. 2016 Jun;20:99–105.

36. Coombes B, Johnson JT, Howitt R. Indigenous geographies III: Methodological innovation and the unsettling of participatory research. *Progress in Human Geography*. 2014 Dec;38(6):845–54.
37. Castleden H, Morgan VS, Lamb C. “I spent the first year drinking tea”: Exploring Canadian university researchers’ perspectives on community-based participatory research involving Indigenous peoples. *Canadian Geographies / Géographies canadiennes*. 2012 Jun;56(2):160–79.
38. Louis RP. Can You Hear us Now? Voices from the Margin: Using Indigenous Methodologies in Geographic Research. *Geographical Research*. 2007 Jun;45(2):130–9.
39. Chilisa B. *Indigenous research methodologies*. Second edition. Los Angeles: SAGE; 2020. 368 p.
40. Weber-Pillwax C. Orality in Northern Cree Indigenous Worlds. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 2001;25(2).
41. Ellis JB, Earley MA. Reciprocity and Constructions of Informed Consent: Researching with Indigenous Populations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2006 Dec;5(4):1–13.
42. Rivera-Carlisle J & Eccles K Open Cabinet: Critically Contextualising Contested Heritage through Augmented Reality. In *Mobile Heritage: Practices, Interventions, Politics*, ed. Herman A. (forthcoming).
43. Dussel E. Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures). *boundary 2*. 1993;20(3):65–76.
44. Dentsu Webchutney. An unofficial guide to the disputed artefacts of the British Museum. [Internet]. Available: <https://theunfilteredhistorytour.com/>
45. Faloyin D. The True Stories of 10 of the Most Disputed Objects at the British Museum [Internet]. *Vice*. 2021. Available: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3abdd3/unfiltered-history-tour-ten-disputed-artefacts-british-museum>
46. Shaw K. Gurbaksh Singh: Decoding the code behind The Unfiltered History Tour at British Museum [Internet]. *Campaign Brief Asia*. 2021. Available: <https://campaignbriefasia.com/2021/12/22/gurbaksh-singh-decoding-the-code-behind-the-unfiltered-history-tour-at-british-museum/>
47. Krmpotich C, Committee with the HR, Museum the staff of the PR, Museum B. *This Is Our Life: Haida Material Heritage and Changing Museum Practice*. University of British Columbia Press; 2014.
48. Wintle C. *Decolonising the Museum: The Case of the Imperial and Commonwealth Institutes*. 2016.
49. Hall S. *The West and the Rest:: Discourse and Power*. 1992. p. 141–84.
50. Vawda S. Museums and the Epistemology of Injustice: From Colonialism to Decoloniality. *Museum International*. 2019 Jul 3;71(1–2):72–9.
51. Witcomb A. Thinking about Others through Museums and Heritage. In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, 2015. p. 130–43.
52. de Sousa Santos B. *Epistemologies of the South and the future*. 2016;13.
53. Roosevelt CH, Cobb P, Moss E, Olson BR, Ünlüsoy S. Excavation is Destruction Digitization: Advances in Archaeological Practice. *Journal of Field Archaeology*. 2015 Jun;40(3):325–46.

CO-CREATING A SENSORY AUDIT TOOL WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO REVIEW AND TAILOR THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT TO CHILDREN'S SENSORY NEEDS: REFLECTIONS ON THE CO-PRODUCTION PROCESS

Jessica Massonnié¹, Theodora Mavridou²

¹*University of Portsmouth, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Education, Languages and Linguistics (UNITED KINGDOM)*

²*University of Portsmouth, Faculty of Technology, School of Mechanical and Design Engineering (UNITED KINGDOM)*

Abstract

Ensuring children's optimal social and emotional development is essential to building the foundations of learning (1). Whether the school environment provides sensory stimulation that matches children's needs in terms of intensity, frequency, and predictability is important to their mental health (2). This is particularly true for children identified as having special needs and/or specific diagnoses such as autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (3,4). Creating an optimal physical environment in UK schools is a complex task, which includes dimensions pertaining to air quality, lighting, acoustic and thermal comfort (5). In research, there is a need for more individualised evidence-based interventions tailored to children's sensory needs, guided by measures collecting children's voices (6) and evaluating their effectiveness (7–9). Building on the good practices and expertise already existing in schools, our project aims to co-create a sensory audit tool with primary schools to facilitate the collection of children's views on their sensory needs and the physical environment. We will detail the first steps of organising a consultation with schools to co-design the most suitable methods to work towards the research aims. We illustrate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of such a transdisciplinary project (10). Two key Strengths are the potential to increase the impact of findings by understanding social and educational contexts early on inform psychological theories using pedagogical methods and concepts. Despite increased time and ethical commitments (Weaknesses), the project offers the opportunity for professional development, which is called in the clinical literature 'Patient and Public Involvement' (Opportunities). However, we will need to regularly check that we are aligned on our definition of success (Threat) in order to create outputs and spend our resources in the most strategic way possible.

Keywords: children, education, psychology, sensory needs, transdisciplinary

SENSORY NEEDS IN SCHOOLS

Sensory Needs – Definitions and Legal Educational Frameworks

Upon visiting a school, we might notice the busy playground, populated with children's screams of excitement as they play ball games. We might perceive their rushed movements towards a smelly canteen and their pleasure, or disgust, towards certain types of food. We might venture into the library and notice a quiet atmosphere of comfort and focus. Our senses are a door to the world around us -

they influence how we feel, what we pay attention to and how we engage with our environment. Each of us might have up to eight senses, including: sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, interoception (internal body sensations such as breathing and hunger) (11), proprioception (awareness of body parts and movements in space), and vestibular senses (balance, coordination and movement in relation to the surroundings) (12,13). Any potential combination of these senses will influence children's experience of the school environment. Who would decide that a child needs specific provision in the sensory domain, and how is such a judgment supported?

In the United Kingdom, a child might be considered as having Special Educational Needs if they 'require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided.' (14, p. 98). Sensory needs are one type of special educational needs. They may be related to a clinical diagnosis such as vision impairment (15). They might also be a component of a wider diagnosis, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (3). They might also not be attached to any particular clinical diagnosis.

The concept of 'disability' in itself, as expressed in the Special Educational Needs definition presented above, seems to reflect a biomedical model of disability (16) whereby the difficulty is placed on the child who 'requires' special provision and is unable to access the facilities that 'most' children can use. The authors of the present paper favor interpretations of disability as a 'mismatch' or incongruence between the child's current state of development and their complex socio-cultural environment. This mismatch would be characterised by considering the possibilities offered by the child's body, along with their own satisfaction about their sensory engagement and the social expectations placed on them (17).

Why Adopting a Co-Production Approach?

Acknowledging the complexity of these relationships between the child and their environment (18), we adopted a co-production approach (19). At the core of co-production is the idea that the knowledge required for addressing societal problems is developed across different communities. Our team is transdisciplinary, with experts in psychology, education, architecture and special needs. It comprises academics and practitioners in leadership positions (headteachers, deputy headteachers, special educational needs coordinators, senior lecturers). Discussions are also ongoing with Portsmouth City Council, in particular, the Education Team and Neurodiversity Team, to better understand the existing educational provision and tools available to understand children's needs.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats negotiated during the co-production process will now be presented using the SWOT framework on transdisciplinary research proposed in (10). Within this framework, Strengths and Weaknesses represent existing, ongoing advantages and concerns documented in the literature. Opportunities and Threats represent potential advantages and concerns, which, although mentioned in the literature, are yet to be documented to the same extent. To keep our paper concise, two exemplars of each category will be selected and illustrated with our ongoing project.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS NEGOTIATED DURING THE CO-PRODUCTION PROCESS

Strengths

Increasing the Impact of Findings

The first strength of transdisciplinary research is that it allows grounding research questions and hypotheses in an existing educational context, potentially increasing the impact of findings (20). In other words, it reduces the need to 'translate' findings from laboratory research to 'real-world' educational contexts because educational contexts are considered in the design phase of the project.

Understanding the context of our three participatory schools included (1) Understanding what tools and measures are used by special educational needs coordinators to assess and support special educational needs, (2) Understanding the profile of children on the special educational needs register in each school; (3) Gathering floor plans and doing an architectural survey of existing rooms to understand their physical features (e.g. lighting, sound insulation, etc.). Our goal is to characterize what Bronfenbrenner (21) would call the micro-level of the educational system, in other words, direct interactions between children and their school environment.

Furthermore, investigating the local political context was deemed important as it provides a wider and larger-scale framework that influences the training opportunities, tools and resources available to schools and special educational needs coordinators to support children with special needs. This is Bronfenbrenner's macro level (21). Gathering information was facilitated by the fact that city councils have a legal duty to provide information on the educational, health and social provision available to children with special needs through their 'local offer' (22).

Portsmouth's city council's website contains documentation to support educators' assessment and understanding of a child's potential special needs, such as worksheets on children's likes/dislikes and a 'Profile of Need' grid (<https://portsmouthlocaloffer.org/document-hub/>). This grid contains two items on Sensory/Physical needs, one focusing on vision, and the second one on overall sensory needs. These items are scored on a scale from 0 ('normal' functioning) to 4 (significant impact on access to the curriculum and daily routine, with a need for adults to support 'safe navigation' and meet 'daily needs'). In 2021 and 2022, Portsmouth City Council, through the wider Portsmouth Children's Partnership, has piloted a new neurodiversity profiling tool that assesses nine developmental strands in children and young people under 19 years of age. These nine strands are: (1) speech and language; (2) energy levels; (3) attention skills; (4) emotion regulation; (5) motor skills; (6) sensory levels; (7) flexibility and adaptability; (8) empathy and (9) cognitive ability. Sensory needs are scored on a continuum from Low to High based on children's response to injury, textures, food and clothes and based on their ability to sit in the classroom, take information and complete tasks as asked. Open boxes add further details on sensory description, such as when the child is at their best, when they experience difficulties, and what adaptations might be required. Sensory seeking and avoiding behaviours might not be homogeneous across senses (23), and a more systematic and detailed approach might help to have a more fine-grained understanding of children's reactions.

We noted similarities between the Portsmouth Children's Partnership's ethos and our own ethos, which is one of co-production, including the voices of children and families so that assessments are done with them and not to them. The neurodiversity profile is completed jointly with a trained professional and families. Children do not need to have a formal diagnosis to be seen in the context of the neurodiversity profile. Indeed, the tool has been partly created in reaction to the long waiting times (beyond 18 months; <https://portsmouthlocaloffer.org/information/the-neurodiversity-nd-profiling-tool/>) that families need to wait for a formal clinical assessment. The aim of the tool is mainly educational, to facilitate interventions or adjustments to be made for the individual. It is used when neurodevelopmental concerns and questions about additional needs arise between parents and professionals. Our initial conversations with Portsmouth City Council showed a potential interest in further gathering children's views on their sensory needs, which is the main purpose of our project.

Our discussions with schools and Portsmouth City Council were crucial to define our sampling strategy – in other words, to decide which children will be invited to participate in our study. In order to stay in line with the support offered to children by schools and the council, we decided, as a team, to not focus only on children who have already received a diagnosis for a specific mental health condition.

Pedagogy can Inform Psychological Theories

Gathering children's views on their sensory needs with a pedagogical approach can potentially inform psychological theory and practice. First, the field of Psychology is evolving towards a transdiagnostic approach (24). In other words, the focus is not mainly on children's categorical diagnosis (e.g. Autism

Spectrum Disorder, Attention Hyperactivity Deficit Disorder) but on their underlying dimensions (e.g. inattention, social communication, biological and psychological mechanisms. In that context, trialing a new, qualitative tool to gather children's views on their sensory needs and assessing its validity with children who have various diagnoses can be a first step to further inform theories.

Second, there is a scarcity of psychological measures assessing sensory needs that consider the perspective of their users or beneficiaries in their design (6). Ensuring that an instrument's content is relevant and comprehensible for its users is an element of content validity and an important psychometric property (6).

Weaknesses

Increased Ethical Considerations

A potential difficulty of school-based transdisciplinary projects is the increased ethical considerations compared to purely university-based research (25). In addition to children's assent, four levels of consent are involved in our ethical procedures. These are from the headteachers, researchers, and school staff who co-constructed the study design and the parents of participating children.

Ground rules for co-production were also set up in our ethics application, particularly regarding how we will present the project to external audiences. For each partner to feel in control of what information would be shared outside of the team, we agreed for each external paper and/or conference to be run past all collaborators before diffusion. Decisions on authorship are based on CRediT guidelines. Such a process aims at preventing potential reputational risks.

Increased Time Commitments

Increased time commitments can be required for all parties to collaborate more closely (26). One principle of co-production is to share decision-making. This comes with extra work for all parties, compared to a situation where one person would make decisions. In the academic arena, time for research is a fraction of the workload, which is balanced with teaching, administrative, and leadership responsibilities. Similarly, practitioners in school settings spend a significant proportion of their time in leadership and teaching roles. In the initial stages of the project, meetings gathering school staff from the three participating schools were organised online to reduce the time to commute.

Opportunities

Professional Development

Such a transdisciplinary project comes with opportunities for growth and professional development. To give an example from the point of view of the first author, who is a researcher specialised in Psychology, discussing the accessibility of measures used to investigate children's sensory needs was eye-opening. It came with a certain degree of vulnerability, too. In research and clinical settings, measures such as the Sensory Profile Questionnaire are widely used (27). However, it is costly to use and might, therefore, not be easily accessible to schools.

Patient and Public Involvement

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) or, in other words, constructing the research *with* schools is crucial to anticipate the accessibility and user-friendliness of any new measure. Amongst the many different ways they can get involved in research, some teachers have expressed in focus groups a desire to have direct contacts with researchers (28). This is what we are aiming to do here, seeing it as a collaboration between people and not only institutions.

Threats

Epistemic Trespassing

Understanding each school's context is key to trying to avoid 'epistemic trespassing' – the imposition of 'research-validated' strategies from 'above' (10). In other words, we are not aiming at offering ready-made solutions to support children's sensory needs before we have understood the specificities of each school's physical environment and of each child. Our current challenge is to define a protocol to gather children's views that is flexible but replicable and can be used in different settings by different professionals while capturing the specificities of each child and educational context. This will be achieved by systematically investigating eight senses, asking open-ended questions to children and actively exploring their views on the school's physical environment. Based on the information provided by children, we will look at ways to support them by looking at the psychological literature and the literature on architectural design, keeping in mind our financial and educational constraints to change the school environment.

What is success?

Ultimately, the definition of what is successful might diverge between professions and needs to be explicitly discussed (29). Gaining funding for this project required planning outputs in the social and academic domains, with two conference presentations and the potential for one scientific publication. However, the content of the outputs is what is most important. We would consider ourselves successful if: (1) our sensory audit tool offers specific prompts in relation to the environment that can further support educators when discussing children's sensory needs, and (2) we can compile suggestions for 'easy wins', in other words, suggestions based on scientific research about what sensory features of the environment can impact children's wellbeing.

CONCLUSIONS

We have reviewed two Strengths of transdisciplinary projects across research and education: (1) the potential to increase the impact of findings by understanding the social and educational contexts in the early stages of the project, and (2) the potential for pedagogy to inform psychological theories. These strengths come with two Weaknesses, which are widely documented in the research literature: (1) increased time commitments and (2) increased ethics commitments. Amongst the potential Opportunities, which lie at the individual and subjective levels, are (1) professional development and (2) what is called 'Patient and Public Involvement' in the clinical literature. Two Threats are being negotiated, namely (1) academic trespassing and (2) divergences on what constitutes a successful outcome. Keeping these two threats in mind will help us regularly check why and how we use our time. We are hoping that this paper will be of interest to colleagues working with a similar approach or planning to do so. We look forward to continuing the discussion on practices of co-production in education.

Acknowledgements. We would like to thank Jade Graham.

REFERENCES

1. Massonnié J, Thomas M. Perspectives on learning from neuroscience. In: International Encyclopedia of Education [Internet]. 4th Edition. Elsevier; 2023. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818630-5.14008-4>

2. Jones EK, Hanley M, Riby DM. Distraction, distress and diversity: Exploring the impact of sensory processing differences on learning and school life for pupils with autism spectrum disorders. *Res Autism Spectr Disord.* 2020;72:101515.
3. Dellapiazza F, Michelon C, Vernhet C, Muratori F, Blanc N, Picot MC, et al. Sensory processing related to attention in children with ASD, ADHD, or typical development: Results from the ELENA cohort. *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry.* 2021;30:283–91.
4. Hazen EP, Stornelli JL, O'Rourke JA, Koesterer K, McDougale CJ. Sensory symptoms in autism spectrum disorders. *Harv Rev Psychiatry.* 2014;22(2):112–24.
5. Montazami A, Gaterell M, Nicol F. A comprehensive review of environmental design in UK schools: History, conflicts and solutions. *Renew Sustain Energy Rev.* 2015;46:249–64.
6. Soler N, Cordier R, Perkes IE, Dale RC, Bray P. Proxy-reported sensory measures for children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders: A systematic review. *Dev Med Child Neurol.* 2023;65(2):185–99.
7. Dynia JM, Walton KM, Sagester GM, Schmidt EK, Tanner KJ. Addressing sensory needs for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the classroom. *Interv Sch Clin.* 2023;58(4):257–63.
8. Hummerstone H, Parsons S. Co-designing methods with autistic students to facilitate discussions of sensory preferences with school staff: exploring the double empathy problem. *Int J Res Method Educ.* 2022;1–13.
9. Stephenson J. Characterization of multisensory environments: Why do teachers use them? *J Appl Res Intellect Disabil.* 2002;15(1):73–90.
10. Hobbiss M, Massonnié J, Tokuhamma-Espinosa T, Gittner A, Arson de Sousa Lemos M, Tovazzi A, et al. 'UNIFIED': Bridging the Researcher-Practitioner Divide in Mind, Brain and Education. *Mind Brain Educ.* 2019;13(4):298–312.
11. Barker M, Brewer R, Murphy J. What is interoception and why is it important? *Front Young Minds* [Internet]. [cited 2024 Feb 5];(9:558246). Available from: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2021.558246/pdf>
12. Keenan T, Evans S, Crowley K. An introduction to child development [Internet]. 3rd Edition. Sage; 2016 [cited 2024 Feb 5]. Available from: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=X9SfCwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=keenan+an+introduction+to+&ots=gkOJPe61wO&sig=MHSH1dprDPv5SFuN6DbmN8vVvN8>
13. Lynch SA, Simpson CG. Sensory processing: Meeting individual needs using the seven senses. *Young Except Child.* 2004;7(4):2–9.
14. Department for Education, Department of Health and Social Care. SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years [Internet]. Department for Education; 2015. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>
15. World Health Organization. International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision [Internet]. 2023. Available from: <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http%3a%2f%2fid.who.int%2fcd%2fentity%2f30317704>
16. Forstner M. Conceptual models of disability: The development of the consideration of non-biomedical aspects. *Disabilities.* 2022;2(3):540–63.
17. Bøttcher L, Dammeyer J. Beyond a Biomedical and Social Model of Disability: A Cultural-Historical Approach. In: *Development and Learning of Young Children with Disabilities - A Vygotskian Perspective*

[Internet]. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing; 2016. p. 3–23. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39114-4_1

18. Spence C. Senses of place: architectural design for the multisensory mind. *Cogn Res Princ Implic*. 2020;5(1):46.
19. Bandola-Gill J, Arthur M, Leng RI. What is co-production? Conceptualising and understanding co-production of knowledge and policy across different theoretical perspectives. *Evid Policy*. 2023;19(2):275–98.
20. Booth JL, Oyer MH, Paré-Blagoev EJ, Elliot AJ, Barbieri C, Augustine A, et al. Learning algebra by example in real-world classrooms. *J Res Educ Eff*. 2015;8(4):530–51.
21. Bronfenbrenner U, Morris PA. The bioecological model of human development. In: *Handbook of child psychology*. John Wiley & Sons; 2006. p. 793–828.
22. Hellowell B. *Understanding and challenging the SEND Code of Practice*. SAGE Publications, Inc.; 2019.
23. Dunn W. Supporting children to participate successfully in everyday life by using sensory processing knowledge. *Infants Young Child*. 2007;20(2):84–101.
24. Astle DE, Holmes J, Kievit R, Gathercole SE. Annual Research Review: The transdiagnostic revolution in neurodevelopmental disorders. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*. 2022;63(4):397–417.
25. Felzmann H. Ethical issues in school-based research. *Res Ethics Rev*. 2009;5(3):104–9.
26. Simmonds A. *How neuroscience is affecting education: Report of teacher and parent surveys*. Wellcome Trust; 2014.
27. Ben-Sasson A, Gal E, Fluss R, Katz-Zetler N, Cermak SA. Update of a meta-analysis of sensory symptoms in ASD: A new decade of research. *J Autism Dev Disord*. 2019;49:4974–96.
28. Massonnié J, Lucchesi A, Le Brun I. Evaluating What Works in the Classroom-How French Primary School Teachers Apply the Science of Learning. *Psyarxiv* [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Feb 5]; Available from: <https://psyarxiv.com/n9yw3/>
29. Stafford-Brizard KB, Cantor P, Rose LT. Building the bridge between science and practice: Essential characteristics of a translational framework. *Mind Brain Educ*. 2017;11(4):155–65.

HISTORY OF BREAST BY COLLECTIVE WORK OF MEMORY METHOD

Dr. Khodyreva Natalia^{1*}, Sokolova Anna²

^{1} St.Petersburg State University (Russia), by the time of writing the article Dr. N. Khodyreva was subjected to extrajudicial repressions and fired from St.Petersburg State University*

² St.Petersburg State University (Kazakhstan)

Abstract

Students from Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, and Estonia have studied the qualitative method of Collective Work of Memory (F. Haug) within the course Gender Studies and Health. Although it appeared sensitive to some participants, they picked the subject "The history of my breasts". The method involved writing personal stories about body socialisation and sequential reading of these stories with other participants, who added more memories along the way. After finishing their memories, the participants intended to write a joint story of breasts, in which they highlighted both universal and particular moments of the girls' socialisation. Using AhaSlides (word cloud generator), the highlighted domains from personal stories were displayed on the screen. It included the formation of standards of attractive breasts, parents' reactions, reactions of others, and emotional experiences. The group highlighted the contradictions in the requirements of the social environment and significant others to the breasts' appearance. As some participants noted, there was no mention of breast health, prevention of breast cancer, or the necessity to learn self-examination in the texts. There was a problem with the distribution of duties in the process of developing the joint text, which led to duplication of statements. The most difficult part was the joint discussion of the texts offline. In the final version of the joint story, the participants shared their impressions about the method, such as improving trust and mutual understanding and decreasing sensitivity on the subject. Some participants noted that they became less shy about their breasts and would pay more attention to their health. This experiment raises the question of whether it is possible to talk about each participant's equal participation/agency and how to measure it.

Keywords: collective work of memory, body socialization, equal participation

COLLECTIVE WORK OF MEMORY METHOD

Method of Collective Work of Memory (CWM – initialism by N.Kh.) is a qualitative research technique developed by German sociologist Frigga Haug in the early 1980s at the intersection of academic research, feminist and Marxist theory, and political practice (1). In its original format, it entails a group reflecting on a topic of shared interest by using short written memory scenes of the group members as the core material. It can be used in, for instance, social research, adult education, social activist groups, and professional reflection processes. It is based on a wider group of Memories Studies (MS - initialism by N.Kh.) and is defined as an original feminist research method (2, p. 223).

The impact and role of disasters and injuries on collective memory, ethical issues of remembrance and forgetting, problems of the influence of globalization, and the role of Oral History and identification policy were investigated in Memory Studies (3). Methodological disputes in MS are related to attempts to find objective grounds for collective representations, the search for a single theoretical framework, and approaches that are still ongoing (4,5,6). It is noted that collective memories and images of the past are not a simple sum of individual memories.

CWM aimed to investigate cultural, political, and cognitive factors contributing to how, what, and why individuals, groups, and communities forget/remember and recall any phenomena. F. Haug notes that the requirements of objectivity and knowledge verification require rationally structured methods and their mathematical processing, but on the other hand, they lose the opportunity to record everyday experiences. In her CWM method, the research object becomes the researcher herself. The Collective Work of Memory is an attempt to overcome the objectivity-subjectivity dichotomy in research: women as researchers were studying themselves.

F. Haug also discusses the problem of memory subjectivity: "If our opponents say that experience cannot be used as a source of knowledge, that it is too subjective, that an individual does not give an objective reflective assessment, we, on the contrary, insist on objectivity, since there is no unitary human existence. Femininity.... cannot be derived from any known law" (7, p. 39)

At the same time, she insists on reassessing language, concepts, perception, logic and emotions since we as women also have a lot based on biases: "Our task is not only to oppose reason to emotions but to explore them together and try to change both" (7, p. 41)

The uniqueness of the CWM method is the emphasis on the process of gender socialisation of the female body and its parts, which results in the construction of female sexuality. For example, various collective projects using CWM are associated with the awareness of the influence of the policy of national socialism in Germany on the physicality of German women in projects "Hair," "Legs," and so on. (7)

The Collective Work of Memory method grew from feminist consciousness-raising groups and was supplemented by writing texts and their collective analysis. Thus, the experience of consciousness-raising groups is another foundation on which the CWM method is based. At the same time, this makes the research method a social practice, a method of social action research aimed at raising women's self-esteem, awareness of the commonality of experiences and stimulating political change.

The collective empirical task of CWM is to determine the paths by which an individual constructs himself, complying with existing structures and thus forming himself. An emancipatory project will be possible when women can understand how they participate in their own socialization and find the potential for both personal change and the institutions of socialization themselves.

HISTORY OF THE COLLECTIVE WORK OF MEMORY METHOD IN RUSSIA

In the early 1990s, Finnish researchers Eva Tuovonen and Leila Simonen introduced this method to Russian activists/scientists. Since then, in post-perestroika Russia, research groups in Moscow and St. Petersburg began to operate under the leadership of Ph.D. M. Liborakina and Ph.D. N. Khodyreva. So, in the St. Petersburg Center for Gender Issues from 1992 to 1995, the project of the socialisation of Women's Body was implemented (8,9). Since 2012, the CWM method study was resumed at St. Petersburg State University as part of a special course, "Gender Research and Health", by Assistant Professor N. Khodyreva.

The necessity and importance of studying and applying the CWM method is associated with the known problem of topic sensitivity in psychology, medicine and social work. Many clients of the health care system try to avoid discussing topics and not to use concepts that relate to somatic problems connected with bowel and bladder functions and body parts, which are taboo and cause embarrassment when discussing. Therefore, the competence of clinical psychologists requires the study at a personal level of sensitive topics to ethically and openly discuss them with clients/patients

in clinics and medical centres. The consequence of taboo topics is the concealment of the corresponding problems with the health and disease of individual organs and parts of the body.

The use of the CWM may assist future clinical psychologists in investigating social factors through which body parts become sexualized, shameful, and, therefore, incommunicable.

We conducted 11 groups with 60 people to update the health-saving behavior. Groups chose one of the topics and wrote personal stories about a body part. To reduce censoring, the study using the Collective Memory Work method was carried out in heterogeneous groups by sex. For example, the participants chose from the following topics: "History of hair on the head," "History of the abdomen", "History of my breasts", "History of my urination", and so forth. The participants, with respect to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, discussed them in a closed group to make memories dynamic. Then, they wrote a text on their basis, highlighting the general and specific features of the process of socializing physicality.

The study continued by listening to individual stories, discussing them to identify ambiguities and contradictions in each text, supplementing their stories with recollections, processing the texts through triple coding (10), and finally, intensive discussions in the process of writing the common text. The latter was the most complex and raised the question of equal participation in subject-subject communication.

THE STUDY PROCESS AND ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS IN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The 2023 study was a remake of *History of My Breasts*, conducted 30 years ago (8). The study involved six women who grew up in Post Soviet so-called Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), such as Ukraine, Estonia, Kazakhstan and Russia. They were students from Saint Petersburg State University, Faculty of Psychology, Department of Clinical Psychology) aged 22–23.

Like 30 years ago, the main goal of CWM is to identify the general and particular similarities and differences in the socialization of a woman's body and to explore the boundary between the social and biological (8, p. 43). The process started with discussing the proposed topics among six female students. Among the suggested topics were "the history of the feet", "the history of the fingers", "the history of the navel", and "the history of the female breast". Each participant chose which topic to write on and gave arguments for and against. Despite some dissatisfaction and sensitivity of the topic, each participant voluntarily agreed to write a story about their own breasts. The process of approving the topic took approximately 3 hours. Each participant wrote her story, which she then read aloud. This allowed other female participants to recall and reflect on their own forgotten memories. The result was a text consisting of each participant's original memories. Memories were added to the individual original text as the other participants told their stories – a collective memory was triggered. After that, the female students completed their texts. The texts were randomly allocated to the female participants, and we then used three levels of encoding (10). The main task was to discuss and highlight the main domains that each of us identified. Creating a collective text was a challenge due to the abundance of material. The original shared text was 36 pages long. Particular attention was paid to highlighting domains for the collective text.

Initially, each attempted to describe a dedicated domain. However, the participants encountered a problem of overlapping and extensiveness of the text, which required an additional meeting to reduce and clarify it. It is worth noting that some participants found the topic particularly sensitive and chose to engage less in discussions, expressing their reservations.

Lastly, our group collectively discussed each participant's roles during this process. We used the AhaSlides website during the discussion, allowing us to visualize sentences and highlight general domains. The more frequently a domain is used, the larger in size the word becomes. The discussion process was based on listening to each other. The discussion took approximately 20 hours, and each participant had an opportunity to speak. The participants found the discussion space safe, leading to better topic disclosure. It should not be overlooked that each of the participants, at some point, took on a different role in the group. What happened was that some of them were transcribers, some monitored the coding, and some used the additional site. Thus, it was possible to create true group work with individual stories. During the discussion, the participants highlighted that the comments of others helped to recall the story in more detail and provide more information. Although the method insists on a lack of interpretations, the final joint discussion was conducted as a so-called communitarian interpretation. The interpretation of the results involves study participants from different countries (11). If we summarize the whole time of the work, it took approximately 40 hours of group and individual work online and offline.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY *HISTORY OF MY BREASTS*

The general memory history of breast socialization and sexualization included the following domains:

- 1) the formation of standards for attractive breasts ("In the 7th grade, I got push-up bras and I came up with the idea of stuffing them with socks." Such actions could even be traumatic: "My friend and I decided to shove some Styrofoam, which we found near the house, under my T-shirt, and pass the boys who were playing ball at that time.");
- 2) parents' reactions («It's embarrassing for a 5 year old girl to run around without a top»);
- 3) reactions of other adult men and women («Also, when I went to the sea and wore a swimming costume, I also observed that men do not look at the eyes, but a little lower»)
- 4) reactions boys and girls – peers («Boys at school liked girls at school who had breasts, they were popular and invited to go out and date»);
- 5) emotional experiences about breasts ("I found it distasteful when someone of the opposite sex emphasized breasts. Then, I realized for my own comfort, it does not give me pleasure to wear bras, so I just stopped wearing them, thereby removing the very emphasis of the bust, for which I thought I was doing it. ").

Contradictions were highlighted in the requirements of the social environment and significant others towards breasts appearance: on the one hand, a large breast is a shame, you need to hide it, it is paid attention to and offensive remarks are made. On the other hand, breast growth is encouraged so that "the girl gets married" and "potential husbands-to-be" pay attention to her.

«If my breasts grew, then I grew, so I could consider myself an adult. For me, it was a kind of indicator that I am no longer a child, which means it is time to think and act like an adult".

Revealing your experience is not only about encouraging you to talk about previously taboo topics. After all, most women are trained to use words and interpret their experiences using the words and meanings of dominant cultural discourse. Therefore, in the process of text processing, coding dips were analyzed, as well as avoidance zones and blind spots in the discourse. As some participants noted, in personal stories, there was no mention of healthy breast functioning, prevention of breast cancer, or the need to learn how to do self-examination. Also, we found that the role of media and social networks were not mentioned in the memories at all.

We found that there were more common socialisation patterns than differences between girls from Estonia, Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan and that the features of socialisation related to the emancipating role of parents of some participants in Kazakhstan and Russia.

Unexpected effects

In addition, there were therapeutic effects of participation in the study (which the author of the method F. Haug tried to avoid): cohesiveness increased sensitivity to the topic of decreased awareness of the need to take care of breast health. (It is believed that young women do not need to take care of it, that it is not necessary to increase cancer caution at a young age).

As expected, the overall effect of shame reduction was noted, which was an unforeseen side effect of collective recall. According to the author of the method, avoiding this emotional involvement and detente is necessary. However, as 40 years of experience using this method has shown, a therapeutic effect is inevitable. Many participants noted that now they are less embarrassed about their breasts and will pay more attention to their healthy functioning.

In the process of discussion and communitarian interpretation, there was a decrease in the sensitivity of topics, stereotypes and norms that were critically considered, leading to an emphasis on forming external standards of physicality and ignoring healthy functioning.

If we compare the current History of breasts with the study of a similar topic 30 years ago in the PCGI project (8), you can see how age (10 years older than the 2023 group) and other socialization conditions (Soviet period of the 1980s of the 20th century with its lack of sexualization images of women in the media) forced to focus on the problem of the healthy functioning of the mammary glands, and not their appearance. This is also because a third of the CWM participants in the 1990s have already faced medical problems and underwent breast surgery.

SUMMARY

The development and use of the Method of Collective Work of Memory in the practice of researching self-construction of identity has shown that the process of development and formation of female subordination goes through the construction of the hyper-importance of the appearance of the breast and its sexualisation. This process generated feelings of shame, fear, uncertainty and guilt in young women, all at the same time. It is important that the participants record how norms, expectations, values, and recommendations from others affect the idea of their breasts and their treatment. On the other hand, they saw elements of resistance - activity in the form of irony, trolling, sarcasm and mockery of public prescriptions.

At the same time, a similar system of socialization for Russian-speaking teenage girls of the 2010s is common for post-Soviet CIS. Regardless of where their youth passed, it was the sexualisation of breasts that is the common feature that all participants noted, as well as the paradoxical forgetting and ignorance of the general sexist background of the media and social networks.

During the study, there was a decrease in the topic's sensitivity, and stereotypes and norms were critically considered, leading to an emphasis on forming external standards of physicality and ignoring healthy functioning. Many participants noted the therapeutic aspect of communication even though the goal of mastering the method was exploratory and educational.

Methodologically important for further research and practice was the raised question of to what extent the contribution of all participants in the group was equal. How can subject-subject equal communication be measured during research activities?

The use of AhaSlides website technology made it possible to streamline the process of digitally selecting common domains. Collective discussion and interpretation in creating a common text was the most complex and time-consuming to implement. A communitarian interpretation procedure was organised instead of the usual interpretation patterns associated with generally accepted theories to do this.

In modern Russian realities, with the alarming demographic policy and the revival of so-called "traditional" values, even in scientific discussions, one can find disregard for the quality of life of young women, for the experience of women during pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and post-natal physical and mental health problems.

If, for the members of the current research group who received the vaccination of liberalism and freedom in the post-perestroika years, sarcasm was a reaction to the official shift in the discourse of gender equality to patriarchy values, then the problems of a new generation of Russian adolescents are alarming. It is to them that vast resources of Russian state propaganda are directed. We hope that the Collective Work of Memory method can develop critical thinking, but the main issue is the massive introduction of the method into education.

REFERENCES

- (1) Haug F. MEMORY WORK. *Australian Feminist Studies*. 2008 Dec;23(58):537-41.
- (2) Reinharz S, Fonow MM, Cook JA. Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research. *Contemporary Sociology*. 1992 Mar;21(2):282.
- (3) Radstone S. Memory studies: For and against. *Memory Studies*. 2008 Jan; 1(1):31-9.
- (4) Jelin E, Gosselin W. *The struggle for the past: How we construct social memories*. New York: Berghahn; 2021.
- (5) Laanes E. Born translated memories: Transcultural memorial forms, domestication and foreignization. *Memory Studies*. 2021 Feb;14(1):41-57.
- (6) Landsberg A. *Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press; 2015.
- (7) Frigga Haug. *Female sexualization: A collective work of memory*. London: Verso; 1999.
- (8) Khodyreva N. Collective work of memory (Don't turn your back on breast cancer! Why I do not give birth to a child)//*Bulletin* No. 3, PCGI, St. Petersburg, 1994, 135-150.
- (9) Khodyreva N. *Collective memory method in the study of reproductive behavior of women//Reproductive rights of citizens in Russia: reality and expectations*, M., Materials of an interregional seminar. - M.,1996
- (10) Anselm Strauss, Corbin J. *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory, procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications; 1990.
- (11) *Timelining*. SAGE Research Methods Foundations. 2020 Jan 1;

- (17) Kepes G. *Arts of the environment*. New York: G. Braziller; 1972.
- (18) Boal A. *Theatre of the oppressed*. London: Pluto Press; 1979.
- (19) Slattery P. *Curriculum development in the postmodern era*. New York: Garland; 1995.
- (20) [a] Jagodzinski J. Curriculum as felt through six layers of an aesthetically embodied skin: The arch-writing on the body. In: Pinar W.F., Reynolds W.M. (eds.) *Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text*. New York) : Teachers College Press; 1992: 159-183. [b] Jagodzinski J. *Postmodern dilemmas: Outrageous essays in art and art education*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum; 1997.
- (21) Finley S. *Teacher education faculty as researchers: Composing lives in context, a blend of form and content* [dissertation]. Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan; 1998. Available from: First Search: 0127. Source: 59, no. 07A, 2439.
- (22) Diamond CTP., Mullen CA. (eds.) *The postmodern educator: Arts-based inquiries and teacher development*. New York: Peter Lang; 1999; p. 15-36.
- (23) Davis D., Butler-Kisber L. *Arts-based representation in qualitative research: Collage as a contextualizing strategy*. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting; 1999 Apr; Montreal, Quebec. Session 17.12.
- (24) Gablick S. *The reenchantment of art*. New York: Thames & Hudson; 1991.
- (25) McDermott M. *"Flinging the piano" of critical post-avant-garde arts-based inquiry: A study of four pre-service teachers' collaged representations of self and pedagogy* [dissertation]. University of Virginia; 2001. AAT 3020375.
- (26) Lather P. How research can be made to mean: Feminist ethnography at the limits of representation. In: Ibanez-Carrasco F, Meiners E, (eds.) *Public acts: Disruptive readings on curriculum and research*. New York, NY: Routledge; 2004: 181-188.
- (27) Desai D. Imagining justice in times of perpetual war: notes from the classroom. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*. 2009; 6(2): 6-25.
- (28) Gleick J. *Chaos: making a new science*. London: Penguin; 2008.
- (29) Cassidy D. *Uncertainty: The life and science of Werner Heisenberg*. New York: W.H. Freeman; 1992.

REFLECTIONS ON PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN THE CULTURAL SPHERE: REDRAFTING THE RULES

Sheelagh Colclough

Belfast School of Art, Ulster University (Northern Ireland)

Abstract

This paper is based on reflections on my experiences as the project researcher for a three-year international professional development, peer learning, and knowledge exchange programme: Spaces of Transformation in Arts Education (SPOTing), 2020-3 (1). Built around participatory action research methodologies drawn from education pedagogies which centre embodied knowledge principles such as lived experience (2) and living theory (3), the SPOTing programme involved eight cultural centre partners from across Europe devising their own research questions and research actions, and reflecting on the data they generated; understood through the lens of the research values they identified.

This participatory research process generated key questions relevant to many working in cultural participation, especially around agency and the nature of learning from experience, related to the essential but often absent freedom within publically funded projects to collaboratively factor in 'failure' as well as claiming the space to do 'less' while reflecting more.

Cultural participation practitioners and theorists have drawn attention to the ethical issues 'baked into' hierarchical arts institutions' outreach projects wherein participants do not typically have "the possibility to question the rules of the game" (4, p.4). In contrast, the experiences of SPOTing reinforced both the potential and the challenges of the openness and 'uncontrollability' of participatory research, as well as generating collaborative reflections on what qualitative research can be and who can make use of it. Arts and arts education practice-based methodologies, which reposition core academic research values of knowledge, originality, and collaboration to be understood as "theory to be interpreted through practice" (5, p.66), can offer a more flexible person-centred approach to participatory research which emphasises the importance of collaborative civic skills and practices such as transparency, consent, negotiation, agency, responsibility, and collective critical reflection.

Keywords: cultural participation, participatory action research, arts education

INTRODUCTION

The Spaces of Transformation in Arts Education (SPOTing), 2020-3, was a collaborative practice-based and participatory research-led arts education programme between Trans Europe Halles (TEH) and 8 of its members, centred on peer learning, professional development, and knowledge exchange. TEH is an arts and culture network based in Lund, Sweden, with 162 member organisations across Europe. The 8 TEH members who participated in SPOTing were also programme partners, forming part of the steering group together with TEH, SPOTing's lead partner, receiving funding through the EU's Erasmus+ programme. The SPOTing partners, based in Belfast, Bologna, Bratislava, Esch-Sur-Alzette, Gothenburg, Paris, Vienna, and Žilina, all run different types of cultural centres with varying

levels of resources, offering diverse programming, which includes carnival, circus, community art, contemporary art, film, graffiti art, music, participatory art, performance, and visual art.

The SPOTing partners had all taken part in previous TEH Arts Education Platform exchanges, mostly meetings and seminars hosted by TEH members. SPOTing was therefore devised as a development of these experiences, designed to facilitate a deeper form of knowledge exchange using a common practice-based methodology "shaped by a collective interest in reframing the idea of evaluation as a more reflective process of ongoing learning in order to help strengthen practice" (1, p.9). Case studies reflecting each of the partners' SPOTing experiences were planned as a way to capture key learning and practice outcomes, as well as the process of knowledge development and exchange, within and between the eight cultural centres. During the three-year programme, SPOTing's peer learning was conducted online and in person through meetings, workshops, and four partner-hosted seminars.

Due to my long-term professional association with the Belfast-based SPOTing partner, Beat Carnival, and my participation, as part of their arts education team, in several TEH Arts Education Platform exchanges, as well as my collaborative practice-based PhD research examining theories of arts participation through different stakeholders' lived experiences, I was proposed and accepted by the SPOTing partners as the programme researcher. In turn, I devised the SPOTing methodology and research design proposed to the SPOTing partners, and some adaptations were made along the way.

DECONSTRUCTING RESEARCH

As part of the necessary process of deconstruction, in order to explain and explore what actually 'counts' as participatory research and for 'non-academic' researchers to be able to take ownership of conducting such research themselves, the deceptively simple question of '*what is research*' has to be posed. Although challenging, this 'entry-level' existentialism can be actively embraced and productively applied to different aspects of cultural participation, as demonstrated by SPOTing partners Kulturfabrik. "Existential crises can also be good, they don't have to be anything dramatic, it's just this process of us questioning ourselves" (1, p.78).

The fact that as the SPOTing programme researcher, I was employed not by a university but by a carnival arts organisation, perhaps even subconsciously, also influenced a broader criticality towards the 'rules of research.' Nonetheless, one of my key concerns at the beginning of the programme was the selection of a methodology that was simple and adaptable enough to be used with the agency by the SPOTing partners, acting as participatory 'non-academic' researchers within their organisations and communities, while still retaining its rigor and integrity as qualitative research, *understood here as collaborative knowledge creation*, rather than spilling over into advocacy which can often happen in arts and culture work as noted below. Some SPOTing partners also struggled early on with getting their research 'right,' as one partner explained, internally, they "discussed a lot about how to state questions in the right ways so we get to the answers we are looking for" (1, p.32). In such instances, I encouraged partners to think about their research as an open, transparent, and adaptive process of gathering information collaboratively with their research participants, which could accommodate 'mistakes' and iteratively lead them to more generative questions rather than definitive 'right' answers.

On Bullshit

Eleonora Belfiore, reflecting on Harry G. Frankfurt's *On Bullshit*, which deals with the prevalence of bullshitting in public life presented as an "indifference to how things really are and the cultivation of vested interests" (6, p.343), talks about how in the context of UK cultural policy, advocacy is frequently presented as research. Belfiore points out that often, in research which purports to examine the social impact of arts and culture, research questions typically focus on asking '*how*' such presumed impacts have been achieved rather than interrogating '*if*' they have (6, p.353). As Belfiore

also notes, such research approaches reveal the prevalence of audit culture operating as an ideological dead end, resulting in seemingly endless yet fruitless attempts to comprehensively 'make the case' for spending public money on the arts in the UK, generating 'evidence' heavily weighted towards economic impact, despite being based on "unrealistic claims, dubious statistics and unverifiable data" (7, p.299).

Research as Theory

Developing the previously noted idea of participatory research processes as forms of productive existentialism, Marsha Bradfield talks about the typical "existential angst" generated by arts practice-based research where the work is neither seen as "'good' contemporary art nor 'relevant and rigorous' Research" (5, p.64). As a way out of this impasse, Bradfield recommends that what she calls academic research (with a capital R), namely the core values of "knowledge, originality and collaboration", be treated as a "theory to be interpreted through practice" (5, p.64, p.66). Bradfield's notion of the generative possibilities of abstracting 'what research is', understood as a set of principles to be tested through action, is also compatible with forms of participatory research which centre the development of collaborative knowledge based in reflective 'learning through doing' framed by a consistent value base, which underpins the SPOTing approach.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

As noted, one of my key concerns with the SPOTing methodology was its ability to be deconstructed and reformulated according to partners' needs without losing its validity as research. This requirement for methodological 'robust flexibility' became even more important given the additional Covid pressures encountered, meaning much more time was spent collaborating online, especially in the beginning stages of the programme, than initially planned. In addition, the pre-existing international context of differences that existed between the SPOTing partners in terms of their art forms, practices, resources, experience levels, cultures, and operating environments also demanded a suitably open and adaptable practice-based methodology.

Through a literature review of comparable projects, participatory action research (PAR) offered both simplicity and adaptability, particularly in the iterations based on education pedagogies that emphasise embodied knowledge principles of lived experience (2) and living theory (3). SPOTing drew on Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead's well-established action research methodology with its clearly explained project stages and rationale. Their participatory research methodology centres on practitioners' understanding and development of their own practice, which is understood as a collaborative, relational, and negotiated process of knowledge creation (3, 8). In particular, McNiff and Whitehead's practice-based action research cycle of "values, reflection and action" (8, p.209) became the central core of SPOTing's methodology, adapted slightly to 'values-action-reflection' in order to emphasise its' continuous iterative nature.

The key elements of SPOTing's research design outlined in the project structures and processes below used this methodological 'mantra' of 'values-action-reflection' to try to ground all project activity in reflective thinking, understood, analysed, and adapted through a self-selected value base which ultimately placed the research agency, ownership, and responsibility with the SPOTing partners, situated within a shared common framework.

Methods versus Methodology

In arts and cultural practices and organisations, methods and methodology are often confused and used interchangeably, which can hamper knowledge development as the rationale of using certain methods over others is easily lost, as is the means of understanding their efficacy or suitability. This confusion can also act to obscure ethical issues of decision-making, consent, and where power lies within projects (4). The values (whether they are named or understood as such) evident in

organisations' mission statements, for example, instead of being integral to how projects are planned, understood, and evaluated, can become peripheral to them, often due to practical pressures exacerbated by funding emphasis typically put on outcomes rather than processes (1, p.33, p.68).

Acknowledging the work of McNiff and Whitehead, I, therefore, tried to explain the methodology to the SPOTing partners as essentially the '*why*' of the activity and the methods they selected as the '*how*,' stressing the need for compatibility between the two, explaining that within SPOTing's PAR adapted framework their self-formulated research questions and self-selected values also had to have a compatible '*why*' and '*how*' relationship.

Devising Research Questions, Values, and 'Testbeds'

The SPOTing partners were required to devise their own research question or questions, in order to shape the focus of their SPOTing projects alongside their research value or values. Their chosen research values were intended to underpin all their thinking and activity and be used in the 'values-action-reflection' cycle to frame their understanding and analysis of '*why*' and '*how*.' All their project action,' which included thinking, planning, and discussions, was ring-fenced and named as 'testbed activity', which partners could devise specifically for SPOTing, assign through their existing programming, or use a mixture of both. It was up to the partners to decide how much or how little activity made up their testbed, as there was no requirement in terms of participant numbers or creative output, solely that the practice-based research activity included young people as per the Erasmus+ funding stipulation, and that it generated tangible peer learning and knowledge exchange which demonstrated professional development on an international European level. This lack of prescribed targets, if anything, generated more activity and outputs overall due to a worry about 'doing enough' for some (1, p.115). However, the majority of the SPOTing partners eventually adjusted to this way of working and were able to use this 'freedom' to be "a bit more brave about trying and maybe failing" (1, p.33).

The previous TEH Arts Education Platform exchanges generated provocations and questions that, for some partners, fed into their SPOTing projects. "Is inviting the participants to an already conceptualised project an act of participation? Or should the participatory project start with shaping the idea together?" (1, p.9). For other partners, the process of devising their research questions took much longer, with the first four months of SPOTing given over to project planning, including online meetings and workshops on PAR methodology, methods, and processes which happened between the SPOTing project manager, the partners, and myself as the researcher, with additional time and support offered to those who wanted to talk through their project proposals.

Using McNiff and Whitehead (8), I prepared a project planning checklist for partners to work through to help identify their research questions and values as well as their planned testbed activity (1, p.123). Before the partners formally began work on their testbeds, they filled in a 'starting point' document (1, p.125) in which they had to outline their research question, values, and planned action and explain the relationship between them. This proved a useful document in capturing their thinking and understanding at the time and tracking how it changed. It was also effective in helping them develop their reflective skills.

Reflective Diaries

Based on McNiff and Whitehead's reflective diary questions for generating knowledge from action research (8, p.107), SPOTing's online reflective diaries consisted of the same questions for partners to answer monthly, designed both as a source of data for the case studies and as a reflective tool to understand, analyse, and develop project activity:

"1. What happened this month? [Description of activity]

E.g. Account of "Action"/"Inaction"

2. Why? [Explanation of activity]

E.g. Decisions made, by whom and how, rationale, values compatible?

3. What has been learned?

E.g. Process, practice, individual, group, ongoing?

4. What is the significance?

E.g. How/Will this affect; project, group, individuals, practice, wider contexts?

What evidence are you basing your reflections on?

E.g. Participant feedback, facilitator feedback, stakeholder observations, please describe

Any other comments (optional) (1, p.126)."

Due to various reasons, including unfamiliarity with the format, overall workload, and the other non-research-based administrative demands of the SPOTing programme, the majority of partners often had to be cajoled into filling in their diaries, with a minority using them regularly as a reflective tool. In the project's final year, the monthly reflective diaries were changed to quarterly to reduce this burden. However, despite a patchy engagement with the format overall, all the partners showed evidence of reflective thinking and ways of working, demonstrated through various examples of internal and external group discussions and activities concerning their research topics, questions, and values with their staff, boards, project partners, audiences, and participants.

The openness of SPOTing's methodology, putting partners in control of devising their own research questions, values, and testbed activity, was not without problems. As already acknowledged, some partners struggled with what 'counted' as participatory research, in addition to learning being presented as a perfectly acceptable end goal in itself and with what they thought was expected as a valid outcome, unaccustomed to setting their own parameters. There were also reservations about how to be 'effectively' critical with each other, which manifested through SPOTing's use of 'critical friends,' which was arguably the least generative aspect of the programme in terms of knowledge creation.

Critical Friends

McNiff and Whitehead outline the function of a 'critical friend' in action research as one who can offer a knowledgeable 'insider perspective' to help support self-criticality by offering the possibility to "challenge the normative assumptions underlying your work (8, p.173)." In SPOTing's case, for mainly pragmatic reasons, the partners paired up to become each other's critical friends. Although this provided an 'insider perspective' in terms of having shared experiences of the overall programme, it did contrast with the more typical PAR role of a critical friend acting as a known and experienced mentor with in-depth contextual knowledge. Due to the difficulties that most SPOTing partners experienced with the processes of criticality mentioned above, a critical friend pair who had at least initially found their relationship mutually beneficial devised and led sessions for a hybrid in-person and online SPOTing seminar on constructive and creative criticism in the second year of the programme. Some of the processes developed for that seminar were also used in later SPOTing seminars hosted by partners. Up to that point, the SPOTing critical friend pairs were asked to arrange and meet one-to-one mostly independently, approximately once a quarter, using set questions to help prepare and reflect on their learning (1, p.127), however as with the reflective diaries this was not typically done regularly by the majority of partners.

Some partners expressed a desire for polyamory by having multiple critical friends pairs in order to enhance their peer learning about international arts and cultural contexts; however, after our

seminar on constructive and creative criticism, despite changing the critical friends format to allow partners total autonomy to decide on meeting frequency and pairings, there was no increase in critical friends exchanges. Notably, some of the partners stated that they felt that I performed the role of a critical friend more effectively for them, primarily through our yearly research interviews, enhancing their own perspectives of how their research was progressing, helping develop their reflective skills by reminding them of the changes in their thinking and approach, and also by requiring them to explain and justify their decision making.

Case Study Writing Process

PAR research values of collaboration and transparency underpinned the case study writing process. Although always intended as a formative rather than purely summative process, due to the partners' positive reception to the collaborative reflections I facilitated with them during the research interviews conducted in the first year, which included an interrogation of their thinking, decision-making, and activity, I chose to start writing the case study drafts as a generative basis for the subsequent yearly interviews. This was also heavily influenced by only having partially filled in reflective diaries from many of the SPOTing partners and, therefore, was intended as a way for me to collectively check my understanding and interpretation of partners' thinking and learning. This early drafting process was also an attempt to consolidate accuracy and agency by ensuring that we could have adequate time to consider and collectively agree or negotiate what was the most important information to include in their case studies.

Conducting the case study writing process over a six to eight-month period also meant that aspects of the partners' learning, such as changes in their approach or direction, could be preserved and reflected on rather than elided or 'tidied up' as part of a final edit. For me, some of the most interesting aspects of the SPOTing case studies are partners' reflections on their previous struggles or 'failures.' After the final interview, each partner was sent a final draft of their case study to review, amend if necessary, and approve.

OVERVIEW OF SPOTING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND VALUES

Table 1: Synopsis of SPOTing partners' research questions and values

SPOTING PARTNER	KEY RESEARCH QUESTION	RESEARCH VALUES
A4 – SPACE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURE, BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA	<i>How do we want to work with people that potentially may become our audience?</i>	Enquiry and 'Negotiated Openness'
ARTSOCIALSPACE BRUNNENPASSAGE, VIENNA, AUSTRIA	<i>How do the values of our organisation match up to the actual practice?</i>	Transculturality, Access and Participation
ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE OLTRE, BOLOGNA, ITALY	<i>How does space affect our artistic and educational practices?</i>	Inclusion and Accessibility
BEAT CARNIVAL, BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND	<i>How can (our) spaces be art spaces?</i>	Access and Ownership
KULTURFABRIK, ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE, LUXEMBOURG	<i>How can we succeed in giving ownership to young people within an established institution?</i>	Transparency and Ownership
LE PLUS PETIT CIRQUE DU MONDE, PARIS, FRANCE	<i>How can non-formal artistic education play a role within the formal educational system in disadvantaged areas?</i>	Transformation and Ownership
RÖDA STEN KONSTHALL, GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN	<i>How do we initiate, establish and maintain contact with participants in our art educational programmes?</i>	Openness and Co-Creation

TRUC SPHÉRIQUE (STANICA), ŽILINA, SLOVAKIA	<i>How can the core team at Stanica open up to the younger generation, allowing space for the independent creativity of young people?</i>	Communication, Inclusion and 'Supported Independence'
--	---	---

As seen above, the SPOTing partners' research questions demonstrate their interest in issues of space, practice, processes, and values, especially those of ownership and openness (1, p.19–24).

Partners' reflections on the learning generated from their research projects included:

- appreciating the space to experiment and learn from mistakes and failures
- the importance of honesty about obstacles and 'unknowns' as well as having clarity of intent in order to build strong and equitable participatory research relationships
- the need to set or redefine realistic and achievable research parameters
- the value of showing respect by listening and trying to understand, and whenever possible, accommodate differences
- the importance of being curious and leaving room to explore why things happen
- the necessity of identifying compatible goals
- the value of offering real autonomy without undue interference to those research participants interested in developing their own ideas and work

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the overall experiences of SPOTing, I can see the interlinked duality of its potential *and* its challenges. For 'non-professional' participatory researchers, devising and conducting their own research projects inevitably involves a steep learning curve despite the 'simplicity' of a PAR-adapted methodology. However, once this simplicity has been grasped, internalised, and deployed; essentially the holistic practice of working reflectively, it can offer a much more horizontal spread of power, decision-making, agency, and ownership, not just between 'professional' and 'non-professional' participatory researchers but many more publics besides.

As SPOTing partners Beat Carnival underline, considerable time, space, and effort is needed to build and maintain the collective reflective working relationships required for a participatory research-centred approach. However, if embraced by all involved, this can greatly enhance the scope of such work in a cultural context.

"If you can build in time and agree on a structure for working reflectively and other people share that idea and that commitment, so our participants, our partners and equally our funders then that changes the whole tone of what you're doing and how far you are likely get with it. It allows for much more space for everybody to build their skills and to create and shape projects together. It also makes things more equal as well, if we're all on the same page it gives us more power (1, p.68)."

REFERENCES

- (1) Colclough, S. *Spaces of Transformation in Arts Education Programme Report*. Trans Europe Halles, 2023. <http://teh.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/SPOTING-Final-Report-A4-Publication-2023-Digital-Page-By-Page.pdf>.
- (2) Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary edition. New York: Continuum; 2005.
- (3) McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. *All You Need to Know About Action Research: An Introduction*. London: Sage; 2006.

- (4) Sternfeld, N. Playing by the Rules of the Game: Participation in the Post-Representative Museum. *CuMMA Papers*, 2013 Volume 1, p. 1-7.
https://cummastudies.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/cummapapers1_sternfeld1.pdf.
- (5) Bradfield, M. Mirror, Mirror: Towards 'Something Like' a Value System for Art Research by Way of Critique and Dialogic Art. *Journal of Visual Art Practice International*, 2016; Volume 15 (1), p. 63-79.
DOI: 10.1080/14702029.2016.1149974.
- (6) Belfiore, E. On Bullshit in Cultural Policy Practice and Research: Notes from the British Case. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2009; Volume 15 (8), p. 343-359. DOI:
10.1080/10286630902806080.
- (7) Belfiore, E. Is it Really about the Evidence? Argument, Persuasion, and the Power of Ideas in Cultural Policy. *Cultural Trends*, 2022: Volume 31 (4), p. 293-310.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2021.1991230>.
- (8) McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. *You and Your Action Research Project*. 3rd edition. London: Routledge; 2010.

BECOMING WITH POSITIONS OF VULNERABILITY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ARTWORK

Dorethe Bjergkilde, Pernille Welent Sørensen

University College Absalon (DK)

Abstract

This paper is based on a Dream Team we facilitated at the ECQI2024. In the paper, we are curious about how do vulnerable positions materialize and come into the matter in different types of methods. Our Dream Team consisted of three workshops, where we invited participants to a shared exploration of vulnerable positions through different methods, such as storytelling, paper, pen, strings, and bodies. Our aim was to disturb well-known knowledge production and hierarchies in producing other stories about vulnerability and vulnerable positions. In the workshops, we were working with vulnerability as an open-ended phenomenon. This is to be understood as a position in which *becoming* is an ongoing process changing in time and space, inspired by Barad (1). We think of vulnerability as a phenomenon that is shaped and becomes an intra-action with the methods we use in the workshops, materiality, discourses, human and non-human agents, and us as researchers and facilitators.

Keywords: diffraction methodology, co-creation, exploring vulnerable positions

INTRODUCTION

The background for the Dream Team, on which this paper is based, is a research project called "More people must join". The purpose of the project is to support long-term communities for young people in vulnerable positions through leisure time activities, as well as to support the development of general life management. The young people are already enrolled in a specially designed educational course. The project is located in Denmark, specifically in the western part of Zealand. "We" refers to both authors, who are educators and researchers at University College Absalon, Roskilde.

In the project "More people must join", we work with young people in vulnerable positions and teachers (from the educational course and leisure time activities) as co-researchers, using art-based methods (2,3) and stories of hopeful becoming (4). During last autumn in 2023, through a co-creative process and together with the young people and their teachers, we started exploring and developing an approach with the purpose of empowering young people in troubled positions through leisure time communities over a long-term basis. Our aim is to offer young people, through participatory and action-based research, the possibility to expand their life options and transcend marginalized positions towards becoming more active participants. We wanted to share and explore our experiences and knowledge production in an open intra-active process with the participants in the Dream Team at ECQI2024. In this paper, we introduce our methodology, the workshops, and thoughts about the Dream Team we facilitated.

METHODOLOGY

This paper and its background workshops are inspired by a diffractive methodology (1,5–9). The process of diffraction draws attention to the ways in which we become with stories, materiality and bodies. A diffractive methodology (1) means reading empirical and theoretical insights through one another in attending and responding to new angles and alternative comprehensions:

"...a diffractive methodology is a critical practice for making a difference in the world. It is a commitment to understand which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom. It is a critical practice of engagement, not a distance-learning practice of reflecting from afar" (1).

So, when we use a diffractive methodology, we are curious about what new patterns and insights emerge in the intra-action of stories, materialities and bodies in the workshops. Therefore, we do not think of agency as a unity but rather an iterative doing or becoming, which gains agency in the intra-action. It is in the intra-action that phenomena gain meaning and agency. So, in our workshop, we are curious about how we, the participants, papers, pens, strings and bodies become and intra-act in the room - what atmosphere emerges, which stories are told, what communities emerge, what stories do the bodies tell, and so on.

We work with diffraction as a "thought-technology" (1,4,6–8), which is a metaphor for a way of working that is not reflection. Haraway refers to diffraction as "figure-string games," which create different foreground and background displacements in threads and entanglements, thereby bringing in complex and new angles (6).

So, in the workshops we facilitated, we encouraged storytelling, (re)writing, reading, listening, papering, stringing and becoming with bodies. We wanted to open up a collective space where a new collaborative and ethical knowledge production could emerge. Our intention was to facilitate a collaborative process where paper notes, strings, bodies, coffee cups, furniture and so on would emerge in a shared becoming.

We think of the workshops as performative events that emerged in time and space. It means that we facilitated a process and a frame, but we also wanted to open up a space which could take off in many different and unknown directions. The collaborative and collective becoming in the different workshops was to be explored through people's experiences and bodily memories entangled with the furniture, papers, markers, and strings. We were curious about what stories, affective relations, bodily landscapes, and paper landscapes would emerge from these intra-actions. This means that people's experiences, productions, and relations will also become a way of coloring the form of the workshop (10). We wanted the form of the workshop and the event of the workshop to become a performative entanglement, allowing new questions and considerations to arise. The following section introduces the three workshops that formed the Dream Team we facilitated at ECQI2024. At the same time, we elaborate on how different methods co-constitute the intra-action of words, stories, strings, paper and bodies, emerging in a co-creative and explorative process.

EXPLORING VULNERABLE POSITIONS THROUGH STORYTELLING, PAPER INSTALLATIONS AND EMBODIMENT

We conducted three workshops using three different performative methods, encouraging bodies, storytelling and paper installation to intra-act in a shared space. Being together in time and space and working "on the floor" with bodies and senses is a complex, rich and creative process. It is from this very affective and co-creative point of view that this paper emerges.

With the methods used in the workshops, our ambition was to decenter the human self, from a focus on individuality and personal identity to a question of becoming in a vulnerable position with the world. We wanted to be open to the more-than-human and in-between humans. Therefore, we encouraged an awareness of the intra-actions of materialities, bodies, experiences, methods and thinking technologies and discourses about vulnerability and vulnerable positions emerging in the room.

In the three different performative workshops, we gave the participants string, pen, and (white and transparent) paper to write down narratives about vulnerability, and we facilitated an embodied process enabling the participants to tune into collective experiences. We also worked with shifts in positions as a diffractive reading. In this way, bodies, string, pen and paper were allowed to intra-act as a part of an open-ended exploration of vulnerability. Furthermore, we also worked with paper installations, asking the participants to consider how tearing paper materializes vulnerable positions for you. Moreover, how are vulnerable positions created in your installation? In this way, paper became an intra-active part of the process. The paper took part in the making and became a co-active agent. In this way, the material intra-acted with the participants and performed vulnerability, making treads and invitations, like a dance between humans and non-humans.

We also invited the participant to perform a still image with bodies as a way to explore embodied cracks of new and hopeful positions. In groups, they selected an event, episode or image which they should perform together. The participants were told to pay attention to how the positions were arranged, how they would materialize, what difference they would make and with what effect. The point of the workshop was an invitation to explore new possibilities, where the position of vulnerability was pushed in the background or at least diminished, and maybe where cracks of possibilities and new positions were enabled.

In this third workshop, we were also inspired by Blackman (11), who draws our attention to affects as something trans-subjective, which can mediate and materialize in intra-actions between bodies and produce potential changes. We think of affect as circulating and traveling between bodies in ways where participants and positions become entangled in relational dynamics (11). Therefore, we invited the participants to focus on emerging embodied intra-actions here and now, where hopeful feelings, hopeful positions, intensities or maybe blocks, clutterings and troubled affects might occur (1,12,13).

Our aim was to open the cracks of hopeful positions. However, we also wanted to be aware of troubles, challenges, and disruption (e.g. social categories and how you can perceive them otherwise). Harraway (6) would call it staying in trouble. If you think of 'The hopeful' and 'The trouble' going hand in hand, an ethical awareness emerges. Barad (1) uses the concept of ethico-onto-epistemology, which brings attention to the entanglement of ethics, being and knowing, and that each intra-action has a meaning. It also brings awareness to the entanglement of us as researcher/facilitator, the participants and our researching/facilitating technologies (14), which means we co-constitute the process in the intra-action with the participants.

We were obligated as researchers/facilitators to guide the participants through the workshop. For instance, the participants needed to know the intentions and timeframe, and there had to be time for experiments and reflection as well so that the participants had a possibility to elaborate on hopeful as well as troubled feelings. Likewise, the workshop had to consist of bodily open and closure exercises, as the embodiment of vulnerability requires ethical awareness. People react differently, and some are (un)comfortable with different methods. Stories and experiences were brought into the matter, which makes such processes unpredictable and complex and requires constant ethical

awareness and attunement to the participants so that processes might be redirected or people can check in and out of the situation.

Also, after the discussed workshops, we will keep working with the following questions: How can different materialities, narratives, paper and body-work intra-act? How is the phenomenon of vulnerability co-constituted in the research process? Which new awarenesses emerge from the different methods?

References

1. Barad K. Meeting the universe halfway : quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning. Durham: Duke University Press; 2007. 524 s.
2. Leavy P. Method meets art: Arts-based research practice. Guilford publications; 2015.
3. Leavy P. Handbook of arts-based research. Guilford Publications; 2018.
4. Le Guin UK, Haraway DJ. The carrier bag theory of fiction. Ignota books London; 2019.
5. Haraway D. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Fem Stud.* 1988;14(3):575–99.
6. Haraway DJ. Staying with the trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene. Duke University Press; 2016.
7. Haraway D. The promises of monsters: A regenerative politics for inappropriate/d others. I: *Cultural studies*. Routledge; 2013. s. 295–337.
8. Barad K. Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs J women Cult Soc.* 2003;28(3):801–31.
9. Davies B. Entanglement in the world's becoming and the doing of new materialist inquiry. Routledge; 2020.
10. Østern TP, Dahl T, Petersen JA, Østern A-L, Selander S. Dybde/læring - en flerfaglig, relasjonelle og skapende tilnærming. Norge: Undervisningsforlaget; 2019.
11. Blackman L. Immaterial bodies : affect, embodiment, mediation. *Theory, Culture & Society*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd; 2012. 209 s.
12. Barad K. Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: re-turning, re-membling, and facing the incalculable. *New Form.* 2017;92(92):56–86.
13. Maclure M. The Wonder of Data. Koro-Ljungberg M, Maclure M, redaktører. *Cult Stud ↔ Crit Methodol.* 2013;13(4):228–32.
14. Jackson AY, Mazzei LA. Thinking with theory in qualitative research : viewing data across multiple perspectives. Abingdon: Routledge; 2012. 150 s.

EXPLORING AMATEUR ARTISTIC CO-CREATION IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS THROUGH SENSES AND EMOTIONS

Sophie Valiergue

University of Montréal (CANADA)

Abstract

In this paper, I outline the methodological dimension of my thesis project, which combines research and creation, academic knowledge, and embodied experience. I aim to understand how individuals interact and dialogue when they collaborate to create a collective creation and how a community emerges from this co-creation. To this end, my project is rooted in a community organization based in Montreal, Canada, the Espace des Possibles de la Petite Patrie. Espace des Possibles brings together citizens concerned with improving life in their neighbourhood by setting up projects addressing socio-ecological issues. I am offering a series of collaborative workshops there, aiming to collectively produce a stop-motion animated video. The idea is for participants to appropriate the project to tell the story they want to talk about their neighbourhood and stage it in their own way. The decisions for the project are made through discussions, sharing and verbal or non-verbal interactions between the co-creators. My artistic positioning in this project falls within the realm of dialogical art. This artistic practice is based on dialogue and exchange within the framework of socially engaged projects. The methodology I have developed, but not yet implemented, combines collaborative workshops aiming to co-create a stop-motion video, a sensory ethnography, which is an ethnography focused on senses and emotions, and an autoethnography through which I will document my own experience throughout this process.

Keywords: research-creation, dialogical art, co-creation, senses, emotions

INTRODUCTION TO MY RESEARCH PROJECT

My thesis project focuses on understanding how individuals interact when they collaborate to create a collective creation and how an ephemeral community emerges from this co-creation. To this end, my project is grounded in a specific community-based in Montreal, Canada, called l'Espace des Possibles de la Petite Patrie (Espace des Possibles), a community organization focused on socioecological issues. I am embracing a research-creation approach which exists at the crossroads of two paradigms: academic research and creation, whether artistic or not (1). Thus, in my project, research and creation intertwine. At l'Espace des Possibles, I am setting up a series of workshops that bring together novices or artistic amateurs who come more or less regularly to this place in order to connect the members of this community and allow them to tell a co-created story through the making of a stop motion video.

Dialogical art

This project is rooted in the field of dialogical art. It is an artistic practice that puts dialogue and interactions at the heart of the artistic process ((2),(3)). The artist I embody in this project seeks

interaction and reciprocity with the participants. Dialogical art belongs to the field of social practices in art, which is based on intersubjectivity, participation and collaboration, and which ultimately aims to co-create meaning, knowledge and social or political change ((3),(4)).

One of the distinctive features of dialogic art is its communicational dimension (2). Dialogic art also has a strong interest in the creative process based on dialogue. Thus, dialogue becomes the heart of the artwork, and in some projects, there may be no material creation at all. This is not the case in my project, as the participants co-create a stop-motion video with felted characters and sets that they produced.

Research questions

Collaboration of dialogical art projects is generally analyzed in terms of the direction given by the artist or in terms of the final result, which may or may not endure over time. Moreover, the literature gives little attention to the participants' perspectives on the creative process or to the relationships that may exist between the participants themselves, more particularly from a sensory and emotional point of view. These observations lead to my research question: How, in a dialogical art project, do individuals come together, interact and dialogue when they collaborate to make a collective creation?

This leads to secondary questions: How do the Espace des Possibles community members, in which I am carrying out my project, federate through dialogue and allow co-creation to emerge? What role do the emotions and senses of the participants play in this co-creation? What role does the "doing" and materiality of the co-creation in progress play in the dialogue that allows this same co-creation to emerge?

To answer these questions, the methodology I am implementing combines a series of workshops, sensory ethnography and autoethnography.

THE WORKSHOPS

I organized a series of 8 workshops, which will take place in March 2024. It will aim at the collective production of a stop-motion video for which sets and characters will be felted. The series of workshops is designed for seven to twelve participants, and the same participants take part in each workshop. The workshops take place at the Espace des Possibles in Montreal, a third place that defines itself as "A place to share, learn and get involved for a more socially and ecologically responsible neighbourhood" (free translation)(5).

The techniques

The two techniques I am working with are needle felting and stop-motion video. The needle felting involves aggregating unspun wool with a long needle. Small sculptures or puppets can thus be created. The stop-motion video is an animated video created by a succession of images that, one after the other, create the illusion of movement. In the case of this project, these will be photos of the felted objects created by the participants.

The goals

The idea of this project is for participants to take control of it, tell the story they want, and stage it in their own way. Decisions will be taken following discussions, dialogues and verbal or non-verbal interactions.

I am going to give them a theme to start with, which is *The neighbourhood of my dreams*. In my experience of organizing creative workshops, people tend to get stuck if they are too free from the outset. Giving them a theme is like a springboard that will give them the impetus to get started. They will be free to follow it or go in another direction. I chose this theme as a starting point because it coincides with the interests of the people who come to the Espace des Possibles. Some people are

more interested in ecological issues and others in social issues, but the neighbourhood is at the heart of their concerns.

Moreover, some participants are activists who are used to debating to develop their ideas and projects. I hope that these workshops will give them the opportunity to experiment with a new way of thinking together through the creation and perhaps lead to the birth of future projects for the neighbourhood.

I have planned five steps: scriptwriting, production of characters and sets, shooting, editing, and screening. I am not deciding how many sessions will be needed for each stage, as it is an emergent process. The schedule will result from what the participants come up with in the first workshop, and it will be decided by them.

SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY

My methodology also includes sensory ethnography, which is an ethnography that uses senses and emotions. It is a participatory and collaborative methodology that takes into account the sensory experiences of the people taking part in the research, who share their experiences through dialogue with the researcher. It is a situated approach. Indeed, according to Sarah Pink (6), it is a critical methodology, a reflexive and experiential process that allows understanding, knowledge, academic knowledge and applied knowledge to emerge. This methodology departs from the ethnographic approach, which consists of observing and producing purely verbal descriptions. Instead, it considers all types of knowledge and ways of knowing without hierarchy.

Why sensory ethnography?

This methodology is appropriate for understanding collaboration in a co-creation context beyond the verbal, through gestures, senses, and shared emotions, between participants, but also between participants and their creation. Thus, sensory ethnography will allow me to consider its materiality. This method will also help me have a more holistic understanding of the participants' experience which is not only limited to language. It will also give me a better understanding of their collaboration.

Furthermore, sensory ethnography is an interesting methodology for thinking about how to report on my research and how to broadcast and share it in order to communicate this sensory and emotional knowledge to others. This opens up an exciting realm of possibilities.

How it will be implemented

For this sensory ethnography, I plan video recording, audio recording and photography during the workshops. I also plan individual interviews at the end of the series of workshops to collect the participants' points of view about the project.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

To complete and feed my sensory ethnography, I am doing an auto-ethnography. It helps me better understand what the participants are going through while participating in a co-creation project.

Autoethnography enables researchers to experience a phenomenon in different ways, and it offers the possibility of making connections between theories, scientific concerns, and cultures at large ((7),(8)). It is a great tool for learning through one's own multisensory and localized experiences (6).

I started my auto-ethnography in February 2021. My observations focus on my overall experiences, senses and emotions. I have participated in different types of workshops, some to learn new artistic techniques and others to carry out a joint project with other people. I have also organized workshops, such as an electronic embroidery activity at the University of Montréal. This way, I have been able to

experiment with being both a participant and a facilitator. Moreover, autoethnography enabled me to document my integration into the Espace des Possibles community.

To conclude, my research-creation project seeks to understand how people interact when they collaborate to make a collective work. My methodology combines a series of workshops that will give birth to a co-created stop-motion video, a sensory ethnography and an autoethnography. My approach is inductive, leaving much room for emergence. With this project, I would like to contribute to a better understanding of the nature of participation for individuals involved in a collective artistic project in community settings. I want to bring insights into group dynamics and individual and collective relationships to co-creation and community.

REFERENCES

- (1) Chapman O, Sawchuk K. Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and "Family Resemblances". *Cjc*. 2012;37:5-26. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2012v37n1a2489>
- (2) Kester G. *Conversation pieces: community and communication in modern art*. San Diego (US): University of California Press; 2013.
- (3) Thompson N. *Living as form: Socially engaged art from 1991-2011*. Cambridge, MA (US): MIT Press; 2017.
- (4) Bishop Cl. The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents. *Artforum*. 2006; 44(6): 178-183.
- (5) Wiki des possibles [on line]. Montréal (QC); 2023. Espace des Possibles de la Petite-Patrie [modified September 6, 2023]. Available: https://wikidespossibles.org/wiki/Espace_des_Possibles_de_la_Petite-Patrie
- (6) Pink S. *Doing sensory ethnography*. 2nd ed. London(GB): Sage; 2015.
- (7) Tracy SJ. *Qualitative research methods: collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated; 2020.
- (8) Ellis C, Bochner A. Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. Dans: Denzin NK, Lincoln YS, éditeurs. *Handbook of qualitative research*. 2nd ed. Sage; 2000.

EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Raappana, Anu

LUT University, FINLAND

Abstract

This article presents a survey tool development process that utilised a participatory approach. The process involved all key stakeholders in the development process. The participatory survey development process was rewarding and strengthened the validity and reliability of the quantitative research. However, the process was a complex and confusing puzzle. To better understand the benefits of a participatory approach in survey development, data that covers the whole survey development process is analysed. This data includes transcribed interviews, oral and written feedback, discussion notes, observation notes and quantitative test data. The process revealed different distances between different actors, the analysis of which has helped to implement the survey and disseminate the research results.

Keywords: participatory approach, survey research design

INTRODUCTION

This article describes a survey tool development process that utilised a participatory approach and involved several stakeholders in the design of a quantitative online survey. The survey aimed to examine the entrepreneurial potential of year nine students (aged 15) and is related to entrepreneurship education. Research related to individual entrepreneurial potential mainly targets higher education students (e.g. (1), (2), (3), (4)). Hence, the previous research literature did not support developing concepts related to entrepreneurial potential in a way that meets the adolescent target group of the research.

Furthermore, it was acknowledged during the process that there are different distances between the actors, which could harm the implementation of the research. According to Parjanen et al. (5), the concept of distance is divided into eight dimensions: communicative (concepts and language), cognitive (ways of thinking), cultural (values), temporal (ability to imagine possible futures), social (relationships and trust), organisational (ways of coordinating the knowledge), functional (impression of expertise), and geographical (physical) distances (5). The starting point for the participatory approach was that these distances between different actors (mainly between researcher and target group) could be narrowed down to strengthen the overall quality of the survey.

The main research question in this article is: How does the participatory survey development process benefit quantitative survey research? Data covering the survey development process is presented and

analysed to answer this question. This article aims to describe the benefits of participation by different stakeholders in the quantitative research process, especially for strengthening the overall quality of the survey. This article contributes to the practical implementation of both quantitative and qualitative research by analysing the process and describing a way to strengthen quantitative research with a qualitative research sample. These two research directions do not have to be separate from each other within one research process; instead, they can support each other and thus produce added value for research.

In this article, personal entrepreneurial potential is defined as a combination of life experiences and the perception of opportunities available to a person (e.g. (6), (7)). The development of entrepreneurial potential is found to be related to context and culture ((8), (9)), and it also develops through entrepreneurship education programmes (e.g. (10), (11)). According to Krueger and Brazael (6), entrepreneurial potential is something that precedes entrepreneurial intention. Hence, the concept suits the target group of this survey: 15-year-olds. Such a young person cannot be expected to have entrepreneurial intention, but they can have the potential for entrepreneurship.

Concepts that are related to entrepreneurial potential are abstract. Hence, special attention has been paid to the conceptualisation of entrepreneurial potential. In the operationalising phase of developing the survey, it was especially necessary to use a participatory approach. Based on previous research literature (e.g. (12), (13)), entrepreneurial potential is defined by concepts like self-efficacy (e.g. (12), (14), (15), (16), (20)), locus of control and need for achievement (e.g. (15), (18), (19)), risk tolerance (e.g. (20), (21), (22)), perseverance (e.g. (23), (24), (25)) creativity (e.g. (26), (27)), tolerance of ambiguity (e.g. (27)) and opportunity identification (e.g. (28), (4), (29)). Entrepreneurship education research is mainly related to adults, but the same concepts are used when the research targets children and adolescents. The concepts are not defined in an age-appropriate way, which may lead to problems in compiling the survey. Item development and incorporating research results into development activities have been identified in the previous research literature as problematic areas in survey design (e.g. (30), (31), (32)).

Through the participatory process, the concepts were defined so that both the researchers and the subjects of the study had a common understanding of what the concepts meant. Hence, the stakeholders' contributions can be seen to positively affect research quality, particularly the construct of validity. Central to quantitative research reliability and validity is the question of whether the way of measuring the phenomenon is correct (e.g. (33), (34), (35)). Moreover, Benge et al. (36) argue that the limitations of quantitative research should be considered at all stages of the research process: conceptualisation of research, research design, research implementation and research utilisation. Especially in the conceptualisation and design phases of research, considering issues of 'research legitimacy' can help researchers reflect on the limitations of research and make the necessary changes. Learning about the thinking and action patterns of the research target group and other stakeholders makes it possible to make the research visible. (36)

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The survey tool development process was carried out in 2019 and 2020. Some 260 target group representatives, teachers and principals participated in the survey design process. In addition, representatives of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Agency for Education were involved in the process. The third-sector organisations JA Finland and the Finnish Network for Entrepreneurship Education YES were also important partners in the planning and implementation of the survey. The measurement tool development process and all the stakeholders involved in the process are summarised in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1. Description of the survey development process

Time	Form of activity	Aim of the event
Spring 2019	Semi-structured interviews: target group representatives (8).	Creating a better understanding of the research target group.
	Testing with random test group/adults and teenagers.	Testing the first version of the questionnaire (paper): questions and their wording.
	Reflection/discussion: teachers, principals, Junior Achievement Finland, Finnish YES network, Representative of the Ministry of Education and National Agency for Education.	To better understand everyday life at school and to create a connection to the curriculum.
	Testing the survey: year nine students, 119 respondents.	Testing the questions and their wording (Webropol). Validity and reliability tests (SPSS).
	Building of the technical solution begins.	
Summer 2019	Testing the technical solution with random test group/adults and teenagers.	Test of the operational capacity of the result database. Test of different browsers and mobile devices.
Autumn 2019	Reflection/Discussion: Third-sector actors, representatives of the Ministry of Education and National Agency for Education.	Ideas for carrying out the research, perspectives on cooperation between educational institutions.
	Workshops: 260 year nine students, six teachers, and two principals.	Developing the research content, the technical solution and the visual appearance of the survey.
Spring 2020	Workshop: Teachers and principals.	Instructions written together with teachers and principals.
	Pilot survey: 2558 respondents.	Validity and reliability (SPSS), database test.
	Reflection/Discussion: Other researchers, Ministry of Education and Culture, National Agency for Education, third sector organisations.	Pilot survey results, observations, ideas and tips on how to conduct the actual research.

The survey was completed in the spring of 2020 after the pilot survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the research was postponed until the subsequent autumn. The questionnaire has 35 questions in total. Nine are background questions, and 26 are research statements. The survey uses a Likert scale (1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree).

In analysing this survey development process, the process is handled as a single case and analysed using systematic qualitative methods, including reading and classifying the data (37). A case study as a research approach may consist of several methods, and it may have several data sources (e.g. (38), (39), (40), (41)). All the different phases of the process were carefully documented (written documents, pictures, test data, etc.). After every activity, a discussion was held with the research team, and observations from the activity were discussed. The pilot data was factor analysed and tested for reliability and validity with several tests (SPSS) to avoid common method bias (42).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The analysis of the participatory process produced several findings that significantly benefited the implementation of the research. The benefits achieved can be presented under three headings: content accuracy, survey administration and technical feasibility.

Content accuracy

Participatory development had a significant impact on the expressions and words used in the survey. Communicative, cognitive, cultural, social and functional distance (5) narrowed, and the researchers could be sure that the respondents understood the questions as expected. Below, some examples of year nine students' interpretations of concepts related to entrepreneurship are presented:

- 1) Entrepreneurship → *Money, dream, work, hard work, bankruptcy.*
- 2) Creativity → *Doing things differently, drawing, singing, ideas, vision.*
- 3) Perseverance → *Do not give up, stubborn, leader, successful, does not compromise.*
- 4) Business plan → *Project plan, financial plan, resources, guidance, basics.*

Furthermore, the length of the questions was discussed with the students: *'It's no fun to drag this page this far. The question must be shorter.'* As a result of this type of feedback, the questionnaire was modified. The wording and visual elements (font, page layout) were redone. Later, it was found that these factors also clearly affected the response times and made the survey more user-friendly. In tests, it was noted that respondents' motivation decreased significantly after question number 30. Hence, the number of questions was limited to 35. Also, response times were measured in the tests. Knowledge of how long it takes to respond on average helped to search for respondents in the data who spent a particularly short period of time answering (for example, less than 2 minutes). These short response times indicate that the answers may not be reliable.

Survey administration

Working with school personnel revealed school-related issues that we researchers would not have been able to know without working together with stakeholders. For example, one principal revealed that schools are an object of interest for researchers:

'We receive about 10–12 surveys in February every year. The target group is always year nine students. We are not able to implement all these surveys in our school. If you want your survey to be successful, avoid doing it in February.'

Answering a survey in the classroom with a mobile device reduces the movement of students and teachers in the school and thus facilitates the implementation of the survey:

'Using a mobile device makes it much easier for us. Otherwise, we have to take each group separately to the IT classroom and that takes way too much time.' (Teacher)

All stakeholders brought up questions related to information and data security. It was a benefit that these observations and questions had already become visible in the development phase of the survey, and they could be considered when writing the instructions. In general, the instructions played an important role because the questionnaire was sent to schools by the National Agency for Education, and the survey was implemented by teachers in schools. The instructions had to be clear and take the conditions of different schools into account.

The most frequently asked questions were related to data storage and whether the respondent can be identified from the data:

'Do you know who the respondent is?' (Year 9 student)

'Do you store my IP address?' (Year 9 student)

'Do you store students' personal information?' (Teacher)

Technical feasibility

A lot of time was spent on developing the technical solution, as it was a significant factor from the point of view of the reliability of the research. If the survey is difficult to use or the database does not work well, data can be lost, and thus, the quality of the research would decrease. Feedback related to the technical solution of the different groups was slightly different. The students' feedback was mainly concerned with colours, readability, and the loading speed of the survey. The teachers were more interested in different problem situations and their solutions, and the principals were the research entity.

'It's annoying when the question doesn't fit on the screen.' (Year 9 student)

'These colours make it difficult to read the questions.' (Year 9 student)

'My phone won't open the survey.' (Year 9 student)

'What do I do if the student can't open the survey? Should I know something about the technical solution?' (Teacher)

'How is this survey and the database structured, what data does it store, and where is the server located?' (Principal)

Various browser options were also tested during the process. It was found that mobile phones behaved differently. This had to be considered not only in the technical solution but also in the guidelines and instructions for teachers and principals. However, teenagers use technical tools smoothly and without any difficulty. During the work with the stakeholders, no obstacles to using a mobile phone, tablet or computer for the survey were found. Furthermore, the process helped to develop the database and ensure that the simultaneous presence of multiple respondents online did not crash the system.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the beginning of the process, it was clear that the survey could not be built without involving stakeholders in the survey tool creation. However, it was not clear who the key stakeholders were and how they could be involved in the process. The first phase of the process was quite fuzzy. The image became clearer during the literature review and discussions with different parties. Each actor had their own important role in the process, and they contributed to the process in several different ways. For example, some of the findings were tacit knowledge that a research team would not have known without engaging in the participatory process.

The involvement of stakeholders in the survey development process helped to avoid certain pitfalls in the implementation of the survey. Hence, the survey development process that involved the target group and other relevant stakeholders increased the validity and reliability of the research. In addition, the inclusive process gave legitimacy to the research and made the results easier to disseminate. It can be stated that involving stakeholders in the survey tool development increased the researchers' understanding of the research entity, narrowed the distance between different actors, created trust, and thus enhanced the overall quality of the research.

However, the process was not easy or straightforward. It took time and money. Hence, it is understandable that it is not always possible to conduct this type of participatory process in the survey development process. However, analysis of the survey development process indicates that a participatory approach enables valuable input during all phases of survey research. All stakeholders contributed to the operationalisation of the concepts and thus increased the accuracy of the research content. In addition, a participatory way of working provided an opportunity to involve those who benefit from the research in the research design process. Understanding where the results of the study

can be used helped to consider the implementation of the survey more broadly than just from the researcher's perspective.

It was necessary to think about the researchers' role in the process and figure out how to maintain the decision-making power concerning the entire survey development process. Decisions had to be made in line between the theoretical framework and the real world. The study had to remain a study, even though the survey was edited together with different actors. After acting with different groups, the researcher also acted as a messenger of the formed overview between different groups. This raises an interesting question: Can a researcher act as a 'broker' at different stages in the research process, transmitting information flows and creating new understanding in the same way as in innovation processes (e.g. (43))?

As an experience, the participatory survey development was encouraging. The survey has been carried out three times in Finland, and more than 27,000 year nine students have responded to it. Due to the careful planning process and joint development, several challenges were avoided, and the end result can be considered rather successful. Based on the entrepreneurship education research literature, it seems that very rarely have stakeholders been involved in designing research. Nor have young people themselves been involved in building research in cases where they are the subjects. However, the volume of entrepreneurship education research has increased (e.g. (44), (45), (46)), and methodological experiments in research could contribute theoretically and practically to entrepreneurship education research. Quantitative entrepreneurship education research could be further developed by creating new ways of involving actors in the research processes and by cooperating with different actors and other researchers.

REFERENCES

- (1) Mukesh, H. V., Rao, A. S. and Rajasekharan Pillai, K. Entrepreneurial potential and higher education system in India. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 2018; Volume 27(2), pp. 258-276.
- (2) Joensuu-Salo, S., Varamäki, E. and Viljamaa, A. Beyond intentions—what makes a student start a firm? *Education+ Training*, 2015; Volume 57(8/9), pp. 853-873.
- (3) Aamir, S., Atsan, N. F. and Erdem, A. F. A Review of Entrepreneurship Education Research in the Special Issues of "Education+ Training" Journal. *Education & Training*, 2019; Volume 61(9), pp. 1078-1099.
- (4) Athayde, R. Measuring enterprise potential in young people. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 2009; Volume 33(2), pp. 481-500.
- (5) Parjanen, S., Melkas, H. and Uotila, T. Distances, knowledge brokerage and absorptive capacity in enhancing regional innovativeness: A qualitative case study of Lahti region, Finland. *European Planning Studies*, 2011; Volume 19(6), pp. 921-948.
- (6) Krueger Jr, N. F. and Brazeal, D. V. Entrepreneurial potential and potential entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 1994; Volume 18(3), pp. 91-104.
- (7) Shapero, A. and Sokol, L. The Social Dimensions of Entrepreneurship. In Kent, C.A, Sexton, D.L. and Vesper, K.H. (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Entrepreneurship*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall; 1992
- (8) Mueller, S. L. and Thomas, A. S. Culture and entrepreneurial potential: A nine country study of locus of control and innovativeness. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 2001; Volume 16(1), pp. 51-75.
- (9) Jayawarna, D., Jones, O. and Macpherson, A. Entrepreneurial potential: The role of human and cultural capitals. *International Small Business Journal*, 2014; Volume 32(8), pp. 918-943.
- (10) Peterman, N. E. and Kennedy, J. Enterprise education: Influencing students' perceptions of entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 2003; Volume 28(2), pp. 129-144.

- (11) Varamäki, E. Joensuu, S., Tornikoski, E. and Viljamaa, A. The development of entrepreneurial potential among higher education students. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 2015; Volume 22(3), pp. 563-589.
- (12) Raab, G., Stedham, Y. and Neuner, M. Entrepreneurial Potential: An Exploratory Study of Business Students in the U.S. and Germany. *Journal of Business and Management*, 2005; Volume 11(2), pp. 71–88.
- (13) Santos, S. C., Caetano, A. and Curral, L. Psychosocial aspects of entrepreneurial potential. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 2013; Volume 26(6), pp. 661-685.
- (14) Bandura, A. Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change. *Psychological Review*, 1997; Volume 84(2), pp. 191-215.
- (15) Boyd, N. G. and Vozikis, G. S. The influence of self-efficacy on the development of entrepreneurial intentions and actions. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 1994; Volume 18(4), pp. 63-77.
- (16) Markman, G.D. and Baron, R.A. Person-entrepreneurship fit: Why some people are more successful as entrepreneurs than others. *Human Resource Management Review*, 2003; Volume 13, pp. 281–301.
- (17) McGee, J.E., Peterson, M., Mueller, S.L. and Sequira, M.J. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy: Refining the Measure. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 2009; Volume 33(4), pp. 965-988.
- (18) Hermans, H.J.M. A questionnaire measure of achievement motivation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1970; Volume 54(4), pp. 353-363. TÄMÄ on
- (19) McClelland, D. C. *The achieving society*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand; 1961.
- (20) Atkinson, J.W. Motivational determinants of risk-taking behavior. *Psychological Review*, 1957; Volume 64(6), pp. 359-372.
- (21) Brockhaus, R.H. Risk taking propensity of entrepreneurs. *Academy of Management Journal*, 1980; Volume 23 (3), pp. 509-520.
- (22) Sitkin, S.B. and Pablo, A.L. Reconceptualizing the determinants of risk behavior. *Academy of Management Review*, 1992; Volume 17(1), pp. 9-38.
- (23) Eisenberger, R., Kuhlman, D. M. and Cotterell, N. Effects of social values, effort training, and goal structure on task persistence. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 1992; Volume 26, pp. 258-272.
- (24) van Gelderen, M. Perseverance strategies of enterprising individuals. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 2012; Volume. 18(6), pp. 630-648.
- (25) Markman, G.D., Baron, R.A. and David B.B. Are Perseverance and Self-Efficacy Costless? Assessing Entrepreneurs' Regretful Thinking. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 2005; Volume 26(1), pp. 1–19.
- (26) Amabile, T. The Social Psychology of Creativity: A Componential Conceptualization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1983; Volume 45(2), pp. 357-376.
- (27) Furnham, A. and Ribchester, T. Tolerance of ambiguity: A review of the concept, its measurement, and applications. *Current Psychology*, 1995; Volume 14(3), pp. 179-199.
- (28) Ardichvili, A. Cardozo, R. and Ray, S. A theory of entrepreneurial opportunity identification and development. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 2003; Volume 18(1), pp. 105-123.
- (29) Gupta, V., MacMillan, I.C. and Surie, G. Entrepreneurial Leadership: Developing and Measuring a Cross-Cultural Construct. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 2004; Volume 19(2), pp. 241–260.
- (30) Duckworth, A. L. and Yeager, D. S. Measurement matters: Assessing personal qualities other than cognitive ability for educational purposes. *Educational Researcher*, 2015; Volume 44(4), pp. 237-251.
- (31) Morgado, F. F., Meireles, J. F., Neves, C. M., Amaral, A. and Ferreira, M. E. Scale development: ten main limitations and recommendations to improve future research practices. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 2017; Volume 30.
- (32) Wiklund, J., Wright, M. and Shaker A.Z. Conquering Relevance: Entrepreneurship Research's Grand Challenge. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 2019; Volume 43(3), pp. 419– 436.

- (33) Adcock, R. and D. Collier. Measurement Validity: A shared standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research. *The American Political Science Review*, 2001; Volume 95(3), pp. 529-546.
- (34) Messick, S. Foundations of validity: Meaning and consequences in psychological assessment. ETS Research Report Series, 1993; pp. i-18.
- (35) Messick, S. Test validity: A matter of consequence. *Social Indicators Research*, 1998; Volume 45(1), pp. 35-44.
- (36) Benge, C. L., Onwuegbuzie, A.J. and Robbins, M.E. A model for presenting threats to legitimation at the planning and interpretation phases in the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research components of a dissertation. *International Journal of Education*, 2012; Volume 4(4), pp. 65-124.
- (37) Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M., *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage; 1994.
- (38) Beverland, M. and Lindgreen, A. What Makes a Good Case Study? *Industrial marketing management*, 2010; Volume 39(1), pp. 56–63.
- (39) Creswell, J.W. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, California; 1998.
- (40) Farquhar, J.D. *Case Study Research for Business*. Los Angeles, California; SAGE, 2012; pp. 3-5.
- (41) Yin, R.K. *Case study research*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, California; 2009.
- (42) Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y. and Podsakoff, N. P. Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2003; Volume 88(5), pp. 879-903.
- (43) Parjanen, S., Harmaakorpi, V. and Frantsi, T. Collective creativity and brokerage functions in heavily cross-disciplined innovation processes. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management*, 2010; Volume 5(1), pp. 1-21.
- (44) Aparicio, G., Iturralde, T. and Maseda, A. Conceptual structure and perspectives on entrepreneurship education research: A bibliometric review. *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, 2019; Volume 25(3), pp. 105-113.
- (45) Gibb, A. In Pursuit of a New 'Enterprise' and 'Entrepreneurship' Paradigm for Learning: Creative Destruction, New Values, New Ways of Doing Things and New Combinations of Knowledge. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 2003; Volume 4(3), pp. 233-269.
- (46) Henry, C. and Lewis, K. A review of entrepreneurship education research. *Education+ Training*, 2018; Volume 60(3), pp. 263-286.

BEYOND THE SCREEN: NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND BODY LANGUAGE IN ONLINE INTERVIEWS

Barbora Procházková

Charles University (CZECH REPUBLIC)

Abstract

Nonverbal communication and body language represent a significant part of qualitative research. Specifically, in the context of qualitative interviews, bodily analysis constitutes a component of the puzzle that researchers try to unravel in their work, forming a comprehensive picture of the participant. In certain research topics and interview types, body language and nonverbal communication can be crucial for the acquired information. Nonverbal expressions can play a significant role in setting verbal expression in the context of physicality (5). When a researcher lacks access to the physical aspects, they can rely only on verbal expression, which may not always be sufficient. Furthermore, online interviews can present various challenges, such as building connections between the researcher and the participant, creating a safe and understanding environment, difficulties with technical equipment, and more. The increase in the use of online interviews gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic when there were limited options to conduct research interviews. Based on the analysis of 20 individual interviews on the topic of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, both online and offline form, I have identified several areas that appear to be problematic and bring challenges in terms of how to approach the context of physicality in online interviews and how to enhance their effectiveness. It can be assumed that the interest in conducting online interviews will continue in the future due to greater time flexibility or the ability to connect on a global scale and conduct interviews across the world. For this reason, it is important to know how to conduct online interviews to ensure researchers get all possible data, especially those of a nonverbal nature.

Keywords: nonverbal communication, body language, qualitative interviews, online interviews

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND BODY LANGUAGE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Nonverbal communication can be defined as communication without words involving the transmission of nonverbal messages (2). A considerable portion of nonverbal communication is automatic and occurs without conscious awareness. It proves helpful in various areas, such as providing information, building close relationships, and regulating interactions (6). Body language represents a subtype of nonverbal communication involving physical expressions and movements instead of linguistic expressions. This includes gestures, body posture, facial expressions, and spatial utilization (4). Nonverbal communication and body language constitute a significant aspect of qualitative research. Alongside verbal expression, they are crucial components of social interactions influencing communication (1,7). Some researchers argue that nonverbal communication may provide greater

significance than verbal communication (3). The body, its signs, and symbols, such as gestures, gazes, and postures, collaborates with spoken expression and form the basis for the embodiment analysis used in qualitative research. Nonverbal expressions can play a significant role in contextualizing verbal expression (5). Researchers should be aware of this context when conducting online research interviews, where confusion can more easily arise when interpreting the collected data. Verbal expression serves as the primary source of information in research interviews and can overshadow the importance of nonverbal expressions. However, nonverbal expressions are crucial for obtaining a complete image of the participant (5). Nonverbal communication constitutes a part of the puzzle that the researcher should try to decipher with their work, which can be much more demanding online than face-to-face interviews. The surge in online interviews gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic when traditional research interview options were limited. We can expect that online interviews will continue to rise in the future, driven by technological advancements and new possibilities.

METHODOLOGY

Twenty in-depth research interviews on the topic of Coping with the COVID-19 pandemic were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (2021-2022). A total of 14 interviews took place online and six face-to-face. Weaknesses and strengths of online interviews were identified, both in general and in the context of nonverbal communication and body language perception. Furthermore, recommendations for the implementation of online interviews were developed.

ONLINE INTERVIEWS

Weakness

Interpersonal limitations

In conducting an online interview, when meeting a participant for the first time and expressing an interest in asking about their life and personal experiences, it is crucial to create a pleasant environment and a safe atmosphere. However, this may pose a higher challenge in the online space than conducting a face-to-face interview. Building a positive climate and relationship requires greater effort and meticulous preparation on the part of the researcher. Due to technical limitations, identifying the participant's mood and approach to the interview can be difficult. Especially in the online environment, it is challenging to determine how the participant perceives the interview and their current reactions. Another challenge is capturing the participant's attention. Given that the participant is participating in the interview remotely and using technical equipment, they cannot be guaranteed to devote full attention to the interview, as would be with physical presence in the same room.

Limited visual context

Due to technical limitations, the image of the participant is often restricted to viewing only the upper part of the body or the face. Furthermore, with low video transmission quality, significant difficulties may arise in capturing nonverbal communication and body language, reducing the ability to complement verbal messages with important nonverbal signals. The low transmission quality can also complicate the interpretation of nonverbal communication, making it challenging to comprehend the participant's overall situation and the effort to gain a comprehensive picture of the individual being examined and their specific circumstances.

Space limitations

When an interview occurs in two different locations, it is impossible to guarantee that the participant will have sufficient space for a conversation, unlike a face-to-face interview, where a suitable location

for the interview can be agreed upon in advance. In the case of online interviews, various pitfalls may occur. One of the frequent ones may be the presence of other people in the participants' room. This disrupts privacy, which can impact the participant's openness, cause distractions, or contribute to noise in the room, ultimately reducing the quality of the conversation.

Technical limitations

Dependence on technical equipment on both the researcher's and participant's side. Inadequate technical equipment, including camera and microphone quality or unreliable internet access, diminishes transmission quality and consequently impacts the interview. The researcher has limited control over the transmission quality on the participant's side.

Specific groups exclusion

Conducting online interviews entails requirements for technical equipment and knowledge, which may not be accessible to all social groups. The absence or inadequate technical resources, coupled with a lack of technical skills, can lead to the exclusion of certain social groups, such as lower social classes, seniors, and others, who may not have access to the necessary technology or lack sufficient technical skills.

Strengths

Time and planning flexibility

Online interviews offer significant time savings and are less time-intensive than face-to-face interviews. Conducting interviews online is often more straightforward to integrate into daily schedules, making it a convenient option. Participants with hectic schedules can be more willing to engage in online interviews due to the time-saving aspect compared to face-to-face interviews, which may include transportation to the interview site and possibly a longer discussion with the researcher beyond the interview.

Space flexibility

Online interviews allow researchers and participants to conduct interviews from the comfort of their homes or workplaces. This not only saves time that would otherwise be spent on travel but also brings financial savings on transportation. At the same time, it allows for breaking geographical boundaries, enabling interviews to be conducted across the world, which would not be possible under different circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Before the interview, agree on several important points to ensure the meeting proceeds as efficiently as possible. In relation to nonverbal communication and body language, adjust the camera to capture at least the upper part of the body and ensure optimal lighting for a clear image. Strive to secure a stable internet connection and high-quality audio, and recommend the use of earphones to minimize disturbances. The participant should choose a calm and quiet place for the interview, promoting privacy and the effectiveness of the meeting.
- Find out in advance the most suitable and safe online interview tool for both the researcher and the participant. Consider recording the interview along with a video. Video recording can be particularly helpful for analysing the interview in the context of nonverbal communication and body language.
- The significance of nonverbal communication and body language may vary across research topics, interview types, research methods, and scientific fields. Specifically, in interviews addressing personal and sensitive issues, where the goal is to capture individual experiences, understanding nonverbal communication and body language can become essential. The researcher should carefully consider the decision to opt for online interviews.

REFERENCES

- (1) Barkai JL. Nonverbal communication from the other side: speaking body language. *San Diego L. Rev.* 1990;27:101. Available from: <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/sanlr27&div=8&id=&page=>
- (2) Hall JA, Horgan TG, Murphy NA. Nonverbal Communication. *Annual Review of Psychology* [Internet]. 2019;70(1):271–94. Available from: <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-103145>
- (3) McCornack S, Ortiz J. *Choices & Connections: an introduction to communication*. S.L.: Bedford Bks St Martin's; 2019.
- (4) Poyatos F. *Nonverbal Communication across Disciplines: Volume 1: Culture, sensory interaction, speech, conversation* [Internet]. Google Books. John Benjamins Publishing; 2002 [cited 2024 Feb 15].
- (5) Roberts RA. Dancing with Social Ghosts: Performing Embodiments, Analyzing Critically. *Transforming Anthropology*. 2013 Mar 15;21(1):4–14.
- (6) Zuo Y, Ma Y, Zhang M, Wu X, Ren Z. The impact of sharing physical activity experience on social network sites on residents' social connectedness: a cross-sectional survey during COVID-19 social quarantine. *Globalization and Health*. 2021 Jan 11;17(1). Available from: <https://globalizationandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12992-021-00661-z>