# Doing Critical and Creative Research in Adult Education

## Case Studies in Methodology and Theory

**Bernie Grummell and Fergal Finnegan (Eds.)**



BRILL | SENSE

ESREA
European Society for Research on the Education of Adults

Doing Critical and Creative Research in Adult Education

# Research on the Education and Learning of Adults

# Doing Critical and Creative Research in Adult Education

*Case Studies in Methodology and Theory*

*Edited by*

Bernie Grummell and Fergal Finnegan

**BRILL**

**SENSE**

Cover illustration: *Dreamland*, by Lorna Corrigan, acrylic on canvas, 100 × 120 cm

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

# CONTENTS

**Part 3: Arts-Based Research and Creative Pedagogies**

**Part 4: Critical Mixed Methods and Critical Quantitative
Research**

**Part 5: Digital Research Methods**

**Part 6: Sound, Vision and Storytelling**

**Part 7: Research on Embodied Knowledge and Movement**

## Part 8: Creative Dissemination

# THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS (ESREA)

ESREA is a European scientific society. It was established in 1991 to provide a European-wide forum for all researchers engaged in research on adult education and learning and to promote and disseminate theoretical and empirical research in the field. Since 1991 the landscape of adult education and learning has changed to include more diverse learning contexts at formal and informal levels. At the same time there has been a policy push by the European Union, OECD, UNESCO and national governments to promote a policy of lifelong learning. ESREA provides an important space for these changes and (re)definition of adult education and learning in relation to research, theory, policy and practice to be reflected upon and discussed. This takes place at the triennial conference, network conferences and through the publication of books and a journal.

## ESREA RESEARCH NETWORKS

The major priority of ESREA is the encouragement of co-operation between active researchers in the form of thematic research networks which encourage inter- disciplinary research drawing on a broad range of the social sciences. These research networks hold annual/biennial seminars and conferences for the exchange of research results and to encourage publications.

The current active ESREA networks are:

- Access, Learning Careers and Identities
- Active Democratic Citizenship Adult Learning
- Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professional Development
- Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Development
- Education and Learning of Older Adults
- Gender and Adult Learning
- History of Adult Education and Training in Europe
- Interrogating Transformative Processes in Learning: An international exchange.
- Life-history and Biographical Research
- Migration, Ethnicity, Racism and Xenophobia
- Policy Studies in Adult Education
- Working Life and Learning

## ESREA TRIENNIAL EUROPEAN RESEARCH CONFERENCE

In order to encourage the widest possible forum for the exchange of ongoing research activities ESREA holds a triennial European Research Conference. The conferences

have been held in Strobl (1995), Bruxelles (1998), Lisbon (2001), Wroclaw (2004), Seville (2007), Linköping (2010), Berlin (2013), Maynooth (2016) and Belgrade (2019).

## ESREA JOURNAL

ESREA publishes a scientific open access journal entitled The European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA). All issues of the journal can be read at www.rela.ep.liu.se. You can also find more information about call for papers and submission procedures on this website.

## ESREA BOOKS

ESREA's research networks and conferences have led to the publication of over forty books. A full list, giving details of the various publishers, and the books' availability, is on the ESREA website. ESREA's current book series is published in co-operation with Sense Publishers.

Further information on ESREA is available at www.esrea.org

*Emilio Lucio-Villegas*
*Barbara Merrill*
*Marcella Milana*
*Henning Salling Olesen*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# FIGURES AND TABLES

## FIGURES

## TABLES

# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Shauna Butterwick** is Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia. For 25 years, she taught and developed courses in adult education. Feminist, arts-based and community-centred approaches have informed her research projects which have explored formal and nonformal adult education, particularly women's learning, including women's alternative learning pathways  and their activism.

**Darlene E. Clover** is a Professor of Adult Education, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, Canada. Her specialty areas include feminist, cultural and ecological adult education, and arts-based research and teaching methods. Her current study focuses on museums as spaces of epistemic gendered injustice and resistance and she is co-editing a forthcoming book entitled *Feminist Critique and the Museum: Educating for a Critical Consciousness.*

**Vicky Duckworth** is a Reader in Education at Edge Hill University. Vicky has developed considerable expertise as an educationalist and researcher in the field of Adult Literacy and Education. Presently, she is researching effective practice in the delivery and teaching of English and Maths to 16–18 year olds (DfE funded) and leading a UCU funded research project (with Dr. Rob Smith) which aims to understand and provide evidence of how the further education (FE) sector is vital in transforming lives and communities in 21st century Britain. Recent publications include *Learning Trajectories, Violence and Empowerment amongst Adult Basic Skills Learners* (Routledge, 2013); *Landscapes of Specific Literacies in Contemporary Society: Exploring a Social Model of Literacy* (Routledge, 2014);  and *Adult Literacy Policy and Practice: From Intrinsic Values to Instrumentalism* (Palgrave, 2015).

**Peter Ehrström** is Head of Research for Regional Science at Åbo Akademi University, as well as Associate Professor (Docent) in Regional Science, especially Urban Policy, at University of Vaasa. Ehrström specialises in questions related to urban transformation, civic participation and civic learning processes, with emphasis on interdisciplinary cooperation. Ehrström has prior experience as Assistant/Associate Professor in Adult Education and he was also subject responsible (sub) for Adult Education 2015–17, Åbo Akademi University. Ehrström was Guest Professor in Lifelong Learning at University of Hamburg, Germany (April–December 2019). He is Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), M.Pol.Sc., and has a teacher's degree in Social Sciences and History (for upper-secondary and secondary schools).

**Andreas Fejes** is Professor and Chair of Adult Education Research at Linköping University, Sweden as well as one of the founding editors of the *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* (www.rela.ep.liu.se). His current research interests concern issues regarding the role of adult education for the social inclusion of migrants and questions about what the market orientation of adult education has on teachers, students, educational counsellors and principals.

**Mirella Ferrari** carries out research and training activities in numerous companies, her research interest ranges from adult education to corporate training. She pursues three key research areas: the process of learning of art through advanced technologies; social inclusion and training of migrants; and sociology of education. She is author of numerous articles, different curatorships and monographs with Franco Angeli, Ledizioni, Aracne, Guerini.

**Fergal Finnegan** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University where he is a co-director of the doctoral programmes. His background is in community education and his research interests include transformative learning, biographical research, social class, equality and higher education. He is co-convenor of the ESREA Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Network.

**Laura Formenti** is Professor of Pedagogy at Milano Bicocca University, Italy, joint convenor of the ESREA Life History and Biography Network and present Chair of ESREA. Her research interests focus on adult learning and education as systemic and complex phenomena, embodied and embedded in layered contexts such as the family, organization, community, and larger society, that she investigates by using narrative, aesthetic and cooperative methods. She co-edited *Embodied Narratives* (2014, with L. West and M. Horsdal) and *Stories That Make a Difference* (2016, with L. West), both from the ESREA LHBN Conferences.

**Andrea Galimberti** is a post-doctoral Researcher at the Department of Human Sciences "Riccardo Massa", Bicocca University of Milan. His research interests are connected to lifelong learning and mainly focused on transitions in learning and professional careers. He explores these themes through auto/biographical methods and from systemic and constructionist perspectives. He is co-convenor and member of the scientific committee of the ESREA network "Access, Learning Careers and Identities".

**Bernie Grummell** is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Education and Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University. She previously worked with the School of Sociology and the Equality Studies Centre in University College Dublin. She is a co-director of the Centre for Research in Adult Learning and

Education. Her research interests include social justice and inclusion issues in education, and participative, practitioner-based and arts-based research methods.

**Ann Hegarty** is a Maynooth University Pat and John Hume Scholar and the Irish Research Council Government of Ireland PhD Scholar as she completed her PhD in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University. She has extensive experience as a literacy practitioner, community development facilitator and trainer of trainers. Her research interests include organisational development and equality issues including family literacy, masculinities, photovoice, women's education, disability rights and workplace literacy.

**Melissa Jackson** is a graduate student in the Department of International Development at Saint Mary's University, located on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her research is guided by a passion for community, and rooted in an anti-colonial, intersectional feminist perspective. Her work centres on themes of women's livelihoods, social movement organizing, and resource defence.

**Sophia Kitcher** is a Presbyterian Minister and a Veterinarian from Ada, and has been working in the Ada area for several decades. She is an advocate with the Yihi Katseme, fighting for the return of communal access to and use of the Songor Lagoon, in Ada, Ghana. She has professional training from the University of Ghana (Legon), the Pong Veterinary College, the Institute of Local Government Studies (Accra), WHO, DANIDA, and has completed various international veterinary certificates (Egypt and Netherlands). She is currently Chief Animal health officer and Presbyterian Minister in New Ningo.

**Jonathan Langdon** is an Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in Sustainability and Social Change Leadership at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. He has been working with social movements in Ghana for the last 18 years, and more specifically with the Yihi Katseme in Ada who are defending communal access to a salt yielding lagoon. His recent work connects with other resource contention hot spots in Ghana, as well as with Indigenous Mayan educators/activists in Guatemala. He also works closely with climate justice movements and Mi'kmaq First Nation Water Protectors in Nova Scotia, and sits on the steering committee of the Nova Scotia Fracking Resource Action Coalition (NOFRAC).

**Emilio Lucio-Villegas** is a Professor on Adult Education at the University of Seville, Spain. He holds the Phyllis M. Cunningham Award for Social Justice presented in 2010. He is convenor of the ESREA Network: 'Between Global and Local: Adult Learning and Communities'. His latest publication includes *Adult Education and Communities. Approaches from a Participatory Perspective* (Sense Publishers, 2015).

**Silvia Luraschi**, PhD, is a Pedagogist in "Educational and Communicational Sciences" at the University of Milan Bicocca and a qualified practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method. She is interested in studying embodied and aesthetic transformation in contemporary social contexts for an ecological, with body-mind-soul, critical and reflective approach to education and learning. Publications in English include "Traversing a story. A reflective exploration of the role of a researcher" (2016 in *Before, beside and after (beyond) the Biographical Narrative*, edited by R. Evans) and "How do you Breathe? Duoethnography as a Means to Re-embody Research in the Academy" (2017 co-author, in *Re-enchanting the Academy*, edited by A. Voss & S. Wilson).

**Siobhán Madden** has been involved in feminist community education/activism in Ireland for over twenty-five years. She received her PhD in Adult and Community Education from Maynooth University in 2017. Her research interests include collaborative narrative methodologies, the politics of voice and subjectivity, and feminist counter-rationalities to neoliberalism.

**David McCormack** is a Lecturer in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University where he is Co-Director Counselling and Adult Guidance Programme. He is interested in teaching and researching around the emotional dimensions of Transformative Adult Learning and sees Autoethnography as a powerful genre supporting this work.

**Sarah Meaney** is associate staff with the Adult and Community Education Department in Maynooth University, where she works as a researcher and educator. She uses poetic transcription and theatrical methods to bring research outside of the academy and into the public sphere for social purpose and engagement.

**Barbara Merrill** is an Emeritus Academic in the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Warwick, UK. Her research interests include issues of class and gender in relation to the learning experiences and the learner identity of adult students, particularly in higher education, European comparative research as well as biographical narrative approaches to research. Barbara is a member of the Steering Committee for ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults) and co-ordinates the ESREA Access, Learning Careers and Identities Network.

**Erik Nylander** is Associate Professor of education at Linköping University and a visiting fellow at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. His current research focuses on educational research in Singapore and Sweden from a comparative bibliometric perspective.

**Cormac O'Keeffe** is Director of Digital Learning at INSEEC U., Paris, France. His research focuses on socio-material theory and the influence of digital technologies

on learning and assessment. He is currently investigating the role of international organisations in shaping narratives around educational attainment.

**Jerry O'Neill** has worked in further, adult and higher education contexts for twenty years in Scotland and Ireland. He has a keen interest in developing his own creative, critical and participative modes of practice and inquiry for personal and socially transformative ends.

**Lovisa Österlund** is a Bibliometrician at the Department for Publishing Infrastructure (PI), Linköping University, providing bibliometric analyses of different units at the university, in addition to assisting in the interpretation of these and providing suggestions for a publication strategy and research projects.

**Annika Pastuhov** is a postdoctoral researcher affiliated with Mimer – Swedish network for research on popular education at Linköping University. Her research interests include questions concerning ethnographic knowledge and the democratic ideals and practices of popular education, particularly in the Nordic countries.

**Milosh Raykov**, PhD, is an associate professor of Research Methods and Sociology of Education at the University of Malta. His research interests include education-work relationships, the impact of labour unions on participation in education and service learning

**Carole Roy** is Professor in the Department of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, Canada. Her work has focused on older women's activism and more recently on the use of documentary films and documentary film festivals for sharing relevant grassroots stories, building community, and fostering solidarity.

**Mary B. Ryan** is Head of Adult and Community Education Department in Maynooth University and a Group Analytic Psychotherapist. She is Co-Director of the suite of Counselling and Adult Guidance Programmes. Her doctoral research involved a Narrative Inquiry into professional practice as a psychotherapist working in adult education.

**Ari Sivenius**, PhD, is a university lecturer at the School of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Eastern Finland. His research interest includes the methodology of educational sciences, especially qualitative research.

**Rob Smith** is a Professor of Education at Birmingham City University. His body of work explores the impact of funding and marketisation on further and higher education. His recent research with Vicky Duckworth focuses on further education as

a space for trans-formative teaching and learning. Other research interests include Social Justice and Leadership in Further Education.

**Alison Taylor** is a professor in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, Canada. She is currently leading a mixed methods study of university students and part-time work. Her previous research focused on community service learning in universities.

**Tony Walsh** was, until recent retirement, a member of the academic staff and Head of Department at Maynooth University, where he continues as Director of the Centre for the Study of Irish Protestantism. He is a Research Fellow of the Centre for Anabaptist and Pietist Research at Elizabethtown, Pa, and editor and contributor to a number of books and articles on radical education, narrative and religion.

BERNIE GRUMMELL AND FERGAL FINNEGAN

# 1. INTRODUCTION

*Doing Critical and Creative Research in Adult Education*

Academic scholarship on adult education and learning has developed a great deal over the past thirty years. Within adult education there has been a great deal of methodological creativity and innovation linked to the commitment to doing research in a critical and participatory manner. While there is a significant body of work which explores how to do research in a creative and critical way using a specific methodological approach and/or from a particular theoretical perspective in adult education [for example biographical methods e.g. Merrill and West (2009), feminist research Chilisa and Preece (2005) or visual participatory methods Butterwick & Roy (2016) etc.], there are relatively few publications on methodologies and methods that explore diverse ways of doing critical research on adult education and learning in a single volume. Typically, researchers, students and lecturers on adult education courses find themselves relying on handbooks and guides to research from cognate disciplines in the social sciences. Although, interdisciplinary 'borrowing' is inevitable and valuable, we think in a mature and established discipline there is a clear need for a book which explores a range of research methodologies which are directly orientated to the contexts, themes, values and problematics of the field. As such this collection seeks to address this gap and offer readers insight into the exciting and diverse range of critical research methodologies being used in contemporary adult education.

The book does not approach research methods in an abstract or schematic way. The emphasis is on the craft of research as a practical, ethical and theoretical endeavor that happens in specific contexts. In selecting the contributors, we have sought to include a wide range of case studies using diverse methodologies in order to capture the vitality and complexity of contemporary adult education research. This includes contributions on biographical, narrative, embodied, arts and media-based and ethnographic methods alongside the critical use of quantitative and mixed methods. Each of the chapters take up the themes of criticality and creativity, whilst also reflecting on the purpose of these research methodologies as they are applied in a variety of settings and contexts.

Using case studies the contributors explore the links between research, pedagogy and creative forms of transformative social, cultural and political agency and address how creative research can support meaningful learning in education institutions as well as non-formal settings. In doing so the contributors illuminate a range of

approaches that combine the critical and the creative, and challenge epistemologies that erase the complexity of social phenomena. The book also considers how we can co-create and disseminate research in meaningful collaboration with a variety of learning communities and publics. Several chapters explore the histories and intellectual legacies that can be drawn upon to feed a sense of creativity in critical research as we think this will be of use to both experienced and novice researchers in adult education and in other social sciences.

## CRITICALITY AND CREATIVITY IN ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH

A good deal of the development and diversification of critical adult education research follows patterns which are evident across the arts, humanities and social sciences (Merriam & Cunningham, 1989; Leavy, 2009, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It would also be a mistake to exaggerate the homogeneity of adult education: it is an international and highly diverse field of practice and research. Nevertheless, adult education has certain well-established areas of interest as well as methodological tendencies and orientations linked to the historical formation and development of the field (Duke, 1999; Rubenson & Elfert, 2015). These characteristics and trends have been noted in recent research on its journals and research networks (Fejes & Nylander, 2014; Käpplinger, 2015).

Some of specificities of adult education research can be linked to the processes, relationships, beliefs, and epistemologies valued by adult education practitioners more widely. There is, we believe, a type of what Gramsci (1971) called 'good sense' – a type of critical and ethical orientation – generated by the field as a whole which also informs the assumptions of many academic researchers. To be precise, this is a democratic and collaborative ethic which seeks to identify and foster progressive transformative possibilities for individuals, communities and society through research, teaching and learning. Of course not all adult education researchers share these values and orientations but they are very widespread. This has fostered a type of criticality that can be discerned across the collection and is marked by a sensitivity to questions of power in learning and research.

How this 'good sense', this criticality, is articulated and instantiated varies a great deal, yet one can point to other shared coordinates beyond a broad commitment to democracy and transformative education such as; a strong critique of the positivist assumptions which dominated research and knowledge in the social sciences, an abiding interest in questions of social justice and power; a holistic approach to learning and education which is not, nor can be, sectorally or institutionally defined; and an emphasis on the importance of non-formal and everyday knowledge. In concrete research terms this has manifested itself in recent decades in terms of a preference for intensive, qualitative methods alongside the widespread use of 'horizontal' collaborative research processes which aim to be participatory and engaging.

The desire to do research differently and conduct critical research *with* rather than *about* people demands theoretical and methodological creativity. It calls for

a willingness to rupture hierarchical relations in order to create new collaborative spaces of learning and research (and significantly many of the contributors to the collection treat collaborative pedagogies and research as intertwined activities). It positions participants as active co-creators of knowledge (Freire, 1972; Dominicé, 2000) emphasizing openness and responsiveness rather than prescribing meanings (Yang & Lawrence, 2017). It is worth recalling that the origins of Participatory Action Research are in adult education (Hall, 1992) and the creative ferment of emancipatory movements in the global south. This approach means research in adult education is often viewed by researchers as a collective learning process which has the potential to lead to significant transformation, empowerment and even for some emancipation (Duckworth & Smith, 2018). The focus cannot therefore be on 'data gathering', but sparking and encouraging collective and critical knowledge production with people. Being critical in this sense is not only being aware of one's concepts, goals and methods but of constantly exploring how the means and ends of research are connected and enmeshed in specific contexts and power dynamics.

Working collaboratively with people requires different modalities of research; with criteria of validity, reliability, ethics and quality based on the capacity of researchers to be truly responsive to what they learn through dialogue. This orientation in critical adult education research has required developing research methods which allow for the exploration of the nuances and textures of social and educational experience (Lucio-Villegas, 2015). Researchers seek to elaborate methodological approaches which are cognizant and reflexive of people's experiences; drawing on the diversity of people's interests (hooks, 1995, Dutton & Knightley, 2007, Leavy, 2014). We would argue, the source of a great deal of creativity is an ethical and political desire to find new terms for the production of knowledge.

Once we think collaboration between what the researcher wants to know, and what the participant wants to be known is important, research methodologies which respect and celebrate a variety of ways of being and ways of knowing becomes crucial. As a result, there is a very strong interest in research methods, such as arts-based approaches which offer multimodal ways of revealing, analyzing and expressing this. As Richardson (2000) identifies, creative methodologies should open up interpretive responses and should be artistically shaped, satisfying, and complex. This requires developing a wide array of arts, multi-media, narrative and embodied methods that reflect the diversity evident in people's ways of being and knowing the world. These methodological innovations often transverse the tendency to solely rely in academic research on traditional written and oral forms of expression (for example surveys, interviews or fieldnotes in the social sciences) and to conduct research for example through the modes of song, theatre, poetry, photographs, social media, and movement. This involves drawing out people's experiences of their worlds in ways that acknowledge the past, present and future, as well as the richness of their context and culture (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2008). Creativity in this sense is linked to trying to tap into the imaginative resources that allow us to communicate and access to each other's social worlds.

The methodologies explored in this book illustrate this commitment to collaborative, participatory, multimodal inquiry and treats research above all as a layered learning process. This requires high levels of reflexivity and examining subjectivity and positionality as an integral part of research process and to ask what is 'really useful knowledge' for adult education as a field (Connolly, 2008, see also Etherington, 2004). It involves, we think, sitting with uncertainty and emergence, allowing space and time for the form to emerge as part of the reflective process (Marshall, 2008). Crucially, we also think it means acknowledging the importance of context – in social and relational terms – in thinking about and doing research. Critically reflecting on the research process and ensuring it is consistent with the ethos of adult education throughout all the stages of research becomes paramount.

As noted earlier there is a clear preference for intensive, qualitative methods evident in contemporary adult education (Fejes & Nylander, 2019). But of course there is a risk that this can become an article of faith which blocks or limits critical research. There is also a way of approaching quantitative analysis and conducting mixed methods within a critical perspective that is oriented towards the people with whom we research. This criticality focuses on what is measured and how it is made 'knowable' within quantitative and mixed methods approaches and to what end this is used (such as in the use of large-scale datasets in adult literacy or critically questioning the gatekeepers and role of journals in our own field)

Criticality and creativity thus ultimately depend on openness and a willingness to rethink what we do and find new modes of dissemination that engage and empower people. The field of adult education research is changing (not least because of the use of 'big data' and the development of social media) and this requires new forms of critical research. Questioning methodological assumptions formed in an earlier period is crucial – for example, does the assumption that a rejection of positivism necessarily means a preference for qualitative approaches really hold good today?

## THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK

This collection of essays emerged from the debates and discussions that took place at the 2016 European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) Triennial conference. Established in 1991 and consisting of twelve different research networks, ESREA has become one of the best-known organizations concerned with academic research on adult education (Slowey, 2016). Its twelve networks meet annually or bi-annually in different parts of Europe. The Triennial conferences offer space for the various networks to come together, meet and share ideas and it has become an important event for adult education researchers globally.

The 2016 Triennial was the eighth such conference and took place in Maynooth University in Ireland, hosted by the Department of Adult and Community Education. The theme of the conference was *Imagining Diverse Futures for Adult Education:*

*Questions of Power and Resources of Creativity.* The double focus on power and resources of creativity was chosen through dialogue between colleagues in ESREA and was designed to respond to concerns about changes with the field which were being voiced at adult education events internationally and within various ESREA networks at this time. This theme was intended to open up and facilitate creative and imaginative responses from adult education researchers to the rapidly changing societal, cultural and political landscape during this time.

It was a remarkably vibrant event with approximately 200 presentations and papers by researchers from 27 countries. These researchers were mainly from Europe but also came Asia, Australia and North America. One of the most important themes of the events was the vitality of critical and creative methodologies in exploring adult learning and in answering wider social challenges. It provided the spark for this book and we wanted to capture some of the methodological diversity evident in the field in order to encourage debate and inspire other researchers. Just as importantly – and this only became clearer afterwards in planning for the book – is the importance of discussing methodology in context; not to separate thinking and doing and to avoid treating methodologies and methods as prescriptions and recipes.

The collection brings together both leading and emerging scholars in adult education research from a range of contexts using a variety of innovative critical and creative methodologies. The authors have been selected to reflect methodological developments in the field and illustrate how this is linked to sustaining, refining and developing critical adult education. Each chapter can be read as a standalone chapter on methodology and theory in research, whilst the book as a whole is intended as a contribution to debates about the status and identity of adult education as a distinctive field of research.

## STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This collection is organized into 8 parts representing key themes in critical and creative research methodologies in contemporary adult education. Part 1 illustrates the rise of biographical and oral history methodologies and explores the importance of story and collective memory in adult education research, while Part 2 discusses the importance of ethnography and reflexivity in research. A range of arts-based research and creative pedagogies is outlined in Part 3 illuminating the nature of creative participatory learning processes. Part 4 outlines the capacity of research to use critical mixed methods and critical quantitative research to critically analyze the larger scale and multiple impacts of adult education processes. Digital research methods are drawn upon in Part 5 to consider how research methods can be developed to investigate digital actants. Part 6 explores the use of multiple media forms of sound, vision and story-telling in participatory research. Part 7 represents research methodologies that use embodied knowledge and movement as participatory methodologies and democratic learning processes. Part 8 concludes the book with an exploration of creative dissemination methods in adult education.

BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH, ORAL HISTORY AND
COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

Part 1 illustrates the rise of biographical and life history methods and explores the importance of storytelling and collective memory in adult education research. Biographical and life history inquiry been one of the most important areas of methodological innovation in adult education research, especially in Europe (Alheit, Bron-Wojciechowska, Brugger, & Dominicé, 1995, Merrill & West, 2009, Dominicé, 2000). It has been the source of a distinct sociology of adult learning as well as the basis of lifelong learning initiatives, reflexively situating the researcher and acknowledging the co-construction of stories with participants (and this is a theme that runs right through this section and across the book). Drawing on a study of higher education and transitions into work by 'non-traditional' students in the UK, Barbara Merrill, a key figure in biographical methods, explores the complexities of doing biographical research from a critical and feminist perspective. She explores the importance of 'voice' and dialogue between researcher and participants, linking the ethical and methodological aspects of doing critical research with questions of equality and participation in society as a whole.

Emilio Lucio-Villegas illustrates how the reconstruction of local cultural identities and heritage can enable individuals and communities to build a critical reflection on their life, cultural heritage and the history of their places. This 'memory work' requires a specific type of theoretical and methodological approach to work towards a historical reconstruction of a forgotten community which Lucio-Villegas describes through an exploration of an ongoing research project using oral history and photographs. He contends that reconstructing our collective memories through oral histories can enable people to regain their local cultural identities and heritage and become protagonists of their life and regain some of their own power.

Andrea Galimberti, Laura Formenti and Mirella Ferrari explore the methodological implications of using biographical methods as one part of a multiple methods research project to explore the transition to adulthood for young adults from the foster care system. They argue that quantitative data is useful but cannot fully grasp individual differences, learning trajectories, and meanings that are developed by subjects and could explain their choices. Biographical research enables critical research with people in a dynamic co-construction of meanings among interacting people in order to track and understand the paths of life, education and learning of 'vulnerable' adults.

Siobhán Madden explores processes of collaborative storytelling as we negotiate the ontological boundaries of written and spoken words in order to disrupt linear narratives of research, education and politics, attending to 'a temporality of struggle' (Mohanty, 2003). This is structured through an exploration of three very different text genres which are significant for adult education: policy, research and literary genres. Madden explores the processes of creative transcription and research methodologies in an exciting and novel way whilst disrupting linear narratives of research, education and politics to draw out the central ontological, epistemic and political possibilities of feminist community education.

## THE AUTO/ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION

Ethnographic research methods have enabled adult education researchers to capture the dynamic and interactive nature of practice in the field in ways which highlight the storied and contextual nature of learning. As a method, it draws on its roots in anthropology and cultural studies to develop a methodological approach which gives a nuanced, contextual, emotive, embodied, linguistic and socio-cultural understanding of everyday learning processes and contexts. Annika Turunen and Ari Sivenius discuss ethnographic methods in adult education research in the context of Nordic study circles, highlighting the contribution of ethnographic methods in its ability to clarify 'what goes on', making use of a micro-perspective to bring relevant order into what might seem confusing, or also too familiar. This calls for an interpretive, creative and thoughtful approach where data collection, analysis and reporting are intertwined (Sivenius & Friman, 2017, p. 28). They present key methodological challenges which occur in ethnographic processes in this considered reflection.

The importance of reflexivity and stories in adult education research which is highlighted in Part 1 is also central to the dialogue on auto-ethnographic research methods that David McCormack, Jerry O'Neill, Mary B. Ryan and Tony Walsh give in their chapter. Reflecting on various forms of autoethnography, they present a fascinating dialogue developed and written in collaboration with each other. The space this opens up between writer and reader is considered to be a potential site of meaning making and reader responses are considered to this end. Narrative inquiry and autoethnographic research allows them to catch those subtle processes of human growth and transformation in a way that honors the richness with which adults embrace their own growth and development.

## ARTS-BASED RESEARCH AND CREATIVE PEDAGOGIES

Part 3 explores the rise of arts-based research and participatory learning processes in adult education research methods. Arts-based research approaches acknowledge the importance and vitality of finding multiple ways of inquiry and knowing the world using a reflexive, creative and participatory approach to research, highlighting its transformative and multimodal capacity where "in contact with art, people could see and feel more that they could say" (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, pp. 507–508). This facilitates participatory approaches to research that deliberately positions the participant as 'expert' and the active co-creators of knowledge, creating opportunities for marginalized voices to emerge. Shauna Butterwick and Carole Roy explore how creative expression, as both research methodology and pedagogy, contributes to creating conditions for these voices to be expressed and to be heard, reviewing relevant literature exploring voice and listening, and arts-based inquiry before turning to two cases of arts-based approaches to research on community education and learning through documentary film festival and political fashion shows.

Sarah Meaney explores how the arts-based methods of Forum Theatre and the co-creation of research poetry evokes an emotive and embodied re-presentation of participants' experiences of educational exclusion and its consequences on their lives. Methods such as transcript poetry reveal how we know the world in emotional, embodied and psychic ways and represent the full richness and complexity of human experience.

Darlene Clover presents a pedagogical, analytical and methodological tool called The Feminist Museum Hack which she designed as a critical and creative means to pay attention to the complex storied and visual culture of museums and what they tell us about gender and patriarchal cultures in the past and today. This draws on feminist research, visual culture, and pedagogical theory and practice, encouraging participants to develop important analytical, narrative and visual competences aimed to create 'really useful knowledge' about patriarchal ideologies and how they shape and mobilize particular knowledge and meanings. As a methodology, it disrupts the privileged authority of the museum or gallery, unmasking clear gendered discursive, visual and rhetorical dimensions that hide in plain sight.

## CRITICAL MIXED METHODS AND CRITICAL QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

This part explores critical perspectives on quantitative research methods and the use of mixed methods in adult education research. Although there has been a methodological flourishing of different approaches across the social science, quantitative research methods including their use in mixed methods approaches still hold an important place, especially in evidence-based and policy analysis. While mixed methods has been defined as a specific research approach in recent years (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007), the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in research has a long history. The authors in this part demonstrate the ongoing and newer incarnations of mixed methods and their role in adult education research. Alison Taylor and Milosh Raykov offer insightful reflections on their experiences of using mixed methods approaches, arguing for an approach to mixed methods research that is dialogical, creative, critical, and participatory. Their review research highlights how mixed methods approaches means negotiating epistemological and methodological differences as researchers articulate and explore the gains and losses of employing different methods, and what becomes known and captured through research in this process.

Erik Nylander, Lovisa Österlund and Andreas Fejes report on findings from a large-scale bibliographic study conducted on the citation practices within the field of research on adult learning and education. They construct a critical map of the research field based on patterns of citations, theme and concerns to identify dominant players active in the field, and how this is linked to geography, gender and language. This extensive research discloses the hidden assumptions – doxa – and power relations in the scientific field of adult education in a way that allows researchers to situate

their own methodological, theoretical, empirical and dissemination choices in a reflexive manner.

## DIGITAL RESEARCH METHODS

Cormac O'Keefe outlines how ethnographic methods can be developed to investigate the construction and operation of digital data and processes in large scale adult skills assessments. This reveals how data are produced and subsequently fed into statistical models to produce outputs that profoundly affect how we understand concepts such as literacy or skill. Drawing upon the theoretical resources of Actor Network Theory, this investigation employs a new and innovative methodology, trace ethnography, to follow the distributed agency of hypermobile digital actants. This, in turn, highlights the role of non-governmental organizations in influencing educational and economic policy-making through the intensification of data production.

## SOUND, VISION AND STORYTELLING

Research approaches that are embodied and performance-based are key to recognizing people's diverse ways of expression, thinking and doing. They are based in participative and creative ways of naming people's world and offer possibilities for protest and transformations. This often emerges through the telling and retelling/re-presenting of stories over time to reveal learning in motion (Kenyon & Randall, 1997) using songs, photography, arts, drama, dance and other creative forms, such as tapestry making, that have enabled a rich, complex form of expression and documentation of learning.

Creative dissent is not only a crucial part of social movement activism, but is also a key area of social movement learning. Jonathan Langdon, Melissa Jackson and Sophia Kitcher document and explore community action and learning through song and storytelling in Ada Songor salt movement. They share the story of emergence of women's salt defense movement in Ada, Ghana, demonstrating how creative dissent through song functions in a social movement and in doing so advance research on what Griff Foley (1999) termed 'learning in struggle'. This illustrates how a participatory research approach, coupled with a methodology sensitive to learning through collective stories and the cultural forms of expression of a community, such as restorying and song, can produce rich meaningful research on adult learning through social movement activism.

Ann Hegarty explores the use of visual research methods through the use of photovoice, an engaging, powerful arts-based research method employed to problematize hegemonic discourses that confine and limit human flourishing. The complex, relationship between constructs of hegemonic masculinities, fatherhood and family literacies are revealed in this visual and discursively-based methodology which is premised on the group's co-construction of their collective experiences and

meaning-making. A collective, creative exploration of the role of fathers doing family literacy work grounds participants, supporting them to reflect collaboratively on their roles as men and fathers involved in learning care work and highlights how adult education might become a really useful element in their process of radical change.

## RESEARCH ON EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE AND MOVEMENT

Creative research approaches have increasingly highlighted the significance of the embodied basis of how we experience the world. The significance of how we move in and through the world and embodied experience is core to learning is highlighted in the contributions in this part, offering the potential for more reciprocal learning and democratic processes that are contextualized in a multi-sensory way through movement and activity.

In her research Silvia Luraschi explores the active involvement of the body's perception and movement in the context of vocational guidance. This draws on a constructivist, ecological systems point of view (Bateson, 1972) to explore the complex and varied dimensions of learning (embodied, aesthetic, relational, spatial, etc.). Using this method, Luraschi highlights the importance of dialogue and learning in public spaces in order to acquire creative resources for thinking, feeling and acting in new ways, towards diverse futures.

Peter Ehrström reflects on the use of Deliberative Walks as a participatory method and learning process, building on the deliberative models of Citizens' Jury and Development Walks and influenced by outdoor pedagogy and place-based learning. Ehrström argues that Deliberative Walks offer a vehicle to learn in a more democratic and complete matter by seeing, observing and feeling in situ, to learn with all your senses and by observing first-hand as well as theoretically. The variation of learning methods and places as well as the possibility to contribute in other ways – by using all senses and having practical knowledge and sense of place – Ehrström contends may enhance political participation and learning.

## CREATIVE DISSEMINATION

Vicky Duckworth and Rob Smith highlight the importance of using means of dissemination which are congruent with the participatory, creative and transformative intent of much of adult education research. Their research is based in a sharing of stories between the participants as a dialogical approach that sees research as a social practice (Duckworth & Smith, 2018). The data comprises a series of rich narratives from learners, teachers, employers and learners' family members collected through video recorded interviews and shared via a project website with a multi-faceted digital platform and interactive critical space. The digital platform is the catalyst to what they describe as a process of virtually enhanced engagement adding to the data and extending the influence and meanings of the project in the public domain to unsettle neo-liberal hegemonic discourses. The chapter theorizes the connection

between a digital, organic research methodology and critical pedagogy in an attempt to model a democratic and dialogical approach to knowledge production.

## REFERENCES

Alheit, P., Bron-Wojciechowska, A., Brugger, E., & Dominicé, P. (Eds.). (1995). *The biographical approach in European adult education*. Vienna: Verband Wiener Volksbildung.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York, NY: Ballantine.

Bochner, A., & Riggs, N. A. (2014). Practicing narrative inquiry. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butterwick, S., & Roy, C. (Eds.). (2016). *Working the margins of community based adult-learning: The power of arts-making in finding voice and creating conditions for seeing/listening.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Chilisa, B., & Preece, J. (2005). *Feminist research: African perspectives on adult learning*. Cape Town: Pearson.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Clover, D. (2011). Successes and challenges of feminist arts-based participatory methodologies with homeless/street-involved women in Victoria. *Action Research, 9*(11), 12–26.

Clover, D., & Sanford, K. (Eds.). (2013). *Lifelong learning, the arts and creative cultural engagement in the contemporary university: International perspectives.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Connolly, B. (2008). *Adult learning in groups*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. New York, NY: Sage.

Dominice, P. (2000). *Learning from our lives: Using educational biography with adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Duckworth, V., & Smith, R. (2018). Transformative learning in English further education. In C. Borg, P. Mayo, & R. Sultana (Eds.), *Skills for sustainable human development of the international handbook on vocational education and training for changing the world of work*. London: Springer.

Duke, C. (1999, September 6–9). Research in adult education: Current trends and future agenda. In W. Mauch (Ed.), *World trends in adult education research. Report on the International Seminar on World Trends in Adult Education Research.* Montréal, Canada.

Dutton, Y., & Knightley, W. (2007). *An introduction to research methods for adult learning practitioners.* Leicester: NIACE. Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.468.36 52&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Eisner, E. W. (1991) What the arts taught me about education. *Art Education, 44*(5), 10–19. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3193290.pdf

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2008). Opening conversation. *Creative Approaches to Research, 1*(2), 1–3.

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: using ourselves in research*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Fejes, A., & Nylander, E. (2014). The anglophone international(e): A bibliometric analysis of three adult education journals, 2005–2012. *Adult Education Quarterly, 64*(3), 222–239.

Foley, G. (1999). *Learning in social action: A contribution to understanding informal education.* London: Zed Books.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, B. (1992). From margins to center? The development and purpose of participatory research, *The American Sociologist, 23*(4), 15–28.

Hesse Biber, S. N., & Piatelli, D. (2012). *The feminist practice of holistic reflexivity. The handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*. New York, NY: Sage.

hooks, b. (1995). *Art on my mind*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Leavy, P. (2009). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. London: Guilford Press.

Leavy, P. (Ed.). (2014). *Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lucio-Villegas, E. (2015). *Adult education in communities. Approaches from a participatory perspective.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Käpplinger, B. (2015). Adult education research between field and rhizome-a bibliometrical analysis of conference programs of ESREA. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 6*(2), 139–157.

Marshall, J. (2008). Finding form in writing for action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Merriam, S. B., & Cunningham, P. M. (Eds.). (1989). *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 233–245). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merrill, B., & West, L. (2009). *Using biographical methods in social research.* London: Sage.

Mitchell, C. (2010). *Doing visual research.* London: Sage.

Mohanty, C. (2012). Foreword. In L. Manicom & S. Walters (Eds.), *Feminist popular education in transnational debates: Building pedagogies of possibility* (pp. vii–x). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nylander, E., & Fejes, A. (Eds.). (2019). *Mapping out the research field of adult education and learning* (Lifelong Learning Series). Cham: Springer.

Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating ethnography – The Ohio State University. *Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(2), 253–255.

Rubenson, K., & Elfert, M. (2015). Adult education research: Exploring an increasingly fragmented map. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 6*(2), 125–138.

Sivenius, A., & Friman, I. (2017). An art-based project as a research approach – Young people's lives in pictures and words. *The Finnish Journal of Youth Research, 35*(1–2), 26–38.

Slowey, M. (2016). *Comparative adult education and learning; Authors and texts*. Florence: Firenze University Press.

Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Editorial: Exploring the nature of research questions in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(3), 207–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689807302814

Yang, K. H., & Lawrence, R. L. (2017). *Participatory visual approaches to adult and continuing education: Practical insights* (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education series, No. 154). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley/Jossey Bass.

Zukas, M. (1993). Feminist issues in adult education research: Links and conflicts. In *1993 SCUTREA Conference Proceedings, SCUTREA 1997* (pp. 38–41). Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002909.htm

# PART 1

# BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH, ORAL HISTORY AND COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

BARBARA MERRILL

# 2. BIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY

*A Collaborative and Egalitarian Approach to Adult Education Research*

INTRODUCTION

Biographical inquiry enables us as researchers and adult educators to grasp an in-depth understanding of the complexities and nuances of learning in adults' lives in a collaborative and egalitarian way. There has been a 'turn' to biographical methods in the social sciences (Chamberlayne, Bornat, & Wengraf, 2000) over the past thirty years. Perhaps it is more accurate to say this is a renewed interest as oral history and biographical research has a long tradition in disciplines like sociology and history which faded due to the strengthening of positivism. The 'turn' was, therefore, a response and a reaction to the dominance of scientific and objective approaches to understanding human behaviour which mimics that of the natural sciences. Such an approach silences the voices of marginalized groups and dehumanizes people reducing the understanding of lives to mere statistics which are devoid of meaning, life and context and subsequently many social scientists began to question this (Roberts, 2002), including adult education researchers within Europe.

The biographical tradition in European adult education was established through the work of people such as Agnieszka Bron, Peter Alheit, Pierre Dominicé, Henning Salling Olesen and Linden West. Their work marked an important move away from early research on adult students which were mostly large-scale quantitative studies (Woodley et al., 1987). Biographical methods "offer rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and other" (Merrill & West, 2009, p. 1) which quantitative methods cannot do. This 'movement', particularly within the UK, was influenced by the work of symbolic interactionists from the Chicago School and feminist scholarship which put the human subject at the core of the research process (Plummer, 2001). There are parallels here with student-centred adult education practice. Other influences have shaped UK biographical approaches such as the psychosocial and more recently the German interpretive tradition as in the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2000).

As biographical inquiry has developed it has been used alongside art and drama-based approaches and the collection of artefacts as well. This chapter outlines a critical and feminist perspective approach drawing on symbolic interactionism and how this helps in the understanding of people's lives and adult learning. It draws on research on non-traditional students in higher education to illustrate not only the

complexities of undertaking biographical research but also its richness and power in revealing the particular and general, structure and agency, the macro and the micro in the individual and collective lives of adult learners. It will argue for the importance of 'voice' and dialogue, even conversation, between the researcher and research participants in the co-construction of stories. While many biographical researchers view the stories as individual, I see individual lives as also telling collective stories and histories through, for example, experiences of class, gender, ethnicity and adult learning thus highlighting issues of inequality. Methodological aspects of doing such research will also be explored.

## A FEMINIST & SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Biographical and life history approaches are now one of the most widely used methods in adult education research, particularly in Europe. Its popularity is visible at European conferences and in adult education journal articles. The European Society for Research in the Education of Adults (ESREA) Life History and Biographical Network has been critical in encouraging and developing the use of biographical methods in varied adult education contexts such as higher education, community education, the workplace as well as informal learning in the family and elsewhere. The 'turn' to biographical methods brought subjectivity centre stage in the research process and the meaning which people give to their lives. Although popular, biographical inquiry in adult education is characterized by heterogeneity which leads to richness and stimulates debate. This also reflects the fact that researchers in adult education draw on a range of disciplines and perspectives such as sociology, psychology, philosophy and education. Biographical inquiry is also conducted in very diverse ways. In Germany and Denmark, for example, an objective hermeneutics position is favoured whereby the researcher remains distant in order not to shape the account. This approach is exemplified in the work of adult education researchers Peter Alheit and Henning Salling Olesen. In Germany this orientation was partly about making biographical research respectable within a very traditional academic system. In contrast in the UK and Sweden the role of subjectivity and intersubjectivity was viewed as important, heavily influenced by feminism and the work of the Chicago School.

My particular approach has been sociological, influenced by feminism, symbolic interactionism and critical theory, taking a humanistic and subjectivistic approach to research, what Plummer calls a "critical humanism" (2001, p. 14). On the surface my selection of symbolic interactionism and feminism may appear to be oppositional and contradictory as symbolic interactionism focuses on the individual and micro social theory while many versions of feminism and critical theory emphasize collective conditions and social inequality. However, I would argue that there are similarities and complementarities between them. The work of the Chicago School and, in particular, that of Goffman and Becker had a strong impact on me because it encompasses a humanistic philosophy and celebrates the agentic possibility in

people's lives, marking a move away from the determinism of positivism. The Chicago School of Sociology has been influential in the development of biographical inquiry. This goes back to 1918–1921 and the classic study by Thomas and Znaniecki – The Polish Peasant – on the experience of Polish peasants in a new cultural context to later in the 1960s and 1970s with studies such as the Jack-Roller by Clifford R. Shaw (1966). Significantly symbolic interactionism places the social actor and the meaning and interpretation they give to their lives and social situation as central to understanding human behavior (Blumer, 1986).

Interaction with others and how others see us is key to the formation of the self, biography and our definition of the social world. For symbolic interactionists interaction is seen as "a crucial link between the individual and the social group" (Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975, p. 50). Constructing the social world is a situated activity. The distinct methodological approach of symbolic interactionism and its focus on the social actor stresses the importance of 'telling it like it is'. Like feminists much of the research centres on the marginalized in society and 'sticking up for the underdog' (Becker, 1967) who also asserts that researchers should ask themselves 'Whose side are we on?' There is also a tradition of illuminating individual resistance to the power of institutions (Goffman, 1961). As Plummer elucidates "It is a fully dialectical theory where subject and object, creativity and restraint, pattern and chaos, structure and meaning, knowledge and action are ceaselessly emergently intertwined" (1991, p. xv).

Rooted in a liberal tradition symbolic interactionism only takes us so far in looking at issues of power and inequality. Feminists take a more critical and political stance than this, particularly Marxist feminists. Second wave feminism in the 1970s stimulated the development of feminist theory and methodology in academia and critique of traditional 'malestream' research. Dorothy Smith asserts "The women's movement has given us a sense of our right to have women's interests represented in sociology, rather than just receiving as authoritative the interests traditionally represented in a sociology put together by men" (1987, p. 85). In doing so feminists were questioning who has the power to construct knowledge. The everyday lives of ordinary women were deemed to be important bringing women out of obscurity through research. Feminists emphasized how 'the personal is political' whereby individual experiences become collective ones. This idea can also be traced back to the work of C. Wright Mills who elaborated that: "… know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues – and in terms of the problems of individual life" (1970, p. 8). Importantly feminist research gives 'voice' to marginalized women through the telling of their stories. For Reinharz "biographical work has always been an important part of the women's movement because it draws women out of obscurity, repairs the historical record, and provides the opportunity for the woman reader and writer to identify with the subject" (1992, p. 126). Feminist researchers, in contrast to 'traditional' research, work with women and not on women (Oakley, 1981) to avoid exploitation.

Feminist researchers have contributed to the development of biographical methodology in various ways. A subjective (and intersubjective) engagement is advocated between the researcher and researched in a form which challenges and breaks down power differences to establish a more democratic relationship than in traditional hierarchical approaches to interviewing. Ann Oakley (1981) took this further in promoting the idea that an interview should be more like a conversation which may include the researcher sharing some of their story so it becomes a participatory process. For Natalie Popadiuk "… the feminist biographical method is a powerful tool. It engages in research from a unique perspective that provides depth, meaning and context to the participants' lived experiences in light of the larger cultural matrix in which they live" (2004, p. 395). Research, it is stressed, is a political process. The 'voices' of the women highlight oppression and inequalities in society which need to be challenged and transformed. Undoubtedly feminist researchers had, and still have, a significant impact on biographical research in the UK, including adult education research, with many adult education researchers carrying on the feminist research tradition. As Jane Thompson reminds us "But it is what becomes of the stories that matters. And what uses can be made of them in the search for political knowledge and theoretical understanding" (2000, p. 7).

## LEARNING FROM BIOGRAPHIES

In researching the experiences of non-traditional adult students in higher education I am interested in looking at issues of class and gender and their intersectionality. I connect individual stories of non-traditional students to class and gender experiences by linking the micro to the macro and locating a biography within a social, political, economic and historical context.

As Denzin points out biographies reveal "an inner world of thought and experience and to an outer world of events and experiences" (1984, p. 66). Bertaux also reminds us that biographies reveal the common experiences of structure: "The intent of the biographical project is to uncover the social, economic, cultural, structural and historical forces that shape, distort and otherwise alter problematic lived experiences" (1981, p. 4). Biographical methods importantly illuminate the two fundamental foundations of sociology – agency and structure. It encompasses a key question in relation to what extent lives are shaped and or constrained by social structure and to what extent lives can be changed through intentional actions. A person's life is never fully agentic or structurally determined but rather an interaction between the two although at certain moments one aspect may be more dominant. The stories of working-class adult students in higher education illustrate the role of agency and structure in shaping their learning identities and career. Agency is used, for example, in taking the decision to study for a degree as an adult and a determination to succeed but this may be constrained by structural factors such as financial issues. The interaction of agency and structure are also at play in life transition processes and biographical narratives highlight transitions in the learning

life course (Hallqvist, Ellström, & Hayden, 2012; Biesta et al., 2011). Experiencing and coping with life transitions is a biographical learning experience as a person's biography is linked with learning or biographicity as termed by Alheit and Dausien (2002). Learning, from this perspective, is an integral part of a person's biography so that "without biography there can be no learning, without learning there is no biography" (Alheit & Dausien, 2002, p. 15).

Biographical research can be used in radical, collective and practical ways by combining "the principles and practice of biographical methods with those underpinning feminism and radical/popular adult education" (Merrill, 2007, p. 86). Such research enables educators to understand where their students are coming from. This is in the tradition of popular education which advocates including the learners' experiences in the curriculum in order to challenge the structural inequalities they face. Drawing on the idea of Pierre Dominicé (2000) biographies can be used as a learning resource in the 'classroom' as a means of enabling learners to understand their way of learning in universities or in adult/community education.

## THE COMPLEXITIES OF DOING BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

This section draws on a European study on the experiences of non-traditional students in higher education and their subsequent transition into the labour market to illustrate the complexities but also the value of doing biographical research. The project is entitled 'Enhancing the Employability of Non-traditional Students in Higher Education' (EMPLOY) and involved six European countries but this chapter will focus on the UK study. Employability is currently given high priority by universities and policy-makers and there is an assumption that all students will benefit in the labour market by learning to become 'employable'. Our research, however, took a critical stance on employability as adopted by a few other researchers such as Tomlinson (2012). The voices of the working-class adult students we interviewed revealed experiences of inequality in relation to employability and transitioning to the labour market as HE institutions are not a level playing field. In Bourdieu's (1986) terms middle-class students have advantages in terms of social, cultural and economic capitals and age which make them more favourable to employers than adult working-class graduates. Collectively the participants' stories offer a powerful critique of the hierarchical UK higher education system. They also highlight the entrenchment of class, gender, race and age inequalities and practices in society. In terms of sampling we interviewed students in their first year of degree study and again after graduation as well as a cohort of graduates. Longitudinal research helps a researcher to build trust and really get to know participants' lives in depth. Importantly it highlights changes to the self over time.

Using biographical methods in this study generated thick description or 'a good story'. "By good stories we mean narrative material that is both rich in detail but also experientially inclusive and reflective in character" (Merrill & West, 2009, p. 113). Biographical interviews involve interpretation by the interviewee and

interviewer and are spaces which are creative and dialogical. Importance is attached to building secure, collaborative relationships to listening and working respectfully with participants (Stanley & Wise, 1993) as well as emphasizing that biographical interviews are a form of learning for those involved. Building a trusting relationship is central to the interview process (Oakley, 1981). Following the feminist tradition we strove to build a more equal and democratic relationship between the interviewer and interviewee encouraging a conversational style. Biographical interviewing is a social process and the subjectivity and inter-subjectivity of both the interviewee and the interviewer forms part of this as stories are co-structured and interpreted. As Stanley and Wise point out:

> All research involves, as its basis, interaction, a relationship, between researcher and researched … Because the basis of all research is a relationship. This necessarily involves the presence of the researcher as a person. Personhood cannot be left out of the research process … We see the presence of the researcher's self as central in the research. (1993, p. 161)

Such an interview approach is more demanding and intense for the researcher than 'traditional' approaches. A collaborative interview should involve the participants as fully as possible in the research process, not only during the interview but afterwards through giving their story back to them as a transcript. This enables participants to reflect on their story and add to it if they want or even delete sentences through a "dialogical processes that assist story givers in untangling the complex meanings of their own lived experience" (Lawthom, 1997, p. 456).

## UNDERSTANDING CLASS AND HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH BIOGRAPHICAL METHODS

More than other research methods biographical approaches reveal the complexities and inequalities experienced in people's everyday lives at both an individual and collective level. This section looks at the significance of these aspects through the stories of non-traditional adult students in higher education studying at an elite UK university and their transition to the graduate labour market. The following is not an in-depth outline of their lives but a partial one. All were working-class and for women and black students class inequality is also intersected by gender and race. Age inequality was another key factor which impacted on all of them in relation to entering the labour market. In their teens they did not consider going to university and these attitudes were related to class and gender cultures in their family and community. As Paul reflects:

> It was a working-class area and people didn't really do well academically there. I don't think it's any reflection of how capable people are but there was just a kind of culture of you didn't want to be a swot … My family weren't too pushy and the idea that university is a waste of time. It wasn't an option for me'.

For Sue:

> There was no pressure at all that I remember from parents. It was do whatever you want to do and what's going to make you happy and I was like 'I have no idea what I want to do.

As a result most of the participants left school with few or no qualifications. Some undertook a range of jobs before entering university which were unskilled or semi-skilled and low paid – jobs which some found boring. Paul, for example, ended up as a roofer working for his uncle. Studying for a degree offered them a potential for more fulfilling lives and an opportunity denied them at eighteen. Most studied a social studies degree aimed at local adult students. While there is another local university they chose Warwick because it is a top institution in the belief that it would help them in the competitive labour market. Sharon chose law conscious of the university hierarchy and attitudes of employers: "it is the best especially for Law and I know that solicitors can be quite prickly about which university you've been to, to whether they employ you or not. I've got into the top five universities from coming from nothing". Once in the institution participants became aware of class (and age) differences between themselves and middle class students and some lecturers. This led at times to a feeling of being the 'other' and not belonging. Paul articulates it in the following way:

> I have felt isolated and … self-conscious because I don't fit in just because of the age thing and I think like there is like a class issue as well. And this ability to communicate my ideas vocally when I'm sitting next to some of these people that's just I don't know whether it's to do with their education but I've sat next to lots of people who can pick their words off the shelf and are very, very articulate people. They're quite intimidating.

Class differences were also perceived and experienced by other adult students in terms of knowledge, dress and finance. In relation to 'employability' for the labour market inequalities were associated not only with class but also gender and age. They knew that the top companies targeted students at Warwick but were conscious that "… when it comes to what employers are looking for I don't think I'm it for a lot of them" (Paul). Many felt that, in Bourdieu's term, they lacked the cultural and social capital which employers want. Sharon realized the importance of the power of social and economic capitals which she lacks thus putting her at a disadvantage to the point of being discriminated against. She witnessed the younger middle class students using their social capital to get into the legal profession:

> Some of the students I've spoken to, their parents are partners in solicitors so obviously they're going to walk into a job. Definitely down the barrister route it's about what private school you've been to. I think money definitely because if you haven't got the money you're not going to the bar. It costs too much money – £18,000 and £12,000 (cost of the Legal Practice course) for solicitors

and then books. I think it's more who you know as well as what university you're from.

Students are increasingly expected by employers to gain work experience but this is generally unpaid which working-class students cannot afford as they need to earn money during the university vacation nor can they travel outside their locality. Age was also a discriminatory factor:

Yes, at the end of this year I will have a degree but looking at my age and looking at the students – so many young students with the same degree as me when it comes to employment. Employers – maybe they will say – 'Yes you have your degree expertise but your age' and would rather be looking at someone younger than me. (Kate)

Family commitments also tie adults to a particular locality but graduate schemes do not make allowances for this:

Most of the graduate schemes that are available are for people without responsibilities. I can't go travelling and leave my son at home. There doesn't seem to be any niche for graduate schemes that are solely based locally. The jobs I've looked at they're looking for people that are flexible and are willing to work all the hours god sends and I have commitments. But that isn't taken into account for the mature student market. (Jane)

As a result of the inequalities and discrimination they experienced many of these adult students took a while to find a job and when they did it was not always at graduate level. Paul, for example, despite having obtained a first class degree in Politics (the highest UK classification) ended up going back to work as a roofer and finding himself in a precarious work situation as contracts are short term:

Like one person I'm working for he gets the contracts for the schools but what they'll do, like you finish one school and they'll say 'it might be in a few weeks' because they want to keep you hanging on … Working in building you're pretty much on a zero hours contract. You won't get any holiday pay, no sick pay, if it's raining you won't get paid or if there's no work they'll just drop you.

Doing a politics degree politicized Paul and he analyzed his position through a critical Marxist lens. He had hoped to do a Masters' degree full-time after finishing his undergraduate degree but with having a family he felt that was out of the question financially. After a year, however, he was able to start a Masters' degree part-time while also trying to become self-employed as a roofer.

Although the above is a brief snapshot their voices illuminate how biographies are located in the past, present and future and within particular historical, social, political and economic contexts. Their individual stories highlight commonality between their experiences in their past lives, at university and in the labour market

as a result of the impact of inequalities on their biographies and in particular, class, gender and age. They illuminate the institutional barriers and inequalities of the UK higher education system and the graduate labour market. Yet at the same time while they are aware of these, their stories also show how they are able to use their agency, to varying degrees, to challenge this and find a path for themselves while also recognizing that the structural inequalities continue unchanged. As Thompson stresses biographical inquiry is a "way of exercising critical consciousness and of producing knowledge from the inside about gender, class and education, deriving from personal, particular and shared experience. Not in the pursuit of ultimate truth but in the search for greater, more nuanced, understanding" (2000, p. 6).

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Critical and feminist biographical methodology and radical adult education share similarities in their approaches as both place the interviewee/learner at the centre of the research/learning processes. Importantly they are concerned with challenging inequalities and oppression in society in a pursuit for social justice. Biographical inquiry is, therefore, more than just about a research method and as feminists and critical researchers remind us research is not neutral: it is political. Biographical interviewing is also a learning process for both the researcher and researched. Telling a story is potentially a powerful and transformative experience (Gouthro, 2014; Merrill & West, 2009) enabling a participant to reflect back on their life through a reflective and critical lens. For Stroobants "the interconnection of narrative and learning of both the research subjects and the researcher is an inherent feature of narrative biographical research" (2005, p. 48). Biographies and life histories can also be a critical learning tool in higher education and in other educational contexts as a means of raising critical discussion about inequalities in society. Such an approach sits in the tradition of Freire (1972) by learning through experience and 'really useful knowledge' (Johnson, 1988).

The social purpose of the university is currently being subsumed by the dominance of neo-liberalism and managerialism so it is becoming more important than ever for researchers and adult educators to keep a critical tradition and a social purpose agenda alive although the spaces for doing so are getting harder. In the UK we have largely lost this but as researchers and adult educators we need to, in the words of Raymond Williams (1980), find 'resources for a 'journey of hope'. Biographical inquiry which uses a critical, collaborative and egalitarian approach is one way of doing this.

## REFERENCES

Alheit, P., & Dausien, B. (2002). The double face of lifelong learning: Two analytical perspectives on a silent revolution. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 34*(1), 3–22.

Becker, H. S. (1967). Whose side are we on? *Social Problems, 14*(3), 239–247.

Bertaux, D. (Ed.). (1981). *Biography and society.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Biesta, G., Field, J., Hodkinson, P., Macleod, F., & Goodson, I. (2011). *Improving learning through the lifecourse: Learning lives.* London: Routledge.

Blumer, M. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspectives and method.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J., & Wengraf, T. (2000). *The turn to biographical methods in social science: Comparative issues and examples.* London: Routledge.

Denzin, N. K. (1984). *On understanding emotion.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dominicé, P. (2000). *Learning from our lives.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gouthro, P. (2014). Stories of learning across the lifespan: Life history and biographical research in adult education. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 20*(1), 87–103.

Hallqvist, A., Ellström P., & Hayden, A. L. (2012). The many faces of biographical learning. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 44*(1), 70–84.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently.* London: Sage.

Johnson, R. (1988). 'Really useful knowledge' 1790–1850: Memories in the 1980s. In T. Lovett (Ed.), *Radical approaches to adult education.* London: Routledge.

Lawthom, R. (1997). What do I do? A feminist in non-feminist research. *Feminism and Psychology, 7*(4), 533–538.

Meltzer, B. N., Petras, J. W., & Reynolds, L. T. (1975). *Symbolic interactionism: Genesis, varieties and criticisms.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Merrill, B. (2007). Recovering class and the collective in the stories of adult learners. In L. West, P. Alheit, A. S. Andersen, & B. Merrill (Eds.), *Using biographical and life history approaches in the study of adult and lifelong learning: European perspectives.* Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang.

Merrill, B., & West, L. (2009). *Using biographical methods in social research.* London: Sage.

Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms. In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doing feminist research.* London: Routledge.

Plummer, K. (1991). Introduction. K. Plummer (Ed.), *Symbolic interactionism, foundations and history.* London: Edward Elgar.

Plummer, K. (2001). *Documents of life 2: An invitation to a critical humanism.* London: Sage Publications.

Popaduik, N. (2004). The feminist biographical method in psychological research. *The Qualitative Report, 9*(3), 392–412.

Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research.* London: MacMillan.

Roberts, B. (2002). *Biographical research.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Shaw, C. (1966). *Jack the roller: A delinquent boy's own story.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Smith, D. (1987). Women's perspective as a radical critique of sociology. In S. Harding (Ed.), *Feminism and social theory* (pp. 84–96)*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology.* London: Routledge.

Stroobants, V. (2005). Stories about learning in narrative biographical research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18*(1), 47–61.

Thomas, W. I., & Znaniecki, F. (1958). *The Polish peasant in Europe and America.* New York, NY: Dover Publications.

Thompson, J. (2000). *Women, class and education.* London: Routledge.

Tomlinson, M. (2012). Graduate employability: A review of conceptual and theoretical themes. *Higher Education Policy, 25*, 412–431.

Williams, R. (1989). *Resources of hope.* London: Verso.

Woodley, A., Wagner, L., Slowey, M., Fulton, O., & Browner, T. (1987). *Choosing to learn.* Buckingham, SRHE: Open University Press.

Wright, M. C. (1970). *The sociological imagination.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

EMILIO LUCIO-VILLEGAS

# 3. DOWN TO THE RIVER

*People's Memories and Adult Education*

*For Will, the arrival of his grandfather was strange*
*and exciting. Jack Price turned to him and talked,*
*as the others had not heard him talk since their childhood.*
*The end of work seemed to have released his spirit.*
*He read Will's school-books, talked of the politics he remembered,*
*teased both Will and Harry with dialect words*
*that he had known as a boy but that had gone out of use.*
                              – Raymond Williams, Border Country, p. 240

## INTRODUCTION

In the age of the Roman Empire, the shores of the Guadalquivir River traversed a village that we call Rivendel. After then, and until the middle of the past century the river had been the core of the village life. The production system, the culture, the identity and a great part of the history of the place cannot be understood without the river. But at the present time, the memories of the river are becoming lost; the crafts associated with it – from fishing activities to brick factories –are being replaced as the village has become a dormitory town. A collective memory of the river is disappearing, a topic that I will return to again later. Nowadays, few people live directly from the river and, if they do, it is usually in a low-paid jobs at the fringes of the economy. Living from the river is considered an ancient and obsolete way of life totally out of sync with the mainstream driven by globalization and modernization processes.

In this chapter I explore a research project which tries to reconstruct memories of the river through oral history and photographs. This is based on a theoretical framework that contends that in a society when many procedures are standardized, the act of safeguarding popular creativity is a vital element in guaranteeing people's development. In this sense, this chapter attempts to recover the creativity that is present in the traditional crafts arguing that this creativity resides in the community. Crafts which were at the heart of the community feed communal traditions which sustain social solidarity. By recovering and maintaining these traditional crafts, even if only as leisure activities, it may be possible to tap into people's capacity for creativity. Research on memory, craft and knowledge can help with the reconstruction of local

cultural identities and heritage that can enable people to become protagonists in their own lives and, in doing so, regain some of their own power. This can occur where research is related to adult education in a liberating way that enables individuals and communities to build a critical reflection on their life, cultural heritage and the history of their places.

'Memory work' used to move towards a historical reconstruction of a forgotten community requires a specific type of theoretical and methodological approach. I will describe this through an exploration of an ongoing research project I am involved in with others in Rivendel which uses oral history and photographs. The main tool for the recovery of memory in this project are interviews (using an oral history approach). In this chapter I will explain this process and my research methodology in detail. Before I do so I will first offer an overview of my theoretical positioning. Then based on the material gathered and this theoretical lens I will offer a historical reconstruction of Rivendel based on this research which will lead to reflections on theorizing change and transition.

## UNDERSTANDING CRAFT AND CULTURE: THE POLITICS OF RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE

Craftwork is an important part of people's everyday lives as well as their traditions. It creates a shared identity based on their experience derived from their relationships with others and with the surrounding environment. Experience here could be considered as one of the dimensions of adult education and work (Lucio-Villegas, 2015). It is, to a certain degree, the result and the process through which an individual processes knowledge and shares knowledge with others. Furthermore, experience from a Freirean perspective is the basis for a problem-posing education, and it is therefore the source for organizing the processes of teaching and learning to enable people to analyze social change (Freire, 1970). But, sometimes and this is crucial for the research project under discussion – whole swathes of social experience can be lost or rendered invisible in the transition to the 'new economy' (Sennett, 2000).

These experiences can be recovered as educational tools (Lucio-Villegas, 2015, Olesen, 1989). By exploring these experiences it is possible to discern the relationship between adult education, identities, productive work and crafts. According to Gelpi (1990):

> The relationships between work and society are not only of economic and social nature. The lack of identity of a community, a country or several countries has consequences concerning the content and the quality of the work. (p. 17)

There is, Gelpi adds, an essential cultural dimension in reflecting on work. Deriving from this, Gelpi talked on the cultures of work, trying to define identities and bonds that people create around it.

In previous social formations the relationships between artisans and their communities were very close. In fact, as Sennett states "in the traditional world of

the ancient potter or doctor, it was the community who defined the pattern of good work" (2010, p. 38). In Gramscian terms:

> The artisan produces pieces of furniture, ploughs, knives, peasant's houses, stoves, etc., always in the same way, according to the traditional taste of one village, province or region. (Manacorda, 1976, p. 273)

The artisan creates whatever they like, but at the same time trying to capture the spirit of people. In short, it seems that these relations among culture, identity, and community life are always present in organizing a part of the quotidian life of people and the system of production.

Today, the quotidian is homogenized to benefit commercial companies which are, largely, dictating people's taste. The work of the artisans is lost, because it is singular and follows guidelines based on the interests of the people, rather than aligning these interests with mass commercial appeal.

In addition, the structure of work has changed. "The time of production is fragmentary and very diverse and the quality of work varies in regard to the content, the development and the aim" (Gelpi, 2004, p. 111). This form of the organization of work abandons some of the characteristics of the craft and craftsmen's work such as the innovative changes in the final product at the end of the production process and the creativity to adapt the final result to the taste and necessities of the communities where the artisans work and live.

Sennett (2000) studied changes in people's daily lives produced by this new organization of work some of these are: the impossibility for many people to coordinate a career due to the constant mobility that means "never for a long time". People are living in a constant state of unpredictability when it comes to organizing their own career and life, in a situation in which their experience is not valued. As Gelpi (2004) stated "All men [sic] have lacked their history even though it is evident that a part of their work's culture is not only still alive but it is essential for production and identity" (p. 46).

An important point to reflect on is that Sennett's argument related to the loss of pride of craftsmanship which, in some ways, means identity. They are people "devoted to doing their best work for the simple fact of doing it well" (Sennett, 2010, p. 32); in fact arguably doing good work is fundamental to the identity of artisans. This entails a specific way of organizing work, and learning and teaching of the craft, and even of living life. A job well done means "curiosity, research and learning from the uncertainty" (Sennett, 2010, p. 66).

Finally, I want to refer to culture. According to Raymond Williams, culture, apart from being a very complicated word (1983, p. 87), is a plural word with diverse meanings. It is not possible to talk about culture, but rather about cultures, and this diversity is not only related to different countries or historic periods but to "social and economic groups within a nation" (Williams, 1983, p. 89).

In the end, culture is a way of life that includes work, intellectual practices or artistic activities among other things. In this direction it is possible to consider the

activities performed by artisans as a part of the local cultures that are in danger of disappearing through the globalization of production, but not limited to this.

According to Peter Mayo (2010), Gramsci differentiated between 'high' and 'low' culture. Low culture, in some ways, could be related to popular culture or folklore in Gramscian terms. He also considered that research and education may help people to go from folklore and common sense to good sense as a path to grasp the world and analyze it (Manacorda, 1976).

Raymond Williams highlighted the role of criticism in culture (Welton, 1982): as the possibility to think about things beyond collecting data and information without any criteria. To Williams (1983), criticism "developed to … CULTURE" (p. 83, capital letters in original) with "its positive sense for good or informed judgment" (p. 83). Criticism also means "a definitive practice, in active and complex relations with its whole situation" (Williams, 1983, p. 86). In this sense, it could be said that criticism is the way to develop individual and collective creativity.

My methodological choices try to provide a response to these matters. For that, the selection of interviews as the main tool to collect information is an attempt to encourage informants to also be creative.

METHODOLOGY

The oral history methodology used for this research drew on a set of interviews and the use of pictures. At this time, nine interviews – 60 minutes length each – have been conducted; with eight men and one woman. People interviewed were selected by local people taking part in the research team. The main criteria for selecting interviewers were that they were people who had an ample knowledge of the river and the city and the crafts associated with it. Adhering to these requirements, individuals interviewed included: sailors, fishermen, and a net manufacturer, the owner of a brick factory, and, finally, an older woman with a profound knowledge of the river.

Members of the research team were: adult educators, people working in City Hall, women involved in the womens' resource centre, and adult learners. There were also university students helping in the process of interviews.

Interviews were always audio recorded and, in some cases, video recorded. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using purposive categories to organize the people's discourses about the river and their quotidian life. For example, it is possible to reconstruct the memories of the people from categories such as: the crafts associated with the river, the feeling of mystery of the river, the role of women, etc.

As an interview is a kind of planned conversation, it is important to say something about the planning itself. The first question presented to the informants always was about and how they first entered into the labor market. This is the crucial point to introduce people to remember about the craft. After this it is possible to return to their life in Rivendel, about the changes in their surrounding world: the family, work, village, river, and so forth.

Photographs have been useful for presenting moments of the daily life of people and communities. In this sense it is possible to undertake an analysis of the pictures by asking ourselves about the major themes in the culture of the community (Becker, 1986) or, as a most modest goal, to present, in a visual way, the work of artisans and the life in the community. In doing this, it is possible to shift our research orientation from the larger questions to more practical things (e.g. what is important to the people that take these photographs? How did they take the photos? What was the purpose of the photos?).

The sources and intended methodological purposes of these photos are important to note. There are two sources: (a) old photos: professional or mainly domestic pictures. In the case of these photos it is not possible to know the reason the picture was taken, nor the things that pictures does not include (Becker, 1986). (b) Pictures taken by the researchers during the project (e.g. pictures of the river or of the net workshop). These pictures were chosen by local people; either those involved in the Women's Municipal Centre or in the adult education school. The primary idea is to use these pictures as codification – in a Freirean sense – in future work with adult learners. Codification and decoding are two steps in Freire's methodology. In the first, reality in presented to the learners – usually using pictures or drawings. Then, the process of decoding starts and is organized through dialogue to bring to the surface the diverse realities where people live (Freire, 1970). In this sense the use of the pictures could become a powerful element to help people reconstruct their memory of the river. It provides a direct link between research and adult education to reconstruct people's memories of crafts in an adult learning context.

## THE RIVER AND THE VILLAGE: A RECONSTRUCTION

In the middle of the past century two elements arose which changed life in the village and the relationships between the people and the river in Rivendel.

The first one is related to the construction of a great shipyard in the nearby city of Seville. When the shipyard started to recruit workers, they looked for individuals with a basic knowledge of boats. As Seville is not on the coastline, the only people with experience and knowledge were in the surrounding villages which had strong connections to the river. Rivendel was one of these due to their traditional production system based on the river. As recruitment was based on familial ties, a lot of people went to work in the shipyard with the promise of leaving behind the poverty that, at that time, devastated the rural areas of the country. As one of the people that went to work in the shipyard affirmed, he changed his work "because there were no other possibilities, because on the river I earned very little". The loss of the river as a means of commerce also means the end of shipbuilding and other traditional crafts associated with it, such as the boat builders. Historically there were some small shipyards in the village for both building and repairing fishing and transport boats. In fact, some activities are still present but "before we had 50 [fishing boats] and now only 3 remain".

Combined with poverty, it is possible to view the newly created jobs as a way to distance oneself from the familial work, rife with confusion, as I will examine later on.

A second element that can explain the demise of the production system and the relationships between people and river is the appearance of washing machines. In this case, washing machines are the metaphor of the pollution of the river: "When washing machines arrived, the laundry soap began polluting the river".

At the beginning of the 1960s with the start of the wave of industrialization of the country (and the shipyard is also an example of this) – the pollution of the river – more from the industries than by the washing machines, meant the end of fishing as one of the main sources of work and wealth in the village. Industrialization processes also meant the construction of roads and motorways that replaced the commerce previously conducted on the river.



*Figure 3.1. River in present time (Guadalquivir River, Spain)*

Since the late 1960s, other important changes in the village have occurred, basically related to the shift from a village with a specific and specialized production system into a dormitory town. These changes meant the loss of diverse elements in the daily life of people. The heart of these changes is related to the river and the loss of its importance as the core of life of the village. Perhaps one of the most visible changes is in relation to the river as the way of transporting people and goods from

one village to another. In the past, the river was a kind of motorway from Rivendel to the mouth of the river at the Atlantic Ocean – *"before everything went by boat"*.

As well as transport; fishing was another important constituent of the production system. There were diverse species of fish, but the most important was the sturgeon. In fact, until 1970 there was a caviar factory in the village. The fishing of sturgeon also led people to the marsh, a place of mystery and legend. It is defined as a natural border between civilization and the unknown. This physical border amplifies the myth of the river as a place outside of the control of people: the river can ruin cows, crops, etc. It also is a place of mystery and disease. This unknown element enabled people to create a magical consciousness about the River that is fatalist and beyond control: "Here you have your thirty cows in winter and then a flood came, and when you could get there [to the place where the cows were], there were no more cows". In short, it could said that "Here began a physical border. From here on down the river it was the marsh […] of the mosquito diseases".

The end of fishing activities also meant the end of other traditional craft associated with it. For instance, net manufacturing. In fact, today only one net manufacturer remains in Rivendel.



*Figure 3.2. Fishing nets*

Traditionally crafts are a kind of heritage passed from father to son – usually the oldest son. In this traditional kinship structure, women are consigned to the domestic space and particular activities associated with the home in this heritage. The production system is based on family relationships which imply the extended family living and working together. This result in a context where social roles are intermixed: the father is the boss; there's no pay for the work, etc. "I went to work with my father. My father was the master and I was the sailor". These complex intermingling of roles resulted in some people having to or feeling the need to escape from this context by looking for a different job in another place, such as the shipyard.

Linked to these crafts, a specific language and way of knowing was created. When crafts – in this sequence from fathers to sons – are vanishing, this specialized language is also lost. The cessation of the craft means that language diversity is disappearing and some words are becoming archaic. "You bring a piece of fabric, a piece of fabric called *La Ritana* [it is not possible to translate this] for one side. For the other side another piece of fabric and in the middle is the fishing net".

## REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH: GLOBALIZATION & SOCIAL CHANGE

We are living in a society which is enmeshed in a unstoppable process of globalization. Local identities are confronted by modernization and the pressures to change traditional ways of life and work in order to increase market profitability (Beck, 1998; Santos, 1998). I have previously studied these processes of change in the case of fishing activities (Lucio-Villegas, 2006). In this research two powerful concepts emerged as important: social change and transition.

Social change can be defined "as the difference observed between the previous and subsequent state of an area of social reality" (Giner, 1985, p. 217). According to Rocher (1985), social change means observable changes, and can be verified within short periods in geographical and socio-cultural areas. It is important to stress that, according to Rocher (1985), change goes beyond purely economic aspects and extends to the way people live, their feelings and their relationships. In short, the concept of social change can allow us to consider the loss of cultural identities that communities – and the people living in them – are suffering in relation to their way of life and the production system associated with it. In order to research social change, Rocher (1985) considers six questions: What is changing? How does the change work? What is the rhythm of the change? What are the elements and determining factors of change? Who are the agents of change? What can we anticipate in the future?

On the other hand, Godelier (1987) spoke of societies in transition. This occurs when they have greater internal and external difficulties in producing traditional economic and social relations. In the process of transition, other forms of economic and social relationships appear. This concept is also linked to the processes of modernization. These processes are associated with the massive incorporation of certain changes as, for instance, in the production system because it is considered

obsolete. By doing so, the process of modernization is based on curtailing crafts and other forms of economic trade to a kind of marginal niche – in some cases catering to tourism and functioning as anthropological objects of curiosity. Riverdel is an example of these processes of modernization. At present there only is a net manufacturer and the nets are usually used by conservationists for marking the birds and not for fishing. There are no boat builders. It could be said that the crafts are lost, along with the word associated to them.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This research gives rise to complex findings which have significance for adult education as this concluding discussion illustrates. Firstly, the contradictory feelings that people face in regards to the river. The river is the source of life but, at the same time, it is a dangerous place and it is better not to go there. In some ways it could be affirmed that the production system is dissociated from the quotidian life. The complex view of the river more as an enemy than as a source of work and richness could explain the reason that the inhabitants abandoned their lives on the river. To investigate these beliefs may help people to shift from a magical consciousness to a critical one (Freire, 1970), or in Gramscian terms to move from 'common sense' to 'good sense'. This contribution is clearly related to adult education. In this sense, it can be said that the processes of Popular Education should be rooted in the interest and curiosity of the people and should produce really useful knowledge for individuals and communities. In this case, the really useful knowledge is related to the knowledge of the history and to preserve the present by considering the past. This may also allow people to be situated in their community and society in a path of resistance and transformation.

A second issue is related to the impact of modernization processes. It seems that some of the most profound changes that the village suffered are related to the shift from a rural society to an industrial and urban one. The integration of the artisans working in the shipyard in Seville and in other jobs around the world was a chance for them to position themselves in more secure jobs, increase their salary and, in economic terms, to improve their quality of life.

The challenge here is to determine how to preserve a traditional production system while simultaneously guaranteeing both jobs and quality of life. As well, this is connected to processes of social change that have occurred in the village in the last 60 years. They are – mainly related to industrialization processes – the construction of a shipyard in the city of Seville, or the pollution of the river, as mentioned above.

Another important element is to try to avoid the Manichaeism between global and local; considering the local as good and the global as evil. Robertson (1995, 2012) states that the local means, among other things, a reconstruction of the global. Important connections exist between global and local trends that are derived from mutual influences. In some ways, the local is shaping the global. This occurs within the existence of power relations as the loss of the traditional production system

can be explained – among other things – by the construction of a shipyard and the pollution of the river, which are global matters related to the expansion of a certain model of development rooted in economy and not in well-being.

Culture is closely linked to language. Subordinate culture is reflected, among other things, in language (Diaz Salazar, 1991). If words are lost, we are losing an important part of this popular culture that, in this case, is represented by a specific and technical oral language. But the most important thing here is that these words are in the collective memory and in the cultural identity of the communities. Preserving these words and the language associated with it is also to preserve the creativity of the community and their identity because words express the world of individuals and communities. And the question here is how to preserve the orality in a society – and in literacy processes – that always reinforces reading and writing? Grammar in this sense is political and linked to dominant culture.

Opposite to this hegemonic project of domination are interesting experiences that combine literacy, memories and craft. One of these is the Currach Project (Reeves, 2010) rooted in Edinburgh that combines environmental issues – the recovery of the Union Canal and the preservation of a singular and traditional boat – the Currach, with literacy processes such as writing, reading and numeracy to build the boat. These kinds of initiatives enable people to be situated in their own reality, to be aware of it and establish ties with other situations. In short, it can be said that they reinforce the ability for people to develop their own creativity that is, in a certain way, a form of recovering the power lost in an educational system and a society based on standardized procedures. Reconstructing our collective memories of the river through oral histories can enable people to regain their local cultural identities and heritage and become protagonists of their life and, in doing so, regain some of their own power.

## REFERENCES

Beck, U. (1998). *¿Qué es la globalización?* Barcelona: Paidós.

Becker, H. S. (1986). ¿Dicen la verdad las fotografías? En T. D. Cook y Ch. S. Reichardt (Eds.), *Métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos en investigación educativa* (pp. 148–170). Madrid: Morata.

Díaz Salazar, R. (1991). *El proyecto de Gramsci.* Madrid: Anthropos.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.

Geertz, C. (1987). *La interpretación de las culturas.* Barcelona: Gedisa.

Gelpi, E. (1990). *Educación permanente. Problemas laborales y perspectivas educativas.* Madrid: Popular.

Gelpi, E. (2004). *Trabajo futuro. La formación como proyecto político.* Xàtiva: Edicions del CREC.

Gelpi, E. (2008). *El trabajo: utopía cotidiana.* Xàtiva: Edicions del CREC.

Giner, S. (1985). *Sociología.* Barcelona: Península.

Godelier, M. (1987). Introducción: el análisis de los procesos de transición. *Revista Internacional de Ciencias Sociales, 114*, 5–16.

Gramsci, A. (1974). *La formación de los intelectuales.* Barcelona: Grijalbo.

Hobsbawm, E. (2001). *La era de la revolución, 1789–1848.* Barcelona: Critica.

Junta de Andalucía. (2016). Retrieved June 30, 2016, from http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/ institutodeestadisticay cartografia/sima/htm/sm41034.htm

Käpplinger, B. (2015). Adult education research between field and rhizome—a bibliometrical analysis of conference programmes of ESREA. *European Journal of Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 6*(2), 139–157.

Labov, W. (1983). *Modelos sociolingüísticos*. Madrid: Cátedra.

Lucio-Villegas, E. (2006). Desarrollo y cambio social en espacios sociales en transformación. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria, 12–13*, 119–135.

Lucio-Villegas, E. (2015). *Adult education in communities. Approaches from a participatory perspective.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Manacorda, M. A. (1976). *La alternativa pedagógica*. Barcelona: Nueva Síntesis.

Mayo, P. (2010). Antonio Gramsci and his relevance for the education of adults. In P. Mayo (Ed.), *Gramsci and educational thought* (pp. 21–37). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Olesen, H. S. (1989). *Adult education and everyday life*. Roskilde: Roskilde University.

Reeves, S. (2010). Construir un Currach. En E. Lucio-Villegas y P. Aparicio (Eds.), *El valor de la palabra. Alfabetizaciones, liberaciones y ciudadanías planetarias* (pp. 217–231). Xàtiva: Educions del CREC.

Robertson, R. (1995). Glocalisation: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity. En M. Featherstone, S. Lash, y R. Robertson (Eds.), *Global modernities* (pp. 25–44). London: Sage Publications.

Robertson, R. (2012). Globalisation or glocalisation. *The Journal of International Communication, 18*(2), 191–208.

Rocher, G. (1985). *Introducción a la sociología general*. Barcelona: Herder.

Sampedro, J. L. (2003). *El río que nos lleva*. Barcelona: Destino.

Santos, B. S. (1998). *Reinventar a Democracia*. Lisboa: Fundação Mário Soares/Gradiva Publicações.

Saramago, J. (2015). *Viaje a Portugal*. Barcelona: De Bolsillo.

Sennett, R. (2000). *La corrosion del carácter*. Madrid: Anagrama.

Sennett, R. (2010). *El artesano.* Madrid: Anagrama.

Welton, M. (1982). Gramsci's contribution to the analysis of public education knowledge. *The Journal of Educational Thought, 16*(3), 140–149.

Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, R. ([1960] 2013). *Border country*. Llandibïe: Library of Wales.

ANDREA GALIMBERTI, LAURA FORMENTI AND
MIRELLA FERRARI

# 4. TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

*Learning from Young Adults through the Exploratory Use of
Multiple Methods*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses a study in Lombardy, Northern Italy, involving care leavers, i.e. young people who came of age while living in fosterage (children's homes and/or foster families), and had experienced professional intervention in their lives (social workers, in-home assistants, special educators, psychotherapists, etc.). The research is based on the use of multiple methods (critical quantitative research, auto/biographical methods and cooperative inquiry) to explore the transition to adulthood in distressed lives and to interrogate the learning processes occurring amidst the foster care system.

The years between 18 and 21 are crucial in the transitions young adults make from the 'protection' of the foster care system to the 'agency' of adulthood. Welfare services in Italy offers 'administrative extension' as a special program aimed at supporting this transition, but there is not much research on this process. We wish to explore the learning at many levels produced through and in this "foster care system". Is this learning conducive to the exercise of agency, freedom, self-direction, reflexivity, and a meaningful life? How does this system respond to families and their children made vulnerable by poverty, lack of support from the social community, immigration, etc.?

A critical, thoughtful and 'care-full' appreciation of such forms of social intervention needs to be undertaken. The main focus of professionals and decision makers is on the economic, social, and individual psychological aspects but there is little understanding of specific learning factors intervening in the process of identity building, life and career design, relationship building, and meaning making. Addressing this requires innovative, multi-stranded forms of research.

We started our research by reviewing existing quantitative data on the topic. Numbers, however, do not tell us very much about meaning making. So, we moved towards a qualitative and participatory research framework involving a group of care leavers and professionals as well, to gain a fuller view of the phenomenon, focusing on the insiders' perspective. We used auto/biographic methods (Merrill & West, 2009) as well as cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1996; Formenti, 2008) to create

a basis for shared reflection and reflexivity. In our view, these methods are useful to promote learning and agency through participants' critical reflection and active participation and, in this sense, they are coherent with our view of adult education as an emancipatory project.

## THE SCENARIO: COLLECTING DATA ON A COMPLEX PHENOMENON

Protection and fosterage[1] of minors and people without a family, or whose family is considered not to have enough care resources, has been the topic of recent discussions and debates in Italy, but remains under-researched by social scientists.

Systematic research on best practices and models of social services is lacking. It is concerning that none of the six countries considered by the 4th ANCI (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani – National Association of Municipalities) Report (Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Belgium and Spain) produced regular comprehensive statistics (ANCI, 2012, p. 19); and this absence of a standard model to collect comparable data hinders the development of regional macro-level profiles.

Current research provides a partial and fragmented view of what occurs in fosterage. There is a need to provide greater context for research. For our study, it is important to focus on the 18–21 age group, since the minors who were in foster care are not automatically discharged after their coming of age (Belotti, 2010). Some of them volunteer to receive further support until they are 21 years old, by entering a program called 'administrative extension'. It entails constraints, monitoring, and semi-autonomy in work and living for varying periods of duration.

Fosterage is a complex and layered system, a network of agencies and actors, comprising municipalities, the juvenile court, the local social services for minors (connected to health, care, and education services), the private agencies that rule residences (*comunità minori, case-famiglia, comunità mamma-bambino*, etc.) and offer educational support to minors and families, local networks of foster families), and a panoply of professionals (social workers, psychologists, educators, neuropsychiatrists, and other doctors).

The Municipality (local social services) is legally responsible for monitoring and assessing the progress of minors in foster care. The ANCI Report (2012) highlights difficulties due to general economic shortages, as well as other issues that may hinder good and more effective systemic cooperation: the need to fix national standards for services; a more attentive focus on minors' needs; the promotion of a culture of foster care; the enhancement of previous experiences; the need for greater coordination between the different actors of minors' protection; and monitoring to identify best practices.

Different datasets give us diverse pictures of the sector. ISTAT (2013) identify 28,449 minors in foster care along Italian territory in 2013 and map residential structures: 36% owned by non-profit organizations; 25% for-profit; 24% public administration; 14% religious institutions. Most structures (94%) have more than 10 beds.

In Italy, at 31/12/2014, 12,400 minors (1.2‰) were hosted in residential structures and 14,020 in foster families.[2] The law, in line with the convention for the rights of the child, recommends family fosterage. However, existing data (unfortunately coming from different sources which are not comparable) show an overall growth in institutionalization, as reported by the Children's Authority[3] in 2015.

Surveys[4] show many reasons for separation: relational problems within the family are frequently mentioned, as well as parental inadequacy due to addiction or neglectful behavior. The living conditions and problems of these families are diverse, and poverty is among the factors of children's outplacement, which should not be the case in a democratic society that respects children and citizen's rights.

Gender and ethnic backgrounds are also relevant: numbers of males in care are increasing due to the higher presence of unaccompanied foreign minors; their nationality depends on changing migratory flows: from Romania and Morocco at the beginning (Belotti, 2010), then Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Albania (ANCI, 2012), and more recently Middle-East and Central Africa. Institutionalization becomes a solution for adolescents (or undocumented young adults), who are not vulnerable in the ordinary sense.

Age groups and length of treatment also vary: the adolescent group has been growing recently, as well as those in 'short stay' (less than 24 months), although the average duration of stay is four years. Young adults (18–21) are also increasing in administrative extension.

After fosterage, following Belotti (2010), 50% of careleavers decide to re-enter the family (family of origin, relatives, acquaintances, etc.); 11% begin their journey in autonomy with the search for a job. Foreign young adults tend to choose autonomy three times more than Italians. According to the ISTAT survey[5] (2013) 8% of care leavers become independent, while 31% returns to their family of origin and 24% go into secondary care protection.

These surveys and available databases[6] tend to be focused on the protection of minors and Children's Rights[7] and to rely almost exclusively on quantitative data. While quantitative surveys can be useful in certain respects they depend on simple forms of categorization that blur significant differences, and underestimate the influence of contexts on people's lives.

In general, many seem to 'disappear' from statistics as soon as they come of age. The fosterage system is focused on minors, and to a lesser extent on young adults (18–21 age class), its philosophy being based on protection and children's rights, not least for economic reasons: the money preferably goes where 'children' (and not 'adults') are in distress.

## THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: LOOKING FOR STORIES WITHIN A PARTICIPATORY FRAMEWORK

In our experience, stories have a great potential in illuminating processes of learning that shape the development of an adult identity; we want to use this potential to focus

on the learning biographies of people who are or have been under State 'protection' (that also entails control), until they come, or have come, of age. Our research is then positioned on the verge of a transition, hence a transitional learning (Alheit & Dausien, 2000) that deserves attention. In our view these processes may be explored through qualitative methods to complement the statistical picture outlined above. Narrative materials, specifically, may offer a deeper sense of these young adults' experience than quantitative data.

From the perspective of complexity theory (Osberg & Biesta, 2010; Alhadeff-Jones, 2012) and the systemic approach (Formenti, 2008, 2011, 2015), learning trajectories are not only individual paths, but entangled processes where macro, meso and micro levels are intertwined and inter-dependent. We are especially interested in understanding the action of meaningful *learning contexts* (Edwards, Biesta & Thorpe, 2009) that shape stories and 'reveal' hidden perspectives of meaning, personal and collective scripts and myths, and worldviews (Formenti, West, & Horsdal, 2014). Someone who tells her/his biography is not only 'revealing' her/his path, but making (performing) a representation of structures and discourses in the larger society, family, proximal group, and present situation. Biographical research is deeply aware of the action of dominant discourses and narratives, cultural models, processes of stigmatization etc., in shaping and organizing stories.

How do different systems and narratives connect in these young adults' lives? They grew in different places: original family, foster family(ies) and/or children's housing, school, groups, communities. Each place had its own framework, hence forcing the child to adapt. Were the different contexts and frameworks coherent and easy to compose, or did they clash? And eventually, was this clash able to generate disorienting dilemmas that triggered transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 2009), or were they only dis-orienting and hindering the construction of a sense of identity?

Besides, which kind of transitional spaces (West & Carlson, 2007) were able to foster emancipatory learning? Which kind of guidance (Reid, 2016) – or other meaningful relationships – was offered to these young adults to allow what has been called "biographicity" (Alheit & Dausien, 2000); that is the possibility to develop a new script, a different identity/theory of oneself, and awareness of one's context, that entails a deep understanding of the action of social determinants in one's life, that enables the subject to re-design it in more adaptive and meaningful terms?

*Sampling and the Involvement of Professionals*

The study is currently being carried out in Lombardy, Italy. We started with auto/biographical interviews with a small sample of care leavers (7 males and 3 females, from 18 to 28 years old). Sampling, in this study, is a constitutive part of the research itself. It is the result of a process that was extremely useful to produce reflection and reflexivity. To build our 'sample', and to test some ideas about interviews, we started by addressing professionals who are working within residential units for minors, in order to reflect together upon our assumptions and ongoing outcomes. We involved

some of them in our research from the very beginning, since their perspective is entangled and complementary to that of the care leavers'; they are *insiders* of the same context, they participate in many common events and conversations, they co-construct narratives all the time.

Our sampling is not meant to be representative of all the features or categories we are interested in, but we asked the professionals to contact a diverse group of young adults who had left their units, keeping in mind the different variables we had focused in the meeting: gender, participants in administrative extension programs and care leavers at 18 years, migrants and Italians, perpetrators of crimes, achievers, etc.

*Method*

We designed a narrative open interview to enter the topic, asking the participant to speak from his/her own position and experience. This part of the interview was delicate and aimed to build authentic relationships of trust and interest in order to create a dialogical and 'good enough' space (West & Carlson, 2007) to open possibilities for reciprocal learning and reflection. We were conscious that these young adults are 'experts' in doing interviews and might have developed 'scripts' related to stories that can (and cannot) be told in meetings (with psychologists, social workers, educators) whose aims are markedly instrumental for both sides. In practical terms this entailed starting a conversation with each participant about the aims and logic of the research before starting the interview. We used the consent forms as a first step to propose a cooperative stance, in order to engage our interlocutors in becoming co-researcher about an experience they lived firsthand.

The interview started with an open question: *This interview is about your experience … from which point would you like to begin?* Then we let the narration flow, as the teller decided to shape it. The interviewer played an active role through his/her responses that were non-verbal and verbal (asking, for example, more details about a fact or to clarify an assertion). While the interviews were openly structured, we ensured to cover four main topics: practical things about present and future, education and training, relationship with foster system and becoming an adult.

This interview was a first step as we contacted participants afterwards to check the transcript and to possibly have further meetings if they agreed between the participants and the professionals to bring about a collective ongoing process of data interpretation and discussion. Our aim is to co-construct a 'good enough' (West & Carlson, 2007) theory, using co-operative inquiry as a method of research that "involves two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which they move between this experience and reflecting together on it" (Heron, 1996, p. 1). This choice entails the idea of research as a possibility of advancement in knowledge, i.e. learning for all the participants, in terms of critical and complex thinking, knowledge building and sensemaking, deliberate action, and reflexivity.

CASE STUDY: MARCO'S STORY

The interviews show different ways of self-positioning in a complex relational system, where mothers and fathers, schoolmates, mentors, professionals, can become resources of hope in the transformative process or obstacles in growing one's own sense of positioning and agency. The stories appear influenced by the larger society, dominant discourses and cultural models, but there is also agency, individuality, and critical thinking. There are supportive relationships, recognition, and 'good enough' spaces for learning (West, 2016). In this sense they illuminate how macro, meso and micro levels are intertwined to shape life trajectories, but, at the same time, also the potential for biographicity (Alheit & Dausien, 2000; Alheit, 2016), when the subject becomes aware of some of these ongoing processes. The following is an example of analysis, based on one participant's (Marco) narrative, that highlights all these interconnected levels.

*The macro-level:* this is the level where participants position themselves in relation to assumptions, prejudices "floating" in common sense and in social representations (Moscovici, 2003), e.g. 'the vulnerable child' (and consequently vulnerable adult).

At the beginning of his interview, Marco immediately takes a distance from his past ("*a bygone record*") and from a possible prejudice of the listener. "I could tell you about old episodes but I will not play the victim … if this is what is expected from me". He refuses to indulge in the "*negative situation*" he lived at home and that resulted in being moved to a child residence centre. He declares that he remembers few things of living together with his mother ("*alcoholic and depressed*") and his father ("*absent*"). He describes past situations with a sort of detachment "Objectively, I had my problems, but I guess you too, isn't it? […] I could tell you these old episodes but I would not have a distressed attitude … if this is what this experience [the interview] expects from me …". This sort of initial "normalization" of the story seems a kind of reaction to possible prejudices of a stranger (the interviewer) that was interested in a "careleaver experience" based on problems. We can find there some hints of those dominant discourses in relation to which Marco seems ready to actively re-position himself.

*The meso-level:* this is the level where participants tell about their proximal system of interactions composed by family, foster family, peer group at residence centre, social care professionals, schoolmates, teachers, etc.

Marco during the interview refers to educators and other professionals (social workers and psychologists) working in the social care system. He regrets that too many professionals seem not interested in making a real effort to listen to a child; instead, they put questions in order to interpret or explain his behaviour: "sometimes for professional reasons they forget that they are dealing with children and not with other professionals … I felt more psycho-analyzed than

listened to". The professionals are criticized, as well as desired, as someone who could give attention. This was a titanic endeavour in the residence centre, as other seven young boys were also asking for attention, by crashing doors or coming home under the effect of drugs. How did Marco try to gain the educators' attention? "I always tried to behave as an educator and not as the pupil to be taken care of. I still have all the residence keys, I knew all the educators' shifts, the amount of money given to the other boys … that was my way to get attention". His effort to be on a level with the adults around him often resulted in violent quarrels: "sometimes I provoked someone just for the taste of it, just to face him/her and hold my head high, just to prove that I am not a young boy but your equal, even if I wasn't like that. I felt myself growing up through this feeling of being equal with adults".

Marco also highlighted the role of the other seven young boys living with him at the residence centre as they were fundamental in his learning processes. "You can learn a lot in a children residence centre but not from the educators … from other lives. We were eight young boys with similar and different problems, we were brothers in a certain way … And I learned a lot from their experiences: when my friend Paolo lost his father, when Dario came at the centre as an orphan. Those experiences helped me in growing up and in facing my own problems".

This highlights the children's residence centre as a learning context in itself, beyond the intentions of the educators and social assistants that manage it which is a dimension that is often neglected from professionals.

*The micro-level:* this is the level where participants deal with their own story and the ways in which it shapes their identity. It is about the representation/myth of themselves that they elaborate in relation to their experiences. It refers to the different ways in which their experience of 'leaving care' is connected with their own current identity.

When Marco left the residence, a difficult period begun for him: "when you go back home you have to manage all the problems that are still there". Even if the residence was considered "home", after leaving he realized that it was also a "bubble" that had not prepared him for the future: going back to his father, no friends, job difficulties, poverty. Marco worked through this, thanks to help he received: his grandparents bought him a car to move and a neighbour found him a job. Now, at 25, Marco is engaged with a 43 year old man "that for me is the best choice as he is youngish – we do the same things – and at the same time he has experience that allows him to be my mentor and my guide". Marco draws a thread between his present relationship with his partner and his previous relationship with the educators: "I am glad when he simply hugs me. But the pupil in the residence has the same desire … he/she's just not interested in someone standing on the other side of the desk and trying to understand

him/her". Today Marco does not consider himself like an adult, as he feels that he "doesn't face the world all alone yet". Living with his boyfriend – and his mother – means that he does not need to care about many fundamental things: "I still have to learn how to manage bills and rent payments …". This advantage has a reverse side: "after 25 years I still don't have a place I consider mine". What makes him feel different and "*more adult*" is a different perspective of himself on him and his life: "the unique thing that makes me proud about my life is that it didn't crash me … I didn't defeat my life and I was not defeated … I just make my life part of myself … I might live it with coldness but I remember it warmly. I don't see my life like a tragedy, I don't see it as either happy or sad. It is the route that I made to get to be myself, as I am now".

CONCLUSIONS

One of our aims, doing this research, is to generate rich and deep enough data in order to challenge linear, deterministic and simplistic perspectives of meaning and commonsense thinking, that may accompany fostered minors (and be internalized by them too). In our first step, we analyzed quantitative surveys and databases, in order to understand the dimensions of the phenomenon and the fundamental factors that are taken into consideration for depicting the wider scenario. This was a fundamental starting point for shaping our research questions and finding an interesting "qualitative space" in which we would have been able to move. Quantitative data are not able to grasp individual differences and trajectories, learning paths, crises, possibilities, and meanings that are developed by subjects, and could explain, for example, why some choose to go back to their families, or not; why some are successful in finding their own way, while others do not. What was lacking, from our point of view, was a deeper knowledge from inside, in order to develop critical research with rather than about these subjects. We didn't elaborate in this chapter on the cooperative inquiry with our insiders and with professionals as we are still in the analysis process, but it is important to highlight how stories were able to trigger reflexive processes and move different points of view (Formenti & West, 2016), especially during the meetings with professionals.

This co-operative dimension was not only a methodological choice but also an epistemological one: vulnerability, in our view, is only partially inherent to the individual: there is always a relational, social, and contextual quality to it. Hence the co-construction of meanings among interacting people involved in the situation with different roles is a crucial moment. Research on education can make a difference on these processes if research contexts are not considered as 'fixed' but as dynamically modified by the interaction between researchers and participants' assumptions. This stance entails a continuous process of self-reflection about the ecology of ideas (Morin, 1995) involved in the conversations. The rhetoric of help and children as victims, for example, while important to bring about the culture of protection and rights, nonetheless becomes a problem when it creates gaps between children

and adults who are, similarly, in trouble. Even more paradoxically, when a person becomes of age, she seems to abruptly lose every right; besides, the status of 'victim' risks to shadow the force, resilience, and resources of these persons. These young adults have to face, as we said, a dominant narration, entailing a problematic, absent, or abusive family (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004), and the action of 'helpers' who look sometimes more like watchmen and gatekeepers. Nonetheless, it is clear that they develop their own perspectives of meaning, scripts, and worldviews, partly coherent with the system and contexts around them, partly not, sometimes emancipatory, while sometimes they appear closed to further learning. In Marco's case study it is evident the complex dynamic connected to the need of positioning himself in relation to a received narration about 'vulnerability' coming from society in general, family, social services, educators, friends etc. His narration is constantly in dialogue with all these voices and with the researcher's one.

The interviews collected so far illuminate how macro, meso and micro levels are intertwined to shape life trajectories, but also the potential for biographicity (Alheit & Dausien, 2000). Structural and material factors are evident, as well as resources and relational protective factors. We are witnessing, thanks to these amazing stories, how powerful experiences may 'unstick' (Field & Lynch, 2015) these young adults from a self-fulfilling prophecy of lack and failure, overcoming the dilemmas they have to face. We also see hints of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 2009) and transitional spaces (West & Carlson, 2007) that were able to foster it.

## NOTES

[1] We use 'fosterage' and 'foster care' to refer to the practice of bringing up a child outside her/his family, usually on a temporary basis, in a situation where the child's parents remain the acknowledged parents. In Italy, as in many other countries, foster care can be organized in two ways: by giving custody of the child to a foster family or by placing the child in a residence center ('comunità minori'), family-like housing ('casa famiglia') or similar.

[2] http://www.garanteinfanzia.org/news/seconda-raccolta-dati-sperimentale-sui-minorenni-ospiti-delle-comunità

[3] http://www.garanteinfanzia.org/news/seconda-raccolta-dati-sperimentale-sui-minorenni-ospiti-delle-comunità

[4] http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/176622

[5] http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/176622

[6] The most important data sources in Italy are: the 'Istituto degli Innocenti' in Florence (Belotti, 2010); ANCI Cittalia 4th Report (http://www.cittalia.it/index.php/welfare); ISTAT; the governmental National Center for Documentation on Childhood and Adolescence (CNDA), jointly ruled by the Family Policies Department and the Ministry for Social Solidarity (www.minori.it).

[7] http://www.minori.it/; http://www.istitutodeglinnocenti.it/; http://www.gruppocrc.net/

## REFERENCES

Alhadeff-Jones, M. (2012). Transformative learning and the challenges of complexity. In E. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 178–194). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Alheit, P., & Dausien, B. (2000). 'Biographicity' as a basic resource of lifelong learning. In P. Alheit, J. Beck, E. Kammler, & H. Olesen (Eds.), *Lifelong learning inside and outside schools*. Roskilde: Roskilde University.

ANCI. (2012). *I minori stranieri non accompagnati*. IV Rapporto ANCI Cittalia, Fondazione Anci Ricerche, Roma. Retrieved from http://www.cittalia.it/index.php/welfare

Bamberg, M., & Andrews, M. (Eds.). (2004). *Considering counter narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin.

Bastianoni, P., & Taurino A. (2014). *Le comunità per minori*. Roma: Carocci.

Bastianoni, P., Zullo, F., & Taurino, A. (2011). *I minori stranieri non accompagnati diventano maggiorenni. Accoglienza, diritti umani, legalità.* Lecce: Libellula Edizioni.

Belotti, V. (Ed.). (2010). *Bambine e Bambini temporaneamente fuori dalla famiglia di origine.* Firenze: Istituto degli Innocenti, Centro Nazionale Documentazione e Analisi per l'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza.

Berto, I., & Canali, C. (2012). La tutela dell'infanzia e il rischio di allontanamento in altri paesi. *Quaderni della ricerca sociale, 12 & 18*. Approfondimento monografico. Fondazione Zancan.

Crawley, H. (2006). *Child first, migrant second: Ensuring that every child matters* (pp. 21–22). London: ILPA-Immigration Law Practitioners' Association.

Davis, B., & Sumara, D. (2006). *Complexity and education: Inquiries into learning, teaching and research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Edwards, R., Biesta, G., & Thorpe, M. (2009). *Rethinking contexts for learning and teaching*. London: Routledge.

Eurochild. (2010). *Annual report.* Brussel: Eurochild. Retrieved from http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/public/05Library/Eurochild-Annual-Report-2010.pdf

Field, J., Gallacher, J., & Ingram, R. (2009). *Researching transitions in lifelong learning.* London: Routledge.

Field, J., & Lynch, H. (2015). Getting stuck, becoming unstuck: Agency, identity and transition between learning contexts. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 21*, 3–17.

Formenti, L. (2008). La com-position dans/de l'autobiographie. *Pratiques de formation. Analyses, 55*, 171–191.

Formenti, L. (2011). Families in a changing society: How biographies inspire education. Ih H. Herzberg & E. Kammler (Eds.), *Biographie und Gesellschaft. Überlegungen zu einer Theorie des modernen Selbst* (pp. 215–227). Frankfurt/New York: Campus.

Formenti, L. (2015). Autobiography: A relational journey. In H. Reid & L. West (Eds.), *Constructing narratives of continuity and change. A transdisciplinary approach to researching lives*. Oxon: Routledge.

Formenti, L. (2016). Learning to live. The pattern which connects education and dis/orientation. In L. Formenti & L. West (Eds.), *Stories that make a difference: Exploring the collective, social and political potential of narratives in adult education research* (pp. 234–241). Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.

Formenti, L., & West, L. (Eds.). (2016). *Stories that make a difference: Exploring the collective, social and political potential of narratives in adult education research*. Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.

Formenti, L., West, L., & Horsdal, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Embodied narratives: Connecting stories, bodies, cultures and ecologies.* Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.

Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition.* London: Sage.

Merrill, B., & West, L. (2009). *Using biographical methods in social research.* London: Sage.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* New York, NY: Wiley & Sons.

Mezirow, J. (2009). Transformative learning theory. In J. Mezirow & E. Taylor (Eds.), *Transformative learning in practice* (pp. 18–32). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2012). Learning to think like an adult. Core concepts of transformation theory. In E. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 73–95). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Morin, E. (1995). *Introduction a la pensée complexe*. Paris: Seuil.

Moscovici, S. (2003). Des représentations collective aux représentations sociales: éléments puor une histoire. In D. Jodelet (Ed.), *Les représentations sociales* (pp. 79–103). Paris: PUF.

Naldini, M., & Saraceno, C. (2008). Social and family policies in Italy: Not totally frozen but far from structural reforms. *Social Policy Administration, 42*(7), 733–748.

Osberg, D., & Biesta, G. (Eds.). (2010). *Complexity theory and the politics of education.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Reid, H. (2016). 'What hat am I wearing?' Navigating the boundaries between research and counselling in narrative research with young unemployed people. In R. Evans (Ed.), *Before, beside and after (beyond) the biographical narrative* (pp. 591–603)*.* Duisburg: Nisaba Verlag.

Reid, H., & West, L. (Eds.). (2015). *Constructing narratives of continuity and change: A transdisciplinary approach to researching lives.* London: Routledge.

Thoburn, J. (2010). Toward knowledge-based practice in complex child protection cases: A research-based expert briefing. *Journal of Children's Services, 5*, 9–24.

Tibollo, A. (2015). *Le comunità per minori.* Milano: Franco Angeli.

West, L. (2016). *Distress in the city. Racism, fundamentalism and a democratic education*. London: Trentham Books.

West, L., & Carlson, A. (2007) *Claiming space: An indepth auto/biographical study of a local sure start project.* CCCU: CISDP.

SIOBHÁN MADDEN

# 5. COLLABORATIVE STORY TELLING

*The Poetry of Everyday Life and the Challenge of Transcription*

LADY GAGA AND ME

and That was the kind of Thing that I – that My Dream was
that      it was Never going to be Dry and Stale    that it was going to be Open
and Fluid
that Lots of   you know   we Didn't have to s- Start out and say "we're going to
Work on
eduCation and emPloyment" that We were just going to be Open and we were
Just going to
– you Know
we      were going to Go where the work Took us and we were going to be
Guided   by what   Women    were Coming in and Telling us

These words were spoken by my friend, "Lady Gaga" (a self-chosen pseudonym), as part of her response to my research invitation to, *"Tell me a story of voice that has some significance to you as a feminist community activist"*. We had first met through a solidarity exchange between feminists from Tanzania and Ireland, reclaiming women's community education for grassroots feminist movement through neoliberal times. One evening in Mwanza, after asking me to tell her about my PhD research, Lady Gaga said, "I want to be involved".

In this chapter, I attend as a feminist researcher to some radical methodological implications of a collaborative ethic for the *textuality* of critical educational research, particularly transcription. Guidance abounds on "writing up" research. Yet, even as Lady Gaga tells of being "Guided by what Women were Coming in and Telling us", a collaborative research ethic insists on hearing and being guided by what *she* is telling me. Such hearings and tellings are mediated, not only by story-telling processes, but in moving from the oral/aural into writing.

My concern is to critique and recreate the links between pedagogy, political agency and research. A research link of collaboration means seriously responding to the ontological, epistemological and political ramifications of Lady Gaga's dream, including for textual representation. I contend that textuality risks being a "Dry and Stale" aspect of research practice, its normative impulse to fix potentially

undermining the "Open and Fluid" political possibilities of unofficial pedagogies. I focus on transcription as one precarious site of linkage charged with political and creative import for embodied connections.

I first link Lady Gaga's approach to critical pedagogy with Cavarero's (2000) and Tamboukou's (2008) Arendtian-informed feminist philosophy of the "narratable self", before outlining my own collaborative methodology based on the narrative practices of White and Epston (1990). I then discuss the ontological challenges of transcription based on the "devocalisation of logos" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 42). This sets the terms of my poetic transcription which adapts the punctuation practices of poet Emily Dickinson. I assert that critically negotiating the oral-writing move can unsettle sedimented histories of language and science, affording a research position of remembering and responding to already present pedagogical possibilities of transformation.

## THE NARRATABLE SELF

"*Tell me a story ...*". My invitation to Lady Gaga is, of course, no academic contrivance. It belongs to the human condition itself. What Cavarero (2000) calls "the familiar sense of the narratable self" (p. 35) relates to "the type of story whose tale finds itself at home in the kitchen, during a coffee-break, or perhaps on the train" (p. 53).

Adult education research has benefited from and contributed to the social sciences' "narrative turn". But Cavarero's concept of the self as *narratable* attends to something other than the more typical analyses of narrative content and structures. Her point is not so much the story itself, or the strategies of its construction, but the knowledge that the other *has* a story "even when we do not know their story at all" (2000, p. 34). This *a priori* knowledge of narratability infuses both narrative research methodologies, and critical pedagogies of the personal as political.

Narratability relates to Hannah Arendt's (1958) question, "who are you?", addressed to a unique existent, "*here and now*, in flesh and bone, this and not another" (Cavarero, 2000, p. 90, original emphasis). Cavarero notes that the *you* is ignored, both by individualistic philosophies concerned with the *I*, and their critics who tend to privilege collective pronouns of *we* (p. 90). However, to ask "who are you?" enacts an embodied relationality, opening the "subjective in-between" of "the 'web' of human relationships" (Arendt, 1958, p. 183). This fragile web is the ontological condition of Arendt's distinctive notion of the political, a site of "reciprocal appearance … each one *for* and *with* another" (Cavarero, 2000, p. 90, original emphasis).

For Cavarero (2000), the Arendtian political finds a historical realization in feminist consciousness-raising groups, whose uniqueness is in the intersection of politics and narration. It also involves pedagogy. Describing the aim of women returning to adult education as to "think that my 'I' exists", Cavarero distinguishes between "mere empirical existence" and "ontological affirmation" (p. 56). In

explicitly feminist contexts, women's stories intertwine on the "shared scene of co-appearance", allowing them "to deconstruct a point of view on the world, which claims to be neutral, but in reality conforms largely to masculine desires and needs" (p. 60).

Lady Gaga joins Cavarero in asserting the narratability of self as a feminist pedagogical and political condition:

> And        you Know
> there's a Space for Women to be Able to
> Just to feel Free to       to Talk about
> Their Life exPerience and where there'd be Some valiDation
> … we Say to Women "the Only thing you have to Bring is yourSelves
> And        a Willingness to Share some of your        Life exPeriences"
> and then We kind of Hang it on a Feminist FrameWork
> we proVide a feminist framework that they can       Hang their exPeriences On
>                                        and      See it in aNother Way
> but it Is aBout
> it's Really aBout their Women's Stories themSelves
> and That's what we kind of Wanted we Wanted something that women wouldn't feel they had to do
> a Course    and do Homework or do       Writing or
> y'Know      Go outSide their comMunity to Do Something      y'Know?

The narratable self marks three key ontological shifts from standard narratology. Firstly, paralleling Lady Gaga's valorization of sharing stories rather than writing, Cavarero (2000) contests the paradigm of textuality informing contemporary narratology. She distinguishes the ontological status of the narratable self from the text of her story. When written narratives set the terms for understanding story-telling, then "the text … wins out over life" (p. 42).

Secondly, this requires a narrative analytics which abandons "the sequential canon" of stories with beginnings and endings (Tamboukou, 2008). Sharing stories creates "conditions of possibility for more stories to emerge" (p. 284), accenting the process of making connections. For Tamboukou, like Lady Gaga, this means the analysis is "finally attentive to the fluidity and openness of narratives, the virtual forces that surround them, the silences and the unsaid" (p. 290).

Thirdly, identity cannot now be collapsed into narrative through, say, "narrative identity". In the expressive flux of story-telling, the narratable self exposes herself "to the becoming-time of existence" (Cavarero, 2000, pp. 38–39). Indeed, Tamboukou's (2008) feminist political subject is a "nomadic narratable self" whose condition is defined by what has *escaped* molar formations (such as patriarchy) in the "molecular counter-formations": "I am considering the self as a threshold, a door, a becoming between multiplicities, an effect of a dance between power and desire, nomadic and yet narratable" (p. 285).

## COLLABORATIVE STORY-TELLING

But if the narratable self links the pedagogical and political in feminist contexts, how does it link with research? Already I have left hanging firstly the research conditions of story-telling, and secondly its turning into text. But therein lies a conundrum. A key research marker – producing a text – has been problematized. Moreover, both research moments are implicated, being not, after all, distinct or sequential. The *anticipation* of a textual analysis binds normative approaches to the research interview, closing nomadic possibilities through the "interview schedule". Even complex, multi-storied exchanges demonstrated by post-structuralist researchers are usually based on *post*-interview analysis of interview texts (Speedy, 2008). This raises the question for Speedy of how co-constructed interviews with people might be carried out in practice.

The question speaks to the desires of critical educational researchers to do research *with* rather than *about* people. I found a response in the post-structuralist narrative therapeutic practices of White and Epston (1990). They attend to meanings generated "in the *there and then* of the conversation" (Speedy, 2008, p. 61, original emphasis) through a collaborative inquiry emerging from people's own words. Following Foucault (1980), their purpose – and mine too – is the "insurrection" of "subjugated knowledges" against the effects of institutional power. A practice of "double listening" means inquiring about dominant stories and their effects, but also "alternative" stories of resistance. These counter-stories are amplified through a purposive social practice of "re-membering" which facilitates recognitions of knowledge, skills and values cogenerated in the relationships of people's lives (White, 2007).

As a research methodology, these practices link critical pedagogy with research because the interview context too becomes an open site of analysis and knowledge co-production. This linking is not a welding of two abstracted planes. It is a joining which finds itself rather in the embodied particularity of Lady Gaga and me, here and now together. The research moment enacts a scene familiar to us both: telling and listening to stories, lingering together in their territories of meaning, deconstructing the taken for granted in an explicitly feminist context.

When I ask Lady Gaga then to, "Tell me a story of voice that has some significance to you as a feminist community activist", she begins by telling me about facilitating a 'Training for Transformation' session. Into the space between us she introduces the voices of women who powerfully contest the predetermined agendas of official 'consultation' practices. I listen to her intensely, to the cadences of her voice, trying to be alive to the generative possibilities of the moment. Neither of us stays still. We move in a flux of new responses, new moments and new becomings.

The story becomes the condition for remembering another story:

> when   when  when i was   After that     Session  with the     Training
>              for transformation i was Thinking about it and i thought  "God

you Know it    it Isn't What we    Really  would have    Set Out to do
you know when We Started when we Came toGether Years ago
…
And      you Know    the Time   we Had in Those days with the supPort
                                                                    Agency
    to Have just Space for converSations
    to Actually Dream of what a Women's project could Look like

We return to Lady Gaga's dream again and again as a touchstone of desire, freedom and pleasure, intertwined with a critique of governmentalized practices:

… if we'd Had the Freedom to Really Work the way we    wanted
VolunTeers would have been kicking our Doors down to be Part of it
                                                    because it    was
it was So      Great!
and          and Little by Little it Started getting Pulled aWay
– you know where    our Meetings we said "we'll Always have Meetings
                                        we'll  Always have a Space
– to Talk about
you know      something Real that's going On in the Real work Rather
                                                            than" –
and we Always light a Candle we Still do to this Day we Always do this
        and we Always check In and we    you know when the Candle is
                                                            Lit
you're Free to talk about Anything and
– it's Not Minuted or reCorded
and –
but –    the      the    the preTend World started to Push In on us    and
                                        Make us      Do This
Link In with this preTence of    Filling these Forms    and it
        it Pushed In        and it's Making our World Smaller and Smaller
…
and    Then All    Crazy    neoliberal Language started coming In
and there was No Room   AnyMore for what We wanted to Do
because All that Mattered Now
was that we got people Educated    to get Jobs
to make More
Stuff that could be Traded
to cause More      Inequality

and    it just p-   it's –      we're reSisting    as Best we Can
but it's Pushing In  and Pushing In
and making it Smaller and Smaller

She tells of a dream delegitimized by a neoliberal regime of training for the labour market. But she draws on the dream to hold these pushy practices at a distance, calling them "the preTend World" opposed with "the Real work". A lighted candle marks a boundary of resistance, when talk about the Real work is not minuted or recorded, but free to turn in any direction.

And as she again protests the increasing diminishment of "our World", she remembers a moment from yesterday:

> and Some days  like Yesterday was a Gorgeous day here
> we had a Crowd of women in    it was Lovely the Chat
> was Great the    Talk was unReal what people were Talking about
> and –   you know Then you say
> i was Sitting Listening to the Women some Women in the Kitchen having
>                     converSations and it was Just so Lovely and i thought

> "This is what we have to Fight for"

But these research moments of telling are fragile, disappearing in the moment of their appearance. This is the fragility which inheres in all action, and why Arendt (1958) writes of the importance of "the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember" (p. 95).

But how? The norms of research textuality start to push in, casting our research moment as one of *data production,* a discrete moment in a specialized, linear set of practices looking for resolution in writing. Conventional qualitative methodology, argues St. Pierre (2018), is still controlled by a "preexisting research process to follow, a container with well-identified categories", to make all research aspects "recognizable, clear, and accessible" (p. 603). The normative expectation is that I will contain, analyze, and somehow render Lady Gaga "knowable", facilitating my emergence as *the* expert knower. But the cost would be a kind of dis-memberment which separates me from her, making my world smaller and smaller as I flounder unmoored from the relational and epistemological conditions of my own political agency.

When Lady Gaga says then, "This is what we have to Fight for", what ontological and epistemological alliances does she awaken so that I, as a feminist educational researcher, am politically aligned with this 'we'? But to write now of "she" and "we" is to recall that, "She is the *you* that comes before the *we*" (Cavarero, 2000, p. 90). Indeed, catching myself writing post-interview reflections *about her/she,* I realized with a startle how swiftly my thinking had abandoned the collaborative address to "you". Writing/thinking my notes then *to* Lady Gaga evolved into research retellings of stories through the I-you ethic of letter-writing. But this critical intervention into the power/knowlege relations of textuality was already premised on negotiating the oral/written word move to remember Lady Gaga as "the inassimilable, the insubstitutable, the unrepeatable" (Cavarero, 2000, p. 90). For me, transcription marked a critical threshold of a dance between forgetting and remembering.

CHALLENGES OF TRANSCRIPTION

The word "tran-scription" itself evokes a threshold, crossing from the oral to the written word. How might one imagine this threshold?

One discussion of transcription cites Hymes' (1981) description of a linguist telling his students that "in published work one should not bring the reader into the kitchen". But for Hymes, "it is in keeping with the canons of science to let the kitchen sometimes be seen" (in Buscholz, 2000, p. 1462). The metaphor is apt. In the 'normal' kitchen of transcription, one prepares one's "raw data". The rules of grammar 'naturally' determine the tidy presentation of capital letters, commas and full stops. The purpose is a palatable dish of written words, to be mannerly served and consumed in the house of science according to its canonic norms. To the extent that such norms "let" the kitchen "sometimes be seen", they confirm that transcription is utterly tied to normative notions of science, including the 'data' which feeds it.

For Buscholz (2000), the point of the citation is to underline the importance of reflexive accountability for transcription as a process. This includes the recognition that textual products "are not transparent and unproblematic records of scientific research but are instead creative and politicized documents in which the researcher is fully implicated" (p. 1440). My politicization of transcription aspires to join creatively with Lady Gaga's own commitments. Her community kitchen opens up alternative metaphorical terms. This kitchen is not some preparatory zone, but the site of open and fluid conversations. *This* is the site to be fought for against the anti-freedom effects of the official canon.

Nonetheless, deeper ontological clarity is afforded by moving beyond the kitchen. The dream is, actually, not for a kitchen, nor any mere building, but for the mobile possibilities of a bus:

… Some of it Has Come    In that    In that    you know a Space where
                                              where Women Would Recognise  that –
This is some Place to Go
Maybe not the Physical Space now because    at One time we     we Thought
                                              we  might Try and get a Bus
and just Have the Office in a Bus and a Space that you could Literally Drive
                                              aRound to the Different Areas!

And later:

we      were going to Go where the work Took us and we were going to be
                    Guided by what    Women    were Coming in and Telling us
and i'd Always had a Dream cos at One time we Dreamt we'd have a Bus
                                              and we'd Go aRound you know

Lady Gaga's dream of the bus dissolves fixed spatial boundaries to valorize a decentred, nomadic politics. She evokes a dynamic social reality of joining with

women in their own local contexts, guided by their voices. The non-actualization of this dream in no way diminishes its significance for the critical imagination.

The word "logos", Cavarero (2005) reminds us, derives from the ancient Greek verb *legein* which means "speaking" and "gathering", "binding", "joining" (p. 33). These joinings are through "a 'speaking', which announces the relation between mouths and ears that logos carries inside of itself from the beginning" (p. 182). Cavarero's story of the devocalized logos tells of how sight rather than sound becomes the horizon of meaning. It is the story of Homer, the epic poet who composes with oral methods: "this law is rhythmical, like breath or the heartbeat … manifest in speech through the regulation of accents, the number of longs and shorts, the modulations, assonances, and silences" (p. 80). It is the story of Plato who transforms these unruly instabilities of sound into immobile presences. The historical transition from orality to writing is one whereby speech "makes itself available to a visual organization that positions it in discourse according to a spatial, linear, analytical and permanent process" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 81).

Cavarero (2005) traces the entire Western philosophical and scientific lexicon to the Platonic predilection for the eye. Plato's use of the term *theoria* to mean "the contemplation of real, lasting, immobile things" confirms the detached gaze as the guarantor of "the status of truth as presence" (p. 37). The embodied flux of speech is frozen into abstract universal images of "the mind's eye". Words are no longer sonorous events, but signifiers of ideas. Their proper visual plane is in writing, joined in an "ordered and controlled chain" (p. 81). The logos of philosophy is "the order that rules the 'joining'" (p. 34).

The critical point for Cavarero, however, is not simply the privileging of sight, but "a precise strategy of devocalizing logos that relegates the voice to the status of those things that philosophy deems unworthy of attention" (p. 42). In this codified account of language, the role of the voice is relegated to acoustic signifier, stripping logos of the "*who* of saying" (p. 30). Splitting the vocal from the semantic also confirms a mind-body dualism, with the mind-semantic a male-defined rationality, and the body-vocal assigned to women who come to speech through "idle chatter" (p. 207).

What then of tran-scription? Transcription bends research towards the norms of observable data, allowing the qualitiative researcher to speak authoritiatively to questions of truth and evidence, validity and reliability. However critical the theorizing behind these warranting claims, the whole exercise is generally premised on the 'service role' of the voice as acoustic signifier. The word itself already privileges the *script*, with the oral/acoustic its silenced other. The words lie on the page as 'dry and stale' husks, their semantic content sundered from their embodied speaking and hearing.

But for me, Lady Gaga's own voice reverberates through this sedimented epistemology. It resounds with Cavarero's (2005) insistence on reclaiming a vocal ontology for feminist politics – and, we might add, critical research in adult

education. The point is to effect a shift in the logos of the joinings, to disrupt the devocalized binaries of body/mind, poetic/philosophical, speech/writing, and the linear terms of research that aspire to "know" an ending. This is a dream for the freer etymological roots of *recercher,* "to search again", from the Latin *circare* – "go about, wander, traverse".

To traverse the boundary between spoken and written language is to connect them in a way that "disorganizes language's claim to control the entire process of signification" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 132). This is a poetic logos which Cavarero highlights through Cixous' writing where the voice "invades writing" (p. 132), allowing language to "flow in the musical rhythms of language … so that they can begin to signify and resound in one another" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 141). Cixous writes, "I do not write, I curl up in a ball, I become an ear, I am a rhythm" (1994, in Cavarero, 2005, p. 143).

This alternative logos opens educational research to poetic inquiry, attending to "complexity, feeling, and new ways of seeing" (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 29), including through poetic transcription (Prendergast, Leggo & Sameshima, 2009; see also Cahnmann, 2003; Glesne, 1997). Poetic transcription involves representing conversations in stanza form, although its processes and underlying philosophies are not homogeneous. My poetic transcription was inspired by the punctuation of U.S poet, Emily Dickinson (1830–1886).

<div align="center">DICKINSON'S PUNCTUATION</div>

*I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,*
*And Mourners to and fro*
*Kept treading – treading – till it seemed*
*That Sense was breaking through –*

*And when they all were seated,*
*A Service, like a Drum –*
*Kept beating – beating – till I thought*
*My Mind was going numb –*

*And then I heard them lift a Box*
*And creak across my Soul*
*With those same Boots of Lead, again,*
*Then Space – began to toll,*

*As all the Heavens were a Bell,*
*And Being, but an Ear,*
*And I, and Silence, some strange Race*
*Wrecked, solitary, here –*

> *And then a Plank in Reason, broke,*
> *And I dropped down, and down –*
> *And hit a World, at every plunge,*
> *And Finished knowing – then –*

(Emily Dickinson)

The surface narrative of Dickinson's funeral poem – "and then … and when …" – suggests a chronology of events, commonly interpreted as the stages of a "mental breakdown". Indeed, her odd punctuation – no full stops, strange intrusive dashes, "incorrect" use of commas – has been variously regarded "as the result of great stress and intense emotion, as the indication of a mental breakdown, and as a mere idiosyncratic, female habit" (Denman, 1993, pp. 27–28). But some regard Dickinson's punctuation as a critical engagement with conventional writing practices, and integral to her challenges to conventional expectations of women (Denman, 1993; Ladin, 1994; Crumbley, 1997). Crumbley (1997) argues that the feminist implications of her poetics register with greatest force in "her refusal to silence the many rebellious voices that registered clearly in her own mind" (p. 20). My reading of this poem is of a horror evoked when the voices of convention seem to overwhelm, when "it seemed/that Sense was breaking through –". But Dickinson's punctuation works to disrupt conventional Sense, refusing to silence Silence by drawing attention to language as process rather than product.

For Weisbuch (1972), Dickinson's dashes expose "the struggle of poetic process, a struggle to find the right word, and they serve to represent a hesitancy" (in Crumbley, 1997, p. 13). Her unconventional capitalizations "concentrate attention, implying that the capitalized words have additional meanings" (Ladin, 1994, p. 46). Crumbley (1997) argues that this "verbal instability" (p. 8) challenges "the syntactic linear progression suggestive of specific linguistic destinations" (p. 20). By grouping words, indicating tone, and marking rhythms, her punctuation creates "places of silence in the pauses between words" which extend their meanings (Denman, 1993, p. 38). Silence not only provides the time and space for speaking and hearing words, but is also a generating source of language: "Silence is not a void but rather a fullness from which the most powerful language emerges" (Denman, 1993, p. 39). All this fluidity of meaning valorizes an uncontainable and emergent self who resists reification in social discourse.

I regard the shift in this poem to a sense of sound, announced by Space tolling and "Being, but an Ear", as an ontological rather than chronological turning point. It is marked by a subjectivity which expands from the bounded confines of a Box, to "all the Heavens", attuned to a relationship with Silence. What *appears* foundational and absolute is not so after all: "And then a Plank in Reason, broke", seems to expose the epistemological scaffolding of "Reason". To "hit a World, at every plunge", evokes a plurality of Worlds becoming newly available. The last line is wonderfully paradoxical: "And Finished knowing – then –". Whatever this finish means, it becomes undone in the dash where openness is affirmed. Or rather, *re*affirmed: this

openness is present throughout the poem, disrupting linearity through punctuated silences which suggest new possibilities erupting through the routines of Sense.

And so for me too, on the threshold of transcription, the Plank of grammatical Reason broke, along with its constituent closures and hierarchies. Full stops dissolved. Capital letters mutated. I became an Ear, dancing to the open rhythms of breath, stresses and silences. As I heard the taking of breath, I marked a new poetic line. I denoted stresses with capital letters, reflecting a syllabic listening (e.g. exPeriences). I used dashes for moments of stumbling to find words, and transcribed silences as blank spaces on the page to suggest rhythms and groupings of words (see Mazzei, 2007).

The resultant transcript is, of course, a construction. Its purpose is to convey a sense of self, language and voice as processual, emergent and embodied, so that our identities are not fixed but open and on the move. Lady Gaga loved it, as did the two other women collaborating with my research. They loved its subversions of the written word, its genesis in the poem, and the possibility of hearing their own voices. As for myself, I became newly present to the language of everyday life as a poetic miracle emerging into sound and meaning, and a key site of "what we have to Fight for" in harnessing the critical and creative possibilities of adult education research.

AND FINISHED KNOWING – THEN –

In this chapter, I have joined my friend and research collaborator, "Lady Gaga", in her resistance to governmentalized pedagogies, by linking critical pedagogy and political agency through an open and fluid narrative analytic. This accords with a critical feminist pedagogy of the narratable self (Cavarero, 2000; Tamboukou, 2008) as a realization of Arendt's distinctive notion of the political. However, such open possibilities are blocked by the closures of the perusable text which constitute the normative conditions of research, fixing its subjects into a linear narrative. This opens up textuality as a key site of struggle for critical adult education research in order to link with alternative modes of thought which step outside institutionalized pedagogies.

I have discussed a poetic transcription as a critical threshold between the oral and written word for interrupting the linguistic transformation of the intangible into observable data. The critical purpose is to effect a de-ontologizing move which unfixes these stabilizing effects in order to valorize the irreducibility of the other. The creative purpose is not so much to represent as to actively remember, where remembering is also responding. The poetic act of transcribing with an ear has enacted a purposive remembering of the fragile, embodied, relational research moment as open and processual. Ontologically congruent with Lady Gaga's counter-narrative, the poetic transcription simultaneously responds to delegitimized pedagogical possibilities in the present which escape governmentalization.

Released from the routines of research representation, these ontological terms freed me to respond to how the voices of Lady Gaga, and the other two women

involved in my research, moved and challenged me. Such dialogical provocations found expression in a heteroglossic text (Bakhtin, 1981), actively subverting official policy rationalities of adult education through their feminist narratives of voice. But that's another story.

## REFERENCES

Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. Chicago, IL & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogical imagination*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Buscholz, M. (2000). The politics of transcription. *Journal of Pragmatics, 32*, 1439–1465.

Cahnmann, M. (2003). The craft, practice, and possibility of poetry in educational research. *Educational Researcher, 32*(3), 29–36.

Cavarero, A. (2000). *Relating narratives* (P. A. Kottman, Trans.). London & New York, NY: Routledge.

Cavarero, A. (2005). *For more than one voice.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Crumbley, P. (1997). *Inflections of the pen.* Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.

Denman, K. (1993). Emily Dickinson's volcanic punctuation. *The Emily Dickinson Journal, 2*(1), 22–46.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Glesne, C. (1997). That rare feeling: Re-presenting research through poetic transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3*(2), 202–221.

Ladin, J. (1994). Breaking the line: Emily Dickinson and William Carlos Williams. *The Emily Dickinson Journal, 3*(1), 41–58.

Mazzei, L. A. (2007). *Inhabited silence in qualitative research*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Prendergast, M., Leggo, C., & Sameshima, P. (Eds.). (2009). *Poetic inquiry.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Speedy, J. (2008). *Narrative inquiry and psychotherapy*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2018). Writing post qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry, 24*(9), 603–608.

Tamboukou, M. (2008). Re-imagining the narratable subject. *Qualitative Research, 8*(3), 283–292.

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre.

# PART 2

# THE AUTO/ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION

ANNIKA PASTUHOV AND ARI SIVENIUS

# 6. DOING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN ADULT EDUCATION

*Reflections on Studying Citizenship in a Study Circle*

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on and discuss ethnographic methodology, specifically within adult education research, exemplified with a study in a non-formal adult education setting. Examples are taken from a participatory ethnographic field study in an English as a foreign language study circle, which took place within an institution of Nordic popular education.

The roots of ethnographic research are found in anthropology but is now carried out in a variety of fields. Ethnography is an ambiguous term with diverse meanings which can broadly refer to qualitative approaches to social research such as case study, life history or qualitative research in general (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Pole & Morrison, 2003). Further, ethnography can be used as both a noun and a verb. In other words, ethnography refers to both research as activity and the result or product of the undertaken research (Pole & Morrison, 2003). It is also important to consider that ethnography can be understood as a set of research methods and as a methodological stance (Brewer, 2000; Pole & Morrison, 2003). In this chapter, we discuss ethnography primarily as the latter but believe that the philosophical considerations of research cannot be fully separated from methodological considerations (Brewer, 2000).

We define ethnography as a methodology for studying people in particular cultural and social settings, often referred to as "fields" (Brewer, 2000, p. 6) in order to understand the meanings of everyday life, experienced at first hand (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 3; Geertz, 1973; Davies, 2002). The researcher participates in the setting and to a lesser or greater extent also takes part in the on-going activities there (Brewer, 2000, p. 6). We see the value in this kind of research in its potential to understand the surrounding culture we are embedded in and how this is linked education and human growth in general (Weisner, 1996). We argue there is value to research that is trying to capture the core of socially and societally aware adult education – namely active, democratic participation. This reflects commitment to democratic processes, respecting the input of the participants and attempting to put the participants' view at the forefront, before theoretically informed questions and

interests. This is perhaps especially true for non-formal forms of adult education, such as study circles, which are meant to be open-ended forms of studying and learning.

The chapter reflects on the process of doing ethnographic research in educational settings in the following manner. First, we give a brief overview of our research and the planning and design of the study. We then move on to discuss the fieldwork, dealing with key questions in ethnographic research of gaining access to the field, building trust, and leaving the field. In the following sections we highlight the role of the ethnographer and the role of fieldnotes as well as the analytical process with attention to the use of theory.

## SETTING THE SCENE: CHOOSING ETHNOGRAPHY

The example study discussed below (Pastuhov & Rusk, 2017) was the third and final of ethnographic studies in study circle settings undertaken for a PhD thesis (Pastuhov, 2018). The aim of the research was to investigate the relation between the ideals and practices in study circles in Nordic popular education. The aim was to shed light on if and how the participants view citizenship in and through their participation in an English as a foreign language study circle (Pastuhov & Rusk, 2017).

Nordic popular education seeks to enhance societal participation and strengthen grassroots democracy (Laginder, Nordvall, & Crowther, 2013; Larsson, 2001; Tøsse, 2009). Popular education strives to make knowledge accessible to people through practices that allow participants to influence the organization of the studies by, for example, taking participants' previous experience into account (Harding, 2011; Laginder, Nordvall, & Crowther, 2013). Even though Nordic popular education is informed by democratic ideals, not many studies have focused on the democratic practices during the study activities. A significant number of previous studies have focused on popular education as a concept, as well as its ideals, aims and uniqueness (Tøsse, 2009). There are also prior studies highlighting the participants' perspective, but most of these consist of surveys or interview studies (e.g. Andersson & Laginder, 2013). This identified gap in the research informed the choice of ethnography as a methodology.

The research looked specifically at study circles organized and supported by study associations (in Swedish 'studieförbund') (Larsson & Nordvall, 2010). Study circles are an important part of Swedish 'popular education', which consists of state-subsidized non-formal and often non-accredited education. These circles consist of small groups gathering on a regular basis to study a topic of their own interest. There is a high level of participation in popular education: in 2017, 624 000 participants took part in these organized study circles (Folkbildningsrådet, 2018), approximately 8% of the adult population (SCB, 2018).

## FIELDWORK ON THE STUDY CIRCLE

In our study, participant observation was the main research method. As is customary (Pole & Morrison, 2003), the fieldwork was combined with some secondary data – in this case an interview with the study circle leader and an analysis of brochures from the study association. For us good fieldwork requires a balance, on one hand, between openness to discoveries in the field and, on the other hand, a systematic approach to collecting data (Brewer, 2000; Geertz, 1973), mainly through the writing of fieldnotes. In the following, we want to highlight and discuss this balancing act in getting access and then gaining and building trust and eventually leaving the field. In discussing the practical aspects of doing fieldwork from here onwards, we will be using the first person, since only one of us (Annika) conducted the fieldwork.

*Access to the Field*

Doing ethnography means working collaboratively with people. As a part of this process, accessing the field is often portrayed as a crucial and also demanding phase (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) which, in Geertz's (1973, p. 13) words is all about "finding our feet". This balancing act should neither end up with the researcher becoming one of participants, nor seeking to mimic them. The aim is, in all its simplicity and complexity, to converse with the participants.

Accessing the English language study circle happened with the help of the director of the study association. I met to discuss my research interests and possible sites. I was open at this stage to any suggestions from the director. A guiding principle was to identify a circle with a leader who would not be bothered by my participation as the study circle leader would most likely influence how the participants would respond. The meeting with the study circle was also preceded by e-mail contact with the teacher. The director and the teacher functioned as gatekeepers (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), and their support was pivotal. In this case, the teacher would prove to be especially influential.

The aim was to attend a whole course in order to understand the learning culture in detail and avoid misinterpretations based on lack of insight into the whole cycle of the course (compare Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 52). In this case, there were quite clear beginning and end to the study circle – it stretched from early September to late November.

When entering the study circle, I had asked to have a few minutes to introduce myself and to give a brief overview of the research interest and my focus on the collective aspects of participation and its impact on citizenship. The participants were informed that the notes and recordings from these sessions would only be used for these research purposes, that they would remain anonymous in the reporting of the study and that any hesitations regarding participation in the study could be voiced then or later to either the study circle leader or me. The idea of a researcher

entering the group was not met with any strong reactions. Rather, this news was met with silence and no direct show of emotions, which made my first attempts at conversation with the group quite difficult. Finally, one of the participants asked: "What will your participation help you accomplish?" I tried to answer, as briefly but as thoroughly as possible, that my interest concerned what it was like to be part of this study circle and what it was like to be a participant. It was hard to tell if this answer was understandable or incomprehensively vague. There were no follow-up questions however, and the teacher then asked us to draw attention to the first task. Apparently, I had now become part of the group, at least to some extent.

*Gaining Trust*

In order to become a participant observer and be able to understand what is going on in the everyday life of the studied context, the task at hand is to find a place in the group. In the end, this is a question about establishing oneself as trustworthy in the eyes of the participants. This is not just a pragmatic question, but also a question of respect towards the participants. Trust is something that can only be built over time.

Quite early into the fieldwork the other participants started to position me as different because my knowledge of English was more comprehensive. I could for example observe how most of the group would be especially attentive during verbal exercises when I was speaking. As time went by, some participants started to ask me to help them from time to time. When asked a direct question of this kind, it felt only right to respond to it in a helpful way. At the same time, I tried to navigate the situation and keep a low profile and avoid taking on a role as a co-teacher.

My main concern throughout the research was whether I had been able to communicate effectively with the other participants regarding both my research interests and their participation. Some of the participants repeatedly voiced an inability to understand my interest in the participatory and social dimensions of the study circle group. Because of this, I asked to give a small presentation at the end of a session in the middle of the autumn. I talked about how I had found our way of working to be quite school-like, that there was tangible motivation for the studies, and that there was always something to laugh about together during our evenings. The participants listened attentively, and I got a couple of questions about how I viewed their participation in relation to citizenship and what I was about to do with my material. In my answer, I pointed to learning languages as a opportunity to be part of new communities. I also told them I was about to write an article of my experiences in the group. Possibly, this made something clearer for some of the participants, but I was not convinced this broke the invisible walls between us.

As the fall went by, I was still not completely satisfied with my communication with the participants. Since the day-to-day activities in the group were quite task-oriented and lacked informal socializing, I decided towards the end of the semester, to try and complement the participatory observations with some focus group interviews. When asked in late autumn to participate in a group interview about their

studies, the participants responded mostly with silence. Some talked about a lack of time. Unfortunately, since there was no interest in participating, no focus group interviews were conducted. This raised doubts in me: Do I not appear trustworthy enough to be given an hour of their time? Could I have done something differently?

## *Leaving the Field*

As the fieldwork came to an end, my focus shifted to the production of the ethnographic report. An important part of ethnographic fieldwork is to actually leave the field in order to deepen the analysis.

Leaving the English study circle did not take any particular effort since the study circle came to an end by itself in late November. I continued to worry about the participants' hesitancy. With this in mind, and as a sign of general appreciation, I brought gingerbreads and chocolate to the last gathering of the study circle. The beginning and end of the last session goes to illustrate, that the lingering feeling of not really being on the same wavelength was something that I never was able to fully solve. The slight indifference of the participants towards my gesture in the beginning of the session was striking. A bit astounded by the continuing difficulty of grasping sentiments in the group, I finally asked in the end of the last session, if anybody had felt any unease with my participation. No one responded with anything distinct. I then went on to ask if I had bothered anybody with my presence. To my relief, several participants replied quite sincerely 'not at all'.

When the last session came to an end, I thought someone would come up and talk to me or that participants would exchange some final goodbyes or greetings for the upcoming holidays. On the contrary, I stood around, feeling a little foolish, witnessing how the other participants hurried to get their coats and move on to the rest of their possible commitments for the evening. There really was no 'leaving' the field but rather a sense of the 'field' evaporating in front of my eyes.

The balancing act between ethnographic openness and a systematic ambition turned out to be quite unsettling. There are always things that could have been said and done differently. In the end, the fieldnotes and recordings, combined with sentiments and memories from the fieldwork allowed me reflect on and analyze what was going on as a whole and from a certain distance.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS

The foundation of an ethnographic analysis is mainly laid during the fieldwork. The ethnographer will focus attention on some aspects of what is going on and not for others. Observing what it is to participate and study English together with my group, the research interest was eventually narrowed down.

The overall knowledge claim here is grounded on the aim of understanding the studied reality or culture in its own terms but from a specific perspective (Geertz, 1973). The interest of the interpretation is the lived culture in the field of study:

What is going on in this setting? This is attempted from an inside perspective (Pole & Morrison, 2003) and by mediating these findings into communicable terms (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001) – that is, by taking part in the activities as one of the participants, but in contrast to others, also writing down what happens. As an ethnographer, the researcher is inevitably involved in shaping the social processes studied. The ethnographic process is in other words creative, and the knowledge acquired is characterized by creativity and consideration (Sivenius & Friman, 2017).

To highlight the analytical dimensions of doing ethnography – that is, ways ethnographies contribute with knowledge and what this knowledge consists of – we continue to discuss the role of the ethnographer, the role of fieldnotes and the role of theory.

*The Role of the Ethnographer*

To understand what is going on in the study circle, I needed to take part in the studied activities to develop acquaintance with the habits, norms, beliefs and desires of the participants in the study circle. Through the understanding of habits and beliefs, I had the possibility to understand the value of the social practices, even in cases when I was not able to fully accept these social presumptions. I was struck by the way the participants were complying with their exercises and not wanting to be part of a dialogue about how to carry out the studies. Why would anybody want to return to school-like studies as adults on a voluntary basis? It was also puzzling to me to discover how some of the participants referred to themselves in belittling ways – calling themselves for example 'stupid'.

This called for a reflexive approach, in order to avoid simply mimicking the participants (Geertz, 1973). The intention of this reflexive approach can be summarized as the ambition of making the familiar unfamiliar and vice versa (Spindler, 1982), through systematization of the human day-to-day ways of understanding and creating meaning (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Through curiosity and openness to the perspectives of others, it is possible for the ethnographer to come to terms with previously unfamiliar experiences and motives.

My reflexive role as an ethnographer is of importance both for ethical considerations and for the meaningfulness and trustworthiness of the analysis. The main interest for me was to observe the studied practices broadly, trying to alternately search for specific paradoxes and problems, alternately for nothing in particular (compare Wolcott, 1981). When I took part in the activities in the study, I paid attention to being attentive and respecting the other participants, trying to imagine what it is like to be one of the others by immersing into the activities. The more distanced aspects of analysis came at play when reading the initial fieldnotes and expanding on the fieldnotes afterwards.

A possibility for exceeding my individual perspective and assumptions is to employ what can be called researcher triangulation (see Cohen, Manion, &

Morrison, 2002; May, 1993). In this case it meant that one of the researchers had been conducting the fieldwork and made initial reflections and analyses. The observations and impressions were then shared with another researcher who could provide new perspectives and also question certain ideas. Researcher triangulation proved to be fruitful in deepening the analysis, since it encouraged me as an ethnographer to reflect on my feelings of unease during the fieldwork. Looking at my observations in the field, a reflection was striking: perhaps there was no substantial group to be part of? After all, I could safely say, I had made several attempts at communicating my interest and trying to integrate into the group. Instead of looking at the fieldwork as a failure to some degree, this interaction with the participants can illustrate the underlying assumptions making the activities in the study circle possible.

*On Fieldnotes*

We view fieldnotes as an emerging dialogue between theory and practice. The more considered the verbal and conceptual descriptions become, the thicker the examination of the studied phenomenon can become. Thick descriptions are essentially analyses of webs of significance, that is, contextual significances spun by the actors, informants or hosts themselves (compare Geertz, 1973, pp. 5–7). Thick descriptions mean theoretically informed descriptions of a phenomenon at hand, with the intention of conceptualizing the phenomenon. The understanding and interpretations are aimed at the participants' interpretations of the situation and my interpretations are thus at least of a 'second order' (see for example Geertz, 1973, pp. 13–15, 20–21).

The analytic art of writing fieldnotes is, however, filled with complexity, since the fieldnotes cannot be separated from contexts (Geertz, 1973). Writing fieldnotes was quite easily accomplished in the classroom setting of the study circle, where writing was constantly occurring. There was in other words no risk of for example being viewed as totally off and strange when being seen writing notes, even been seen as suspicious (compare Emerson et al., 2001).

The class as an example of social practice functioned as a starting point for analyzing and understanding the study circle. This was informed by an initial surprise during the fieldwork about how meticulously the participants were taking notes and how conscientiously the given tasks were performed. Attending the first session, my fieldnotes convey, that "we are sitting in rows, pronouncing words", and that there is a certain "safety about filing out papers, copying given alternatives". A few weeks later the first comparison to school practices is made. In a concluding discussion, initiated jointly by the study circle leader and me, the notion of participation as "investment in oneself" was coined by one of the participants and seconded by the group. This quote was eventually used to summarize the type of social practice that was expressed in the study circle – to me a rather surprising conclusion to the fieldwork.

*Focusing the Analysis: The Role of Theory*

In order to achieve a meaningful analysis, and eventually a meaningful ethnographic research report, understandable also for an outsider, we argue for the need of a conceptual framework for both theoretical and empirical understanding (compare Pole & Morrison, 2003). The initial detailed descriptions – in our example of the study circles activities as school-like activities – are refined through an explorative analytical process to identify key concepts, with an interest in the complexities of the studied social endeavours (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Pole & Morrison, 2003).

The point of departure of the ethnographic investigation, found in the day-to-day activities, the repetition and the mundane, is eventually combined with a more specific research interest. In our example, this interest was citizenship in a broad sense, comprising of taking part in activities and identification of some kind (compare for example Bagnall, 2010; Biesta, 2011). In order to focus on citizenship within the activities of a study circle, citizenship was understood to be constructed in and through actions within the study circle setting. Citizenship in this context takes place in social interactions where differences are encountered and private issues are translated into public concerns (Bauman, 1999; Biesta, 2011). The study circle could be presumed to influence the persons acting and participating there, and furthermore to influence public opinions and the formation of social bonds. In the English study circle, one tangible aspect of citizenship is the learning of a new language. Becoming more proficient in a language provides possibilities to understand and be part of new contexts. The ways these studies are carried out are thus interesting as an example of entering a public conversation in a broad sense. In our example, this entrance into the English language was characterized by an interest in adapting 'private issues'; complying with a set structure for the studies, rather than setting a shared agenda about what the group could have seen as shared 'public concerns'.

The earlier-mentioned participants' expressed understanding of their participation as taking individual responsibility was further elaborated in the analysis with the help of the theoretical considerations regarding citizenship. This opened up for a concluding discussion in the final version of the published article, highlighting the expressed individual stance "as limiting possibilities for responsibility and thus expressions of citizenship".

## CONCLUSIONS: ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE

Ethnographic knowledge is interpretive. The contribution of an ethnographic description lies in its ability to clarify 'what goes on', making use of a micro-perspective to bring relevant order into what might seem confusing, or also too familiar. Ethnographic description is 'thick' and interpretive, concerns social discourses and attempts to preserve what is being said and done in communicable terms.

We regard this knowledge endeavour as critical in the sense that we try to question and dissolve what seems to be taken for granted and instead look at occurrences with

fresh eyes and from a perspective of a stranger (Spindler, 1982). The ethnographic stance is an attempt at seeing things for what they 'really' are, by overcoming and avoiding superstitions. The aim of reaching ethnographic understanding of everyday knowledge relies on doing research with the informants or participants. This calls for an interpretive, creative and thoughtful approach, not far from other approaches such as arts-based research, where data collection, analysis and reporting are intertwined (Sivenius & Friman, 2017). As we have shown above, this is not an unproblematic process.

The field of adult education practices is broad and action-oriented. This field can be studied as learning environments, situations and encounters, unfolding as the research is carried out. This provides a fruitful field for ethnographic approaches – for example to capture and consider the broader and societal significances of adult education and learning taking place in everyday life and en passant.

How then should qualitative ethnographic research be done? For example, how should the ethnographer avoid influencing the studied group too much or too little? The critical ethnographer has to consider issues regarding understanding and interpretations, as has been discussed in this chapter. Generally, understanding and interpretations affect both the informants and the researcher. At best, the attentive ethnographer sees behind both situations and words, as it were, inside the collective. The ethnographer regards the possibility of things being quite different to what the interviewees for example are portraying. Observations might reveal such contradictions. However, the ethnographer's own personal history and presumptions are unavoidably part of for example writing the fieldnotes, coding these initial observations and analyzing them. This cannot be escaped, but has to be recognized and considered in the search for truthfulness.

## REFERENCES

Andersson, E., & Laginder, A.-M. (2013). Dimensions of power: The influence of study circles. In A.-M. Laginder, H. Nordvall, & J. Crowther (Ed.), *Popular education, power and democracy. Swedish experiences and contributions* (pp. 99–121). Leicester: NIACE.

Bagnall, R. G. (2010). Citizenship and belonging as a moral imperative for lifelong learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 29*(4), 449–460. doi:10.1080/02601370.2010.488812

Bauman, Z. (1999). *In search of politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Biesta, G. (2011). *Learning democracy in school and society. Education, lifelong learning, and the politics of citizenship.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Brewer, J. (2000). *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education.* London: Routledge Falmer.

Davies, C. A. (2002). *Reflexive ethnography. A guide to researching selves and others.* London: Routledge.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2001). Participant observation and fieldnotes. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 352–368). London: Sage Publications.

Folkbildningsrådet. (2018) *Fakta om folkbildning.* Stockholm: Folkbildningsrådet. Retrieved June 18, 2018, from http://www.folkbildningsradet.se/globalassets/fakta-om-folkbildning/fbr_fickfakta2017_webb.pdf

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gordon, T., Holland, J., & Lahelma, E. (2001). Ethnographic research in educational settings. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 188–203). London: Sage Publications.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography. Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). London & New York, NY: Routledge.

Harding, T. (2011). Learning democracy in a Swedish gamers' association: Representative democracy as experiential knowledge in a liquid civil society. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 2*(2), 135–149. https://doi.org/10.338/rela.2000-7426.rela0042

Laginder, A.-M., Nordvall, H., & Crowther, J. (2013). Introduction. In A.-M. Laginder, H. Nordvall, & J. Crowther (Eds.), *Popular education, power and democracy. Swedish experiences and contributions* (pp. 3–13). Leicester: NIACE.

Larsson, S. (2001). Seven aspects of democracy as related to study circles. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 20*(3), 199–217. doi:10.1080/02601370110036073

Larsson, S., & Nordvall, H. (2010). *Study circles in Sweden. An overview with a bibliography of international literature*. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press.

May, T. (1993). *Social research: Issues, methods and processes*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Pastuhov, A. (2018). *Att vara och agera medborgare. En etnografisk studie i folkbildande praktiker*. (Diss.) Åbo: Åbo Akademi.

Pastuhov, A., & Rusk, F. (2017). Citizenship as individual responsibility through personal investment – An ethnographic study in a study circle. *RELA – European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 9*(1), 95–108. https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.relaojs99

Pole, C., & Morrison, M. (2003). *Ethnography for education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

SCB. (2018). *Summary of population statistics 1960–2017.* Retrieved June 18, 2018, from https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/pong/tables-and-graphs/yearly-statistics--the-whole-country/summary-of-population-statistics/

Sivenius, A., & Friman, I. (2017). An art-based project as a research approach – Young people's lives in pictures and words. *The Finnish Journal of Youth Research, 35*(1–2), 26–38.

Spindler, G. (1982). General introduction. In G. Spindler (Ed.), *Doing the ethnography of schooling: Educational anthropology in action* (pp. 1–13). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Tøsse, S. (2009). *Folkbildning som universellt fenomen. Om betydelser och motsvarigheter i historiskt och internationellt perspektiv*. Linköping: Mimer.

Weisner, T. S. (1996). Why ethnography should be the most important method in the study of human development. In R. Jessor, A. Colby, & R. A. Shweder (Eds.), *The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur foundation series on mental health and development. Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry* (pp. 305–324). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wolcott, H. F. (1981). Home and away: Personal contrasts in ethnographic style. In D. A. Messerschmidt (Ed.), *Anthropologists at home in North America: Methods and issues in the study of one's own society* (pp. 255–265). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

DAVID MC CORMACK, JERRY O'NEILL, MARY B. RYAN AND
TONY WALSH

# 7. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY IN, AND AS, ADULT EDUCATION

*Eavesdropping on a Conversation*

## INTRODUCTION

*It is typical of our work in adult education – suggestions made on the run and commitments made in the same way. I was asked to write a chapter on autoethnography as a creative research method in adult education and thought that it would be best written in dialogue and collaboration with others, and presented in an autoethnographic way. Inspired and supported by Ellis and Bochner's conversational method (2008, 2016), I suggest to three colleagues that we, all four, meet for a conversation about our respective experiences of autoethnography and from this write the chapter.*

*There was ready agreement from all, an appointment made, a conversation had, transcribed and shared. The business and the busyness of life took over though and now, months later, with a deadline straight ahead, I begin to feel that familiar fear: Can we do this? Can we craft something useful out of our conversation? Is it my responsibility or ours? How do I (or we) do justice to the living, exciting method that is autoethnography, staying true to lived experience, harnessing the 'we' in balance with the 'I'? Knowing that it is impossible to re/present exactly who says what and when, the process of retelling is akin to eavesdropping, catching snippets and echoes of conversation.*

*These are all typical conundrums that autoethnographers ask, since there isn't the comfort of a formula or a stable form – introduction, literature review, data collection and analysis. Autoethnography resists such formulae and the accompanying depersonalized voice, and tries instead to sit with the mess of experience, trusting that something will emerge which somehow renders the mess into a narrative frame that is both an adequate rendering of experience and a useful scholarly inquiry into that experience.*

*But I am getting ahead of myself. For autoethnographers, like adult educators, context is hugely important: researchers are always real people in real contexts that shape, and are shaped by, our commitments and interests.*

WHO ARE WE?

All four of us (Mary, Tony, Jerry, Dave) work as adult educators and see ourselves as creating space for adult learners to learn from, and about, our own lives in a way that offers resources for enhanced awareness and fuller participation in the range of personal and social occupations in which we engage. Such processes of change and development are emergent, requiring a strong sense of subtle, nuanced aspects of imaginative, holistic, emotional and cognitive change. As adult educators, we have all struggled to find research approaches and paradigms that are congruent with this view of transformative adult learning (Dominicé, 1990, 2000; Jarvis, 2006; Mezirow, 1990, 2006). We have each had quarrels with the modes of writing and research characterized by the "one-dimensional, monochromatic text expected by the academy" (Hoult, 2012, p. 1). As scholars we are keenly aware of the "academic purgatory" into which we can be cast for writing outside (and against) the register of the "supposed objectivism of science drilled into us from our first brushes with academic writing" (Mitchell & Clark, 2018, p. 1).

Writing about, and in, transformative learning requires a commitment to a different kind of scholarly practice grounded in a belief that "to study persons is to study beings existing in narrative and socially constituted by stories" (Bochner & Riggs, 2014, p. 197) and working towards the goal "to imagine, discover, or create new and better ways of living" (p. 198).

In narrative inquiry in general, and autoethnography specifically, we believe we have come upon an approach to research that allows us to catch those subtle processes of human growth and transformation in a way that honours the richness and passion with which adults embrace their own growth and development. Autoethnography is, we believe, a method wholly congruent with adult education.

*I get to work and I write a few paragraphs that articulate some key aspects of narrative inquiry and autoethnography. In doing so, I risk returning to that same impersonal style of writing that autoethnography works against. Autoethnography, though, usually involves a balance between showing and telling (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) and to help us in the conversation I draw on some scholarly work that tells us more about these genres.*

NARRATIVE INQUIRY & AUTOETHNOGRAPHY – OR INDEED
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY & NARRATIVE INQUIRY

We begin from the position that there is no one solid entity known as autoethnography that is easily labelled and categorized. Like every other approach to research, it emerges from paradigms of thought, and is brought forward by researchers who wrestle with research problems in different disciplinary contexts. As adult educators we see story as being a fundamental way of experiencing the world and therefore core to the practice of facilitating transformative adult learning (Randall, 2014). We see human beings as storied, and as constructing and being constructed by

individual and collective experience. From this viewpoint, inquiring into the stories that constitute our lives, understanding the power dynamics that are at play in how stories get made, told and heard, is transformative learning.

Narrative inquiry as a paradigm of research honours this ontology and sees social inquiry as rooted in "stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 20). Research inquiry in this paradigm gathers the stories by means of which we experience and understand our worlds and mines them for the knowledge that resides in our storied framings of experience.

Autoethnography is one key expression emerging from this narrative ontology. Reed-Danahay (1997) points out that autoethnography as a term contains three core elements: *auto* meaning self, *ethno* meaning culture and *graphy* meaning writing. We take this tripartite distinction as a structuring principle in this chapter, but we also recognize that the method is complex and evolving. Autoethnography honours the reality that in any piece of research, the self of the researcher is a substantive, constitutive fabric in the epistemological tapestry. We cannot research narratively without explicitly honouring our selves as substantially present in how we write, think and research.

In this chapter, the relationship between narrative inquiry and autoethnography is foregrounded. Mary and Tony see themselves as narrative inquirers; inquiring into experience with others in terms of the stories that frame that experience. In their studies, autoethnography is a key backdrop to the inquiry, but not the sole focus. For example, Mary situates her research in terms of her own learning biography and her group work practice, which is shaped by her competing identities of group analyst and adult educator.

Tony, likewise, sees his ethnographic study of southern Irish Protestants[1] as coloured by his own experiences. In his narrative inquiry, exploring his own story became a pathway into exploring the stories of others.

In contrast, Jerry and Dave's work is more solidly located within autoethnographic methodological practices; the experiences of the self of the researcher being the primary focus for the inquiry, the source of experience from which knowledge emerges. Jerry set out to research the experience of other adult educators but methodological and epistemological questions thrown up through the research and the supervisory process prompted an increasingly reflexive gaze back on the self of the researcher, that took him, onto a different, more aesthetic, journey.

Lastly, Dave's research was autoethnographic from the start, mining as it did, deeply personal and professional experience emerging through reflective practice, culminating in an expanded knowledge of identity issues for adult educators.

## EAVESDROPPING: ONE GENRE, DIFFERENT COMMITTMENTS

*The editors remind me of the deadline, the word count, the overall vision for the book. Here I am, faced with a transcript of our conversation. Let's eavesdrop ...*

Our conversation highlights our excitement about narrative approaches to research and autoethnography, the sense of liberation that we each felt from the constraints of a certain brand of objective academic writing and research. But as the conversation goes on, the differing perspectives we have of autoethnography become evident. Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) point out the ways in which narrative inquiry as a genre of research has itself become a catch-all term, one that involves a wide range of often mutually incompatible commitments. Our conversation reveals some of these differing methodological understandings and the ideological commitments that underpin them. In our conversation, Mary addresses Dave and Jerry, seeing her own approach to autoethnography in contrast to theirs.

> So, the pair of you (J and D) are going to say 'no we're not like that at all' (laughter) but I think what strikes me is that the internal journey, the making sense of that inner world is a very rich landscape for both of you. I think what strikes me when I read both your works is that you are drilling down into the deeper recesses of the inner worlds. I think you are both much more literary and interested in the literary world than I am – you play a lot more with ideas than I do, and when I read what you write I get this sense of the absolute pleasure of following ideas or playing with them, seeing where they go. So, it's much more fluid the way you both write. It's more to do with feelings and emotions, that's not to say that I don't deal with the emotional world but it's different, and I think yours is much more a literary kind of creative process.

Mary's thoughts highlight two notions underpinning autoethnography. On the one hand is a concern for the aesthetic, the sense of emotionality, subjectivity, attention to a form of writing that would speak out of, and speak to, hearts as well as minds. This approach takes us in a writerly direction: evocative writing is seen as a method of inquiring into felt experience, using story to understand the flux and complexity of experience (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Jerry and Dave have both written autoethnographically in the context of adult education in this framework. But Mary approaches research very differently:

> I start in a different place. So, mine is always, always rooted in what am I doing in the here and now and how does my practice have meaning? How has it value? What does it connect with? What am I actually trying to do here? How does research help me in the here and now of what I'm trying to do? Narrative inquiry did work for me more because what it kept putting me back into was the actual experience of what I was doing in my pedagogical practice and trying to probe into that and understand it more deeply. This gave me a way of connecting the different identities in myself in the lived experience.

Mary, then, is more drawn to a pragmatic concern, that pedagogical experience is a form of knowledge and that autoethnography is a vehicle for articulating this kind of praxial knowledge. Where evocative autoethnography is concerned with matters

of feeling and story, pragmatic concerns are guided by questions of; what does it tell us about practice, what do we learn from practice, what difference does it make to us in practice?

## EAVESDROPPING: CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

But autoethnography does not simply take its definition from the pragmatic or aesthetic distinction. There is also in autoethnography a problematizing of selfhood, a *critical* (Denzin, 2014) perspective on self as an object of inquiry and the sense in which selfhood is a social construction. Tony's research illustrates the contribution autoethnography can make to our understanding of the socially constructed self and to the often unwitting effects of dominant discourse, marginalization and oppression:

> And what narrative inquiry and autoethnography gave me was a way of honouring experience but also of exploring the social significance of experience, that it's not just the individual's experience. Each individual is positioned in a much wider range of worlds and their experience is a way into exploring all sorts of nuanced realities and possibilities and layers of culture, of society, of politics, of power, of oppression and of marginalization – all those kinds of things. And so my research was extraordinarily life-giving and to me it seemed to be very much related to what adult education is about – giving us an observer position on experience and what that speaks to in terms of oppression and our own marginality and learning and change and hope.

> It was the power of those autoethnographic memories, and I suppose the anger to some degree that arose in me that became a catalyst to explore the areas of marginality – not just in Irish society, I think any group of people who are marginalized share an experience with other people that were marginalized – and autoethnography helped me to explore and analyse the dynamics of power and marginalization.

There is a sense in the conversation that autoethnography is congruent with the commitment in adult education to the intersection between the personal and the political, the ways in which the outer world impinges and shapes the internal world. In this sense we see that adult education at its best is intrinsically an autoethnographic project, an ongoing process of conscientization of how individual and group lives are constructed in and by powerful social contexts and forces. Adult education and autoethnography are both dialogic forms of practice; both emerge from critical engagements with what Jerry refers to in our conversation as 'biographic reflexivity'.

Let's eavesdrop again on Jerry as he feels keenly the ways in which identities are a function of the social institutions we are part of or excluded from. Being in precarious employment and balancing caring roles leaves him on the margins of these social institutions – a place that sensitizes him 'to be critical about the notion of social realities and identities':

So I think that kind of being on the edges of things lets you see that identities are constructed and I think this gives me a predisposition to being critical about the contexts in which they're formed. Even in my own family this happens; like because I do a lot of the caring work, and because I'm not in full-time employment. And when I was growing up, my sisters would often have said 'Ah you were one of the girls anyway'. So even as a child, my gender identity was kind of called into question … and I think that's a great thing you know. It wrecks your head – but as a critical creative thing it allows you to kind of see through things in some ways.

### EAVESDROPPING: WHAT IS THE *AUTO* IN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

So, the question emerges as to what is the *auto* in autoethnography; what is selfhood. There are clear dangers that, as a genre, autoethnography can be simplified and watered down into a version of straightforward autobiography. There is a danger that the version of selfhood that is implicated is a straightforward humanist notion predicated on the assumption that we have unproblematic access to selfhood and the wherewithal to tell stories of self in an equally unproblematic manner (Butler, 2005; Davies & Davies, 2007; Gannon, 2006). Autoethnography springs from this paradox, the simultaneous complexity of selfhood and its status as a social achievement.

Adult education exists in exactly this space of recognizing that in a world that is socially constructed there is a sense of fluidity that can be anxiety-provoking as well as liberating. Autoethnography is one way in which we can gain some traction in the process of taking responsibility for shaping selfhood in the context of this fluidity. We can articulate and interrogate in playful and autoethnographic ways. Dave says:

As I see it, transformative learning can take place if you begin to learn that you are storied, and that you are made up of stories and that you are constructed and that you continue to construct your story. I think it's liberating to understand that, rather than you're stuck with who you are, you know.

### EAVESDROPPING: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *AUTO* AND *ETHNO* IN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

There is a clear challenge in autoethnography concerning how it can be at once deeply personal and at the same time of concern to the wider social and cultural worlds. Autoethnographers can often default on either one of these concerns and lose something vital in the process. Autoethnography requires that we encompass both: it is about the self, of use to the self, but not for the self. So how can we resolve the competing concerns of *auto* and *ethno*? Mary offers a clear ontological position on the relationship between the personal and the social.

*Mary*: Using autoethnography gave me a space for the notion that there is no such thing as an individual separate to the group, that the individual is

constructed by the group before they even are born. Their story, their identity, is part of that group and the part I think that I liked about autoethnography is that notion of trying to step slightly out of the group to reflect on my individual position but always in the knowledge that I am formed and part of the group. I think my reading of Clandinin and Connelly and narrative inquiry helped me to understand how I am shaped by it, I am fed by the group; I don't exist separate to the group. I don't exist out of relationship.

*Dave*: But I think I have a sense of what you're saying or the implications of what you're saying is that the auto is always ethno. It is always about the other and the relational. So, the individual is always about the other as well, that the more I can write into how I experience being in this world that's knowledge about self and other; and what reflexivity is to me is that I am then always able to come back into the relationship with that knowledge that self is a way back into other.

*Tony*: Autoethnography allows the telling of a range of different stories about self and about group, about community, about power, about resistance, about marginalization, about all of those things. In autoethnography we need to be mindful of looking at the group as well as the individual, but also the wider systems that contribute to particular stories.

EAVESDROPPING: WHAT IS THE *GRAPHY* IN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY?

Jerry sees an "open text which draws the audience in in the moment and engages them, provokes thinking at a really basic level". Autoethnography is, for him, a textual equivalent of an adult education space, a playful but provocative space in which thought, feeling and reflexivity are stimulated and held. It holds the potential of being a pedagogic, as much as methodological, space, that, drawing on concepts such as Barthes' (1992) "writerly text", can actively engage the reader in meaning-making (to slip you, somehow, into the inquiring, learning text). Autoethnography then typically makes us feel *and* think: we not only tell our story, but we explore it in dialogue with theory and with others, so as to tease out emergent learning.

But the desire for a framework for qualitative inquiry, a 'how to', is always frustrated by the sense that every autoethnography is *emergent*: there are no instrumental guidelines. As we discover in the conversation, there is "only the autoethnography you are writing now". Marshall (2008) reminds us that form emerges in the writing of such reflexive genres and this demands a well-developed capacity for patiently working with nuanced processes of emergence, sitting with the anxiety of not knowing. If adult education is a border country in which disorientation, anxiety and loss are precursors to transformative learning, then autoethnography requires the same supports and disciplines.

Mary recognizes that such messy processes and texts necessitate good supervisory holding, especially with the backdrop of the university as a potentially conservative

audience to what is sometimes perceived as an experimental research method. Jerry refers to the group process that fostered his own autoethnography: the group provided a safe and trusting context for emergent reflexivity: this "could only have happened in a kind of pedagogic space that trusted people to interrogate their own biographies critically in a trusting space".

## METHODOLOGICAL SCAFFOLDING

*But still I'm not happy. During our conversation, we talked about the difficulty of autoethnography, the way in which it requires resources of honesty, creativity as well as scholarship. I think of my students and their demands for clarity on structure, format and process in conducting their research. I feel the need to offer readers some advice, so I revisit my own experience as an autoethnographer and ask the others to do likewise: what advice would you give? What advice would you like to have been given? What follows are some suggestions for scaffolding that can help us in the challenging and exciting process of creating autoethnographies.*

### Choose Your Topic Carefully

Autoethnography isn't about writing what is already known, it is about writing into the unknown. So when choosing a topic make sure that you choose something that you are passionate to know more about, to sustain you in the gradual process of coming to know. Therefore, it is important to be open to the unexpected, in the process of the inquiry, you may encounter something new and unanticipated that will challenge your assumptions and expectations.

### Reading Other Autoethnographies

There is no formula for an autoethnography and this can be a frustration. However, there is a growing body of scholarly work across a variety of disciplines and becoming familiar with a range of approaches will help to inspire your own approach and your own form. Read widely, find voices that help you to find your own.

### Reflexivity

Autoethnography is essentially a reflexive project at a number of levels. It requires you to be both fully in your own experience and still to have the capacity to think about the lenses through which you interpret and therefore shape your own experiences. It is useful to share your writings with critical others, especially those skilled in illuminating blind spots.

*Journaling*

Journaling is a strong resource for engaging in this reflexive project. In journaling you can catch yourself being yourself (Cixous, 1997, p. 13), developing your capacity to be fully immersed in experience while also in an observer position.

*Internal and External*

Reflexivity requires that we are finely attuned to the ways in which our experience of our personal and social world involves a complex dynamic between our internal and external worlds. The response of the other is essential in developing insight and knowledge. We are shaped by wider society and relationship, but we also shape them in turn and autoethnography is a keen intervention in that process.

*Relationship with Reader*

In all writing we need to pay attention to our audience, but in autoethnography we seek to pay particular attention to the reader as participant in the process of meaning-making. We are not seeking to convince them intellectually but allow them into a living experience, bringing them with us, allowing them to experience things vicariously and therefore provoking a response.

*Dialogue with Theory*

One of the hallmarks of autoethnography is the practice of critical analysis and reflection where the autoethnographer becomes forensically alive to the experiences of their life and its contexts. The extent to which conceptual and theoretical resources are brought to bear on this project are core. This does not require a change of voice or of register, rather theory is a resource that can be used to shape the meanings and significances that emerge from our reflexive engagements with our storied experience.

*The 'Other' in Autoethnography*

Though autoethnography is about the 'self', this does not preclude others as co-researchers. Autoethnography profoundly requires the support of others. In this research modality collaborations and conversations are often used to deepen inquiry, enabling all concerned to reflect on their experiences and learn from them. Narrative research is inherently a relational endeavour, as a researcher you are often in an intimate/personal relationship with participants and a professional relationship with the scholarly community. Autoethnography as a method, then, often requires of us that we manage the tensions of occupying multiple positions simultaneously: such as, colleague, peer, educator, researcher.

POSTSCRIPT

*Around the time when we were pulling this chapter together through our reflections, conversations, and shared writing and responses, I found myself driving homewards from a conference in Sligo where I had just presented a paper-poem on a more recent engagement with a narrative practice. In Irish terms, it was a long drive: 257 km home across the breadth of the island.*

*My drive, west-to-east, was a movement against a well-established trope, and, as Enright (2015) points out, almost cliché, in Irish cultural practice that, usually, draws the artist from the east to western spaces to explore the inner world in communion with a sublime landscape. But, for me, this is what a lot of my narrative methodology seems to have become, a movement, a writing against the grain – and from this counter-movement a messy methodology has emerged slowly that locates itself in and around process-orientated and dissonant epistemologies.*

*Writing and movement as method – a way through to knowledge.*

*And on this slow movement across the island, I had, for once, the space and time to think about a million and one things: the conference I had just left, this emerging chapter and, of course, eavesdroppers such as yourself.*

*As Sligo receded into my rear-view mirror, I pondered on the paper-poem of that morning. I was happy how it went. Happy that it went the way I intended, but also a bit bemused at its reception. I had the familiar feeling of being somewhat at the methodological margins and I wondered if the performance and play of knowledge is, in one sense, respected and acknowledged, but maybe, for many, not regarded as the serious stuff of an academic conference. And despite inviting everyone there, as I moved into the poem that morning, "to listen with another ear" (Irigaray, 1985, p. 366), I felt that it really is quite hard work to speak, and maybe more so, to listen, against dominant ways of knowing. But for me, now, for this kind of work, there is no other way and so it doesn't bother me – or maybe, more truthfully, it bothers me less.*

*And as I continued eastwards in a car barely up for the journey, my thoughts settled on this piece of writing we are working through and, specifically, a knot in the text that I felt was there for a while but which, somehow, we had loosened through our conversations, emails and shared pieces of writing. It was in this dynamic and dialogic subtext – the words that are underneath and behind all this – where we talked and wrote our way through our different approaches and conceptions of autoethnography and narrative inquiry. And, in the end, what came into focus for me through all this was, despite different methodological nuances in our approaches to research, that the four of us, quite simply, get each other.*

*We get that the thing that grounds us in our different ways of working with stories in research, is our attendance to process, context and transformation – in short that, our adult educator ways of knowing and being is the fertile soil and common ground out of which our varied takes on narrative and autoethnography emerge. It is a*

*practice, either with learning groups or research participants, that strives to balance the personal with the collective, the inner world with the outer. A practice that tries, always, to create spaces which allow stories to be told with a sensitivity to power so we can hear and amplify marginal voices in that foundational purpose towards transforming people's lives and the worlds they inhabit.*

*And so, if it is our positions as adult educators that, fundamentally, orientate the four of us, then, it may be no surprise that our final thoughts turn to you … that often-neglected subject space in scholarly writing between the first and third person … we wonder how all this will orientate you in your quest for some methodological direction in your work … you may have come to this chapter as part of that search for the mythical text that will, somehow, reveal, step-by-step, how to 'do' autoethnography.*

*… but maybe your starting point can be found, not in the solid black ink of our words, but in the whiteness that holds them and follows this … that you, like us, need to write into and through to your knowledge … and … so …*

*as our voices fade …*

*down into the          …*

*open white spaces of epistemological possibilities …*

*… as our ellipses … …          …          flat-line our thoughts …*

*… we invite you to move out from the shadowed silence of the eaves …*

*… we invite you to respond …*

*… to revive our knowledge with yours …*

*…to find the knot in all this that you'd like*

*to unravel … to work through …*

*and use that as a place to write into or against …*

*… we invite you to respond …*

*…so, go on …*

<div align="right">*… find the knot in all of this …*</div>

<div align="center">*find your space*</div>

*… open your journal …*

<div align="center">*… and write …*</div>

<div align="right">*write anything …*</div>

<div align="center">*just write …*</div>

## NOTE

[1]   On the achievement of political Independence in 1922, Ireland became a state whose social, political and religious life was rigorously controlled by a coalition of rigid Catholicism and fundamentalist nationalism. In this chilly environment the tiny (and, until recently, shrinking) Protestant minority constituted the main cultural and religious alternative to the prevailing hegemony. Its identity, survival and modes of resistance were the core focus of Tony's inquiry.

## REFERENCES

Barthes, R. (1992). *S/Z*. London: Blackwell.

Bochner, A. P., & Ellis, C. (2016). *Evocative autoethnography: Writing lives and telling stories*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bochner, A., & Riggs, N. A. (2014). Practicing narrative inquiry. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Oxford book of qualitative research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butler, J. (2005). *Giving an account of yourself*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.

Caine, V., Estefan, A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2013). A return to methodological commitment: Reflections on narrative inquiry. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 57*(6), 574–586.

Cixous, H. (1997). *Rootprints: Memory and life writing* (M. Calle-Gruber, Trans.). Abingdon: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Davies, B., & Davies, C. (2007). Having, and being had by, "experience" or, "experience" in the social sciences after the discursive/poststructuralist turn. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*(8), 1139–1159.

Denzin, N. K. (2014). *Interpretive autoethnography* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Dominice, P. (1990). Composing educational biographies: Group reflection through life histories. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dominice, P. (2000). *Learning from our lives: Using educational biography with adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum Aualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12*(1), Article 10.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2008). 'Foreword'. *Creative Approaches to Research, 1*(2), 1–3.

Enright, A. (2015, May 9). The last place before America. *The Guardian Review*, 2–4.

Gannon, S. (2006). The im(possibilities) of writing the self-writing: French poststructural theory and autoethnography. *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies, 6*(4), 474–495.

Hoult, E. C. (2012). Recognizing and escaping the sham: Truth claims and the fiction of academic writing about adult learning. *Interactions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies, 8*(2), 1–23.

Irigaray, L. (1985). *The sex which is not one*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Jarvis, P. (2006). *Towards a comprehensive theory of human learning*. London: Routledge.

Marshall, J. (2008). Finding form in writing for action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of action research: participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview on transformative learning. In P. Sutherland & J. Crowther (Eds.), *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts*. London: Routledge.

Mitchell, K. M., & Clark, A. M. (2018). Five steps to writing more engaging qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*, 1–3.

Randall, W. L. (2014). *The stories we are: An essay on self-creation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Reed-Danahay, D. (1997). *Auto/ethnography*. New York, NY: Berg.

# PART 3

# ARTS-BASED RESEARCH AND CREATIVE PEDAGOGIES

SHAUNA BUTTERWICK AND CAROLE ROY

# 8. FINDING VOICE AND ENGAGING AUDIENCES

*The Power of Arts-Based Community Engagement*

## INTRODUCTION

In the wider field of adult education practice and research, there is growing appreciation for how arts and creative expression can create opportunities for marginalized voices to emerge. Within liberatory approaches to adult education (e.g. Freire, 1996; Schugurensky, 2006), the matter of voice has been prominent; in this chapter, we bring attention to how creative expression, as both research methodology and pedagogy, contributes to creating conditions for those voices to be expressed and to be heard. We begin with a review of relevant literature exploring voice and listening, and arts-based inquiry before turning to two cases of arts-based approaches to research on community education and learning. First, we examine Carole's study of documentary film festivals. Then Shauna's inquiry into the political fashion shows developed by the Philippine Women's Centre in British Columbia, Canada (PWCBC) is explored.

## FINDING VOICE AND CREATING CONDITIONS FOR LISTENING

Communicative practices where citizens speak their truths and share what matters to them are central to the creation and sustaining of a dynamic and vibrant pluralistic democracy. Due to their location on the margins created by unequal power dynamics, there are individuals and groups who are left out of these processes, for example people who experience poverty or mental illness, transgender individuals, immigrants, Indigenous peoples, to name a few. As many Indigenous groups have pointed out, the issue is not about finding voice, rather, the time has come for these voices to be heard and acted upon (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015; Alfred; 2010; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Graveline, 1998).

Listening, Susan Bickford (1996) argues, is a significant political activity. She challenges approaches to democratic engagement where the goal is achieving consensus, pointing to how, within pluralistic democratic societies, consensus can silence difference. The kind of political listening that Bickford is promoting does not ignore conflict, nor does it require a strong sense of community. "Listening – as part of a conception of adversarial communication – is a crucial political activity that enables us to give democratic shape to our being together in the world" (p. 19).

The goal for each communicative event is to engage in such a way so that action is possible. Listening, not just speaking, "is what unites us, and we accomplish this through the exercise of empathy" (p 13).

The kind of listening, however, we are exploring here is one that does not assume that we can fully understand or know 'the Other'. It cannot be premised on empathy that assumes a sense of symmetry, which, as Iris Marion Young (1997) suggests, is problematic. All we can achieve, Young suggests, is asymmetrical reciprocity which requires moral humility, that is, an understanding and appreciation *for all that we do not know*. Trust, Young notes, is also key, but it cannot be based on hope for reciprocity: "the trust to communicate cannot wait for the promise to reciprocate or the conversation will never happen" (p. 50). This matter of asymmetrical relations is also a concern for anti-racist scholar Sherene Razack (1998). She points to how some practices of telling stories and listening can actually reproduce injustice, particularly in circumstances where subordinated subjects are required to tell their stories to dominant subjects. Building on the important work of Fanon, Razack argues that these exchanges can involve a violent process of depersonalization , that is, how "powerful narratives [can turn] oppressed peoples into objects" (p. 3) and how "the colonial encounter produces … both the colonizer … and the colonized" (p. 4).

In this chapter we explore how community-based projects employing art and creative forms of expression offered opportunities for speaking and listening such that differences are not erased and further subjugation does not occur.

## ARTS-BASED LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

We believe that artistic and creative expression, thoughtfully carried out, can support forms of speaking and listening across boundaries to differences and lead to understanding of self and others. Elliott Eisner (2008) similarly argues that artistic expression enables the development of insights into particular situations, our own and that of others. Sandra Hayes and Lyle Yorks (2007) also observed how "the arts can bridge boundaries separating people and keep those boundaries porous" (p. 2). Maxine Greene (1995) advocated for creative and arts-based forms of expression as a way to build community and engage our imaginations which "permits us to give credence to alternative realities [and] allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions (p. 3).

This empathy for self and others is, we argue, foundational to building a kind of solidarity that aligns with the powerful challenge articulated by Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal Australian woman: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together".[1] Recognizing that others may have very different experiences and worldviews is basic to living in a pluralistic democratic society. Clare Hemmings (2012) takes up the idea of solidarity that engages with difference in her discussion of "affective dissonance", that is, how shared rage and frustration can lead to "affective solidarity" (p. 147).

There is expanding literature that explores how art-making practices (poetry, visual art, film, theatre, music, and dance) have supported individuals and groups positioned at the edges of mainstream society to tell their stories and speak their truths. This literature describes how adult educators, community activists, and artists are working in a wide range of settings promoting the use of the arts as ways to communicate individual and collective perspectives and provide opportunities for exchanges in multicultural and pluralistic societies (e.g. Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Mirochnik & Sherman, 2002; Powell & Speiser, 2005; Lawrence, 2005; Barndt, 2006, 2011; Hayes & Yorks, 2007; Clover & Stalker, 2007; Clover, Sanford, & Butterwick, 2012; Butterwick & Roy, 2016). Arts-based methods (particularly visual and performative) have also been central to popular education processes (Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, & Thomas, 1995; Nadeau, 1996; Hope & Timmel, 1999; Barndt, 2011). Popular education involves not only describing and analyzing problems, but also envisioning what actions should be taken.

In the next section, we consider two cases of arts-based projects: Carole's research into the public pedagogy of documentary film festivals and Shauna's collaborative research with the Philippine Women's Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia Canada (PWCBC) follows.

## TWO STORIES OF ARTS-BASED LEARNING AND RESEARCH

### Documentary Film Festivals and Collective Listening

Documentary film festivals are a growing phenomenon around the world. Carole has initiated several such film festivals in Canada and became intrigued with their potential for bringing different voices and creating conditions for listening, which led to her research project. Documentary film festivals offer an alternative to mass media which critic Solomon suggests offer "a multiplicity of sameness" (in Waltz, 2005, p. 7). Frank Tester, founder of Courtenay's World Community Film Festival (British Columbia), eloquently critiqued the mainstream media: "We just don't have a media with a really critical cutting edge in this country. … Where else do you get the other side of the coin using media that people can so easily relate to?" (Roy, 2016a, p. 120). He added, the festival plays a "role in countering the lies, the deception, the falsehoods … [and keeps] people sharp and thinking critically" (p. 28). Social media has since developed but as we have seen in recent years it can also amplify erroneous information so there is still a need for a deeper look at issues. Documentaries by independent filmmakers provide different perspectives and often reveal what mainstream media ignores (Boler & Allen, 2002); yet they are stifled by a distribution system that caters to corporations (Winton & Garrison, 2010).

Ehrenreich (2006) expressed concern for how the notion of the common good "has been eroded by the self-serving agendas of the powerful" while "decades of conservative social policy have undermined any sense of mutual responsibility and placed the burden of risk squarely on the individual or the family" (p. 254). Despite

the thousand-channels universe, marginalized people rarely have the opportunity to tell their stories. Documentary film festivals can foster democracy by amplifying voices often left out of mainstream media: indigenous, youth, poor, homeless, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, immigrants, workers, or advocates for justice, to name a few. A documentary film festival is an opportunity to listen, with others, and engage imagination and empathy: action is necessary but it is often born in the quieter times of listening to/with others (Roy, 2016b). These festivals exposed problems but also revealed courageous struggles, even victories, and allowed people to rediscover the pleasure of gathering together in the dark and listening.

In this case study of three documentary film festivals, data collection was through interviews with 135 attendees (94 exit interviews, 23 individual interviews, and 3 group interviews with 18 individuals); 15 organizers (individual interviews); and 11 sponsors (8 in 1 group interview and 3 individual interviews). Anonymous written feedback by attendees were also collected. The festivals under study showed films simultaneously in different venues and selected a diversity of stories about social justice in general. An attendee expressed gratitude, saying the festival had fed and nurtured her active engagement over the years, providing reassurance to activists that they are not alone. The documentaries often acted as conversation starters that broke isolation and contributed to building community, which echoes Andruske and Noble's (2006) comment that festivals allow dialogue, "so that the 'other' becomes more familiar, safer, and more acceptable" (p. 3). As Shirley Goldberg, festival organizer and professor of media studies for 30 years, said, films are often associated with leisure rather than work so viewers tend to be relaxed and open because no performance is expected (personal communication, February 10, 2010). In addition, the lack of "preconditions, markers of acceptance, or sense of 'measuring up'" in a festival helps to "foster a sense of belonging" (Andruske & Noble, 2006, p. 5). While a festival may take place within a familiar location, it breaks the routine of regular activities and allows time to listen to new ideas and reflect. Documentary film festivals provide an opportunity for popular epistemology since the use of visual images makes them more easily accessible than written literature, which requires higher level of literacy. Film festivals in large urban settings are usually produced by the film industry, attract celebrities, and tend to be perceived as elitist events. However, both film festivals in this study are popular events: they are sponsored by local community organizations and tell stories of "ordinary" people's lives.

Some people came to a film festival looking for information. Tiffany attended the Antigonish International Film Festival (Nova Scotia) and said: "I feel First Nations people in Canada have been hard done by and it's not something that I know that much about so I am trying to educate myself about what the issues are and that's what drew me" (Roy, 2016a, p. 44). On the other hand, Rosemary, a First Nations woman found *Le Peuple Invisible* (The Invisible Nation; Desjardins & Monderie, 2007) shown at the same festival, very educative; she suggested that many probably did not know about the challenges Indigenous communities confront and she thought this was an opportunity for them to hear and reconsider their views (Roy, 2016a).

For many, watching a film is easier than reading a book. Its appeal is the visual as well as the limited time required, plus the fact that it allows for peripheral observation that demands no overt action/statement while mind and emotions may be fully engaged in a public setting. In a society so focused on action, it can be a relief to be allowed to be silent within a collective setting that values witnessing as learning. This can be a gentler approach to communicating difficult and/or controversial material as people can ponder the new information without having to respond immediately. This reflective time provides space needed for thoughtful consideration, which may lead to change in perspectives and actions. Anthony attended ReFrame Film Festival in Peterborough (Ontario) and thought that openness and receptivity could lead to important changes. He acknowledged that while seeing a film is not action, it may lead to being to being less judgmental and developing greater empathy and compassion towards others (Roy, 2016a).

The attraction to a film festival is also the social aspect. Witnessing others' reactions made an attendee pause and think about his reactions. Learning from emotions happens in an embodied way, by being aware of others in the audience responding to a story, physically at times; learning is not limited to cognition. Listening is also about hearing of others' imagination or innovation. The challenge for documentary film festivals is to provoke thought and encourage action, and not overwhelm people with information on the many problems. Tempering exposition of problems with stories of effective, courageous, or inspiring actions is important. By exposing particularities, documentary film festivals provide a bridge between differences by creating a collective listening space where ideas, experiences, and emotions are conveyed at a pace that allows viewers to reflect individually or in dialogue with others. Gaston Kaboré, a pioneering filmmaker from Burkina Faso, suggested that cinema has become "a tool of liberation, liberating the individual in his mind. We need to describe our own reality by ourselves" (cited in Turan, 2002, p. 71). Film festivals can contribute to "strengthen[ing] the documentational aspects of an already existing knowledge creating process" that provides "a context of continuity" and resources for activists and adult educators (Hall, 2001, p. 174).

## *Speaking Truth to Power through Political Fashion Shows*

Shauna undertook her study of the Political Fashion Shows of the PWCBC having observed how Filipino activists' effective use of creative expression to educate and organize. While Shauna was familiar with other forms of creative expression in her research and teaching (popular theatre, poetry, painting), she had not yet encountered how fashion shows, a genre not usually associated with women's empowerment, can educate and politicize. Working collaboratively with the PWCBC, funds were secured[2] and Shauna began to research the three political fashion shows created by the PWCBC.

Along with a member of the PWCBC, Kim Villagante, data was gathered through interviews and analysis of documents (press releases, notes and photographs and videos of the shows). Group interviews using an arts-based approach were

also conducted. In these sessions, photos of the fashion shows were shared and participants were invited to tell their stories of their involvement. Small groups were formed and lengths of coloured fabric distributed. Scenes were created using the fabric to animate and further expand on their experiences (Butterwick, 2017).

The three performances (2004, 2005 and 2008) told stories of colonization of the Philippines and the ongoing struggles of millions of overseas Filipino workers (see Butterwick, Carrillo, & Villagante, 2016). The idea for the political fashion shows came from how feminist organizations in the Philippines such as GABRIELA (General Assembly Binding Women for Reform, Integrity, Equality, and Action) had used this genre during election periods to raise issues and educate voters. Outside the Philippines, other organizations have also employed the fashion show genre. In 2009, the Los Angeles GABRIELA group put on a political fashion show at Berkeley and a mainstream mall. Entitled "Trafficked", the show focused on the global sex trade. A Filipino activist group in New York created "In Her Shoes", using shoes that had been decorated and designed to honor women defenders of human rights for International Women's Day.

The three PWCBC political fashion shows involved a large group of PWCBC members and others from the wider Filipino community in the design, choreography and making of dresses and scenes. This was a community and arts-based process that involved many meetings, small group discussions and creative expression. These events share elements of popular or forum theatre in which theatre is created with, by and for community with the goal of identifying problems and possible solutions (Prentki & Selman, 2000). The 2004 show focused on the colonization of the Philippines. One of the scenes involved a model entering the stage wearing colourful Indigenous clothing. She is seized by soldiers, her clothing removed and she is then dressed in a long white dress favoured by the Spanish and is given a bible and rosary. This dress and scene depicts in an embodied way the colonization of the Philippines by Spain and the Catholic Church. Marilou, the model in that scene, commented on how she was knowledgeable about colonization of the Philippines but through this performance she had much deeper embodied understanding:

> I stood there on the stage … a couple of the women removed the beads around my hair, the dress, the skirt, and then … they put the lace, the embroidered long dress. The clincher was then they put a crucifix necklace around me and gave me a rosary, a little bible, prayer book, and there I stood. I felt so vulnerable … [and] I felt more part of the history of the whole thing.

The colonization theme continued into the second fashion show which also explored the exploitation of the natural resources of the Philippines. One of the dresses was designed to symbolize the rice terraces of the Philippines; an abundant natural resource. The dress was built after much trial and error; as one of the participants commented; "the difficulty of making this dress reflects the many years of labour it took to create the Banaue rice Terraces of Ifugao on the northern Cordillera mountain regions". Many of these beautiful terraces have been the target of mining companies

interested in the minerals beneath the fertile soil. Through mining, an innovative and highly productive food growing practice and its associated culture, thousands of years old, is being destroyed. Another scene included models who wore simple white aprons painted with the logo of a well-known international sports clothing company; their mouths were taped shut illustrating how they were silenced and exploited by these transnational corporations.

The 2008 fashion show focused on violence against women, particularly the exploitation of Filipino domestic workers in Canada whose remittances have become a key pillar of the economy in the Philippines. Through these dresses, many of which were worn by the women whose story was being told, the exploitation of Filipino nannies through Canada's Live-in Caregiver program (LCP) was depicted. The LCP brings in thousands of Filipino women each year to work as caregivers but they must leave their children and families behind. One dress spoke to this struggle; it was made with over 1000 carefully linked together phone cards (see Figure 8.1).[3]



*Figure 8.1. Phonecards dress representing the exploitation of Filipino nannies*

The dress was both attractive – evoking the desires of LCP workers for a better life for themselves and their families, and restrictive – signalling how LCP workers become caught up in a vicious cycle of economic marginalization. The idea for this dress emerged from one of the study group sessions:

> We asked all of the women to bring [their phone cards] in. So every time they would come in and give us the phone cards, they would tell a little story of who they were talking to [using the card they brought in]. I remember one of the women who basically said, "do you know the tears involved in this card?"

Another scene in that last show included a model who wore an apron with very long ties, at the end of which, a man and a young child walked very slowly, depicting the struggle of family separation and reunification (Pratt, 2003).

These fashion shows proved to be a powerful forum for speaking truth to power and telling stories about colonization of the Philippines and the exploitation of Filipinos through globalized capitalism as well as Canadian migrant worker policies. They were effective because they combined a strong political message and were entertaining which attracted many members of the audience who would not have attended political meetings or participated in protests. Through the fashion shows, they listened to a more critical story of colonization of the Philippines, which contrasted with the dominant story told of how the Philippines benefited from the Spanish influence. The audience members also heard, often for the first time, stories of Filipino migrant workers' exploitation and the impact of family separation; this led some to become politically engaged. Christina, for example, was an audience member of the 2004 fashion show; she became a very active leader in the PWCBC.

> I felt that they were telling my story … to see other people say that the American and Spanish influence on the Philippines was not all positive, and these are the things that happened to us. That history is playing into our current situation. I just said to myself, "Wow. I need to talk to these people because this is what I've been feeling for so long".

The fashion shows were a powerful form of political theatre which, in some respects, broke through the divides within the wider Filipino Canadian community. On the one hand, members of the PWCBC speak out publically against Canadian and Filipino governments' policies and how these policies exploit Filipino migrants and their families. On the other hand, many in the wider Canadian Filipino community disagree with this standpoint and these protests, believing that the best way forward is to be grateful for the opportunity to migrate and work in Canada. The fashion shows were events that created a space for deeper listening to happen. They were innovative forms of feminist popular education which Manicom and Walters (2012) define as "intentional and facilitated processes of collective learning and knowledge production that enable and provoke self and social transformation toward the realization of contextually determined feminist goals" (p. 3)

CONCLUSION

We live in a society that promotes action, and quick action. Creative expression using various art forms can interrupt this process and create a space for reflection. These cases of arts-based community engagement including documentary film festivals and political fashion shows, speak to how arts-based practices enable people to express their voices, tell their stories and to be heard. This can lead to establishing new identities, re-establishing relationships, building a sense of community, challenging stereotypes and taking action. As Bickford (1998) points out, "we depend on the perceptions of others for the very quality of realness that the world has ... the multiplicity of perspectives on what appears is what constitutes reality" (p. 63).

The arts, be it documentary films, theatre, political fashions shows or other creative expression engage people's imaginations in such a way that new understandings can arise. As many theorists have pointed out, art is a bridge across other experiences that may be difficult to verbalize initially. It is also important to demystify ideas about art and artists as Ananda Coomaraswamy stated, "the artist is not a special kind of person; rather, each person is a special kind of artist" (in Berman, 1990, p. 337). The arts validate people's experiences and make speaking out engaging and noteworthy for audiences unfamiliar with particular realities. The arts also provide forums where audiences more or less familiar with certain experiences have a chance to listen and reflect on what they hear. Documentary film festivals or political fashion shows are artistic practices that have great potential, as Adams and Owens (2016) claim, to enable "political subjectification" (p. 12) which is essential for "the democratic and educational process, especially given their propensity for disruption and critical questioning. Democratic subjectivity can be constructed through creative practices, especially those in which a context for collective democratic action is created" (p. 12).

NOTES

[1]  See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilla_Watson
[2]  This project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
[3]  While we now have the internet and computers, at that time the phone card was so central to how LCP workers maintained contact with their families.

REFERENCES

Adams, J., & Owens, A. (2016). *Creativity and democracy in education: Practices and politics of learning through the arts*. London: Routledge.

Alfred, T. (2010). What is radical imagination? Indigenous struggles in Canada. *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action, 4*(2), 5–8. Retrieved from http://journals.sfu.ca/affinities/index.php/affinities/index

Andruske, C. L., & Noble, S. (2006). Performing knowledges of inquiry in the creases of festivals: Creating a model for urban and rural dialogue. In 2006 CASAE National Conference on-line Proceedings (pp. 1–6). Toronto: York University.

Arnold, R., Burke, C., James, C., Martin, B., & Thomas, B. (1995). *Education for a change.* Toronto: Between the Lines.

Bagley, C., & Cancienne, M. B. (2002). *Dancing the data*. Lesley University Series in Arts and Education, Vol. 5. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Barndt, D. (2006). *Wildfire: Art as activism*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

Barndt, D. (Ed.). (2011). *VIVA! Community arts and popular education in the Americas*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. Y. (2009). Naturalizing Indigenous knowledge in Eurocentric education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 32*(1), 5–18.

Berman, M. (1990). *Coming to our senses: Body and spirit in the hidden history of the West*. Toronto: Bantam Books.

Bickford, S. (1996). *Listening, conflict and citizenship: Dissonance of democracy*. New York, NY: Cornell University Press.

Boler, M., & Allen, K. R. (2002). Who's naming whom: Using independent video to teach about the politics of representation. *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly, 30*(1–2), 255–270.

Butterwick, S., & Roy, C. (2016). *Working the margins of community-based adult learning: The power of arts-making in finding voice and creating conditions for seeing/listening.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Butterwick, S. (2017). The political fashion shows of Filipino activists: Wearing and performing our struggles and resistance. In. K. Yang & R. Lawrence (Eds.), *Participatory visual approaches to adult and continuing education: Practical insights*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Summer, 154, 71–82.

Butterwick, S., Carrillo, M., & Villagante, K. (2016). *Speaking truth to power: The political fashion show of Filipino activists.* In S. Butterwick & C. Roy (Eds.), *Working the margins of community-based adult learning: The power of arts-making in finding voice and creating conditions for seeing/listening* (pp. 117–131). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Clover, D., Sanford, K., & Butterwick, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Aesthetic practices and adult education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Clover, D., & Stalker, J. (Eds.). (2007). *The arts and social justice – Re-crafting adult education and community cultural leadership*. Leicester: National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education.

Desjardins, R., & Monderie, R. (Directors). (2007). *Le peuple invisible* [*The invisible nation*] [DVD]. Canada: Office National du Film [National Film Board of Canada].

Ehrenreich, B. (2006). *Dancing in the streets: A history of collective joy.* New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.

Eisner, E. (2008). Art and knowledge. In G. Knowles & A. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of arts in qualitative research* (pp. 3–16). London: Sage.

Escueta, M., & Butterwick, S. (2012). The power of popular education and visual arts for trauma survivors' critical consciousness and collective action. *International Journal for Lifelong Education, 31*(3), 425–440.

Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Gatt-Fly. (1983). *Ah-hah: A new approach to popular education*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. Chicago, IL: Jossey-Bass.

Hall, B. L. (2001). I wish this were a poem of practices of participatory research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participating inquiry and practice* (pp. 171–178). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hayes, S., & Yorks, L. (2007) Special Issue: Arts and societal learning: Transforming communities socially, politically, and culturally. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 116*.

Hemmings, C. (2012). Affective solidarity: Feminist reflexivity and political transformation. *Feminist Theory, 13*(2), 147–161.

Hope, A., & Timmel, S. (1999). *Training for transformation – A handbook for community workers* (Book 4). London: Practical Action Publishing.

Hunt, P. (2010). *Music lessons: A cultural studies analysis of music's capacity for critical pedagogy and methodology* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Kidd, J. R. (Ed.). (1950). *Adult education in Canada.* Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education.

Lawrence, R. (2005). Special issue: Artistic ways of knowing: Expanded opportunities for teaching and learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 107.*

Manicom, L., & Walters, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Feminist popular education in transnational debates: Building pedagogies of possibility*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mirochnik, E., & Sherman, D. (2002). *Passion and pedagogy: Relation, creation, and transformation in teaching*. Lesley University Series in Arts and Education. Vol. 1.

Nadeau, D. (1996). Embodying feminist popular education under global restructuring. In S. Walters & L. Manicom (Eds.), *Gender and popular education: Methods for Empowerment* (pp. 40–60). London: Zed Books.

Powell, M. C., & Speiser, V. (2005). *The arts, education, and social change – Little signs of hope*. Lesley University Series in Arts and Education. Vol. 9. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Pratt, G. (in collaboration with the Ugnayan Ng Kabataang Pilipino Sa Canada/Filipino-Canadian Youth Alliance). (2003). Between homes: Displacement and belonging for second generation Filipino-Canadian youths. *BC Studies, 140*, 41–68.

Prentki, T., & Selman, J. (2000). *Popular theatre in political culture: Britain and Canada in focus.* Bristol: Intellect Books.

Razack, S. (1998). *Looking white people in the eye: Gender, race, and culture in courtrooms and classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Roy, C. (2016a). *Documentary film festivals: Transformative learning, community building & solidarity.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Roy, C. (2016b). Amplifying voices: Film festivals, new perspectives, critical reflection, and inspiration. In S. Butterwick & C. Roy (Eds.), *Working the margins of community-based adult learning: The power of arts-making in finding voice and creating conditions for seeing/listening* (pp. 51–60)*.* The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Schugurensky, D. (2006). Adult citizenship education: An overview of the field. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbitt, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 68–80). Toronto: Thompson Educational.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (2015). *Truth and reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action*. Ottawa.

Turan, K. (2002). *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film festivals and the world they made.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Waltz, M. (2005). *Alternative and activist media*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Winton, E., & Garrison, J. (2010). 'If a revolution is screened and no one is there to see it, does it make a sound?' The politics of distribution and counterpublics. In T. Waugh, M. B. Baker, & E. Winton (Eds.), *Challenge for change: Activist documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (pp. 404–424)*.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Young, I. M. (1997). *Intersection voices: Dilemmas of gender, political philosophy and policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

SARAH MEANEY

# 9. EDUCATION WILL SET YOU FREE

## *Research Poetry with Prisoners on Adult Education Programmes*

### INTRODUCTION

Over the course of my PhD research, I used and developed arts-based approaches, such as film, theatre and poetry, in an attempt to understand and represent the educational journey of prisoners on adult education programmes. Drawing heavily from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1993), the study began by exploring participants' lived school experience through a filmed dramatization or fictional frame, which evolved into the co-creation of performative poetry and monologues based on participants' interview transcripts. This chapter explores how this method of co-creating research poetry evoked an emotive and embodied re-presentation of participants' experiences of educational exclusion and its consequences on their lives.

In line with Paulo Freire's (1972) concept of problem posing, participatory arts-based pedagogy in adult education research is designed to evoke thought rather than prescribe meanings (Norris & Saudelli, 2018). This is based on the premise that looking at the problem is at least as important as finding solutions, as unless peoples' perspectives and experiences are properly grasped and understood, it is unlikely that effective solutions can be created (Denzin, 2010). Participatory arts-based research can therefore be set in terms of the Freirean commitment to adult and community education ideals, and the deliberate positioning of the participant as 'expert' and a producer of knowledge, rather than passive subject.

How we know the world in emotional, embodied and psychic ways, stretch far beyond the typical format of prose selected from an interview transcript. Methods such as transcript poetry, can reveal the inconsistencies and contradictions of a life spoken as a meaningful whole, a whole which makes sense of its parts (Richardson, 1993). This is especially crucial in research with prisoners, as this is where the oppressive structures that preceded, or as Irene Baird (2001) would say 'precipitated', the criminal actions are made visible.

I began my exploration of early school leavers' experience of educational exclusion, by collaborating with Kildare Youth Theatre, a youth theatre collective in in Ireland. We worked together over a series of workshops to create a short dramatization of what exclusion from mainstream school might look like. The piece was filmed, and I

showed it to focus groups in prisons and in an alternative education centre, asking the question as to whether the depiction was accurate. Based on the feedback, the piece was remade as an 'ethnodrama', which is the practice of dramatizing a script created from selections of research data from interviews or field notes and performing it as a play. The play was then presented as a piece of forum theatre (Boal, 1993). Forum theatre is an interactive form of social theatre that invites the audience to intervene and explore different options to the issue presented, by stepping onto the stage and into the shoes of the protagonist.

But a single play could not capture each participant's individual experiences. I conducted individual interviews, becoming concerned with how to present and preserve these narratives in their entirety. Working from the idea that poetry can enlarge understanding when it seems that prose fails to adequately capture "a moment of truth" (Faulkner, 2007, p. 219), I worked with individuals on their transcripts, highlighting, cutting and pasting sentences into themes until a poem or monologue emerged. I re-worked pieces independently, and with the help of professional poet Colm Keegan. I enlisted professional actor and ex-offender Tommy O'Neill to record some of the poems, the main goal being to preserve and prioritize orality and the power of spoken word. At every stage of the process, I was concerned with honouring participants' voice, and in finding methods that could engage an audience on an empathic level.

In this chapter, I present three poems that originated from this research, outlining the creative process and the collaborative nature, before reflecting on the participatory nature of the methodology, and its usefulness in adult and community education research.

## THE PREAMBLE

The three poems, or monologues, presented here as examples, originate from research with 12 Irish male prisoners, and are the outcome of a participatory process of representing participants' interview transcripts poetically. Christy, Dean and Luke (pseudonyms) were three of 12 incarcerated men, who chose to participate in the study; a creative exploration of early school leavers' ('drop-outs') experience of educational exclusion. Dean and Luke were in their early thirties at the time of interview, Christy was 49, and the only participant whom I did not manage to see again after interview.

Two of the poems chosen for selection here describe participants' experience in mainstream school, contrasted with their experience of adult education through the prison system. The third poem, describes a participant's experience as a relatively significant figure in the world of drug dealing, and is included as it was his story that was the catalyst for my working with poetic inquiry, and might therefore be of interest to anyone considering incorporating poetry as a methodological approach.

## THE PROCESS

The idea of condensing the interview narratives from my doctoral research into poetic form originated because of an interview I had with one participant. Dean, an incarcerated man in his early thirties, who had been particularly candid with me about his experience of drug dealing. His story had resonated strongly with me because of unsettling experiences I had previously working with 'at risk' youth in Dublin, and witnessing their attraction to the glamour and status of the criminal underworld especially as depicted in the popular *Love/Hate* TV series glamorising Dublin gangland culture. Dean's lived experience in Dublin's drug gangs painted a different picture. He was deeply regretful of the life decisions he had made, which he described as 'no life', and how he had put his own and his family's lives in danger. I recounted my experience of working with the teenage group, and we spoke about how we might shape Dean's story into a monologue or performance piece that would have the potential to be used as a learning tool for working with 'at-risk' youth. The idea sprang from a method schools often use in collaboration with recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, whereby a recovering alcoholic or addict is invited into a school to conduct a talk with students with the hope of deterring destructive alcohol or drug use. However, having spent two years attempting to engage the teenage group, I was doubtful that this method would have any positive impact with this particular cohort due to its similarity to a lecture. My idea was to harness the aesthetics of theatre in combination with Dean's true-life story, to provoke critical thought and help to dispel some of the romanticism around life as a drug dealer.

Dean and I met up several times and worked together on his interview transcripts, highlighting sentences and phrases we felt stood out, and grouping and numbering these until we gave cohesion to his story in a condensed form. I now know that this is a common method of poetic transcription that researchers use in an effort to reveal the essence of participants' lived experience, and as a means to evoke emotional response in readers and listeners (Faulkner, 2005, pp. 7–9). What is perhaps less common in poetic inquiry, is the collaborative nature that my work with participants took. This is rooted in a Freirean commitment to adult and community education ideals and pedagogy, and the deliberate positioning of the participant as 'expert' and active stakeholder in the research process. It also requires that I relinquish all notion of myself as 'expert'. I found that when I revisited transcripts with participants, that I had frequently misunderstood the significance of certain events. Boal gives an extremely effective example of this from one of Freire's literacy workshops in Peru, where youngsters were asked to photograph a symbol of oppression. One boy took a photo of a nail on the wall, which initially facilitators took to mean that he had misunderstood the assignment. Through dialogue, they discovered that the boys who survived by shining shoes in the city had to pay a fee to the landlords to be allowed to hang up their signs. So, the nail in the wall represented this oppressive practice.

In the absence of dialogue, the facilitators, having never been shoeshine boys in Lima, could not have understood the noteworthiness of a nail in the wall to their participants. For me in this study, it was often only when I positioned myself from the perspective of the learner and asked questions, checking and re-checking, that I could begin to understand the nuances of participants' stories.

Dean expanded on details of some aspects of his experience, which I duly recorded and transcribed, before returning to repeat the process. As the poem took form, he also made the decision to remove certain details, particularly personal details, and those which he believed could possibly expose his identity. This was an interesting turn of events and coincided with the research moving into a more performative and therefore potentially more visible sphere. It is worth mentioning that several of Dean's associates had been killed in the preceding months, and this also undoubtedly influenced this decision.

*The Price*

There's no pride in selling drugs
Hiding from the police
Keeping your head down
GO to a drug dealer
ASK him
Are you having a good time?

I looked at my father
He couldn't afford to buy us a pair of runners
I don't want THIS
I'm not living my life like THAT
I was in a hurry to grow up
Money mad

Drug dealers
They had EVERYTHING
People that didn't work driving fancy cars
Nice clothes
Their own houses
'He has a GREAT life'
Why work for a lousy couple of hundred quid?
I can make what he makes in a week in an hour

Eventually I got there
I had the cars
I had the houses
But there's still a sense of emptiness
Cos it's NEVER enough
It's always someone else's money

And you ARE working
You're working 24/7
There's no cut off point
'Oh its 5 o'clock I can go home'
It's not like that

No matter what I was doing the phone was ringing
It could be 3 o'clock in the morning
Your phone's still ringing
The kids they're getting dragged home
Cos you've to go off and do something

It makes you SNAP
At the wrong people

People don't have the money to pay
The violence comes in then
It's a VICIOUS circle
The people who owe YOU money are just as dangerous
Watching your back
Constant vigilance
Looking over your shoulder for the rest of your life
I'll NEVER walk through a park
Without looking behind me back

EVERYONE owes someone
ANYONE can kill you

'We'll do another year and then get out'
Your whole life spent chasing your tail
There's two options to get out of drugs
In JAIL
Or in a BOX
When he fucks up and can't fix it
That's it
You're dead

I've seen it
I've LIVED it
I was LUCKY
I'm in jail
This is my 3rd Christmas
Me missus at home with the kids
On her own

You're putting your KIDS in danger
You're putting every family member in danger
There's always someone bigger than you
You can't go home and SHUT your door
And know that nobody's coming through it

There's no pride in selling drugs
Hiding from the police
Keeping your head down
GO to a drug dealer
ASK him
Are you having a good time?

## THE PROGRESSION

Turning research interviews into poetry or monologues, has been a process of discovery for me and came about largely from fear that I would not be able to accurately represent participants' stories through traditional qualitative methods. The conversations with prisoners, which began with childhood and their experience in school, all described the transition from the innocence of childhood to criminality. When viewed in its entirety, it seemed possible to pinpoint the events, or cumulation of circumstances in participants' narratives that had culminated in a prison sentence. However, during the data collection, as I isolated phrases from the transcripts to support the various research themes, I felt I was losing the essence of the stories and thereby the core findings of my research. Consequently, I became obsessed with finding a method to present a synopsis of the stories as a whole. This is the purpose of research poetry that utilizes participants' exact words in a compressed form in an attempt to convey the central message (Faulkner, 2007).

I started working with other participants in the same way, some to a greater or lesser extent than with Dean. It was vital for me, where possible, to involve the men in the analysis of their own transcripts so as to affirm firstly they had been truly 'heard', and secondly, to ensure that the elements which held most significance to them held a place in the representation. I engaged with D. Soyini Madison (1999) and identified with her use of poetic transcription to capture the rhythms of black speech. There was a colour, depth and humour, an oral swagger in participants' speech, which is unique to Irish working class and which I was anxious to try to encapsulate. The goal was to preserve the speaking style, while at the same time capturing the spirit of the story (Faulkner, 2005, p. 7).

Sandra Faulkner's (2007) article, *Concern with craft: Using Ars Poetica as criteria for reading research poetry* did just that and alerted me to concerning myself with the craft and aesthetics of poetry. Attention to craft is attention to images, to line, metaphor and simile, music, voice, emotion, story, and grammar (Faulkner, 2007, p.17). Very often participants' transcripts were full of repetition of certain words or

phrases. Poetic form offered a space whereby reiteration could be presented and its implications considered. Exploring with participants the meaning they wished to convey in their choice of metaphor often led to richer and clearer description, such as 'grey granite columns above the cliffs' and 'one day he grabbed me up against the wall by the throat'.

I had followed much of Glesne's (1997) method for re-presenting research through poetic transcription instinctively, having only come across her work in hindsight. Glesne (1997) identifies three rules to guide the process of poetic transcription; namely that; the words be those of the participant not the researcher; that phrases could be extracted from anywhere in the transcript and juxtaposed; that the poem should be presented according to the participant's speaking rhythm (p. 205). I found working with participants on their transcripts with highlighters and scissors, literally cutting and pasting lines into verses helped mould interviews into poems. The act of physically isolating phrases and words from text, mirrored a method I found to be successful in my previous work as a literacy tutor that took into consideration literacy issues. Participants seemed to enjoy the physical aspect of moving and grouping phrases into position. With some of the younger men, who were more confident with reading and writing, we worked directly with the cut and paste functions on a computer.

Honouring the speaking rhythm meant copying sentences and phrases in their entirety, which resulted in me often returning to the audio recordings, paying more attention to the pause and the natural punctuation of participants' speech. Some participants spoke in short, punchy phrases, which lent itself well to poetic form. Some poems read better as monologues, and we visualized them as performance pieces rather than poetry. However, one line in Faulkner's article referring to the inertia inducing experience of reading and listening to 'lousy' poetry masquerading as research and vice versa (2007, p. 220), led me to seek out the advice of a professional poet.

## THE POET

Patricia Leavy (2009) recommends 'interdisciplinary collaboration' as a criterion for assessing aesthetics in arts-based research. By this she means working with other professionals outside of our own disciplines, in order to 'maximise the aesthetic qualities and authenticity of the work' (p. 18). I can only imagine, that for actual 'artists', amateur renderings of their particular art form by researchers experimenting with form and genre must irk the sensibilities of those deeply involved in its culture. As a researcher, I was satisfied that the transcript poems met with Glesne's criteria for poetic transcription, however, although transcript poems can be less concerned with 'artsy' concerns than say interpretive poetry (Faulkner, 2007, pp. 221–222), I was interested in the work reaching and engaging an audience on an aesthetic level, so it made sense to ask the opinion of someone who worked in the area of performative poetry.

I contacted Dublin poet Colm Keegan. Keegan is a writer and performance poet who has been shortlisted four times for the Hennessy New Irish Writing Award, and who won the All Ireland Poetry Slam in 2010. Colm Keegan is originally from Ballymun, an area on Dublin's Northside notorious for its high-rise tower complexes, and the social problems that arose from poor planning and government policies. Most, if not all of the prisoners I was working with, came from areas that would have experienced similar levels of neglect and social deprivation. Keegan's work etches a portrait of working-class Dublin in a voice that isn't heard too often in the poetry world, so I figured that his opinion would be the one most likely to carry sway with participants. Furthermore, I reasoned his background and life experience positioned him perfectly to be able to judge whether these research poems were successful in helping the reader or listener access the speaker's world.

We met late one evening in a hotel over tea, chips and poetry.

'They're good', he said.

I realized I had been holding my breath. 'Are you sure?'

'They're really good. I'd like to meet them. The men'.

Faulkner (2007) admits that describing a 'good' poem, is an impossible task, as its definitions are variable and elusive, not to mention highly personal (p. 222). Nevertheless, with research poetry, it should be possible to assess whether it succeeds aesthetically by asking whether the use of creative analytical practices opens up the research and invites interpretive responses, and whether it is artistically shaped, satisfying, complex and not boring (Richardson, 2000). One is unlikely to want to meet the author of work that is thought to be mediocre or dull, so I took Keegan's comments as indication of aesthetic success, and we set about concerning ourselves with artistic details. Colm suggested some changes to the poems I had brought, concerned with elements such as line length and verse, punctuation and the pause, and the use of metaphor and repetition. I took note of all the suggestions and returned to the prison bolstered by the advice and reassurance.

Participants appeared encouraged by the suggestions, and all accepted and made changes accordingly. The response to receiving positive endorsement of their life poems from a professional poet, was in some instances very moving. Luke, whose poem 'A bit better' (below) is about his struggle in school with undiagnosed dyslexia, and who was more reserved than other participants during his interactions with me, swung back on his chair holding his finished poem and holding eye-contact,

'It is good, isn't it?' he beamed.

For the performance of some of the prison poems, I enlisted well-known Dublin actor Tommy O'Neill, as much for his acting experience and background and for how he would be able to relate to the poetry, which I felt would enhance the performance. An early school leaver as well as an ex-convict, O'Neill wrote his first play in Mountjoy

Prison in Dublin in the 1980's under the creative writing tutelage of another Dublin poet, Pat Ingoldsby.

'I got angry reading the poems' he told me, 'I didn't sleep well last night'.

Many learners on adult and community education programmes have had a negative experience of education as children. 80% of young prisoners in Ireland are at, or below, the second level of literacy (IPRT, 2007). Most of the people I spoke to over the course of my research, rarely experienced praise, endorsement or validation, and yet it has been argued that the self-esteem of children is central to their education development (Humphreys, 2004). I chose to collaborate with professionals Colm Keegan and Tommy O'Neill, as I felt that their opinion would carry weight with participants. That Luke could self-evaluate his work 'A bit better' so positively at the end of the process, to me is indicative of the transformative value of the methodology.

<div align="center">THE POEMS</div>

*A bit better*

I left by choice
But I wasn't learning
I didn't pass or anything
I was more behind
What was the point?
Just sat around
Bored

Going backwards
Instead of going forwards
More messing than learning
Suspended a few times
For throwing stuff
Fighting
You learnt more outside

Dossing around
Getting into cars
Into trouble with the police
Stuff like that
What you do
Didn't really have a plan

They should have learnt me more
Focus on who was behind
If I could turn back time

And stick it out
Learn how to work 'round it

It's hard enough
Not able to read and write
The likes of big books
Application forms
Stuck on words
'Here, what's that say?'
Awkward
The shame of it

I wanted to get back
To help me like
Start using this brain
And to get through the time

Start off with basic stupid stuff
She thinks we're in playschool
I know how to start
I want to go forward
Instead of fucking backwards

She says I'm going from back to front
I'm kind of backwards
Trying to spell it that way
When it should be that way
I do be guessing
Then looking at her to see
If she's going to give me the answer

I'm getting a bit better
She says
A bit better
I'm trying
Break it up
Put it all together
And it all makes sense

Christy (pseudonym), was one of the first men to talk to me privately about his experience of attending primary (elementary) school in Ireland. He spoke of the difficulties and abuse he experienced at the hands of the Christian Brothers, a religious order that had over two centuries of involvement in the evangelization and education of youth in Ireland, and who have been at the centre of a litany of abuse and sexual abuse charges and scandals. Christy's family had returned to Ireland after

living for a period in the U.K, and Christy attributed his being 'singled-out' as a target for abuse in school, due to his having acquired an English accent. He also talked about the positive impact adult education had on his return to education as an adult via the prison education system, and how this had impacted positively on his self-esteem and on his relationship with prison staff.

Christy's was the only prison poem that I crafted without input from the participant, as Christy was transferred to a more secure institution. I spent a lot of time on Christy's audio recording as a result. Without the benefit of participant collaboration to check facts and details, I listened and re-listened to Christy's contribution in the focus group and to his one-to-one interview. Poetic inquiry requires us to listen deeply. It embraces the notion of speech as an embodied activity, honouring speakers' pause, repetitions and rhythm (Prendergast, 2009). Where there was uncertainty, I tried to reflect this in the poem, by leaving elements open to interpretation. Where there were details that Christy may not have wanted included, I erred on the side of caution and omitted them.

This act of witnessing through deep listening raises many ethical questions about the role we have as researchers in reflecting the hard realities we witness and about the possible impacts of our renderings on those embedded in what we study. Christy's narrative, Finding Freedom, which ironically is one of the more 'hopeful' of all the prison poems, will always serve as a stark reminder to me of the tentative nature of adult education and the vulnerability of its participants.

*Finding Freedom* –

Education will set you free?
I always felt trapped
Wake up in the morning
Open your eyes
School
'Ah shit'

For years and years I was tormented
I had an English accent on me
The more they singled me out
The worse I became
I wasn't 'settling in'
Sir or Mr or Brother or Sister
Who were these people speaking down to me?
In my life supposed to give me direction
But all they gave me was violence and abuse

I started hitting back
Lashing back
The physical seemed to be getting me places

The outcome was still the same
I was going home
No matter what

Fighting seemed to be the thing
I had the name at this stage
Bigger people to prove myself to
Of all the lessons I could have taken from school
That's the one I took
My whole world a goldfish bowl of boxing
I didn't have fear
I never thought consequences
Hurt people hurt people
That's me
That's what I do

All the aggression, the fears, the resentment
The HATE HATE HATE HATE
Everyday drinkin' druggin' hungover
Hating the world
Hating myself
Waking up sick
It was on the cards
It was inevitable
For years and years and years
But I didn't see it
I didn't see it

This life sentence is going to kill me
Hanging around the landings
Doing drugs
Doing what I do well
Fighting

I started going to school it was different
There's a good buzz
A good energy
A good vibe
A different click

A camaraderie in the classroom
We were adults
But yet we were like kids
Getting to know people
Other people who are struggling

And the interest grew
This is brilliant
Being able to pick up a newspaper
Or write a letter
Little conversations about worldly affairs
Got my head out of this environment
For a few hours

The screws started to know me
More of the staff were saying hello
Respect me cos I go to school
There's days when I really feel it you know
That education set me free

## PARTICIPATION

The process of shaping that occurs in poetic transcription is different to the type of editing that takes place in traditional qualitative research data analysis. In this study, I chose where possible, to adopt a collaborative research strategy that involved participants in shaping and editing their own transcript poems. I would argue that the only way we can access another's social world is through our imagination. Therefore, it would stand to reason that research methods that furnish imagination, empathy and emotive response are more conducive to doing so.

As adult educators, our work is to help participants view their experience in the context of wider systems, and to move away from the notion that individual suffering is somehow the individual's fault (Connolly & Hussey, 2013). The methodologies we choose to use in adult and community education research can reflect this ideal and be both a methodology and a pedagogy simultaneously, an instrument for social change. Participants are not passive in the research process but are active co-creators of knowledge. The research question becomes a collaboration between what the researcher wants to know, and what the participant wants to be known. Participatory arts-based research methods expand on this again, so what is known can also be shown, told and felt.

## REFERENCES

Baird, I. C. (1999). The examined life: Women's liberatory learning within a locked-in society. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 18*(2), 103–109.

Boal, A. (1993). *Theatre of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group Inc.

Boal, A. (1995). *The rainbow of desire.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Calafell, B. M. (2004). Disrupting the dichotomy: 'Yo Soy Chicana/o?' in the New Latina/o South. *The Communication Review, 7*, 175–204.

Connolly, B., & Hussey, P. (2013). 'The war against people: Adult education practice for critical democracy'. *The Adult Learner*, 75–87.

Denzin, N. K. (2010). *The qualitative manifesto: A call to arms*, Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Faulkner, S. L. (2005). Method: Six poems. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(6), 941–949.

Faulkner, S. L. (2007). Concern with craft. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*, 218–234.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Glesne, C. (1997). That rare feeling: Re-presenting research through poetic transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3*, 202–222.

Humphreys, T. (2004). *Self-esteem: The key to your child's future*. Dublin: Gill.

Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT). (2007). *The Whitaker Committee report 20 years on: Lessons learned or lessons forgotten?* Kerry: IPRT.

Leavy, P. (2009). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. London: Guilford.

Madison, D. S. (1999). Performance, personal narrative, and the politics of possibilities: Visions and revisions. In *The future of performance studies: Visions and revisions.* Annandale, VA: National Communication Association.

Norris, J., & Saudelli, M. G. (2018). Heating up online learning: Insights from a collaboration employing arts based research/pedagogy for an adult education, online, community outreach undergraduate course. *Social Sciences, 7*, 104.

Prendergast, M. (2009). Introduction: The phenomena of poetry in research. In M. Prendergast, C. Leggo, & P. Sameshima (Eds.), *Poetic inquiry: Vibrant voices in the social sciences*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Richardson, L. (1993). Poetics, dramatics, and transgressive validity: The case of the skipped line, *Sociological Quarterly, 34*, 695–710.

Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating ethnography: The Ohio State University. *Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(2), 253–255.

DARLENE E. CLOVER

# 10. SEEING THE UNSEEN THROUGH THE
## *FEMINIST MUSEUM HACK*

### INTRODUCTION

> The oppressed must see examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor so that a
> contrary conviction can begin to grow within them. (Freire, 2000, p. 64)

I teach a course on culture and adult education and I begin by asking the students to
name five male and then five female artists. Monet, Van Gogh, Dali, Picasso, Gauguin
and more come easily for the former whilst eyes cast downward and silence meets
the latter. Save gender, I set no parameters yet the students visualize 'Europeans',
'famous' and 'painters'. Activities on 'historical figures' yield similar results. What
is responsible for creating such limitations to our cultural, social, political, historical,
and aesthetic world?

The education system is one answer but another, and the focus of this chapter,
is art galleries and museums (hereafter simply 'museums'). Whether one frequents
them or not, these ubiquitous cultural institutions have the power to produce, shape
and "mobilise representations of the world past and present [telling us] what the
world is, or should be" (Hall, 2013, p. 127). Feminist cultural theorists Carson and
Pajaczkowska (2001) refer to representations as 'the seen', and they are powerful
because sight more than anything else is "considered evidence, truth and factual"
as it establishes "a particular relation to the reality in which a visual is considered"
(p. 1). Therefore, what we see, and are shown, and the settings of seeing and
showing such as the authoritative context of the museum, produce reality. Carson
and Pajaczkowska also draw attention to the relationship between the 'seen' and the
'unseen', with the former acting as a façade "to an underlying and unseen system of
meaning" that has implications ranging from aesthetics to identity (p. 1).

Deconstructing the seen to unearth the unseen systems of meaning that perpetuate
gender injustices has been a preoccupation of feminist cultural researchers for
decades. As a feminist adult educator and researcher with one foot in museums and the
other in gender justice and change, creating a pedagogical activity to operationalize
pedagogically and investigate methodologically the unseen has been my aim. I have
taken to heart Plantenga's (2012) challenge to design "tools to analyse the underlying
systems of power that institutionalise and manipulate identities in ways that justify
oppression, discrimination and often violence" (p. 29). Manicom and Walters
(2012, p. 4) too call for new "pedagogies of possibility … grounded in pragmatic

assessment" – in my case interrogating the narratives, displays and images of the museum – and the imagination, the capacity to think critically, reflexively, and to act creatively, innovatively and radically "once prevalent relations of power are made visible". My response is the *Feminist Museum Hack*, a method that stimulates the power of seeing – the oppositional feminist gaze – to render visible and disrupt the unseen power of patriarchal knowledge making in the visuals and texts of museums.

In this chapter, I discuss the *Feminist Museum Hack* as a fluid pedagogical, methodological, analytical and interventionist practice aimed to educate, investigate, interrogate and dislocate unseen practices of gender and its intersectionalities. I ground my discussion in theories of representation because central to museums, as Hall (2013) and hooks (1995) remind us, is the practice of 'representation', "a crucial location of struggle for exploited and oppressed people asserting subjectivity and decolonisation of the mind" (hooks, 1995, p. 3). Using examples, I outline various components of the *Hack*, illuminating its contributions to feminist adult education as an embodied educational and grounded research practice that encourages critical analytical assessment, visual literacy, new knowledge creation and the imagination. The *Hack* exposes the privileged discursive and visual authority of the museum, what Freire (2000) in the above quotation calls "vulnerability", and patriarchal ideology that hides in plain sight to re-enforce and maintain a gendered status quo.

## MUSEUMS, REPRESENTATION AND GENDER

Conn (2010) believes "we live in a museum age. At the turn of the twenty-first century more people are going to more museums than at any time in the past" (p. 1). Pedagogy is installed in the armoury of these major culture institutions, and they radiate authority and legitimacy through assumed impartiality, objectivity, and neutrality. As a result, art and cultural institutions are some of the most trusted knowledge legitimating institutions in society (e.g. Hannay, 2018; Janes, 2015). I would argue that if museums are representing society, culture, history or identity in all their complexity and contradiction, as some are, then this high degree of 'trust' is crucial to creating forms of knowledge and understanding about people and the world that could bring about justice and change. However, many museums remain elitist, colonial, racist and sexist (Marstine, 2006). Shaped through ideologies of power manifest in practices of representation such as lighting and positioning (stagecrafting), language (discourse) and images, museums show us and tell us what counts as knowledge, what has aesthetic value, what history matters, what gender is normative and superior (Bergsdottir, 2016; Hall, Evans, & Nixon, 2013; Whitehead, 2009). Rogoff (2013) challenges us to learn to question actively "who we see and who we do not see; who is privileged within the regime of specularity … whose fantasies of what are fed" (p. 15) through the stories museums and art galleries show and tell. The questions are 'how' do we do that and why bother?

Museums are important because they are ubiquitous, the personification of what Giroux (2004, p. 62) called circuits of "power, ideologies, and values" (p. 62) found

worldwide. They play a strong 'public pedagogy' role, producing meaning through clever institutional practices. These are practices of representation and according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "to represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description, portrayal or imagination" (cited in Hall, Evans, & Nixon, 2013, p. 2). For Hall et al. (2013) representation is one of the most powerful practices of our time. He theorizes representation in three important ways that are applicable to museums. The first he calls the 'reflective'. Does what museums show and tell simply 'reflect' what "already exists out there in the world?" (p. 1). The second is 'intentionality'. Do we accept curatorial statements or artworks simply as expressions of what painters or the curators intend, or are there other valid interpretations? These harken back to notions of trust, validity and legitimacy, and challenge us to think about both museum 'statements of fact' and in particular, the 'gaze'. Hall's third theorization of representation is 'constructivist', how representations 'construct' meaning and their implications. Representations are not simply a collection of inert 'things' – objects artefacts or artworks – they are narratives, discourses, metaphors and imaginaries that produce, exchange and actively shape ways of seeing and knowing. Through organizing, clustering, arranging, classifying, displaying and naming, culture in museums exercises "power over how people think of themselves and their relationship to society and to others" (Giroux, 2004, p. 62). While museum representations "bear a close resemblance to the things to which they refer they … carry meaning and thus, have to be interpreted" (Hall, 2013, p. 5). But museums operate through what Gramsci (1971) called unforced, tacit consent, lulling both men and women into accepting, for example, that "creativity is an exclusive masculine prerogative and that as a consequence, the term artist automatically refers to man" (Pollock, 1988, p. 29). Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) suggest that 'passive reception' of artist and curator intentions, transmitted through authoritative statements and chosen objects, lies behind this. And both unconsciously and by design this contributes to visual 'illiteracy', the inability to 'read' representations beyond the 'god voice', and therefore, the inability to make the institution accountable for what it shows and tells and its impact on how we see and understand.

While Hall (2013) addresses representations of colonialism and the 'other' in museums, feminist cultural theorists point out their highly patriarchal and sexist natures (Pollock, 1988). Patriarchy is cultural – knit into the fabric of society and upheld by individuals and institutions, a "central feature that reinforces racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, nationalism, ageism, and ableism in our daily lives" (Ayu Saraswati, Shaaw, & Rellihan, 2018). Representation is what we see, are able to see, or are "allowed or made to see" about women and gender and this ranges from total absence to under-representation, from over-simplification to stereotyping (Rose, 2001, p. 6). Representations are refracted through 'the male gaze' in ways that has colonized the female body, and naturalized hegemony in hierarchies of masculinity and femininity (Bloom, 1999; Marstine, 2006). For Pollock (1988) representations are 'signifiers', women, and the 'signified', a femininity of fragility,

dependency, incapacity, and inactivity to "act as a foil to the masculine usurpation of activity, productivity [and] creativity" (p. 136). Indigenous scholars Penn Hilden and Lee (2015) add to this, illustrating the lack of Indigenous women's stories in museums as well as the 'Pocahontas loop', representations of Indigenous women as either victims of colonialism or idealized "tough femininity" both of which render them history-less, voiceless and powerless. The categorization of 'woman' in museums is thus "shot through by other categories of social identity such as ethnicity" (Lazar, 2005, p. 1). Representations of women, to return to Hall's theorizing, is a process that excludes or essentializes (reflects dominant culture) and engenders ways of seeing through the male gaze (intention). This limits views of women as human beings who have made important contributions to society, culture, politics, history and aesthetics. There are of course exhibitions that have re-framed and re-narrated history through a feminist lens. For example, fashion history is mostly told 'neutrally' or through the lens of the god-like figure of the male courtier (e.g. Dior). Yet an exhibition entitled *Victims of Fashion* at the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto illustrated the brutality inflicted upon women through toxic pigments, body-bending corsets and flammable fabric (e.g. Clover, Sanford, Taber, & Williamson, 2018). But for the most part, I, my colleagues and Hack participants have found in the hundreds of museums hacked over the past years, that masculinized constructions, stereotypes and absences remain steadfast.

## THE FEMINIST MUSEUM HACK

The unrepentant sexism and its problematic invisibility in museums justifies the creation of more dissonant and creative feminist adult education approaches to teach and learn about gender (in)justice within museum and art galleries. Indeed, Obrist and Raza (2015) remind us that "unsatisfying conditions" like these in museums can be excellent catalysts to incite "the imagination of possibility" (p. 2). In collaboration with colleagues, I have created the *Feminist Museum Hack* to challenge the many problematic representations of women and gender. Like many other adults, I lacked the ability to examine critically texts, paintings and collections and therefore, saw nothing amiss (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2010, p. 19). This mean I could not leave 'learning' about their power to individual interpretation. I had to be what Martin (2003) called 'intentional' because gender injustice is intentional. I was also finding, along with other feminist adult education scholars, that my students, and many museum educators, lacked gender consciousness (e.g. Clover & Sanford, 2016). "Has equality not been reached?", many students have queried. "Isn't feminism passé in this post-modern world? No to both as #Metoo has shown. The *Hack* is a way to ignite their appetites for the feminist project and instil 'legitimate rage' at the all but undiminished persistence of patriarchy. Rage itself does not produce change, Martin (2003) reminds us, but it is where there is hope. "And of course, *making anger hopeful* is an educational task" (p. 575, emphasis in original).

Despite all the important practices of feminist adult education, I could not find one that was applicable to what I was seeing and reading – the scripto-visual – in museums and therefore, I had to create one. The *Feminist Museum Hack* is a means to penetrate and illuminate critically and creatively the male gaze, the seen and unseen gender formations secreted in the dioramas, artworks, displays, and language. I liked the verb 'to hack' because it means to enter subversively, without 'authority' or 'authorization'. Museums do not willingly invite me/us in to reveal what they conceal and challenge their authority. The aim of the *Hack* is primarily to encourage a radical feminist oppositional gaze and imagination capable of unravelling and re-weaving the museum's fabric of ideological restrictions. It can be likened as well to Mohanty's (1989, p. 208) 'practice of resistance', "conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations" through an oppositional analytic. The *Hack* also encourages direct agency in the form of disrupting physically the visual and narrative detachment of images and narratives to reveal the museum's politics but also, its vulnerabilities and thereby, shatter its authority to dictate the past and the present. Another central aspect of the *Hack* is that it is fluid and adaptable to different museums – art, ethnographic, textile, military, war, doll, industrial, shoe and so forth – although there are many commonalities across these institutions.

Before I discuss the *Hack* in more detail, let me establish some parameters and ideas for future development. Women's museums exist, but I do not take these up in this chapter. I confine my discussions to museums that pretend to be gender neutral. Secondly, I confine my discussions to museums in England and Canada, although I have hacked museums in Europe and India with similar results. Thirdly, there is an increase of 'virtual exhibitions', but I have not yet applied the *Hack* to these as I prefer to be engulfed in the physical structures which tell a more holistic tale of gender exclusion than any single exhibition can.

## *Frequency of Visits and Levels of Trust*

In line with research practice, I begin each Hack by asking the participants whether or not they have frequented museums and establish their level of trust in these institutions. I have also put myself and colleagues through this exercise. Janes (2015) observations above, that trust in these institutions is high, is accurate. Although I, my colleagues and the majority of the participants have frequented museums, and even the museum we are about to enter, few of us can offer substantive critiques save things like "I find it a bit dark", "it has a lot of 'stuff'" or "it is large and I tire trying to see it all". When I query how we 'know' what the museum shows and tells us is true, few query 'truth' and most state, which reflects my own experience, that from what they have seen, nothing has suggested otherwise, although my question does raise suspicions, as it is meant to.

I remind the students that none of them is either un-intelligent or unconscious, as this can be an assumption, for I admit to making it about myself when I began finally

to 'see' what had been unseen. It is not ideal for intelligent people to be 'fooled', but museum ideological obfuscations are cleverly done, perhaps even unconsciously done, but either way, they "sap power, to take power" (Foucault, 1982, p. 142).

### Quantitative Questioning, Space and Time

I include in the *Hack* simple yet telling quantitative 'count' questions: How many stories are about women and how many about men? How many artworks are by women and how many are by men? The is an easy way to begin what feels at first like a daunting task and gives a first glimpse into the 'unseen'. If not for paintings by Emily Carr, for example, the National Gallery of Canada would be nearly devoid of women's works. This quantitative 'snapshot' is enough to begin to raise the hackles of participants – the rage behind hope – who had never seen this show of absence, before.

Adding to this, simply counting women's works does not tell the entire story of gender inequity and therefore, we also count numbers of works or displays by/ about Trans-women, lesbian, Indigenous, working class, Black, or differently abled women. This complicates and expands our discussion of gender and allows us to explore the complexity of identity, or their absences, in the world shaped by the museum, which is shaped by the patriarchal beyond its walls.

Building on this, *The Feminist Hack* focuses on questions of permanency and temporality in terms of exhibitions. How many permanent exhibitions are by or about women and how many of the temporary? What do permanence and temporality say to museum visitors? In conversation with a curator in a museum in England following a hack he pointed out "the museum has little control over what it owns as a permanent collection and therefore, nothing can be done about it". While the former is true, many artworks and objects are donated, and mostly by male collectors. Malt (2006) points out, the latter is not because it does have control over what it 'says' about its permanent collections and I will return to this later.

### The Question of Framing

Building on the above are questions of how women are 'framed' because this can take us deeper into differences, but it can also reveal commonalities. For example, we began by questioning whether or not the *Becoming BC (British Columbia)* exhibition at the Royal British Columbia Museum was framed within a discourse of colonialism. The answer is both yes and no. It is all about colonialism, a representation of discovery and progress, but it neither acknowledges nor questions this. Therefore, how Indigenous women are portrayed and any exploration of their sense of agency to tell their own stories, is practically null and void. Indigenous women are simply too irrelevant, save a mention or two of marriages to explorers, to be included in the grand colonial narrative of male conquest. What of Settler women? We found they only existed as wives, and almost all were nameless and story-less. There were,

however, a number of stand-in 'representations' in the forms of dainty tea services, linens and fans. We thus unearthed how Settler women were absented, save through an essence of domesticity, class, and female propriety, which matched the 'elegance' (museum words) of the uniforms of the 'named' and storied, male explorers. The *Becoming BC* exhibition has sanitized the plundering, murdering and displacement of the colonial project, and excluded or silenced women through an imaginary of femininity. Revealing this makes students very angry indeed and I often view them stomping from one display to another, pointing vigorously to what can now be 'seen'.

Taking it further, a display which at first appeared to be about women's activism around abortion rights in a museum in Ottawa, turned out to be the story of physician and advocate Henry Morgentaler. While he was a very important figure in reproductive health in Canada, the *Feminist Museum Hack* illuminated two things. Firstly, museums defer to 'individual' and 'heroic' narratives and these for the most part, are stories of individual men. We discuss here how they form the discursive base of 'leadership' and 'change-makers'. Women's actions of leadership for change are most often collective, and therefore, to 'ill-defined' to include. Secondly, women's stories are important when in relation to men. This is clear in the example above, but it is ubiquitous. In an art museum in England, the male artists were described in terms of innovation and brush stroke, whilst the female artists were described as wives or daughters of famous men, instilling an idea of 'dependency' which may in fact be true, but where did it come from and how do we lay waste to it?

The physical space of the museum is also an important 'framing' device that is not overlooked in *The Feminist Museum Hack*. How are displays about women and men positioned in the museum and what does this say to us visually? My partner and I found an exhibition of the suffragette movement in Manitoba placed in a poorly lighted hallway, where it would be easily missed. Even more infuriating was sitting atop an original petition, with hundreds of signatures by women and some men in favour of 'votes for women', was a small comedic figurine of a gaggle of geese. In another museum, a lowly lighted diorama of a woman's sitting room at eye level juxtaposed an elevated, brightly lighted display of male uniforms and weapons.

*Interrogating the 'Scripto-Visual'*

Central to feminist visual culture is the 'scripto-visual' what we take up as a combination of imagery, curatorial statements, myths, metaphors and symbols. While reading images is central to art history, it is not for many other disciplines. To teaching students to unpick the meanings in artworks, the *Hack* draws directly from feminist visual culture but it also operationalizes it pedagogically, rather than simply as a research method. A question in point here is: What are the women doing in the artwork? How are they positioned in relation to men? What is the central story being told and how? Students see in forest scenes by 'the masters', for example, women draped naked over branches, whilst the men sit fully clothed in intellectual discussion. "The story is that women are adornments to men who contemplate", was

a comment by a particularly disappointed female student who had frequented the museum but had never thought about the messaging and its implications.

Another part of scripto-visual analysis is to expose the hidden "relationship between language and ideology" (Pollock, 1988, p. 29). We considered one diorama entitled *Men, animals and machines: Farming meant combining their power.* Contrary to the signage, the human images are women labouring in a field. Although women were and remain active farm workers, they are seldom referred to as farmers and this representation simply re-enforces that message. Indignation was apparent in this question written on a post-it note by a student and attached to the image: "So what are they then, animals or the machines?"

### Disruption and Agency

This mention of the 'post-it note' brings me to a final aspect of the *Feminist Museum Hack*, what Bannerji, Carty, Delhi, Heald and McKenna (1991) call "direct agency" (p. 77). For us, this a visual force of re-writing and challenging the museum's hegemonic patriarchal representations. We move through the collections attaching post-it notes to display cases, beside artworks and so forth, that carry provocative questions and highlight omissions, such as why the only mention of women in a replica of old China Town is 'prostitutes' or make suggestions: "Since this violence is clearly a story of male power, just say it". We have also used coloured dot stickers to identify works by women or men, creating a visual map of gender imbalances. Green painter's tape works well to create a visual redaction of sexist language. Following the hacks, we create skits and particularly, write poetry because as Lorde argues, the poetic voice is a powerful means to overcome "the intolerable or incomprehensible to find the strength and courage to see, to feel, to speak, and to dare … institutional dehumanisation" (cited in Golding, 2013, p. 91).

Impacts of our interventions on visitors range from indignation at the "defacing" of the institution and 'mansplained' history lessons, to statements such as "Oh, you are not taking those [post-it notes] down? They had added so much to my visit. They have really made me think". These are important learning moments, opportunities to reflect on the challenges we continue face, as well as the potential of our work, as well as what museums could have if they were to change. The length of time our interventions remain depends upon partnering with a museum educator, who can ensure they stay for several weeks. Educators can also present the reports from our findings to curators and administrators. We deliberately make suggestions that require little financial cost such as inserting provocative questions about women in curatorial statements or changing sexist language. For the most part, these institutions do not seem to appreciate the challenge to their authority as no changes have been made. This is a limitation to the *Hack* on one hand, but on the other, it reveals the resiliency of patriarchy and the power to name and shape the world.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Culture, Hall (2013, p. xxi) reminds us is a "constitutive process, as important as the economic and material base" in shaping and mobilizing subjectivity, and knowledge. For me, this is what makes cultural institutions like museums such important sites for feminist adult education teaching, learning and research. I have designed *The Feminist Hack* as a fluid, adaptable and embodied process that critically and creatively brings to light museums' patriarchal system of meaning, that hides in plain sight to limit seeing and understanding. *The Feminist Hack* is important because as an intentional project, it broadens the intellectual endeavour of reading the world, developing an informed visual literacy that acknowledges the significance of how the micro of the museum plays into and off the macro of gender and other hegemonies. As it illuminates the 'monocultures' of museums, it encourages new conversations about the missing histories of women enabling the next generation to inherit a strong sense of the practice of silencing. As we move through the galleries, we complicate spectatorship as an act of passive consumption, disrupt the complacency of normative assumptions, and illuminate the sleight of hand of stereotyping and essentializing. We develop our feminist oppositional gaze, and our imaginations because "imagination is the most subversive thing a public can have" (Mohanty, 2012, p. vii). I am conscious a great deal more work remains to be done, but for now *The Feminist Hack* is an important counter constitutive process to make the road of gender justice and change.

## REFERENCES

Ayu Saraswati, L., Shaaw, B., & Rellihan, H. (2018). *Introduction to women's, gender and sexuality studies: Interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bannerji, H., Carty, L., Dehli, K., Heald, S., & McKenna, K. (1991). *Unsettling relations: The university as a site of feminist struggles*. Toronto: Women's Press.

Bergsdóttir, A. (2016). Museums and feminist matters: Considerations of a feminist museology. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 24*(2), 126–139.

Bloom, L. (Ed.). (1999). *With other eyes: Looking at race and gender in visual culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Burnham, R., & Kai-Kee, E. (2011). *Teaching in the art museum: Interpretation and experience*. Los Angeles, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum.

Carson, F., & Pajaczkowska, C. (Eds.). (2001). *Feminist visual culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Clover, D. E., & Sanford, K. (2016). Knowing their place: Feminist perceptions and understandings of women adult educators in museums. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 22*(2), 117–133.

Clover, D. E., Sanford, K., Taber, N., & Williamson, S. (2018). Feminist interrogations and creative teaching in art galleries and museums. In R. McGray & V. Woloshyn (Eds.), *Proceeding of the 37th Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education Conference* (pp. 36–42). Regina: University of Regina.

Conn, S. (2010). *Do museums still need objects?* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.

English, L., & Irving, C. (2015). *Feminism in community: Adult education for transformation*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Foucault, M. (1982). The subject of power. In H. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Giroux, H. A. (2004). Cultural studies, public pedagogy, and the responsibility of intellectuals. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, 1*(1), 59–79.

Golding, V. (2013). Museums, poetics and affect. *Feminist Review, 104*, 80–99.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selection from prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. Nowell Smith, Eds.). New York, NY: International Publishers.

Hall, S. (2013). Introduction. In S. Hall, J. Evans, & S. Nixon (Eds.), *Representation* (pp. xvii–xxvi) London: Sage.

Haiven, M., & Khasnabish, A. (2014). *The radical imagination*. London: Zed Books.

Hannay, C. (2018, September 15). Canadians visiting museums, galleries more than ever, survey shows. *Globe and Mail*. Retrieved Mars 20, 2019, from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canadians-visiting-museums-galleries-more-than-ever-survey-shows/

hooks, b. (1995). *Art on my mind*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Janes, R. (2015). *Museums without borders*. London: Routledge.

Lazar, M. (2005). *Critical feminist discourse analysis: Gender, power, and ideology in discourse*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Malt, C. (2006). Women, museums and the public sphere. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 2*(2), 115–136.

Manicom, L., & Walters, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Feminist popular education in transnational debates: Building pedagogies of possibility*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marshment, M. (1993). The picture is political: Representation of women in contemporary popular culture. In D. Richardson & V. Robinson (Eds.), *Thinking feminist* (pp. 123–150). New York, NY: Guildford Press.

Marstine, J. (Ed.). (2006). *New museum theory and practice*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Martin, I. (2003). Adult education, lifelong learning and citizenship: Some ifs and buts. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 22*(6), 566–579.

Mohanty, C. (1989). On race and voice: Challenges for liberation education in the 1990s. *Cultural Critique, 14*, 179–208.

Mohanty, C. (2012). Foreword. In L. Manicom & S. Walters (Eds.), *Feminist popular education in transnational debates: Building pedagogies of possibility* (pp. vii–x). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Obrist, H., & Raza, A. (2015). *Ways of curating*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.

Penn Hilden, P., & Lee, L. (2010). Indigenous feminism: The project. In C. Suzack, S. Huhndorf, J. Perreault, & J. Barman (Eds.), *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (pp. 56–77). Vancouver: UBC Press.

Phillips, R. (2011). *Museum pieces: Towards the indigenization of Canadian museums*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Plantenga, D. (2012). Shaping the magic: Reflections on some core principles of feminist popular education. In L. Manicom & S. Walters S. (Eds.), *Feminist popular education in transnational debates: Building pedagogies of possibility* (pp. 25–40). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pollock, G. (1988). *Vision and difference: Feminism, femininity and the histories of art*. London: Routledge.

Rogoff, I. (2013). Studying visual culture. In N. Mirzoeff (Ed.), *The visual culture reader* (3rd ed., pp. 14–26). London: Routledge.

Rose, G. (2001). *Visual methodologies*. London: Sage.

Whitehead, C. (2009). *Museums and the construction of disciplines: Art and archaeology in nineteenth-century Britain*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co.

# PART 4

# CRITICAL MIXED METHODS AND CRITICAL QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

ALISON TAYLOR AND MILOSH RAYKOV

# 11. TOWARDS CRITICAL AND DIALOGICAL MIXED METHODS RESARCH

*Reflections on Our Journey*

## INTRODUCTION

Mixed methods research (MMR) has been defined as research "in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study" (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). But social scientists were using qualitative methods alongside surveys long before the term 'mixed methods' was introduced (Guest, 2013). Further, quantitative research has been used to advocate for social change since the time of Marx (Hall, 2003). For example, writers like Adorno and Fromm explored the rise of Nazism in Germany and the authoritarian personality using survey as well as ethnographic methods (Roiser & Willig, 2002; Cortina, 2015). These scholars and others we think demonstrate that it is possible to have an "objective approach that is contextually, historically, and culturally situated, embraces the subjectivity of individuals being studied, and doesn't hide the values of the researcher" (Cortina, 2015, p. 395).

In this chapter, we wish to assert the value of critical MMR by exploring current debates in the literature, and reflect on our collaborative research as well as discuss the implications of what we have learned for future research. We make a case for an approach to MMR that is dialogical, creative, critical, and participatory.

## CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ABOUT MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

[I]n many discussions, the notions of qualitative research and quantitative research stand for much more than just the kind of data being used. The terms tend to stand for a whole cluster of aspects of research, such as methods, designs, methodologies, epistemological and ontological assumptions, and so on … what often is at stake in discussions between proponents of the different approaches is precisely not the nature of the data being used but bigger issues such as views about the nature of reality, the limits of knowledge, or the purpose and politics of research. (Biesta, 2010, p. 5)

Epistemological and political questions are important to consider when adopting any methodology. Positions on methods, however, tend to become ossified when articulated in terms of paradigms (Biesta, 2010). This is evident in the "incompatibility thesis", which argues that quantitative methods are rooted exclusively in a *positivist* paradigm and are therefore incompatible with the *constructionist* paradigm that underpins qualitative methods (Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2009; Hodgkin, 2008). Quantitative research is characterized as involving an objective process of deduction, whereas the qualitative process is seen as involving a subjective process of induction in a particular context (Morgan cited in Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2009). The opposition between positivism and constructionism is thus related to an objective-subjective binary, which sees knowledge either as independent from knowers or as produced by knowers seems to us to be mistaken. Biesta challenges this binary, drawing on John Dewey's argument that knowledge is both real and constructed. Dewey's pragmatism, in Biesta's view, helps researchers "ask more precise questions about the strength, status, and validity of the knowledge claims developed on the basis of particular design" (Biesta, 2010, p. 25). We agree that more open discussion about the assumptions underpinning different methods results in more fruitful dialogue. Our preferred methodology is a dialectical and dialogical approach to MMR, discussed below. This approach is consistent with the trend in adult education research toward socio-material approaches, focused on the ways in which action and knowledge give rise to systems (see Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011).

MMR can, effectively and reflexively applied, addressing the weaknesses of single method studies (Mirchandani et al., 2016) – for example, the weakness in large quantitative studies of over-interpreting data, and in qualitative studies, of poor representation and a tendency to overgeneralize (Hodgkin, 2008). It can help explore and answer research questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) by providing a more complete and comprehensive picture of a phenomenon (Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009). For example, surveys can set the stage for the cycle of inductive/deductive[1] research on informal learning and work (Sawchuk, 2008) and can reveal broader patterns.

Greene (2005, p. 209) suggests that MMR also "offers greater possibilities than a single method approach for responding to decision makers' agenda", for example, by providing a counterpoint to the predominant discourse of "valid, rigorous and 'scientific' research" in program evaluation research. But perhaps because of the predominance of this discourse, other writers observe that the quantitative elements of the methodology are often privileged (Fielding, 2012; Mason, 2006). For example, qualitative data are seen as primarily useful "to illustrate quantitative findings" or in "hypotheses development and testing" (Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2009, p. 179).

MMR has also been described as useful in triangulating different kinds of data (Doyle, Brady, & Byrne 2009). The meaning of triangulation as "convergent validation" (Fielding, 2012), more common in early social scientific research, involves establishing construct validity via multiple data sources. However, critics argue, and we agree, that triangulation cannot be a validation strategy where different

epistemological assumptions underpin the methods being combined (Fielding, 2012). A more recent view of triangulation in MMR involves seeking divergence "in the service of complexity and richness of understanding" (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 137). Thus, in addition to a "conjunctive" conception of triangulation, where different methods are used to explore the same questions, MMR can be used to address different research questions, described as a "disjunctive" conception of triangulation (Howe, 2012). For example, Hodgkins (2008) used surveys to examine the question, "do men and women have different social capital profiles?" followed by interviews to consider the question, "why do women participate more in social and community activities than in civic activities?" (p. 301).

Our preference is for a dialectical approach to triangulation, which involves seeking different versions of the same phenomenon and placing disparate or contradictory findings in dialogue with one another (Hesse-Biber, 2012). This approach is at once con- and dis-junctive. According to Howe (2012), this may require moving to a higher or more holistic level of integration in MMR to address different ontological ideas about causality. Howe's suggestion resonates with discussions in our current MMR study where quantitative research team members have expressed interest in modeling the impacts of student work on their university studies based on survey data. While this modeling is a taken for granted practice in quantitative studies, discussions with more qualitatively-oriented team members reveal different ideas about the extent to which it is possible to attribute strong (deterministic) causality within open systems – systems that interact with outside factors or conditions (cf. Biesta, 2010). In addition, other team members assert the need to clarify quantitative measures of complex social phenomena (e.g. race), drawing on conceptual resources. Dialectical or holistic approaches to triangulation involve negotiating epistemological and methodological differences as researchers articulate and explore the gains and losses of different methods in their mixing (Leckenby & Hesse-Biber, 2007, cited in Mirchandani et al., 2016).

A dialectical approach to MMR is seen by some writers as consistent with a transformative emancipatory politics of research. For example, dissonant findings between and within methods are seen as an important locus for uncovering the "subjugated knowledge" of women and other marginalized groups in research (Hesse-Biber, 2012). In some cases, qualitative data are used to speak back to the concepts and interpretations of quantitative methods. Denzin (2012) suggests that like transformative emancipatory action researchers, pragmatists also posit a dialectical model, "working back and forth between a variety of tension points, such as etic–emic, value neutrality–value committed" (p. 81).

According to Mason (2006), "placing explanation at the centre of enquiry reflects an interest in the complexities of how and why things change and work as they do in certain context and circumstances" (p. 19). He encourages researchers to use MMR to try to "see and think about things differently and creatively", in a "multi-nodal" and dialogic way. The term "multi-nodal" refers to attending to the different axes

and dimensions of social experience while the term "dialogic" suggests conversation that is reflexive about different forms of data (p. 20).

Dewey's ideas about truth as contextual and related to action imply that different knowledge results from different ways of engaging with the world (Biesta, 2010). As we reflect on our own theoretical and political commitments as educators and researchers, we posit that Vygotsky's work further reinforces the importance of epistemological questions in thinking about research designs. It too challenges the binaries between subject and object, mind and world, theory and practice. From his perspective, knowledge emerges in and is the product of collective effort of human beings to come to grips with their world and themselves over time (Derry, 2013). Knowledge is thus seen as being constantly reconstituted and transformed by the activity of individuals in definite social contexts. Experience is an inferential activity that involves making judgments and developing concepts rather than reflecting the world in an unmediated way. For Vygotsky, theoretical understandings should be directed toward effective and responsible action in the world of practical activity. This transformative political orientation to research is consistent with our values and aims.

## REFLECTIONS ON OUR ENGAGEMENT IN MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

The degree to which we have put the different methods and findings into dialogue in our MMR studies to this point has been limited, but the necessity for such work has become clear through our review of literature and research related to student engagement, first generation students, and CSL. The discussion that follows suggests that the binaries often invoked in discussions of MMR (subjective-objective, positivism-constructivism) are also reflected in conceptual discussions about student learning. Reflection on our previous collaborative work highlights some of MMR's pitfalls and possibilities. Taylor's early research studies employed qualitative data collection methods to explore topics related to educational reform, school-to-work transitions, and experiential learning. Raykov's expertise in quantitative methodology and shared interests in work and learning have fomented discussion across methods. The following section offers Taylor's reflections on her journey in and through MMR.

We have collaborated on research related to community service learning (CSL) in Canadian universities, that is, experiential learning where "students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222). Our data collection involved surveys of students and graduates at two universities followed by interviews.

The motivation for including an MMR design was partly instrumental; such research often has more cachet with granting agencies and policy-makers (Christ cited in Fielding, 2012). Because Taylor was the Director of Community Service

Learning at one of the Canadian universities (in addition to her faculty role), it was important to her to try and combine more descriptive program evaluation research (demonstrating the "impact" of CSL pedagogy) with theoretically informed research for academic publication. Raykov proposed a mixed-method research design involving a combination of exploratory and explanatory sequential methods (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

We concur with others (Greene, 2005) that survey results are often viewed more favorably than other forms of data by decision-makers, in this case, university leaders with the power to invest resources in such programs. Also, like Hodgkin (2008, p. 296), Taylor felt that quantitative data could help paint a "big picture", which could be complemented by personal stories to bring "depth and texture" to the research study, particularly in reports for university decision-makers. In these reports (Raykov & Taylor, 2018), we used excerpts from interviews to enliven the statistical findings (cf., Fielding, 2012).

Our process of developing the survey started with focus groups with CSL graduates to expand our understanding of the outcomes of CSL as well as to inform the design and test our items for the online survey (Rea & Parker, 2014). In order to better understand and explain quantitative results, we followed the survey by interviews with a sample of respondents. Additionally, open-ended survey questions provided data about students' service learning experiences.

Because the CSL literature includes many large quantitative studies (often multi-university surveys of students) or small case studies (often conducted by instructors on their own classes) (Taylor et al., 2015), we thought it was important to think about how studies conducted at quite different scales inform each other. In particular, large quantitative studies, which often focus on documenting measurable outcomes of CSL, obscure the diversity and situational contours of CSL pedagogy. From our examination of the literature examining the effects of the intensity and duration of CSL, we conclude,

> Much of the literature … involves quantitative, large-scale studies involving surveys of students, which are limited in their ability to probe the details of particular student experiences or to provide in-depth discussion about different "measures" of student outcomes (e.g., what intercultural competence means). In addition, the type of student service is not captured in large-scale studies. In sum, such studies cannot attend to context-specific factors. (Raykov & Taylor, 2020)

Our MMR study, in contrast, examined situational aspects of CSL that were critical to understanding survey findings, for example, students' reflections in interviews on different community placements during their university programs. Thus, while survey findings demonstrate that students report the impact of CSL on their further education and career aspirations, interviews allowed us to understand how students' experiences fit together to create a tapestry of meaning. For example, while survey data suggested that CSL increased students' interest in graduate school, interview

data suggested that students who participated in CSL often seek more applied and community-oriented graduate programs as opposed to traditional research programs. Interview data also influenced our analysis of survey findings; for example, we noticed that a number of students who had participated in several CSL courses were the first in their family to attend university. This led to a closer look at our survey data to compare the responses based on parental education, discussed below.

From an "everyday" pragmatic position, our use of mixed methods research may be regarded as unproblematic – data from surveys and interviews were used in mostly descriptive ways to paint a picture of the impacts of CSL on students in two Canadian universities (Taylor & Raykov, 2014; Raykov & Taylor, forthcoming). We asked students about their motivations for participating in CSL in surveys and used interviews to gain further understanding about their responses, for example, what students meant by saying they were motivated to "contribute to community" or to "develop employability skills". Methodologically, full integration of data has not yet been pursued since quantitative data were analyzed initially and compared to preliminary analysis of qualitative data to produce reports.[2] Thus, the degree to which we have put the different methods and findings into dialogue to this point is limited.

Conceptual and epistemological tensions have become evident, however. For example, when conducting interviews with students who had completed several CSL courses during their undergraduate programs, we noticed that a number were "first generation" or "first in family" students, students whose parents had not attended university. Their comments about their experiences in university, including their relationships with professors and other students, feelings about their ability to participate effectively in classes, and ideas about what they would do following university suggest that CSL played an important role in their identity formation processes as undergraduate students. As a result of these interview data, we returned to our quantitative data analysis to see if differences between students who were "first generation" and other students were evident in their survey responses. At the same time, we explored the literature on first generation students in service learning and in universities.

Our review highlights the limitations of existing literature (Taylor, Yochim, & Raykov, 2018). In previous research quantitative data focused on narrow outcome measures (e.g., post-secondary education retention or completion rates) were usually privileged over qualitative data (e.g., Lee, 2005, Wilsey et al., 2014; Yeh, 2014; York, 2013). In addition, many studies were conducted in the US where the post-secondary education system has a "steeper prestige hierarchy" across institutions than in Canada (Davies & Hammack, 2005, p. 93). The findings of Canadian studies were inconsistent; for example, some studies found differences in post-secondary education retention rates for first-generation youth while others did not (Butlin, 2000; Finnie, Childs, & Wismer, 2010). Quantitative findings speak to the difficulties associated with trying to measure and predict outcomes for first generation students given the complexity of their interactions with their social worlds (Lehmann,

2012). Quantitative studies about service learning also give inadequate attention to its diversity – some CSL courses focus on developing students' technical skills while others aim to involve students in social transformation (Butin, 2010). Diverse practices reflect the plurality of theoretical influences on service learning (Taylor, 2014). Studies also tend to gloss over the diversity of first generation students; for example, how parental education intersects with other social markers (such as race and ethnicity), and varies by geographical and social location (McKay & Estrella, 2008; Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005). In combination, the literature prompts questions about the underlying conceptual understandings of studies, their design, and their findings. It became clear that the overlapping concepts of "first generation", "student engagement", and "experiential learning" needed to be unpacked.

First of all, the term "first generation" is tied to concerns about lower rates of access to and persistence in higher education for particular groups of students. But the use of parental education as a proxy for disadvantage ignores both how parents' educational attainment intersects with other markers of difference and how the concept may reinforce the perceived deficits of some students when measured against the profile of the successful, engaged student, discussed further below.

Second, the concept of student engagement, as portrayed in the US literature is rooted in psychological "input-environment-output" models (e.g., Astin, 1991; Kuh, 2008) that attempt to capture the myriad of variables at play at different stages in students' experiences through university. But writers drawing on Bourdieu's critical analysis suggest that the definition of "engagement" (e.g., the kind of activities seen as valuable) is based on a student profile that does not reflect the realities of working-class students (Stuber, 2009). Traditional universities often see the cultural capital and habitus of working-class students as less legitimate than others (Finnegan & Merrill, 2017). Bryson (2014) further critiques measures of student engagement that use an aggregate of survey items, noting that the standardization of questions (e.g., in the National Survey on Student Engagement) lacks sensitivity to local contexts, and the closed nature of questions allows no voice for students. His own definition of engagement seeks to capture the richness and diversity of students' experiences, seeing it as a space of transition.

Tensions in the literature highlight more fundamental questions about what can be known and what it means to know something as well as political questions about whose knowledge and what kind of knowledge is valued. Many studies assume that student learning involves the individual and cognitive acquisition of knowledge and skills, evident in the language of measuring "gains in learning" (Finley & McNair 2013) or survey items that ask students to self-report their increase in skills. However, other theorists (e.g., Vygotsky) would emphasize the contextual, embedded, fluid, and dynamic aspects of human development (Derry, 2013). Research drawing on socio-material ideas is likely to focus on how students realize their relationship to the world through learning, exploring their predispositions and actions, wider social and cultural values, and the culture and resources of the learning site (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2007; Bryson, 2014; Stetsenko, 2008).

The preceding discussion informs our research on CSL. As noted above, the service learning literature typically pays little attention to the diverse aims of this pedagogy and the situational contexts of that learning. Our final section provides a brief discussion about how our reflections on MMR inform our ideas about future research and writing.

## MOVING TOWARD DIALOGICAL, CREATIVE, CRITICAL, AND PARTICIPATORY MMR

What does the discussion above mean for our MMR studies, in particular, how to ensure that our qualitative data and quantitative data analyses are in conversation and that our conceptual and political commitments are reflected in both? The above discussion of first generation students and CSL suggests the importance of theoretically informed, reflexive quantitative data collection. We tried to address the problematic nature of homogenizing and decontextualizing CSL by including questions in our survey about what type of CSL students participated in it and what they did, as well as providing contextual information about programs in written reports. Our survey also gave students voice (to a limited degree) by including open-ended questions about how they thought service learning affected their university experience. Finally, we included questions that go beyond narrow outcome measures (e.g., academic performance) to include items related to graduates' subsequent civic engagement, development of personal ethics, ability to take an active role in learning, and to be reflective on learning, etc.

More integration of quantitative and qualitative data is needed, particularly in areas where data seem inconsistent. One example involves our lack of statistically significant survey results for first generation students compared to others on several items. Meanwhile, our interviews with a sub-sample of first generation students suggest that their CSL experiences were highly influential for developing their sense of confidence as "knowledge producers" as well as for widening their horizons for action. A second example concerns students' motivations for enrolling in CSL classes. Our survey results suggested that many students entered CSL courses for seemingly instrumental reasons (e.g., résumé building, to gain particular skills). Interviews, however, suggest that while students may have been attracted by the idea of "skills development" initially, their reasons for continuing to be involved were more complex and their post-graduation reflections reveal changes over time. Participants often attributed their growing confidence as they approached graduation to moving "out of their comfort zones" from campus to community (with support) and learning to handle contradictions and tensions.

Four commitments inform our research design for our current MMR study (with four other co-investigators) on the ways in which undergraduate students move between work (paid and unpaid) and their studies. First, we think that qualitatively-driven MMR has potential for "generating new ways of understanding the complexities and contexts of social experience" (Mason, 2006, p. 10). Thus, our

research team will employ a multi-nodal approach as we follow eighty students over three years of their university programs, in addition to conducting an institutional survey of all undergraduate students.

Second, we will place disparate or contradictory findings in dialogue with one another by seeking more comprehensive explanatory frameworks (Howe, 2012) and considering how different dimensions and scales of social existence intersect or relate (Mason, 2006).

Third, we will explore the creative possibilities of MMR by including data sources that go beyond surveys and interviews. Since our research includes undergraduate students, many of whom participate in social media, we plan to include a variety of qualitative data collection methods, which, combined with survey data, will allow us to gain a "wider and deeper picture from all angles" (see Fielding, 2012, p. 128).

Finally, we have clear political commitments in our MMR, focusing on students who are perceived as experiencing more challenges in higher education – first generation students and international students. Part of our commitment to change involves ensuring that students benefit not only from the dissemination of outcomes (uncovering subjugated knowledge), but also from their involvement in the project (see Sweetman, Badiee, & Creswell's, 2010, discussion of criteria for transformative research). In sum, our approach to MMR seeks to be dialogical, creative, critical, and participatory and puts to one side unhelpful binaries related to earlier debates in social science.

## NOTES

[1] While inductive research approaches tend to derive categories from the data, deductive approaches structure the analysis on the basis of previous knowledge (cf., Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

[2] In part, this is because of the timing of phases of data collection since qualitative data analysis has lagged the quantitative analysis.

## REFERENCES

Astin, A. (1991). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. New York, NY: McMillan.

Biesta, G. (2010). Pragmatism and the philosophical foundations of mixed methods. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (1996). Implementing service-learning in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education, 67*(2), 221–239.

Bryson, C. (2014). Introduction. In C. Bryson (Ed.), *Understanding and developing student engagement*. London: Routledge.

Butin, D. (2010). *Service-learning in theory and practice: The future of community engagement in higher education*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Butlin, G. (2000). Determinants of university and community college leaving. *Education Quarterly Review, 6*(4), 8–23. Cat#: 81-003-XIE.

Cortina, M. (2015). The greatness and limitations of Erich Fromm's humanism. *Contemporary Pyschoanalysis, 51*(3), 388–422.

Creswell, J., & Plano-Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davies, S., & Hammack, F. (2005). The channeling of student competition in higher education: Comparing Canada and the US. *The Journal of Higher Education, 76*(1), 89–106.

Denzin, N. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 6*(2), 80–88.

Derry, J. (2013). *Vygotsky: Philosophy and Education*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Doyle, L., Brady, A.-M., & Byrne, G. (2009). An overview of mixed methods research. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 14*(2), 175–185.

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 62*(1), 107–115.

Fenwick, T., Edwards, R., & Sawchuk, P. (2011). *Emerging approaches to educational research: Tracing the socio-material*. London: Routledge.

Fielding, N. (2012). Triangulation and mixed methods design: Data integration with new research technologies. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 6*(2), 124–136.

Finnegan, F., & Merrill, B. (2017) 'We're as good as anybody else': A comparative study of working-class university students' experiences in England and Ireland. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 38*(3), 307–324. doi:10.1080/01425692.2015.1081054

Finley, A., & McNair, T. (2013). Assessing underserved students' engagement in high impact practices. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Finnie, R., Childs, S., & Wismer, A. (2010). *First generation post-secondary education students* (Version 02-24-10, A MESA Project L-SLIS Research Brief). Toronto: Canadian Education Project.

Greene, J. (2005). The generative potential of mixed methods inquiry. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education, 28*(2), 207–211.

Guest, G. (2013). Describing mixed methods research: An alternative to typologies. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 7*(2), 141–151.

Hall, S. (2003). Marx's notes on method: A 'reading' of the 1857 'introduction'. *Cultural Studies, 17*(2), 113–149.

Hesse-Biber, S. (2012). Feminist approaches to triangulation: Uncovering subjugated knowledge and fostering social change in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 6*(2), 137–146.

Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G., & James, D. (2007). Understanding learning cultures. *Educational Review, 59*(4), 415–427.

Hodgkin, S. (2008). Telling it all. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 2*(4), 296–316.

Howe, K. (2012). Mixed methods, triangulation, and causal explanation. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 6*(2), 89–96.

Kuh, G. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Lee, J. (2005). Home away from home or foreign territory? How social class mediates service-learning experiences. *NASPA Journal, 42*(3), 310–325.

Lehmann, W. (2012). Working-class students, habitus, and the development of student roles: a Canadian case study, *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 33*(4), 527–546.

Lohfink, M. M., & Paulsen, M. B. (2005). Comparing the determinants of persistence for first-generation and continuing-generation students. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(4), 409–428.

Mason, J. (2006). Mixing methods in a qualitatively driven way. *Qualitative Research, 6*(1), 9–25.

McKay, V. C., & Estrella, J. (2008). First-generation student success: The role of faculty interaction in service learning courses. *Communication Education, 57*(3), 356–372.

Mirchandani, K., Vosko, L., Soni-Sinha, U., Perry, J., Noack, A., Hall, R., & Gellatly, M. (2016). Methodological K/nots: Designing research on the enforcement of labor standards. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 3*, 1–15.

Raykov, M., & Taylor, A. (2018). *Beyond learning for earning: The long-term outcomes of course-based and immersion service learning*. Vancouver: Authors.

Raykov, M. & Taylor, A. (2020). Seeing the "big picture": Exploring the impact of the duration of community service-learning on university students. Submitted for publication.

Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (2014). *Designing and conducting survey research: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Roiser, M., & Willig, C. (2002). The strange death of the authoritarian personality: 50 years of psychological and political debate. *History of the Human Science, 15*(4), 71–96.

Stetsenko, J. (2008). From relational ontology to transformative activist stance of development and learning: Expanding Vygotsky's (CHAT) project. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 3*, 471–491.

Stuber, J. (2009). Class, culture, and participation in the collegiate extra-curriculum. *Sociological Forum, 24*(4), 877–900.

Sawchuk, P. (2008). Theories and methods for research on informal learning and work: Towards cross-fertilization. *Studies in Continuing Education, 30*(1), 1–16.

Stuber, J. (2012). Inside the college gates: How class and culture matter in higher education. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Sweetman, D., Badiee, M., & Creswell, J. (2010). Use of the transformative framework in mixed methods studies. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*, 441–454.

Taylor, A. (2014). Community service-learning and cultural-historical activity theory. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 44*(1), 95–107.

Taylor, A., Butterwick, S., Raykov, M., Glick, S., Peikazadki, N., & Mehrabi, S. (2015, October). *Community service learning in Canadian higher education*. Retrieved from https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/facultyresearchandpublications/52383/items/1.0226035

Taylor, A., & Raykov, M. (2014). *The long-term outcomes of community service-learning*. Edmonton: University of Alberta. Retrieved from https://uofa.ualberta.ca/community-service-learning/-/media/arts/departments-institutes-and-centres/community-service-learning/documents/reports/csl-tlef-report-mar31.pdf

Taylor, A., Yochim, L., & Raykov, M. (2018). *Experiential learning to engage marginalized university students: A conceptual exploration of the literature*. Unpublished paper.

Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. (2007). Editorial: The new era of mixed methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*, 3–7.

Wilsey, S. A., Friedrichs, J., Gabrich, C., & Chung, T. (2014). A privileged pedagogy for privileged students? A preliminary mixed-methods analysis comparing first-generation and non-first-generation college students on post-evaluations of service-learning courses. *PRISM: A Journal of Regional Engagement, 3*(2), 79–97. Retrieved from http://encompass.eku.edu/prism/vol3/iss2/1

Yeh, T. (2014). *First-generation male college students in community-based education: A mixed methods study* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

York, T. (2013). *Exploring service-learning outcomes and experiences for low-income, first-generation college students: A mixed methods approach* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, PA.

ERIK NYLANDER, LOVISA ÖSTERLUND AND ANDREAS FEJES

# 12. THE USE OF BIBLIOMETRICS IN ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH

> To be, say, a formidable club player, I must be recognized as such by those I recognize as such. My recognitive attitudes can define a virtual community, but only the reciprocal recognition by those I recognize can make me actually a member of it, accord me the status for which I have implicitly petitioned by recognizing them.
>
> – Brandom, 2008, p. 71

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to introduce a methodological approach that can be used in order to analyze how the adult education research field is shaped through research practices, measurement standards and indexation. More specifically, we focus on three formative dimensions that we argue play a significant role in constructing "the rules of the game" in contemporary academia: (i) indexation, (ii) publications and (iii) citations. Our account is nowhere close to exhaustive but outlines how bibliographic data and bibliometric methodology can be used. Hence, to build our argument we draw on the research traditions of bibliometrics which, in the last few decades, has become linked to a highly controversial subject. Namely, how the reward system of the modern university should function. What will be the basis of 'quality' assessments of universities? How will merit be fought about and money distributed across different universities and disciplines?

The emergence of large-scale statistics in Western societies has always had a close connection to the state and the role it has in steering and governing a given population (Desrosiéres, 2008). Since the early ground-breaking work of bibliometricans such as de Solla Price's (1965) and Merton (1973), citations and publication patterns of scholars has been used to understand how researchers behave and relate to one another's work. In the heyday of bibliometrics the measurement of citations could, quite rightly we think, be treated as signs of internal collegial recognition. However, since then citations and publications within higher education has been dragged into a standardized evaluation regime that differs considerably from the situation studied by the forerunners of contemporary bibliometrics. Apparently lacking any other comparative measurements governments and management boards across a wide range of countries have begun to turn towards the standardized output variables linked

to recognized databases. As with all economic incentives orchestrated by the state, standardized evaluations can have "perverse effects" as soon as agents start to adjust their behaviour to fit what is currently being measured and evaluated (Hoskin, 1996).

However, the degree to which higher education policies have incorporated bibliometric performance indicators varies across countries and tend to change over time. For example, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in the UK drew on citation analyses as part of the research assessment (Martin, 2011; Brown, 2014). Another, arguably even more aggressive version of this assessment praxis, is currently and has for many years been enacted in Sweden where the government divides a substantial share of its research funding to higher education institutions based purely on a small number of performance indicators related to the publication and citation rates in journals listed in Web of Science (Ministry of Education, 2007). A third version, combining collegial assessment and production matrixes, is the so called "Norwegian list", in which both articles and books are counted, but differently so depending on where it is published and how evaluators assess its impact (Larsson, 2009).

It is tempting and, indeed appropriate, to critique these policy developments for the highly reductionistic and futile ways it deals with the complex issue of quality assessment and collegial recognition in higher education (Gingras, 2016; Karpik, 2011; Larsson, 2009). Yet the research tradition that once gave rise to the convention of studying research practices and scholarly acknowledgement through publications and citations still provide a series of important lessons for those interested in understanding the construction and formation of research traditions and the way scholars recognize and assign value to each other's work.

This chapter builds on previous research conducted on the field of adult educational research and aim to provide a short introduction to the use of bibliometrics (Nylander et al., 2018; Fejes & Nylander, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019). To be sure, bibliometric research has evolved greatly since the foundational contributions of de Solla Price and Merton. This contribution can be seen as an effort to provide a "descriptive cartography" of the field of adult educational research (Gingras, 2016, p. 75) and analyze how this relates to the dynamics and tendencies in academic research more widely.[1] Throughout the chapter we will highlight the importance of geographical and linguistic boundaries in assessing what is given scholarly recognition within the adult educational research field. We conclude that bibliometric methods remain a powerful tool to map out localized research communities and their publication and citation practices. By conducting these kinds of analysis, we believe it is possible to give a panoramic view of what kind of research that is being published and cited by colleagues as well as to foster reflexivity on the fundamental questions posed in any given scientific subfield (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004).

## INDEXATION AND THE DOMINANT DATABASES

In the current landscape of higher education, the role of databases such as Web of Science and Scopus is paramount in "setting the rules" of which journals that "count"

(cf. Archambault et al., 2009; Bonitz et al., 1997; Larsson, 2009). Or put in another way, by introducing certain measurements, based on certain databases, politicians and university managers steer academics work towards certain publication outputs. This means that Web of Science and Scopus are assigned the role of rulers of the rules of contemporary academia and that journals indexed in these databases, their editors and reviewers function as gatekeepers of what is deemed as 'high quality' research. In effect the journals are also deciding on which researchers that should be deemed worthy of contributing to the field and which ones that is not. Thus, questions such as what kinds of journals that are indexed in these databases becomes pivotal to explore. In what language are these indexed journals published? Who can publish in their first language in the journals that "count"? Where are the journals published, or rather, are there a "bias" in terms of geography of journals? Even though, many of these indexed journals have not asked to become gatekeepers in the various national contexts they have nevertheless increasingly been awarded this role.

First thing we need to look closer at is what kinds of journals these databases include in the first place. Turning to the database that is assigned the highest status in many locations, the Web of Science (WoS), we can begin to look at in what countries that are represented in the journals that are indexed, and in what language their articles are written. Here, we focus on those journals indexed in the category "education" and "educational research" as per the listing for 2016. We also compare 2016 to the listing of 2011, in order to see how the database have developed over time.

In total there are 235 articles indexed in the category of education and educational research for the year 2016, whereas a total of 216 journals were included for 2011. Country of publisher origin, as listed in the database, is distributed in the following way.

The numbers illustrate that there is a clear dominance of two countries, the US and the UK. Altogether, 76% of all journals in the category education and educational research is published in these two countries. If we include all those journals published in a location where English is the first language (New Zealand, Australia, Canada and South Africa), we end up with a total percentage of 82% of all journals indexed in WoS. We can also see how there has been a slight *increase* of indexed journals in this category, from 216 to 235 between 2011 and 2016. In relative terms the Anglophone dominance is stable and the idea that these databases has become more 'international' over time does not seem warranted based on the available data on the location of the publishers.[2]

However, editorial work is not necessarily conducted in the same country as where the publisher is located. Thus, there might be a wider regional distribution of the journals as indicated above. But when we look at what language these journals are published in, the Anglophone dominance becomes even more prominent. Below is the language of publication as of 2016 and 2011.

As these results indicate, English is, not surprisingly, the hegemonic language of publication in the education research field as represented through journals indexed in the Web of Science (WoS). Perhaps more surprisingly, this position as

*Table 12.1. Publishers indexed in the categories Education and Educational Research included in Web of Science 2011 and 2016 by country, frequency and percentages*

| Country of publisher | Freq. 2016 | Percentage 2016 | Freq. 2011 | Percentage 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UK | 92 | 39 | 81 | 38 |
| USA | 87 | 37 | 80 | 37 |
| Netherlands | 18 | 8 | 15 | 7 |
| Australia | 8 | 3 | 7 | 3 |
| Spain | 6 | 3 | 8 | 4 |
| Germany | 5 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| New Zealand | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Turkey | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| South Africa | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| South Korea | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Mexico | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Philippines | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Lithuania | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Belgium | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Brazil | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Croatia | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Italy | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Canada | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Poland | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| **Total** | **235** | **100** | **216** | **100** |

the modern-day *lingua franca* of educational research has been strengthened over the course of recent years, as the share of multi-lingual and non-English journals has decreased further. Interesting to note, as well, is how several of the journals published in locations where is English is not the first language, also publish their journals in English.

## PUBLICATIONS AND CITATIONS: THE BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTENT OF INDEXED JOURNALS

There are currently very few journals in the adult education and learning research field indexed in the Web of Science. In the 2016 listing these journals in the field are indexed: *Adult Education Quarterly* (AEQ), *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *Studies in Continuing Education* and *Vocations and Learning*. Furthermore, most

*Table 12.2. Indexed journals in the categories Education and Educational Research*
*included in Web of Science 2011 and 2016 by language, frequency and percentage*

| Language of journal | Freq. 2016 | Percent 2016 | Freq. 2011 | Percent 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | 219 | 93 | 194 | 90 |
| Spanish | 5 | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| German | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Multi-lingual | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Turkish | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| Portuguese | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Dutch | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Croatian | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Italian | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| **Total** | **235** | **100** | **216** | **100** |

of these journals, have only been indexed in the Web of Science for a few years. If we turn to the rival database, Scopus, a few more journals in the field are included, e.g. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, *International Journal of Lifelong Education* and *Journal of Education and Work*. Thus, if the aim of the bibliometric analysis is to map out the content of research in adult education and lifelong learning, more specifically, it is more useful to start from Scopus rather than WoS.

So far, we have argued that the way research quality is assessed based on metrics derived from individual scholars' publications in indexed databases and in terms of citations. We have also illustrated how journals indexed in the main databases have a key role in defining quality, and how there is a substantial bias in this database in terms of where journals are published and in which language research is published. The question then is, can we identify a similar pattern in *what* is being published in key journals in the adult educational and learning research field? Or rather, does it matter if journals are published in English speaking countries with English as the publication language? In order build empirical evidence on such questions, we will here, firstly, conduct an analysis of the geographical distribution of first authorship of articles published within three journals in the field of adult education and learning, and secondly, outline the location of authorship for those articles that receive the highest share of citations. Thus, we can on the one hand, identify potential bias in terms of representation of authors from different parts of the world, and secondly, identify potential bias in terms of which author citations are assign greater value than others.

We draw on the database *Scopus* analyzing three journals where the editorial work is located in three different continents, for further analysis: *Adult Education Quarterly* (US), *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (UK), and *Studies in Continuing Education* (Australia - however, the publisher is located in the UK). We have conducted an analysis of these journals during the period 2012–2018, to identify the institutional location of the first author of each article in each journal. To assess the articles that have been picked up and cited within the field we select the articles with the highest citation rates during the period, and identify the first author, and compare this to the full sample of published articles. For the period 2012–2018 we identified the share of the top 10, and top 20 highest cited articles for the period. Below, we present the results in Figure 12.1.

During the period 2012–2018 we can see how authors from the UK, US, Australia and Canada, together represent a total of 56% of all articles published. In terms of share of the 20 most cited articles, the four countries represent 67% of all articles and 66% in terms of the 10 highest cited articles. Such results indicate that a substantial dominance of authors from these four Anglophone countries. However, there are differences among the four countries. UK and Canadian authors have a relatively low number of highly cited articles as compared to Australian and US authors. This is interesting, not the least as the former have a higher share in terms of published articles. Compared to previous findings (Fejes & Nylander, 2014), the dominance of Anglophone scholars also seems to be declining slowly in terms of both contribution to the journals and the "conversion rates" as measured through the difference between "output" and number of articles included among the "top-cited" percentages. In one
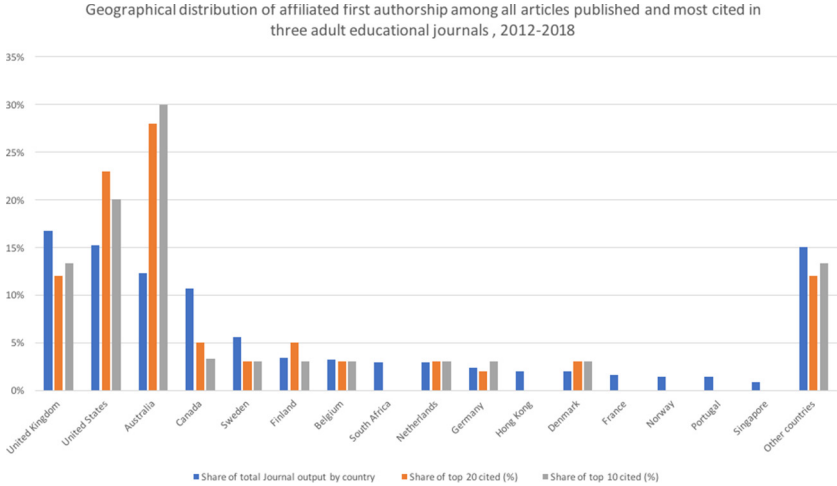


*Figure 12.1. The share of published and cited content of all articles published in three adult educational journals 2012–2018*

way this can be taken as an indication that the role of these journals as international outlets for academics all around the world has been strengthen over time. However, since the sample size is rather small, particularly when it comes to the top-cited contributions, it might be wise not to read too much into the current data.

## FOLLOWING THE CITATION FLOWS: WHO IS CITING WHOM

The third and final dimension of the bibliometric tradition that can be considered useful is to use citations to explore and dissect who is given recognition in the research field (Nylander et al., 2018; Larsson et al., 2019). Whereas indexation could be seen as key in shaping *where* researchers direct their publications and the gatekeeping-function of editors and reviewers hold an important role in filtering out *what* is deemed "publishable" in the first place, that is hardly enough for understanding "who counts" in any given research field. Just as the quote by Brandom (2008) in the beginning of this chapter illustrates, one is not fully a member of a community until one is recognized as such by the members of that particular community.

In research, this dimension of scholarly recognition can also be analyzed by means of more detailed bibliographic maps based on citation data (cf. Gingras, 2016). One of the advantages of the indexation and standardization of knowledge production in databases such as WoS and Scopus is that they enable us to make use of large-scale data for exploring *who* is given recognition through citations.

In this final example of bibliometrics we make use of a visualization of the citations from five journals between 2006–2014 within the wider field of adult learning; adult education, continuing education, lifelong education, and workplace learning (Nylander et al., 2018). To derive the map presented on the dominating scholars in this field we have used a visualization tool called Gelphi (Bastian et al., 2009). To model the relationships of the top-cited scholars we used the default algorithm to explore social networks in Gephi ForceAtlas2 (Jacomy et al., 2014).

All the selected journals (*Adult Education Quarterly, International Journal of Lifelong Education, Journal of Education and Work, Journal of Workplace Learning, Studies in Continuing Education*) have acquired an indexation status in Scopus, and are thus categorized as "international" in contexts where international publication is encouraged through different methods of measuring quality in research. In all, the sample covers 1219 publications, 151,261 citation links and more than 33,000 different authors.[3]

Figure 12.2 illustrates how the entire research field on adult learning looks like if one takes into consideration all the citations found in these five journals between the years 2006–2014. Several central sub-clusters of authorship nodes can be observed. The most central cluster, and arguably the strongest one at the time, is created by the citation bibliographies in the tradition of sociocultural theory (in its various branches). Authors such as Etienne Wenger, Jean Lave, Stephen Billett, Yrjö Engeström, David Boud and Phil Hodkinson, represent key bibliographies in this citation cluster. It is worth noting that two bibliographies, that of Wenger and that
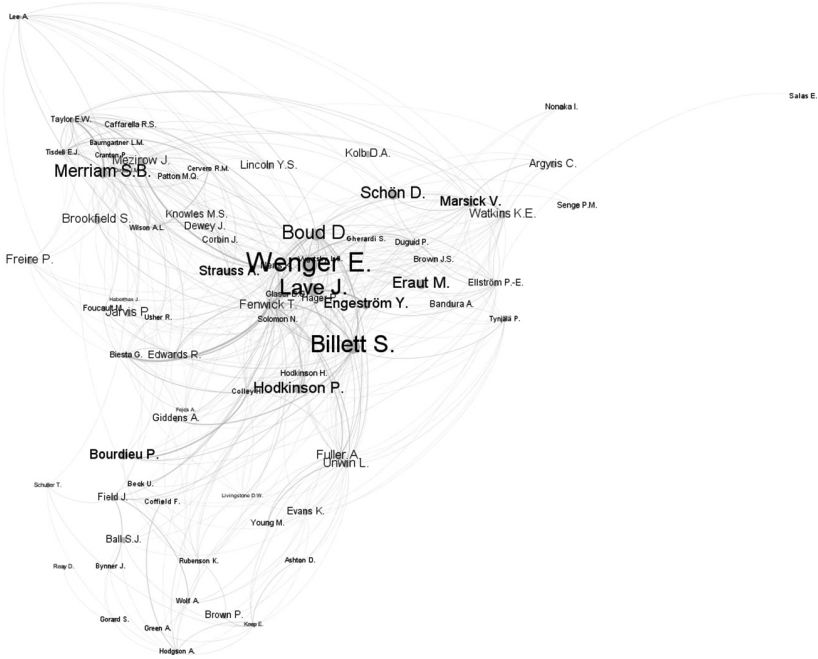
*Figure 12.2. The space of citations based on accumulated number of citations in five journals on adult learning, 2006–2014*

of Lave, do not themselves contribute to the building of the field by publishing in the selected journals, even though they occupy such central position. Instead these names represent what is conceived of as 'standard referencing', and is called upon as external authorities by the many researchers contributing to these journals.

Aside from references to quite a few scholars from social science in general (Bourdieu, Foucault, Beck, Giddens, Lave and Wenger) one can also trace the dominance of Anglophone scholars as most prominent names (by size). These scholars either work in or originate from countries where English is the main language spoken. One might assume that this finding is directly linked to the sample of journals chosen as these are edited in the UK, Australia, and the US. However, as we saw in the previous section, one third to almost half of the content produced in journals such as *Adult Education Quarterly*, *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* and *Studies in Continuing Education* comes from scholars affiliated to universities outside of the UK, US, Australia and Canada. Following the citation of individual scholars thus strengthens the image of a research field where linguistic and geographical boundaries have considerable power of shaping *who* is given recognition even if, as we saw from Figure 12.1, this is far from guaranteed.

Two further points worth raising here. Firstly, there are remarkably few female authors among those most cited as illustrated in Figure 12.2. Such results are the same as those reported by Larsson et al. (2019). However, in their more elaborated analysis on the issue of gender, they illustrate how this gender imbalance in citations, is not so much an effect of internal gender discrimination within the articles produced in the field but rather an effect of the highly gendered referencing that is targeting external social scientific authorities. As the adult educational research field is rather "weak" and direct a large part of its citations to elevated scholars from outside the field, the gender imbalance here is to a large part "imported" from the patriarchal structure of the social scientific canon writ large. Secondly, we can also note that many of these authors currently hold, or have held, positions as editors and advisories to the examined journals, which raises the age old "chicken and egg" discussion of what comes first? Is it that citations come from taking on the gatekeeping function of editors within the field or is it the recognition of peers that lies behind the assignment of editor for these journals?

In the West/Southwest of the space of citations we find an aggregation of more philosophically and sociologically-oriented scholars of education, whereas on the opposite side of the figure (East/Northeast) scholars are more oriented to studying workplace learning and human resource development informed by organizational perspectives or more psychologically oriented learning theories. As previously argued by Nylander et al. (2018), the dominating role that socio-cultural theory has occupied in the field can be attributed to its "mediating" role in the field, equally adopted by scholars interested in education and workplace learning and having the power of transgressing institutional and geographical boundaries to some extent.

A surprising finding worth recognizing from this citation map is that position rendered to scholars from North American universities are not as central as one might have expected. Unlike many other social scientific fields, the assigned value of research from the US does not occupy any hegemonic position in the field of adult education and learning research, although they are still clearly visible on the map of the dominating scholars (see also, Heilbron & Gingras, 2018). Though it is beyond the scope of our chapter to investigate what, more closely, lies behind this finding it seems warranted to claim that a few adult educational researchers in Australia have possessed more prominent positions within this field in terms of citations during this period than scholars from North American and British universities. One hypothesis that has been launched for explaining this is that the Australian scholars are forced to be more mobile and international in how they relate to other researchers and their research in the field, as they might not have the same incentives of playing a "domestic game" as one might assume is the case in US and UK (Nylander et al., 2018).

## SUMMARY AND SOME IDEAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this chapter, we have introduced three formative dimensions that we argue play a significant role in constructing "the rules of the game" in contemporary

academia as well as for adult educational research, more specifically: (i) indexation, (ii) publications and (iii) citations. Bibliometric methods have been hijacked by politicians and policy makers in order to assess the quality of research. However, in this chapter we propose that we as researchers, instead of only critiquing such measurements, should use bibliometrics ourselves in order to create knowledge on our own "localized" publication and citation practices. By doing so, we believe it is possible to give a synthetic and panoramic overview of what kind of research that is being published and cited by colleagues and to foster reflexivity on the fundamental questions posed in any given scientific field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004). To make the rules of current publication game more transparent could hopefully lead to a well-grounded discussion on what kind of evaluation systems are being implemented across different countries, as well as discussions on how our publication and citation practices could become more balanced in terms of who is publishing, who and what is cited, and what should be deemed to be "quality work" in our own specific research fields.

Another important aspect of the shaping of a research field is the gatekeeping function of journal editors and reviewers (cf. Pontille & Torny, 2015; Hirschauer, 2015; Lamont & Huutoniemi, 2011). The peer-review processes and journal publications can represent an important space of possibility for contemporary scholars as well as exercise substantial scholarly constraint. As journals are governed by editorial decisions it is obviously part of the job description of editors and peer-reviewers to act as intermediary gatekeepers, controlling the discursive influx to the particular scholarly field (Lewin, 1947a, 1947b). To provide the full story of scholarly recognition, it would be interesting to extend the analysis to include research in other publication formats than journal articles (books, handbooks, educational policy, etc.) as well as to assess, more closely, the gatekeeping work that goes on in the blind peer-view processes. Another aspect of dynamic of scholarly publication and recognition that has not yet been explored extensively is the temporal aspect of the relative impact that individual scholars and research traditions exercised on the field over time. One final bibliometric idea that could be worth pursuing is, therefore, to arrange the bibliographic data in time-series and to take into consideration the emergence and perseverance of the dominating research traditions in a longer time horizon.

## NOTES

[1] In the quest to map out the relations between scholars, bibliometrics contains alternatives to the methods used in this paper, see for instance the analysis of "co-citation networks" provided by Persson and colleagues (Person, 1994; Åström et al., 2009).

[2] Please note that the editorial work and the country of the publisher does not necessary match. This is partly due to the big publishing houses being located to a specific country for non-academic reasons such as taxation, accounting etc. For instance, this help to explain the rather elevated position of the Netherlands which host a series of international publishers that has editorial teams active elsewhere.

³ Self-citations were excluded from the sample as was other document types than articles or reviews (that often do not include reference lists in Scopus). For more on the method used see e.g. Nylander et al. (2018) and Fejes and Nylander (2019).

## REFERENCES

Archambault, E., Campbell, D., Gingras, Y., & Lariviere, V. (2009). Comparing bibliometric studies obtained from Web of science and Scopus. *ArXiv eprint* (arxiv:0903.5254).

Åström, F., Åström, F. (Ed.), Danell, R. (Ed.), Larsen, B., & Schneider, J. W. (2009, June). *Celebrating scholarly communication studies: A festschrift for Olle Persson* (Vol. 05-S). International Society for Scientometrics and Informetrics.

Bastian, M., Heymann, S., & Jacomy, M. (2009). *Gephi: An open source software for exploring and manipulating networks*. International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media.

Bonitz, M., Bruckner, E., & Scharnhorst, A. (1997). Characteristics and impact of the Matthew effect for countries. *Scientrometrics, 40*(3), 407–422.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (2004). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brandom, R. (2008). Untimely review of Hegel's phenomenology of spirit. *Topoi, 27*, 161–164.

Brown, A. J. (2014). Being REFable: Strategies and tactics in meeting the challenges of the research quality assessment process. In B. Cunningham (Ed.), *Professional life in modern UK HE* (pp. 14–25). London: IoE Press.

De Solla Price, D. J. (1965). Networks of scientific papers. *Science, 149*, 510–515.

Desrosières, A. (2008). *Pour une sociologie historique de la quantification. L'argument statistique I.* Paris: Mines ParisTech.

Fejes, A., & Nylander, E. (2014). The Anglophone International(e): A bibliometric analysis of three adult education journals, 2005–2012. *Adult Education Quarterly, 64*(3), 222–239.

Fejes A., & Nylander, E. (2015). How pluralistic is the research field on adult education? Dominating bibliometrical trends, 2005–2012. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 6*(2), 103–123.

Fejes, A., & Nylander, E. (2018). Adult education research: Publication strategies and collegial recognition. In M. Milana, S. Webb, J. Holford, R. Waller, & P. Jarvis (Eds.), *Palgrave international handbook of adult and lifelong education and learning* (pp. 761–777). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fejes, A., & Nylander, E. (Eds.). (2019). *Mapping out the research field of adult education and learning*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Gingras, Y. (2014). Criteria for evaluating indicators. In B. Cronin & C. R. Sugimoto (Eds.), *Beyond bibliometrics* (pp. 109–125). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gingras, Y. (2016). *Bibliometrics and research evaluation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Heilbron, J., & Gingras, Y. (2018). The globalization of European research in the social sciences and humanities (1980–2014): A bibliometric study. In J. Heilbron, G. Sorá, & T. Boncourt (Eds.), *The social and human sciences in global power relations. Socio-historical studies of the social and human sciences* (pp. 29–58). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hirschauer, S. (2015). How editors decide. Oral communication in journal peer review. *Human Studies, 38*(1), 37–55.

Hoskin, K. (1996). The 'awful idea of accountability': Inscribing people into the measurement of objects. In R. Munro & J. Mouritsen (Eds.), *Accountability: Power, ethos and the technologies of managing.* London: International Thomson Business Press.

Jacomy, M., Venturini, T., Heymann, S., & Bastian, M. (2014). ForceAtlas2, a continuous graph layout algorithm for handy network visualization designed for the Gephi software. *PLOS ONE 9*(6), e98679.

Karpik, L. (2011). What is the price of a scientific paper? In J. Beckert & P. Aspers (Eds.), *The worth of goods: Valuation and pricing in the economy* (pp. 63–85). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Lamont, M., & Huutoniemi, K. (2011). Comparing customary rules of fairness: Evaluative practices in various types of peer review panels. In C. Camic, N. Gross, & M. Lamont (Eds.), *Social knowledge in the making* (pp. 209–232). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Larsson, S. (2009). An emerging economy of publications and citations. *Nordisk Pedagogik, 29*, 34–52.

Larsson, S., Fejes, A., Österlund, L., & Nylander, E. (2019). Invisible colleges in research on adult learning: A bibliometric study on international scholarly recognition. In A. Fejes & E. Nylander (Eds.), *Mapping out the research field of adult education and learning*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Lewin, K. (1947a). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations, 1*(1), 5–40.

Lewin, K. (1947b). Frontiers in group dynamics II. Channels of group life; social planning and action research. *Human Relations, 1*(2), 143–153.

Martin, B. R. (2011). The research excellence framework and the 'impact agenda': Are we creating a Frankenstein monster? *Research Evaluation, 20*(3), 247–254.

Merton, R. K. (1973). *The sociology of science: Theoretical and empirical investigations* (Norman W. Storer, Ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *Resurser för kvalitet.* Stockholm: Ministry of Education.

Nylander, E., Österlund, L., & Fejes, A. (2018). Exploring the adult learning research field by analysing who cites whom. *Vocations and Learning, 11*(1), 113–131.

Persson, O. (1994). The intellectual base and research fronts of "jasis" 1986–1990. *Journal of the American Society for information Science, 45*(1), 31–38.

Pontille, D., & Torny, D. (2015). From manuscript evaluation to article valuation: The changing technologies of journal peer review'. *Human Studies, 38*(1), 57–79.

# PART 5

# DIGITAL RESEARCH METHODS

CORMAC O'KEEFFE

# 13. INVESTIGATING ADULT SKILLS ASSESSMENT IN ESONLINE

*A Digital Ethnography*

## INTRODUCTION

For several decades, the concept of adult skills and competencies has become increasingly central in discussions dealing with education reform, labour markets and international competitiveness. Many countries, and in particular, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member states, are preoccupied with the problem of mismatches or skills gaps.

Much of the evidence in these discussions again especially in OECD countries is produced by tests such as the Programme for International School Assessment (PISA), and the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). These tests instantiate conceptual frameworks that have been specifically designed to influence policy and shape decisions about investments in educational practices (OECD, 2018).

Assessment as testing, more than any other educational practice, is particularly efficient in producing data that are internationally comparable (Grek, 2013; Hamilton, 2017) and amenable to policy-based and economic calculations of human capital (Luke, 1997). As such, "policy makers across the spectrum of education, from primary schooling to adult literacy, invest trust in test scores" (Yasukawa & Black, 2016, p. x) to assess the efficacy of education systems to be able to produce adults with the requisite skills to be able to participate in the labour force and contribute to economic development (van der Velden & Ineke, 2018).

Tests such as the PIAAC and PISA have, in recent years, come to rely extensively on sophisticated networks of digital technologies to produce data on educational attainment. As such, rather than focusing exclusively on the results produced by tests or how they are translated into decision-making, it is also important to develop appropriate methodologies and techniques to investigate how the data that generate these results are produced in the first place. The aim of this chapter is to explore how we research digital testing. By using an approach informed by material semiotics and digital ethnography, I will describe and analyze how Education & Skills Online or ESOnline, a digital assessment tool used to measure adult competencies, is able to perform and legitimate an economic vision of what it means to be a skilled and economically valuable adult.

HOW CAN WE RESEARCH DIGITAL ASSESSMENT DIGITALLY?

With educational testing becoming increasingly mediated by digital technologies, new methods are needed to better understand how the digital and often mathematical technologies used to produce data are enacted (Perrotta & Williamson, 2016) as well as how the frequently spatially distributed and virtual networks that support them are made (Hogan, Sellar, & Lingard, 2015). As educational practices become digitized and ever greater large amounts of data on educational attainment are produced, stored, and re-used, the "development of analytic skills and competencies that might allow educational researchers to work *with* data as well as working *on* data" (Selwyn, 2015, p. 78) becomes critical in the process of turning individuals and collectivities into datasets.

This investigation mobilizes the resources of digital ethnography, and more specifically, trace ethnography (Geiger & Ribes, 2011) as a way of grappling with the methodological and theoretical issues raised when doing ethnography in a "decentered and dispersed postmodern world that blurs the boundaries between ontology and epistemology and between humans and machines" (Beach, Bagley, & Marques da Silva, 2018, p. 528). This approach extends ethnographic methods by aligning them with those used in software studies (Mackenzie, 2006) and combines the richness and depth of ethnographic approaches with the analysis of the data found in log files, text, images, console messages, and code that "open a window to larger organisational practices" (Østerlund, Sawyer, Ribes, Shankar & Geiger, 2014, p. 2). By following the traces left by digital assessment events and how these traces produce data, the researcher can carve "out of the field objects that are not located in a particular place that can be identified in advance, but maintain a multiple existence across an unpredictable set of locations" (Hine, 2015, p. 176). Trace ethnography can be used to describe not only the clicks and other actions taken by people moving through digital environments but also through close reading and rich descriptions, analyze how digital interactions are scripted and enacted. This is done by detailed analyses of how coded agents co-produce data as part of larger assemblages of educational practices and technologies.

Rather than making an arbitrary distinction between the actions of people and technical artefacts, this investigation makes no *a priori* analytical difference between the social and the material or between the action and the intentionality of action (Callon, 2006). By following distributed digital actants, such as code, and acknowledging their agency, a fuller understanding of what happens during digital assessment events becomes possible. This approach is informed by material semiotics and praxiography both of which come from a current of thought commonly known as Actor Network Theory (ANT). ANT extended the locus of agency to non-human actors. Borrowing from Greimas' semiotic theory, all actors, human or otherwise become "actants". Actants are able to make durable and persistent *chains of reference,* or series of techniques or actions that transform, often through language,

local and heterogeneous practices into comparable, standardized, textual accounts that are calculable and comparable (Latour, 1999). Material semiotics, an extension of ANT from the 1990s onwards, describes the world as a series of interactions between human and non-human agents that act upon one another and in doing so perform or enact different realities (Law, 2011).

Praxiography takes this theoretical lens and uses the notion of praxis to describe and explain how realities are performed as situated practices. It describes how large scale statistical practices (Mol, 2002) prioritize specific aspects of reality that lend themselves to being measured and compared. Praxiography shows how measurement is itself a social practice that while able to create authoritative accounts or definitions of reality, can be at odds with the reality of the things or people being measured.

I investigate digital assessment as a situated practice rather than simply as a psychometric instrument disentangled from the daily activities of the workplace, home and laboratory. ESOnline and PIAAC, like many educational assessments rely on psychological constructs that only function when producing necessarily narrow and precise representations of adult behaviour. Material semiotics combined with trace ethnography is able to offer a "messier" (Law, 2004) but more detailed and unexpected view of digital testing practices in ways that are outside the scope of a statistical analysis. It cannot offer large-scale generalizations or international comparisons but it can provide insights into how data on adult skills are produced and thus give insights into the kinds of decisions we can reasonably make with these data.

In the description that follows, I argue that ESOnline is an assemblage of actants that exerts the powerful and persuasive force of calculative agencies (Callon, 2005) to make real, durable, and legitimate what counts as literacy (Addey, 2018).

## PIAAC AND ESONLINE

Developed by the OECD, Educational Testing Services (ETS), and the European Union (EU), ESOnline is an instrument designed to generate data about an individual's cognitive and non-cognitive skills. To do this, ESOnline tests adults on their ability in the domains of literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments (PSTRE). Test-takers answer questions on their perceptions of skill use, job preferences and job seeking behaviours, as well as how they evaluate their mental and physical well-being. Additionally, ESOnline also assesses a final domain called behavioural competencies which draws upon the "Big Five" personality inventory. This optional part of the test measures "personality facets based on their high relevance and utility for academic and workforce readiness and success" (OECD, 2016b, p. 202). Although contested and difficult to measure (Brunello & Schlotter, 2011), characteristics such as assertiveness, friendliness or self-discipline are considered to be important predictors for success in education or work (Educational Testing Services, 2018, p. 3)

The psychometric instrument used to produce these measures is based directly on PIAAC. PIAAC is an International Large Scale Assessment (ILSA) run by the OECD since 2013 with the express aim of giving national governments data about the skills present in their adult populations (16–60 years) much in the same way that the PISA claims to do for school-age children (OECD, 2016b). PIAAC, however, is notable in that it is the first ever ILSA to produce demographic and test data digitally.

ESOnline differs from PIAAC in several significant ways. First, the test is deployed entirely online with no human-to-human interaction. PIAAC is an offline, digital test that relies on human interviewers to assist and guide test-takers. Second, ESOnline delivers individual-level results rather than aggregate or population-based scoring. Although ILSAs such as PIAAC derive data from answers to test or survey items from individuals (von Davier, Gonzalez, & Mislvey, 2009), these data have never been linked to individuals. Finally, ESOnline moves into the for-profit sector and targets clients in universities, Vocational Education and Training (VET) centres and companies "that want to use the results to help them identify the training needs related to literacy and numeracy for their workforce" (OECD, 2015, p. 1). Administered by ETS Global, ESOnline is one of the first tests that allows private sector companies to assess human capital and thus move discourses on human capital from the metaphorical (Burton-Jones & Spender, 2012) to detailed measurements of individuals within their organizations.

## PIAAC AND ESONLINE

ESOnline is a three to four-part test. Test-takers first perform a background questionnaire that asks them to give information on their age, gender, highest education level, birthplace, first language, employment status, and occupation. Followed by a core module, test takers are then categorized into one of three groups: low, intermediate or high ability. They then move onto the cognitive test for numeracy and literacy. Depending on how they answer questions in the background questionnaire and the core module they will be given a harder or easier "testlet" composed of calibrated items. Since ESOnline uses Computer Adaptive Testing (CBA), a test-taker's exposure to "easier" or "harder" items is determined by an assemblage of algorithms that determine the type of cognitive or non-cognitive testlets that the test-taker can interact with (Chen, Yamamoto, & von Davier, 2016) as a function of their interaction with previous items. Once these modules have been completed, test-takers can then move on to optional modules such as Problem Solving Skills in Technology-Rich Environments, well-being questionnaires, and non-cognitive competencies.

Once the test begins, the human test-taker interacts with up to 267 different non-human actants. In addition to scoring answers, these agents, essentially software programs also record information on how the test-taker interacts. By analyzing these

files, the researcher is able to see how the educational data were produced and how the traces were created. Each line of code does not only instruct what the computer will do but also what its human interlocutor will and will not be able to do.

```
2751        var score = scoreThis(rules);
2752        var time = getGlobalTime();
2753        var actionCounter = GetActionsCount();
2754        var timefirstAction = getTimeFirstAction();
2755        var pLoad = {
2756            rule: rules,
2757            result: 1,
2758            response: answer,
2759            itemDuration: time.item,
2760            TimeTotal: time.unit,
2761            TimeFAction: timefirstAction,
2762            NbrAction: actionCounter
2763        };
```

*Figure 13.1. Excerpt from formscoring.js (StartTest, 2016)*

The scripted and precise background work performed by one of the many scripts such as formscoring.js in Figure 13.1 produces data on variables such as the time spent on each item or the number and duration of each interaction. These are then used to generate data on the relationship between scores and how the scores are made (Goldhammer et al., 2014). Once this is done, they can be translated into psychometric concepts such as "time on task". The time spent on answering an item is tracked as a variable that can be used to predict success or failure (Goldhammer et al, 2014, p. 609).

The number of latent traits or variables measured in a test can risk being underrepresented since the time needed to adequately measure a construct frequently exceeds the time a test-taker can spend on a test without being tired and thus invalidating the results. In the absence of adaptive algorithms, to solve this issue, test designers have had to resort to different solutions: either ask fewer questions and risk inaccurate results due to insufficient data or, make longer tests and risk test-taker fatigue or excessive logistical and financial burdens. However, the scripts and server side algorithms that control item exposure, that is, which items the test-taker interacts with, allows ESOnline's makers to measure and refine their tool by optimizing the relationship between item, ability estimates and time. One and a half hours later, the test-taker and digital assessment actors will have finished their interactions. Hundreds of lines of data will have been generated which will then be sent for analysis by software routines triggered by automated scripts.

Unlike PIAAC that only produces aggregated data, ESOnline test-takers (if their managers allow them to) receive their scores (Figure 13.2) that are benchmarked against national and international data from PIAAC by education level, occupation, and age group (EduSkills OECD, 2015, p. 17).
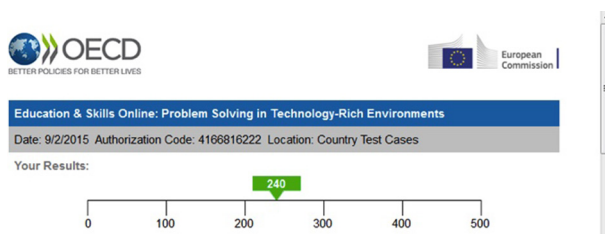
*Figure 13.2. Results from ESOnline (Kennedy & Langan, 2016)*

Along with the scores, they also receive descriptions of what the scores means, typically describing their ability or personality from a performance band on a scale that gives a "characterization of the test taker's strengths and weaknesses in the skill areas assessed" (OECD, 2016a, p. 10).

DISCUSSION

As a relatively new assessment, there is little research on how test data affects the education or the careers of adult learners. However, a recent study investigating the effect of PIAAC on curriculum and teaching practice in Canada, found in addition to the "displacement and disestablishment of literacy learning expertise and absence of pedagogically useful insights" (Pinsent-Johnson, 2014, p. 209) the test data, precisely because of the statistically rigorous and necessarily narrow focus, were very difficult to apply to "actual literacy uses in people's daily lives, and its developmental trajectory" (p. 209). Further research is still required to discover the effects of ESOnline on the lives of adult learners. To date, over 40,000 people have taken the test (OECD official, Personal Communication, 2018). At present it has been used as a diagnostic and training tool for teachers, the unemployed, prisoners, and refugees but the results have not yet been released.

It is clear however, that one of the primary purposes of ESOnline is to "assess the human capital of enterprises and other entities" (OECD, 2016a, p. 5) on a large scale in a cost-effective manner. At five to twelve euros per test bundle, ESOnline prices itself significantly lower than other commercially available skills or psychological tests. Cost is a critical factor in administering ILSAs. PIAAC costs each participating country several million euros and each iteration lasts for several years (Gérard, 2013). ESOnline can assess the same sample populations for a fraction of the cost and time thus making it more attractive to government ministries that are sometimes loathe to spend money on tests that may not always provide much in the way of actionable data (OECD official, interview, November, 2014). As a for-profit test in an industry that generates 15.1 billion dollars year in revenue (Ibis World, 2017; Paul, 2010), ESOnline may offer an alternative vision of how ILSAs are performed.

Unlike PIAAC, ESOnline is entirely digital, and avoids the cost and contingencies of human interviewers or supervisors (Maddox, Dalrymple, & Hanover, 2018). The tightly sequenced agency of the ESOnline test-taker, who follows strictly defined and scripted workflows, removes the inherent unreliability and error-prone ways of human actants when "gathering" data by employing the same branching algorithms but with all of the work delegated to digital actants, such as NaxAPI.js that runs the PIAAC background questionnaire. However, it would be misleading to think that digitally produced data are free from unpredictability since "how data are generated is not inevitable: protocols, organizational processes, measurement scales, categories, and standards are designed, negotiated and debated, and there is a certain messiness to data generation" (Kitchin, 2014, p. 19). Trace ethnography is able to offer insights into the less than reliable and often contingent trajectories that go into data production. As digital actants play an ever-greater role in making data, digital methods that take the time to follow each step in the processes involved, can reveal the contingencies and the cultural, political, methodological, and economic situatedness of educational measurements that are neither neutral nor objective.

This move towards the digital is important for reasons that go beyond cost-cutting and making test items more relevant to real-world situations. That large-scale testing is part of an already well-established large-scale project of producing quantitative data on citizens in many aspects of their lives from spending patterns, health, mobility or any other dimension that can be tracked, ordered and categorized is hardly novel (Porter, 1996). What is relatively recent, however, is that digital educational assessment is part of what has been termed a data or technological "revolution" (Floridi, 2014). With the intensification of computational, statistical, economic, and political techniques, "the volume, variety, velocity, resolution, and availability of data, and how data are being processed, analyzed, stored, and employed to leverage insight and value, is being radically transformed" (Kitchin, 2014, p. 26). Although this puts test-makers into a powerful position, it means that test-takers find themselves into an asymmetrical situation that is difficult to resolve. As data producers, test-takers have little or no control over how they are assessed and how their data are used in decision-making and in this way lose some of their "personal sovereignty" (Menger & Paye, 2017, p. 19). Even with recent legal moves to protect user data such as the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), test takers may have ownership over some of their data, but little in the way of authority over how data are interpreted and commoditized when faced with the extremely sophisticated psychometric, statistical, and psychological methods that reinforce the discursive power of test results.

Since the 1960s, the ILSAs have more than doubled in number and extended their scope from compulsory education to workplace training and VET signalling a reframing of human capital, where the "emphasis shifts from educational qualifications towards skill measurement" (Carlsen, 2012). ESOnline is an extension of and latest iteration of this assessment logic where "organisations such as OECD advocate a new political technology where formalised curriculum-making is ignored

or even contested in favour of assessment and accountability systems" (OECD, 2013, p. 76). Pearson, an educational publisher and test maker that uses the same test platform as ESOnline, exemplifies this trend. At the beginning of 2018, it began the process of divesting itself of much of its education business in favour of increasing investments into its assessment division with a particular emphasis on digital testing (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010, p. 104). Unlike the pluralistic, heterogeneous and geographically and linguistically bounded educational actor-networks of schools or educational departments, the collectives that perform assessment-as-testing are much more homogenous and fluid. Theoretically, culturally and linguistically unified, this handful of independently wealthy testing agencies or consortiums are not answerable to electorates nor local interest groups yet have a decisive influence on policy and public enactments of accountability (Molnar, 2018).

For many people, the data from ILSAs have remained at a policy level and had little direct effect on educational attainment, employment or social mobility. However, ILSAs that give individual-level results have long been a gateway to visas, university admissions, internal promotions or recruitment for millions of non-native English speakers since the 1960s (O'Keeffe, 2015). Furthermore, they play a critical role in reinforcing a vision of education as the generation of human capital (Weir, Vidakovic, & Galaczi, 2013) and literacy, numeracy and personality as quantifiable traits of an individual rather than situated and shared social practices (O'Keeffe, 2016). By creating inexpensive digital assessment assemblages, test-makers are able to reframe adult learning as the development of sophisticated testing tools and contribute "to the emerging consensus about not only the legitimacy but also the necessity of assessment" (Wagemaker, 2014, p. 17). The PIAAC was able to influence adult education and training at the policy or curriculum level, but ESOnline seeks to target change among individuals by providing "valuable feedback to test takers so that they may identify traits which are most in need of improvement" (Wagemaker, 2014, p. 17).

This situates ESOnline as an instrument apt for use in contemporary modes of governance that privileges discourses that suggest "that individuals, in becoming self-responsible for making good on the infinite possibilities for self-capitalisation, are also blameable for their failures to do so" (Educational Testing Services, 2018, p. 1). In this way, through its deployment as an almost completely automated ILSA, ESOnline transforms PIAAC from a policy instrument with little or no-stakes for individual test-takers into a potentially high-stakes test. ESOnline allows its makers and clients to evaluate test-takers regardless of who or where they are and even more critically, compare their results with those produced by PIAAC thus creating what is potentially the world's biggest dataset on adult skills. Assessment tools such as ESOnline help create powerful data-producing practices that can exert a profound and lasting influence not only on how adult education is performed and imagined but also on individual's lives. In a world where the "interest in education only seems to be about test-scores" (Sellar & Zipin, 2018, p. 8), ethnographic methods such as trace ethnography are able to open up and move the conversation about educational

attainment towards how and why data are produced to shift the "focus on the actors, collectives and things in the making and not only on the numbers and ratios" (Biesta, 2011, p. 16).

## REFERENCES

Addey, C. (2018). Assembling literacy as global: The danger of a single story. In M. Milana, J. Holford, S. Webb, J. Peter, & W. Richard (Eds.), *The Palgrave international handbook of adult and lifelong education and learning* (pp. 315–335). London: Palgrave.

Beach, D., Bagley, C., & Marques da Silva, S. (Eds.). (2018). *The Wiley handbook of ethnography of education*. Medford, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Biesta, G. (2011). *Learning democracy in school and society: Education, lifelong learning, and the politics of citizenship*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Brunello, G., & Schlotter, M. (2011). *Non cognitive skills and personality traits: Labour market relevance and their development in education & training systems*. Berlin.

Burton-Jones, A., & Spender, J. C. (2012). *The Oxford handbook of human capital*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Callon, M. (2005). Peripheral vision: Economic markets as calculative collective devices. *Organization Studies, 26*(8), 1229–1250. doi:10.1177/0170840605056393

Carlsen, A. (2012). Foreword. In D. N. Aspin, J. D. Chapman, K. Evans, & R. Bagnall (Eds.), *Second international handbook of lifelong learning* (Vol. 26, pp. ix–x). Dordrecht: Springer.

Chen, H., Yamamoto, K., & von Davier, M. (2016). Controlling multistage testing exposure rates in international large-scale assessments. In D. Yan, A. von Davier, & C. Lewis (Eds.), *Computerized multistage testing. Theory and applications*. London: CRC Press.

Educational Testing Services. (2018). *Education & skills online field test behavioral competencies noncognitive module. Statistics and psychometric properties*. Princeton, NJ.

EduSkills OECD. (2015). *Education and skills online*. Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net/OECDEDU/education-and-skills-online

Floridi, L. (2014). *The fourth revolution: How the infosphere is reshaping human reality.* Oxford: OUP.

Geiger, S., & Ribes, D. (2011). *Trace ethnography: Following coordination through documentary practices.* Paper presented at the 44th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS), Hawaii.

Gérard, L. (2013, October 9). Lecture/maths: pas de budget pour évaluer les francophones. *La Libre*. Retrieved from http://www.lalibre.be/actu/belgique/lecturemaths-pas-de-budget-pour-evaluer-les-francophones-5254d0363570c13e8fa60e50

Goldhammer, F., Naumann, J., Stelter, A., Tóth, K., Rölke, H., & Klieme, E. (2014). The time on task effect in reading and problem solving is moderated by task difficulty and skill: Insights from a computer-based large-scale assessment. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 106*(3), 608–626. doi:10.1037/a0034716

Grek, S. (2013). Expert moves: International comparative testing and the rise of expertocracy. *Journal of Education Policy, 28*(5), 695–709. doi:10.1080/02680939.2012.758825

Hamilton, M. (2012). *Literacy and the politics of representation*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hamilton, M. (2017). How international large-scale skills assessments engage with national actors: Mobilising networks through policy, media and public knowledge. *Critical Studies in Education, 58*(3), 280–294. doi:10.1080/17508487.2017.1330761

Hine, C. (2015). *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, embodied and everyday*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hogan, A., Sellar, S., & Lingard, B. (2015). Network restructuring of global edu-business: The case of Pearson's efficacy framework. In W. Au & J. J. Ferrare (Eds.), *Mapping corporate education reform: power and policy networks in the neoliberal state* (pp. 43–64). London: Routledge.

Ibis World. (2017, September 27). *Testing & educational Support – US market research report*. Retrieved from https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-trends/market-research-reports/educational-services/testing-educational-support.html

Karseth, B., & Sivesind, K. (2010). Conceptualising curriculum knowledge within and beyond the national context. *European Journal of Education, 45*(1), 103–120.

Kennedy, A., & Langan, L. (2016). *Education and skills online assessment*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/skills/ESonline-assessment/assessmentadministration/results/

Kitchin, R. (2014). *The data revolution*. London: Sage.

Latour, B. (1999). *Pandora's hope. Essays on the reality of science studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Law, J. (2004). *After method. Mess in social science research* (1st ed.). Oxon: Routledge.

Law, J. (2011). *What's wrong with a one-world world?* Retrieved from htttp://www.heterogeneities.net/publications/Law2011WhatsWrongWithAOneWorldWorld.pdf

Luke, A. (1997). New narratives of human capital. *Australian Educational Researcher, 24*(2), 1–21.

Mackenzie, A. (2006). *Cutting code. Software and sociality*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Maddox, B., Dalrymple, J., & Hanover, L. (2018). Interviewer-respondent interaction and rapport in PIAAC. *Quality Assurance in Education*. doi:10.1108/qae-05-2017-0022

Menger, P., & Paye, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Big data et traçabilité numérique: Les sciences sociales face à la quantification massive des individus*. Paris, France: Collège de France.

Mol, A. (2002). *The body multiple. Ontology in medical practice* (1st ed.). Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Molnar, M. (2018). Pearson set to sell K-12 curriculum business, but not assessment. *Market Brief*. Retrieved from https://marketbrief.edweek.org/marketplace-k-12/pearson-set-sell-k-12-curriculum-business-not-assessment/

O'Keeffe, C. (2015). *Assembling the adult learner: International and local assessment practices* (PhD). Lancaster University, Lancaster.

O'Keeffe, C. (2016). Producing data through e-assessment: A trace ethnographic investigation into e-assessment events. *European Educational Research Journal*, 1–18. doi:10.1177/1474904115612486

OECD. (2013). *Technical report of the survey of adult skills (PIAAC)*. Paris: OECD.

OECD. (2015). *Education & skills online assessment*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/skills/ESonline-assessment/

OECD. (2016a). *Education & skills online technical documentation.* Paris: OECD.

OECD. (2016b). *Survey of adult skills (PIAAC)*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/

OECD. (2018). *OECD education 2030 position paper*. Paris: OECD.

Østerlund, C., Sawyer, S., Ribes, D., Shankar, K., & Geiger, S. (2014, March 4–7). *What to do with all those traces people leave behind: computing, culture, and (bits of) context?* Paper presented at the iConference 2014, Berlin.

Paul, A. M. (2010). *The cult of personality testing: how personality tests are leading us to miseducate our children, mismanage our companies, and misunderstand ourselves.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Perrotta, C., & Williamson, B. (2016). The social life of Learning Analytics cluster analysis and the performance of algorithmic education. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 1–14. doi:10.1080/17439884.2016.1182927

Pinsent-Johnson, C. (2014). From an international adult literacy assessment to the classroom: How test development methods are transposed into curriculum. In M. Hamilton, B. Maddox, & C. Addey (Eds.), *Literacy as numbers. Researching the politics and practices of international literacy assessment* (pp. 107–206). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Porter, T. (1996). *Trust in numbers: The pursuit of objectivity in science and public life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sellar, S., & Zipin, L. (2018). Conjuring optimism in dark times: Education, affect and human capital. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1–15. doi:10.1080/00131857.2018.1485566

Selwyn, N. (2015). Data entry: Towards the critical study of digital data and education. *Learning, Media and Technology, 40*(1), 64–82. doi:10.1080/17439884.2014.921628

van der Velden, R., & Ineke, B. (2018). Effective skill: A new theoretical perspective on the relation between skills, skill use, mismatches, and wages. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 1–21. doi:10.1093/oep/gpy028

von Davier, M., Gonzalez, E., & Mislvey, R. J. (2009) What are plausible values and why are they useful? In *Issues and methodologies in large-scale assessments*. Hamburg: IERInstitute, Educational Testing Services.

Wagemaker, H. (2014). International large-scale assessments: From research to policy. In L. Rutkowski, M. von Davier, & D. Rutkowski (Eds.), *Handbook of international large-scale assessment: Background, technical issues, and methods of data analysis* (pp. 11–33). New York, NY: CRC Press.

Weir, C. J., Vidakovic, I., & Galaczi, E. D. (2013). *Measured constructs. A history of Cambridge English language examinations 1913–2012*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yasukawa, K., & Black, S. (2016). *Beyond economic interests: Critical perspectives on adult literacy and numeracy in a globalised world*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

# PART 6

# SOUND, VISION AND STORYTELLING

JONATHAN LANGDON, MELISSA JACKSON AND
SOPHIA KITCHER

# 14. PEDAGOGY OF SONG AND RESTORYING HOPE

*Stories and Songs as Social Movement Learning in Ada Songor*
*Salt Movement*

[O]ur people are storytellers. All the history of the community is, is written in songs, in stories that are handed over from one generation to the other. (Kofi Larweh, former Radio Ada station coordinator, and Ada activist)

## INTRODUCTION

Creative dissent is not only a crucial part of social movement activism, but is also a key area of social movement learning, and therefore social movement learning (SML) research. Over the past 8 years, an ongoing participatory study of social movement learning in Ada, Ghana, has documented the ways in which narrative 'restorying', as well as the creation and reviving of songs in Dangme, the Ada language, have been at the heart of this learning. Restorying is a narrative inquiry technique where stories are returned to and retold over time, with the retelling revealing learning in motion (Kenyon & Randall, 1997). In the case of this research, the restorying has been collective, and has emerged through songs and other creative forms, such as tapestry making, that have enabled a rich, complex form of documentation of learning.

The movement in Ada is defending an artisanal salt production practice that is 400 years old, and provides the livelihood for roughly 60,000 people. Their livelihood is being threatened by a local rent-seeking elite, and national and international capital interested in using Ada salt in Ghana's newly established oil industry. A crucial dimension of our chapter will share how the emergence of women's leadership in this movement parallels the emergence of the narrative and song forms of creative dissent. This chapter also shares how such creative dissent builds on and reimagines Griff Foley's (1999) notion of 'learning in struggle'. Finally, and most centrally to this collection, the chapter lays out how a participatory research approach, coupled with a methodology sensitive to learning through collective stories, such as restorying, can produce rich meaningful research on adult learning through social movement activism.

This chapter shares the empirical results of the research documented so far (Langdon, 2015; Langdon, Larweh, & Cameron, 2014; Langdon & Larweh, 2015;

Larweh & Langdon, 2014), but takes this work further to look at recent developments in the social movement in Ada, where women's leadership has emerged at the forefront of the struggle, and is using creative means to disrupt both external power structures, as well as power dynamics within the movement itself. Songs are a central part of this creative dissent. Restorying has also been a key component to this women's leadership assertion of their analysis of the situation in the lagoon over that of older male activists who are no longer on the front line of this struggle. Given that women make up the majority of salt winners in the Songor movement, this shift in dynamics represents a democratic response. At the same time, this emergent women's leadership has insisted on the resource being for all, and knowledge about the resource being for all. This pivot towards knowledge-democracy through creative dissent connects well with the overarching theme of this text, criticality and creativity. This chapter will, ultimately, focus on these three aspects of social movement learning in the Ada Songor salt movement that have emerged through the participatory, story-sensitive methodology: (1) The pedagogy of songs; (2) restorying the movement; and (3) building the movement through knowledge-democracy.

## A PARTICIPATORY, STORY-SENSITIVE AND MOVEMENT-RELEVANT METHODOLOGY

An important facet of our methodology that deserves special consideration is the dialogue-based process of theorizing change. Rather than beginning work and entering into relationships with preconceived ideas of how change will happen, our theorizing is a process that emerges from dialogue within the movement. In this way, this study is participatory action research that is compelled to "move with the movement" (Langdon & Larweh, 2015) and engages with the people who are closest to the issue, thus creating space for local organizers to guide work that is mutually constituted by everyone involved. While Bevington and Dixon (2005) have called for this movement-centric approach in studies of movement theorizing in general, Choudry and Kapoor (2010) underscore the importance of movement-articulated theorizing especially in connection with adult learning, as well as in contexts outside of the Global North – especially given how much social movement learning thinking has been framed by Euro-American theorizing (English & Mayo, 2012). In particular, Choudry and Kapoor (2010) argue that it becomes imperative to document the knowledge production and learnings that emerge from these social movement contexts, as they are important sites of resistance, developing insightful critiques of dominant and oppressive power structures, and imagining visions for social change.

As important as documenting "the what" of this knowledge production is "the how" of this production. There are two facets to the "how" of this production. The first of these involves the relationships and processes of ongoing movement-researcher accountability that allowed for the documentation of this knowledge

production. While Langdon, the lead author has been working with Radio Ada since 2004, the relationship with activists on the Songor did not start to form until 2008, when he was invited by these activists to build a research project on their learning. At that time, Kitcher, the third author, and a leading voice in the emergence of women's leadership in the movement, was only peripherally involved in the activism, but was deeply concerned by the issue. She became deeply involved in the movement from 2012 onwards. Jackson, the second author, became involved as a graduate research assistant from 2015 to 2017. She was directly involved in documenting the many movement meetings that were recorded openly for potential broadcast on Radio Ada, and for keeping track of movement knowledge production – an important way to document in an oral-focused movement context. The research team has therefore been composed of movement members and also a Canadian researcher with long-standing ties to the community, and research assistants from his university in Canada. At the end of each intensive research period (generally from May to August ending due to the rains which suspends work in the salt flats), a research specific movement meeting is held – one of the only ones during each intensive period. It is during this meeting that collective decisions about the ways in which knowledge should be shared are discussed. In other words, what parts of the movement story will be told where.

Alongside this aspect of "how" knowledge production is documented, of equal importance are the ways in which the movement frames what its struggle is over time – the "how" of the production itself. In Ada case, as Kofi Larweh notes above, it is through stories that this thinking has been framed over time, as well as through songs. In this sense, creating ongoing spaces for collective dialogue developed complex tellings of the struggle that were returned to and restoried in various ways (through tapestries, imagery, proverbs and songs) over time – and this restorying, or the evolving ways of understanding the struggle helped to reveal the movement's learning both to itself and in the research (Langdon & Garbary, 2017).

The use of stories, songs and arts-based interventions have long been the tools with which social movements across the globe have affected meaningful social change (Lynskey, 2011). From the anti-Apartheid protest music of South Africa, to civil rights anthems in the contemporary United States – all have used creative dissent in the form of music to spread messages and further a political end. Lynskey (2011) shares how the use of song has been intimately tied to social movements creating community awareness about burning issues. On the notion of art as activism, Barndt (2006, p. 18) maintains that:

> whether verbal, or non-verbal, art making that ignites people's creativity, recovers repressed histories, builds community, and strengthens social movements is in itself a holistic form of action. The modes of expression are endless. Most important is that they are appropriate to a particular group, time, or place.

Artistic expression is a natural and essential part of life for the people of Ada; through music, dance, song, visual arts and a multitude of other art forms these communities convey their experiences of everyday life. The emergence of song as an effective and powerful tool for social movement learning stems from its place as a traditional practice that is rooted in the culture of these communities. Perini (2008) asserts that when groups gather to share imaginative and creative artistic processes, people can become connected in a way that "fosters collective, generative action" (p. 183). With this in mind, what is shared below are a set of snapshots that reveal how a story-sensitive, participatory approach to research in a social movement contexts provides rich illustrations of the learning ongoing within the movement. But first, a note about the context.

## CONTEXTS OF ADA

The rural communities that surround the Songor Lagoon in Ada have been impacted over time by the harsh nature of 'accumulation through dispossession' – a Marxist concept further refined by David Harvey (2005) that focuses on how local and international elite accumulate wealth by dispossessing broader groups of communal resources (Langdon & Larweh, 2017). In the 1970s and 80s, the communities surrounding the Songor were dispossessed by a pair of companies, one of which used duplicitous tactics to claim almost the entire lagoon as a concession (Ada Songor Salt Cooperative, 1989; Manuh, 1994; Amate, 1999). Through years of resistance, which has included the loss of life, the community managed to reclaim the resource from these companies in the early 1990s, on the eve of Ghana's return to democracy (Langdon & Larweh, 2017). Despite this success at reclaiming the resource, a plan to develop the Songor for the benefit of both local communities and potential business interest, called the Songor Master Plan, has yet to be implemented – leading older activists involved in this era to describe the victory as a "thumbless hand" – one where the resource was reclaimed but was not subsequently handled well (Langdon, Larweh, & Cameron, 2014). This has led, in contemporary times, to entire communities being dispossessed from their livelihoods, as the communal salt resource is being turned into individuals' private property – whereby the 400 year old tradition of open salt flats of the lagoon in the dry season have been turned into individualized saltpans, known locally as 'atsiakpo' (ASAF, 2016; Langdon & Larweh 2017). A closer examination reveals the intricacies and intersections of these social processes of accumulation – the resulting household insecurity leaves women exposed and vulnerable, standing at the forefront of those being dispossessed. Women once were able to access the Songor lagoon in Ada and win salt to supplement household finances, drawing on it when necessary to add to or replace lost earnings from other endeavours (Garbary, 2016). Women living close to the lagoon have often used it as one of the main sources of household income. It is through salt that many non-subsistence costs such as school fees and healthcare are paid for. Now women work as labourers for an 'atsiakpo' owner, making a small wage, a mere fraction of

what they had previously earned (Garbary, 2016). With limited options available to them, some women in these communities are submitting to sexual advances in order to acquire access (ASAF, 2016). Given this reality, it becomes incredibly relevant that women's voices from these communities are rising up and claiming leadership positions that were not possible a decade ago. This research has documented how songs are at the heart of this transformation.

Beginning in 2010, with the emergence of the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum (ASAF) social movement, women from the Songor salt communities began voicing their concerns about atsiakpo. One woman in particular, Akpetiyo Lawer, used her talent with song composition to encapsulate this concern and the analysis of women began to shape the broader movement's thinking (Langdon & Larweh, 2015). This emergence led some to see women's voice and leadership – and its absence in the 1980s round of struggle to reclaim the resource – to act as the 'missing thumb' required to handle the resource well (Langdon, Larweh, & Cameron, 2014). Since 2015, the women have consolidated this leadership with their own group within the broader ASAF movement, called the Ada Songor Salt Women's Association (ASSWA), known more broadly by their catch phrase, "Yihi Katsɛmɛ" meaning 'Brave Women!' in Dangme. These Brave Women have taken inspiration from Akpetiyo and have deepened the use of song to mobilize their fellow community members to not only resist atsiakpo, but to more broadly call for a return to times past when the Songor was a communal resource for all – even those from outside Ada (Langdon, 2016).

## PEDAGOGIC ELEMENTS OF SONG

While songs entertain, they also currently serve deep pedagogic functions in the social movement context of Ada. This pedagogic turn in the movement was begun by Akpetiyo Lawer who has been writing songs her whole life. In recent years, as a leading member of ASAF and ASSWA, her songs have given the Ada movement an analytic foundation that has both grounded its work and helped propel it forward. An expert in Ada history and language, an activist, and a community elder, Akpetiyo Lawer is deeply engaged in sketching out a clear depiction of the Ada struggle. Larweh and Langdon (2011, 2015) have explored a selection of Akpetiyo's songs in previous publications associated with this study and propose that she has helped engender a *literacy of struggle*, one that is oral and rooted in the history and epistemology of Ada and that pulls listeners deeper into this history.

Akpetiyo Lawer's song, *Nɔnɛ Nɔko Liɔ, Nɔko Le* is composed in Dangme, and gives an important analysis of the struggle for resources – namely salt – and communal access to the Songor salt lagoon. Translated to English the song means, "What someone doesn't know, someone knows", an idea she raises as both an indictment of those who have chosen to conceal details of their knowledge, as well as an invitation to others in the community to search out this hidden knowledge (ASAF, 2016). The song then encourages community members to "spread it" (ASAF, 2016).

Her song reflects exactly what the Yihi Katsɛmɛ have since done; equipped with their own knowledge and analysis they have claimed space, marking a solid starting point for pushback against this accumulation through dispossession.

To illustrate how this has happened, in one of the Yihi Katseme collective dialogue spaces, our research documented a crucial moment of knowledge production and learning in the Yihi Katseme movement, where the song strategy was formalized. Occurring in 2016, the movement held a workshop to think more deeply about how they wanted to use songs in their activism. To this point these songs had been mostly used in protest moments – like those that Akpetiyo Lawer developed, discussed below. However, at this point, they now wanted to use songs to reach out to the communities surrounding the resource they were trying to defend. They developed a five finger approach that enabled them to easily memorize their strategy, and also gave them confidence to shift from reactive activism to movement building and organization. The use of song was the opening finger of this approach: "The small finger represents the music, the music we will be using" (Mary Akutey, Song Workshop, August 11, 2016). For example, the women decided in one instance to use a traditional working song in this community mobilization:

> You have entered the room
> You are keeping long to come out,
> The community will be expecting you to give
> birth to twins!

Translated from Dangme, this Ada song is used by the Yihi Katsɛmɛ to reference older times, when resources were accessed communally, work was collective, and the Songor lagoon was open to all. Edith Okabutey, a member of the ASSWA executive, shares her own reflections on the song, which points to how times have changed:

> The music … tries to refresh our minds in the olden days where the women can work on their own, and housekeeping was not a problem for the men and women. At evening the women gather and sing this song: You have entered the room and are keeping long to come out. The community will be expecting you to give birth to twins. This is a song the women used to tease each other because of the excitement they have. (Garbary, 2016)

Looking at the lyrics, there is a playfulness to the words, the song is a reminder of the importance of communal work and collective responsibility, but also teases people for putting their own personal needs above the best interests of the community. The song also points to women's dual responsibilities for productive and reproductive labour (Garbary, 2016). Revitalizing traditional songs that speak to communal spirit is the cornerstone of the women's mobilization strategy. They use songs such as this one to draw people into a discussion over the differences between contemporary times and the past. In this way, they provoke a restorying learning context, where community gatherings can use stories of the past to rewrite what is possible in the present. Kofi Larweh summarized this thinking:

So, we say before we work, the first thing we do is that we will bring songs out to gather the people. The first thing we do is use folk songs, we bring songs to gather people. Songs we use to gather the people. After singing those songs, we have words that will back it, things that are getting missing in our culture, our tradition and cultures are getting missing. Time back, we gathered and sing those songs. But now, it's no more like that. We the Songor women won't allow that thing to beat us. That's why we are bringing out these songs. (Song Workshop, August 11, 2016)

Using songs and restorying in this way enables the women to effectively engage with their communities by creating a safe space for community members to have difficult conversations, as West (2017) describes. Yihi Katsɛmɛ are essentially meeting people where they are – a central tenet of adult education. By sharing imagery of communal life, they return to the familiarity of what people know, and then use that as the starting point to delve deeper into challenging discussions of community issues. This strategy is yielding deep community buy-in to the manifesto for change Yihi Katsɛmɛ have developed – expanded on in the next section.

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT

Women's organizing in the contexts of Ada is strongly connected to discourses of women's leadership and empowerment, looking at the many ways that gendered power relationships take shape in communities and change over time. The Yihi Katsɛmɛ of Ada have spent years working to mobilize community members and raise awareness about the Songor lagoon, the issues surrounding it, and the grave costs associated with atsiakpo – its current balkanized state. The women have been travelling a winding road of self-driven empowerment, made all the more possible because of a commitment to self-teach through song and other creative art forms. Women have long been a part of the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum, where older men had more prominent voices and held key positions of power within the movement. The women's process of empowerment was gradual yet impactful, as the Yihi Katsɛmɛ are recognized as leaders of the Songor movement, with their analysis adopted by community members who previously refused to support the women's perspective. The self-driven process of empowerment that the Yihi Katsɛmɛ experienced is a break from the literature and practice of many within the mainstream development paradigm (cf. Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010). All too often the meaning of empowerment is technical in nature, as it is put forth as step-by-step procedural endeavour where at the end, an individual will be empowered. Within the discourse of empowerment in the aid sector, there has been a preoccupation with the idea of women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, and specific externally-derived programming that will yield particular results of capitalist success. A tension exists within the literature – between self-driven processes of empowerment and mainstream conceptions of 'being empowered by x, y, z' (Batliwala, 2009;

Anyidoho & Manuh, 2010). The women of Ada have shown us the former, where they have demanded and taken space, it has not been handed to them.

In Ada, where Manuh (1994) notes historically, women have been excluded from the leadership of the salt struggle, over the past seven years women have insisted on their space and role as a leading force in struggle for a *Songor for all* – the title of their manifesto. This has all taken place within the limits of a deeply patriarchal society. In the past, women involved in the Songor movement have drawn stark parallels – likening women to the lagoon, maintaining that they, like the Songor, have being treated like dogs, taken for granted and abused (Langdon, Larweh, & Cameron, 2014). The women have undergone a transformative process of self-empowerment, and now describe themselves as wolves, protecting the lagoon. The women's perspective on the central issues of the Songor has emerged as the most rooted analysis and is the focus of defending communal access to the lagoon in the face of the 'atsiakpo' small scale mining, and the threat of government expropriation of the lagoon. The Yihi Katsɛmɛ have emerged as capable leaders, organizing demonstrations at key moments to raise awareness of issues in the lagoon.

Community radio has been an instrumental partner to the ASAF and ASSWA social movements, not only in its pursuit to democratize the airwaves, and disseminate the voice of indigenous communities and the knowledge systems they uphold, but for its active work to create space for women to build their own analysis, share their perspective, and take steps towards self-empowerment. In the Ada context, Radio Ada, the community radio station, has created space and opportunity for women's voice to be heard, and in broadcasting Yihi Kateme's songs, has helped to reinforce the women's analysis, and has developed enabling mechanisms for women to dialogue together in a broader way.

Kofi Larweh, a key figure at Radio Ada and whose quote began this chapter, links the importance of song to understanding the Ada world and the Ada people, explaining how the oral tradition of song is bound to the identity and expression of Ada, and serves a multitude of important social functions – most notably maintaining a historical record. Larweh further points to the essential role that community voice and social movement songs have been given in the community radio context, stating that "songs and their meaning are the center of our radio programming strategy" (ASAF, 2016).

Radio Ada aims to be the voice of the Ada people and is committed to engaging in culturally relevant and appropriate ways of communication, which includes indigenizing broadcasts to support communities of listeners and the knowledge systems they uphold. In broadcasting the Yihi Katsɛmɛ songs, Radio Ada provides a larger platform for the women's analysis to be shared with all of Ada, democratizing this knowledge and creating and supporting more accessible avenues that amplify marginalized voices.

## ARTICULATIONS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT LEARNING

Studying articulations of social movement learning is inherently about connection and depth; looking at ways that people and their ideas can connect and ultimately deepen understanding and learn from that exchange. As noted above, this current study has grown out of, and builds on many years of collective research and movement work; the theorizing around social movement learning and the articulation of 'learning *through* struggle' as well as "learning *to* struggle" have surfaced through a Ghana-based dialogue reconfiguring Foley's (1999) notion of, 'learning *in* struggle' (Langdon, 2011). The former refers to the discrete learning that comes from conflict – demonstrations, campaigns, and rallies can all be spaces of deep learning. The Yihi Katsɛmɛ organized a demonstration, marching to spread their message of a Songor for all, while sharing details and updates on various social media platforms and on the radio. Importantly, this march included the presence of a brass marching band that added to the songs they sang as they marched. Initially, when the demonstration began the police presence attempted to stop the women marching. Then as time went on, and the women continued to march and the band continued to play, some police officers began walking with them. By the end of the demonstration the women had so transformed their relationship with the police that officers were showing off their own marching techniques and the tension between the groups had eased. This type of situational learning is what can emerge from situations of conflict, learning *through* struggle.

Learning *to* struggle, on the other hand, is the processes and theorizing movements themselves are producing to educate themselves and the broader world. As the five finger approach share above shows, this is happening and being theorized in Ada through song. For instance, songs have provoked a call to widely broaden the circle of knowledge about plans for the Songor – building processes of knowledge-democracy into the movement. Songs have been used as a way to connect to a communal past, and to provoke discussion about how things have changed. They can also help restory this past to highlight the role women have played in establishing and maintaining Ada culture. Finally, the women have learned through struggle that songs can be used to create openings for relationship building and to undermine assumptions even in the minds of adversaries. It is by using a movement-articulated, participatory and story-sensitive approach to this research that we have been able to document this learning in rich, restoried ways for the movement to better understand its own learning over time, and to share this learning with the world.

## REFERENCES

Ada Songor Advocacy Forum. (2016). *The struggle of the Songor Salt People*. Sogakope: Comboni.

Ada Songor Salt Cooperative. (1989). *The story of the Songor Lagoon: Who killed Maggie?* The Netherlands: Bijeen-Hertogenbosch.

Amate, C. O. C. (1999). *The making of Ada*. Accra: Woeli Publishing Services.

Anyidoho, N. A., & Manuh, T. (2010). Discourses on women's empowerment in Ghana. *Development, 53*(2), 267–273.

Barndt, D. (2006). *Wild fire: Art as activism*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

Batliwala, S. (2009). Feminism's coming of age: Celebrating diversity and power. *Development, 52*(2), 140–143.

Bevington, D., & Dixon, C. (2005). Movement-relevant theory: Rethinking social movement scholarship and activism. *Social Movement Studies, 4*(3), 185–208.

Choudry, A., & Kapoor, D. (2010). Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on social movements and knowledge production. In A. Choudry & D. Kapoor (Eds.), *Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on social movements and knowledge production* (pp. 1–13). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

English, L. M., & Mayo, P. (2012). *Learning with adults: A critical pedagogical introduction*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Foley, G. (1999). *Learning in social action: A contribution to understanding informal education*. London: Zed Books.

Fraser, C., & Restrepo-Estrada, S. (1998). *Communicating for development: Human change for survival*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Garbary, R. (2016). *UNSDG Yihi Katseme* [Video, extended version]. Ada, Radio Ada.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kenyon, G. M., & Randall, W. L. (1997). *Restorying our lives: Personal growth through autobiographical reflection*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Langdon, J. (2011). Democracy re-examined: Ghanaian social movement learning and the re-articulation of learning in struggle. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 43*(2), 147–163.

Langdon, J. (2015). Democratic hopes, neoliberal transnational government(re)ality: Grounded social movements and the defense of communal natural resources in Ghana. In D. Kapoor & D. Caouette (Eds.), *Beyond colonialism, development and globalisation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Langdon, J., & Garbary, R. (2017). Retor(y)ing hope: Stories as social movement learning in Ada Songor salt movement. *Education as Change, 21*(3), 1–18.

Langdon, J., & Larweh, K. (2015). Moving with the movement: Collaboratively building a Participatory Action Research (PAR) study of social movement learning in Ada, Ghana. *Action Research, 13*(3), 281–297.

Langdon, J., & Larweh, K. (2017). Guided by the Yomo Spirit: Resistance to accumulation by dispossession of the Songor salt lagoon in Ada, Ghana. In D. Kapoor (Ed.), *Local resistance to colonization and rural dispossession in Africa and South/East Asia*. London: Zed Books.

Langdon, J., Larweh, K., & Cameron, S. (2014). The Thumbless hand, the dog, and the chameleon: Enriching social movement learning theory through epistemically grounded narratives emerging from a participatory action research case study in Ghana. *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements, 6*(1), 27–44.

Larweh, K., & Langdon, J. (2014). Seeing the synergy in the signals: Reflections on weaving projects into social movement mobilizing through community radio. In H. Pleasants & D. Salter (Eds.), *Community-based multiliteracies and digital media projects: Questioning assumptions and exploring realities* (pp. 217–236). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Lynskey, D. (2011). *33 revolutions per minute: The history of protest songs from Billie Holiday to Green Day*. London: Ecco.

Manuh, T. (1994). Ghana: Women in the public and informal sectors under the economic recovery programme. In P. Sparr (Ed.), *Mortgaging women's lives: Feminist critiques of structural adjustment* (pp. 61–77). London: Zed Books.

Perini, J. (2008). Art as intervention: A guide to today's radical art practices. In K. Van Meter, C. Hughes, & S. Peace (Eds.), *Uses of a whirlwind: Movement, movements, and contemporary radical currents in the United States* (pp. 183–197). Oakland, CA: AK Press.

West, L. (2017, July 6). *Multi-culturalism and the decline of public space: Adult education and the building of a common culture*. Paper presented at SCUTREA conference, Edinburgh.

ANN HEGARTY

# 15. VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS AND NEW MASCULINE SUBJECTIVITIES

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects on photovoice, a creative and participatory visual research methodology employed to enquire into the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' experience of family literacy learning care-work (FLLC). Finding a research methodology that uncovers the nuances and complexities of social experience is not a simple task. It requires careful consideration of multiple elements, including the rich diversity of humankind, the wider social, political, affective and cultural context in which the research is taking place and the researcher's own positionality. In the field of adult education research there is strong emphasis on enquiring into the nature of social reality *with* people. Hence relationships built through listening to the 'other' are central to the research process and listening requires attention to voice. The photovoice methodology is premised on the assumption that people's voices are infused with knowledge that outsiders, like myself, lack (Wang & Burris, 1997).

I open the chapter with a discussion of my approach to research and how the research methodology was chosen. Details of photovoice as a powerful participatory research method follow. The chapter proceeds with an account of the study, briefly introduces the research participants and reflects on the experience of finding this way to research. I propose that the photovoice methodology engaged participants in a creative and critical adult education process. It gave rise to nuanced, insightful conversations about the social experience of the gendered and classed construction of masculinity, fatherhood and family learning care work.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

I am a feminist activist, researcher and adult education practitioner. I passionately believe in the power of critical adult education to transform lives and to challenge a destructive status quo that is maintained and reproduced by unequal gendered and classed social structures. My practice is anchored in a worldview that has been deeply influenced by the work of Freire (1972, 1997) and feminist education scholars (see Connolly, 2008; hooks, 1994; Reay, 1998) who trust in the importance of everyday knowledge and value people as knowing subjects with the capacity to make decisions about their lives. For me, the work of adult education is a creative and collective process which has greater social justice as its goal. Critical adult

education sets out to illuminate and challenge oppressive social structures which seek to limit and constrict our potential rather than supporting human flourishing. I understand creativity in research and pedagogy as a process that welcomes and enables participation and development by people who have had previous harmful encounters within the education system. Creativity, like adult education itself, involves effort and builds on the ability to see more clearly and to rediscover what we know but seem to have forgotten (Jon-Steiner, 1997). Previously sedimented knowledge emerges through reflection and dialogue. Reflexivity, deliberating as a thinking subject, is a central component of creativity and a critical step in developing agency (Allen, 2002). It underpins adult education practice which seeks to support people to collectively name their world through engaging in transformative dialogue which in turn brings to light the lines of power (Dean, 1998) that both shape and connect us to one another.

## CHOOSING PHOTOVOICE AS A METHODOLOGY

Finding what Connolly terms a 'really useful research methodology' (2008, p. 96) led me to investigate the use of photovoice as an engaging means of recruiting participants in my research. Based on the use of photography, it is a flexible and participative research approach and has been used extensively across a diversity of disciplines such as anthropology, education, sociology, psychology and cultural studies (Luttrell & Chalfen, 2010). The term 'photovoice', was coined by Caroline Wang following her research into community health with rural women in China (Wang et al., 1998). The methodology is rooted in the problem-posing educational work of Freire (1972) and its goal is to contribute towards greater social justice (Mitchell, 2010).

A number of considerations and some assumptions guided my choice of photovoice. Working-class male participants are often referred to as hard to reach by social researchers and adult educators (Bengry-Howell & Griffin, 2012; Corridan, 2002), therefore I wanted to choose a methodology that would be engaging and reciprocal. Within disparaging discourses about working-class parents, fathers are most often described in one-dimensional terms and relegated to the realms of deficit and pathology (Reay, 2004). My goal was to find a method that would reveal more nuanced understandings of fathers from working-class communities. Supporting male research participants to discuss their emotional lives is often described in the literature as challenging, photovoice has been effectively used to support men to discuss their intimate emotions and to engage in reflective and collaborative thinking (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007; Slutskaya et al., 2012).

The research aimed to address unequal gendered care constructs and to explore the under-researched relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' involvement in FLLC. Literacy and literate activities are often viewed as passive and belonging in the feminine, therefore subordinate, domain (Martino & Berril, 2003). By association, the personal relationship some men have with literacy effects their

involvement in family literacy learning care work (Karther, 2002; Nichols, 2002). Disparaging discourses about working-class parents depict fathers as uncaring, absent and feckless (Hewett, 2015). Yet research shows that all parents value literacy skills and regardless of parents' own literacy levels, they report that they want their children to do well and to support their learning in school (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010).

Consideration of the research context was also paramount: In Ireland, as the recession deepened, high levels of unemployment spread across the male-dominated construction industry (Barry & Conroy, 2012). I planned to work with men who had moved from the public space of breadwinning to the private place of stay-at-home-father (SAHF). I expected that they might be feeling some vulnerability about their new identities. I hoped that the reflective and collective nature of the methodology would support individual men to reflect on and voice their current experiences as SAHF with their peers. Through the critical interrogation of their images it was possible that useful insights and understandings of their gendered experiences might emerge.

## The Photovoice Process

Photovoice can serve to involve participants in a powerful process of telling their stories and connecting with others. In naming and showing their world to one another they are engaged in building knowledge and understanding of the social world and their place in it. Mirroring core aspects of radical adult education, the participant's perspective in photovoice is the starting point. Research participants are given cameras and asked to construct images relating to the research topic. They have time to go away and to consider and create those images. The creative activity is itself the starting point for the development of thoughts about personal experience. In the making of images participants are already involving themselves in engaged thinking.

When the group next meet, photographs are shared and participants get to view, discuss and respond to each other's images. Contrasting with more traditional one-to-one interviews where research participants may be in a more passive role, photovoice participants have autonomy about the images they choose to take and to share with the group. Whilst each photographer is the expert about the image they have constructed, individual interpretations can be puzzled over in the collective space. Images evoke open conversations about diverse topics and these are further expanded by facilitated group discussions which can illuminate different ways of being in the world. This creative process requires time and skilled facilitation.

## THE STUDY

The global economic crisis resulted in some small disruption and restructuring of patriarchal, socially constructed, gendered parenting roles and such changes brought challenges and opportunities. The one-time breadwinner found himself in the

unfamiliar role of fulltime family carer whilst his partner, often in poorly paid and part-time employment, provided financially for the family. These SAHF and their role in family learning were the focus of the photovoice study reflected upon in this chapter.

## Research Participants

Existing networks within the adult literacy and community education sector in and around Dublin were used to recruit fathers to the project. Following introductory meetings four groups agreed to participate. Each group committed to three photovoice research workshops over a period of three weeks and these were located within familiar community learning settings.

In all, twenty men contributed to the research. Between them they had 56 children ranging in age from twelve months to 41 years. The youngest research participant was 27 years old whilst the oldest was 65. Together, these fathers had a wealth and diversity of experience to draw from.

The men lived in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Dublin. These areas are characterized by multiple inequalities and state neglect that is evidenced by high levels of poor housing, long-term unemployment, educational disadvantage and ill health. Research participants had first-hand experience of such social harm, including early school leaving, drug and alcohol addiction, sexual and physical abuse, imprisonment and damaging experience of institutional care, homelessness and depression.

## Research Process

Research has shown that entering a learning group can be a daunting experience for men. Many express fear about how they might be perceived by male peers (Corridan, 2002; De Brun & Du Vivier, 2007). Levels of anxiety and embarrassment about learning in groups are further compounded by memories of early and negative school experiences (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010). With this in mind the aim of the first workshop was to support individual participation and to develop the group working relationship.

In-depth discussion about literacy and family literacy were planned to ground the workshop in shared understandings of these pivotal themes and to establish a context for the men in thinking about taking photos of family literacy in practice. Activities relating to photography, camera skills and the reading of images that the men had taken during an initial photographic treasure hunt made up the second part of the workshop. This culminated in agreements about the rights and responsibilities associated with taking photographs with a particular emphasis on ethics and consent procedures relating to photographing children. The 'mission' for participants at the end of the first workshop was to capture images of FLLC in their families. Discussion

and analysis of these images and the story behind their production was the focus of the second workshop. From these discussions the challenges and benefits of FLLC for men in their new role as SAHF were identified. The final workshop focused on collectively naming and questioning the source of messages about masculinity and fatherhood alongside an analysis of the impact of such messages on the men's lives. Following the photovoice workshops fifteen one-to-one interviews were conducted (Hegarty, 2017).

Once the data analysis was complete, a final research meeting with participants took place. Here emergent themes were discussed in order to strengthen the validity of the analysis. Text messaging updates to participants about the progress of the enquiry continued throughout the data-gathering phase of the study. This communication loop served to maintain the relationship with the men over time and many responded to the texts with messages of good will and continued interest in the project.

*Fieldwork*

Engaging in three workshops provided a stretch of time for participants to settle into the research process, to get to know one another and the researcher. Initially, within the public group-space many of the men engaged in a range of comments which established them variously as robustly heterosexual, knowledgeable about sport, photography and authoritative parenting.

In some cases, these comments intensified when the men were given cameras and sent out on a photographic treasure hunt. Cameras and photography were closely associated with pornography by some men and sexually loaded remarks, which objectified women, were casually exchanged. On their return, images were uploaded to a computer and projected onto a large screen. During this time participants had an opportunity to relax and to talk informally to one another about the cameras, their children and their lives. Conversations shifted. Men could be heard presenting themselves differently to one another in the more intimate space of one-to-one conversations. They began to speak of their concerns about their children. They shared experiences of access arrangements. One man spoke to another about his son watching pornography on the internet. Another spoke proudly of his son's sporting achievements. In these moments tentative efforts towards mutual understanding were being made, and Dad relationships were being formed.

Whilst viewing their treasure hunt photographs in the large group another conversation shift takes place where men leave aside private conversations about children and revert to public banter. Sexually loaded, misogynistic remarks are casually expressed,

Johnny Cash[1]: That's a girl's bike, it's pink

Badboy: You don't know that!

Batman: Women are vain. They love themselves … It's a substantial saddle.

Badboy: They like themselves … I'd say she has a big ass. She needs one of those saddles 'cause she has a Kim Kardashian backside. [Group laughter] (Transcript group 3)

Remarks made by individual men were greeted by laughter, which signified group affiliation and the construction of a mutual masculine understanding (Grønnerød, 2004). Situated in a wider context where men instinctively looked to one another for respect and recognition (Connell, 1995) displays of incontrovertible heterosexual masculine selves were most often directed towards other members of the group rather than me, an older female researcher. Nevertheless, they were not without impact on me. As a reflexive feminist researcher, I am aware, like Etherington (2004) of the rich learning to be gleaned from the researcher's personal responses. In truth it was not easy to be a lone woman amidst a group of men engaged in this sort of conversation. The words and the meanings behind them attach to other misogynistic talk commonly heard in the wider context and are sticky and hard to disregard.

In this instance I found myself making a pragmatic decision not to challenge such sexist remarks. My dilemma as a feminist researcher became one of setting participants' displays of hyper-masculinity to the side, whilst trying to see and relate to each man's unique subjectivity. This reflects the challenging reality of collaboration, I had to consciously check myself before entering into group work, reminding myself, each time, that my goal was to understand through dialogue the underlying gendered and classed experiences that led to their worldviews. This approach allowed me to continue to develop relationships with the men. The stories that emerged, through the photovoice process, illuminated lives which had been honed against a backdrop of social harm and violence which in turn produced, what Badboy termed, a destructive, oppressive and ultimately fragile 'hard-man' shield.

Badboy: You don't want to come across as soft, vulnerable, weak. Because you're afraid that other people will think that you're vulnerable and then, you know. That man's man of bein' tough on the exterior, of anythin' happens to my son and my family, I'm goin' to be the man. You feel like that would be taken away from you. So, you sort of say to yourself, 'Well I can't be vulnerable' … sometimes you put on a front, the 'hard-man front'. It's an image. (Transcript group 3)

Photographs of their children evoked memories of the men's younger years and, prompted by me, gave rise to reflections on the shaping of their masculinity. During free-flowing group discussion, commonalities about the lines of power, which had shaped them as men, were identified. Families, place, the education system, social class, the media and religious institutions were all implicated as having deeply influenced ideas of what it meant to be a real man.

Reflecting the greater power of men in the wider social context (Connell, 1995: hooks, 2004), fathers were identified as having the most influence on their young masculinities and subsequently on their own approach to fatherhood.

Pado: I'm talkin' about a bloke that's at home with his missus. He's two or three kids and like he's goin' from the way his father carried on when he was growin' up. His father done that and he's doin' what his father done.

Tommy: Well that's the biggest influence on men … [Interrupted]

Pado: Yeah, the father, the father would have been. (Transcript group 1)

Emerging from their photovoice conversations the model of fatherhood they described defined men as breadwinners, as inexpressive and authoritarian. In their fathers' day, men were expected to provide and there was no expectation that they would look after children. That was women's work. Reflecting on their photographs they recognized the durable power of that model and uncovered together the complexity of their new situation as SAHF.

Jack: There it is. If the man is not workin' he is not a good provider. That's the way it is looked at. You are a bad provider for your family. It's not even that anyone has to say it to him. People know like. Maybe you're sittin' down in the pub and you're drinkin' and you hear people whisperin' and sayin' 'Ah Jaysus, you'd think he would be at home with his family or out looking for a job'. (Transcript group 2)

Prompted by their revealing images men slowly began to open up to one another, to share their desires to do fatherhood differently.

Messi: Bein' a father, from your own father, you'll always want to do somethin' different. Make it better all the time. From what you had from your own childhood, from your own father. You want to, you just want it better. Well as best you can. (Transcript group 2)

Through the display and discussion of photographs, participants and the researcher were introduced to the private lives of other men from their communities and new understandings emerged. A window opened into the intimate spaces of children's bedrooms, sitting rooms, kitchens, bathrooms and gardens.

Rory: There's a nice message on the wall there. I can't quite read it, somethin' about love?

Messi: This house is seasoned with love or somethin'. That would be the wife, she likes all these morals up so the kids are looking at these and we hope they are taking it on board and use it in their lives somewhere, you know.

Rory: It's a nice message! You must have stood up on the chair to take that!

Messi: I had to get up on a chair to take that! They're nearly all bigger than me an' anyway so I had to do that. [Laughter] (Transcript group 2)

The photographs were pored over. Images of partners and children were brought to life through the words spoken by the men. They were inquisitive about each other's children.

Batman: See he's autistic.

Najib: And what age is he?

Batman: He's just eight. He hadn't talked for five years and he started, and as I says he loves maths now, he loves numbers.

Najib: Can he talk?

Batman: Perfect now. He can talk, he can communicate with you. He never shuts up! (Transcript group 3)

Listening to the workshop audio recordings I had the sense that participants got to know the lifeworlds of other men in a new way. "New angles of vision" (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012, p. 560) were revealed through a multi-sensory encounter with the men's family lives and with their interior worlds.

Whilst responding to one another's evocative images men were conversing and connecting with one another and the more public form banter was gradually left aside. These were meaningful conversations where men expressed empathetic interest. They shared with one another something of the complexities and contradictions of their intimate selves, of what one participant termed their '*soft spots'*. They spoke of the vulnerabilities of being a SAHF, of their desires for themselves and their families, of what mattered to them, of their values and commitments. Providing evidence of masculine subjectivities in transition, and alongside their compelling photographs, they allowed themselves to be seen by others and to engage in counter-hegemonic care-talk. Supported by photovoice, the research participants' narratives disrupted one-dimensional pathologized representations of fathers from working-class communities. The men emerged as caring, committed fathers who were determined to do their best for their children, often with scarce resources. The men were engaged in developing their subjectivities through connecting with others and the study revealed the diversity and complexity of masculinities. Research participants were heard to be tentatively imagining and constructing their own patterns of masculinity.

As the researcher I was struck by the power of the facilitated photovoice process to spark richly nuanced and revealing conversations amongst participants. The men were engaged in a reflexive adult learning environment where as one participant commented, they were 'getting the head working'. Prompted by the creative research process, participants were noticing life in a more acute and heightened way. They were heard to be critically examining assumptions and beliefs about their gendered construction and assessing such messages in their new situations as SAHF. Furthermore, they were questioning the usefulness of these gendered messages to the next generations. Many expressed enjoyment about the research process. They were

developing learning skills that redressed experiences of educational inequalities of the past. They were expressing themselves, actively listening to one another and discovering they were not alone in their experiences. Collaboratively they were learning about the possibilities of change to unjust social structures.

My learning in terms of research methods reflected some of that of the research participants. Skilled facilitation and photovoice combined to construct an engaging, dynamic research process. The understanding that the research was both enjoyable and useful to the men evoked a strong feeling of personal satisfaction in me. It reaffirmed the power of creativity to bring to light nuanced understandings of complex social realities.

On reflection, and prompted by the men's openness I have observed that my own socially constructed and gendered shield as a 'smiling', 'soft-woman' was as deeply enmeshed in my identity as the men's hard-man shield. This has stretched my understanding of gender relationships and the mutuality of learning.

CONCLUSION

In the context of this study aspects of the method and process of photovoice emerged as congruent with the goals and practice of critical adult education. The starting point of both is that people and their experiences are of value. Adult education and photovoice both nurture a belief in the power of collective reflexivity and the importance of praxis-oriented learning for greater social justice. In this instance the process of analysis, reflection and transformation was at an individual and collective level. It stopped short of activism towards structural change and on one hand this is a limitation of the research. However, whilst the creative research process met participants where they were it did not leave them there.

Despite societal efforts that sought to shape them as hard-men, and enabled by the photovoice method and research approach, the men in this study tentatively allowed themselves to be vulnerable to one another. They actively engaged in counter-narratives of masculinity. The creative and thoughtful production of images of FLLC ignited deep engagement with the research topic. The immersive process involved an extended time commitment by participants and this had an impact on the quality of research relationships and, in turn, the emerging data. The very pace of the creative research method was unlike language based qualitative interviews. No instant responses to questions were expected. Rather, through the process of creating an image, participants had time and space away from the research site to consider their own meanings and understandings of the research topic.

Supported by the reflexive photovoice methodology the men in this study transformed initial presentations of themselves as stereotypical 'hard-men'. Photovoice not only facilitated the men to name their world, it also invited them to show their previously unseen worlds to one another and to imagine alternative scripts of masculinity for themselves and their children.

In particular, the collective process of viewing and responding to the photographs sparked imaginations and gave rise to meaningful conversations. Images that showed children, wives and partners animated the private lives of the men and their families. Participants' curiosity about those in the photographs prompted the sharing of experiences and created an opportunity for the men to engage in revealing conversations which were characterized by affective expression. The men's stories gave rise to critical questioning of everyday classed and gendered experiences that were previously assumed to be 'natural'. Conversations tentatively rehearsed the envisioning of a more gender just world and provided insight into their power to make different choices for themselves. The creative, enabling and reflexive photovoice methodology proved to be a really useful research method. It helped to reveal and disrupt the lines of power that shaped masculinity and supported new masculine subjectivities to emerge.

## NOTE

[1]   Participants chose their own pseudonyms.

## REFERENCES

Allen, A. (2002). Power, subjectivity, and agency: Between Arendt and Foucault. *Journal of Philosophical Studies, 10*, 131–149.

Barry, U., & Conroy, U. (2012). *Ireland 2008–2012: Untold story of the crisis – Gender, equality and inequalities*. Dublin: TASC.

Bengry-Howell, A., & Griffin, C. (2012). Negotiating access in ethnographic research with 'hard to reach' young people: Establishing common ground or a process of methodological grooming? *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 15*(5), 403–416.

Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity.

Connolly, B. (2008). *Adult learning in groups.* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Corridan, M. (2002). *Moving from the margins*. Dublin: Dublin Adult Learning Centre.

Dean, J. (1998). Feminist solidarity, reflective solidarity. theorizing connections after identity politics. *Women and Politics, 18*(4), 1–26.

De Brun, T., & Du Vivier, E. (2007). *Own goals and penalties: A study of the needs of socially excluded males in Dublin's Inner city.* Dublin: Dublin Inner City Partnership.

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: Using ourselves in research*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of hope.* New York, NY: Continuum.

Grønnerød, J. S. (2004). On the meanings and uses of laughter in research interviews; Relationships between interviewed men and a woman interviewer. *Nordic Journal of Youth Research, 12*(1), 31–49.

Hegarty, A. (2017). *Masculinity, fathers and family literacy: Glimpses behind the 'hard-man' front* (Unpublished PhD thesis). Maynooth University, Maynooth.

Hegarty, A., & Feeley, M. (2010). *Taking care of family literacy work: An enquiry with parents about their experience of nurturing language and literacy in the home.* Dublin: National Adult Literacy Agency.

Hesse Biber, S. N., & Piatelli, D. (2012). The feminist practice of holistic reflexivity. *The handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis.* New York, NY: Sage.

Hewett, C. (2015). *Britain's most feckless father single again after splitting from latest girlfriend*. Retrieved June 15, 2016, from http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/world-news/britains-most-feckless-father-single-5491448

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education and the practice of freedom.* Routledge: New York.

hooks, b. (2004). *The will to change.* New York, NY: Washington Square Press.

Jon-Steiner, V. (1997). *Notebooks of the mind: Exploration of thinking.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Karther, D. (2002). Fathers with low literacy and their young children. *Reading Teacher, 56*(2), 184–193.

Luttrell, W., & Chalfen, R. (2010). Lifting up voices of participatory visual research. *Visual Studies, 25*(3), 197–200.

Martino, W., & Berrill, D. (2003). Boys, schooling & masculinity: Interrogating the 'right' way to educate boys. *Educational Review, 55*(2), 99–119.

Mitchell, C. (2010). *Doing visual research.* London: Sage.

Nichols, S. (2002). Parents' construction of their children as gendered, literate subjects: A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 2*(2), 123–144.

Oliffe, J. L., & Bottorff, J. L. (2007). further than the eye can see? Photo elicitation and research with men. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*(6), 850–858.

Reay, D. (1998). *Classwork: Mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling.* London: UCL Press.

Reay, D. (2004). 'It's all Becoming a Habitus': Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 25*(4), 431–444.

Slutskaya, N., Simpson, A., & Hughes, J. (2012). Lessons from photoelicitation: Encouraging working men to speak. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, 7*(1), 16–33.

Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health, Education and Behaviour, 24*(3), 369–387.

Wang, C., Yi, W., Tao, Z., & Carovano, K. (1998). Photovoice as a participatory health promotion strategy. *Health Promotion International, 13*(1), 75–86.

**PART 7**

# RESEARCH ON EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE AND MOVEMENT

SILVIA LURASCHI

# 16. RESEARCH THROUGH, AND ON, EMBODIED MOVEMENT IN ORIENTING ONE'S SELF TOWARDS THE FUTURE

## EMBODIMENT IN ADULT EDUCATION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

In Western thought, there is a long tradition of a Cartesian disjunction between mind and body (Damasio, 1994): where the mind is viewed as the site of reason and the location of speech and is entrusted with the future design of our life, the body is a tool at the disposal of the intellect. But what if we considered the body not only as an instrument of the intellect but as a way to knowledge in its own right? This chapter will take up this question and make the case that embodied experience, which is understood here as profoundly relational and situated, is central to learning processes and a crucial topic for adult education research. This throws up major theoretical and methodological challenges that I will discuss drawing on the methods used in an innovative project that explored the reflexive, transformative, orienting effects of body perception and movement in guidance and career workshops. We will argue, "the body has many stories" and we "know in and through our bodies" (Clark, 2012, p. 426). Our first orientation in life happens through the body: senses and movement give us our centre of gravity in this (troubled) world (Feldenkrais, 1991). Embodied knowing is our first and most primitive way of experiencing the world: our bodies allow us to be active and animate within the world, to see, hear, touch, explore; we can only become persons and selves because we are located bodily in a particular place in space and time, in relation to other people, animals, plants and things around us.

Recent decades have seen growing interest in embodiment in the social sciences and theories which challenge the mind/body division and understand the body as a source of knowledge and agency (Shapiro, 2011). Yet a good deal of the discussion in adult education and career counselling remains anchored in linear and de-contextualized ideas of the mind and rationality which is also highly individualistic (Reid, 2016). Only recently has this topic been taken up in adult education in a series of studies (Ollis, 2012) in which embodied learning is examined in a variety of contexts, including higher education, community education, health care and the workplace, and through multiple methods, such as dance, theatre and outdoor experiential education (Lawrence, 2012). This research challenges the dominant paradigm of how knowledge is constructed and suggest the importance of bodily movement in how we create our sense of self. Rich learning (Hunt, 2013), depends

on holistic reflexivity, in the double meaning of *reflection* and *reflexivity* the first is intended as cognitive, intellectual and critical ability and the latter as the capability of "abandoning" one's self to the experience of learning, by giving up control – which is specific to *reflection* – in order to let something new happen in the present and the future. I am concerned about the pedagogical role of adult educators and counsellors in giving creative resources to future generations, because everyone has the right to a career guidance that is hopeful, creative and personally meaningful (Reid, 2016).

In educational research, and especially when it is conducted through participative methods, it is essential to recognize the personal, emotional and relational aspects that are involved in every step of the research process. This type of adult education practice has led us to develop a 'compositional' methodology which is attentive to embodied learning and narratives Compositional methodology, which will be discussed in detail below, creates an educational encounter in which the participants generate stories through movement, relationship building, expressive drawing and imaginative exercises. In formal education (school, university), these aspects are generally neglected. This compositional methodology illustrates, instead, how thinking and feeling are not in antithesis, but come together in an enhanced, coherent, critical and collective practice of knowledge construction.

## RETHINKING METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In vocational and career guidance, practices rely almost exclusively on the use of written and oral language (for example in one to one sessions, in information booklets etc.). Conversely, the body rarely represents the focal point in constructing future life projects through guidance. Body perception and movement in guidance workshops aims at raising awareness on the important role of the body in our self-narration. Our story is not solely cognitive recollection of a series of events. It involves emotions, imagination, and indeed our bodies (Kroth & Cranton, 2014).

We are only beginning to get to grips with how to ensure guidance practice and research on adult education and guidance uses methodologies appropriate to the facts of embodied knowing and learning. A compositional methodology (Formenti, 2018) represents a challenge to how we think about guidance because it transforms the idea of the learner as distinct and separated from others, into an understanding of guidance as a critical exchange that is relational, reflective and responsive (Cecchin, Lane, & Ray, 1992). Compositional methodology operates on the assumption of an embodied and enacted mind (Varela, Thompson, & Rosh, 1993) to create moments of learning and research in which the participants' narrations are linked to their body, to the plasticity of neural connections and the relationship with nature. The method consists of a co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996) with a group of adults where all participants are co-researchers. Among the key principles that guide me as a researcher is the idea that dealing with adult education means considering ourselves more as collaborative research subjects rather than observers of other people's lives,

and that the participants are, in fact, co-responsible for that learning that is generated together. Doing research involves raising difficult questions and finding answers through uncertain paths, which always exposes us to risk if they are not shared and deconstructed with others. This compositional methodology invites participants to examine their experience through multi-sensory exploration, embodied narrative, aesthetic representation such as drawing and dialogue. According to Formenti et al. (2014), embodied narratives do not merely tell stories about ourselves, but actively make sense of how we are connected to each other. By telling stories about ourselves, we expose the complex connections between what we think and who we are, our personal values, ideas, emotions and feelings. In order to do that, Formenti (2016b) suggests using a methodology that can move beyond familiar dichotomies: words and body, self-image and environment, narrative and reflexivity.

For this we need to create participatory environments where the participants' bodies can be 'summoned' – a space of "movement" as any action that allows us to see beyond reality "as it is" and to project what is beyond our own "perceptions". Our body moves as our mind moves. Learning is the process by which we vary our responses to information based on the context of each situation. I will also try to show how these actions are related to the creation of a space for the recognition and the valorization of differences and creative resources (Fraser, 2017), and how the body, for vocational and career guidance, potentially provides leverage for new opportunities in the relationship between education and progressive social change. Compositional methodology, we argue, can generate a deep, relevant change in our thinking habits, one that could activate critical, imaginative and transformative dimensions of learning.

DOING RESEARCH ON EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE: THE DESIGN OF
THE WORKSHOP

According to the systemic and radical constructivist theoretical framework (Bateson, 1972; Maturana & Varela, 1992), and experimenting with a compositional methodology, this work presents a pilot case study related to vocational guidance and body-learning and aimed at a group of adults, attending a *Festival of knowledge*[1] organized by the University of Udine, in Italy in the squares and streets of the city. The festival's goal was to promote an innovative approach to knowledge, intended to connect with sections of the population that are not typically invited to debate about the role of knowledge in their life. I was prompted by a national call that invited young researchers to propose ideas for workshops which dedicated to "desire, methods and new knowledge". The workshop was set outdoors and the activities, conceived and led by myself, were inspired by the recent works on educational guidance through art (Formenti, 2016a) and ethnography of multi-sensory exploration of settings (Pink, 2009). This approach uses a version of co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996) which goes through four phases, each exploring a form of knowing – *experience-based, presentational, propositional, practical.*

The participants were 12 adults interested in creative educational methodology as mature students – teachers, educators, social worker – they were asked to co-construct the workshop by way of their actions and social interactions, by sharing language and gestures.

## Experience-Based Knowing

The activities were set in a square situated in the historic centre of the city as a starting point. The adults were invited to explore the space of the square; in different phases of the experience, our attention was focused on different parts of the body (e.g. feet, head) and its functions (breathing). Here are the directions I gave them:

- Choose a place to go to and observe the surrounding environment and your perceptions.
- Spend 20 minutes on the spot, either sitting, standing or walking alone.

The participants were invited to use the following questions to help focus their attention:

What do you hear? What do you smell? What can you touch or what kind of tactile sensations do you recognize around you? What about taste? What do you see? Do the sensory perceptions come from somewhere near you or have they travelled from afar? How does your body respond to your sensorium as a whole? What about your mind? Feelings, memories, associations? Are they personal/individual, or can they be understood as part of the broader cultural context? Are they related to your field of ways of making sense of the world?

## Presentational Knowing

After this first phase, the participants were asked to write down and draw what they had experienced on a sheet of paper. Art-based methods (Leavy, 2017) produce presentational knowing that opens up new possibilities of reflection and reflexivity. Stories and drawings show the complexities of our perceptions, emotions and cognition. The participants are invited to develop their own aesthetic sensitivity through the method of composition, i.e. they are asked to choose how they want to put words, signs, gestures and images together. This form of knowledge operates on multiple levels – corporeal, linguistic, semantic and symbolic – and by adjusting on the white page the elements and relationships that give meaning to the experience of the previous phase.

## Propositional Knowing

In the following step, the participants were invited to share their experience, or part of it, in order to gain awareness of its relevance to their present and, perhaps, future

life. This phase is crucial to get the participants involved as co-researchers. The researcher explains to the participants the systemic premises that interpret education as research, i.e. a specific kind of co-operational and compositional practice with an open and uncertain result in terms of knowledge that depends on an open shared process and on the dialogue that is created together. First, I asked them to introduce themselves to the group by referring to a concrete situation in their lives that involved their bodies. Then we had a conversation/debate in which the participants freely asked each other questions. Propositional knowing is not immediate because a biographical exchange in a workshop requires time to become a form of dialogue (Freire, 1972).

*Practical Knowing*

Finally, the participants explored new possibilities of orienting themselves toward the future through the increase of their body sensitivity, the ability to sense and name differences and share knowledge in groups. I asked them to connect what they had experienced in the previous phases with their questions, doubts or desires about the future and, in general, about their past and present life. The dialogue became an embodied, living space of inquiry where the participants were encouraged to reflect on the conversation and the resonance associated with this talk. The process evoked new insights into the original experience, connecting aspects of the self which they were previously unaware.

## LET THE BODY SPEAK: SOME DATA FROM THE WORKSHOP

The workshop is above all a process of co-construction of personal and shared knowing which is both an event and a form of research. It relies on the subjects' and the group's ability to make, to share, and to criticize experience, always starting from their own history and stories, i.e. from their own concrete life experiences and from their ways of narrating them – without separating their perceptions and emotions from their ideas and values. The workshop was audio-recorded and the data analysis focused on the conversations among three participants, rather than on their life histories. The nature of this research is that it is multi-layered and situated and therefore difficult to summarize but here I will highlight three moments in which the participants were talking to each other which I think communicate a flavour of what occurred during the research and which also illustrate the complex embodied nature of experience and knowledge.

I wish to briefly discuss Giuseppe, Paolo and Luisa because they are adult learners: this common experience helped the creation of a dialogic environment for the horizontal sharing of knowledge. The presence of three adults returning to education out of 12 participants cannot be considered a coincidence. This would require further reflections on the difficulties of accessing the services of vocational and career guidance encountered by all those people who are not usually recognized/

well-served inside dominant processes of educational and professional orientation (Finnegan, Merrill, & Thunborg, 2014). By giving voice to three participants who have re-entered education, I underline the need to encourage co-operative research with adults who are going through a phase of personal and professional (re)orientation. I also try to promote a relational approach because individuals co-emerge as interactors within the interaction (Gallagher, 2005).

During the third phase of *propositional knowing*, participants were encouraged to introduce themselves to the group and share fragments of their biography in relation to the theme of orientation. Giuseppe, teacher, PhD student and father of a six-year-old child, introduced himself by telling a story which connects him with his son and students:

> Luckily, I found myself lost several times in my life. Today my son Francesco and my students, who are my teacher's pets, guide my footsteps. (Giuseppe, age 38)



*Figure 16.1. Giuseppe's picture*

Giuseppe's words show he is within a transitional phase of experience, where his multiple identities, as a father and as a teacher, means he is constantly negotiating his position in relation to other people (Merrill & West, 2009). During the conversation a dialogue started:

Q: How come you teach little ones [kids]? You are a man. (Marta, age 25)

A: I know men are uncommon in primary schools, but I am man, father and teacher and I'm learning a lot from the children. As a man who teaches, I am expected to show an aptitude for sports such as football, but I prefer to dance. Sometimes, at home, the sitting room turns into a dance floor when Francesco puts on some music. He is very enthusiastic. I think he feels fully recognized: he puts his heart and soul into dancing and, in that moment, I am totally present with him. (Giuseppe, age 38)

The exchange between Giuseppe and Marta conveys something of the vital nature of the mind/body connection in learning. As a father, he describes the happiness deriving from physical movement and physical contact through the story about his son. This demonstrates that the relation with the body is not only necessary for the development of the child, but also fundamental for the adult, in that it generates a deep sense of integration among his different roles and selves. He himself tells how the personal, familiar and gender-related aspects all intertwine in his professional experience. Giuseppe is performing an act of composition because he is expressing his own personal way of dealing with multiplicity and differences, by recognizing them and trying to balance them in his life.

The conversation proceeds with the intervention of Paolo, another participant and founding partner in an insurance company. He introduced himself to the group by narrating his job experience:

I am not a robot, but I am certainly the product of huge random variants. I am all the people I meet in the city where I work. This fact recurs in every meeting I have with every living person, in every moment I spend working, in every sentence I say and every thought I have. (Paolo, age 45)

Paolo works in Milan, a busy, commercial city. His experience of working life, has helped to form a habitus, a set of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977). His working meetings and his business city are metaphors which refer to the multiple roles in his life. In addition to that, Paolo's words express how social cognition is generated and transformed in the interplay between the unfolding interaction process and the individual engaged in it (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007).

This fragment of Paolo's story appears as a very creative, almost poetical one. I need to go beyond it, to understand how his identity is composed of complex and multiple aspects. While talking, Paolo showed to the group the picture he had drawn in the previous phase of *presentational knowing*, which depicted a crowd of people in the subway.

This composition, involving both words and the body, represents the possibility of transformation in these workshop activities in the field of pedagogical guidance. Giuseppe's and Paolo's experiences show that each individual life contains a heterogeneous range of stories. Living a life "in-between" (in-between space of

*Figure 16.2. Paolo's picture*

practice and possibilities, in-between the socially constructed categories of "teacher", "man", "father", "business man") implies a space created and spatially defined by relationships. In-between space (Grosz, 2001) can be a space of exposure, a space that restricts and limits, spaces that are always altering and shifting and always in the process of becoming something else – tangible but un/known. If we reduce people to one story, we're taking away their humanity.

Paolo's story was followed by that of Luisa, another adult learner who, showing the picture of a tree, said:

> I felt as if I was being called. By whom? By the leaves! Yes, they were so green: it is summer and I, up until that moment, had not noticed the green tree into the square. And I was actually seeing myself in the leaves. I was aware of the vitality of leaves and of my body, made of a soul, which is itself nature. (Luisa, age 36)

Luisa's words transformed the topic of conversation, shifting the focus from an educational towards a philosophical goal. The aesthetic image of nature in Luisa's words indicates how this sort of practice can also generate hope. The objective of orientation is not to give or find answers, but to bring participants to feel that they are "explorers". This involves transformation in the perception of selves as those who are seeking something and, in seeking, lean towards things which have not yet taken form. In this they find a sense of hope. If our perceptions generate images and new

*Figure 16.3. Luisa's picture*

stories, these then enable us to create new worlds and contribute to the re-designing of the world in which we live and the ways in which we explore it, but also to bring the future into the present. This is a creative and reflexive process (Gardner, 2014) that enables changes in ideas and perspectives and, above all, innovative actions.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

During the workshop information was collected through dialogue among the participants, in which individual body experiences constructed "space" for attention towards the biographies of others (West, 2016). My proposal for the workshop was based on group work in order to reflect upon the way to experience life "in-between" knowledge and identity in relation to vocational guidance. Then, the possibility of telling different stories from different perspectives about the same experience helped to realize that we, as embodied human beings situated in time and space, combine multiple models of the world (Horsdal, 2012). This pilot case highlights how, in career guidance, practices of exploration associated with movement and artistic experience (writing and drawing) and dialogue sustain the development of self-awareness and innovative patterns of action.

Arguably we are experiencing a shift is notions of the future – from a pattern of progress and repetition to openness and unpredictability (Morin, 1999). This demands a wider educational perspective of guidance, where choice is seen as a continuous, dynamic process (Formenti, 2016b). Reflection on experience in this sort of workshop is a type of ethical action, not only because it was participatory and democratic, but also because of connections and relationships, including with one's own self, that were activated. The workshop suggests that life is made of interdependence and movement between the inside/outside. Through embodied experience in an open space, myself and others have listened to the minute movements and senses of the body – "My body is a tree", said Luisa, as though the body were an inward field of learning and knowing. The body wakes up. Our bodies will be more similar to a field of resonance, when we start to feel that we are connected with other people – "I am all the people I meet in the city where I work", said Paolo – and the future generation – "[…] my son and my students, […] guide my footsteps", said Giuseppe.

Awareness encourages or allows an oscillation between inner and outer space. The space of the "in-between" is the locus for social, cultural and natural transformations: it is not simply a convenient space for movements and realignments but it is in fact the only space – the space around identities between identities – where becoming and openness to futurity outstrip the conservational impetus to retain cohesion and unity (Grosz, 2001, pp. 91–105). In what can feel like a philosophical or sacred space, intuition, movement, emotions, gestures, hopes and dreams have equal validity alongside the rational thinking and thoughtful words. They co-exist, so that differences can inspire a type of creativity that is life honouring, which is called human flourishing. The participants' engagement in activities aimed at increasing body awareness seemed to raise their ability to sense their perception and share experience where they were able to tap into embodied knowledge and then write and discuss from a more embodied perspective. The research suggests we have multiple selves; we all play many roles and are complex human beings. But how can we connect to and explore this multiplicity in research, guidance and education? We need to create occasions, to encourage a more holistic way of approaching vocational guidance and go beyond binary thinking. Exploring, with body and words, the multiplicity of experiences, role, beliefs and perspectives that make up this unique person. No perception exists outside of action, and as far as actions change, perception of the world changes too (Varela, Rosch & Thompson, 1993). Paying attention to one's own sensory perceptions and giving them form through written words is an exercise of hope which allows us to create a new image of our connection to nature, and in going beyond the separateness from it, we have ourselves created. Embodied movement practices are a way beyond dichotomies: parent/child; teacher/student; male/female; practitioner/service user; able/not able; and power/powerless.

Developing compositional methodologies in research and education allow the participants to engage in both verbal and non-verbal orientating activities that creates space to not only explore what it immediately possible, but desirable. Body awareness can help create richer narrations that challenge the way we conceive

ourselves and foster a more integrated self (Tisdell, 2003). In post-modern times, where uncertainty is ubiquitous, it may be relevant to involve wider segments of population in non-directive and non-linear activities to invite them to become active participants. Responsible co-construction and emotional participation, in activities which encourage listening, recognition and mutual appraisal enhance our subjective and personal resources to walk through an uncertain present and look to the future with confidence.

## NOTE

[1]   www.conoscenzainfesta.eu

## REFERENCES

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York, NY: Ballantine.
Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Burkitt, I. (1999). *Bodies of thought. Embodiment, identity & modernity*. London: Sage.
Cecchin, G., Lane, G., & Ray, W. (1992). *Irreverence. A strategy for therapists' survival.* London: Karnac Books.
Clark, M. C. (2012). Transformation as embodied narrative. In. E. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 425–428). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes' Error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. New York, NY: Putnam Publishing.
De Jaegher, H., &, Di Paolo, E. (2007). Participatory sense-making. An enactive approach to social cognition. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Science, 6*(4), 485–507.
Feldenkrais, M. (1991). *Awareness through movement: Easy-to-do health exercises to improve your posture, vision, imagination*. San Francisco, CA: Harper.
Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Finnegan, F., Merrill, B., & Thunburg, C. (Eds.). (2014). *Student voices on inequalities in European higher education: Challenges for theory, policy and practice in a time of change*. London: Routledge.
Formenti, L. (2016a). Complexity in learning biographies: A dialogical approach. *Culture, Biography & Lifelong Learning, 2*(1), 11–23.
Formenti, L. (2016b). Learning to live. The pattern which connects education and dis/orientation. In L. Formenti & L. West (Eds.), *Stories that make a difference* (pp. 234–241). Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.
Formenti, L. (2018). Complexity, adult biographies and co-operative transformation. In M. Milana, S. Webb, J. Holford, R. Waller, & P. Jarvis (Eds.), *The Palgrave international handbook on adult and lifelong education and learning* (pp. 191–209). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Formenti, L., West, L., & Horsdal, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Embodied narratives. Connecting stories, bodies, cultures and ecologies*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.
Fraser, W. (2017). *Seeking wisdom in adult teaching and learning*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Gallagher, S. (2005). *How the body shapes the mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Gardner, F. (2014). *Being critically reflective*. New York, NY & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Grosz, E. (2001). *Architecture from the outside: Essays on virtual and real space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition*. London: Sage Pubblication.
Horsdal, M. (2012). *Telling lives. Exploring dimensions of narratives*. London: Routledge.
Hunt, C. (2013). *Transformative learning through creative life writing*. London: Routledge.
Kroth, M., & Cranton, P. (2014). *Stories of transformative learning*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Lawrence, R. L. (Ed.). (2012). *Bodies of knowledge: Embodied learning in adult education* (New Direction for Adult and Continuing Education series, Vol. 134). San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Leavy, P. (2017). *Handbook of arts-based research*. New York, NY: Guildford Press.

Maturana, H., & Varela, F. (1992). *The tree of knowledge. The biological roots of human understanding.* Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Merrill, B., & West, L. (2009). *Using biographical methods in social research*. London: Sage.

Morin, E. (1999). *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*. Paris: UNESCO.

Ollis, T. (2012). *A critical pedagogy of embodied education.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pink, S. (2009). *Doing sensory ethnography*. London: Sage.

Reid, H. L. (2016). *An introduction to career counselling and coaching*. London: Sage.

Shapiro, L. (2011). *Embodied cognition*. London: Routledge.

Thelen, E. (2000). Grounded in the world: developmental origins of the embodied mind. *Infancy, 1*, 3–28.

Tisdell, E. (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Varela, F. J., Rosch, E., & Thompson, E. (1993). *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

West, L. (2016). *Distress in the city: Racism, fundamentalism and a democratic education*. London: Trentham Books.

PETER EHRSTRÖM

# 17. PLANNING WITH PEOPLE

*Reflections on Participation and Learning on Deliberative Walks*

## INTRODUCTION

Literature on democratic deliberation rarely focuses on learning processes as Prosser et al. (2018, p. 213) note, "what is often lacking is *detail on the pedagogy of learning*". This chapter focuses on the participatory learning that takes place in 'Deliberative Walks', a novel method first proposed by Ehrström and Raisio (2014). I will outline what this involves and the impact Deliberative Walks have, and might have. These reflections builds on previous work in which a colleague and I analyzed two case studies (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017), exploring the potential of Deliberative Walks alongside findings from a pilot study on an initiative called Studentlab Deliberative Walks. These walks can be regarded as both a form of pedagogy and a type of research. It highlights the importance of place in learning and as Szczepanski (2013) points out, *where* education takes place is a vital pedagogical question. It also underlines the need for innovation and creativity to develop forms of education that deepen participation and engagement. "The act of participating can be seen as bringing spaces to life as well as carving out new spaces and creating new social forms with their own momentum and impetus" (Cornwall, 2002, p. 2). This brings us to broader questions of social power and as Ercan and Dryzek (2015) argue, "democracy also needs to be deepened" by engaging participants in ways that are authentically deliberative and involving reflective participation (2015, p. 243). Instead of just articulating viewpoints, a deliberative process also creates opportunities for these viewpoints to change (Curato et al., 2017). Thus, there is need to develop deliberative methods that increase participants' learning not only of issues, but of participation itself. Understanding participatory democracy includes *how* to argue, *why* to argue, *when* to argue, and *with whom* to argue.

## WHAT ARE DELIBERATIVE WALKS?

Deliberative Walks synthesizes two established participatory methods – the discussion-centric Citizens Juries and the observation-oriented Development Walks (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017). Deliberative Walks are:

> A participatory process in which the participants, by deliberating in small groups and joining facilitated walks, tackle a complex policy issue that has highly intertwined social and physical dimensions. (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017, p. 29)

Before I discuss Deliberative Walks in more detail, I want to say more about the inspiration for the practice. The Citizens' Jury (CJ) method was invented in the early 1970s (Crosby & Nethercutt, 2005). A typical Citizens Jury project lasts three to five days and the goal is to make sure that a group of people – randomly selected and demographically balanced – have enough time to learn about the issue from witnesses and to be able to deliberate among themselves about what they are learning (Crosby & Hottinger, 2011). Information given to the jurors needs to be of high quality and facilitators guarantee the quality of deliberative discussions, guided by ideals of equality and fairness (Leighninger, 2014; Fung, 2015).

The origins of Development Walks (DW) in turn can be traced back to *women's safety audits*, developed in Canada in the late 1980s as a response to increasing concerns related to insecurity and violence against women (Lambrick & Travers, 2008). *Safety and security walks*, developed in Sweden in the early 2000s, share many similarities with women's safety audits (Brå, 2009, p. 1). The focus of safety and security walks is on, both, the physical and social dimensions of localities; the underlying idea being that the ones who have the greatest knowledge of the local environments are those who actually live there (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017). Ehrström and Katajamäki (2013) identified DW as an important method for citizen participation, with the learning process enhanced by in situ observations of specific situations and places and its capacity to concretize complex planning issues (Ehrström, 2015, p. 17).

Facilitated by the walk leader(s), participants proceed through a pre-defined route, record reflections and discuss their surroundings, after which participants develop proposals for development, summarize and communicate them to public officials (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017). If a scribe is appointed, he/she will record the group experience. Written comments and pictures are of great help during the later deliberation phase, as non-documented reflections and impressions may too easily be forgotten, when deliberating in groups and drafting the resolution in plenum.

The potential of deliberative walks which builds on these two models of participatory processes was explored in two case studies implemented in Finland in 2014 by Raisio and Ehrström (2017). Both case studies have their shortcomings in relation to the ideal of Deliberative Walk; however, together they constitute a basis from which preliminary conclusions could be made. The Deliberative Walk approach makes it possible for participants to acquire a more direct and holistic experience of the issue they are deliberating on (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017, p. 43) which also makes learning more equal. This combines theoretical elements and listening to experts and discussions which is complimented by in situ observations and recognition of a sense of place (by which I mean inhabitants' and citizens' understanding of

the locality where they live and/or act), participation may be experienced as more equal by all participating groups. Well-educated, well-off, well-positioned citizens tend to dominate in situations based on theoretical learning and participation. The combination of different learning methods and a preparedness to value different skills and characteristics may give groups that are challenged by theoretical elements, a greater opportunity to contribute to a common learning experience. It is further argued that a combination of indoor and outdoor, place-based, learning, make deliberations more inclusive, and more interesting to participate in, especially for groups or individuals that prefer more practical forms of learning.

In this way Deliberative Walks provide a vehicle to learn in a more complete matter. This means to learn with all your senses, theoretically and by observing first-hand. The variation of learning methods and places as well as a possibility to contribute in other ways – by using all senses (feeling, smelling, seeing, hearing, touching) and having practical knowledge and sense of place – may enhance political participation and "re-engag[e] a disillusioned and disenchanted citizenry" (Smith, 2009, p. 4).

Deliberative Walks, then, is a more complex deliberative method than either CJ or DW and the use of these various methods as a pedagogical and methodological set of practices as explored below in relation to two case studies. The first case study Pirkka14 was initially designed as a Citizens Jury and kept this title but used the DW model as described above. Pirkka14 gave us an opportunity to also test a situation-based observation, and thus a (somewhat impure) Deliberative Walks experiment. The second case study Campus Forum, was planned and carried out in accordance with the Deliberative Walks method. Early results are also presented from a pilot study 'Studentlab Deliberative Walks'. The results of the case studies were jointly analyzed, and research was conducted through an analysis of semi-structured interviews with participants. The Pirkka14 Citizens Jury took place in October 2014 in Finland. Raisio was in charge of this case (a situation-based Deliberative Walks experiment), while I was in charge of the second case study (Campus Forum, a place-based Deliberative Walks experiment).

## Pilot Case I: Pirkka14 Citizen's Jury

Pirkka14 (an emergency preparedness exercise by civil authorities) and Wanaja14 (Finnish armed forces defense training) were implemented simultaneously for the joint training of civil authorities and armed forces. As noted above Pirkka14, was somewhat confusingly, called a Citizens Jury (partly due to it being already planned and named so by the participating/organizing authorities). The CJ consisted of three days of deliberation (five hours per day) and a press event. The first day began with an introduction, and a video described the scenario. Then the jurors were divided to two small groups, both with a facilitator and a scribe. After these initial deliberations jurors had a chance to ask questions from the expert panel. On the second day the deliberations continued in small groups and the day ended with the observation of an accident simulation in the field. The simulation – an explosive laden military truck

catching fire – tested the new local defense concept and the co-operation between civil authorities and armed forces. Jurors observed while a commentator narrated the sequence of events, and they could ask questions. On the third day the focus was on writing the declaration. On the fourth day jurors presented the declaration in a media event, after which official statements were requested from various stakeholders (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017).

The unique off-site component, however, makes it an interesting case study from the point of view of Deliberative Walks (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017). During the research, jurors reflected on different ways of learning. Interestingly, these did not include only learning by hearing and seeing, but also by feeling. For example one of the jurors described this multitude of learning opportunities: "It is always that when we, after the theoretical part, leave to the 'field', people can then use their ears and eyes and heart and to see" (J2) (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017).

The role of feeling and experiencing was also noted in relation to the accident simulation. Being in the dark with the flashing lights of emergency vehicles, not knowing what will come next, was considered thrilling by some; such conditions clearly differing from those of a "nice warm classroom" (J2).

Participants thought the accident-simulation in combination with more theoretical learning was a novel approach that also made it possible to simulate reactions with other senses, like seeing, hearing and smelling. This combination of theoretical learning and practical experiences influenced new ways of thinking and deliberating about the subject.

*Pilot Case II: Campus Forum*

Campus Forum pilot study was organized strictly in accordance with the Deliberative Walks method. It took place in November 2014, as part of the national New Locality project (2011–2015), administered by The Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses. Previously it had been contemplated how synergies between different institutions could be increased and how the campuses in the locality could be more open to local inhabitants. It was thought that a more participatory practice, such as a Deliberative Walk, could give novel insights to the issue leading to the Campus Forum being tasked with a question of "how to create a common campus for all" (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017).

I was in charge of the Campus Forum Deliberative Walks, as well as leading the Development Walk element, and as facilitator in one of the discussion groups. Research was conducted by analyzing semi-structured interviews with participants after completing the Campus Forum.

Campus Forum was organized in 3.5 hours long sessions over three evenings. The first began with a presentation of the process and the theme, and getting to know each other, followed by three expert presentations. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions, after which they were divided into two subgroups for discussions,

with a facilitator and a scribe appointed for each group. The day ended with a short common discussion.

The second day was "Development Walk Day" on campus. The walk leader held a short introduction and then guided the group on a two hour route, via eight stops, where different experts/managers held short informative presentations. The participants then had the opportunity to ask questions. A minute-maker made notes and took photographs. The participants then gathered indoors for discussion and reflections, with some presenters joined in, an unplanned added value.

The third day followed a Citizens' Jury pattern, with participants deliberating and writing a declaration. A week later, at a presentation seminar, the declaration – including five proposals – was handed over, and the process of the Campus Forum was presented. Representatives of the city and institutes of higher education were given the floor for comments. Discussion followed. Media attended the seminar, resulting in articles in local newspapers.

Contrary to traditional CJs, in which the objective is to form a local population in miniature, with the Campus Forum the aim was to gather a heterogeneous sample of different stakeholders, e.g. inhabitants of the locality, local entrepreneurs, students and employees of the institutes of higher education. Eighteen persons registered, seventeen participated. Six students, four employees on campus, three entrepreneurs, and four inhabitants, across a wide age range. However, of the seventeen participants only six participated for the whole duration of the Campus Forum. Partly this is due to miscommunication from gatekeepers, as four one-day participants announced that they had thought Campus Forum was a one-night event. This, of course, had implications for the process, as the number of participants during the whole Deliberative Walk became very low. In hindsight, the researchers themselves should have provided the information to all relevant groups.

Following the ideals of outdoor and place-responsive pedagogics (Wattchow & Brown, 2011) participants described how they had embodied encounters with different places as well as hearing many place-based narratives from the experts/managers. The expert presentations of the first day and the walk on the second day were considered to support each other, and the walk made issues tangible: as one male participant explained "[the walk] is where it really starts. Although there were discussions, through the walk one saw how things really were". An inhabitant participating said "It was so great … I would say the best (part). It suited it perfectly. It sure was much better than watching a video or something, it was so much better to see the entire place". One participant highlighted the use of different senses:

> These are several senses then, and you can see visually in front of you what people are talking about, instead of just talking about it or see the image … you're there and you see it in three dimensions, yes. (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017)

Those who were not very familiar with the campus welcomed the walk-about session and the input of experts/managers in particular, as their presentations supplemented

each participant's own observations of the surroundings. Walking encouraged and stimulated discussions.

Participants strongly pointed out the value of combining different forms of learning and appreciated place-based learning and in situ-observations as an ingredient of the deliberative learning process. Based on these two case studies, Raisio and Ehrström (2017) suggest that:

> in place-specific deliberations, a Deliberative Walk is a suitable method when the issue that is being tackled has highly intertwined social and physical dimensions, while in more situation-specific deliberations, a Deliberative Walk adds value when the issue is such that needs a more complete and direct learning experience … Sometimes a single CJ or a single Development walk is not enough; a combination is called for. (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017, pp. 28, 44)

The case studies were not without limitations. Neither study fully met the ideal of Deliberative Walk. The off-site component of Pirkka14 Citizens' Jury was observation-oriented and the activity on the field was limited. Campus Forum had a more active field experience, but suffered from a limited number of participants. Overall, participants valued combining theoretical input (discussions, expert lectures, Q&A sessions) and place-based physical observations as it strengthened the learning process and increased their understanding of this participatory method as well as the issue and place/situation under deliberation.

## STUDENTLAB DELIBERATIVE WALKS

Learning to deliberate is core to our development as democratic citizens (Carney & Harris, 2012). This approach was also crucial to the Studentlab Deliberative Walks, where Lindell and I piloted a new place-based method for citizen participation and different learning methods, to increase student activity and interest in participatory democracy and deliberations in society. It was a cooperation between Adult Education (Ehrström) and Political Science (Lindell), and formally a pilot master course in Adult Education.

The idea was to create an interdisciplinary mini-public of students from different backgrounds, both domestic and international students from different disciplines. 21 students enrolled, 19 participated in the whole course, 9 domestic and 10 international students. 18 students completed all assignments (for 5 ECTS).

We designed a Deliberative Walk experience on the redevelopment of Åbo Akademi University campus and neighboring sites – silo buildings, nearby seashore, and Kuntsi Museum of Modern Art. Choosing a current municipal topic, the arrangers also hoped that the Studentlab resolution could influence the municipal planning debate, and therefore, as a potential added-value, give students a taste of "real life"-politics. Studentlab was organized in October 2017, consisting of five half-day elements (4 hours each) (see Table 17.1).

*Table 17.1. The "Studentlab: Deliberative Walks" process*

| How should the university campus and surrounding areas be redeveloped? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Day 1: | Introduction/Theory Day | Information about the process, deliberative and participatory democracy, place-based learning and the Deliberative Walks method, pre-questionnaire. |
| Day 2: | Citizens' Jury Day | Three Q&A sessions with four experts (about deliberative theories, architecture, arts and environments), followed by small-group discussions and a plenum discussion. |
| Day 3: | Development Walk Day | Development Walk on campus and surrounding areas, including six stops with expert introductions (representing Åbo Akademi University, Student Union, Museum of Modern Art, city planning department, and citizen association). Local media attended. Followed by plenum discussions. |
| Day 4: | Deliberation Day | Citizens Jury small group and plenum discussions, writing of joint declaration with five (re)development proposals for Campus area and surroundings. |
| Day 5: | Presentation Seminar Day | Declaration with proposals presented and handed over to relevant decision-makers from City of Vaasa and Åbo Akademi University Dean of FPV, with local media present, post-questionnaire. |

Results based on questionnaires and essays indicate that student knowledge and interest in participatory democracy and deliberative methods increased during this course. Interest to participate in education that combines theoretical and place-based elements also increased.

Most students had low or non-existent prior knowledge of deliberative methods, prior experiences of participatory democracy in education were more varied, but only a small fraction had extensive experience of this. Participants either had significant prior experience of combining theoretical and place-based learning (9 scored 4 or 5, on a scale 1–5) or little or none (16 scored 0–2). Thus, the individual starting-points were very different.

Questionnaires clearly show that both knowledge and interest to participate improved overall. Interestingly, student interest to participate in participatory democracy and deliberations *in society* clearly increased. 10/19 mark a strongly increased interest (scoring 4 to 5 on a scale 0–5), with as many as seven (more than a third) scoring a full five. The remaining nine participants scored 3. This suggests that the interest to participate *in society* increased, at least somewhat, for *all* participants. Thus, Studentlab succeeded in educating (potentially) more active citizens.

The participants' knowledge of deliberative methods increased significantly. More than half the group (11/19) scored 4 or 5 (on a scale 0–5), none scored under 3. Increased knowledge of participatory democracy was also clearly stated, as 11/19 answered 4 or 5 (on a scale 0–5), and, again, none less than three.

11/19 participants also scored a full 5 on the question "Has this course increased interest in combining theoretical and place-based learning?" A further five scored 4 and three scored 3 (on a scale 0–5). Interest in place-based learning received a slightly more varied answer, but still positive. Eight scored a full 5, four scored 4, six scored 3, and only one scored a 2. Strong support for the Development Walk element was evident with 15/19 participants singling out the walk (wholly or partly) as the most important element in their learning process.

Participants described their willingness to participate more actively in society, to use newly gained knowledge of deliberative methods by, for example, conducting deliberative walks or development walks, with children (suggested by an international student of pre-school pedagogy), while another international student proposed a similar Studentlab course at her own University campus.

At the presentation seminar, a representative of the City planning authority quite bluntly dismissed the students' proposal, when handed the declaration. The representative concluded that the silos will be demolished (even though a formal, democratic, decision by the city council was yet to be made). This angered and disappointed many students, but it could perhaps also be seen as a valuable lesson in real-life politics.

Hence, the presentation seminar, rather unplanned, gave students a glimpse of power structures and decision-making in society and outside elected political bodies. The importance of "getting the word out" and experiencing the role of media means that the question of media strategy may also be taken into consideration in future Studentlabs. Here roughly half the group, 9/19 participants, were interviewed by media. For most students, this was a first experience, and students not interviewed still experienced media presence and media coverage.

Students clearly enjoyed the combination of theoretical and place-based in situ-observations. Their interest increased for combinations of these forms of learning. Even though the sample is small (18 students completed all course tasks to be awarded 5 ECTS points) it is suggested that a combination and variation of methods were experienced positively and increased learning.

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In both case studies (Raisio & Ehrström, 2017) and in the Studentlab experience, the combination of theoretical and place-based learning methods strengthened the learning process. Participants in all cases singled out the structured walk as the most important element for their learning process.

The presentation seminar also highlighted important challenges for Deliberative Walks to be truly successful. Political planning processes, for example, are time-

consuming and may finish long after the DW experience has ended, policy-makers may be dismissive of DW declarations or may be organized for general awareness-raising rather than direct policy impact. In these cases, strategies are required for how the DW proposals can be seriously considered by decision-makers and clearly communicated.

> Respect, tolerance, patience, empathy, and being open-minded are some of the values that we learned during the group discussions", noted one international student of the Studentlab, while another emphasized: "The deliberative walks and democracy part grew my political efficacy, and the interaction with the city officials diminished my political efficacy. (Lindell & Ehrström, 2018)

It is important to reflect upon the impact of sequencing in Deliberative Walks. Would the outcome change if the elements were realized in a different order? Goodin and Niemeyer (2003) argue that reflection and focusing attention on an issue will generate "internal-reflective deliberation" and state that this is likely to happen in earlier stages of deliberation and will have a large impact on participants. Lindell and Ehrström (2018) in turn note that the development walk sequence (in Studentlab Deliberative Walks) had a more profound impact on participants, which was sequenced in the opposite order, with theoretical content first, followed by in situ-observations.

The Deliberative Walk method takes sequencing into account as it may indeed influence the learning process. I argue that it increases the value of observation to first have learned about the issue at hand, as well as the deliberative method and process. It afforded opportunities to theoretically problematize issues under discussion. Without understanding the issue at hand and method, important observations may go unnoticed or processed in an unreflective way. Listening to experts, asking questions and discussing together means that participants from different backgrounds share information and initial perspectives before making common in situ-observations. All participants will then be instructed to observe with all senses (smell, see, hear, touch, feel, "sense"), which makes the walk experience in itself more equal, irrespective of prior experiences and knowledges.

Deliberative Walks, then, include elements visualized in a Deliberative Walks Learning Process Wheel. I call the elements in the process *Problematize* (theoretical input, Citizens Jury), *Observe* (In-situ observations, Development Walk), *Reflect* (Deliberation, discussions, compromises, writing of common declaration), *Act* (Presentation of declaration and propositions to decision-makers, public and (in) media). A fifth element, *Summarize* (reflections on the result and process as a whole, and the outcome of the DW), complete the Learning Process Wheel. This concluding summarization may then be a spark for a new or continuing process, starting with new theoretical input and problematization.

From a democratic point of view, it is vital to note that participation and deliberation based on interacting with experts in "classrooms" and reading texts, tend to strengthen the position of the already powerful, that is, the well-educated,
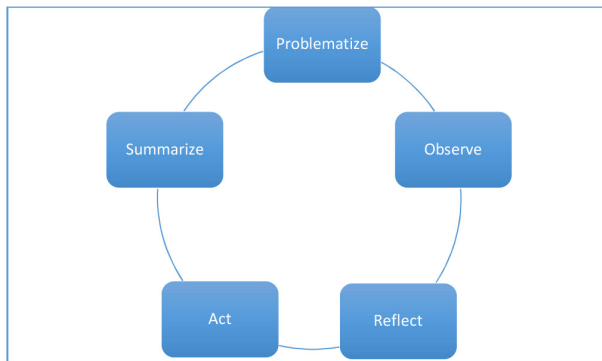
*Figure 17.1. The Deliberative Walks learning process wheel*

well-off and well-positioned citizens. For other groups, this challenges their rights and possibilities to participate in an equal way. Facilitators are instructed to distribute speaking turns equally and emphasize different ways of learning, but they cannot change the fact that participants differ in background and experience of theoretical learning situations.

Combining theoretical classroom-based learning with place-based learning, in-situ observations, diverse skills and knowledge within a group and holistic embodied learning has enormous potential for learning and research. Different groups and individuals bring different qualities, skills and experiences to the deliberations, and thus widen the group's knowledge base. Sharing thoughts, seeking compromises and discussing (under the guidance of facilitators) may then result in novel insights and learning.

Deliberative Walks include a strong element of *variation*, and this, I argue, improves the learning process. The experience is not the same, but very different, every time the participants meet. Interviews with participants especially highlight the Development Walk element, that is, in situ-observations, as the most important element in enhancing learning. The physical walk element may be the most important, and obviously the most appreciated, part of a Deliberative Walk experience, but I argue that it actually is the variation and combination of methods that is the most important feature of Deliberative Walks. I further argue that this method is well suited for civic participation and planning processes. In contested and/or transforming places it may be a tool for improving social sustainability, where a Deliberative Walk bring different stakeholders and interest groups to the same table and walk, in order to find common ground to agree upon. Deliberative Walks implies to plan *with* people, instead of planning *for* people, or *over* the heads of people.

# REFERENCES

Brå. (2009) *Safety and security walks: The Swedish National Council for crime prevention*. Retrieved from http://www.veilig-ontwerp-beheer.nl/publicaties/safety-and-security-walks

Carney, G. M., & Harris, C. (2012, May). *Citizens' voices: Experiments in democratic renewal and reform*. Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, IRCHSS.

Cornwall, A. (2002). Locating citizen participation. *IDS Bulletin, 33*(2), 49–58.

Crosby, N., & Hottinger, C. J. (2011). The citizens jury process. In *Book of the states 2011* (pp. 321–325).

Crosby, N., & Nethercut, D. (2005). Citizens juries: Creating a trustworthy voice of the people. In J. Gastil & P. Levine (Eds.), Deliberative democracy handbook: Strategies for effective civic engagement in the twenty-first century (pp. 111–119). San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Curato, N., Dryzek, J., Ercan, S. A., Hendriks, C. M., & Niemeyer, S. (2017). Twelve key findings in deliberative democracy research. *Daedalus, Symposium on Deliberative Democracy, 146*(3), 28–38.

Ehrström, P. (2015). *Uusi paikallisuus-hanke ja keskusteleva demokratia* [*The new locality project and deliberative democracy*] (Raportti 11/2015). Helsinki: Settlementtiliitto. Retrieved March 19, 2018, from http://setlementti-fi-bin.directo.fi/@Bin/fdd3a5da49350416260dd4b114618ef1/1468417955/application/pdf/1024628/Peter_Ehrstr%C3%B6m_Uusi%20paikallisuus%20-hanke%20ja%20keskusteleva%20demokratia.pdf

Ehrström, P., & Katajamäki, H. (2013). 'Paikallisuuden ytimessä: Tarkastelussa Vaasan Palosaari' [In the core of locality: A study of Palosaari, Vaasa]. In I. Luoto, H. Katajamäki, & N. Lundström (Eds.), Oppiva alue, menestyvä alue – Juhlakirja professori Seija Virkkalan 60-vuotispäiväksi (Vol. 275, pp. 61–80, Acta Wasaensia series). Series 12. Vaasa: Vaasan yliopisto.

Ehrström, P., & Raisio, H. (2014). *Deliberative walks – A new participatory method for urban from planning* (Abstract). Deliberatiivisen Demokratian Instituutti R&D Day. Retrieved March 19, 2018, from http://www.deliberaatio.org/~delibero/wordpress/?p=758

Ercan, S. A., & Dryzek, J. S. (2015). The reach of deliberative democracy. *Policy Studies, 36*(3), 241–248. doi:10.1080/01442872.2015.1065969

Fung, A. (2015). Putting the public back into governance: The challenge of citizen participation and its future. *Public Administration Review, 75*(4), 513–522.

Goodin, R. E., & Niemeyer, S. J. (2003). When does deliberation begin? Internal reflection versus public discussion in deliberative democracy. *Political Studies, 51*, 627–649.

Lambrick, M., & Travers, K. (2008). *Women's safety audits: What works and where?* (Safer Cities Programme, UN-Habitat).

Leighninger, M. (2014). What we're talking about when we talk about the "civic field" (and why we should clarify what we mean). *Journal of Public Deliberation, 10*(1), 8. Retrieved from https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art8

Lindell, M. (2015). Deliberation och åsiktsförändring: En studie av individegenskaper och gruppkontext [Deliberation and opinion change: A study of individual characteristics and group context]. Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Lindell, M., & Ehrström, P. (2018, September 5–7). Deliberative walks – Civic participation in local-level planning processes. Full paper presented at the Participatory Spaces in Perspective, International Conference of the Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Specialist Group of the Political Studies Association, University of Westminster, London (In panel "Shaping Participatory Spaces I: Facilitating Participation).

Prosser, B., Flinders, M., Jennings, W., Renwick, A., Spada, P., Stoker, G., & Ghose, K. (2018). Pedagogy and deliberative democracy: Insights from recent experiments in the United Kingdom. Contemporary Politics, *24*(2), 210–232. Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Raisio, H., & Ehrström, P. (2017). Taking deliberation to the streets: Reflections on deliberative walks. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration, 21*(4), 27–51. Retrieved from http://ojs.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/sjpa/article/view/3517/3383

Smith, G. (2009). *Democratic innovations: Designing institutions for citizen participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Szczepanski, A. (2013). Platsens betydelse för lärande och undervisning – Ett utomhuspedagogiskt perspektiv [The importance of place for learning and teaching – An outdoor educational perspective]. *NorDiNa, 9*(1), 3–17.

Wattchow, B., & Brown, M. (2011). *A pedagogy of place: Outdoor education for a changing world*. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing.

# PART 8

# CREATIVE DISSEMINATION

VICKY DUCKWORTH AND ROB SMITH

# 18. CREATIVE, CRITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

*Learners' Lives and Further Education*

## INTRODUCTION

Further Education (FE) is an umbrella term that describes mainly formal learning taking place mainly outside of school environments and largely shaped by historical, industrial and social factors closely related to the local socio-economic circumstances in different towns and cities across the UK. This chapter presents findings from a collaborative research project into how, against a challenging landscape constrained by the pressures of marketization and funding, FE continues to offer a 'differential space' (Lefebvre, 1991) in which learners who have often had negative experiences of schooling, supported by critical pedagogy, are able to experience education as transformative (Mezirow, 2000; Duckworth, 2013; Duckworth & Ade-Ojo, 2016; Duckworth & Smith, 2017, 2018b).

The churn of post compulsory educational policy over the last quarter century provides a vital frame for any discussion about knowledge production practices in this field. As a point of departure, the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) removed colleges from local authority control and introduced marketization to this heterogeneous and locally orientated form of educational provision. At the heart of this episode of marketization was an approach to funding that, in effect, centralized the curriculum control and allowed for on-going annual policy and curriculum intervention by successive government departments (Keep, 2006; Lucas & Crowther, 2016). This has led to an intensification of an instrumentalist view of FE closely linked to the emergence of neoliberal policy with its emphasis on 'skills' rather than broader conceptualizations of education (Duckworth & Smith, 2019). The ideological effect of the Further and Higher Education Act was to conjure into being and consolidate what has become known as 'the Further Education Sector' – a generalized and 'abstract' space (Lefebvre, 1991) that has facilitated policy making at a distance and systematically superimposed a centralized drive to address economic and skills concerns over local 'ecologies' of teaching and learning.

As marketization requires colleges to generate performance data, these 'metrics' – measurable phenomena – have come to dominate the knowledge production activities of colleges and tend to shape their cultures. These pressures have resulted in a sectoral habitus, a way of doing and seeing things in colleges/providers that values

and promotes the production by teachers and managers of a veneer of favourable performance data that presents only a distorted and distant reflection of the lived experiences of teaching and learning.

Colleges' performance is currently dominated by the grading system used by the market regulator, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), that inspects schools and colleges and assesses them against a four-point grading scale: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, Inadequate. This involves colleges being subjected to a cycle of 'inspection' that intensifies if performance is judged not to be Outstanding or Good. The consequences of this supposedly authoritative judgement are very serious and can result in the closure of courses and even of whole areas of provision. In this high stakes context then, our research project aimed to work outside and beyond these performative knowledge production practices, to engage in knowledge production as a reflexive and collaborative rather than a competitive activity governed by 'gaming'. Instead, our research project chose to foreground voices of students, teachers and others to provide a qualitative, textured and more critical picture: a nuanced picture we would argue that creatively represents perspectives that are typically blocked out within marketized settings. As a project that sought methodologically to bring values and practices from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1995) to research practice, we viewed the cycle of research as enhancing the agency of the participants by foregrounding their stories and offering an alternative set of narratives that crossed institutional boundaries and challenged reductive discourses that permeate discourse about the FE 'sector'.

In contrast to the highly constrained and performative knowledge production practices that incorporation has brought into being within colleges, this project has collected counter-metric narratives: stories that fall outside of what is deemed to be measurable. The project provided a collaborative and democratic space for the sharing and celebration of participants' stories; their voices were validated. The digital platform was a key facilitating factor in this. We will focus in particular on the project's creative use of digital tools to: (i) extend engagement with and dissemination of the project findings and (ii) enrich the research through the establishment of discursive *fora* and a virtual space in which ideas and narratives related to transformative teaching and learning could be shared. The chapter concludes by theorizing the connection between a digital research methodology and critical pedagogy in an attempt to model a democratic and dialogical approach to knowledge production that that acts as a counterforce to work against the grain of current neo-liberal hegemonic discourses.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT: TRANSFORMING LIVES

The research project: *FE in England: Transforming lives and communities*, sponsored by the University and Colleges' Union, utilized a digitally embedded research methodology to gather, explore and share project data. The data comprised a series of rich narratives from learners, teachers, employers and learners' family members.

These were collected through video recorded interviews which were then shared via a project website.[1] A YouTube channel[2] and twitter account (@FEtransforms) were further features of an inter-related and multi-faceted digital platform that were used to build a project audience and an interactive critical space which garnered further contributions in the form of written narratives, photographs and artefacts. This digital platform was used to grow a wider project audience to participate in a collaborative way by contributing to the data. The aim here was to catalyze what we describe as *virtually enhanced engagement* in order to constitute a 'thirdspace' (Soja, 1998), i.e. a space in which FE could effectively be reimagined, through a collective dialogical interaction of practitioners and students as *more than* the quantitatively–defined abstract space that current FE policy discourse reifies. This interactive dimension extended the influence of the project and constructed new and alternative meanings in the public domain. It also facilitated engagement with policy makers and led to additional opportunities for public dissemination and speaking back and to the development of policy.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology brought together aspects from a range of different approaches. For us, life history and biography provided important entry points into our research (Goodson & Sikes, 2004; Duckworth, 2013). The life stories of the researchers are closely bound up with FE and this provided a crucial frame of authenticity when meeting and speaking with participants. Reciprocity in telling our stories while asking participants to share their own was an important principle in the collaborative practice of gathering the data. Goodley et al. (2004, p. 167) comment that:

> Researching life stories offers opportunities for drawing on our own and others' narratives in ways that can illuminate key theoretical, policy and practice considerations.

Listening to participants' life stories provided insights into the transformative impact of FE for them and on their lives; it also illuminated the ripple impact on family and community. This often also involved us listening to participants recounting negative experiences of schooling. These research conversations were collaborative in the sense that not only were stories shared, but new understandings were generated for everyone involved. For the research team, participants' stories provided important insights into the factors that facilitated transformative teaching and learning. For participants, these dialogical research conversations involved a re-telling that culminated in a shedding of spoilt identities (for example through the symbolic violence of being labelled) and an affirmation of the new learner identities based on agency and self-respect. The discussions also, more broadly, fostered a growing awareness of social and historical factors that had shaped their experience of education to date (Duckworth & Smith, 2018a). Participants' sense that they belonged to a dispersed community that they could connect with through the project

made possible a broadening of individual horizons. There was also a sharing of stories between the participants which developed the process of what Clough (2002) describes as "focused conversations", the value of which he outlines in the following way:

> Through 'talking-for-writing' new ideas can be born, new knowledge can be created, views can be shaped and re-shaped. The richness in the approach lies in the openness of those participants and their ideas to be shaped by those of others, and to examine their own experiences in the light of what they hear others say. (p. 81)

The dialogical approach not only fed into a methodological position that sees research as a social practice (Duckworth & Smith, 2019) rather than as a separate, technical exercise in extracting information while remaining neutral and distant. As we explain below, we felt the nature of the narratives we were gathering demanded that we step outside of the rush and tumult of 'the present' and into a space of reflection in which we aimed to summon up a greater level of 'presence' (Lefebvre, 2004). Lefebvre (2004) uses the term 'presence' –counterposed against 'the present' – to critique 'everyday life which he sees as ideologically imbued with marketized relations. In contrast with the present which for him is "a fact and an effect of commerce":

> (W)ith presence there is dialogue, the use of time, speech and action … presence situates itself in the poetic: value, creation, situation in the world and not only in the relations of exchange. (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 47)

In this way, the research was reflexive as it recognized its own potential impact as social interaction. That consciousness made it important for us to draw on our understanding of critical pedagogy and to attempt to produce an egalitarian space for research conversations to take place in. Creating an atmosphere of informality, sharing our own stories, helped to rupture hierarchical relations; we aimed to position participants on an equal footing with us as researchers. Our narratives were woven into the research conversations as a way of de-mystifying research and ourselves as researchers.

Life history has the sensitizing potential "to enable voices to be heard that are usually silent" (Plummer, 2001, p. 248). This allowed the researchers not just to view the respondents' world picture but enables a mutual engagement with each other's narratives to open them up for discussion and meaning making. Throughout, we remained highly sensitive to the importance of the language we used as we wanted to explore the issues without labelling and stigmatizing the participants. That said, the experiences they have are not neutral, they are lived experiences which demonstrate the inequalities which impact on their lives.

PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT

The project paid particular attention to the ethical issues associated with using a digital platform which included video. Anonymization was offered to all participants but, as the focus was on the transformative qualities of their educational experiences, most were happy for their real names to be used. Recruiting participants to the project happened organically: starting with the existing professional networks and contacts of the researchers, it gradually spanned out across the UK and beyond. This momentum grew through an ongoing programme of virtual and actual dissemination. The researchers began presenting data from the project to audiences at local, national and international conferences within six months of it starting. These audiences included HE researchers, further education teachers but also policymakers and members of the public. This fed into participation naturally; those listening to presentations about the project were invited to contribute to the project website. We distributed postcards with images of participants and links to the website asking audiences to share their stories of transformative teaching and learning. This often then led to audience members contributing directly to the website. Once these new accounts had been written into the website under a tab labelled: *Share your story*, we were able to tweet the link out to the growing digital audience for the project.



*Figure 18.1. Project postcard*

In this way, the collection of project data was punctuated by specific social events that sought to promote a shared understanding of transformative teaching and learning and that generated further data gathering opportunities. At the same time, the research was digitally live and publically accessible as it developed.

The retelling of the participants' narratives was not without difficulties. To offer validity to the narratives, it was important to include our own life histories and to write ourselves into the knowledge (Stanley & Wise 1993). This approach came with emotional challenges. The difficulty for us was feeling at times impotent as details surfaced within participants' narratives that spoke of deprivation, poverty and struggle. As comparatively privileged academics, we were sharing experiences with people who had often come from (or were still in) very different circumstances.

Maintaining the dignity of participants who talked about freeing themselves from drug dependency, abusive relationships, spending time in prison, episodes of clinical depression and similar experiences was paramount. This required a careful and judicious editing of the data that we thought it appropriate to include. Very personal and sensitive information (e.g. details of drug dependency or of family trauma) while often very significant were omitted to preserve participants' dignity and where there was a potential for impact on other family members.

*Using Video*

The project positioned the use of video centrally as a medium for presenting participants' narrative voices. The immediacy of video and its ability to communicate participants' stories as told by them was one reason for this choice of medium. Also, we were keen to avoid or at least limit the kind of imposition of meanings onto their stories that is rendered largely invisible when snippets of transcript are presented on a page. A key finding of the research related to participants' experience of symbolic violence in their educational histories (Duckworth & Smith, 2018b, 2019) in which some were positioned in deficit terms as learners and labelled as 'thick'.

The critical and reflexive research methodology that we sought to utilize was conscious of the potential for our research interactions to embody symbolic violence in the same way. We asked ourselves what meanings we were reinforcing and imposing. By bringing a collaborative dimension to the research we sought to avoid transforming the project participants into passive research subjects. In the context of using video as part of ethnographic research, Pink (2007) suggests that visual knowledge should be presented in a contextualized way as forming part of a broader picture rather than simply being translated into written, knowledge during analysis.

By directing a critical gaze at the participant/researcher relationship, we repositioned ourselves as co-producers of meaning. While it is true that we were still responsible for the editing process, each video was shown first to the participant for approval. Additional edits were made at the participants' request. This was not surprising as many of the narratives were of an intensely personal nature and, indeed,

the lens provided learners, teachers, family members and their communities with the opportunity to tell their stories through voicing their experiences and trajectories in education and the impact of this in the personal and public domains of their lives; each narrative exposed the distinctiveness and power of FE. The narratives also expose how transformation and the construction of positive educational identities allow for the reclaiming of spoilt identities based on agency and hope.

We converted video data to a format that could be embedded into visual or multi-media presentations while also uploading videos to YouTube. Digitization facilitated posting and sharing across the public domain and disciplines. The emphasis throughout was on maintaining the dignity of participants as people who are able to tell their own stories.

The research allowed us to understand participants' life-worlds and their situated practices and lived local realities. Some of our participants have gone on to develop their technical skills into digital literacies.

In a digital age, learners need to practice and experiment with different ways of enacting their identities, and adopt subject positions thorough different social technologies and media. These opportunities can only be supported by academic staff who are themselves engaged in digital practices and questioning their own relationships with knowledge (Beetham & Oliver, 2010, p. 167).

The digitalization of data does not necessarily make it more comprehensive or more 'accurate'. An example of this comes from our experience of video recording research conversations with participants. It is important to acknowledge that however hard we tried as researchers to create an informal setting, the switching on and off the video camera somehow changed the atmosphere. While many participants were comfortable with the use of videoing on phones and with the notion of a lens capturing images, still the camera sometimes seemed to interpose itself between us and participants. A consequence of this was that often, the moment the interview ended and the camera was switched off, some participants would then seem to relax and the sense of suspended formality would trigger new comments and rich, important insights. A number of participants at this point related an experience or perspective that we wished we had captured as data. On at least one occasion, we switched the camera back on and asked for the story to be repeated. On other occasions, the data was off the record and while relevant, was judged to be too personal to be included. It was vital that the conversations captured were organic and followed the participants' flow of thoughts; they controlled what they wanted to disclose or not. The aim was to retain sensitivity and remain mindful of not exploiting their conversations in a voyeuristic way.

*The Project Website*

The use of a digital platform to present and disseminate the research responds to the rapid development of new and emerging technologies which impact on people's

experiences of space and time. Within this context, the project utilized a research methodology with the reach and power to engage, inspire, entertain, enrich and connect. This meant taking account of a non-linear approach to accessing and navigating information sources; constant and instant online communication and connectivity sharing information culture (see for example, Prensky, 2001).

The project participants spanned different generations: the youngest being 16 years, the oldest in her fifties. It embraced then the so-called 'Net Generation' (Tapscott, 2008) for whom education and social interaction have always been infused with technology, and digital media a part of their learning and social experience. On the other hand, a number of participants in our study lacked digital literacy skills and the project became a platform for them to develop these. For example, some learners set up accounts in order to watch their videos, or set up twitter accounts and engaged with an online community for the first time as a result of involvement in the project. In this case, digitally mediated research, drawing on technologies such as laptops, tablet computers and smartphones, provided access to and engagement with research across social media networks and at times and locations that were convenient to the social media users.

Our use of digital tools was geared towards the facilitating the expression of stories of individual caught up in 'the present' and hidden by the corporate narratives engendered by marketization. We would argue that these project narratives, free from the distortion of the funding and market-driven cultures that have come to dominate FE settings, instead present a human picture of lived experience and social reality. In addition, they are orientated towards future development for the individuals concerned but also for FE itself.

The website produces a 'thirdspace' (Soja, 1996) in the sense that it actively seeks to represent aspects of transformative teaching and learning in particular ways through featuring narratives about different aspects of FE. While it is curated by the researchers, both students and teachers of FE are free to contribute their narratives. The website thus becomes an attempt to assert what is relevant and what is meaningful in the work carried out in FE settings. These are not just 'stories from below' that only present lived experience of practitioners, learners and others; instead they include commentaries about wider policy, funding and artefacts focusing on specific perspectives (e.g. women and transformative learning or employers' perspectives). In that sense then, the website is an attempt to create a space that makes dialogue possible between sometimes conflicting views on the purposes, meanings, achievements and problems of FE.

We were excited to see how some videos became stimulus materials for teachers that generated further narratives for an online project audience. One example of this was Adam's video. Adam was a student who had been excluded from school for anger management issues that seemed rooted in a frustration at being labelled. At college, he (re)discovered a positive learning identity. Another project participant, a teacher who ran classes similar to those Adam attended, used his video as stimulus material. The students in her class recognized different aspects of Adam's account

and were able to relate this to their own educational experiences in a constructive way. One of the students produced a piece of writing that illustrates this empathy and the beginnings of reflection. This was shared on the project website.
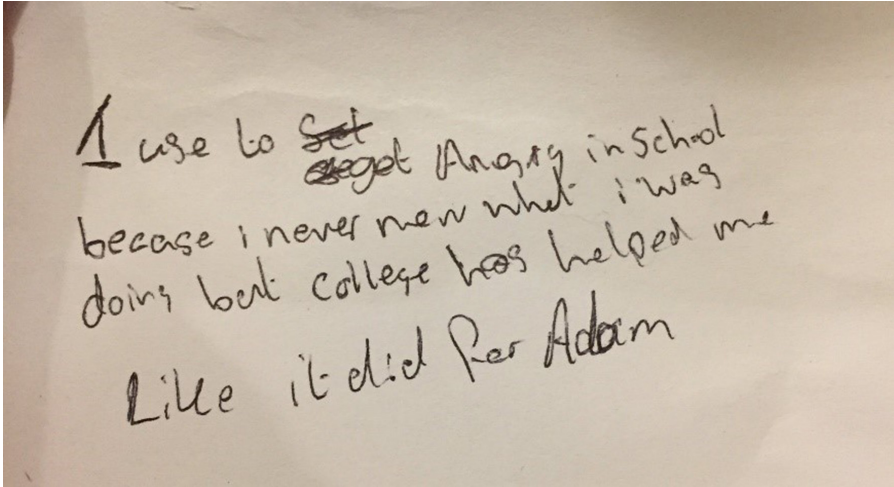


*Figure 18.2. The use of stories of transformative teaching and learning in classroom settings*

Broadly, the project-dedicated website was driven by dissemination and public engagement. However, it was more than this; it provided a platform to validate and celebrate the narratives of learners. The research approach itself became a part of the affirmative practice that aided the creation of conditions for the transformative learning that participants had often experienced. In that sense, taking part in the research reinforced the positive learning identities that the participants talk about having achieved.

*Twitter*

The project made extensive use of Twitter (@FEtransforms). Linked to website content in the form of videos but also text-based participant contributions, tweets helped us develop the sense of a new space of communication in which participants' experiences could be shared and affirmed. The use of Twitter helped establish and build an audience for the research and required an investment of time: at least half an hour or an hour every evening and weekend. This took account of participants and communities more widely going online at various times and in various spaces, e.g. on trains, in meeting rooms, at conferences *inter alia*.

The 140 character limit (for the first eighteen months of the project) of the Twitter format led to additional developments in our creative use of media. We established

a standard format of providing a headline about a new participant with a link to the video underneath. But we felt more variety was needed so we also produced collages of photos of participants from stills exported from the video data. These were used to link to the reports produced at different stages of the project. In addition, we used free websites to make GIFs that functioned in the same way as the collages: providing an artefact to attract a larger audience.

Finally, we also organized the video data in different ways. While the majority of videos present individual narratives, we developed a number that drew snippets from across the dataset to create themed videos. For example, a video was produced that focused on the transformative educational experience of women; another video focused on adult literacy. These were essentially a re-framing of the data. Sometimes they included new segments from the research discussions, sometimes, they were a montage of extracts from videos that had already been published. The targeting of specific events, like International Women's day made a real difference to the impact of these tweets that magnified the interactive potential of the data.

## CONCLUSION

The project website acted as the digital core of the project. Emanating from it, in addition to the twitter feed and the Youtube channel, themed blog posts were produced for different organizations and websites; eighteen months into the project a conference was convened, bringing together many of the participants as well as HE academics and FE practitioners, policy-makers and others. The focus of the conference was to reimagine FE through the lens of transformative teaching and learning. In this way, all the different aspects of the project acted together to assert a heterogeneous picture of FE. The intention was to disrupt the 'abstract' and dominated space crafted by neoliberal policy-making and displace this with a 'differential' space (Lefebvre, 1991). In this space, the individual transformative narratives are sovereign. They are not narratives that tell the story of the inner workings of a 'sector', rather they are stories about how people's lives have been changed by a social (and often political) process in which they have shrugged off their spoilt learner identities and rediscovered an ability to learn, harnessing this to agency and hope for the future.

The research has an ethic of respect for the individual and their communities. In this, it is working against the grain of the marketized cultures that have taken root in FE that, typically, objectify students (Duckworth & Smith, 2018b). This is perhaps the key difference between research which can claim to be socially just and research undertaken within other frameworks and paradigms where although there may be a focus on social justice, the research itself falls into the deficit-reinforcing position of using approaches and processes which reify participants' passivity. We would argue that digital technologies are not neutral tools – they can produce spaces where stories can be reclaimed that unsettle the hegemony of inequality and objectification.

Our research has illustrated how digital technologies can be used in socially just research incorporating the development of a dynamic digital research participating audience which breaches the boundaries that divide scholarly and local communities. The website to date has had 10,648 users and almost 70,000 page views. The virtual platform has developed an energy locally, nationally and globally. Traditional research cultures may have resistant attitudes to digital technologies, however, we would argue that digital literacy and practices are a necessary part of research training to meet the needs of participants in the 21st century. Certainly, failing to use them amounts to missing an important opportunity to share data and involve the research audience in meaning-making and knowledge production. Marketization and the current funding regime have resulted in an ideological reimagining of a 'sector' that has had a significantly negative impact on the local agency of teachers and learners – whose voices within the corporate, competitive institutions have been silenced as well. The *Transforming Lives* project, through harnessing critical digital platforms, has sought to create a new shared understanding of FE that offers an exciting and hope-filled alternative; an alternative that can contribute to the resources of hope that are vital in this age of austerity.

## NOTES

[1]    http://transforminglives.web.ucu.org.uk/
[2]    https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkDeirtGCmeBs361BgibXnA

## REFERENCES

Beetham, H., & Oliver, M. (2010). The changing practices of knowledge and learning. In R. Sharpe & H. Beetham (Eds.), *Rethinking learning for a digital age* (pp. 155–169). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Coffield, F. (2008). *Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority.* Learning and Skills Network. Retrieved January 25, 2018, from http://weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/wea_education_blog/files/frank_coffield_on_teach_and_learning.pdf

Duckworth, V. (2013). *Learning trajectories, violence and empowerment amongst adult basic skills learners*. London: Routledge.

Duckworth, V., & Ade-Ojo, G. (2016). Journeys through transformation: A case study of two adult literacy learners. *Journal of Transformative Education, 14*(4), 285–304.

Duckworth, V., & Smith, R. (2017). *Further education in England – Transforming lives and communities: Interim Report* (Project report). UCU.

Duckworth, V., & Smith, R. (2018a). Transformative learning in english further education. In C. Borg, P. Mayo, & R. Sultana (Eds.), *Skills for sustainable human development of the international handbook on vocational education and training for changing the world of work*. London: Springer.

Duckworth, V., & Smith, R. (2018b). Breaking the triple lock: Further education and transformative teaching and learning. *Education & Training, 60*(6), 529–543.

Duckworth, V., & Smith, R. (2019). Research, criticality & adult and further education: Catalysing hope and dialogic caring. In M. Hamilton & L. Tett (Eds.), *Resisting the neo-liberal discourse in education: Local, national and transnational perspectives*. London: Policy Press.

Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., Clough, P., & Moore, M. (2004). *Researching life stories: Method, theory and analyses in a biographical Age*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Goodson, I., & Sikes, P. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Freire, P. (1995). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Keep, E. (2006). State control of the English education and training system—playing with the biggest train set in the world. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 58*(1), 47–64.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rhythmanalysis*. London: Continuum.

Lucas, N., & Crowther, N. (2016). The logic of the Incorporation of further education colleges in England 1993–2015: Towards an understanding of marketization, change and instability. *Journal of Education Policy, 31*(5), 583–597.

Mezirow, J., & Associates. (2000). *Fostering critical reflection: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Jossey-Bass.

Pink, S. (2007). *Doing visual ethnography: Images, media, and representation in research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Plummer, K. (2001). *Documents of life 2: An invitation to a critical humanism*, London/Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon, 9*(5), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816

Soja, E. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined spaces*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, R. (2017). Area reviews and the end of incorporation: A Machiavellian moment. In M. Daley, K. Orr, & J. Petrie (Eds.), *The principal*. London: UCL IoE Press.

Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology*. London: Routledge

Tapscott, D. (2008). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill.