Teaching leadership or transforming students into leaders: A qualitative exploration of the role of transformational leadership pedagogy on student learning orientation

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Leadership skills consistently rank among the highest sought-after qualities by top employers. Despite this opportunity for college leadership classes to develop students’ leadership skills, most traditional models of teaching leadership focus on teaching students knowledge about leadership while leaving little opportunity for students to become leaders through self-reflection, practice, and feedback. As leadership communication scholars, this problem begs the question of how to teach leadership classes in a way that allows students to develop their competence as leaders rather than leaves them simply knowing about leadership principles. Specifically, we propose the following research question: How, if at all, do students who complete a transformational leadership class communicate a willingness to practice leadership by growing, changing, and embracing challenges in comparison to students who completed a traditional leadership class? In the following paragraphs, we outline two teaching interventions, the theoretical lens from which we analyzed the outcomes of each intervention, the method, and the initial findings of the research.

Transformational versus Traditional Teaching Intervention

In order to answer our research question, we explored the influence of two teaching designs on student practices of leadership. Specifically, we compare a transformative approach to teaching leadership to a traditional approach. Previous studies differentiated transformative styles of teaching from traditional styles (e.g., Tracy et al., 2015). A transformational approach makes use of critical thinking, improvisation, and experiential learning, whereas a traditional approach focuses on teaching students about the content, theories, and philosophies. In application to teaching leadership, the transformational approach is aimed at leaving students “being” leaders whereas a traditional approach leaves students “knowing about” leadership.

A number of essays extol the advantages of transformative learning, critical self-reflexivity, phronesis, and an ontological-phenomenological approach to learning (e.g., Cunliffe, 2004). One empirical study of a transformative approach to leadership (Carney et al., 2016) found significant increases in perceived leadership by those partaking in a transformational course on leadership; however, the study did not examine the transformational approach in tandem with a traditional approach to teaching leadership. Empirical evidence to support either approach is imperative in order to encourage universities to invest in learning to create the most competent leaders. Our goal is to create classroom interventions that leave students not only knowing about leadership theory, but being more effective leaders.

Implicit Person Theory

Much of what we know about creating learners who pursue learning goals (i.e., dedication to developing their competence) rather than performance goals (i.e., dedication to proving their level of knowledge) is supported by research on Implicit Person Theory (IPT). IPT explains that a learner’s willingness to continue in the learning process is a function of the learner’s assumptions about ability. According to IPT, individuals’ assumptions about learning can be categorized as entity or incremental. Entity theorists assume ability is fixed and unchanging, while incremental theorists assume ability is malleable and subject to development (Dweck, 2006). Dweck and colleagues’ research line indicates that incrementalist assumptions predict success in academics (e.g., Good, Rattan, & Dweck, 2012) and in the workplace (e.g., Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011). The success afforded to incremental theorists is, in part, due to their learning orientation. Incrementalist assumptions about ability build efficacy beliefs in students, which is conducive to acquisition of knowledge and skill over time (Bandura, 1997).

Research reveals that implicit theories can be manipulated with direct and specific messaging; however, little is known about how a class designed with the purpose of transforming students might
yield students who hold a more incremental theory of ability. It stands to reason that a class designed to transform students into being more competent leaders would leave students with a belief that their ability as a leader is malleable, can be developed, and will improve with practice.

**Method**

To explore the role of leadership pedagogy on shaping students’ implicit theories, we interviewed students \((N = 29)\) who enrolled and completed either a traditional leadership class \((n = 12)\) or a transformational leadership class \((n = 17)\). Interviews were transcribed, then analyzed using a modified constant comparison.

**Results**

Results reveal that students in the transformational leadership class were more likely to talk about leadership as a process that requires a willingness to grow, change, and embrace challenges, while students in the traditional leadership class talked about leadership in terms of innate, stable characteristics that are difficult to change. Such findings contribute to the literature in two main ways. First, the findings provide empirical evidence of the advantages for designing classes as transformational interventions, especially in the context of leadership communication. Second, the results add to the IPT literature the idea that implicit theories can be changed in more nuanced ways than direct, explicit messaging about the learner’s ability. In conclusion, we believe this work is an important step in creating more positive and withstanding change in the development of future leaders.

**References**


Mary Parker Follett once argued that “all the problems [administrative] that we solve in the field of
business serve to solve other larger problems of the world.” (Follett, 1933/1995: 139) Social science
should be interesting (Davis, 1971). Boxed-in academics (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2014), gap-spotting
research questions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013), and formulaic publications (Alvesson & Gabriel,
2013) boosting the level of dullness of the academia not only for the laymen but also for its own
members.

This paper focuses on the rise of articles and conference papers, based on bibliometric analysis trying
to “count” published academic works (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, and dissertations) within
management and organization studies in Turkey according to several dimensions such as references,
methodology, context etc. Instead of taking stock of the published work within the field as knowledge
transfer (Sahlin-Anderson & Engwall, 2002), recent phenomena seem to be speedy armchair publishing
efforts with little zest. Scrutinizing this (un)conditional surrender (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016), paper will
elaborate reasons and consequences of “stock counting” tradition among Turkish management and
organizations scholar.

Relevance and Literature Review
Widely held academic identity among management scholars in Turkey is said to be natural
consultant/organizational engineer/technician (Berkman, 1987; Üsdiken & Pasadeos, 1992; Üsdiken &
Pasadeous, 1993). But the very situational, highly generic, not practical academic recipes are not
popular among the functioning managers (Özen, 1999: 113). This situation creates tension among
management scholars, and motivated many of them to conduct bibliometric research in addition to
research focusing on understanding organized, organizer and organizations. In a recent study, Dirlik
(2016) found 56 studies focusing on understanding the field of management based on published
academic works.

Dirlik (2016) classified these studies into five categories, namely historical development,
methodological choice, sub-disciplines, knowledge transfer and concept tracking. Dirlik (2016)
concluded that while some of the studies are taking the stock of the literature, and problematizing it,
some of them just counting it. Dirlik (2016) also agrees on the rise of stock counting style academic
work after the 2000s. Quantitative methods are generally preferred (Özen & Kalemci, 2006). Importing
scales, not developing and/or adapting them is more popular (Erdemir, 2008). Preference for qualitative
methods between 1993 -2006 is just around 10% (62/620) among papers presented at the National
Management & Organization Conference (Kutanis et al., 2007). Reasons for limited number of
qualitative papers are lack of expertise on qualitative methodology, duration, doubts on reliability
(Kutanis et al., 2007).

Methods
Based on semi-structured interviews conducted with the management and organization scholars all
around Turkey, this study revealed how (in)access to the research sites shapes methodological
preferences (i.e. limited amount of qualitative inquiry), manipulates priorities (Cunnliffe and Alcadipani,
2016), and in this case resulting more and more stock-counters. As stated before the aim of the paper
is to delineate perceptions on academic publications labeled as “stock counters.” Since my aim is to
understand individual perceptions, paper is designed under the phenomenology’s framework (Creswell,
1998). Empirical material of the paper was generated through semi-structured interviews conducted
with academics all around Turkey (Myers, 2013). In order to be on the same line with participants, I
sent them a hypothetical abstract of a stock counting style paper and ask them to answer my questions
based on the abstract they have read before the interview. Overall I conducted 20 + 3 interviews. I felt
that I started to hear recurring themes and decided to stop doing more.

Findings
Rise of Stock Counting
No no I didn’t do it that, but I see it become more frequent. But it is not exaggerated (Prof -1).
I think the number raised a bit. (Prof - 2).
It is quite open to exploitation. (Asst. Prof -1).
Increased… (Prof - 5)
I think it is overused, easy accessability of the data made it. (Doç -2)

**Technological Developments?**
Recent computer programs made it easy, but it is not an issue, the quality is important. (Doc - 1)
Programs made it easy (Prof - 3)

**Emulating Strong Actors?**
…the most important factor is the leading scholars, first they did such studies and soon after youngsters followed... (Prof - 6)
That trend has started with [...] guys, it was ok, valuable, but enough is enough. (Doç -2)

**Reasons for Stock Counting**
It is a way of criticizing ourselves, we understand what is missing (Prof -1)
Let me say it like this, at the end this is a research area, diffusion of management knowledge, it is a highly specific field, studies within this field carried on that kind of techniques. (Doç -1).
To be honest, for the people who can not collect data from the field, where can I find it [data] easily? You go for students sample, academics or published works (Doç - 2).
It may be a fashion, like structural equation modelling once was (Prof -4)
By this [stock counting] way one can easily produce papers. Go to businesses, conduct field work, this is the real thing, the purpose of organization studies is to understand and explain organizations. (Prof - 3).

**Problems with Access**
We did our PhD like that, thanks to [a colleague], and her relatives, that kind of access became possible. (Prof - 6)
If it is possible, the best is to go and have a look whats going on...when I was doing my Phd I stayed at manufacturing plant for an extended amount of time and I was started to be afraid of getting fired from the facility...because the production manager started to follow me...it is not easy, it is just scales, just translated scales. (Doç - 3).
It is hard, the hardest, I am having these difficulties right now...Doing research in Turkey is very hard job, you can access ressources, the theory but visiting factories doing the field work is the hardest. People do not let you in...I am begging enourmous number of people in order to get my surveys conducted. (Prof - 9).
It is hard ... it does not provide any return to the organization, people are telling me that you are not returing back to us. We do the research and say good bye, but it takes alot of efforts to get permission...we are not doing it for money, businesses are fed up with this behavior (Prof - 10).

**Conclusion**
There is an increasing trend on stock counting papers. Resulting even less qualitative work. Technological advancement and emulating strong actors can be a reason. But main reason, I suppose, related to gaining access which is becoming harder day by day.

…”all the problems [administrative]that we solve in the field of business serve to solve other larger problems of the world.” (Follett, 1933/1995: 139) During the so-called *post-truth* era, there are and will be much more assumptions to challenge! There is no point in time where people freely and eagerly share their life experiences. So, access shouldn't be a problem.
Selected References


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Using the Vanua Research Framework to analyze ethnographic data - A non-indigenous perspective of tourism service experiences in Fiji

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The Vanua Research Framework (VRF) is an indigenous epistemological approach embedded in the I Taukei's Vanua (UW Nabobo-Baba, 2005). It embodies the world views, knowledge systems, lived experiences, representations, cultures and values of the indigenous people of Fiji and is part of an initiative by Pacific indigenous people to move away from western centric research methodologies to investigate social phenomena in that region (Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, 2011; Smith, 1999, 2004; Thaman, 2003). Critical to its philosophical underpinnings is its positioning of indigenous Fijians within the research. VRF proposes that the i Taukei people are not merely the object of the research but they are 'a part of the decisions and processes of defining frames, methods and principles within which the research knowledge is handled and filtered, processed and disseminated' (Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, 2011). Its utility therefore in providing guidance for non-indigenous research where the i Taukei people are involved would be necessary and invaluable as within the discourse of decolonising research, it provides framework for a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that should inform research practices in Fiji (Wilson, 2001).

In applying the VRF to analyse ethnographic data collected on tourism service experiences in Fiji, it's utility was however limited and highlighted two areas that necessitates further attention from scholarship on indigenous methodologies generally or specifically for Fiji. Wilson (2001) cautioned that in decolonising methodologies, indigenous methodologies should not themselves become as ethnocentric as Western methodologies. Western paradigms do represent a particular set of values and conceptualisations of time, space, subjectivity, gender relations and knowledge - but this can also be said of indigenous methodologies as they seek to legitimise their knowledge systems. In either instance there is the possibility of the researcher's gaze being influenced by a particular worldview and reiterates the question of whose "truth" is being told in the research process (Chalmers, 2017; Swartz, 2017). This leads to a second area of concern as indigenous methodologies are increasingly utilised. The issue of the Other is raised, particularly in the context of the use of indigenous epistemes by non-indigenous researchers. Consequently, the reconciliation of ontological and epistemological paradigms to advance the body of knowledge in question, must seek to be inclusive, being careful not to marginalize, exploit or privilege neither the researcher nor the respondents (Kastoryano, 2010; Lincoln & González y González, 2008; Wilson, 2001). So while the VFR framework provides necessary insights, in its current state, its optimum application is a research inquiry that focuses singularly on the i Taukei respondent or community. The framework needs to be developed further so that it can be used in a multicultural context, where the i Taukei is one of two or more world views existing and interacting within the population or locale of the research study.

Given the strides that have been made in developing an indigenous research agenda, the increasing demand for the application of an indigenous episteme is driven by the desire of indigenous people to participate more in the global economy. Tourism represents a rapidly growing area that offers much economic hope for indigenous communities but is simultaneously challenged by the significant difference in their social and cultural values as compared to the rest of the world. Indigenous communities have not had a pleasant history of the research experience and the Vanua research theorising represents an opportunity for enhancement and positive transformation of Fijian lives where greater cultural, socio-political, emotional, psychological, philosophical and spiritual control can be used to inform action and change, a transformative praxis (Augustyn & Seakhoa-King, 2005; Louis, 2007; Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, 2011, 2013; Robinson & Robinson, 2005). As such, tourism service experiences represent an opportunity for indigenous communities to use their way of life to differentiate their destinations within a globally competitive marketplace, but it needs to be driven by i Taukei if its economical potential in Fiji is to be fully realised. The VRF is similar to other counter-hegemonic epistemes such as those developed by women, gay, minorities and other marginalized communities (Smith, 2004). It however needs to move beyond simply telling the story of the i Taukei to facilitating their participation within a global society - it needs to fit within a liberated research agenda that
embraces and reflects cultural plurality (Lincoln & González y González, 2008; Thaman, 2009). Western ontology can be used to position existing knowledge, this paper seeks to use social constructivism to discuss a transdisciplinary approach where VFR can be used to inform the analysis of ethnographic data collected on tourism service experiences in Fiji with the i Taukei representing sixty-seven percent (127 out of 189) of the respondents.

This paper critically discusses the eight principles of VFR demonstrating where invaluable insights were gained and where limitations arose in representing meanings to actions when analyzing the researcher's understanding of field observations, an ethnographic content analysis technique (Altheide, 1987). The ethnographic data discussed is based on the researcher's experiences as a participant observer and includes critical reflections of the researcher who was an outsider (etic) to the Fijian society, but an insider (emic) to the tourism enterprise where the data was collected. The etic-emic position also necessitated critical reflection of the researcher's perspective as the Other along two continuums, first in the research process (practitioner academic praxis) and secondly in the Fijian society (indigenous nonindigenous praxis). It is worthy of note that other socially and culturally differentiated groups native to Fiji were represented within the respondent population - some were indigenous (three groups) and some were not (two groups). The researcher needed to further investigate their world views to effectively attribute meaning to what was observed in the field. However, the Others do not benefit from having theorising grounded in their lived experiences and as such only a limited understanding of their "truths" and the "value neutrality" of the researcher could be presented in the analysis (Bozalek, 2011; Hammersley, 2017). This also meant that the analysis would have been mediated based on their interaction with the i Taukei episteme as observed by the researcher raising further limitations around otherness, subjectivity and authenticity within the research outcomes (Bozalek, 2011; Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011; Glocer Fiorini, 2016; Hirose & Pih, 2011). All within the context of a contemporary imagining of experiences that have been mostly studied through the episteme of anthropology where academic knowledge has been developed through a colonised lens (Salazar, 2013). A very complex, multilayered and messy analysis ensued but this serves mostly to reiterate the urgent need for indigenous methodologies to go beyond an ethnocentric world view towards a culturally plural framing.

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Developing New Materialist Research Methodologies for the Study of Management and Organization

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The (new) ‘materialist turn’ that has taken place in social theory over the past decade seeks to reconfigure understandings of the nature of matter and corporeality in ways which take into account current transformations in how we relate to and conceptualise material objects and the natural environment (Coole and Frost, 2010). In so doing, new materialism calls into question the place of embodied humans in the world. This is enabled by development of a post-anthropocentric sensibility that conceives of matter as vital and volatile or ‘lively’ and exhibiting agency (Bennett, 2010).

Materialist thinkers assert therefore that an ontological reorientation is required in our study of the social world. This ‘new’ form of materialism is characterised by an opposition to dualisms, including between human subjects (as rational, free, self-aware, autonomous) and other (dull or passive) matter. Instead they suggest that all matter exhibits certain capacities for agency. In so doing, new materialism invites a move beyond human-centric perspectives, through being primarily concerned with affective flows understood as a relational ‘field of forces’ which is more than human subjectivity (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2006).

A number of epistemological and methodological implications arise from this ontological shift. These stem in part from the challenge to the epistemological dualism, between realist and constructionist approaches to study, that materialism presents. As Fox and Alldred (2017) note, in contrast to realist accounts of the external world (as independent of human construction) and constructionist positions (which view reality as produced through human - cultural and social - action) new materialism invites an onto-epistemological focus on relationality rather than essence; ‘this has the effect of re-making the relationship between research data and the object of inquiry, cutting across the realist/constructionist dualism that has divided social research approaches’ (p.152-3).

In this paper we suggest that the materialist turn has significant implications for management and organization studies. Many of the scientific and technological changes that are currently transforming our relationships to matter are taking place within organizations – including advances in robotics, artificial intelligence and medical innovation. These changes necessitate reconfiguration of our understanding of what it means to be within these entanglements in organizational contexts. We consider how management and organization studies might respond to the materialist agenda of taking matter/things seriously - human and non-human. Specifically, our focus is on exploring how qualitative management research may be developed methodologically in ways which respond to this onto-epistemological shift.

We begin by considering possible research designs that could enable greater focus on how matter matters. These include ethnographic approaches, as well as ethnomethodological ‘experiments’ (Garfinkel, 1984) which seek to destabilise relational assemblages in order to understand them. Second, we suggest that there is a need to re-orientate qualitative research in management and organization studies towards methods that enable greater focus on matter/bodies in time and space, rather than primarily on language/text (Boden, 1994). This includes the use of sensory, embodied methodologies to access pre-discursive forms of knowing acquired through embodied experience (Stoller, 1997; Law, 2004; Knudsen & Stage, 2015). Third, we explore how qualitative management research, including those that draw on visual (Pink, 2011) or performative methods, could enable a focus on events as ‘encounters between ontologically diverse actants’ (Bennett, 2010: xiv) and enable ‘cultivated, patient, sensory attentiveness to nonhuman forces operating outside and inside the human body’ (ibid, xiv).

Finally, new materialist research requires development of forms of reflexivity that enable a movement beyond anthropocentric forms of social inquiry that treat the researcher as the ‘prime mover in the research enterprise’ (Fox & Alldred, 2017: 153). A materialist position implies that researchers’ tools and techniques (interview schedules, theoretical frameworks, recording and analysis technologies) are themselves productive and disruptive of material capabilities within a given research event. Greater effort must therefore be paid to disclosing affective flows between bodies and objects that make up
specific ‘research-assemblages’ (Fox & Alldred, 2017), and understanding the micropolitics of research, including those associated with the use of specific research tools and techniques which aggregate events in ways which serve the researcher’s agenda. In so doing, new materialism challenges the perceived neutrality of organizational research.

References

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Echoes, Images and Words: Exploring Autoethnography’s Capacity to Show Relational Leadership Practices.

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My proposal to QRM 2018 explores how the qualitative perspectives afforded by visualization, story making, and theoretical knowledge came together to illuminate new ways of defining, processing and practicing relational leadership. Without these alternative forms to approach my doctoral studies, I doubt I would have been able to adequately penetrate four core areas of exploration: how leadership occurs, how others may be foregrounded in thought and action, how co-evolving relational processes emerge and lastly, how relational leadership theory (RLT), autoethnography (AEG) and critical reflexivity can come together to create moments of praxis.

It all began in the winter of 2012 when I was confronted with a research problem. It was invasive and inescapable. Not only was the subject area of my research under scrutiny, but the methodology as well. Initially, I had set out to study innovations in leadership development using a grounded theory approach. You can imagine my dismay, or to be blunt, horror, at having to face up to the reality that two and half years of work had only led me to...start again.

But that’s where I found myself on a cold, Canadian night, skyping with my advisors who were in the sunnier climes of Australia. That moment, as I was to later name it, was a shatterpoint. A no turning back moment that needed to be dealt with even if I couldn’t completely resolve it. With it, a process of understanding leadership emerged through story making, one that was filled with echoes, images and words.

Starting with the subject area, the echo of a phrase encountered during the literature review kept rattling around in my brain: I kept asking myself, “What does it mean to become a ‘philosopher leader’?” (Cunliffe, 2009, p. 88). An anachronistic question for someone to ask when they had been ostensibly leading for over twenty-five years. The second came during the methodology review where I encountered the concept of ‘possibility space’ (Hosking & Plutt, 2010, p. 62). The possibilities afforded by this “safe place” were revealed as I experimented with images in photography, illustration and mud maps. These were challenging exercises for a person who was allegedly expert in appreciating diverse points of view. Ultimately, these different lenses would ‘show’, rather than ‘tell’ new ways to see, feel, act, hear, think and do (Holman Jones, 2002, p. 207).

A third wakeup call inspired a re-think of the power of words as they mingled with, and shaped, the many voices within the writing itself. I realized I had been taking writing for granted; in failing to ask who I was writing for, I now saw myself concocting ‘manufactured’ (Lather, 1991, p. 167) responses to suit the moment and myself. I was using language as a power tool rather than a way to connect with and understand others.

It was at this point that I became acquainted with a new term, ‘gap spotting’ (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 251) causing me to question what my research might contribute. With this unsettling, my old research question seemed inane. I realized that I had been focused on what I came to call the “5W” questions: who leads, why they lead, where, when and what they lead. With Alvesson’s prompt, a new question surfaced, “How does leadership occur among and between people? In this way, a query, a concept and two alerts came together to not only change my subject area and methodology, but how I learned to learn.

In this submission I seek to illustrate, literally and figuratively, the learning curve that helped me to move from compartmentalized “analysis” to holistic exploration. As I now see it, the ways in which I approached the subject area and methodology was a direct reflection of my individualistic views of leadership. Neat and tidy, categorized and reflective of binary approaches to leadership. Over time, I began to see how this approach helped me embrace the relatively new thinking around relational leadership theory. From there, I found new ways of working with assemblages and bricolage that facilitated a re-think of my philosophy of leadership. I began to see leadership not as a thing to do, but a way to be.
This insight only emerged when I embraced autoethnography, which acted as a portal to illuminate ‘culture as seen in the rear view of memory’ (Bochner cited in Chang, 2008, p. 45). As I began experimenting with AEG, new language emerged like shatterpoints, and new ways to approach collaborative story making (an alternative to the storytelling and story selling that I practiced in my leadership). This experience showed me how to see context as ‘multiphrenia’ (Gergen cited in Clark, Brown & Hailey, 2009, p. 326) and I discovered ways to appreciate it, in all of its complexity and subtlety.

Through stories and illustrations, the concepts of other and othering came alive. Over time, I became less tentative about venturing into these wild and disorganized marketplaces of voices and viewpoints. During these moments - when theory, story, and reflexivity met – I was able to work with processes that inspired me to behave differently as a leader. Praxis often surfaced in micro form, with small, incremental changes making bigger differences than anticipated.

But even these two promising concepts – RLT and AEG – were not enough. An aggregating force was required to bring them together. As I reconsidered the notion of possibility space, I envisioned “connective tissues” that could enhance my understanding. It was here that critical reflexivity entered my world and I developed a beginner’s capabilities to bend back on myself, facilitating more ‘collaborative, responsive and ethical ways’ (Cunliffe, 2004, p. 408) to think about how I practiced leadership.

With an unconventional interweaving of RLT, AEG and critical reflexivity, I gained insights into how to deepen my appreciation of others and with these, saw glimmers of the emergence of co-evolving leadership processes. Exploring and practicing these ways emerged as one of the most profound contributions to my personal and professional life.

References

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Despite the rather limited availability of “natural” spaces in our increasingly urbanised world (UNDESA, 2014), people are engaging with nature in towns and cities through “nature-based health promotion activities” (Bragg & Atkins, 2016). These activities include urban agriculture, gardening, and conservation volunteering. In developing a research project on the systemic impacts of nature-based activities, currently being undertaken in the City of Hull, I collaborated with a local playwright to carry out a pilot study in a community garden.

A rising incidence of non-communicable diseases is currently placing growing pressure on healthcare services (Wang et al., 2016). Attention is turning to “upstream” solutions for prevention and public health, which have the potential to improve wellbeing (Care Quality Commission, Public Health England, National Health Service, 2015) There is strong evidence for the links between natural environments and wellbeing (Maxwell & Lovell, 2017) and a sound body of literature on the use of green care, also termed “nature-based interventions” (Bragg & Atkins, 2016), such as ecotherapy (Burks, 2007), social and therapeutic horticulture (Aldridge & Sempik, 2002), and care farming (Hassink, 2013). Less research, however, has been carried out on the impacts of less formal nature-based health promotion activities on wellbeing.

The aim of my research is to develop an understanding of the pathways along which interactions between nature-based activities and wellbeing take place, which may enable health and social care providers, urban planners, and individuals, to harness the benefits of urban nature and nature-based activities in promoting wellbeing. To achieve this, I am examining both the direct impacts of activities on the wellbeing of participants, and indirect impacts on wellbeing, which are effected through changes in living environments. Wellbeing is a complex concept, comprising hedonic approaches, which focus on happiness and define well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance, and eudaimonic approaches, focusing on meaning and self-realization and defining well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In the UK, personal wellbeing is measured nationally in terms of: life satisfaction; the extent to which things done in life feel worthwhile; feelings of happiness; feelings of anxiety (Office for National Statistics, 2017). This approach pragmatically encompasses hedonistic and eudaimonic dimensions.

I am concerned with understanding the impacts of nature-based activities on individuals and their communities, in their own terms, thus from the early stages of planning the pilot study, the need for the research to be carried out in a participative manner was apparent. Meaningful exploration of impacts on wellbeing requires investigation of the lived experiences of participants, and their relationships with human and non-human elements of their environment. I wished to study these relationships reflexively, from within, rather than from without. A grant awarded by Wellcome and Hull UK City of Culture 2017 made it possible for me to work with a local playwright on my pilot project, in a community garden near my institution. We set out to develop the opening section of a creative performance piece in collaboration with the staff and volunteers at the garden, with the intention of giving voice to their experiences and presenting them in a manner which would be accessible to a wide audience.

When Prince Hamlet states in Shakespeare’s play:

“I’ll have grounds
More relative than this—the play’s the thing
Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King.” (Hamlet Act 2, scene 2)

He is referring to his plans to prove to himself his uncle’s guilt in murdering his father, by inserting a few telling lines into a play which his uncle will be watching at court, and to waiting for Claudius to flinch in reaction to them. Our plan was less specific than Prince Hamlet’s, nevertheless, we were also looking to create a performance piece which would resonate with audience members.

My playwright partner and I proceeded, with ethical approval from my institution, to spend time working in the garden. I conducted some interviews with those who were willing to participate in this way, but it
became evident that some of the gardeners were uncomfortable with a formal interview approach. Consent was readily given, however, for informal discussions to be noted and used to inform the development of the creative piece, and my research. As the pilot progressed, we also decided to provide gardeners with the opportunity to contribute their thoughts and stories in written form, by keeping a sketchbook in the garden shed for anyone to write or draw in as and when they wished to do so. This opportunity was taken up by several participants.

The involvement of creative processes in the pilot project did not merely provide an evocative form in which the results of the research could be presented, although the performance piece certainly does this. Rather, it contributed to every aspect of the research, from facilitating relaxed communications with participants who were immediately engaged by the idea of being involved in the development of a play, through providing new perspectives in the collection and analysis of qualitative data, to expanding my own philosophical and methodological perspectives in developing my approach to research. My experience of working on a collaborative project, combining research with art, has also informed the methodology with which I now approach the main body of my research.

The methodology with which I now move forward is participative and reflexive. It is receptive and sensitive to the needs and wishes of the participants and ready to adapt in response at any stage. Continuous evaluation is built in through ongoing comparison with peer-reviewed literature on ethnographic and action research methodologies, and through collaboration with participants to check that findings resonate with experience. Fundamental to the methodology is the recognition that as forms of participation evolve, it may be necessary to renegotiate the terms of informed consent. Channels of communication with participants must be kept as freely open as possible, so that any concerns may be quickly addressed. If necessary, participants must always be aware that they have the option to withdraw completely from the research process.

References

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This presentation explores the methods available to us when studying the interrelationship of touch, bodies and materials in the process of making. The issue of how to study and theorise this interrelationship arose in Michael’s study of the production processes in two industrial museum factories from Birmingham’s Jewelry Quarter in the UK: Newman Brothers’ Coffin Works built in 1894, rescued by the Birmingham Conservation Trust and opened as a museum in 2014. JW Evans’ Silver Factory established in 1881, rescued by English Heritage and opened in 2011. Both museums narrate their history through simulating the working of the machines and constructing sensory aesthetic experiences for visitors (Mangione, 2016). By combining craft and science-technological experiences in demonstrating how craftworkers operated their machines, they allow for the study of touch (Yamaguchi, 1989) and body movements. The same machines are used today that were in operation throughout the twentieth century. As one of the interviewees stated, ‘they’re exactly as they were when they were brought into the building over 100 years ago … It seems to me Newman Brothers didn’t seem to modernize really’. For the purpose of our presentation, we focus particularly on the operation of the drop press and fly press, which shape and trim flat sheet metal and involve not easily reproduced operator skills.

In order to operate the drop press in both factories, a male worker would have to use their body weight by pulling and raising a rope, which was supplemented by gas power distributed by a shaft turning a wheel. The skill was in the lowering of the drop press and knowing the different pressure to be applied in each blow, which had a specific purpose. The craftsworker assesses the individual qualities of the metal and the application of their skill in shaping the metal through a hand-operated industrial machine by using touch, which integrates with the craftworkers’ past experiences of making with similar materials.

The study’s methodology combined site visits, archival data, video, observation, interviews, and trying the activity. Archival data included copies of factory plans charting where different stages of the making took place and the flow in the manufacturing system, trade pattern books and ledgers. This helped with the dating of the objects and in building up a profile of the craftworkers.

As Michael observed and engaged in the making activity, he noticed it had left gestures or marks on the surroundings – for instance, an eroded brick floor, worn away by successive craftworkers standing and moving in the same place. When operating the press, the person demonstrating the operation continually stepped back into the indentation on the floor without articulating its presence or relationship to the movement. It was only when Michael asked about the indentation that a discussion took place around why it was there and how it occurred through years of operation.

This example raises questions around how we study the process of making. In learning from history, a residual sense of continuity can be captured through interviews, but the evidence is not the everyday experience of a century ago. How can we capture this experience? This question is relevant for contemporary activities that use both old and new technologies to create something through a mastery of materials, for example, art, science, cooking, fashion design, sport, building construction, acting, and so on. We need methods and ways of theorizing that go beyond words to try to capture a bodily sense of the activity – to understand the interrelated nature of bodies, movement, and making.

One such approach is Wacquant’s (2015) notion of a carnal sociology, which “grasps action-in-the-making” and recognises “the reality and potency of carnal know-how, the bottom-up, visceral grasp of the social world” (p. 3). It draws attention to the need for researchers to consider practical knowledge – to obtain an embedded and embodied sense of how skills emerge and are enacted – by “performing the phenomenon” (p. 1) and engaging in activities in the social and material world around us. From this perspective, bodily craft is a sociocultural competency (Wacquant, 2005: 446), a ‘visceral know-how (p. 467) that requires us as researchers to ‘feel’ the experience we are studying and the interactions...
with materials, not in a deterministic or purely operational/procedural way, but as open to the physicality – the bodily rhythms, the routines and creativity of our situated and interrelated agency with the world around us. A carnal sociology, or ‘enacted ethnography’ (Wacquant, 2015) in which we perform the activity we are studying challenges purely cognitivist and dualist approaches by recognizing how skilful activity encompasses not just thought but also feel and touch - an embodied process involving proprioception (Bohm, 1994: 121), an awareness of the totality of the intention to move and movement.

We will explore the practical implications for researching and theorizing from the perspective of a carnal sociology.

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Becoming an Other: The Importance of Repetition while Working within Hyphen-Spaces in Ethnographic Research.

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Drawing on my personal experience of ethnographic fieldwork in a multi-sited research in three Brazilian NGOs, I propose to discuss the importance of engaging in systematic repetition and of experimenting the different hyphen-spaces in order to acquire “insights” while doing this type of research. I argue that such “insights” appear when: (1) the researcher recognizes her own identity in the field; (2) the researcher is able to tackle this identity to successfully participate and communicate in an specific symbolic structure which was previously unknown or foreign to her. It’s important to highlight that this presupposes an idea of a “situational researcher”, whose identity cannot be defined prior to her entering the field – which bares some resemblance to Robert Cooper’s notion of relationality. According to this notion identity doesn’t exist in itself, it is always established in relation to an Other. This Other, however, isn’t an individual other, it’s a symbolic structure which will only emerge if the researcher is successful in participating and communicating within its means. In this troublesome research site, working with the notion of hyphen-spaces is highly valuable, and I add to this discussion some remarks regarding the importance of repetition in order to successfully participate and communicate within the realm of the Other. Even though the encounter with the Other has always been at the heart of ethnographic research, I propose that working within hyphen-spaces is important to build on identity as a necessary step which must be surpassed and that becoming an other is a necessary means to gain new understandings/insights in this context.

It’s also important to clear out that this notion isn’t a pure individual “other”, as it was portrayed in the first ethnographies, but a hybrid other informed by postcolonial theory. Surpassing identity is also important if we recognize that the field itself, being a fluid and multiple space, is presented as a foreign territory which defies and objects to the researchers’ accounts, rather than comply to them. This makes the notion of identity highly problematic if one regards identity as an ending point – through the writing of biographic and/or narcissistic accounts, for example – it is so because identity presupposes compliance and conformity. I point out the dangers of restricting ethnographic and reflexivity to biographical accounts. This standing point has also implications for the writing of ethnographic research, as accounts should be rendered plausible not only by the researcher’s peers but also by research participants. The constitution of the researcher as a hybrid other is important to address this matter. I also remark the importance of this discussion for organization research in particular, as organizations are symbolic structures per se and thus privileged sites for gaining new understandings/insights on the dynamics between the subject and the Other. The points contained in this proposal will be conceptually grounded and illustrated by my own field experience and also by extracts from Clarice Lispector’s chronicle “Mineirinho”.

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The world has changed around us: Police officers’ identity work in a context of crisis

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Since the Ferguson riots of 2014, law-enforcement agencies in the United States have faced widespread scrutiny and criticism from the media, politicians, and citizens. When a high-prestige profession faces extensive criticism, how do members of the profession make sense of it? What kinds of identity work do professionals undertake in these circumstances? I explored these questions through interviews with officers in two law-enforcement agencies in Central California. I sought to examine not just officers’ perceptions and rationalizations regarding these challenges, but also their (re)assessments regarding the value of their work, as well as their strategies to reconcile (to the extent possible) who they are perceived to be by outsiders with their own notions of who they ought to be.

Two broad themes emerged from interviews with police officers. The first lays the onus for the threats to their professional identity on external factors. Specifically, participants in the study felt that the world around them has changed so drastically that they are unsure about what it means to be a police officer. In their telling, the criticism and negative scrutiny that police departments and officers are subjected to are less the result of what the officers themselves do, and more the result of outsiders’ changed (and unfair) expectations. The second theme articulates a sense of being let down by a range—by the media, by ‘bad cops’, and even by their own administrators.

The dominant emotion I encountered in participants’ reflections was a deep sense of loss. What they expected to be a high-prestige profession with the potential to make a difference in a community’s life turned out to be quite something else. Officers however held on to the idea that the reasons for their crisis lie elsewhere, for the most part. As officers talked through this predicament (loss, and a lack of control over the reasons for that loss), they offered a conflicted narrative of coping -- they emphasized how important it is to them, still, that they can ‘make a difference’, while adamantly insisting that they will not recommend this profession for their children.

The paper contributes to the literature at the intersection of organizational narratives and identity work in organizations. It explores the sensemaking narratives of organizational actors facing identity threats, actors that normally have a lot of pride in their profession. It explores the fissures and contradictions in these sensemaking narratives to gain a multifaceted understanding of identity work amidst crises.
How to render visible the multitudinous forms of alternative universities?

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My goal with this paper is to make sense of the data I am collecting for my PhD thesis in light of the theoretical reflection in which it is grounded, that is the constitution of alternative organizations. More specifically, I am working on alternative universities and I am particularly interested in understanding how the alternative is embodied and performed in these institutions considering their sociohistorical, political and economic background. Adopting a communicative constitution of organization approach, I propose to study and explore the constitution of being alternative as material/discursive embodiments; these embodiments, I argue, create an ambiguous relation to mainstream or traditional norms (against, within, above, under, etc.).

In terms of method, I am conducting a qualitative research inspired by an ethnographic approach (Neyland, 2007) in two alternative universities: a Canadian free university and a US private college. The data collection started in January 2016 and will be concluded in January 2018. In trying to understand what makes these universities alternative, I have observed that the alternative takes various forms. It is incarnated in multiple things: people –through their values, their lifestyle, their world conception– places/campuses, rituals, websites, advertising, etc. The practical question I face is how to render visible in my writing these multiple incarnations of the alternative? I want to explore here the avenue of writing portraits to convey this multitudinous. As a first step for this conference, I wish to explore the writing of portraits of the people that work/study/volunteer in these institutions and whom “embody” the being alternative. I wish to do so in mobilizing the interviews during which I questioned people on their life's course, their hobbies, their social commitments, their aspirations, etc. and through the observations of their behaviours during events, courses and meetings. I also include their physical and material surroundings (offices, homes, sites of the campus where they hang along).

The first university I am studying is The University of the People (Up) in Montreal. It is free, open to everyone, non-profit and voluntary-based. The courses are held at night (7 to 9 pm) in bars or bookshops. It was created in 2010 to improve critical thinking and is perceived by the general public as a left-wing organization committed to ideas that are against neoliberalism. Following a regular academic calendar, the courses run from September to December (autumn session) and from February to May (winter session). A committee –composed of three women and five men– is in charge of organizing the sessions: selecting the courses’ thematic, finding places and structuring the calendar. The thematic are divided in several courses (up to 5). The subjects are broad and can be related to environmental issues, economics, politics or science (i.e. biology or quantic physics). I conducted 18 interviews (committee members, teachers, students and founders), observed 7 committee meetings, up to 20 courses and 2 session launches. The people I interviewed embody UP alternativeness in their values and lifestyle. For example, Bernard a committee member, the ‘anarchist’; Eloise, also in the committee a former communicational officer who is active for several causes (breast cancer, trade unions); Michaela, a student who lived in a cooperative and who used to do some activism. They all embody one of several UP values.

Secondly, I conducted a three-week fieldwork in January 2017 in The Different College (DC), a private college situated in the US and founded in 1972. It is non-departmental, small and it offers a degree in Human Ecology. 320 students populate this fossil fuel-free in becoming campus that owes 300 acres of forest and farmland at the heart of a National Park on the coast of the ocean. In this college, students design their own degree and can take courses in art, science and humanity. On the administrative level, the hierarchy is flat and the students are fully integrated in the college’s governance. The decisions are made collaboratively through several majors and minors committees where students are represented. The committee’s minutes are approved by the All College Meeting (ACM) which happens weekly on Wednesday from 1 to 2:30 pm. The College is funded partly through tuition and endowments. Here I conducted 15 interviews mainly with staff (I plan to interview students in January), I have collected around 30 moments of observations (10 meetings and several events held on campus). In the College, I met students and staff who embody the being alternative. First and foremost, the founder who is still active in teaching, who is one of the last representatives of the historical values of the institution. I can also mention Charles, an international student involved in various projects all around the world and
committed to alternative education.

Concomitantly, I am collecting virtual snapshots of the two universities on their Facebook and Instagram accounts and on their website. In doing so, I get a glimpse of how these universities present themselves to their “public.” During the conference, I will disclose several portraits of people from these two universities and show how they embody the ‘being alternative.’ In doing so I wish to make sense of my data and to explore if the portraits are able to render the incarnation of the alternative.

I imagine writing portraits as Ashcraft writes her tales when she explores the “inhabited criticism” (2017). These tales help her to “dwell into” her critical posture. I see the portraits as functioning in the same way; bridging different forms of telling a story and dwelling into the life of things and people. Portrait overcomes a dualistic approach in permitting to the researcher to be “in media res” (Cooren, 2015) blurring the frontier between what is human and what is non-human. Moreover, portraits “enact and craft a bundle of ramifying relations that generate presence, manifest absence and otherness” (Law, 2004, p. 42). In fine, writing portraits is a methodological tool that supports my relational ontology in order to render visible the multitudinous embodiments of the alternative.

References
The basis of this study are two underlying empirical projects. In the first one Viktor interviewed 17 Nobel Laureates trying to understand their cognitive complexity. (Dörfler & Eden, 2014a, 2017) In the second one Marc interviewed 18 top chefs trying to understand their creativity. (Stierand, 2015; Stierand & Dörfler, 2016; Stierand et al., 2014) Hence, both studies aimed at a high-complexity phenomenon in a well-defined context (science and haute cuisine respectively) and aimed at understanding the experiences of extraordinary achievers in these contexts. (Dörfler & Stierand, forthcoming) Both studies have been grounded in an interpretivist stance, and in both cases we were trying to collect thick data and achieve deep and insightful learning; this led us to develop a new method for each of the studies. The method developed for the Nobel Laureates project is called Intuitive Cyclic Phenomenology (Dörfler & Eden, 2014b), as it explicitly incorporates the intuition of the researchers and it has a number of embedded cycles in the process. The method developed for the top chef project is called Insider Explanatory Phenomenology (Stierand & Dörfler, 2014), as it explicitly incorporates the insider view of the researcher, who previously worked as a chef in Michelin starred restaurants and the purpose was to develop an interpretive-explanatory model. Naturally, in both projects the notion of bracketing came up as an important consideration, and we have developed a way of implementing bracketing through transpersonal reflexivity. The aim of this study is to unpack this view of bracketing as we believe that doing it well can substantially increase the quality of the findings and it has relevance to many other inquiries conducted following similar research philosophies. Important to mention is that we do not see the use of intuition and the insider view as a limitation; to the contrary, we believe that these were indispensable and key for achieving significant and game-changing findings. Thus, the notion bracketing, as we describe it here and as we have applied it, is not about getting rid of subjective components and removing pre-understandings but raising awareness of them and explicitly incorporating them.

As we were primarily interested in the personal experiences of our interviewees, we needed to deal with the fact that these personal experiences cannot be separated from the context of the experience. Therefore, we considered the interviewees’ immediate context, their Dasein, as well as their broader spatio-temporal Lebenswelt that also accounts for the intellectual tradition and domain knowledge of the interviewees’ field of practice. In a sense, the Nobel Laureates projects also made use of the insider view as Viktor as a researcher is naturally part of the Lebenswelt of Scientists at large. Yet, having not been awarded a Nobel Prize himself, Viktor needed to prepare for each interview meticulously in order to rapidly win the trust of the interviewees in the first few minutes of the interview. This is only a little glimpse into two extremely enriching and fascinating research experiences that both continuously challenged our personal worldviews and required from us to revise some of the fundamental notions of phenomenology, particularly the issue of bracketing.

In its original form, phenomenology came about in a profoundly positivist-dominated world of science and philosophy. Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology and student of Brentano, faced strong opposition from the heavily positivist academic world when he attempted to establish new foundations of scientific inquiry by focusing on the notion of lived experience. For a long time, scholars understood Husserl’s notion of bracketing as an attempt to approximate the positivist ideal of objectivity, because they believe that any form of scientific inquiry needs to remove the researcher from the findings. We believe that this was not Husserl’s intention.

Husserl (1913) talked about three forms of bracketing: the epoché or phenomenological attitude; the phenomenological psychological reduction; and the transcendental phenomenological reduction. Epoché describes the mode in which the researcher refrains from explanations, scientific conceptions and knowledge so as to “return to the unreflective apprehension of the lived, everyday world”. (Finlay,
2008: 3) This is a critical position where nothing is taken for granted (Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Zaner, 1975), beliefs, values, or knowledge about the phenomenon are “put out of play” (Husserl, 1936: 237); the researcher refrains from judgment (Husserl, 1913, 1936; Moran, 2000). Phenomenological psychological reduction, in turn, only requires the researchers (Giorgi, 1997) to suspend their “belief in the existence of what presents itself in the life-world. Instead the focus is on the subjective appearances and meanings” (Finlay, 2008: 3). So, the researcher brackets the world but not the empirical subject, to experience the natural attitude of the person in all its mundanity (Giorgi, 1997; Husserl, 1936). Transcendental phenomenological reduction is “a more radical version of the epoché where a ‘God’s eye view’ is attempted” (Finlay, 2008: 3); Husserl argued that it allows the philosopher to be “above his own natural being and above the natural world” (Husserl, 1936: 152).

Some later interpretations of the notion of bracketing shifted towards what we wanted to achieve; for instance Giorgi (1994: 212) considers it as a process whereby “one looks at the data with the attitude of relative openness” and Finlay (2009: 13) talks about a “dialectic movement between bracketing preunderstandings and exploiting them reflexively as a source of insight”. Similarly, the approach in these cases is aligned with our intentions to understand the interviewees’ perspective including the identification of elements that blur the invariant but essential nature of interviewees’ experiences (Giorgi, 1994; Husserl, 1931). This is also the reason for the numerous iterative cycles in both studies, treading a fine line between “knowing and not-knowing”. (Gioia et al., 2012: 21) These conceptualisations, however, say little about the implementation.

In conclusion, we have implemented bracketing in two stages in both studies, although the order of these stages was different. One stage, primarily corresponding to epoché, was practiced by the interviewer; this stage was primarily focused on suspending the judgement in order to arrive at an intuitive understanding of the interviewees’ subjective accounts. The other stage was practiced in the interaction between the interviewer and the co-researcher; this mainly corresponds to the phenomenological psychological reduction. The purpose of this stage was raising the awareness of presumptions, previous knowledge and beliefs that the interviewer is not aware of; this has been achieved by practicing transpersonal reflexivity. (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015; Hibbert et al., 2014) By this we mean that the co-researcher, who was not involved in the interviews and did not read them, holds a mirror to the interviewer in support of the reflexive process. Going through the cycles present in both methods also meant going back and forth between the two forms of bracketing, thus achieving the above mentioned ‘attitude of relative openness’.

Selected References

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Identity work has increasingly been defined narratively, focusing on how individuals draw on discourses to create, sustain and transform preferred versions of the self (Svenningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Organizational scholars focus on understanding how narratives of the self are constructed and how identities emerge as fragile accomplishments that may be aimed at identity stability but often are uncertain and in flux (Brown and Coupland, 2015). Especially, the idea of identity insecurity has received increasing attention as an important dimension of identity work, which offers insights about how identities are worked on as well as regulated in organizational contexts (Knights and Clarke, 2014). In this paper, I offer some reflections about how such complexities may be researched using narrative methodologies that are informed by a psychoanalytic, specifically Lacanian perspective (Lacan, 1977a,b; 1988 a,b). The latter provides a more fine-grained approach to studying identity narratives, especially in view of the insecurities that mark them and the contradictory positions subjects take in drawing on different discourses to narrate the self.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, identity work is always unsettled as it straddles a number of conflicting orders. There is the order of the real (Lacan, 1988b: 210) or that which we might really desire or seek to articulate but that we are always cut off from as we can only express ourselves through language or what Lacan calls the symbolic order (Lacan, 1988b: 210). None of this expresses what we really want. Hence, we experience anxiety that the ego defends against by making believe that we can still get at the real. This then enmeshes us in what Lacan calls the imaginary order (Lacan, 1988b: 177) in which we can articulate a self that knows who it is and can obtain what it wants. Yet, if one listens more closely to such ordinary identity narratives, it becomes apparent that we get routinely bogged down by our inability to say exactly what we wish to say as evidenced by numerous tensions, contradictions and other rhetorical creations unsettling imaginary constructions to reiterate fundamental lack (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986: 13).

The question then becomes how to deal with such disruptions and what position to take toward underlying lack, such as imaginary versus symbolic responses (Vanheule et al., 2003). On the imaginary side, when we experience disruptions of the imaginary, we see this as a personal problem which we try to solve by working ever harder to overcome it making us susceptible to promises made by and in organizations that we can obtain the enjoyment we fantasize about (Hoedemaekers, 2009: 190). On the symbolic side, the same experience is seen as a structural problem pointing to empowering alternatives (Vanheule et al., 2003: 335). This means, it becomes possible to work with structural lack and take different positions toward it (Vanheule et al., 2003: 336) opening up a wider view of life (Vanheule et al., 2003: 334) as a process of becoming (Fink, 2004: 63).

The implication of this for research on narrative identity work is that it becomes possible to explore identity stability and insecurity as well as power relations in organizations from completely different vantage points. Specifically, we can take this further and examine different positions taken toward this lack, such as imaginary versus symbolic responses. In turn, this provides a more complex and nuanced understanding of how identities are narrated and how this in turn makes us more or less vulnerable to organizational control. The point is to explore narrative identity work as a much more complex interplay of stability and insecurity and, therefore, to obtain a different perspective on the lived experience of individuals and how identity work unfolds over time. This offers a different perspective on examining how narrative identity work illuminates relations of power in organizations. It suggests that both agency and subjection may be mapped on to struggles with self and unconscious desire and therefore work in and through the narrative construction of the self. Put simply, the narration of identity is, in some way always already implicated in relations of power, as individuals seek to realize self and desire through work thereby drawing on available discourses in ways that render them more or less empowered.

References
Entrepreneurizing Research as an Aesthetic Process

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Although the importance of process approaches has now been largely accepted in the field of entrepreneurship, some scholars have suggested that there is a need to continue exploring, from a contextualist perspective, the entrepreneurial process (Chiles, Elias, & Li, 2017). Research in this area has used various methodological techniques, both quantitative and qualitative, with case study being the most commonly used qualitative approach (Chiles et al., 2017). However, for those entrepreneurship scholars wishing to gain insight into everyday practices that are tacit, embodied, and “untouchable,” standard qualitative entrepreneurship research techniques may be inadequate (Johannisson, 2011, p. 136). This is so because these techniques tend to position the researcher as an objective knower while simultaneously silencing researchers’ and practitioners’ subjective experiences and practical knowledge, ignoring relationality and materiality, and privileging what Fletcher (2011) terms as “false objectivity.” Additionally, standard methods may overemphasize talk (see Fletcher, 2011), thus overlooking important aspects of entrepreneurial processes and practices, which practitioners (and at times researchers) may struggle to verbalize (see Elias, Chiles, Duncan, & Vultee, 2017). Given a growing interest in entrepreneuring as a dynamic process, embedded in social interaction, that uses tacit knowledge and intuition as resources for everyday practice, we believe that there is a need to develop new methods for entrepreneuring research. For example, when studying processes that are neither directly observable nor easily measurable (e.g., imagination, aesthetic knowing, intuition), researchers should be open to multiple perspectives on how knowledge is enacted by entrepreneurs and on how to engage participants in the joint construction of that knowledge. Central to this approach is the researcher’s attention to their own subjective experiences, emotions, and sensory reactions; that is, to the aesthetics of the research process.

In this study, we explore our lived experiences, and dynamic roles, as members of a distributed research team striving to gain an in-depth understanding of the everyday practices of entrepreneurs. We borrow concepts and techniques from practice theory (Nicolini, 2012), enactive research (Johannisson, 2011), psychoanalysis (Duncan & Elias, 2017), and the aesthetics of entrepreneurship (Elias et al., 2017) to develop a portrait (see Dixson, Chapman, & Hill, 2005) of the research process. In doing so, we demonstrate how our hybrid approach allows us to “zoom in and zoom out” (Nicolini, 2009) as part of an aesthetic methodology.

An aesthetic approach to entrepreneuring research assumes knowledge to be produced from sensory experience and from the interplay of body, mind, and surrounding environment (Elias et al., 2017; also see Taylor & Hansen, 2005). This means that multiple layers of interaction, meaning, and perception - some of them ineffable or unconscious - need to be teased out. To do so, we propose that researchers enact and reflect on multiple roles (e.g., observer, participant, customer, apprentice), across time, while engaging participants in co-constructing knowledge of their everyday practices. This is important because it allows for generating unique insights (see Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014) into the process and practice of entrepreneuring. Going one step further, researchers must also dig into their own subjective experiences, as well as those of one another, to access hidden meanings, tensions, and contradictions (Duncan & Elias, 2017).

Overall, an aesthetic research methodology incorporates observation, interaction, self-reflection, and reflexive dialogue between both researchers and researchers with participants. Thus, it is ontologically relational and epistemologically interpretivist. This new methodology contributes to several literatures, including team ethnography (e.g., Erickson & Stull, 1998), enactive research (e.g., Johannisson, 2011), and reflexivity (e.g., Cunliffe, 2003). This study is best suited for Stream 2, as it develops a methodology that gives voice to research participants while attending to researchers’ aesthetic experiences.

References


Designing a Creative Focus Group Method as Ethnographic Praxis: Exploring Researcher and Participant Perspectives of Organizational Research with Indigenous Transwomen.

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with
Renae Gray
Alumna of University of New Mexico

This paper will address researcher and participant perspectives of ethnographic praxis through analyzing a method created by Elizabeth K. Eger called a “creative focus group” and responses to this method from research participant, Renae Gray. In our paper, I (Elizabeth) will introduce the creative focus group method as a part of my three-year ethnography with the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (TGRC), a nonprofit outreach organization serving transgender people’s lives and needs. Because QRM will be held in Albuquerque where TGRC operates, invited one of my participants, Renae Gray, to co-present with me on her experience as a participant. In this proposal, I will explain the impetus of designing this qualitative method to research organizational communication. I will then explain Renae and my planned paper for QRM to discuss how we both engaged this method via ethnographic praxis.

In my three-year ethnography and volunteering with TGRC, I utilized “traditional” ethnographic methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. In my research, I recognized challenges of accessing some participants who were unavailable or not interested in participating in semi-structured interviews with me (a white, cisgender researcher). I thus designed a method I called a “creative focus group” that invited participants to create individual art via collage and/or drawing with materials I provided. Their art responded to my prompt, “Draw and/or collage who TGRC is as an organization,” as my research questions explored the relationship of TGRC’s organizational identities to participants’ individual identities. I simultaneously utilized focus group interviewing with participants about the art they were creating, its meaning for them, and the benefits and limitations of the method to explore the organization.

Creative focus groups allowed me to examine participants’ artistic representations of TGRC and to access further information about organizational and intersectional transgender identities in this project through an arts-based approach (see Ellingson, 2009). Collage and drawing are increasingly used by qualitative researchers to access significant dimensions of lived experience and social action (e.g., imagistic, impressionistic) that are typically neglected or excluded by linguistic and rational methodologies (see Knowles & Cole, 2008). Davison, McLean, and Warren (2012) term methods like my own in organizational qualitative studies “visual elicitation.” For example, collage as a method uses cutting and pasting images to create a new image authored by a participant, which uses “found images from popular magazines as a reflective process, as an elicitation for thinking, writing, and/or discussion, and as a conceptualizing approach” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 102). Creative drawing as a method has also been used in prior organizational communication research to complement semi-structured interviews (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006; Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016).

Implementing creative focus groups fit as a local praxis for TGRC participants for three reasons. First, TGRC participants already utilized art for creative expression and reflection. TGRC often provided art opportunities during my research including: making signs for marches, coloring contests, collages, photos, puzzles, etc. In fact, my introductory tour to TGRC included meeting participants who were collaging together. I thus sought to harness their local passions for arts-based inquiry. Second, participants engaged one another frequently in formal and informal support groups. Those who may not have felt comfortable with semi-structured interviews with me could feel more at ease via an artistic session and focus group interview with their peers. I chose to use focus groups due to the value of “chaining,” where “each person’s turn of the conversation links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions that came before it” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 183). Using a focus group interview allowed me to observe participants “engaged in collectively constructing a narrative about a topic” (Belzile & Öberg, 2012, p. 462).

Third, artistic expression also can be “very helpful in emotionally difficult situations” (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016, p. 243), such as participants’ recounting experiences of discrimination connected to their identities. Because many transpeople experience extensive marginalization and discrimination (James et al., 2016), creative art and focus group conversations as an ethnographic praxis can create supportive
reflection and critique. Overall, using my creative focus group method harnessed local ways of knowing I was not able to access with other forms of data collection.

While I conducted five creative focus groups, at QRM, we will focus on one group where my copresenter, Renae Gray, was a participant. I held this particular focus group during TGRC’s drop-in hours, and eight participants enrolled. Seven identified as indigenous transwomen, including Renae. TGRC’s drop-in center hours predominantly served transwomen of color who faced intersectional discrimination, and many engaged in survival sex work and experienced homelessness, addiction, and unemployment. Importantly, national research on indigenous transpeople reveals that 41% of indigenous transpeople live in poverty, and 57% “have experienced homelessness at some in their lives” (James, Jackson, & Jim, 2017, p. 3). 43% of indigenous transwomen have also engaged in survival sex work. Thus researching indigenous transwomen’s experiences with TGRC’s organizational outreach allowed me to better understand their systemic needs, resiliency, and empowerment.

Our paper will encourage organizational researchers to engage in methodological flexibility during ongoing research projects in order to respond to local conditions and arising limitations. I will argue that designing the creative focus group specifically enabled me to explore indigenous transwomen’s intersectional experiences with TGRC’s outreach, such as their resistance to transphobia and anti-Native societal stereotypes. Renae will be exploring her role as a participant in this study as a Diné transwoman. She encouraged other indigenous transwomen to participate in my creative focus group, and she will discuss her role as a leader within her communities in the focus group and beyond. Renae will also be sharing her reactions to this method and seeking other participants’ further reflection on the creative focus group as praxis. Our presentation will also show sample collages and drawings from participants. In this proposal, we are including a sample collage by a participant named Pizza (see Figure 1.1), where she explored the intersections of addiction, sex work, indigenous transfemininity, transphobia, and culture as a part of TGRC’s organizational outreach. We will argue that a creative focus group enabled a unique praxis to examine indigenous transwomen’s experiences with TGRC’s organizing that could not have been otherwise studied.

References
Figure 1.1:
Creative imagining is essential to entrepreneuring, for without it entrepreneurs would not be able to create novel ideas and products. This notion is not new; in the previous century, economists such as Lachmann (1986) and Shackle (1979) emphasized the forward-looking processes of imagination as drivers of entrepreneurial action (Chiles, Vultee, Gupta, Greening, & Tuggle, 2010; Loasby, 2007). Specifically, Shackle (1979) reflected on the connection between future-oriented imagination and entrepreneurial choice, which results in partly *ex nihilo* creation (i.e., the origin of a new beginning, which flows from entrepreneurs’ subjective expectations). Similarly, Lachmann (1986) suggested that by engaging their creative imaginations, entrepreneurs continually generate novelty through a process of *ex nihilo* creation.

Organizational entrepreneurship scholars have also recognized the critical role of imagination in the entrepreneurial process. For instance, more than a decade ago, Sarasvathy (2001) encouraged scholars taking an economic approach to entrepreneurship to place imagination at “center stage” (p. 1). In a similar vein, Chiles et al. (2007) urged entrepreneurship scholars to pay closer attention to the “central, but largely neglected” issue of “the creation of opportunities through human imagination directed toward an envisioned future” (p. 486). Despite these calls, however, relatively little empirical attention has been paid to creative entrepreneurial imagination (i.e., the generation of novelty through forward-looking imaginative acts).

In this study, we follow Thompson (2017) who emphasizes the need for greater engagement with the philosophy of imagination literature to explore imagining as an aesthetic and relational process that intertwines with creative cognition. We take a practice-based, situational approach (see Nicolini & Monteiro, 2017) with the aim of exploring the *performances* involved in the practice of entrepreneurial imagining (rather than the *traits* of imaginative entrepreneurs). Particularly, we endeavor to shed clearer light on how entrepreneurs engage in creative imagining to generate novelty while relating to various elements in their internal and external worlds. To that end, we both theoretically developed and empirically grounded a process model of creative entrepreneurial imagining. We started by developing a preliminary process model by synthesizing and integrating insights from a set of readings addressing the topic of imagination from various disciplines. We then grounded and further honed this model by conducting a 25-month-long case study of a nonprofit venture operating within the music industry. Throughout this processual exploration of entrepreneurial imagining, our philosophical position was ontologically relational and epistemologically interpretivist.

After theoretically developing a process model of creative entrepreneurial imagination, we¹ engaged in field research as a means to ground—and further hone—the theoretical ideas embodied in the preliminary model. Specifically, we sought a more thorough understanding of a particular case (Stake, 1995)—a nonprofit venture within the music industry, comprising three co-founding entrepreneurs. In order to study their lived experiences and daily practices with one particular entrepreneurial project, we engaged in enactive research (see Johannisson, 2011). This interactive methodology was fundamental in gaining an in-depth understanding of creative imagining—a highly subjective process that is neither directly observable nor easily verbalized—because it allowed us to holistically engage in research and, as a result, gain unique insight into the entrepreneuring process. Overall, we took an abductive approach rooted in doubt, surprise, and reflexivity (Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2008) that allowed us to, democratically, co-interpret and co-construct meaning with our focal participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The result of this study is a dynamic, nonlinear process model of creative entrepreneurial imagining yielding five elements—*experiencing*, *early creating*, *reaching an impasse and gestating*, *(re)creating and evaluating imagined futures*, and *choosing and enterprising*. Throughout our exploration of the model, we argue that creative imagining (1) is a *sui generis* process, albeit one that influences, and is influenced by, other *sui generis* processes such as perception and cognition; (2) is a process involving partly *ex nihilo*

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¹ The first author conducted the fieldwork; “we” and “our” are used for rhetorical purposes.
creation; (3) may be experienced differently by entrepreneurs, with some elements co-occurring or unfolding in a dynamic and cyclical manner; (4) involves interaction between entrepreneurs and their surroundings; (5) requires a forward-looking perspective and an interplay between past, present, and future; (6) comprises unconscious as well as conscious processes; (7) is an embodied process requiring self-awareness and self-reflection upon one's inner world; and (8) requires entrepreneurial choice and the configuration of resources. Our hope is that this study helps pave the way for future researchers to explore, in greater depth, the process by which creative imagining unfolds as an essential part of the entrepreneuring process. This study is best suited for Stream 1 because it explores how creative imagining is at the root of the everyday practices and performances by which entrepreneurs generate novelty and thus make a difference in the world.

References

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Adapting Critical Hermeneutic Principles and Methods to Business Studies

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My research experience using critical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1989; Habermas, 1972; Phillips & Brown, 1993; Prasad, 2002; Ricoeur, 1981; Thompson, 1981) as a philosophical position and a platform for analysis of historic Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legal and curriculum documents provides a framework to explore the question, how and whose philosophical perspectives influence and constrain OHS curriculum in Canadian business schools, and what the prospects for change are. I reveal that OHS business studies articulates the hidden messages and subtle ideas of the first Canadian OHS legal institutions whose practices appear to support workers health interests but rather perpetuate business profitability interests. This occurs through hegemonic processes (Gramsci, 1978; Apple 1979) taking place over the past century, making these beliefs and assumptions difficult to change within business practices and studies today.

Engaging in the critical hermeneutic tradition allows me to reflect deeply on our current day OHS curriculum and by extension business school curriculum. I propose that we introduce a historiographical approach to OHS curriculum in business studies that adopts critical hermeneutic philosophies and methods in which every student becomes engaged in an ongoing critical hermeneutic debate of the multiplicity of perspectives concerning OHS. I argue that the social constructive aspects of knowledge that exist on the periphery of scientific knowledge can be introduced not only into OHS courses but other management courses so as to open up new ways of exploring workplace well-being. I further argue that workers OHS, can be better understood by studying its historical roots, evolution and influences through a critical and reflective lens.

As business students engage in a critical hermeneutic approach to their business studies they will develop new experiences and competencies that may not only help them deal the complexities of workers well-being but shape a more caring and compassionate workplace and community. My ideas draw on my experiences with critical hermeneutics offering this perspective and approach as a starting point for conversations on business curriculum, using OHS curriculum as one example.

Selected References


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Qualitative network research provides a path to theory-building (Charmaz, 2015; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) on (a) the nature and role of engaged partnerships in interorganizational networks (Doerfel, Forthcoming, 2016) and (b) repair and recovery of communities and nations following a natural disaster or other disruption (Doerfel & Taylor, 2017.; Harris & Doerfel, 2017). These theory-building projects use empirical evidence drawn directly from the struggles of organizations and communities operating in disrupted environments. After major disasters, interorganizational relationships are enacted to address issues that are beyond the capacity of single organizations or communities. While interorganizational relationships are communicative, that is they provide space for collective identity formation and collaboration (Koschmann, 2013; Koschmann, Kuhn, & Pfarrer, 2012), they are also network based, that is they are comprised of different types of ties that provide pathways for information, resources, service delivery, and advocacy (Benson, 1975; Diani, 2015; Galaskiewicz, 1979). Using field research from two different communities impacted by two different natural disasters, coastal New Jersey and Hurricane Sandy and Houston, Texas and Hurricane Harvey, we will discuss the use of field research and qualitative methods as a form of engaged scholarship that facilitates analyses and theory building about multi-level networks in post-disrupted contexts.

Qualitative network analysis (Hollstein, 2011) is a form of engaged scholarship. The research design discussed in this presentation allows for participants’ voices to be heard throughout the research process (Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, (2008). We discuss multiple methods to triangulate information about a system of organizations working with and sometimes against each other. Involving participants in the design of the research provides community members an opportunity to identify the who, what, and why community members activate, deactivate, and avoid ties that variably support and undermine response to interruptions. This research process also enables a broader understanding of the multi-level social processes of individuals, groups, and organizations, and the choices made by such partners to engage or not (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997). Research from Hurricane Sandy (Harris & Doerfel, 2017) and preliminary design and access in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey (Doerfel, 2018) highlight the choices made at interpersonal, organizational, and interorganizational levels. Organizational networks coupled with qualitative information about the nature of multi-level communicating and organizing provide deep insights along with markers of chronological shifts, breaking points, and retrogressions as they relate to organizational partnering, advocacy, resource sharing, and resource hoarding, within communities. Interorganizational relationships provide communication channels, information, resources, and opportunities for problem-solving and decision-making (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Monge & Contractor, 2003; Van de Ven & Walker, 1984) and may best be understood from the vantage point of participants actively engaged with response to, and recovery from, natural disaster or other social and economic disruptions. Indeed, research continues to point to networks as that which “cements” communities together (Diani, 2015; Doerfel, Forthcoming) but qualitative approaches help move theory to a more nuanced set of insights about timing and social cues embedded in multilevel networks that identify such markers of cemented and fractured communities.

Selected References


Stopping Sexual Violence on Campus: Whistleblowers, Federal Title IX Complaints, and Rape at US Universities

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Whistleblowers—people who call attention to an organization’s wrongdoing—engage in prosocial behavior and contribute to the public good (Miceli, Near, & Dworkin, 2008; Rosenbloom, 2003). Their actions help organizations to remain ethical and minimize corruption (Cassematis & Wortley, 2013). Despite the importance of whistleblowers, their perspectives and accounts of their own experiences remain largely absent from management scholarship (Lipman, 2012). To assess how whistleblowers make sense of their own actions and impact, this study focuses on in-depth, qualitative interviews with a group of highly visible whistleblowers in the United States: Students (and some faculty) who filed federal complaints after their universities bungled responses to campus sexual violence. One interviewee articulated the challenges associated with this kind of whistleblowing. She said: “I’ve had to take years off my education. I want more than anything else to move on with my life, put this behind me. ... I didn’t sign up to sacrifice my life and education for the wellbeing of an institution.” Like other participants, this interviewee struggled with both the impact of whistleblowing and also the aftermath of sexual assault.

The federal complaints—like the one this interviewee filed—occur within the legal framework established by Title IX, part of the Education Amendments of 1972. The law bars any form of gender discrimination—including sexual assault—in US educational programs that receive federal support. Guidance documents from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) obligate colleges to prevent and respond to sexual assault. If colleges do not meet their responsibilities, members of those institutions can file formal complaints with OCR, and OCR then launches an investigation. OCR can withdraw the school’s federal funding if they are found in violation, but OCR has never implemented this punishment and, on the contrary, most cases get dropped (Rocheleau, 2015). Progress is also slow: Investigations take an average of four years to resolve (New, 2015). Nevertheless, these federal complaints are one important component in activists’ strategies for creating change at US colleges. Currently, one in five women experiences rape by the time of graduation and approximately half of LGBTQ students experience some form of sexual assault (Cantor et al., 2015; Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2010). As college students have become more aware of the Title IX and OCR’s procedures, the numbers of complaints have grown. In 2010 when I began researching Title IX, OCR was investigating only three universities: Harvard, Ohio State, and Princeton. Given the savvy of whistleblowers and activists across the US, more than 200 schools were under investigation by early 2017.

Whistleblowers are likely to experience retaliation (Dworkin & Baucus, 1998), and whistleblowing can negatively impact the whistleblower’s relationships with other organizational members (Jackson et al., 2010). One study found that 20% of whistleblowing employees were denied promotion because of their whistleblowing (see Apaza & Chang, 2017). Other members of the organization may be suspicious of the whistleblowers’ motives (Miceli, Near, & Dworkin, 2009), and women may be particularly subject to retaliation (Hobby, 2001). An initial analysis of the data from this study suggests that the negative impacts on those who filed federal Title IX complaints is similar: After going to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), these individuals experienced delayed graduation, struggled with mental health, and received death and/or rape threats both from other university members and members of the public.

The participants in this study are also sexual assault survivors, a factor that complicates what is known about other kinds of whistleblowers. When survivors speak about being sexually assaulted, they often receive poor responses from friends, family, and professional helpers (Ahrens, 2006). Those responses increase the likelihood of negative health outcomes related to an assault (Ullman, Townsend, Filipas, & Starzynski, 2007). These health problems may be exacerbated by organizations. Some scholars have suggested that an institution’s response to assault survivors can be traumatizing, a phenomenon dubbed institutional re-victimization (Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Seff, & Barnes, 2001; Hengehold, 2000). Accordingly, building knowledge specific to whistleblowers who address violence and other acts of hate is

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2 Two important exceptions exist, and both publications are qualitative studies that rely on nurses’ accounts of whistleblowing in healthcare organizations (Jackson et al., 2010; Peters, Luck, Hutchinson, Wilkes, Andrew, & Jackson, 2011).
important so that institutions can learn how to better support the health of those members who are both vulnerable and also courageously demand that the institution become more ethical.

This study relies on four in-depth interviews with people who filed federal Title IX complaints with the Office for Civil Rights. A student who had recently completed her undergraduate degree, and who had also filed a federal Title IX complaint against her school, worked as a paid research assistant. She attended some interviews, assisted with participant recruitment, and also participated in initial stages of data analysis by comparing her own experiences to those of the interviewees. Given the sensitivity of the topic, the public visibility of the participants, and their involvement in high-profile lawsuits, the author obtained a certificate of confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States. With the certificate in place, attorneys cannot subpoena study data—or at least would have extreme difficulty doing so.

Initial analysis—based on grounded theory—revealed that these four participants saw their whistleblowing as one component of broader, systemic change. They connected their federal Title IX complaints to multiple forms of anti-rape activism. Following their complaint to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), they each observed concrete changes in systems and policies at their college/university. These changes occurred even if OCR did not find the college had done something wrong. Per the tenets established by Apazo and Chang (2011), the participants’ whistleblowing was successful to some extent. Apazo and Chang also suggested that lack of legal protections can lead to intense retaliation and backlash against whistleblowers. Given that participants in this study described brutal retaliation—including direct threats on their lives—the United States may lack adequate legal protections for those who blow the whistle about sexual violence. The negative outcomes these participants describe are all related to cultural power dynamics associated with gender and sexuality. Accordingly, this study’s initial analysis underscores the need for more feminist research on whistleblowing, something Scott-Hunt and Lim (2005) advocated more than a decade ago. Developing better understandings of how institutions can support whistleblowers who call organizations to account for harassment, assault, and other forms of sexual violence is particularly important in this cultural moment when so many people—mostly women—are coming forward about past abuses.

**Selected References**


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Organizational Knowledge Building through Action Research

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This abstract presents the framework for a forthcoming paper based on a current action research project where we discuss to what extent and how action research can support organizational learning and change processes in relation to organizational knowledge building and knowledge sharing. The project draws on the dialogue tradition within action research (Coghlan et al.; 2010; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Ripamonti et al 2016) and social constructionist ideas (Cunliffe 2002, 2004; Gergen 2003, 2015; Gergen & Thatchenkery (1996); Cunliffe & Shotter, J. (2006), Shotter 2013; McNamee 2014).

Organizational context
The project is developed and carried out in close collaboration between the Center for Deaf blindness and Hearing Loss (CDH) and Aalborg University. CDH is a regional center located in Northern Denmark who works with:
• Accommodation for children, adolescents and adults with deafblindness and hearing loss
• Learning activities for children and youth with deafblindness and hearing loss
• Teaching and supervision related to deafblindness and hearing loss

The project examines and discusses if and how action research can offer a frame for reflexivity, learning, knowledge production and knowledge sharing across the organization and, how action research can support and sustain organizational change through the active involvement of employees and managers in reflexive conversations (Cunliffe 2002, 2004) and initiatives for change.

Motivation and roles
The overall motivation for the project derives from increased expectations from external stakeholders regarding the inclusion of specialized professional knowledge and research based knowledge within the field of deafblindness and hearing loss. CDH has signed a 4-year contract with The National Board of Social Services, which implies that the center works from a ‘knowledge-based’ approach and has agreed to collect, develop, elaborate and communicate knowledge and share their expertise with external partners e.g. schools and other specialized centers of learning and pedagogy in relation to the target groups. Our paper will discuss different understandings and social constructions of knowledge and, furthermore discuss the question: who defines legitimate knowledge and for whom?

Within this frame the project works with organizational learning and change based on research questions and small local projects formulated and carried out by the participants. During the first year (2017) the project involved 24 employees, and the forthcoming year (2018) it will involve 14 managers.

In the project we work from a process and change perspective (Shotter 2005; Chia 1996; Tsoukas, & Chia (2002)) based on a dialogical approach. Two internal consultants fulfill the roles as process facilitators of the action research process, and the two researchers from Aalborg University (LH and SF) are contributing with ideas, sparring, qualitative research design and methodology, facilitation of focus group interviews and the development of papers for publishing in collaboration with the participants.

Aims of the project
The overall aim of the project is to support the experience of coping in relation to the tasks as an employee or a manager in a ‘knowledge based organization’ and the requirements of being capable to work from a ‘knowledge-based’ approach including the collection, development, processing and dissemination of practice-based knowledge in combination with research-based knowledge. In relation to this, the project is paying special attention to the verbalization and externalization of tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Polanyi, 2009). Through the active engagement of employees and managers the projects seeks to build bridges between practice and theory. Related to this overall aim, the project should contribute to:
• Support and strengthen reflexivity, learning and knowledge production in the organizational context
• Enhance awareness about the pedagogical practice on a reflected and knowledge-based basis
• Promote knowledge sharing among employees and across professional groups.
• Strengthen the participants’ use of theoretical concepts and professional communication skills
• Support organizational learning and an overall organizational identity as a ‘knowledge based
organization’

Research question:
The research is based on the following overall question: How can we share and co-create knowledge through dialogical and reflexive processes in a collaborative setting for learning, involving employees and managers, including as well the sharing of knowledge throughout the organization? In addition, we are curious to examine whether action research as an inquiry for learning and change can act as an alternative to the New Public Management paradigm?

In NPM focus usually is kept on top-down implementation of evidence-based knowledge in pedagogical practice. Data collection and analysis: Our research is based on the collection and analysis of qualitative data from observations through participation, field notes, focus group interviews, documents and posters elaborated during the process, and the forthcoming paper will contain a qualitative analysis of data from two specific cases related to the first year of the project while discussing the use of action research for organizational knowledge building.

In the paper we will examine and discuss the challenges, the preliminary findings and future potentials of the project. In relation to this we will explore how the dominant understandings of what it means to be a ‘professional’ working in a ‘knowledge based organization’ can be de-constructed through action research.

The data analysis will pay special attention to:

• Reflexive process though dialogue
• Externalization of tacit knowledge through verbalization
• Narratives and discourse including the discursive construction of knowledge, professional identities and relationships
• Bridge building between practice and theory
• Polyphony, relationships and power (e.g. who defines legitimate knowledge?)
• Signs of organizational learning and organizational change

Preliminary findings and concluding remarks
Our preliminary findings show that there is a great potential in working with action research for organizational knowledge building and bridge building between practice and theory, because this inquiry actively involves participants in experimenting, exploring and verbalizing their own professional practice and, furthermore can inspire participants to seek knowledge from relevant literature and research within their professional field.

Selected References


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Working with Organizational Learning from a Dialogical Perspective.

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These years we notice a considerable amount of research on top-down implementation of standardized concepts for organizational development and leadership. As an alternative to this trend we present and discuss a dialogically based approach to organizational learning and leadership development inspired by the notion of relational leading (Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, Uhl-bien and Ospina 2012; Hersted & Gergen 2013) and action research (Ripamonti et al., 2016; McNiff et al., 2011; Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

This abstract presents and discusses an action research project involving ten public schools in the Northern region of Denmark. Focus of the project is on leadership and organizational development through dialogic practice with the use of reflective teams, over two years. The intention of the project was to enhance reflexivity (Cunliffe 2002, 2004) and learning among the school principals and school leaders with the aim of improving leadership and thereby support the teachers and pedagogues in their work to strengthen students’ learning and wellbeing. In the first run, the project ran over a school year and was subsequently prolonged by a year. Rather than implementing a general training program for all leaders in the municipality, the main idea behind the initiative was to create a space for reflexivity, knowledge building and learning through dialogue, based on the individual school’s current challenges and special conditions. The ten schools involved in the project each have their own history, background, demographics and socioeconomic foundation. Not surprisingly, each of these schools is characterized by having its own leadership style, school culture and identity. The action research project was facilitated and carried out by the authors of this paper and the findings from the project have been read and validated by the participants.

Our general research question is: How, in a semiformal learning space, can we work with leadership development and learning that can influence positively on several levels in a municipality with ten schools, each with very different histories, backgrounds, and socioeconomic foundations?

As stated above, we worked within the frame of action research where researchers and practitioners are engaged in co-constructing learning and knowledge through reflexive dialogues (Cunliffe 2002, 2004) and experimental actions.

In our approach to action research, which builds on a social constructionist perspective – “The Truth” is not a given in advance, but something, which is shaped socially and is therefore regularly negotiable. Thus, we cannot reach any form of objective recognition of “reality,” but must regularly construct and reassess our understanding of it through relational processes and actions. In our approach, the action researcher is seen as an agent for change, as exploration, learning and knowledge production take place simultaneously (Cunliffe & Shotter, 2006; McNamee 2010; Hosking & Pluut 2010; McNamee & Hosking 2012; Gergen 2015). In the project, we consciously worked on developing and practicing a dialogical approach to learning, change and knowledge production based on Shotter’s notion of “withness”-thinking (Shotter, 2010) while hoping that this approach could inspire the leaders to apply practices informed by dialogue and discover new opportunities for action. We will unfold the inquiry more fully in the paper. As part of the research project we have worked with the following empirical material:

- Reflections and knowledge generated in the dialogues with the leading teams. Field notes were taken along the way. Several sessions were recorded directly on audio file.
- Six months into the process, a mid-way interview of 1½ hour’s length was made with the director for children and youth in the municipality, which was recorded on audio file.
- A dialogue-based evaluation was made in mixed groups at a joint leader seminar in the project’s final phase, where the leaders shared their opinions of the process. The participants produced poster boards and presented their thoughts on the process in plenary session.
The empirical material has been condensed thematically and analyzed in relation to the overall theme of the paper, and the main themes have been compared and analyzed across the different forms of empirical material. The participants' evaluation at a leadership seminar in mixed groups constitutes a validation of the empirical data. The evaluation took place both through verbal and written communication through presentations and dialogues in plenary sessions, with the supplementary use of poster boards prepared by the participants themselves.

The project addresses concrete issues, dilemmas and paradoxes that have been analyzed from different perspectives by the involvement of a reflecting team, and alternative potential actions have been discussed and tried out in practice (e.g. by use of roleplaying and video clips). These challenges have been studied from different perspectives in ways, which contributed to the learning about challenges in leadership at a more general level. The leaders have expressed that the dialogues and reflections in the groups have led to changes in their way of acting in their daily work in the organization. We notice that the main themes chosen by the leaders over time have shifted from the simple and operational to the more complex, visionary and long-term based (this will be unfolded more in the paper).

We find that the project has succeeded in creating a semi-formal learning space which has contributed to both first and second order reflexivity (Cunliffe 2002, 2004), informed by the ideas about relational leading and dialogically based collaboration, which we will explain and discuss in the paper. In addition, the project has contributed to organizational learning at different levels in the local school district and the municipality as such. A special characteristic of this semiformal approach to learning is that it is flexible and is always based on the current context of the organization. It can be considered as a relational-responsive and adaptable approach to learning where the participants identify and work with the themes emerging in the here-and-now situation. Thus, we conclude that this kind of dialogically based approach to leadership development makes particularly good sense while it can contribute to higher levels of reflexivity concerning complex organizational challenges.

Moreover, this semiformal approach has contributed to a closer and more generative dialogue between the schools and the municipality.

References
Bridging Theory and Practice through Reflexivity.

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One of us has been a leader for more than ten years and has during that period been enrolled in various part- and full-time master programs. The other of us has been a university teacher and researcher for more than ten years. What we both – in various ways – have experienced is how the theoretical and practical worlds often unintentionally appear to be poles apart when they refer to the same phenomenon (Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017; Ripamonti et al., 2016). This is – for us – not an indication that the theoretical and practical worlds are not curious or interested in one another. On the contrary. The theoretical world does often includes practical examples to illustrate a theoretical point or to make an abstract theory more understandable. Concordantly, the practical world explores different theoretical concepts when for example, new strategies are initiated, restructuring initiatives are developed or new leadership concepts are introduced etc.

What nevertheless, becomes more apparent is a desire to bridge the practical and theoretical knowledge about leading, strategising and organising in management in more democratic, evocative and indigenous ways (McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Shotter, 2010, 2016). One way to explore the possible ways to bridge existing theoretical and practical knowledge could be to apply a reflexive stance and explore management learning from within leaders’ lived experiences (Cunliffe, 2002; Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017).

The inspiration to apply a reflexive stance in management learning stems primarily from Cunliffe’s (2002, 2002a), Cunliffe & Scaratti’s (2017) and Ripamonti et al.’s (2016) work where reflexivity is one out of three dialogical way of engaging in organisational life. The other two being; reflex and; reflective, whereas the first incorporates peoples’ instantaneous and relationally accepted and routinised taken-for-granted ways of making sense of a situation and acting upon it (Cunliffe, 2002). The latter revolving around anchoring one’s understanding in logical, rational and objective theoretical and analytical responses (Cunliffe, 2002).

Recently, a new Ph.D. project has been initiated with the title: “Reflexive Leading”. The purpose of the Ph.D. is – anchored in a relational stance (Gergen, 2014; McNamee & Hosking, 2012) – to develop a one-year long part-time executive program where leaders during five two-day long seminars are invited to become reflexive about their own practice based on actual organisational and strategic challenges. Furthermore, to experiment with facilitating learning processes in-between the seminars where leaders in smaller groups and based on action learning principles disturb each other in their instantaneous reflex and reflective responses and make room for curiosity and exploring other, unknown and maybe more ethical ways of engaging in organisational life (Ripamonti et al., 2016).

The aim with applying a reflexive stance to management learning is not to argue that reflex and reflective ways of dialoguing are not constructive (Cunliffe, 2002). On the contrary. The aim is to enhance the possible ways theoretical and practical knowledge can be bridged during an executive program and let the theorizing and practicing become closer entwined.

To also turn the gaze on ourselves and become reflexive about the way we – as researchers – construct the executive program, we want to dwell on and in curious ways explore the structure and content of the executive program (Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 2016). The following questions occupy us at the current moment:

- How can we use inquiring conversations with leaders to generate knowledge that enable us to develop an executive program that is valuable for leaders regarding the current and future challenges they will encounter?
- How can we develop an executive program that enable the participating leaders to bridge theoretical and practical knowledge in reflexive ways?
- How can we as researchers become reflexive about the way we develop executive programs?
- How can theories be introduced and used during an executive program to enhance and support a reflexive stance towards one’s own practice as a leader?
- How can we as researchers support and facilitate learning processes that both during and after the program invite the participating leaders into challenging their own and each other’s taken-for-granted assumptions about leading?
It is our hope that we during the QRM conference will be able to explore these questions with other researchers interested in reflexivity and management learning. Our intention is to develop an executive program based on participative teaching methods that take their point of departure from within the leaders' everyday practice and allow for new, reflexive and more democratic forms of knowledge to emerge. Hence, allow leaders' lived experiences to bridge with theoretical insight and let the joining of these two worlds shape the contours of management learning.

References:

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This paper, a segment of a PhD project, is an attempt to aggregate the stories of Bangladeshi women in academia, who have braved through the tremendous socio-psychological obstacles put forward relating to their overseas study and career progression.

As this study studies subjective reality: experience of academics on return from their study abroad, a qualitative approach has been deemed the most viable option for this study. Gillham (2000) argues that qualitative methods are suited for situations where little is known about the phenomenon in question, to explore complexities, to know ‘the informal reality which can only be perceived by being inside’ and also to see things from the perspective of the people involved (p. 11). Robson (2011) echoes that a subjective reality and an interpretive worldview sees reality as socially constructed, where the focus is on ‘individual rather than group and is concerned with how individuals construct and make sense of their world’ (p. 24). The story of each individual is different but they are all situated within the larger story of experience after return. Based on these understandings, the Qualitative research paradigm has been chosen for the methodology that accommodates both the subjective reality that the participants construct of their own worlds and the subjective influence the researcher has in interpreting the data generated.

For this study, multiple narratives have been gathered in the form of face to face interviews from a total of 35 male and female academics out of which 12 were female, working in different private and public universities in Bangladesh. Both strategic and snowball sampling has been used in selecting participants.

The research question is about the common experience of the academics on return from study abroad, their reintegration, challenges faced, contribution made and some other related issues. The narratives have reintroduced the researcher, who herself is a woman academic thus an insider, to the enormous psychological and societal pressure women in academia face in taking decisions like studying abroad or in reintegrating to the work environment and society on return. The presence of women in academia across the globe has increased considerably in recent times. The current trend in academia seems to place men and women on the same grounds and establish roughly equal salaries for them at similar ranks (Li and Peguero, 2015). Bangladesh, a developing country conforms to this trend and has made considerable progress in advancement of women (ADB, 2010).

However, the society being a patriarchal one leave men to enjoy a lot of power at home, in politics and at workplace. Gender remains the most significant social division and sphere of discrimination. As a result, the female partner is expected to make all sorts of compromises and sacrifices in family as well as professional lives. In the analysis, it was seen that all 12 of the respondent female academics were torn between what to prioritize: their career or their family and spoke about their turmoil in taking their decision to study overseas and their hardships on adjusting their family/ themselves on return. Furthermore, social stigma followed the unmarried female academics who went abroad to pursue their MA degree. They had to get married immediately on return because of the social pressure leading to parental pressure.

On the contrary, partner or family issues might have remained subservient to the male academics because only few male academics deliberately spoke about the hitches of family reintegration. Apparently, women in Bangladesh hold cardinal positions in different prime sectors like being the VC of a public university or even being the prime minister of the country. Yet, in reality even the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and recognition of women’s paid and unpaid jobs and choice and advancement of career goals seem to be a struggle in itself at every step for them.

Nonetheless, the narratives of these participant female academics’ provided ample instances which pointed at their submission to the prevailing neoliberal ethos that the society has progressed, men and women are on same grounds and they have greater options and more freedom to choose their trajectory (Baker, 2010). According to Giroux (2015, pp. 449-450), “the vocabulary of neoliberalism posits a false notion of freedom, which it wraps in the mantle of individualism and choice, and in doing so reduces all problems to private issues, suggesting that whatever problems bear down on people, the only way to understand them is through the restrictive lens of individual responsibility, character and self-resilience”.

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Despite facing countless difficulty ranging from coming back without awarding of degrees to getting married immediately on return, none of these academic women in the study wanted to portray themselves as victims of situations unlike the radical feminist belief. Rather, they attempted to position themselves as having “highly individualistic selfhood, voluntaristic, intentional behavior and choice” like the Australian respondents in Baker’s study (ibid, p. 190). There were no pronounced criticism towards the society or spouses in their discourses for that matter, rather was a tendency to manifest positivity and prove themselves strong against all the oddities they faced before, during and on return from their overseas study. Moderate feminism and the current neoliberal discourse that began as a journey of economic reform, later managed to penetrate the realms of human life, which has probably lead these female academics to believe that they are not really at a disadvantage as they could choose to further their career. Notwithstanding the struggles they have been through, they have complied to the neoliberal belief that their success or failure depended on their individual selves, positivity and adaptability to situations (Brown, 2003).

These personal narratives of the twelve academics put forward a collective story of constant adaptability and adjustment and how the current ideology prevails over and reshapes the beliefs of these professional women. Neoliberalism has been criticized on many occasions and its entanglement with these narratives has fostered this belief and turned the voices of these academics into seasoned stories of modern times.

References:
How misaligned moralities can be facilitated in collective sensemaking?

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Interpersonal interactions can contribute in managing unexpected situations. The purpose of this socio-cognitive study, however, is to examine how misaligned moralities, at both personal and organizational level, play out in collective sensemaking episodes where usually the goal is to move the situation from chaos to order. While extant literature discusses in great depth how ethical decision-making models grounded in sensemaking can support organizations facing ethical dilemmas, this study aims to take a different angle by trying to understand how existing sensemaking framework(s) can be given further accuracy and completeness when salient but opposing moral positions are reported during an ongoing crisis.

This study lifts off by taking three key positions on a) crisis as the boundary of the research b) sensmaking process as the phenomenon, and c) morality as the context. Crisis identification entails a true working explanation of how it should be defined and treated as. This study is particularly interested in linking the complexity of crisis to the concept of stress where the dangers and time pressures associated with a particular event demands immediate decision and action needed to stop further breakdowns.

Sensemaking, at an interpersonal and/or interorganizational level, not only becomes relevant but critical by this stage in crisis when a harmonized action plan is needed to handle the chaos. The sensemaking phenomenon enables the actor(s) to assess the faced situation by taking cues from their past experiences and to form reasonable meanings of events as they unfold. This study aims to take a position on sensemaking principle that in an equivocal situation extracts purposeful meaning and promotes developing of a sound action plan that can lead the actors to an ordered situation.

Morality is large and complex. During the course of centuries, several philosophers, academics, and activists have defined morality but none of these definitions are comprehensive enough to be applied to even a handful of discussions and situations surrounding morality - especially when it comes to agreeing on a moral discussion that involves multiple actors.

An event where incongruent moral values between actors prevail is assumed to promote a gradual delay to eventual failure of the crisis handling - academically termed as the destructive transition from sensebreaking (breaking of meaning) to sensefreezing (knowingly or unknowingly preventing making sense) But since this study aims to focus on uncertain events when there is very little to no time to teach each other morality, it is hoped to understand how opposing views of morality can be facilitated through attempting to influence each other (sensegiving), exchanging information (senseexchanging) , and finally proposing a somewhat agreed action plan (sensemaking) to control the already out-of-control situation.

Empirically, the study plans to examine at least two real-life crises in which heavy losses of human lives were reported. The first case is the 2011 Baldia Town garments factory fire in Karachi, Pakistan in which more than 250 innocent workers were burnt to ashes due to negligence of the management and lack of collaboration between the aid agencies and the local government. The second case that will be explored is the 2013 Rana Plaza building collapse – also of a garments factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh in which over 1100 workers lost their lives within minutes. Including these cases essentially serves two main purposes a) they serve as a bedrock to set an appropriate tone for this research study by indicating the role of opposing value-based factors and b) to propose how these factors can be aligned to promote a complete sensemaking framework towards a viable action plan.

To make these expected deliverable even more relevant, the study will explore the thorny issue of refugee crises in the EU and beyond. The selection of this case study sits on the idea to foreshadow the role of morals, values, and ethics on decision-making in times of crises when breaking down of meaning is seen activated between the actors. The case of refugee crises will be studied longitudinally while collecting data through in-depth literature review, semi-structured interviews and available archival data.
In this paper, we argue that collage-making offers an egalitarian and creative tool for exploring primary knowledge, opinions and ideas, which would otherwise be tainted by the politics of dialogue and discussion, and the practices of the ‘speech act’. We do so on the basis of the critical understanding that research and research outcomes need to be more inclusive of our research participants’ viewpoints, questions, and voice. In our two most recent research projects, we therefore used ‘inception meetings/workshops’ in which research participants are ‘invited’ to ‘rethink’ the research problem and determine the specific direction of the research through creative collage-making. We have specifically used the collage-making technique in order to level the playing field in Focus Group discussions and to get participants out of their comfort zone of traditional conversation. 

Collage-making has thus been the core element in two of our interdisciplinary ‘organising for security’ research projects: the Imaginative Scenario Planning for Law Enforcement Organizations project that works with national police and crime units in the Netherlands and the UK and our Maritime Dimension of Transnational Organized Crime: Engaging Indonesian Law Enforcement Agencies and Coastal Communities project that involves Indonesian fishery communities and fishermen as well as law enforcement organizations. In both projects, we have adopted an explicit visual participatory approach (Mitchell, De Lange & Moletsane, 2017) that is creative and emancipatory, and in which the research participants are co-producers of academic knowledge (Cassell et al. 2006). The planning and conducting the research is therefore done with the people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study and the direction and/or final problem formulation is based on the convergence of academic and practitioner insights (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). We have done so on the basis of our expertise and knowledge-bases from different disciplines and fields: law and politics (Noortmann) and anthropology and organization studies (Koning).

Arguing that speech/orally-oriented qualitative data collection techniques suffer from a) standardized responses and known-articulations and b) the politics of language we decided – in our projects - to avoid the more typical qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus group discussions, and opted for creative-oriented ones using images expecting that this technique might open-up interviewees to new and different reactions to the issue under discussion. In line with the participatory and co-production of knowledge grounding (philosophy) consider collage-making to be emancipatory as it breaks through comfort-zones and power relations and allows voice through performance. 

In the full paper, we will subsequently discuss the process of collage making within the projects and critically assess how it has played out across cultures (and languages), groups, and genders. Next, we will explore the issue of how to analyze the data and articulate the potential of creative collage making for qualitative research in organizational / interdisciplinary studies.

**The two research projects**

The Maritime project aims to foster cooperation between Indonesian coastal communities and law enforcement agencies in order to redress transnational organized maritime crimes in Indonesia (illegal fishing, human trafficking, sea robbery, piracy, and smuggling) and advance Indonesia's maritime security. Through the creation of collages and the explaining of those collages, the participants are actively engaged in visualizing and contextualizing the problem, perceiving the impact of maritime criminal activities on their own security and livelihoods, and contemplating their role in combating crime and in increasing maritime security. Through the visual participatory method, the participants (and we as researchers) are stimulated in creative engagement, to think outside the box of existing 'language' enabling expressions and of opinions and views in an illustrative manner.

The scenario-planning project aims to understand and advance the policies and practices of scenario planning among law enforcement organizations and to develop the competence to critically imagine future security threats other than traditional law enforcement planning strategies and mechanisms currently allow
for. It does so on the basis of a comparative study of two national law enforcement organizations (in the UK and Netherlands) and with their participation. The participants ‘produce’ (or perform) their own stories and interpretations of their experiences (of future security threats) through a visualization method during focus group sessions – the making of collages by the research participants.

The creative collage making in practice
For both our projects, the collage-making (using fragments of found images or materials and gluing them to a flat surface to portray phenomena) exercises took place in 2017.

We conducted 2 rounds of collage-making in Indonesia (February and December). In the first round (inception), we invited 6 fishing community leaders from various Indonesian island as well as representatives of 6 governmental agencies to a hotel in Jakarta to engage in collage-making (half a day with lunch for each ‘group’, all men). In the second round (December 2017) we traveled to the various fishing communities to explore the issues identified from the first round one with a wider group of participants (fishermen), again via the means of collage making. We also did observations and on the spot conversations in the various harbors and small fishing communities. We had hoped to do the same with the law enforcement organizations but had to let go of this idea (practical reasons) and returned to follow-up interviews with them (individuals and in groups). In the first round, we decided to ask each participant to make their own collage (individual collage-making). In the second round, we divided the participants into two groups and they made a group-collage. The language used was Indonesian (spoken by Koning) supported in all cases by Indonesian researchers who translated as well. The ‘data’ consist of ‘collages’ and photos of collages and collage making. Indonesian transcripts of the explanations given and follow-up discussions (reactions to each other) as well as English translations of the latter (some still in progress).

For the scenario-planning project, we conducted collage-making focus groups in London in October with 7 organizational members (4 women and 3 men) and in November in the Netherlands (The Hague) with 6 (3 women and 3 men). In both cases at their headquarters. The collage-making took place in small groups (or 3 or 4). In the Dutch case the exercise was conducted in Dutch, the native language of the project-leaders. The ‘data’ of both these sessions consist of group collages, notes from the making, photos of the making, transcripts from the explanations and ‘after-discussion (in Dutch and/or English). In London and The Hague, there were two research assistants who observed and took notes during the sessions.

To add in full paper and/or discuss at the conference: materials used; use of language; the process of engaging; making notes/recordings (of what and why); analyzing the ‘data’.

Points for discussion
Collages are a well-known art form and technique. In academic and applied research collage-making is used for various purposes, but mostly as a tool to express thinking and facilitate dialogue. In this, collage-
making is a visual technique that is instrumental to such methods as Focus Group discussions and interviews (Comi, Bischof & Eppler, 2014). The creation of collages, however can also stimulate participants to produce new, creative and innovative ideas, opinions and knowledges. Collages are then considered to be “images—which may include words—that can evoke meaning and feeling not available in written transcripts” (Gerstenblatt, 2013: 302). In this, collages are potentially intellectually provocative and novel in many organizational and cultural settings.

The analysis and interpretation of collages as a creative and performative expression beyond recorded and transcribed language is still missing in the ‘visualization’ discourse in the social sciences. Art-based research moves away from “the drive to standardise research design and methods” due to its “endless variations of style, interpretation, and outcomes” (McNiff, 2008: 34). According to Bell and Davison (2013), however, art theory is largely problematic in Visual Management Studies for a number of reasons but they also agree that “more could be done to develop the potential of visual methods in collaborative and participatory management research.

We suggest that collage-making is at par with the ‘video diary method’, which “shift the balance of power away from the researcher”. In addition, we propose to develop the analysis and interpretation of collages on the basis of their artistic expression, in addition to the “linear narratives that we conventionally use to respond to art” and artistic expressions (McNiff, 2008: 31).

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The Moustakas Model as Research Tool to Explore the Trusted Advisor Relationships of Executive Women and Beyond

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Since the 1980’s the value and benefits of mentoring had become well recognized. By the 1990’s executive coaching was increasingly put forth as an effective talent management and leadership development strategy, and accepted as best practice. The growing commitment and reported success of executives in the corporate world having executive coaches, mentors, has had significant implications for the career advancement of individual executives and on the corporation as a whole. Today, it has become an accepted practice for executive coaches, mentors, sponsors to strategically support and develop leadership and to act as sounding boards in continued support of corporate executives. Karol Wasylyshyn (2015) has been most active in recognizing and advocating the emergence of a newer pattern, one which transcends that of mentor, sponsor and coach. This emergent pattern is now referred to as the long-term advisory relationship or more cogently, trusted advisor relationship. Long-term advisory or trusted advisor relationships sometime emerge from existing mentor, coaching or executive coaching relationships but may also emerge spontaneously on their own. The status of this newer organizational phenomenon is currently debated within the field.

However, Wasylyshyn, perhaps the clearest and strongest advocate for such an approach has persuasively argued that the trusted advisor relationship has, or in the immediate future will, become indispensable to organizations (Wasylyshyn, 2015). However, the majority of Wasylyshyn and her colleagues research and writing have dealt with male executive leaders. Traditionally, women have lagged behind men in numbers in key corporate positions. Due to increased international efforts to level the playing field over the last decade, and a general socio-cultural shift, more women are now present at the executive level in corporations than ever. Understanding the experience of these women is crucial for industrial/organizational practitioners in the field and the workplace specifically to strategically support and enhance working conditions in the corporate environment. In this study, the phenomenon of what it is like for corporate executive women to have had a trusted advisor was explored through the descriptions of their perceptions and experiences. A qualitative, phenomenological research design (Moustakas model) was utilized to collect, analyze, and synthesize the data through a narrative description of the experience and process of having or having had a trusted advisor.

While much was written in popular business literature in both industrial psychology and business research literature about the slowly increasing number of top executive women and the barriers and problems they face, the women themselves seemed fairly mute about their experience and problems. Perhaps this was a function of being exceptionally busy, and balancing all that was needed to maintain the progress that had already been made. Perhaps this quietness from the female executives themselves was a function of loyalty to the organization where the executive woman had been awarded some opportunity and were hesitant to disclose. There could in fact be a myriad of other possible reasons. Regardless there is now a growing literature on executive women but few are based on the direct voices of executive women themselves. A review of the literature points out that the key driving factors to trusted advisor relationships, the impact of gender on these relationships, and the extent to which these trusted relationships benefit the organization, were largely unexplored. Wasylyshyn (2014; 2015).

Here, 9 participants were interviewed in depth about the experience of having had a trusted advisor as part of their career development. The resultant stories revealed a complex process of human connectedness, sense of self, and the importance of trust for these nine women. The essence of the experience of having a trusted advisor was clearly set in the relational world of human experience and was best represented as the give and take of a shared dyadic relationship.

The study was successful using the Moustakas model as the research question was answered providing rich narrative information on these women’s use of a trusted advisor. This included boundaries and limits of trust, steps in the establishment of the trusted advisor relationship and considerable information into the nature of reciprocal dyadic relationships in the world of work. An interesting component of this work was the recognition that the harder the researcher, Dr. Kruger, worked to replicate and maintain the integrity of the original Moustakas method, the narrower the interpretation of the narrative data became. It was recognized that a great deal of additional information had been collected through the women answering the trusted advisor research question. It became apparent that there is a complex interaction of multiple factors and intersections in the
career stories of these women. However, to stay faithful to the Moustakas model, focus remained on seeking meaning from the narrative associated with the research question of the experience of having a trusted advisor. In the end, the essence of the phenomena was reached.

Thus, the original Moustakas model analysis of the interview data was able to answer the original research question. There was, however, considerable additional information contained in the interviews not explored as part of the original study. This was because this information fell outside of pure phenomenological methodology. By taking the pure Moustakas model a step beyond, several additional themes emerged. Given the primary purpose of qualitative research being discovery, the proposed presentation and subsequent paper focus is on the further exploration of these additional elements. This offers another perspective and perhaps multi-modal view of the productive use of phenomenological findings and results.

A short list of these potentialities included but were not limited to:
(1) The difficulty women in the executive corporate world had in trusting or relying on one another.
(2) The majority of the executive women interviewed attributed much of their success to the connection with their first families, especially their fathers. If they had good relationship with their fathers, they felt they were able to develop good working relationships in the work place, and
(3) Gender differences arising at work, men’s behavior vs women’s behavior and learning to manage these problems.

References

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Preparing to Meet the Field Unprepared

Mette Vinther Larsen & Charlotte Øland Madsen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Preparing to meet the field unprepared

Being researchers working from a relational constructionism perspective invites us to reconsider and move beyond standardised research designs and methods and embrace more emergent, indigenous and democratic research practices (Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017; Gergen, 2014; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). As academics, many of us have grown up in discursive communities where linearity and a rational, objective, logical-reasoning way of writing have been privileged as the scientific and reasonable dogma (Phillips et al., 2014; Pullen & Rhodes, 2008). Although there is much reasoning behind these discourses, it has left us with a sense of scientific practices as constraining and restrictive concerning thinking, discussing and learning.

Organisational life, on the other hand, is fluctuating and constantly on the move (Gergen, 2014; Phillips et al., 2014; Pullen & Rhodes, 2008; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This means that the rational, objective, logical-way of reasoning often distances research from the open-ended, incomplete and uncertain local realities we as researchers try to make sense of (Phillips et al., 2014). To participate in organisational life as a researcher revolves around acknowledging that we are ‘not-knowing’ (Anderson and Goolishian, 1997) when it comes to knowledge about what it means to be a person of the world in the specific local ‘somewhere’ we are allowed into.

Cunliffe & Scaratti (2017) argue that we need ways of generating knowledge that acknowledge the complexities of lived experience and allow us to reconnect with the engaged and spontaneous mode that characterize our ways of engaging in fieldwork (Helin, 2015). Any understanding of organisational life emerges relationally; it is about acknowledging that we can only come to know what we know, co-construct and assign meaning to, by exploring the in-between-ness that emerges between conversation partners (Gergen, 2014; McNamee, 2000; Shotter, 2016). To research from a relational constructionism perspective draws attention to the ‘ontology of language’ (Cunliffe, 2002a) and how we as researchers are future formers “…the ways we relate with one another, the questions we ask, and the words we use create the worlds in which we live.” (McNamee & Hosking, 2012: 75)

In the call for abstracts, you invite us to: “utilize more participative methods that develop research from within, rather than apart from, lived experience and present it in diverse and evocative forms consistent with living within our subject.” The paper we intend to write is a response to this invitation. A response where we will engage in further developing social science in more emancipatory ways and explore the edges and boundaries of research as a way of engaging with the world around us. We research with, not on, and from within a unique once-occurring moment (Shotter, 2016; 2010).

Based on the activities taking place one day in an organisation, in relation to a two-year long research process, we are curious to explore further, how researchers can embrace and perform some of the philosophical assumptions behind a more emancipatory social science. More concrete the paper will explore the following questions:

• What does it mean to make room for collaborative and dialogical practices in research?
• How can we embrace the future-forming role we have as resourceful conversation partners?
• How can we make room for social poetic, reflexivity, be radical present and support the co-construction of desirable ways of living as we engage in collaborative practices from within?

These questions will be explored and discussed based on activities taking place one day in a Danish Shoe Company where one of the authors, as a part of a longitudinal research project, spent a day observing and being in conversations with the two managers of the Shoe Company. As the day unfolded, several unforeseen activities emerged, taken-for-granted assumptions were challenged and new understandings and practices were jointly talked and acted into being among the researcher and the managers. We invite you to take part in exploring how the day unfolded by exploring four empirical insights and discussing four relational resources, we as researchers can be inspired by, as we prepare to meet the field unprepared:

1) Embracing a not-knowing way of engaging in relations
The first insight takes its point of departure in the first sentence one of the managers uttered as the researcher was welcomed. An utterance that challenged the researchers' taken-for-granted assumptions and stresses the need to embrace a ‘not-knowing’ way of engaging in relations.

2) Being radical present from with-in
The second insight revolves around a walk to the local bank where one of the managers and the researcher talked about some of the morning’s experiences, conversations and practices that had struck the researcher. The conversation underlined how differences between views on the world can be a strength in collaborative practices; “… we can achieve jointly what we cannot achieve apart.” (Shotter, 2010: 275) It draws attention to the significance of being radical present from with-in.

3) The potential of unadjusted gestures
The third insight explores the becoming of 16 questions in an envelope that the researcher made for the two managers to invite them into exploring some of their own taken-for-granted assumptions about the Shoe Company. It underlines the possibilities of engaging in ‘reflexivity’, ‘embracing otherness’ and developing ‘unadjusted gestures’ (Larsen & Willert, 2017).

4) Respecting the uniqueness of the moment
The last excerpt revolves around the different thoughts and activities taking place after the day spent in the Shoe Company that develop in different and polyphonic relational practices. One example is the picture below and others will be unfolded. The multiplicity here reminds us for respecting the ‘ontology of language’ and talking and acting out the here-and-now sensible, viable and advantageous ways of living.

The paper concludes with unfolding the contribution the four resources presented have in enriching existing knowledge about how to explore the polyphony and multiplicity of organisational life by being curious to what the meshing of differences enables to emerge. Attention will be drawn to the need for developing new approaches in qualitative studies, where researchers support developing the organizations from with-in by participating in providing opportunities to discuss and explore more reflexive and imaginative forms of research.

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Developing Research Techniques for Contested Exchange Theory

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In my years of teaching organizational behavior, I have been focusing on answering what I believe is a fundamental question - How does an organization effectively align the interests of workers with the interests of management? Yet, as a self-described critical management scholar, I am concerned with considering how workers might align management interests with their own interests. I am in the process of writing a manuscript that attempts to represent the field of organizational behavior through the long ignored Contested Exchange Theory of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. The proposition that agents freely make choices and yet these choices may evolve into constraints and structures is a key foundation of Contested Exchange Theory (Bowles & Gintis, 1990). However, I am stuck on the exact research method to explore how to investigate moment-to-moment changes of an agent’s dispositions and actions. In my presentation, I hope to explore interactively with the audience on developing ideas for just such a research strategy.

Reference

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No Data is Also Data!
Anne Kamilla Lund
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Me, researcher: “Would it be possible to talk to some of the people working with you – e.g. some of the other leaders and the people in their teams?”
Top-leader: “You can talk to some of the people in the leader-group, and to some of the managers in their teams, but you are not to talk to X group of knowledge workers, as they are on a rampage.”

Introduction
The citation above refers to a conversation between a top-leader for a large health organization and me as researcher. It highlights, how I was given permission to interview certain people in the organization – and how other people were excluded. Planning a study on how leading is framed by people in knowledge-intensive organizations who experience the paradox between authority and autonomy, I was hoping to interview and observe formal leaders and employees in a knowledge-intensive organization. I would focus on practical examples (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003) and on exploring opinions on leadership and relationships created in-the-moment (Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014; Raelin, 2016; Reitz, 2017). However, following the conversation above, I had to rethink the research design and focus.

In this abstract, I would like to reflect upon some of the thoughts around my ‘new’ situation. Doing so, I also wish to open for discussions on what we consider data, raise questions regarding research-access, and provide some possible interpretations of the empirical example above. The intension is thus to further reflection concerning preparation of research projects and to begin a discussion on how to treat no data situations.

What is a ‘no data’ situation?
In the book “Big Data, Little Data, No Data: Scholarship in the Networked World”, ‘no data’ is discussed under headings, such as ‘data are not available’, data are not released’ or ‘data are not usable’ (Borgman, 2015). However, these headings do not catch the situations referenced above. Based on the empirical example, I suggest a fourth option; ‘data are not constructed’, as data may have been created, if relevant access had been granted.

Acknowledging that decisions about how to handle missing data are minimally documented, but also “have a profound impact on findings interpretation, reuse, and replication” (Borgman, 2015: 27), this could be a relevant topic for future research. Reflections on no permission to construct data, has led me to consider access/permission more thoroughly – possibly being one of the elements in better documentation on missing data. It is also the background for the thoughts below.

Gaining access and permission – A negotiation?
Another perspective on no data is to treat the situation or decision determining that ‘data are not constructed’ as a type of data in itself. Hein’s (2013) experience studying leadership for creative individuals provides an excellent example. Describing a situation where leaders chose to exclude her from important meetings, Hein (2013) sensed that some of the most important data for understanding organizational life would be found behind the closed doors. Consequently, she chose to treat this decision as data too. Highlighting this to the leaders, she was suddenly permitted access to the meetings. Her experience leaves readers wondering why access was denied in the first place, what information was so important or sensitive that it could not be shared with a researcher, and to question the power of a researcher’s speculations around exclusion and possible critique of this. Could it be that the researcher’s interpretations regarding exclusion would give voice to critics and thoughts more harmful, than insights to the topics on the meeting agenda would cause?

Hein’s (2013) case is inspiring in several ways. It allows researchers to treat the decision leading to no data, as data. A decision and situation that can be analyzed. A practical way to move on with research – even if it may need to be amended in terms of research question, methodology and methods. The work by Roesch-Marsh et al. (2012) exemplifies this process. The authors describe and analyze the difficulties gaining access to relevant research sites in terms of constant negotiations. The consequences of negotiations often constrain research questions, research methods, methodologies, and presentations of research (Roesch-Marsh et al., 2012; Taylor and Land, 2014), making Roesch-Marsh et al. (2012) suggest that society at large and organizations in specific
miss out on relevant and important knowledge. From this short discussion, I would like to turn to some possible interpretations of the empirical example cited in the beginning.

**Possible interpretations on the empirical example**

Based on the above suggestion to understand the no data decision and situation as data in itself, I went from a no data situation to a data situation. In line with my research focus, one way to understand the conversation could be as an example of leading. Deciding about permissions, restrictions, access to the organization and the employees is normally considered part of the leader-job. As such, making a decision could be an example of leading.

I could also choose to focus on authority. The decision, made without consulting anyone and despite the research project depending on it, could exemplify the authority of the leader. Further, the decision was made on behalf of the group of knowledge-workers I wanted to interview, but without their knowledge or consent. This made me wonder if other, more important decisions are possibly made the same way. Questions of authority in knowledge-intensive organisations thus became even more interesting.

From the authority-discussion follows questions of autonomy. With the utterance, it seems that the top-leader did not acknowledge the autonomy of otherwise highly educated, often self-leading professionals. However, as the rampage was the reason I was not permitted access to interview, it also seems that this group of employees enjoy the autonomy to be on a rampage. Simultaneously, the knowledge-workers were not asked if they would have liked to participate in the research, again overlooking the otherwise esteemed status of these individuals. Further, my researcher role and my research was made less autonomous by the decision, while the leader seemed completely autonomous in her decision-making.

These are just a few examples of possible interpretations of the empirical example above, but they highlight that a no data situation or decision can also be data...

Presenting insights from the challenges with planning and conducting research about leading, authority and autonomy in knowledge-intensive organisations, I would like to discuss ‘no data’ reflections as a way to spur researcher-reflexivity and a way to broaden our idea of what we consider research-data.

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Design as a Way of Knowing

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Design and Design Thinking has been business and management for some time, with influential thinkers like Roger Martin at Harvard, and Tim Brown of IDEO promoting the approach as a way to address complex problems in the public and the private sector (Brown and Martin 2015). Part of the interest relates to the way design tools have been used in the digital economy to create artefacts and systems, the success of these things leading to the sense that the design is an approach to problem solving that can be applied in a number of contexts. This paper is an attempt to make sense of design based approaches as a research tool.

It is based on my own interest in, and experience of, using these approaches in work with Third Sector organisations as they explore and develop their engagement with the digital world. Influenced by Dorst and Cross (2001) my own work places the focus on the organisation, and on how values are articulated, explored, contested and narrated through design, production and use of digital media. Even a simplistic account of design practice recognises it as a creative inquiry. However, in order to develop a more sophisticated understanding of design practice as research practice there is a need to look at the mode of inquiries used within design. In particular, what kinds of questions can design based approaches address.

Design is part of a broad family of practitioner led approaches to inquiry informed by pragmatism (Dewey [1910] 2012). While it shares many of the same dilemmas, it also has some novel approaches. Some of the shared concerns about “asking the right questions” have great deal in common with action researchers interest in what informs decision making in participatory and systemic action research (Marshall 2004; Green et.al 2014). However, where some action researchers have been concerned about becoming lost through following activities (Burns 2014), design has in the past been concerned with being overly focussed on the end. More recently design work has come to recognise design practice involves two kinds of double movement. First of all, between the general and the particular akin to “zooming in and zooming out” in organisational studies (Nicolini 2009), and secondly something altogether different, which is the need to hold the present and the future together (Di Salvo 2012). For example, in my own work the former is concerned with practical aspects of designing meaningful learning journeys while also accounting for critical perspectives on socio-technical relations (Feenberg 2002) and questions of digital participation at a broad scale and as they arise within the organisations and relate its values. The paper will report on the insights that a design approach to action research can bring.

While this framing and reframing of issues involving drawing in broader sets of literature, as noted above, what makes design a distinct practice is the latter movement, the framing involved in the double movement between present and future, and the need to attend to the different types of reasoning employed (see Peirce 1988). For example, as one structures inquires into achieving or creating a certain value for a real or imagined public to meet a need that may not yet exist, it is an act of speculative, and the structure of those speculations about the future change ones actions in the present (Malpass 2016; Valentine 2011). This allows the researcher to investigate reasoning on the social and material interactions around practice both in production and real and imagined use, through the narratives surrounding those actions. The paper will draw this out in more detail, and explore the role of differences in logic and problem solving within the research context including reflections on the role of the action researcher as problem solver (Llewellyn 2008).

The paper concludes by suggesting design might be used as a way structure inquiries within action research, on a practice level guiding the topic of research and informing questions of “what to do” (Kemmis 2010). It also suggests that design is more than a topic of the research, in helping to structure inquiries it helps us alight on novel insights into problem solving within organisations and how we come to think about “the right thing to do.

References

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Researcching from within: Partnering with youth to explore their negotiation of online organizing, engagement, and identity

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Like many disciplines, qualitative organizational communication research has historically struggled with issues of legitimacy in a context that favors post-positivist criteria for research such as objectivity and validity. While qualitative methods is firmly accepted in the discipline—indeed accounting for more than half of recent scholarship published in organizational communication’s flagship journal, Management Communication Quarterly (Stephens, 2017)—scholars tend to favor more standard methods of inquiry including interviews and observations at the expense of critical or experimental frameworks. At the same time, organizational communication, with some important exceptions (e.g., Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011), has advanced a narrow view of what counts as organizational research, focusing primarily on communication in organizations, rather than how communication fundamentally organizes.

In this paper, we aim to push boundaries in terms of context, method, ontology and epistemology. Specifically, we explore how teens organize themselves online in relation to formal and informal rules of engagement, through social media applications. We explore how teens engage online in light of the rules they have learned from various sources (parents, teachers, friends, etc.) about appropriate online behavior. We draw upon scholarship that advances social networks as unique organizational forms deserving of further exploration from an organizational perspective (Weber, Fulk, & Monge, 2016) to see how future generations of workers are using technology to organize and construct identities online, as well as practices of engagement.

By doing so, we see how teens wrestle with webs of tensions online, building upon previous work that shows how teens make sophisticated decisions, depending on age and available discursive resources (Malvini Redden & Way, 2017). Additionally, we situate this work in the context of Ames, Go, Kaye & Spasojevik’s (2011) findings that distinguish between working class parents’ willingness to allow children to spend unsupervised time online, while strictly monitoring the content of posts and middle and upper class parents who limit childrens’ “screen time” but provide more structured online experiences. We see promise in this research to take an intersectional approach to youth engagement online, considering how issues of social class, gender, and age converge in young people’s decision-making strategies.

This work is significant because we take a critical, discursive approach paired with a participatory, ethnographic, performative method of our own design. The research draws upon our work partnering with youth who are often skeptical of adults and researchers (Way & Malvini Redden, Under Review), and foregrounds youth concerns and interests in the research. Taking inspiration from 2016 QRM keynote speaker, Michelle Fine, who advocated collaborative data collection and analysis, we let youth drive the research by narrating their experiences online, considering critical scenarios from other youth, and interacting with an online platform to see how teens make decisions about activities online in various contexts. Furthermore, we involve youth in the analysis process to see how they make meaning of the data, to help foster more collaborative, democratic knowledge creation.

This work acknowledges a number of critiques of existing literature, including that when scholarship specifically considers youth, which is not often, research designs often privilege adult concerns. Our work advances concerns and interests voiced by youth that we have written about previously (see: Malvini Redden & Way, 2017; Way & Malvini Redden, 2017), taking a critical but also egalitarian view of youth online. Much adult-driven research harps on the purely negative elements (e.g. Roberto, Eden, Savage, Ramos-Salazar, Deiss, 2014) and positions youth online as either exceptionally vulnerable or exceptionally skilled (Selwyn, 2009), without much nuance. Instead, we show the complexity of young people’s decision making and engagement practices, given the lived realities they face on and offline, and how these experiences shape the ways they organize online. All told, our essay serves to understand organizing in a unique context—youth online engagement—while advancing a critical, performative, collaborative methodology.
References

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The implementation of the new higher education policy implemented since 2015 has affected the roles of middle leaders in higher educational institutions in Malaysia. Their effective leadership roles and responsibilities are significant to materialise the policy implementation. The overwhelming sense of responsibilities and roles of middle leaders are challenged with internationalisation in many universities. Most middle leaders hold highly complex roles and responsibilities by taking over leadership with and without experiences for a short tenure period. Specifically, middle leaders at departmental levels experience role conflicts and role ambiguities. These multiple roles emerge to fulfil the vision and mission of their institutions. They are expected to learn and balance their roles between senior management and those who they lead in varying situations. Although research exists on leadership in higher education, little has been written about those in university departmental leadership positions such as head of department. Those holding middle leadership positions in higher education environment are ‘copers’, ‘strugglers’ and ‘jugglers’.

Through this study, the changing and challenging roles of eight departmental leaders from various disciplines will be analysed. Particularly, professional critical incidents are significant ‘messages’ for middle leaders to understand and perform middle leadership effectively. Critical incidents and semi-structured interviews have been used to investigate relational leadership among the Malaysian higher education middle leaders. Relational leadership is a significant framework used to inter-relate middle leadership in a multi-dimensional viewpoint. It provides a frame for critically examining the nature and complexities inherent in the lived reality of middle leadership. It is conceptualised as encompassing four inter-related dimensions which derived from data and respectively centre on structure and power; trust and credibility; learning; and discursive relations.

The aim of this study is to provide an insight into middle leaders’ perceptions on emerging roles, practices, and the implications of the changes to their leadership learning from a relational lens. The study is also aimed at providing opportunity for my own and middle leaders’ reflections regarding coping and understanding leadership roles, responsibilities in both accommodating and turbulent situations to aid effective departmental leadership by looking from the relational perspectives.

Two basic assumptions underpin this study: first, that middle leaders’ leadership are highly relational and complex because of the emerging new roles and practices they undertake with the implementation of the new higher education policy; second, that the process of leadership learning is inevitable and that there is a possibility that their leadership roles, leadership learning and relationship are increased by the virtue of reflecting on critical situations they face. Therefore, the middle leaders will be more likely to perceive the externally-driven change in relation to critical situations that they encountered either positively or negatively to learn leading and overcome problems.

From the aims above, three basic research questions have been formulated:

1) **How do middle leaders perceive the new challenges and expected changes in their leadership roles and practices?**

The first research question is solely focused on middle leaders’ perceptions in terms of their changing roles and practices because they lead in a multi-relational and multi-directional scope of leadership and further examination of their perceptions can reveal meaningful discussion. All middle leaders in this study represent various departments and disciplines, therefore, it is hoped that they can disclose their highly complex middle leadership roles in a relational manner. The answers to this question will aid in determining the degree of complexity and how their roles are inter-related in relational dimensions. Moreover, it can provide a lens through which relational dimension/s contribute/s to conflicts and challenges to middle leadership.

2) **What have they learned and how have they learned during the process of responding to the new challenges and adapting to their new leadership roles?**

The second research question is equally essential to gather insights concerning to what extent these middle leaders understood the significance of the new roles, leadership practices and what measures have been undertaken. It will provide opportunities for both middle leaders, academic peers and facilitators to voice out what they think as practical preparation and solutions to improve middle leadership in different discipline-based
departments. This research question also indirectly explores the behaviours and mechanisms exhibited by middle leaders and relational influence of others in the department and/or institutions that enable them to cope with critical leadership situations.

3) **What light do critical incidents in the professional experience of middle leaders shed on the process of their leadership learning?**

The third research question is formulated to establish how leaders recall their critical situations based on their positive and negative experiences and identify which leadership learning needs are important to address problems and conflicts in their respective departments effectively. Moreover, this question can help to illuminate to what extent middle leaders are supported or unsupported when encountering critical and challenging leadership episodes in order to execute new roles and practices. The recollection of experiences based on the critical occurrences involving themselves and others in the department or institution are hoped to provide meaningful discussions to understand effective and ineffective leadership learning in a social context.

These three research questions underpin the idea of relational analysis which will focus on middle leaders’ roles and leadership practices. Thus, relational leadership is a significant framework used to inter-relate middle leadership in a multi-dimensional viewpoint. The findings from middle leaders of various academic disciplines are hoped to shed light on how these leaders cope challenging situations and change their experiences into an effective leadership learning journey. Their leadership needs will be highlighted through their self-reflections. Self-reflections of middle leaders can help to distinguish their strengths and weaknesses as leaders. The dichotomy between actions and thoughts can help university departmental leaders to understand themselves and how they interrelate with others.

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This paper explores how social class differences between researchers and participants shape qualitative interviews. Although there is a consensus that the quality of interview data is influenced strongly by differences stemming from social divisions such as age (e.g. Lundgren, 2013; Underwood, Satterthwait, & Bartlett, 2010), race (e.g. Dunbar, Jr, Rodriguez, & Parker, 2004; Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012; Gillborn, 2015), gender (e.g. Golombisky, 2006; Padfield & Procter, 1996; Pini, 2005), ethnicity (e.g. Carter, 2004; Egharevba, 2001), and sexuality (e.g. McDermott, 2004), discussions about the role of social class in conducting qualitative interviews have been limited. In particular, there has been little reflection about the ways in which class differences play out during the interview process (Mellor, Ingram, Abrahams, & Beedell, 2014). In the few instances when the impact of social class on interviewing has been considered, it has been in conversations among race and gender scholars. These researchers adopt a lens of intersectionality to consider how multiple forms of inequality and identity (e.g., race, gender, class, and ethnicity) that interrelate throughout the research process (Archer, 2002; Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Gillborn, 2015; Manderson, Bennett, & Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2006; McDermott, 2004). In these discussions, class generally is conceptualized as an additional environmental, biographical, contextual, and/or psychosocial factor that adds complexity and nuance to our understanding of how race and gender influence interviewing.

It is surprising how little attention has been paid to the effects of social class on interviewing. Class – which entails a complicated set of deeply ingrained beliefs, skills, and dispositions – has a long-lasting impact on how people experience, perceive, and interact with the world (Argyle, 1994; Bowman, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2009; Côté, 2011); it is integral to the formation of individuals' subjectivities (Lamont, 2000; Reay, 1998; Senett & Cobb, 1972; Skeggs, 1997). Drawing on Bourdieu’s theories of capital, habitus, and field (1977, 1984), researchers have shown that people's formative experiences associated with their distinct class positions shape an enduring set of dispositions and practices (Anyon, 1980; Aries & Seider, 2007; Côté & Levine, 2002; Lareau, 2003; Ridgeway & Fisk, 2012). This so-called 'class habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984) tends to persist throughout adult life and manifests itself across all types of social interactions. In other words, individuals 'carry social class from relationship to relationship and situation to situation' (Côté, 2011, p. 49).

Given that the qualitative interview is at its heart a social encounter, class inevitably influences researcher-participant interactions. The influence of class is particularly significant when researchers and participants come from different social classes. In such situations, researchers and participants occupy distinct 'subject positions' from which they speak, act, and interrelate (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). In this paper, we elaborate on how these differences play out during qualitative interviews. Singling out class on its own terms, rather than viewing it as an additional layer of complication, we contend that traversing class boundaries during the interview process demands reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2003; Denzin, 2012; Finlay, 2002; Kvale, 2006). Reflexivity 'questions our relationship with our social world and the ways in which we account for our experience’ (Cunliffe, 2003, p. 985). Thus, researchers need in-depth understandings of their own social class positions as well as those of their participants. We focus specifically on interactions between middle-class researchers and lower-class participants (i.e., poor- or working-class). Although this type of cross-boundary encounter is the most prevalent in practice, it remains the most neglected in the literature (Wakeling, 2010). We draw on Bourdieu’s cultural conceptualization of social class to argue that cross-class interpersonal dynamics between the researcher and the participant – along with the normalization of middle-class values inherent in interview questions – present challenges for establishing rapport and facilitating fertile conversations. We use examples from our own research to illustrate these challenges. Building on these discussion, we offer scholars suggestions for improving their awareness of and mitigating the challenges associated with cross-class interviewing.

Selected References


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Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to describe the experience of the author’s negotiating access to fieldwork at the Montreal Municipal Administration. This personal experience triggered a reflection on a little-studied aspect of obstacles on the road researchers take to gain access to people in institutions targeted for study.

Design/methodology/approach – We describe the negotiation process over a one-year period in the form of a “confessional tale” (Van Maanen, 1988) based on our ethnographic field notes.

Originality/value – The “condition for carrying out” empirical research is written up in many methodological handbooks. However, little work focuses on the fieldwork access negotiation process. We point out how knowledge gained in our case is more broadly relevant material to researchers about to carry out field studies of institutions and the people who comprise them.

Findings – We first describe the negotiation process. Then we discuss how it is constituted of contextual factors that are irremediably shaped through language and interactions, whether or not a researcher gets access to people involved in a field case. We also point out the representational and translating logic as well as the communicational tactics used by the parties (managers, union representatives and researcher) that took part in this process in order to stabilize their organizational realities.

Research limitations/implications – Describing and reflecting on this particular and crucial step for researchers setting up a case study shows the importance of a constructed and construed local-cultural context (Fayard and Van Maanen, 2015) and its influence on the negotiation process itself.

Practical implications – The local-cultural context, when related for example to mistrust displayed by employees to organizations’ values or a poor ethical climate, can dangerously jeopardize chances of gaining access to fieldwork, and by doing so, to employees as research participants.

References

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Autoethnography in Organizational Communication: A Reflexive and Performative Approach to Organizational Inquiry

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Autoethnography is a non-traditional approach to research that has been rapidly emerging in organizational studies and critical management studies over the past decade. Organizational scholars have drawn from autoethnography to investigate a wide array of topics, including academic conferences and identity (Bell & King, 2010; Humphreys, 2005; Learmonth & Humphreys, 2011; Tomkins & Nicholds, 2017), leadership development (Kempster & Stewart, 2010), emotional labor in the classroom (Miller, 2002), work-life balance (Cohen, Duberley, & Musson, 2009), fieldwork experiences (Cruz, 2016; McDonald, 2013, 2016), and international research collaboration (Jonsen et al., 2012). Despite the increased presence of thought-provoking and provocative autoethnographic scholarship in critical management and organization studies journals, organizational communication scholars have been slow to explore autoethnographic inquiry. Indeed, only two pieces drawing explicitly from autoethnographic methods have made their way into the pages of Management Communication Quarterly (Ferguson, 2017; Miller, 2002), commonly viewed as the flagship journal of organizational communication studies (Mumby & Stohl, 1996). The reluctance of organizational communication scholars to engage with autoethnography is surprising considering that there is a rich tradition of autoethnographic scholarship in communication research and that communication processes are central to autoethnographic inquiry. In the final essay that I will present at the conference, my goals are to: (1) introduce autoethnography to organizational communication scholars; (2) demonstrate the relevance and value of autoethnographic methods in organizational communication scholarship; and (3) illustrate how autoethnography can be used in tandem with more traditional methods of data collection as a way of engaging in critical reflexive practice.

Autoethnography is an approach to research through which researchers critically analyze their own experiences and reflect on what they enable us to learn about broader social and cultural issues (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2014; Adams & Jones, 2011; Cohen et al., 2009; Holman Jones & Adams, 2010).

Autoethnographic research thus deconstructs the traditional researcher/participant binary, as researchers become participants in their own research and reflexively write about their own positionalities in the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kempster & Stewart, 2010). The goal of autoethnography is not to produce generalizable findings, but to generate an evocative account that resonates with readers and that contributes to and/or challenges existing knowledge and theory (Cohen et al., 2009). Although all autoethnographic inquiry requires of researchers that they extensively engage in reflexivity about how they disclose and interpret their own actions and experiences (Kempster & Stewart, 2010), there are multiple traditions of autoethnographic research. For instance, Manning and Adams (2015) distinguish social-scientific, interpretive-humanistic, critical, and creative-artistic approaches to autoethnographic research. Moreover, autoethnography can be either a solo or a collaborative endeavor (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2016).

There are many strengths of autoethnographic inquiry for the study of contemporary organizational life. One of its most important appeals is its ability to shed light on organizational experiences that are difficult to examine with more conventional data collection techniques (Cohen et al., 2009; McDonald, 2016). As such, autoethnography is particularly well suited to researching taboo and personal topics, such as sexuality, emotion, illness, death, and abusive relationships (Adams et al., 2014; Han, 2012; Learmonth & Humphreys, 2011; McDonald, 2017). Autoethnography can also provide unique insights on the craft of research and how researchers negotiate their relationships with participants, as well as the (non)disclosure of their identities and experiences in the field (McDonald, 2013, 2016). Another important strength of autoethnography is to offer a level of insight and understanding that can be difficult to achieve with more conventional methodologies, since the researcher is writing about first-hand experiences (Han, 2012). Writing about their first-hand experiences also enables researchers to convey their stories in the ways that resonate the most with the person who experienced them, which is not the case in traditional research practices where participants do not always have a say in how their voices and experiences are represented.
In order to demonstrate the value of autoethnography for organizational communication scholars and how it can be used in tandem with more conventional data collection techniques, I will be reflecting on one of my ongoing research projects on the identities and experiences of foreign-born scholars working in U.S. academia. My interest in this research project was motivated by my own difficulties negotiating the U.S. immigration system as a foreign scholar from Canada. As part of the research project, I conducted interviews with 25 foreign-born scholars currently working in U.S. academia and critically reflected on how my own experiences relate to those of my participants. In the final essay, I'll be exploring questions about this project such as:

☐ What are some ways to compose research that draw from both interview data and autoethnographic experiences?
☐ What is the added value of drawing from both interview data and autoethnographic experiences for this project?
☐ How does drawing from both autoethnographic and interview data contribute to the practice of reflexivity?

Ultimately, I will argue that autoethnographic research, particularly when it is combined with interview data, enables us to “explore alternative forms of knowledge, methodologies, methods, ways of ‘theorising’ that expand the possibilities for engaging with the world around us and for developing a more emancipatory social science” (QRM 2018 Call for Papers). As such, the essay will contribute to the goal of the QRM 2018 conference to provide a space for reflecting on how we might do research differently.

Selected References

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Re-Discovering Institutional Discrimination and the Politicization of Science in 1930's Russia:
Unraveling The Extraordinary Relationship of a USA Nobel Laureate and the murdered Russian
scientist N. Vavilov

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In this paper, I examine my process of re-discovering the politicization of genetics and the institutional
discrimination and related terror that occurred in 1930s and 1940s Russia. In this process I use the lens of the
extraordinary relationship of the renowned Russian botanist/geneticist Nicolai Vavilov (1887 - 1943) and my
dad, the 1946 Nobel Laureate geneticist and New Yorker H.J. Muller (1890 - 1967). This paper is one part of
a larger exploratory qualitative research project that will soon culminate in a memoir of my exceptional
parents. Reaching deep into memory to recall stories that my father told me when I was growing up about
Vavilov and their relationship, what stuck me most was his love and empathy for his colleague and comrade.
An autographed photo of Vavilov always hung on his office wall so that it was visible to him (and others) as he
experimented with his stocks of *drosophila melanogaster* (fruit flies - the ones that fly around bananas). The
tears that would flow from my father’s eyes and his stories of Vavilov’s murder by the Russian State left a deep
impression upon me. As a child of 9 years, my father breaking down with relief the day that Joseph Stalin died
in 1953 left an everlasting imprint. Stalin was responsible for the death, by starvation, of the world renowned,
brilliant, and revered Vavilov, along with countless others. In prison for 3 years in Saratov, Vavilov’s family who
lived close by, did not even know that he was starving nearby.

Moreover, I discuss the recent, unexpected, serendipitous, and joyous process of discovering and
Corresponding with Vavilov’s younger son, Yuri. Now 89, bedridden, and blind, he lives in Moscow and is
articulate and clear of mind. He himself is still on a quest to find out how and why his older brother was murdered
in 1940. Yuri alerted me to the 4 conferences in Russia held in the fall of 2017 in honor of the 130th anniversary
of his father’s birth. Although burdened with my own recent disabilities as well as stereotypes of Russians, I
decided that if ever I would go to Russia, this was the opportune moment. On the journey from London to
Russia, while deeply reflecting upon their relationship and “sensemaking” of the extent material that I accessed
before leaving, I came to realize that Vavilov had saved my father’s life in 1937. Many of their close colleagues
had already been shot and killed by the State. By making my father leave Russia and his beloved colleagues,
Vavilov knew that my father could be free from the institutional repression that the State imposed on genetics
during the “Lysenko Affair.” Thus my father, unlike Vavilov, would be free to continue his pathbreaking work in
radiation genetics. Furthermore, Vavilov’s foresight into my father’s probable arrest and planning his deliberate
departure by way of volunteering in the Spanish Civil War, meant that my own life resulted from Vavilov’s
actions.

At the St. Petersburg memorial conference, I publicly honored N. Vavilov and his son Yuri. In so doing, I
intentionally represented my father who would have been hesitatingly delighted to know that his revered and
tragic colleague now had been “rehabilitated” in Russia. While there, I discovered that Vavilov had now become
a national hero with many institutes and statues bearing his name. Moreover, I learned more about Vavilov’s
Russian colleagues who, during the Siege of Leningrad during World War II, had themselves starved to death
(and not eaten his seeds) in order the save Vavilov’s seed bank that contained specimens from his travels all
over the world that were meant to save the Russian people from starvation. The Vavilov seed bank still exists
in St. Petersburg and my tour of it sent chills throughout my body. That it survived both the State and the
Germans is a story in itself.

Making sense of my findings from my recent trip including giving the “keynote” speech without being informed
upends many stereotypes I have held and gives further insight into a period of horror in Russia that is now re-
emerging as a period in which scholars in the West have written extensively, but now is one that the Russians
are also re-examining. There are many implications of my findings for scholarship that I will explore in my talk.

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In our times, identity is a word that is fraught with both attachment and tension. We seem to be nothing outside our identities; yet reference to our more salient social identities such as gender, race, class and religion can often spillover into hostility and conflict. Identity has certainly come to occupy a prominent place in organization studies where it has functioned for sometime as a “master signifier” (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008). Over thirty years of sustained scholarship on the topic has resulted in insights relating to levels of personal identification with organizations (Elsbach, 1999), the production of identities out of ongoing effort and negotiation – sometimes referred to as identity work (Ashcraft, 2005); Beech, 2008) and the control and regulation of identities at work (Du Gay, 1996; Prasad, Prasad & Baker, 2016).

A great deal of scholarship on identity in organizations tends to be pre-occupied with personal, professional and occupational identities, and less interested in collective and embodied social identities at work, especially those relating to race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and religion. Even in the literature on workplace diversity (where one might expect to find a stronger interest on these social identities), these identities are regarded as social membership categories that meet with varying levels of inclusion and accommodation in organizations. What is largely missing is a serious consideration of how identity dynamics play out in the \textit{lebenswelt} (or everyday lifeworld) of organizations. Some important exceptions to this can be found in the work of Martin (1990) and Ashcraft (1999) on pregnancy in the workplace, and Creed & Scully (2000) on the active deployment of gay/lesbian identities in the workplace.

Indeed, Creed & Scully (2000) offer the ‘everyday encounter’ (Goffman, 1961) as a crucial organizational moment that can yield extraordinary insights into the nature and consequences of identity work. This paper continues in this tradition but scrutinizes more public and dramatic organizational encounters to surface the complex contours of identity tensions at play. This paper emerges out of a research project with an explicit interest in identity conflicts at work. We are interested in how individuals and group actors in organizations deploy, mobilize, contest and negotiate salient social identities, particularly around race, gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion. Beyond an academic interest in these dynamics, we were directly confronted with these tensions in a series of consulting experiences that were eventually expanded in a more scholarly direction. We are also interested in examining the presence of these conflicts in what we term ‘new diversity tensions’ in liberal enclaves – i.e. organizations that both formally and informally identify as socially liberal and inclusive of diversity.

Our study was conducted in five different organizations including liberal arts colleges, a training wing of a major employees’ union and a state government agency. We used both in-depth interviews and document analyses grounded in a Critical Incident Technique developed by Flanagan (1954) to explore stresses and conflicts experienced around identity work in all five organizations. Organization members were asked to pinpoint one or more explosive public encounters that had taken place in their organizations in the last 3 years, and to talk about them.

He then used a mode of narrative analysis that is simultaneously informed by critical hermeneutics (Ricoeur, 1971) and discourse analysis (Mills, 1997) to arrive at an understanding of identity work and its practical effects in each organization. We will be reporting on some of the broad patterns that were discernible across all five organizations.

One theme to emerge was the dual burden of both visibility and invisibility that clung to individuals identifying as racial, ethnic and national minorities; a second pattern centered around clashes between pockets of white class-underprivileged individuals and perceived class privileges of international, Latino/a and Black professionals and a third related to sharp tensions within majority (white) organization members around beliefs about multiculturalism and the accommodation of diverse identities at work. Our paper will explore these aforementioned themes in detail and conclude with a discussion on facilitating a useful dialogue between the study’s findings and various organizational stakeholder’s concerns.

References


Critical Caste Theory in Education

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Existing historical and sociological theorization of Caste system in India give a deep scrutiny of the system, while divulging the experiences of Dalit population in a line or two. However, the Indian history rests on the upper caste narrative (Mahe, 2003) or inquisitive “others” (Westerners') perspective (Dara, 2013). Similarly, Dalit literature by Dalits has increased comparatively for the past 20 years (Still, 2008), which focuses on the oppression that the Dalit population are subject to. Additionally, there is a plethora of study that exacerbate Dalit women’s conditions in modern India. Most of these studies represent SC/Dalit women’s experiences for and by them for educational patronized “empowerment” of this population. These categories of both qualitative and quantitative research literary evidence prove that Dalit women are indeed oppressed. However, there is a lack of theorized analysis of the intersection of caste, class, gender and globalized postcolonial educational discourses that hinder Dalit women’s educational attainment; while pushing them from the position of “exploitation into a position irrelevance” (Tikly, 2001) in the contemporary globalized system.

In this context, "the basic guidelines for any analysis in the interests of the oppressed people is to ask: who are the exploiters and who are the exploited? How can the exploited organize their struggle to move in the direction of liberation? And what is the relation of the structures of exploitation to the historical possibilities of moving in the direction of liberation from exploitation?” (Marx as cited in Omvedt, 1994, p.19). In the light of the above quote, I intend to present my study through Dalit women’s lenses. Studies on Dalit women delineate oppression that the population has been subject to, which has its roots in caste system in the context of India. This historical oppression has extended to other forms of oppression such as class, capitalist and gender based oppressions in the postcolonial India. Postcolonial Indian scholars’ work on the legacy of colonialism is incredible, which has shed light on the oppression that the global south went through under colonial rule. That said, these scholars exclude the voices within India that need unsilencing. As Rege points out, “in the framework of post-orientalism [post-colonialism] studies, the focus remains on colonial domination alone, thereby the pre-colonial roots of caste, gender, and class domination come to be ignored” (Rege, 1998). Similarly, Indian Dalit scholars focus on various ethnographic and historical analysis of caste system, while sidelining the discourse on Dalit women. Likewise, scholarship on class based analysis of caste system, often tend to underestimate Dalit women’s struggle into a mere “sympathy” (Kosambi, 1965; Betielle, 1965).

In this context, I intend to answer two major questions, which may possibly clarify the future purpose of this study: How might a critical examination of the literature on caste, class, gender, and education in the postcolonial context of India provide insight into the interplay of power within understandings of and representations of Dalit women’s experiences with education? What are the major contributions and limitations of these studies?

Several scholars such as Rege (1995), Omvedt (2001), and Kumar (2016) have called for a contemporary theorization of caste system having the current needs as a priority. Rege (1995), underlines the responsibilities of feminist pedagogy’s “complex task” of analyzing the “caste from the perspectives of Dalit women and class from the perspectives of working class women, religion from the perspectives of minorities”; and nationality from the perspective of “indigenous people” (Smith, 1999). Likewise, Omvedt (2001), while calling for a critical theorization of caste system having the needs of the hour as a primary goal, says, “Caste can no longer be justified. Dalits and other oppressed sections are finding a voice. [...] A serious sustained effort at empirical research and theorizing is needed so that social scientists can contribute their expertise to the comprehension of one of India's most severe problems.” Similarly, Kumar (2016) argues that there is a need for contemporary analysis of caste system and its mechanism, “for an effective understanding of the caste system, my contention is that instead of an evolutionary and historical approach we need one from contemporary existence.” Critical theorization of Caste system has happened in the past, one such study is “Against Stigma” by Natarajan and Greenough (2009). This study theorizes the stigma or the prejudice of caste system through the perspectives of various scholars who witnessed the caste bias at a conference on Racism held in Durban, South Africa in the year 2001. This study has given me insight into the ways caste prejudice works in modern international context. I will be analyzing this theory at the end of chapter two in detail.

Although this work does not analyze intersectionality of gender and class I intend to draw on Natarajan and Greenough’s work to make a case.
In this context, caste system needs contemporary theorization, through caste class, gender and postcoloniality, but I would like to point out Rege’s (1995) argument, any system should be analyzed through the lens of the population that is most vulnerable, likewise caste, class, gender and postcolonial systems of oppression needs theorization through the lens of Dalit women. As proven through many studies, Dalit women are the most marginalized population within India (Nambissan, 2014). Hence, it is just to base this theorization through Dalit women’s lens. Even though this study initially started off with my subjective existence as a Dalit woman, the readings gave me a different paradigm to looking at my study. There is a difference in analysis which is limited to the researcher’s understanding and their positions of power they hold in the system. Sharmila Rege (1995), Gail Omvedt (2001), and Vivek Kumar’s (2016) concern towards developing different approaches—the marginalized population’s approach—is a type of guide to this study.

When the world is looking for alternative narratives and radical interpretations, seeking a better world decolonized, decastized and degenderized, it is important to point out the gaps within the critical discourses on any form of hierarchical structures within a multicultural and ethnically diverse nation such as India.

References

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How Dominant Group Members Can Transform Workplace Bullying.

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A major ongoing stream of organizational communication research over the last 15 years is examining workplace bad behavior, in the form of bullying, microaggressions, and incivility. Most of this research has been focused on delineating the costs of the bad behavior on the organization and the targeted employee. However, the field has done relatively scant examination of how everyday organizational talk might disrupt or transform this bad behavior. In this study, we develop a constructed a vignette – drawn from past qualitative research on workplace bullying – that leaves the audience with the question of how might bullying of a marginalized employee be disrupted or transformed by a witnessing employee. We then systematically propose potential answers to this question drawing from co-cultural and dominant group theory. The goal in such a project is to provide insight that goes beyond analyzing the problem of workplace misbehavior to providing options for how we might do better in organizational practice and being.

Little communication research has incorporated studying positive behavior alongside the negative bullying behavior. As such, we ask the question: Can certain communicative behaviors disrupt bullying and create positive change? Knowing about the negative is certainly important. If you don’t know what the problem is, it’s hard to solve. However, simply knowing the problem does not guarantee that an organization can be brought back to functioning, and is certainly not enough to promote extraordinary compassion and thriving in organizations. In the current project, we adopt a constructed vignette as our qualitative analysis to invite the reader to take a critically-reflexive positionality toward an anti-bullying stance. As such, we turn to dominant group theory as our theoretical framework to better understand how dominant group members might disrupt workplace bullying.

Dominant group theory functions as the theoretical framework for our chapter. An extension of co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998), DGT explores the diverse ways in which majority group members—those individuals who are white, male, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied, middle- or upper-class, and/or cisgender—communicate within a society where their social location is steeped in privilege. The theory emerged from a synergistic review of key literature (e.g., DeTurk, 2011; Sue et al., 2007) and qualitative data from two recent studies (Orbe & Batten, 2017; Razzante, 2017). DGT is a useful conceptual framework for explaining how workplace bullying manifests and how dominant group members can challenge its manifestation.

Dominant group theory examines the confluence of six influential factors that inform one’s communicative behavior (abilities, situational context, field of experience, perceived costs and rewards, communication approach, and interactional outcome). We are interested in how these influential factors inform a dominant group member’s interactional outcome when addressing workplace bullying. That is, through their communication, a dominant group member may either reinforce bullying culture, impede bullying culture, or dismantle bullying culture. To better understand how this phenomenon manifests, we use a constructed vignette of an empirically-informed intercultural bullying incident.

While keeping in mind that identity is complex and multi-faceted, we primarily focus our attention to race/ethnicity and gender as the most salient identities in the vignette. Our protagonist, James, is the key figure through which we apply dominant group theory. That is, as a dominant group member in terms of race/ethnicity and gender, we explore how James might use his positionality to reinforce or challenge his boss’s bullying antics toward Sofi, a Mexican-American veterinarian at Paws for Love. Ultimately we hope our analysis demonstrates the praxis between dominant group theory and anti-bullying practices. Finally, we encourage our audiences to leave this work moved to practice anti-bullying through their communicative behavior. Certainly, the use of rich organizational narrative and qualitative research promises to resonate and bring audiences closer to viscerally feeling how they might best disrupt such bad behavior. More specifically, we advocate for more anti-bullying research to become ontological-phenomenological (Tracy & Donovan, 2018; Tracy, Franks, Brooks, & Hoffman, 2015) in creating change agents as a result of scholarship.

References


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In 2013/14, the university where I work was markedly successful in achieving a very high score in the UK Research Impact Assessment Exercise. I was significantly involved in authoring an evidence-based history of the kind of work that myself and colleagues had been carrying out over the previous several years. This was done for the Business School, and concerned the close working form of management and organizational development with public, private and third sector clients we had refined over the years. The final results of the exercise positioned the business school as 5th in the UK as a whole, and 2nd amongst English business schools only, in terms of excellence in research impact. Of course we were delighted, and the publicized results no doubt helped an overall positioning and marketing presence for my school, and possibly the university.

Some 4 years on, in reflexive mood, I find myself considering what exactly happened and how it came to be that our particular submission chimed clearly so readily with a running narrative generated within the context of the exercise as a whole. Further, the tractability of the work with academic colleagues was severely constrained by the agreed need for confidentiality with our corporate clients. Over time this has become increasingly problematized for my attempts at reflective practice. I would like to lead a session where some of the issues raised above will be aired in a positive academic and research environment amongst critical friends, where my ‘corner’ (Cunliffe 2017) of practice may be considered from a wider perspective.

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“Capturing” Emotions through the Camera Lens. Tea, Toast and Tissues.

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The experience of emotion signifies meaning in the social world (Bericat 2016). However, attempting to understand emotional experience is challenging due to problems of subjectivity. The subjectivity of individual experience is acknowledged by some emotion researchers, but emphasized by others. Those adopting individual psychological emotion perspectives categorise emotions into universal groups, conceding their varying levels of intensity when expressed (Turner 2009). Others avoid such categorisation, defining emotion as “a subjective feeling state” (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995:99), and consider the concurrent and multi-layered nature of emotional experience (Fineman 2010). Introducing differentiation between terms such as emotion and feeling creates additional complexity. For example, feeling is the internal subjective experience, emotion the external display generated through organisational or socially required display rules (Fineman 2003, 2005).

Furthermore for the researcher, attempting to capture emotional experience through language is challenging: the words we use to label emotions are learned and can distort emotional experience (Boudens, 2005). The purpose of this paper is to share such challenges in the research encounter and explore the use of photographs as a method to elicit emotional experience. This study, taken from the pilot study for my doctoral thesis, explores how one occupational group, Human Resource (HR) practitioners, experience emotions in their working lives and provides an in-depth analysis of the methodology used.

Participants in this qualitative study were asked to take photographs to bring to an unstructured interview which ‘show how it feels to them to work in HR’. As a method acknowledged to better understand participants’ subjective experiences (Warren 2005), participant-led photography falls under the umbrella of photo-elicitation, where participants make photographs to enable the researcher to elicit their views and opinions at subsequent interview (Shortt and Warren 2012). This method was selected primarily because images can encourage talk where more than words are needed (Allen 2015), enabling communication of the intangible, such as uncovering otherwise hidden emotions (Bagnoli 2009; Höykinpuro and Ropo 2014). Located within a subjectivist problematic (Cunliffe 2011) and using a narrative methodology, I found the inclusion of photographs elicited additional and rich narratives that interviews alone fail to engender. I developed better understanding of participants’ experiences as they “actively re-construct their reality through images” (Liebenberg 2009:444). Photographs captured ranged from cups of tea/coffee, toast, tissues, in-trays and bins, to ‘selfies’, and photographs of hand drawings: stick people striking and an island representing Switzerland. Participants stated the images ‘represented’ emotional experiences or were ‘themes’ surrounding their working lives. In isolation the objects were meaningless (Edwards 2002). However, discussion about image meaning uncovered emotional experiences which went deeper than surface discussion of what the images represented.

In considering that emotions can be difficult to describe and know (Sturdy 2003), participants were asked how easy it was to ‘show’ their feelings of HR work through photographs. Though participants concurred that taking photographs using their smartphones was fun and easy to do, there was also agreement it was “difficult” to capture their emotional experiences on camera. Despite this perceived difficulty, rich data was elicited from discussion about image meaning. Both photographs and transcripts of interview discussion were interpreted together as one body of data. At a first level, capturing image content or what the photograph was of (Edwards and Hart 2004), seeking any commonalities between the images. Secondly, noting how participants labelled the emotional experience the image represented, then unpacking the subsequent narrative, highlighting quotes that resonated with the topic of emotions in HR work. The interpretive process itself demonstrated the complexity of understanding emotional experience. Though emotions were categorised in one way by the labels participants gave them as emotions depicted by image content, when unpacked they led to different emotions, interwoven within lived experience. In addition, expression of emotional experience went beyond words and images. Vocal sounds were prominent in some interviews where words could not be found to describe emotional experience.

Participant 2: “Errrr…..ooohwww, what would I word it as…….I don’t even know. Is there an emotion called aagghhh!” [laughs]
A striking finding was how photographs of mundane objects led to discussions about their meaning which expressed self-care. This was notable given participants held HR roles originating from the industrial welfare workers (Watson 1977), with responsibility for others wellbeing. For example, a cup of tea “represents me just having a minute…..being comforted by a cup of tea”, and boxes of tissues on participants’ desks, “to look after me cos nobody looks after you when you’re in HR”. Participants’ own wellbeing, or rather lack of others consideration for them, was exposed through discussion about everyday objects. Breadth of feelings were further exposed, including what participants evaluated as negative feelings of guilt and hurt, frustration with employees and line managers, and taking the blame for organisational decisions. These contrasted with expressions of compassion, elation and pride in their work.

At the end of the interviews, asking participants to evaluate their experiences into those they felt were good or bad by grouping the photographs into a collage (see picture 2), enabled deeper reflection on what otherwise might be perceived mundane in organisational life. Some participants articulated a lack of humanity in the coldness of the images, others expressed that the images represented the care and compassion they were expected to provide to others.

In summary, this paper addresses the lack of empirical research using participant-led photography (Warren, forthcoming) and provides first-hand experience of using this method, in a conceptually original study. Scholarly interest in how HR practitioners experience and do their work is limited (O’Brien and Linehan 2014). By exploring how HR practitioners experience emotions in their working lives, this study highlights expressions of self-care. Rather than entering into the critically-oriented academic debates about whether HR practitioners have a genuine concern for employees (Gill 2007) and where the ‘missing’ human is to be found in HRM (Bolton and Houlihan 2007), participants in this study shared how they were expected to be ‘emotionless’ themselves, with their own wellbeing neglected by others. Self-care was articulated as a remedy.

Selected References


Exploring the Use of the Ventriloquil Approach in Understanding the Materiality of Virtual Organizations

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In this paper I shall attempt to illustrate the use of the Ventriloquil Approach in understanding the materiality of virtual organizations drawing from a research work that was aimed at explaining how open universities accomplish their purposes and why education is possible at a distance.

Open universities are "higher learning institutions that are primarily concerned with education at a distance, namely, education in which the systematic teaching and the communication between student and teacher or institution take place mainly by a variety of media" (Asian Association of Open Universities, http://www.aaou.net). Open universities are virtual organizations in the sense that students do not see the teacher and the teacher does not see the students. The virtual nature of open universities puts into question its authority (and legitimacy). A question of authority is a question of materiality. Cooren (2012) explains that "...[t]he question of materiality should be understood and studied relationally, that is, we should always ask ourselves, "material to whom or what? … If something is material, it means that this thing is the ground, reason or cause for something else, i.e., it stands under, brings about, materializes or explains something else". The Ventriloquil Approach assumes that communication is not only a matter of people speaking or writing to each other, but that other things are continuously inviting and expressing themselves in day-to-day interactions. Various forms of agency can be invoked or mobilized in a given interaction or dialogue. Agents are those that accomplish purposes (Cooren 2006, 2010). Speaking of material agency "means that one can begin to acknowledge, analytically speaking, all the things that appear to matter in a given interaction [dialogue]. Whether these things are forms of knowledge, situations, expertise, emotions, concerns, interests or even organizations (just to name a few of them), they can potentially make the human participants more authoritative and powerful because of the capacity these latter have to ventriloquize them" (Cooren, 2012).

The Ventriloquil Approach involves a three-step process of: 1) recording interactions as they happen or collecting recorded interactions; 2) identifying markers through which a variety of figures appeared to recurrently and iteratively express themselves in the interactions; and 3) understanding or hearing what the figures are made to say and do.

For the study, accounts were collected from three open universities in Asia-- where most of the open universities are located. Access to the archived recording of class online interactions in the first two universities (Universities A and B) was made through my participation in faculty exchange programs. The classes selected were those where permission by teachers was granted: 4 classes in all (3+1) from AY 2011 to 2012. The third university is my home university (University C) and I used the archived recordings of two of my classes from AY 2010 to 2012.

For illustration, the paper shall present two interactions/exchanges taken from archived recording of the online discussions/forum thread in an introduction to economics class in University B as follows:

Interaction 1: Tutor and Student B1 interacting

Step 1: Identifying the marker (in bold fonts)

Tutorial 1
by Tutor - - Wednesday, 25 July 2012, 11:00 PM

Dear All,
If you have any question for me, please post it on this page. Tutors will not be replying questions in the public forum. Public forum is meant for discussions among students only...

Re: Tutorial 1
by Student B1 - - Tuesday, 31 July 2012, 11:40 AM

Hi Tutor,
Can I have your email address please. Thanks.
Re: Tutorial 1
by Tutor - - Tuesday, 31 July 2012, 11:17 PM

Dear Student B1,

My email is [ ]. If you have questions on TMA1, please post it in Tutorial 1 forum so that my reply can be shared with your class friends..but I encourage you to email or post it here so that we can discuss any issues together.

Contact Information
by Tutor - - Tuesday, 31 July 2012, 11:38 PM

Dear All,

I can be contacted at [ ] Best time is Mon-Fri 10pm-12midnight.

But, please post questions on TMA1 on Tutorial 1 page. We are living in the age of knowledge economy. Knowledge is meant to be shared and leveraged.

Step 2: Understanding what the figures were made to say and do

In this analysis, the tutor’s point of view was taken. The Tutorial Forum in the tutor’s replies/posts was identified as a marker incarnating two figures, the university and the pedagogical community. The mobilization of the Tutorial Forum accomplishes two things: 1) it made present the unseen virtual university by having an official venue for interaction and learning (teacher “herding” the class to the classroom), and 2) it made real an important community of a higher institution of learning, the pedagogical community (the constructivism pedagogy that operates in online educational institutions where the means for knowledge creation is through sharing).

Interaction 2: Course Coordinator (Teacher) and Student B2 interacting

Step 1: Identifying the marker (in bold font)

TMA3 results
by Course Coordinator (CC) - - Monday, 19 November 2012, 10:21 AM

Dear All,

...I shall be uploading the answer guide to TMA2 and 3 either later today or tomorrow. I shall also be uploading some additional exercises for you to try. Perhaps also hints on what to expect in the coming exam.

Re: TMA3 results
by Student B2-- - Monday, 19 November 2012, 10:27 AM

Thanks. Looking forward for the model answers and the additional exercises, hope to receive it soonest as possible, so that we have more time for our revision, as we are all working adults, time is always the factor that limit ourselves.

Re: TMA3 results
by Student B3 - - Tuesday, 20 November 2012, 02:58 PM

Dear CC,

I have yet seen any answer guide for TMA 2 & 3 and also additional exercise uploading in forum. Could you please assist to upload it in soonest possible for our revision purpose. There are only 12 days left towards our exam. Please consider time is very precious for open distance learner and working adult like us. Many thanks.

Step 2: Understanding what the figures were made to say and do

In this analysis, the student’s point of view was taken. Here, time was identified as a marker incarnating a figure: the student body or the learner community. The mobilization of time in the students’ posts accomplishes two things: 1) It made present the unseen virtual open university as the students were waiting for the teacher to appear at the "lecture hall" so to speak on the designated class "hour"; and 2) it materialized or made real
another community -- the distance learner community making virtual universities real, as learners are what make universities an institution for learning.

Through the Ventriloquill Approach, the open university is understood as having material spaces, is made up of various pedagogical and learner communities, and emergent as spokesperson of such communities negotiate/co-construct in their conversations what an open university is-- constituting a way of explaining its legitimacy as an institution of higher learning.

References

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Autoethnography of an NGO Professional Situated in the Hierarchical Socio-Economic Context of Rural Development in India.

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This research proposal is aimed at examining how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on rural development in India are structured to challenge or reinforce existing hierarchies in the society based on caste and gender, using an auto-ethnographic analysis of my own positionality and experience of working and researching in and around such non-governmental organizational spaces. The right to equality as a fundamental right in the Constitution of India recognizes forms of inequality based on caste and gender besides others. This right is significant because most studies on NGOs focus on poverty as the central problem in a neo-liberal state (Dempsey, 2009; Fisher, 1997; Mercer, 2002; Tembo, 2003), but remain incomplete without considering socio-economic factors that not only affect the marginalized communities but also critically shape the change agency of leaders in NGOs given their positionality in a hierarchically stratified society. This autoethnographic analysis is part of my dissertation research on NGOs and rural development in India and how leaders of NGOs are challenging or reinforcing socioeconomic hierarchies in the society. The findings from this dissertation will contribute to theory on intersectional perspectives on leadership in organizations working on social change, can help inform policy on NGOs and rural development in India, and will start a discussion on being reflective about researcher positionality in organizations research.

Introduction

In this paper, I do an autoethnographic analysis of my experiences at work and research in nongovernmental organizational spaces while laying out my own positionality in the socio-political context that I’m studying to help understand how non-governmental organizations working on rural development in India are challenging or reinforcing hierarchies. Auto-ethnography has been used as a method by researchers to write about their own experiences, be reflexive about them and analyze them in relation to the socio-cultural context in which researchers are located (Chang, 2016). I also draw from Päivi’s (2013) longitudinal ethnography to talk about my experiences from the past at my workplace and relate them to the cultural context of my workplace. As a researcher of non-governmental organizations and rural development, I draw from my field-notes and use them for auto-ethnographic analysis.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in general and rural development NGOs, in particular, are predominantly understood as being change agents in the dominant discourse of a receding welfare state and a rising neo-liberal state in India. These NGOs are often seen as working for poverty alleviation. Among the sector-wise classification of NGOs, rural development and poverty alleviation is a sector in itself and has 23381 NGOs listed under it (NITI Aayog, 2016). I have worked for nearly a year in one such rural development NGO and interned briefly at other NGOs with similar agendas while I pursued my post-graduate studies in rural management. However, the hierarchical culture that I observed at these NGOs made me ask some questions for which I couldn’t find answers while working, which then got me interested in research.

In India, caste privilege plays a big role in deciding who can pursue higher education, especially in professional courses such as management as a result of the resistance to implement reservations in faculty recruitment as well as in doctoral program admissions (Joshi & Malghan, 2017; Thakur & Babu, 2017). Neither the admission procedure for students nor the recruitment of faculty for the institute where I studied have a reservation (affirmative action) policy until 2014. Caste discrimination in NGOs has been questioned, documented and published in roundtableindia.com by Ambedkarite activists (Kumar, 2016a, 2016b; Navayan, 2014).

My preliminary research has also helped me understand my own location in this caste hierarchy and how that shaped my perspective while also informing how I approached my research. I may identify as belonging to a Shudra1 peasant caste, middle-class, cis-hetero-woman and I’m relatively privileged by the political and social alliances the caste that I’m recognized under built with other dominant land-owning Shudra castes in Andhra Pradesh since the early 20th century.

The 1901 census of India classifies the caste that I’m recognized under as a cultivating caste that comes under the grouping of “Shudras who habitually employ Brahmins as purohits and whose touch is considered slightly polluting” (W. Francis, 1902, p. 137). With rising consciousness Shudras constitute the castes in the fourth and last class in the Brahminical graded hierarchy of castes arranged into four classes with Brahmins at the top and
Shudras at the bottom (Ambedkar, 1946). Falling outside this system are the outcastes who were known as the Untouchables (Ambedkar, 1948).

Purohits are Brahmin priests who preside over Hindu ceremonies and rituals such as marriage, birth, death and soon among the non-Brahmin castes from the Non-Brahmin Movement3 in the early 20th century, some of the land-owning Shudra castes tried to raise their own social status (Satyanarayana, 2005) but due to the lack of anti-caste consciousness among these Shudra castes, many of them today imitate and practice Brahminical ideology while forgetting their own history.

I am inspired by the standpoint epistemologies of scholars from oppressed communities such as Dr. Babasaheb B.R.Ambedkar, Savitribai Phule, Jyotiba Phule, Dalit women scholars like Cynthia Stephen (Stephen, 2011), Black feminists like Kimberle Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, Sojourner Truth (Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde, 1985; Truth, 1851), Adivasi (indigenous) scholars like Gladson Dungdung (Gladson Dungdung, 2013) and Native American scholars like Sandy Grande (Grande, 2004). These scholars have identified themselves in the social hierarchies that lead to their oppression following which a few white feminist scholars also identify themselves in the social hierarchies that privilege them (Case, 2013; Goodman, 2001; Rich, 1984). My recent exposure to this scholarship, thanks to the Ambedkarite Movement in India, has helped me understand the ethics of representation and the importance of being explicit about researcher identity and location and how that shapes the researcher’s approach.

Selected References

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Identifying Worldviews in Multinational Organizations

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Members of multinational organizations regularly face intercultural communication challenges and continue to seek novel ways to improve cultural awareness, adaptability, and communication. Some current approaches to improve intercultural competence focus on behavioral and observable aspects of culture. Others focus on underlying and unobservable cultural value dimensions. However, both observable behaviors and unobservable cultural values can be better understood through identification of worldview assumptions that are often tacitly held. The purpose of this study was to propose a new conceptualization of worldview based on philosophical definitions of worldview, existing theory in the field of cultural anthropology, and cultural value dimensions identified in the field of intercultural communication.

The proposed conceptualization of worldview consists of three composite universals, morality, perceptions of agency, and positionality. In this study, an interview protocol was developed to identify themes surrounding worldview assumptions about morality, agency, and morality. The setting for data collection was within a private European management and technology university and its counterpart in Japan. Five Asian STEM master’s students participated in a focus group session to describe and assess the quality of intercultural interactions between the European and Asian student consultants and engage in a dialogic approach to identify how various worldview assumptions, or tacitly accepted truths, of the Asian participants influenced team consulting projects in an international, multicultural, multilingual organization.

Theoretically, this paper sought to expand existing worldview theory from the field of anthropology and in so doing, develop a heuristic for better understanding intercultural interactions that can be applied to a variety of organizational contexts. Morality, agency, and positionality were found to be useful worldview composite universals for identifying ways to prevent and mitigate intercultural communication miscues and promote intercultural competence.

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Developing Leadership Evidence through Action Learning Sets for Continual and Collaborative Learning

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Problem:
In late 2014, the Program Director role in our organization was redesigned from administrative to a leadership role responsible for design, delivery, and review of the institution’s programs. This redesign was to ensure quality learning and teaching experiences. It is essential for Program Directors to have leadership skills to effectively manage their program and positively influence colleagues with whom they work and teach (Berg, Carver et al. 2014). Program leaders find it difficult to articulate how their individual leadership practice has an impact, particularly in terms of influencing and empowering others. Our organization did not have a formal leadership development framework and with this change in the role created the need and opportunity to develop a Program Leadership framework. The Action Research for Program Leadership (ARPL) will be presented through the context and the current focus of the action learning set addressing the research question of ‘How can we demonstrate the capabilities of program leaders?’

Context:
Initially a group of program leaders raised the need for greater support. This group was the start of the program leaders network. With support of the academic development unit, activities targeted the development of program leaders to increase their readiness to lead and create knowledge and evidence of leadership for benefits including learning and teaching grants (Carruthers and Maddock, 2017). The group evolved through voluntary participation from a pool of approximately 20 people including program leaders: learning and teaching directors, program directors, program advisors, first-year co-ordinators and discipline leaders. The key criteria for this pool were that they had attended a workshop series on leadership and were part of the Program Leaders Network, therefore, having a foundation and desire for professional development in their roles. From a call to this group eight volunteers came together with the help of the facilitator who is a senior leader in the higher education support area of our organization. This group of eight was established across two of the larger groups however with vastly different focuses (business school and health group). After the project team was granted internal funds we formally started the action learning sets to share, discover and explore our experiences to develop our leadership capabilities (Dick 1999, 2017). Over a year, the whole group met for approximately two hours every second month. The cross-disciplinary approach ensured a capacity building approach that captured unique differences and focuses. This resulted in the current project focused on the business school application of action research in terms of communicating leadership for a new annual review process. This was the result of the business school participants seeing a way to support others through the annual review process using the continual and collaborative approach of action research that was supported by the executive of the group.

Continual and collaborative learning supports transformative development (Gapp and Fisher 2007, Stewart and Gapp 2014). Originating from key theorists such as Dewey (1903), Argyris and Schön (1974), and Deming (1994), the Gapp and Fisher (2007) model (GFM) extends and enhances the iterative approach to support action research and the action learning process (Dick 1999, 2017). In summary, this approach that layers the espoused ideas and thoughts into embedded action is supported by the cycle of: plan (idea or innovation), do (enact or pilot), study (review) and act (amend, abandon or restart) (Deming 1994, Stewart and Gapp 2017). The continuous nature of the GFM underpins the monitoring of our action learning sets, but also requires the opportunity to continually learn through reflection that leads to innovation and improvement in the development of the individual, group, and organization through team learning (Senge 1993). Ultimately, these actions and behaviors become generalized. This framework is being used to guide, position and evaluate the exploratory nature of this action research project and thereby improve our understanding to demonstrate the capabilities of program leaders.

Methodology:
Action learning is the process and action research is the methodological underpinning (McNiff and Whitehead 2016). Employing an action research methodology supported by action learning to develop leadership in higher education teachers is an approach that tackles real problems through experience and reflection (Kember 2000, Kember and Kwan 2002). This approach advances professional development in areas of problem-solving, self-
awareness and solution-based processes to embed positive leadership practices. To have action research in this context, the application of action learning is necessary (Kemmis 2009). Action research is a method for facilitating change in people’s actions and behaviors through reflection that develops an understanding of their practices and leads to transformation (Dick 1999, Kemmis 2010). Taking an action research approach is advocated for long-term quality enhancements and continual improvement through innovation, constructively aligned learning based on scholarly teaching (Biggs 2012). As practitioners, we are using self and group reflection to explore and review our personal experiences to heighten the social meaning and understanding of our leadership episodes resulting in evidence and promotional material to include in our annual reviews (Cunliffe 2009). To ensure this reflection takes a deeper approach, the action learning sets are in a safe environment for leadership improvements through individual and group reflection.

An example of the action learning set meeting process (Beaty and McGill 2013) is described in Table 1. Between meetings, members gather data about their leadership practice, critically reflect on their leadership philosophy and engage with literature to lend rigor to their analysis. Through these action learning sets, members are enhancing their leadership philosophies, incorporating valid evidence of their practice and critically reflecting to gain insights on their leadership.

Table 1. An example of an action learning set process (Beaty and McGill, 2013, p51)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>‘Presenter’ role</th>
<th>‘Supporter’ role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Describing</td>
<td>Observing, listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Exploring, questioning, listening, thinking</td>
<td>Reflecting, exploring ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>Exploring future actions</td>
<td>Asking ‘what if’ questions, specifying action points, questioning action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact and Dissemination:
One intended and high-impact outcome of the ARPL is that each member has and will develop as a facilitator and champion of the process. The model for cascading the action learning sets into the organization (Table 2) is through the iterative approach of continual and collaborative learning underpinned by the action learning sets.

Table 2: The Notional model for extending action learning sets into the organization (adapted from McGill and Beaty, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAAAA</td>
<td>BBBB +2A</td>
<td>CCCCC +2A or B; CCCCC +2A or B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BBBB +2A</td>
<td>CCCCC +2A or B; CCCCC +2A or B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the initial group members in Time 1 (A), run their own groups with new participants in time 2 (B) who go forward and with A and B members run more groups with new participants in Time 3. The impact of cascading the action learning process through improved communication of leadership capabilities has been evidenced in participants’ annual review submissions. Despite the ongoing nature of this project, the action learning sets have provided a forum for sharing and understanding that has built a confidence in the communication of leadership capabilities.

The ARPL was developed to create and implement an innovative group level action research framework to support emerging leaders’ capacity to articulate and enhance enacted leadership for their practice. This group based project focused on the establishment of a group leadership and capacity-building mechanism. Employing action learning sets and action research methods, in this project we included two core activities: (1) Implementing the ARPL; and (2) Evaluating the proposed ARPL. This action research leadership development project has supported leadership skills to the staff at all levels that are engaged as a program leaders. In addition, this project created ‘team learning’ (Senge 1993), specifically in program leaders across the organization.

Selected References:

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Competing Ontologies and Epistemologies: Which Inform Your Qualitative Research?

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&

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Raadschelders (2011) argues that in an effort to carve out its own sense of identity, the interdisciplinary field of public administration has fallen into the trap of methodological narrowness and rigidity. Instead, such study requires a wide breadth that includes social theory and philosophy, in addition to a variety of social science empirical data, much of which cannot be mathematically quantified and manipulated through statistical analysis. To transcend these limitations, we must consider “how attention to ontology and epistemology leads to a richer understanding of social realities and how we come to understand it” (Raadschelders 2011, 920).

This suggestion stands in good part on the arguments of the authors (see Stout 2007, Stout and Salm 2011, Stout 2012). Since then, the authors have been developing a governance typology that is grounded in the ontological assumptions that drive the philosophical choices and practices found in the administration of organizations and governance of society: A Radically Democratic Response to Global Governance: Dystopian Utopias (Stout and Love 2016) and Integrative Governance: Generating Sustainable Responses to Global Crises (Stout and Love 2018).

Taken together, the typology includes four primary approaches to governance and one synthesis approach, labeled Hierarchical, Atomistic, Holographic, Fragmented, and Integrative. Each ideal-type has a unique ontological grounding that informs how truth is understood and how knowledge is constructed. This paper summarizes the ontologies and epistemologies of these five ideal-types, compares and contrasts them, and offers initial reflections on what the differences might mean for qualitative research. Rather than accepting commonly used dualistic heuristics of inductive/qualitative and deductive/quantitative, or defaulting to a “mix and match” heterogeneity offered in other methodological categorizations (see Stout 2013), we explore our five ideal-types as potential foundations for logically congruent methodological paradigms. We argue that fundamental ontological and epistemological assumptions cannot be haphazardly linked to methodologies and methods. We suggest that more nuanced and coherent methodological paradigms will enable better choice making in research design.

References


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This interactive performance piece uses main theoretical tenets from environmental communication and general systems theories (Bertalanffy, 1972; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972) to argue for an ecosystemic-based model of dealing with organizational communication and conflict. Using interlocking displays of spoken word, embodied movement, and creative representations of scholarship from the two academic fields we wish to bridge, the performers will work to critique the problematic stance of many Western organizational and management paradigms. Throughout the performance, particular focus will be on deconstructing organizational communication paradigms that focus on systematic errors as symptoms instead of addressing the root causes of the issues or conflicts.

Throughout the session, performers will work to deconstruct the common management malpractice of reactively focusing on correcting the weaknesses and errors of individuals or singular negative events. Instead, performers argue that by focusing on the rhetorical and material aspects of a system, group success and individual growth are developed as mutual processes of goal accomplishment. By using performance methodology (Madison, 2002) to work through these topics, we hope to advocate for performance as a viable and fertile tool to use when bridging gaps between disciplines (i.e. environmental communication and organizational leadership communication). Because leadership and organizational development must be felt and performed before they can be evaluated, and because environmental communication is moving towards more embodied methods of research and expression (Carbaugh, 2007) we believe it is an important time to join tenets of the two with performance. Additionally, we hope to demonstrate that performance work can add a creative and fecund grounding for qualitative research, due to its integration of embodied writings, interactions, and reactions that transcend the normative and constraining frameworks of scholarly qualitative research (Schechner, 2013).

The concept of communication ecosystems is not particularly new. For example, Littlejohn & Domenici (2007) used ‘ecosystem’ as a metaphor to explain the change, diversity, and variability of group communication in joining persona, relational, and community realms. However, we feel that scholarly movements could be made to address group or conflict systems as not metaphorically an ecosystem, but rather literally ecosystemic. Movements in this direction would encourage more environmentally conscious thinking and help move qualitative research models into a less hierarchical capital-based system of production (Gramsci, 1972) and instead redirect focus to practice and process.

Teams, organizations, and communities always succeed and fail as a single unit. The successes and failures of groups are products of the all parts working together in a dynamic process. Leading the process is a more effective path to success. Rather than just correcting weaknesses or developing strengths, strengths and goals must be developed to complement and facilitate each other (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Organizational leadership would benefit from reframing groups as an ecosystem of strengths functioning with process-goals to create a more motivating, inspiring, and successful system. An ecosystem of success can be fostered and facilitated through the continual, dynamic, and adaptive process of developing individual growth and goal-accomplishment in unison.

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A Researcher’s Fractal: Asking Questions of Mindfulness and Sensemaking to Explore Mindfulness and Sensemaking

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My dissertation will explore the ways sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and mindfulness are related yet dialectic processes that influence the way individuals in organizations act and react. This research agenda comes from a curiosity that emerged in my own lived experience. Based on my study of mindfulness (Brach, 2003; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Pirson, Langer, Bodner, & Zilcha-Mano, 2012) and sensemaking (Weick, 1995), coupled with my practice of mindfulness in regard to my own sensemaking processes and outcomes, I have developed a framework for mindful sensemaking. My dissertation will explore this framework in organizational contexts. In this short paper, I will ask questions of the possibilities and challenges of embarking on a dissertation guided by the very constructs it will examine. Specifically, these issues deal with 1) the insights and limitations of using my own life as data, 2) the ways in which phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2012) has guided my research agenda, and 3) designing a qualitative study well suited to explore contemplative epistemologies.

Own Life as Data
This research is based on both Eastern and Western (i.e., socio-cognitive) mindfulness. Eastern mindfulness is conceptualized by nonjudgmental awareness, a “beginner’s mind,” and radical presence (Brach, 2003; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Socio-cognitive mindfulness is based in novelty seeking, novelty producing, and engagement (Pirson et al., 2012). I propose that practicing both types of mindfulness of our sensemaking processes may transform how we know our worlds and create opportunities for expanded ways of being and acting. I arrived at this curiosity by practicing the “mindset for sensemaking” encouraged by Weick (1995): “research and practice in sensemaking needs to begin with a mindset to look for sensemaking, a willingness to use one’s own life as data, and search for those outcroppings and ideas that fascinate” (p. 191). Weick also suggests that theory construction is “disciplined imagination” (Weick, 1989) and/or “disciplined reflexivity” (Weick, 1999). Both have been instrumental in teasing out the focus of my dissertation. I have also practiced critical reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2016) in the form of memo writing, audio recording, journaling and even mind mapping my perceptions and biases. This process has created a powerful jumping off point for thinking critically about the way mindfulness and sensemaking relate to each other and to human action. Of course, there may be limitations as well. Questions that arise are: “Am I fitting my lived experience on top of existing frameworks? Is my proposed framework a reflection of my sensemaking processes, or is my sensemaking influenced by my desire to extend this framework? Both/and?”

Phronesis as Map
If my mindfulness framework were metaphorized as a diamond, all of the facets would be reflective. Most of them would be philosophical (e.g., phenomenological, ontological). And the largest surface - the table - would be phronetic (Flyvbjerg, 2012). Only a few of the facets would be empirically researched in organizational contexts. While many of my peers have turned to theory as a guiding map for their own scholarship, I have turned to phronesis. Instead of asking, “Is my framework accurate?” or “has it been done before?” I ask, “is it useful?” This is not an entirely comfortable place to be as a PhD student embarking on her dissertation. However, it is the map that guides me. So I probe myself further and ask: “Why is phronesis my guiding map?” And, “How can I accomplish rigorous, respected academic work in organizational communication while focusing on the impact I want to create?”

Qualitative Methods
I struggle with designing a qualitative research study that will meaningfully attend to each construct, and substantiate the potential theoretical implications of my mindfulness framework, assuming these implications do exist beyond my own practice. This is because most of the intricacies of what I propose are grounded in my experience of them. Qualitative methods certainly provide a useful toolbox for discovery. But which qualitative methods are best suited to study mindfulness and sensemaking, empirically? I engage in mindfulness to look inward and outward and ask myself: “How do we illuminate or measure expansion of self through interviews, field notes and focus groups? How do we narrow in on the temporal points of individual or organizational transformation? Can causation coding (Saldana, 2016) provide the answer? What about discourse analysis (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001)? Critically reflexive journaling (Cunliffe, 2016)? Which tool from the qualitative toolbox will shine light on the theoretical significance of my proposed framework? From a phronetic standpoint, can I ever hope to demonstrate generalizability? Should I even try?” Most qualitative research is concerned
with “immersing oneself in a scene and trying to make sense of it” (Tracy, 2013) – as opposed to broad swath theorizing. However, I believe my mindfulness framework is one that could meaningfully improve the lived experience of those who engage with it. I feel a phronetic pull to research and write about it in a way that will create the biggest impact.

**Practicing Mindfulness and Engaged Sensemaking to Carve a Path**

When conceptualizing phenomena in a new way, Deetz (2000) asks, “what do we see or what are we able to do if we think of [it] in one way versus another? Unlike a definition, the attempt here is not to get it right, but to understand our choices” (p. 4). To extend his question, I ask: “How can I research and write about sensemaking + mindfulness in a way most meaningful for participants, students, future scholars, and the public? Which methodologies will provide the most useful access to the contemplative epistemology proposed in this framework? And how might my research translate to, or emerge from an “epistemology of practice” in which knowing comes from the actual doing, rooted in action?” (Cook & Brown, 1999). Ironically, I feel like I am braided in a bit of a meta-framework. Originally, it was through practicing mindfulness of my sensemaking processes that I constructed the framework. Now, I hope that by practicing the framework I wish to explore, I will perceive expanded possibilities for action in the researching of it. And so, the fractal of questions continues...

**References**


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How to qualitatively assess an intervention with a large collaborative (relatively unfunded) research team: A backstage story of analyzing the being of leadership

Sarah Tracy, Jessica Kamrath and the Ontological Research Team
(Adame, E., Clark, L., Donovan, M., Pettigrew, J., Razzante, R., Tietsort, C., Towels, Town, S., Tremblay, R.)
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Over the course of the last year and a half and continuing into the present, a team of 11 faculty and graduate students in the school of human communication at Arizona State University have been assessing and analyzing an intervention of two methods for teaching leadership—one traditional method using the most popular leadership textbook and typical assignments and exams, and the other method using a self-reflexive ontological approach that endeavors to leave students with the “being” of being a leader (Cunliffe, 2004; Tracy & Donovan, 2018). In contrast to most organizational intervention assessments that rely on quantitative pre- and post-tests, our team has primarily relied upon qualitative interviews, drawings and a live action role play scenario. What’s more, this multi-faceted and long-term research project has required a large research team which has persisted thus far on just one small grant. In this presentation, we synthesize the methods we practiced for qualitatively assessing the intervention, and the logistical and interactional methods by which we practiced qualitative research in this large team.

Two particular qualitative practices might be especially notable to the QRMO community: 1) interviews that engaged in “ontological” questions and drawing; and 2) role play scenarios. Both of these were specifically designed so as to assess the ways in which the classes would actually leave students behaving in leaderly ways (e.g., by asking questions of and listening to others, making requests, making promises, understanding the concerns of relevant parties, and incorporating their ideas into a created future).

In the interviews, we asked students to “visualize someone you identify as being a leader” and they drew and described that person—talking about the person’s exact actions and language as situated in time and space. We also asked students to talk about the last time they exercised leadership. We further provided a story of a tough leadership situation with a team member who was resistant to a new policy and asked students to describe step by step how they would deal with the situation. In this presentation, we will discuss how such questions go beyond asking about participants’ conceptual and epistemological knowledge, and rather reveal insight into how the world occurs to them, and how they would embody the being of leadership.

Second, we designed a role play scenario / experiment that brought together one student from the traditional course, one student from the OPPT-in course, and one trained role player. In the presentation, we will distribute worksheets about how the role play scenario unfolded for the students, and discuss the multi-level qualitative analysis process of these scenarios so far. This analysis has included ratings of the students by professionals on their perceived leadership as well as a thematic analysis on their speech acts, which together with the ontological interview analysis is promising to show vivid differences between the ability to talk about leadership and to effectively practice it.

Finally, in this presentation we will discuss the logistical work that has made this large research project possible among a large team with little funding. We will share our publication protocol and guidelines (which ensure collegiality, fairness, and a transparent process)—as well as its affiliated challenges (e.g., how many authors are too many?). We will share what we have found to be instrumental logistical tools for collaboration with a large team such as identifying specific weekly time capacity for each member, using Zoom meetings with subgroups of the team, creating meetings as collaborative 3-hour long work sessions, specifying a designated project manager, and creating a systematic process for “planning our work and working the plan.” Furthermore, we will discuss how key practices from the OPPT-in leadership course (such as integrity and authenticity) have influenced the group in terms of being clear about expectations, requests, invitations and counter-offers, what we can commit to and how quickly, and sharing concerns and upsets.

Among other challenges (but we believe key parts of making our collaboration work so far) has been consistent balancing between the end goal of the project and also ensuring that the journey contributes to each member. For graduate students, this includes behind the scenes research experiences that go beyond individual coursework papers, for mid-career faculty, it includes their own mentoring and also learning how to mentor, and for senior faculty, it means learning how to coordinate a large team with a forgiving audience of team members.
and being able to have research happen in a chosen focus even when they do not have the capacity to do it all by themselves.

In sum, this presentation endeavors to share the backstage process for engaging a large collaborative qualitative research project -- something that we learned via the on-the-ground practice of it, but that we hope other members at QRMO might be interested in pursuing themselves in the future and from which our resources may be of value and interest.

References


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The challenges of building a montage: Encouraging a sensory exploration of what we feel as well as what we think about leadership.

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The aim of my PhD research is to focus on the perceptions and feelings involved in moments of leadership significance, as perceived by those in a leadership position. The focus will be on understanding the insider’s perspective – how participant selected moments have influenced what they think and feel about leadership and as a consequence, how this relates to who they are becoming in leadership. The term becoming being used deliberately to acknowledge the view that managerial/leadership identity is ‘an endless process of becoming’ (Parker 2004, p46).

The proposed study will contribute to the growing recognition of the importance of, and often tacit nature of, social and situated learning and the need to explore experiences for understanding not only what but also how leaders learn (Kempster and Stewart 2010; Stead 2013). It will do so by exploring an under-theorised aspect of meaning-making – its embodied narrative nature, as ‘much of what we do is responsive, intuitive, and is interwoven with feelings about ourselves and others’ (Cunliffe and Coupland 2012, p69). Feelings as well as thoughts are therefore an important focus.

The research will focus on the importance of the inter-subjective relationship between followers and leaders and on the impact of specific events for individuals on their personal leadership development. Acknowledging the relational leadership perspective (Cunliffe and Erkisen 2011; Uhl-Bien 2006), I will draw from work including Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) concept of precipitant perceptual (constant construction of self through our interaction in the world) and Ladkin’s (2010) ideas on the leadership moment and relationality:

‘Leaders must relate to followers and together they interact within a particular context and work towards an explicit or implicit purpose. These pieces also interact dynamically, with the consequences that the way in which followers perceive the context will affect the way in which they interpret the leader’s pronouncement, the followers behaviours will affect the leaders and together leaders and followers actions will demonstrate how a purpose is being understood and embodied’ (Ladkin 2010, p.27).

The value of significant experiences or moments, which call people to stop and evaluate in a significant way, is well established in the leadership research landscape (Adler 2008; Day et al. 2014; McCall 2010). Examples include crucible moments (Bennis and Thomas (2002, cited in Gill 2011); arresting moments (Cunliffe 2001); moments of being struck (Cunliffe 2002); and moments of momentum (Sutherland 2013). Aiming for a double hermeneutic understanding of the phenomenon, the focus is not on observing or accurately identifying the facts/elements/actions within the moments themselves, but on participants’ meaning-making around the significance of moments for their ongoing process of becoming a leader.

Arts-based inquiry is associated with embodied and emotional ways of knowing which can be ‘unavailable to the conversation’ (Kennedy, Bathurst and Carroll 2015, p310). I will therefore use an arts-based method to aid the exploration of the sensory, affective dimensions of lived experiences and ways of knowing (Kunter and Bell 2006; Mack 2015; Page, Grisoni and Turner 2014; Schyns et al. 2013; Shortt and Warren (2012); Taylor and Hansen 2005; Ward and Shortt 2013). This will facilitate a deeper exploration of how embodied or felt experiences and emotions, as well as intellectual processes, contribute to meaning-making (Ajjawi and Higgs 2007).

Drawing on American philosopher and educator Susanne Langer’s (1957) ideas of presentational symbolism (Warren 2002), participants will be asked to undertake a preparatory exercise before their first interview which involves identifying objects/visual artefacts e.g. memorabilia, participant drawn pictures, art, photos etc. which symbolise events or experiences in their journey of leadership becoming. Such artefacts will provide stimulus to the topic being explored:

‘When we look at something we do not just experience it with our eyes, rather its apprehension conjures up a whole host of thoughts and feelings based on our experiences of what the image means to us within our own personal, social and cultural world’ (Warren, 2002, p.235).

The study will also contribute to the arts-based qualitative research methods community through its unique use of a montage of visual artefacts. Montages being identified by Kennedy, Bathurst and Carroll (2015, p317) as
a potential research tool 'particularly in relation to learning the process of leadership’. It is proposed that stories can gain meaning when explored in relation to other stories (Corlett 2012) and the research aims to provide a uniquely symbolic and visual way of relating stories to each other through the development of a montage of artefacts.

Participants will decide which artefacts and significant moments are explored in the first responsive (Rubin and Rubin 2005) interview. Each will be fully explored before building the artefacts into a montage to enable the once individual fragments to be viewed as whole and, through one’s human nature to see connections, to explore if new understandings might be created. In addition to an initial discussion on participants’ thoughts on the resulting montage, participants will then be encouraged to reflect on both the interview discussion and the montage for a few weeks. A second responsive interview will be subsequently held to explore any further thoughts and reflections.

Underpinned by ideas of relational social constructionism, which advocates a dialogical meaning-making process (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008), the research will therefore explore if and how the use of visual artefacts and the development of a montage, support meaning-making and aid the potential for new connections to be made (new learning in and through the research (Corlett 2012)). This will include the degree to which participants experience as part of the research process learning as a ‘reflexive dialogue’ (Corlett 2012, p.453) and participants’ engagement in aesthetic reflexivity i.e. ‘the use of aesthetic experiences to develop subjective understandings of contexts and to critically evaluate ones role, viewpoints and actions’ (Sutherland 2013, p.39).

The conference will take place three months before the deadline for my PhD confirmation. Ideally timed, the purpose of the conference paper will be to explore my proposed methodology and to seek feedback/advice from delegates on the extent to which the approach will adequately address potential challenges such as:

- Engaging participants without leading or restricting their choice of moments or artefacts. E.g. how will participants understand what ‘becoming’ means in relation to leadership in order to identify moments and artefacts?
- Ensuring artefacts add to but do not distract from their ‘story’. The artefacts are not the focus per se but a tool to enable rich data to be accessed.
- Inter-subjectivity and the responsive interview. While being inter-subjective in nature, ensuring the conversation follows double hermeneutic philosophy.
- Building and using a montage – appropriately supporting participants to explore leadership via full exploration of the parts (artefacts/individual moments) and the whole (montage of significant moments) both during and in-between interviews.
- Analysing and interpreting the ‘data’ in a transparent and authentic way.
- Reflexivity and the researcher.

**Selected References**


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Navigating Uncomfortable Expectations and Body Dissonance in the Field

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Introduction
This essay calls our attention to tensions of the body encountered by organization ethnographers during fieldwork. Specifically, the relational ethic of ethnography (Ellis, 2007) may mean that we encounter participants who expect researcher bodies to mirror or imitate participant bodies in ways that are uncomfortable, awkward, or unwanted. Calling on my own ethnographic experiences with religious and faith-based organizations, I consider answers to this question: How might ethnographers navigate encounters with participant bodies that create uncomfortable expectations for ethnographer bodies? I suggest that reinvigorating contemporary ethnographic practice (particularly in religious contexts, wherein body-centric ritualism is prevalent) partially requires researchers to reflect on and account for the ways in which we position our bodies in relation to participant bodies before, during, and after fieldwork. To accomplish this, I contribute several practical recommendations for ethnographers who encounter body dissonance in the field.

Background
Recently, practitioners of ethnography in organizations across disciplines have increasingly advocated for reflexively acknowledging how the frequently gritty humanity of the field can be a source of researcher discomfort – and, in turn, how we may make our participants uncomfortable as well (Czarniawska, 2008; Down, Garrety, & Badham, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Gill, 2011; Gill, Barbour, & Dean, 2014; Koning & Ooi, 2013; McDonald, 2016; McDonald, 2015; McDonald, 2005). Communication ethnographers bear a particular burden to wrestle with and tell about their uncomfortable experiences in the field because we are first and foremost storytellers, and these experiences are central to the story of how we come to know the lifeworlds of our participants. For ethnographers of communication in organizations, to decline to narrate the discomfort of the field is to leave the story of organizing partially unwritten.

Difficult experiences with participants, such as hearing offensive or discriminatory talk, may leave the ethnographer angry, disappointed, or embarrassed, which Down et al. (2006) describe as “emotional dissonance” (p. 96). These experiences create profound ethical and relational ambiguity in the field that ethnographers cannot fully hide from. Ironically, dissipating emotional dissonance may require researchers to accommodate contradictory expectations or behave in uncomfortable ways; for example, Down found himself swearing more than usual to identify with his participants, while Garrety “felt compelled to abide by traditional gender stereotypes and refrained from swearing at all” (2006, p. 109). While these authors wisely counsel us to narrate the awkwardness of fieldwork, this corner of the reflexivity project largely describes the experience of dealing with ethnographic discomfort as a sort of psychic balancing act (Down et al., 2006; Koning & Ooi, 2013). Thus, our stories about navigating difficult fieldwork experiences have become somewhat disembodied. To problematize this knowledge space, I call for a greater accounting of how participant bodies can create challenges (and opportunities) for researcher bodies – an experience I refer to as body dissonance.

Aim
To be clear, reflecting on methods for overcoming the mental challenges of long hours spent in the field is important and necessary. However, I suggest that we have yet to pay adequate attention to the ways in which participant relationships may result in a dissonance that shapes and constrains our bodies as well as our emotions. That is, I suggest that relational discomfort in the field is as much a physiological experience as it is a psychological one; and the ethnographer must recognize and respond to her or his bodily discomfort in the field in uniquely embodied ways.

In the special case of religious contexts, wrestling with participant expectations may primarily seem like an issue of ideological (dis)identification. And yet, I argue that creating a more complete ethnographic understanding of faith-based organizing requires reframing religion as lived out in the ideological and the material. Faith stories in particular are creatively assembled and shared in the bodily practices of the faithful, such as engaging the body in the taking of sacraments or assuming certain postures for prayer that ethnographer bodies may be uncomfortable with (McGuire, 2007; Winchester, 20008). Thus, navigating expectations for ethnographer bodies created by religious participant bodies is a crucial fieldwork problematic to explore. In this article, I use
my own ethnographic experiences in the study of communication and religion as an experiential backdrop for exploring body dissonance in the field.

**Recommendations**

To conclude, I provide recommendations for organization ethnographers to prepare for and respond to body dissonance, especially those who may do fieldwork in religious contexts. I suggest navigating body dissonance begins with reframing ethnographic research as an *embodied* craft, where gathering commonsense knowledge of participant lifeworlds is made more possible via collaborative bodily performances (Cunliffe, 2011; Taylor & Trujillo, 2001). We might do this by taking reflexive fieldnotes about encounters with participant bodies and their effects on us, and then discussing these notes with participants as a form of embodiment-in-conversation. Another approach might be to co-create a “handbook of body expectations” with participants; in practice, this handbook could operate as a set of intersubjective “blocking instructions”, like one might find alongside an actor’s script in a local theater. For ethnographers of religious organizations, we might also consider sharing ritual body postures as a way of helping with the difficulty of unlocking tacit knowledge of faith cultures, which is often embodied rather than linguistic – for indeed, “language can never contain a whole person” (Josselson, 1996, p. 2).

Ultimately, this article is meant to encourage organization ethnographers to move beyond the comfort of detached critical observation toward emotional and embodied engagement with participants—even in the face of unwanted expectations and bodily struggles over relational meanings in the field (Bell, 1999). For the communication ethnographer, sharing these postures may help us narrate the material effects of our participants’ “symbolic advocacy” (Orr, 1978). And in the case of religious ethnography, these reflections may help us to know “religion-as-lived” more deeply (McGuire, 2007) and to more critically consider how mirroring participant bodies may lead us to ignore our ambiguous moral agency (Geertz, 1973), such that we materially substantiate power imbalances in these contexts.

**References**


