



Creative Approaches to Research

2014: Volume 7 Issue 1

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ISSN: 18359442

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2014, VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

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Editorial

This Century Becomes You: Qualitative Inquiry, Being/There and Social Becoming in the 21st Century

Erica Southgate and Rachel Buchanan

This Special Issue canvases notions of becoming in late modern or postmodern conditions and within Western frameworks for thinking about ontology and subjectivity. The collection wrestles with the following questions: What is becoming? What characterises becoming in 21st century? How are the processes of becoming implicated in the production of knowledge, particularly in research? Like the nebulous notion of becoming itself, these questions are not definitely answered, nor comfortably settled.

The contributors to this Special Issue pursue conceptions of ontology that are incomplete and processual; becoming is viewed as a social dynamic that may not have a fully realised or perfect end-point. Becoming is implicated in competing epistemologies and ideologies, and relations of power and subjectivity, which are contested and struggled over. Often, becoming is viewed as a future-oriented enterprise embedded in the calculated actions of individual actors. However, the contributions to this Special Issue treat becoming as cross-temporal and temporary, social and intersubjective. Becoming is what happens now and is an activity implicated in a future imaginary; it is also a reinterpretation of the past actions and identities and is subject to reimagining with hindsight.

Many of the contributions to this Special Issue are located within the field of education, a context which has long been driven by the teleological project of 'be-

Southgate, Erica and Buchanan, Rachel. 2014. Editorial - This Century Becomes You: Qualitative Inquiry, Being/There and Social Becoming in the 21st Century, *Creative Approaches to Research*, vol. 7. no.1, pp. 4-6.

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coming somebody' (Wexler, 1992). Some of these articles explore the influence of ideology on becoming in higher education with a focus on identity (re)formation in researcher subjectivity. Other authors question the influence of policy upon 'educated' subjectivities and offer methodologies for qualitative analysis of social processes from micro (individual) to macro (systems) levels.

The Special Issue begins with an article by Buchanan and Chapman who offer a critique of current conceptualisations of digital identity. They use the construct of the cyborg to interrogate the way computer-generated realities are imposed into young peoples' lives. Their research seeks to understand the political dimensions of digital identities in educational settings and opens up conceptual spaces for future research in this area.

The next article by Southgate and Bennett focuses on higher education policy in relation to the widening participation agenda specifically within the Australian context. Southgate and Bennett apply a Foucauldian 'stone-cutting' approach to policy documents to uncover the ways in which essentialist ideas of ability and older meritocratic beliefs regarding intellectual capacity and quality, permeate current articulations of the ideal subject of widening participation. They detail how older notions of the redemptive promise of education and childhood hope are subtly woven into the 'new' widening participation agenda and how these can facilitate and limit the social justice actions of equity practitioners in higher education.

Daiello's contribution provides a poetic and elegant case study on how psychoanalytical theory can be applied to an analysis of student writing in visual arts higher education. Daiello uses the concept of peripheral vision to articulate the complexities of doctoral thesis analysis and writing, reflecting on the validity of theorising and representing the subjectivities of the researched and the researcher in her work.

The next article by McLeod and Badenhorst explores the problem of constructing strong researcher identities that are produced and importantly owned by researchers rather than being generated by prevailing neoliberal ideology within higher education. Their contribution provides multiple narratives from researchers at different points in their careers. These narratives highlight the tensions between complying with and resisting neo-liberal versions of a quantifiable researcher identity and provide glimpses into how researchers push back against the imposition of narrow categorisations.

In a theoretically sophisticated and reflective article, Vickers and Yelland discursively problematize the role of the researcher in contemporary inquiry and consider their becoming(s) within the intellectual and emotional uncertainties of academe. They suggest that subjectivity is an ongoing inter-textual event where interactions in the world create processes of becoming culturally intelligible.

The final contribution from Weber pulls back from a close focus on subjectivity to an exploration of becoming as a collective enterprise within organisations and social systems. Weber offers the methodology of large group interventions to understand collective change and provides an account of its philosophic roots and how these relate to epistemologies of becoming.

All the articles in this Special Issue are illustrative of an incomplete project of becoming; a process delightfully complicated by context, individual and collective histories, intersubjective dynamics, ideologies and relations of power. The theoretical, methodological and empirical insights offered by these articles are disruptive to common sense notions and dominant desires for simplicity, completion and finality. This may feel uncomfortable. However, we would argue that there is comfort to be found in the realisation that becoming can be thought of as a process without a definitive endpoint, a synergistic confluence of social energies that remains open to new and re-purposed forms of social relations and imaginings.

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The Political Ontology of Cyborgs

Considering Implications of Posthumanism for Education

Rachel Buchanan and Amy Chapman

Purpose

As education continues to expound the virtues of digital technologies much less attention has been paid to the social and political implications of this increasingly digital life. We offer this paper as a starting point for a dialogue around the intersection of digital identity and the political in the context of education as a way to re-think 'Being' and technology in more explicitly political terms.

Design/Methodology/Approach

The argumentation in this paper is developed through a critical examination of constructions of youth identity, education and digital culture. Through a specific focus on the work of Haraway (1991) we begin to develop a space for researching the political dimensions of being Cyborgs, a space necessary if we are to explore the possibilities for radical democratic education in a technologically saturated world.

Findings

Alternate conceptualizations of digital identity are possible which offer ways of understanding and politicizing what happens when we impose computer-generated realities into people's lives. The quest to change the relationship between

Buchanan, Rachel and Chapman, Amy. 2014. The Political Ontology of Cyborgs: Considering Implications of Posthumanism for Education, *Creative Approaches to Research*, vol. 7. no.1, pp. 7-20.

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individuals as political beings and technology has at its foundation recognition of the stake we all have in the technology / politics connection. We offer the position that the cyborg is a worthy starting point for a posthumanist interrogation of education and its current purposes and the imposition of ICT in the lives of young people.

Keywords: education, ICT, being, posthuman, politics, cyborg, subjectivity.

As major institutional arrangements such as education continue to expound the virtues of the digital world much less attention has been paid to the social and political implications of this increasingly digital life. Whilst some expound the digital world as a natural habitat for many, particularly youth, there has been little critical scholarly examination of the consequences of our immersion in the digital world and the implications for identity and agency. Within education, digital technologies are proffered as the way to revolutionize education (Selwyn, 2010). Digital identities have, with little empirical research (Bennett, Maton & Kervin, 2007), been assigned to the youth as a homogenous group - identities such as the “digital natives” which assume that young people are naturally attracted to, and proficient within, the digital world (Prensky, 2001). We seek in this article to problematize the imposition of this identity onto young people and explore other ways in which digital identity can be conceptualized. We offer this article as a starting point for a dialogue around the intersection of digital identity and the political in the context of education. We ponder a counter narrative to the dominant way in which digital identity is understood and presented in educational discourse, and aim to explore new conceptualizations of digital identity which offer ways of understanding and politicizing what happens when we impose computer-generated realities into peoples lives.

Whether we like it or not, computer-generated realities are networked into our everyday lives. From simple financial transactions and communicating via email to participation in social networking sites, writing personal blogs, video posting on YouTube, and the formation of avatars to navigate online or as new identities for virtual worlds such as Second Life, digital communication and on-line participation is now ubiquitous. Such technologies have become commonplace in the field of education and have provided a context for a variety of new paradigms that are renegotiating traditional educational configurations including: hybrid learning, online collaborative models, learning interactions via social media, resource openness and changed resource ownership patterns. However, little effort has been made to explore possibilities of ‘Being’ political in this new technologized educational context. Through a critical examination of constructions of information communication technologies (ICT) as an inevitable imposition, our purpose is to move toward strategies for resistance that enable us the re-think

‘Being’ and technology in more explicitly political terms. Such a possibility, we will argue, represents a space for researching the political dimensions of being Cyborgs, a space necessary if we are to explore the possibilities for radical democratic education in a technologically saturated world. To this end, we examine the research on youth identity, education and digital culture and utilize the work of Haraway (1991) to begin to negotiate the fine line between being technophilic and deterministic, and technophobic and dystopic in regards to the implications of our increasing use of digital technologies. Our intention here is to be speculative and invitational rather than definitive and conclusive in our discussion of politics and being, and the concomitant implications for qualitative research in the digital world.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY + EDUCATION + YOUTH IDENTITY

The dominant discourse regarding educational technologies sees the addition of educational technologies in classrooms to make learning more efficient for students and easier for teachers (Selwyn, 2010) and as a way of preparing students to work in the global knowledge economy (Apple, 2010). With the assumption that technological skills are essential for economic participation digital technologies are now advanced as ‘a core policy requirement’ in the provision of schooling in Australia (Moyle, 2008, p. 1). National education policy, for example, stipulates the embedding of ICT in all curriculum areas on the premise that ICT can ‘improve educational opportunities, boost outcomes and energize the learning experience’ (DEEWR, 2008, p.3). Much of the research into educational technologies consists of small-scale research projects that generally presents the successful outcomes of technological interventions, whether it be adding particular technologies or specific programs into classrooms (Selwyn, 2010). While this approach has been critiqued for reflecting what Selwyn terms “state-of-the-art” rather than “state-of-the-actual”, he attests that there has been little research that transcends what has become the dominant research paradigm in educational technology.

While studies into educational technologies examine the use of various devices, applications or programs, much of the research into the digital identities of young people is premised on the assumption that young people (usually loosely defined as those born after 1980) are natural users of such technologies and various identities such as ‘digital natives’, ‘the *millennials*’, the ‘Net Generation’ have been ascribed to them. The discourse suggesting that young people are ‘naturally’ fluent with digital technologies or are ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001) is so influential that studies have even examined the impact that the digital natives will have on educational institutions (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray, & Krause, 2008; Oliver & Goerke, 2007). However pervasive the idea of the ‘digital native’ is in educational discourse, the claims made about the digital generation do not stand

up to scrutiny (Zimic, 2009), resting as they do on rhetorical rather than empirical evidence (Helsper, 2008). This is not to say that young people are not using digital technology—but the imposition of the digital native (and synonymous) identities that erase the differences between young people’s usage and access to digital technologies proffer the uncritical assumption that a digitally-mediated education will automatically result in better educational outcome for students. Young people’s participation in digital culture needs to be articulated in more nuanced terms in order that the differences between them are not lost with the imposition upon them of a uniform identity.

Work by Boyd (2007), Boyd and Ellison (2007), and Ellison, Stenifield and Lampe (2007) suggests that young people (at least a sample of those with access to the necessary technologies) utilize web 2.0 technologies to facilitate their own processes of identity formation. This identity formation remains firmly grounded in young peoples’ ‘real life’ social connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The use of social network sites (such as Facebook and Instagram) plays a large part in this. Social network sites with their facilitation of ‘public displays of connection’ (Boyd & Ellison, 2007) have been described as serving an important purpose for young people, as the creation of a profile on a social network site can serve as a rite of passage—where one can “type oneself into being” (Sundén, 2003, p.3). Or as Mullan explains, the traditional narratives of identity and agency available to young people “are being complemented by new possibilities that are the direct outcome of their participation in the larger technologically mediated world” (2009, p. 53). While it can be concluded that students do use technology in ways that are identity forming, such research suggests that the identities of those young people who do participate in digital culture are not as simplistic as the digital native identity would suggest. We contend that the understandings of digital identity dominant in the current education paradigm fail to articulate the ways in which digital identity is connected to the wider social body and the ways in which young people’s digital identities and interactions remain grounded in the non-digital. Subscribing the identity of digital natives to young people on the basis that they are increasingly accessing digital technologies works to erase the non-digital aspects of their lives. The challenge therefore is to research into digital identity in a way that captures the friction and fusion, the reconciliation and reapproachment; the often complex, coexistence between the digital and non-digital aspects of people’s lives.

A further area of study around young people’s use of technology looks at the degree to which youth have experienced cyberbullying (Chapman & Buchanan, 2012). The literature examining cyberbullying is often disconnected from the education literature which extols the virtues of digital technology for teaching young people. There is a moral panic about young people’s use of technology in popular media (Schrock & Boyd, 2011) and a disconnect from the education literature which examines cyberbullying from a psychological and legal perspectives

(Tokunaga, 2010) without examining the ways in which such technologies are being pushed upon young people through popular culture, capitalistic marketing and in education (Willis, 2003). Indeed, much of the digital native discourse is around capturing young people's supposed technological skill and harnessing it for educational improvement (See Prensky, 2005/2006; Kukulska-Hulme, & Traxler, 2005). While research into cyberbullying and studies which explore young people's use of digital technologies are useful in illuminating what young people are doing with digital technologies, we argue that such studies fail to capture the political dimension of young people's increased use of digital technologies - an increased usage that they have often had little choice in. The increased ubiquity of digital technologies in education has an inherently political dimension. While couched in educational terms, the goals of increasing the use of digital technologies in schools is an economic goal underpinned by the ideology of human capital theory that infers that in order to be globally competitive we need to have a better educated workforce that is able to use technology efficiently and effectively (Buchanan & Chapman, 2010).

The current conceptualizations around youth identity and digital technologies in education suggest incoherence. On the one hand, young people are being understood as 'digital natives' whose proficiencies with digital technologies are at odds with their educators' discomfit with technology (Bayne & Ross, 2007). On the other hand digital technologies are being put into schools to skill our students with their use so that we can compete in the global economic marketplace (Buchanan & Chapman, 2010). The technological, globalized future that is being envisioned has led to two distinct impacts upon the school system. One reaction is to strive to demonstrate that Australia has an internationally competitive education system through our modern education system, with its one-to-one laptop program, the recent inclusion of 'Bring Your Own Device' programs, and the embedding of ICT in the national curriculum and our results in international standardized tests. Such a reaction is paradoxical in that the goal of doing well in the international testing regime is leading to a narrowing of both the curriculum and pedagogical practice in order to concentrate on basic literacy and numeracy so that our test scores improve; this sits at odds with the freedom, collaboration and creativity that should be engendered by the embedding of ICT in the national curriculum (Buchanan, Holmes, Preston & Shaw, 2012). A competing discourse through which Australia is seeking to demonstrate international competitiveness in the global marketplace is through the 21st century skills movement. In this movement, skills that are valued in the envisioned workforce of the future are being fostered in students. The 21st century skills movement is based upon teaching students to collaborate, create, be innovative, training them in the skills believed to be necessary for participation in the global knowledge economy (Dede, 2010). This movement is suggestive in that it contradicts the digital native discourse

(with its explicit belief that contemporary students already possess these skills) by urging the necessity of explicitly teaching these skills to young people.

Taken together, the 21st century skills movement and the government's agenda of improving Australia's education system through the provision of computers in schools and improved international test results, reflect a vision of the future that rests on utopic assumptions that increased digital immersion is positive—that it is an economic good with benefits in terms of increased communication, sharing and the increased leisure time that supposedly comes with living an increasingly technological life. Such notions fail to capture the complexity of human social life and ignore the social and political effects that the increased use of digital technologies are having on the social body.

THE POLITICAL, EDUCATION AND THE AGE OF INFORMATION

New ICT has brought with it changes to the social world that education has remained silent on. The blinkered view in education that sees technology as a means of improving learning in schools and developing a skilled workforce misses the further possibilities that the current social immersion with digital technologies offers. If, for example, most people have access to cameras embedded in their mobile technology does this offer a space for being 'citizen journalists' (Lasica, 2003), new 'public intellectuals' (Park, 2003) or global opinion leaders? (Delwiche, 2004). What kind of 'being' does education have in mind? And what are the further implications of our digital world in this the "Age of Information"? Beyond the new social roles engendered by these technologies there are deeper questions about the consequences of the increased use of ICT, as Murray and Gibson (2011) suggest,

While technoscientific knowledge has allowed us to communicate and work and live together in ways that were previously unimaginable, the digital age raises new and serious challenges to us as people. In the most obvious sense, new technologies offer more than simply new ways to communicate, to work and to live; they also offer us new ways to exploit, to enslave, and to annihilate the other; crimes that are all too often sanctioned in the pursuit of knowledge, progress, and happiness. (p. 202)

Such a version of the information society, however, should not be recognized as fact or fate, but rather as a territory that is constantly being contested.

In their detailed reading that extends the work of Marshall McLuhan, Murray and Gibson (2011), examine the contributions of the new technologies in the supposed age of information. They begin by suggesting a misreading of McLuhan's concept of the global village. Rather than the current conception of vast

interconnected progress and hope used as a narrative to support a naturalising of technoscientific knowledge, they ask us to contemplate a shadow reading of McLuhan who they claim actually proposes that we engage with the complicated question of what it means to live together in our self created technoscientific village, a place that ‘brings us together in unprecedented ways, forcing us to reevaluate what it means to live together, to share our planet and its precious resources’ (p. 204).

The idea that we are living in a new time—an ‘Information Society’ comprised of ‘Virtual Space’—is a persuasive, if not seductive and sometimes frightening perspective. Envisaging the ‘global virtual community’ as a warm and fuzzy place where we can participate equally and ‘can all be friends’ misses much of the complexity of what may be really at stake. ‘The global village narrative, it is becoming clear, simply will not work for much of the world ...— it is too reductive, too western, too colonial in its conception’ (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000, p. 286). Underpinning such positive conceptions of the online world is a kind of ignorance required to sustain and encourage the creation of capitalist social relations. As Malewski and Jaramillo (2011) make clear,

central to this thesis...are the role of capital and the dominant mode of producing ourselves, our identities, and our relations to the broader society (whether we are talking about social institutions or Mother Earth). Social relations of capitalist society are conditioned by the abject ignorance that maintains social, political and economic hierarchies. (p. 17)

This critique provides us with a thought-provoking point of departure from the often positive and deterministic considerations of ‘Being technological’ in the context of education; and provides the possibilities for a more explicated focus on the politics of information technology, as young people begin to grapple with the questions of what it means to be political beings in this technological world. Drawing on McLuhan again, Murray and Gibson write: ‘...those possessing the most efficient communication technologies tend to use them to anesthetize, dominate, colonize, and control others in order to further their own interests and ends’ (2011, p. 212). Further consideration of the driving forces behind the increased use of technology make it clear that equality is not the point, but rather, as Beck (1997) makes plain;

Technological development in simple modernity is subject, as we know, to the dictate of profitability. Enterprises invest not in order to benefit humanity or to protect it from problematic side-effects, but rather to open up markets and areas of expansion with promise for the future. (p. 117)

Youngs (2007) too, critiques the push for the greater use of use digital technology on the basis that such an imperative, while promising increased equality, really

represents 'yet another set of developments that allow the richer to further embed their advantages at all levels' (p. 72). She maintains that ICT serves to drive, rather than alleviate, global inequality. Despite digital technology being underpinned by such problematic ideology, little attention has been paid in education to the broader implications of this increasingly digital life in our supposed technoscientific village.

Perhaps on some level we comprehend these problematic aspects of technology for there exists a cultural ambivalence regarding young people's use of technology (this ambivalence is exemplified by the moral panic surrounding this issue). This ambivalence and the concomitant cultural emphasis on technological change and digital knowledge is described by Willis, who states:

Youth are always among the first to experience the problems and possibilities of the successive waves of technical and economic modernisation that sweep through capitalist societies. Young people respond in disorganised and chaotic ways, but to the best of their abilities and with relevance to the actual possibilities of their lives as they see, live and embody them. These responses are actually embedded in the flows of cultural modernisation, but to adult eyes they may seem to be mysterious, troubling, and even shocking and antisocial. Schools are one of the principal sites for the dialectical playing out of these apparent disjunctions and contradictions, which misunderstood, underlie some of the most urgent education debates. (Willis, 2003, p. 391).

By revisiting and drawing on Donna Haraway's notion of the 'Cyborg' first articulated more than two decades ago, we offer this posthuman mode of thinking as a way to examine the ways of being techno-political. Research based on such a conceptualization, we suggest, enables an examination of the impact of ICT on the body and identity in order to focus on the possibilities of political agency within contemporary educational culture.

THE CYBORG AS POSTHUMAN BEING

We posit posthumanism in general, and Haraway's notion of the cyborg in particular, as a way to think about the relationship between ICT and bodies. The posthumanist question can be located in such a variety of domains it is almost impossible to account for the distinct, yet overlapping positions on offer. This perspective brings together considerations of biotechnology, science, technology, and Socialist-Feminism. Haraway uses the cyborg as 'not just literary deconstruction, but liminal transformation' (1991, p. 177) to transgress the boundaries of conceptually deep dualisms such as animal and machine, mind and body, organism and biotic component. These ideas can be located in a long history of discursive and semiotic debate about the nature of being, from Heidegger's destruction to

Butler's performativity, with Biesta succinctly summarizing the reasons for moving beyond humanism:

humanism has been challenged for, basically, two reasons. On the one hand, questions have been raised about the possibility of humanism, that is, about the possibility for human beings to define their own essence and origin. Here we can think of the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, both of whom have exposed the impossibility of capturing the essence and origin of the human being. On the other hand, questions have been raised about the desirability of humanism, a line of thinking that has been developed particularly by Martin Heidegger and Levinas. (Biesta, 2009, pp. 358)

The ensuing questions from the abundant postmodernism critiques of human subjectivity raise troubling questions regarding 'the exact status of the subject of education' if it becomes impossible to define the subject whom is being educated (Biesta, 1998, p. 2). One way forward is to reconsider the cyborg. The notion of the cyborg, as Haraway describes it, aims to blur the in-between boundaries between the human and the non-human. Having such a basis moves away from a foundation of Being that establishes the limits of the body as those that are naturally created. 'The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, post-modern collective and personal self' (1991, p. 163)....'rejoicing in the illegitimate fusion of animal and machine' (p. 176). Before we continue to explore the implications of the cyborg identity for today's students we first examine the problems of such a conceptualization.

It may be best not to approach post-humanist ideas naively. The concept of has had a checkered past. Whilst some laud it as it moves beyond the bounded categories of humanistic worldviews, others dismiss it as the musings of eccentric scholars who have lost touch with what it means to be solving the wicked problems of our contemporary existence. For noted scholar, Francis Fukuyama, 'transhumanism', one hybrid form of a materialist post-humanism, represents the 'the world's most dangerous idea' (2004). Fukuyama's purpose in making such an assertion was to bring to our attention new advances in biotechnologies that claim to 'liberate the human race from its biological constraints' (2004). This confrontation with the postmodern 'death of man' and 'hyperreality' are part of the complex world order that young people are now, and into the future, are being asked to negotiate. The juxtaposition of such ideas expose and offer a multitude of approaches, perspectives, tools and concepts with which to problematize the conditions, possibilities and limitations of the posthuman and the posthuman world we inhabit.

This contested nature of the posthuman space lies at the foundation of Haraway's (1991) work. Haraway offers the cyborg as an ontology that explicitly aims to blur the boundaries of the 'deepened dualism of mind and body, animal and

machine, idealism and materialism in the social practices, symbolic formulations, and physical artefacts associated with ‘high technology’ and scientific culture’ (p.154). Haraway locates the emergence of the cyborg in the context of movement from industrial society to information systems, presenting social-relations entangled with science and technology, networks she identifies as ‘informatics of domination’. This points us in the direction of a decidedly political imagery for ‘taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology’ (p. 181). Being techno-political in a cyborg sense involves:

refusing an anti-science metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts. It is not just that science and technology are possible means of great human satisfaction, as well as a matrix of complex dominations. Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. (p. 181)

BUILDING A DEMOCRATIC COUNTER HEGEMONY THROUGH A CRITICAL POSTHUMANISM

Sok Seok Keim (2009), in her examination of Haraway’s notion of the cyborg, makes the case that in the context of Singapore, society is all ready composed of cyborgs. In her distillation of Haraway’s work she claims that ‘to be a cyborg or to be in a cyborg world will mean to be dependent on these new technologies in some way or other in our everyday lives’ (Sok Seok Keim, 2009, p. 12). By this definition, young people in Australia can be considered cyborgs too, being educated in a context that has (or aims to have) digital technologies embedded in all areas of the curriculum and where contemporary students are expected to have access to and make use of such technologies for learning, communicating, collaborating and sharing. Far from being a blanket digital identity imposed upon young people that glosses over inequalities in access and usage, homogenizes differing interests, abilities, values and desires for digital technologies in the service of an already determined technological future, the cyborg conceptually considers the fundamental questions of what it means to be human in a technologically saturated world. It provides the scope for exploring questions such as: what is the potential for agency in the proliferation of the human-machine connection? In this context (in contrast to the digital native trope), ‘there is no brave new world, no new land to conquer: whatever we have, we built ourselves and we can continue to shape ourselves’ (Sandford, 2006, p. na).

The cyborg ontology offers a way of understanding our place in the world. It is an ontology that emerges from the world that we have created, derived not

just from our collective humanity, but from our contemporary dependence upon technology. However, it should be noted that this is a Western, developed world conceptualization and not universally applicable. Cyborg ontology encompasses the multi-faceted dimensions of contemporary modern (Western) society, suggesting an integration of the individual with the collective or social body, the digital and the non-digital aspects of our existence. A part of the world of our own creation encompassing the “man-made” and “natural” aspects and existing in what Haraway (1991) terms “the leaky boundary” between these. This conceptualization breaks down traditional binary understandings of being, the artificial dualisms that have plagued philosophy; man-woman, nature-culture, public-private, individual-social.

With a cyborg ontology being can be thought of as a nuanced individualized assemblage of context-dependent, individual, social, digital, non-digital, natural, and technologized components. In reflecting upon this ontology it becomes clear that young people’s identity creation, with their utilization of digital tools and social networks, while remaining grounded in their “real-life” connections, seems no longer “troubling” and “mysterious” (as Willis, 2003 terms it), but a logical condition of a cyborg existence. While this ontology emerges from Haraway’s (1991) critique of the place of technology in Western thought, this ontology is a space for hope and counter-hegemonic action. She reminds us that what is made, can be re-made, re-designed in ways that stand against the prevailing conditions. “The global and universal are not pre-existing empirical qualities; they are deeply fraught, dangerous and inescapable inventions. [np] The cyborg is a figure for exploring those inventions, whom they serve, how they can be reconfigured” (Haraway, 1991, p. xix).

The changes in education and the concomitant drive for technology reflect changes in capitalist society that have led to ‘the production and use of new literacies and identities that are contradictory’ according to Collin and Apple (2010, p. 55). They argue that these are ‘part of an emerging global biopolitics of capitalism that demand heart and mind. As such, they are clearly associated with relations of exploitation and domination that lead to differentiation and immiseration’ (p. 55). For Collin and Apple spaces for resistance can be found, and the high-digital tools that have been put in the hands of young people can be used for such resistance. They describe, for example a student-led walkout in California in 2006 protesting the treatment of immigrant children; an action organized through utilization of mobile devices and social networking sites. However, can we go beyond the argument espoused by Collin and Apple that digital tools can be used in counter-hegemonic action? Can cyborg ontology offer education a political space for challenging contemporary neo-liberal arrangements? Thus in order to address such concerns we need to explore questions such as, what kind of being is required for the political in this information rich technologically saturated world?

If existing paradigms of political identity are inadequate or misplaced for our ICT rich society, what kind of beings can democracy rest on in the global village? As we build the new collaborative models for learning, play and politics the question we pose is: how can a democratic—even radically democratic—education be achieved with respect to new learning configurations of ICT?

The cyborg conceptualization can be utilized not only to explore such questions but to shed light on the difference in digital identity and the concomitant considerations for equity in regards to young people's use of technology. Given that the cyborg offers a way of understanding identity in an individualized fashion we propose that this conceptualization can be used as the basis of the following further research questions: Given the unequal distribution of resources (both digital and non-digital) what can be done to make the cyborg existence more equitable? As young people have differing degrees of immersion in the digital world, what are the implications for their successful navigation of an education system that is itself increasingly dependent upon digital technologies? How do young people navigate between the digital and non-digital aspects of their lives and education and how do they make sense of their digital footprints—a record of their digital existence that is not ephemeral but exists in perpetuity?

Whilst education may continue to expound the virtues ICT and its simultaneous access to knowledge, such knowledge is not 'synonymous with greater human ethical, social, and political progress' (Murray and Gibson, 2012, p. 203). The quest to change the relationship between individuals as political beings and technology has at its foundation a recognition of the stake we all have in the technology / politics connection. The possibilities for a critical posthumanism in education to address such these concerns are endless. We offer a tentative starting point that posits the position that the cyborg is a worthy starting point for a posthumanist interrogation of education and its current purposes and the imposition of ICT in the lives of young people. This starting point offers a wealth of opportunity for qualitative and philosophical inquiry into the nature of being in the 21st century.

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Excavating Widening Participation Policy in Australian Higher Education

Subject Positions, Representational Effects, Emotion

Erica Southgate and Anna Bennett

Purpose

The massification of higher education is a definitive feature of the last fifty years. Widening participation policy is a recent manifestation of this phenomenon. This article uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to identify two subject positions within Australian WP higher education policy, those of the cap(able) individual and the proper aspirant. The article also traces the feeling-rules associated with these subject positions to ask critical questions about neo-liberal forms of social justice.

Design/Methodology/Approach

A Foucauldian discourse analysis was conducted on a range of policy documents related to higher education during the period 2008-2013. Using Bacchi's (2012) 'what is the problem represented to be?' approach, two subject positions and their attendant feeling-rules were identified.

Findings

The two subject positions, the cap(able) individual and the proper aspirant, represent a quintessential neo-liberal subject who possesses 'natural' ability, hope for social mobility and has a highly individualised and entrepreneurial disposition. As a reinvention of social justice approaches to higher education, WP has wide

emotional and common sense appeal derived from its links to older discourses on meritocracy and the redemptive promise of education and childhood hope. A new neo-liberal appropriation of social justice, WP neglects many critical historical, social and contextual factors related to educational inequity.

Keywords: widening participation, higher education, policy, Foucault, discourse, subjectivity, emotion, aspiration, capability, meritocracy

— “*Policies pose problems to their subjects.*” (Ball, 1993, p. 12)

— “*What are the modes of existence in this discourse?...What placements are determined for possible subjects? Who can fulfil these diverse functions of the subject?*” (Foucault, 1977, p. 138)

WHY DIG?

The massification of higher education (HE) has been linked to a post-1970s shift towards knowledge economies and neo-liberal forms of governmentality (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Rizvi & Lingard, 2006; Teichler, 1998). A recent type of massification policy is the widening participation (WP) agenda. WP policy has sought to increase access and participation for groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in HE. The target of WP is “non-traditional students” (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002). The category of non-traditional student encompasses diverse groups of people including: those from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds; certain ethnic and cultural groups; people with a disability; those living in rural and remote locations; mature age students; and those who are the first in their family to attend university.

The HE policies of the British New Labour government (1997-2010) have received significant scholarly attention (Ball, Davies, David, & Reay, 2002; Burke, 2012; Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009, 2010). The HE priorities of New Labour were widening (or fair) access aimed at increasing the participation of non-traditional students at elite universities and widening participation (WP) aimed at increasing the overall involvement of these students in university study (Hoare & Mann, 2011). While Australia has a history of social justice initiatives in HE (Gale & Tranter, 2011), the WP agenda was adopted by the *Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008), commissioned by the then Labor government

(2008-2013). The *Bradley Review* set the following targets: By 2020, 20% of all undergraduate students would come from low SES backgrounds and 40% of all 25-35-year olds would hold a Bachelor's degree. The 20/40 target was to be met through uncapping undergraduate places and by providing significant funding through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), an initiative designed to “undertake activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low SES backgrounds, as well as improving the retention and completion rates of those students” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). The UK and Australian WP agendas reflected a fusion of social democratic and human capital ideologies that produced a neo-liberal version of social justice (Sellar & Gale, 2012).

In both British and Australian contexts, the outcomes of WP policy have been uneven. There have been differential levels of access and participation by the type of institution (first tier/elite versus other) and degree (prestigious degrees such as medicine versus lower status/social mobility degrees such as nursing or teaching). In the UK, WP did have a significant impact but it seems to have benefitted the middle class more than the working class, with participation rates masking considerable variation in social class participation between elite and second tier universities (Lunt, 2008). In Australia, there has been a rise in the proportion of students from low SES backgrounds accessing university, however it is likely that most growth has occurred in second tier universities not elite ones and, in all probability, in ‘social mobility’ degrees such as liberal arts, education and nursing (closer examination of Australian statistics is required on these issues). As Gale (2012) points out:

For equity to have real teeth, proportional representation also needs to apply across institutions and course types. Short of this, it will be difficult to argue that the (Australian) policy, or at least its equity intent, has been successful. (p. 246)

In both the UK and Australia, WP policies have sparked public debate about the ‘quality’ versus the ‘quantity’ of undergraduate students, a debate that deflects attention away from the underlying cultural, social and economic determinants of post-school career and education options (see Gorard et al., 2007).

Australian WP policies have attracted some scholarly attention (for example Gale, 2011a; Sellar & Gale, 2011, 2012; Sellar & Storan, 2013), but not to the same extent as its UK counterpart. This article contributes to critical studies on WP by examining Australian WP policy since the *Bradley Review*, as both a discursive field (Ball, 1993) and an emotional arena (Fineman, 2000). While the metaphor of excavation has been applied to policy analysis (Fletcher, 1995; Jones & Ward, 2002), we utilise it in the same way as a Foucauldian “stone-cutting” approach to discourse (Foucault, 1979, p. 139). This involves an empirical uncovering of

subject positions, attendant emotions and governmental forms of power relations within the field (Southgate, 2003a, 2003b). Our excavation is in the tradition of Foucauldian critique where common sense assumptions are questioned, rather than simply accepted as straightforward, reasonable and true:

A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on just what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established and unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based... To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy. (Foucault, 1983, p. 172)

Despite the often palpable feelings that “stick” (Ahmed, 2004) to the subject positions within the field, there are few explicit excavations of HE policy as an emotional arena (Brown, 2011; Hey & Leathwood, 2009; Sellar & Storan, 2013; Webb & Gulson, 2012). The contribution of our analysis is in its focus on identifying the subject positions of higher education policy, the effects of their representation, and their accompanying feeling-rules; a type of analysis that is relatively unique given the propensity to gloss over the significant connections between subjectivity, representation and emotion in higher education policy research (Hey & Leathwood, 2009; Leathwood & Hey, 2009). We focus on how these subject positions, their representational effects and feeling-rules congeal with broader neo-liberal ideologies. The intent of our excavation is to unsettle common sense approaches to neo-liberal inflected social justice, which we argue constitute a form of Foucauldian governmentality.

DIGGING TOOLS

Two of the most prominent Foucauldian-informed policy analysts are Carol Bacchi (1999, 2000, 2009) and Stephen Ball (1990, 1993, 1997). Both scholars offered the current analysis a range of theoretical tools for excavating policy. Ball (1993), for example, views policies as “textual interventions into practice” and as discursive “ensembles...(that) exercise power through a *production* of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’” (p.12-14). Referring to Foucault’s conception of discourse as something that is not just descriptive of objects and subjects but constitutive of them, Ball (1990) contends that:

Discourses are, therefore, about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations...Discourses construct certain possibilities for thought...We do not (just) speak discourse. The discourse speaks us. (pp. 17-18)

It could be argued that policy discourses attempt to speak certain types of subjects into being. The constitutive processes of discourses are not however inevitable nor are subjects subservient to them (Foucault, 1990). Ball (1990) argues that it is best to understand education policy within a moving discursive frame in which interpretations, action, possibilities and probabilities are established, struggled over and sometimes elided. Expanding on Ball's discursive policy framework, Gale (1999) suggests that ideology should be added to the theoretical toolbox so that the influence of dominant political discourses can be adequately accounted for.

Bacchi (1999, 2000, 2012) is interested in the way policy 'problems' are framed or represented, and the social and political implications of this. Bacchi (2009) shifts the focus from policy solving to policy questioning by providing the analytic tool – 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' – or the WPR approach. The WPR approach poses six questions:

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced? (Bacchi, 2012, p. 21)

Policy texts—their development, implementation, pronouncement, interpretation and analysis—are "co(i)mplicated" with emotion (Horton & Kraftl, 2009, p. 2984). Policy 'problems' resonate with feeling, from turbulent reactions to moral panics, to more subtle moods leaking imperceptibly from the dry documents of government. To adapt a phrase from Fineman (2000), policy is an emotional arena. Feeling-rules (Fineman, 2003; Lupton, 1998) reverberate through policy, and these rules influence public sentiment and private moods. Individuals may have private reactions to policy, but policy also evokes an emotional materiality that is sensed, shared, contested and endured in the social

realm (Southgate, 2003a; Webb & Gulson, 2012). While affective responses in political and social spaces cannot be guaranteed (as if they are marketing devices which invoke measureable and assured policy-induced responses and commitments), they are not random processes either (Thrift, 2004).

Drawing on the influential work of Nikolas Rose, Ball (1997, p. 261) points out that forms of governance through policy do not simply constrain or repress people; rather, they express a mode of existence that inscribes techniques of self-scrutiny and self-regulation. We would add that policies also articulate modes of *emotional existence*. Feeling-rules are techniques of the self that are inherent in neo-liberal ideologies where each person is considered to be their own entrepreneur responsible for the cultivation of their personal human capital (Connell, 2013; Davies & Bansel, 2007). Feeling-rules are an important part of governmentality, and more specifically, neo-liberal forms of governmentality. Governmentality involves:

[M]odes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that [are] destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. (Foucault, 1994, p. 341)

In this article we deploy Bacchi's (2012) questions relating to representational effects, to aspects of WP policy in Australia. We excavate two subject positions that are evident in the discursive field: the cap(able) individual, and the proper aspirant. We trace how these two subject positions, with their attendant feeling-rules, may structure the possible field of action for those who are the target population of the policy—non-traditional students, particularly those who are from low SES backgrounds, and equity practitioners in university, school and community settings. In line with Bacchi's (2012), we ask questions about how subject positions are implicated in representations of the bigger WP 'problem' in HE, what assumptions underpin these representations, and what silences and effects are produced by them. In proposing this critique, we hope to make it less easy for neo-liberal versions of social justice to operate unchecked in HE.

WHERE TO DIG?

The discursive field of WP is expansive. It has globalised and localised manifestations. It consists of stock scripts and resistant voices, official government and institutional texts and more marginal discourses emanating from numerous sites. For the purposes of this article we have focused on WP policy in the Australia (2008-2013) as represented in the following texts:

- *Review of Australian Higher Education, Final Report. (The Bradley Review)* (Bradley, et al., 2008);

- The Australian Government's *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009);
- Two Labor government media releases (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, 2011) and one speech (Gillard, 2009);
- The Australian Government *Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program* (HEPPP) website, <http://myuniversity.gov.au/http://www.innovation.gov.au/highereducation/Equity/HigherEducationParticipationAndPartnershipsProgram/Pages/default.aspx>;
- The Australian Government *My University* website, <http://myuniversity.gov.au/>
- The Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program website (<http://www.innovation.gov.au/highereducation/Equity/HigherEducationParticipationAndPartnershipsProgram/Pages/default.aspx>);
- Two Liberal Party speeches (Abbott, 2013; Pyne, 2011) and the Liberal Party (2013) *Education Plan*;
- *Towards a Performance Measurement Framework for Equity in Higher Education* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013);
- Two documents from the peak university body, Universities Australia (Universities Australia, 2013a, 2013b).

The above documents constitute pronouncements on WP in Australian HE policy during the period the Australian Labor Party held government (2008-2013). Following Brown (2011) we have applied an iterative process of axial coding to identify the major subject positions, always guided by the questions of the WPR approach (Bacchi, 2012). We acknowledge the limitations of concentrating on only these types of texts as they do not adequately reflect the range of (lived) subjectivities shaped through HE (Brown, 2011; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Reay, et al., 2009, 2010). Furthermore, we have not entirely enacted Ball's (1997) trajectory perspective where attention is paid to how "policies evolve, change and decay through time and space and their incoherence" (p.266). Rather, we do discuss a recent shift (since mid-2013) in HE discourse from that of the "quantity" to the "quality" of undergraduate student.

THE EXCAVATION

Subject position 1—The cap(able) individual

The *Bradley Review* offered an important opportunity to address inequity within Australian HE. It promised to focus on “providing opportunities for all capable people to participate to their full potential” (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 10). In the introduction to its “vision” it argues:

Australia needs to harness the *potential of all capable* students to contribute to society and the economy. Actively encouraging and facilitating entry into higher education for people from groups who are currently under-represented is vital [italics added]. (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 10)

In this context, the ‘problem’ is framed as a lack of participation of people from under-represented groups. The solution is to “provide opportunities for all capable students to participate”. Government largely accepted the frame presented by Bradley, both in terms of the detail about the problem and the solution. The Labor Government’s *Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), explains:

The Government embraces in large measure the Bradley Review’s vision for our universities. Australian higher education should...provide opportunities for all *capable* people from all backgrounds to participate to their full potential... The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that Australians of all backgrounds who have the *ability* to study at university get the opportunity to do so [italics added]. (pp. 7-12)

The WP problem then is that *cap(able) people from all backgrounds do not participate* in HE, and the policy solution is to *provide opportunities for all cap(able) people who have ability* to participate.¹ Thus, on close inspection, despite appearing to be based on the principle of “facilitating entry into higher education for people from groups who are currently under-represented” (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 10), the problem and the solution instead come to contradict an opportunity for all discourse. The cap(ability) discourse of WP policy is very specific about who is targeted to participate in HE and, by implication, who is not. Despite some allusions to this particular *capability framing*, this aspect has received limited attention in scholarly work on WP policy (Burke, 2012; Gale, 2011b; Leach, 2013; Watts & Bridges, 2006). In the following discussion we outline how the discourse on “capability” produces six representational effects which problematize the social justice aspects of WP.

1 We bracket ‘able’ and ‘ability’ in the words cap(able) and cap(ability) to visually denote how the idea of capability contains older notions of ability within it.

The first effect relates to the absence of in-depth discussion about what “capability” is. This absence reinforces the notion that people simply possess capability or not, without addressing various social and structural forms of advantage and disadvantage which determine cap(abilities), and define what it is to be cap(able) in the first place. Although predicated with an emotive tone of inclusion for all and a “triggering of hope” for both low SES students and educators invested in making a difference for disadvantaged peoples (Sellar and Storan, 2013), as an approach, WP continues to exclude because the *imagined student already possesses* cap(ability). The message that only cap(able) people can learn in HE is never explained. As such, cap(ability) is left as a floating signifier; the idea is presented as if it were straightforward, when the concept it describes is not. The idea of cap(ability) floats around in policy buoyed by a deep sea of contingent meanings and associations. Even though it appears to be about social justice, the subject position of the cap(able) low SES individual situates them *regardless of (or despite) their social and personal backgrounds* (Leach, 2013).

Buried in footnote 3 of the Bradley review is the only elaboration on the idea of capability. Included as additional information to a point about how HE will produce graduates with knowledge, skills and understandings, the report states:

[A] core function of contemporary higher education was identified as ‘Developing high level knowledge and skills’. There is general agreement that there *is a third component of educated performance which involves a broader element* variously described as understandings, *capability* or attributes. This element permits the individual to think flexibly or act *intelligently* in situations which may not previously have been experienced. Often, value positions, including a commitment to lifelong learning or to responsible citizenship, or the insights derived from practical experience are seen to be components of this [italics added]. (Bradley, et al., 2008, p. 6)

Mention of the structural, socio-cultural and learning environments which influence these kinds of dispositions, performances and values are entirely lacking in WP policy documents, and explanations of the developmental and socialisation processes both within and before the individual enters HE are not apparent, except in some governmental reports of school education (Gonski et al., 2011; cf. Kenway, 2013). This absence leaves the aim to engaging with under-represented groups open to oversimplification and neglect.

A second effect of the cap(able) subject discourse—and one that is largely unacknowledged—is the connection between the notion of cap(ability) and older discourses of ability which are based on biological essentialism. Ideas of cap(ability) link back to older understandings of ‘natural ability’ or ‘biology as destiny’. This is an analepsis, or a flashback to older discourses, which is surprising given established bodies of work which have challenged the logics of biologi-

cal essentialism. This analepsis highlights the deeply individualistic nature of the policy narrative.

Operating under the surface of the equal opportunity rhetoric is a common sense, essentialist understanding of ability and intelligence (Hamilton, 2010). Hay and Macdonald (Hay & Macdonald, 2010) argue that biologism dominates ideas about ability within education:

Much of contemporary, popular thought regarding ability appears to be informed unknowingly, or otherwise, by the ‘positive eugenic’ perspective in the sense that ability is understood to be primarily innate and stable...Although current understandings of ability have progressed from the sexist, racist and classed beliefs of the original eugenicists and to a lesser extent the positive eugenicists, the belief in the centrality of genetics to ability has prevailed...Ability has been understood within these paradigms as a largely inherited capacity of an individual... (p.2)

Thus, cap(ability) is linked with older discourses about ability, potential and talent as if it were entirely spontaneously-occurring, natural and innate to individuals. This is a simplistic and limiting discourse which obscures how intellectual abilities are developmental and a result of complex synergies between biology and environment. In addition biological reductionism obscures the way that intellectual ability is defined by socio-historical and cultural processes.

In terms of modern schooling, Rätty and Kasanen (2013) argue that the ideology of “natural giftedness” acts as a “pivotal organizing principle of the social representations of educability and intelligence” (p.1112). As such, views of natural ability continue to have powerful and multiple effects on conceptions of self and identity (Rätty & Kasanen, 2013). The framing of cap(ability) in WP policy can act to perpetuate the myth that social and educational systems are neutral, and (re)inscribe individuals with blame for their lack of innate ability. A socially just version of WP should recognise the social production of cap(ability) beyond the ideology of natural giftedness.

Because it does not adequately address what cap(ability) is, WP policy produces a third effect—it links back into and reinforces older meritocratic discourses about who deserves to go to university. In her analysis of policy developments related to WP in New Zealand, England and Australia, Leach (2013) suggests that the WP agenda about capable people is a merit-oriented approach to higher education, based on personal attributes rather than equality of outcome or social justice. Cap(ability) certainly assumes participation is premised on an individual demonstrating (past) success in gaining required skills and knowledge. Although the scope for inclusion is widened in terms of university entry, the system still operates by affording entry to individuals who have demonstrated merit in advance (*before entry*). This meritocratic frame represents an important limitation

for the scope of WP because it is really dependent on pre-entry performance, and its measure of success is essentially located at graduation. Success in HE is of course not just dependent upon the innate cap(ability) of students who show merit. Success is also reliant upon the actions of institutions and educators, and is determined to a reasonable extent on resourcing. The complexity of what determines success in HE is rarely discussed in policy documents. Within the discourse on cap(ability) there is no mention of what happens between entry and graduation in HE—there is only pre-existing cap(ability) based on merit and assumed success. As a result, a “policy apparition” (Webb & Gulson, 2012, p. 89) or powerful hermeneutic gap operates which reduces HE to an ethereal space where the very concept of *education* itself becomes absent.

The logic of WP connects strongly with the older meritocratic notions of success that locate responsibility for engaging (and not being “able” to engage) in HE *with the individual*. By applying Bacchi’s (2012) “what’s the problem represented to be” approach we can see how students are positioned as either possessing or lacking capability even before they enter HE. The policy problem is the under-represented but the solution is merely a new layering of an older meritocratic discourse of an imagined ‘ideal’ student who usually just happens to come from a low SES background.

Implicated in this requirement for cap(ability) is a fourth effect where the aim is to “harness people’s potential”, rationalised as utilitarianism (for the wider social and economic good). This representational effect seems inherently inclusive; however, within this human capital approach to WP, the good of all and each is ultimately posed as the *responsibility of the individual* to participate in HE, to gain desirable employment and to work to secure the competitive economic standing of the nation within a global context. Because cap(ability) is couched in a *form of utilitarianism* that is infused by a neoliberal appeal to economic gain and individual upward mobility, the theme of inclusivity becomes problematic and disconnected from its precursory *opportunity for all* message. The logic of human capital was the central feature of the UK *Dearing Report* (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997), the precursor to the *Bradley Review*. In point 8 of the Foreword to the *Dearing Report*, the logic of the neoliberal human capital is described as a rationale for WP: “it is now widely recognised that economic prosperity relies on the presence within the labour market of large numbers of individuals with higher level capabilities”.

Both the *Dearing Report* and *Bradley Review* position WP as an economic capacity-building project to be achieved through an appeal to the consumer desire for individual economic gain and social mobility (Sellar & Storan, 2013; Burke, 2012). HE institutions and the nation are considered to hold the ‘capacity’ for generating wealth and prosperity. Capacity is represented as something possessed by individuals who have completed HE. Capacity is considered an ability to ac-

quire the skill and knowledge for individual and national economic gain (capital). The market discourse of human capital is a form of utilitarianism that can preclude consideration of other choices, possibilities and outcomes different from economic ones (Bennett et al, 2012; Slack, 2003).

The fifth representational effect is that the cap(able) subject position implicitly relies on the idea of an abject Other—the *incapable individual*. Because some people are represented as having the cap(ability) to study at university, and because discussion of social context, developmental experiences (and the role of education itself) is absent, it is implied that incapable individuals have innate deficits. According to the equally elusive categorisation of the implied incapable individual, this is a person who does not possess the potential to “act intelligently”, provide “commitment” and contribute “insights” (Bradley et al, 2008, p.6).

Policy apparitions or interpretive gaps and ‘sensed signs’ operate in WP policy (Sellar & Storan, 2013; Webb & Gulson, 2012). Webb and Gulson (2012) argue, “subjects make sense of, or represent, the indeterminacies and contradictions of policy—subjects fill in these spaces affectively” with multiple interpretations and feelings of hope, denial, self-doubt, and inadequacy (p. 92). One important “policy-sensing” of WP policy is fear of incompetence or of not being capable (Webb & Gulson, 2012). The “sensed-sign” of the incapable individual produces a whole host of interpretations for students and educators who register and endow the *absence* of what cap(ability) means with a significant *presence*. Within WP policy educ-able-ness is posed against an absent, abject Other who *lacks* the higher educ-able-ness.

The limited definitional category of cap(ability) restrains the very students WP seeks to engage and potentially limits the social justice work of equity practitioners and university educators. For example, students may worry: ‘what if I don’t have the ability?’ Likewise, some teachers comment: ‘some students just don’t have ability’, without due recognition that ability is a construct enabled by complex processes of relational development within socio-historical contexts. This points to a sixth policy-effect where the discourse of cap(ability) is caught up in a complex paradox created between inclusivity (opportunity for all) and exclusivity (only the (cap[able])).

When students assume that cap(ability) is fixed, they come to have a lowered opinion of their ability, feel helpless and withdraw (at the very least emotionally) from believing they can achieve (Hay & Macdonald, 2010). This limits our understanding of student potential, of learning as relational and developmental, and of the importance of teaching in education. The emotion so central to learning and teaching (the joy of discovery, the thrill of mastery, the crushing disappointments, the frustration, the fear, the self-doubt, anger and pleasure) are also left unacknowledged when the relational context is erased. It is critical to recognise that the construction of cap(ability) is dependent “upon the interests and objectives of those observing

or judging the abilities of others” (Hay & Macdonald, 2010, p. 1). Both the “*politics of recognition*” as the socio-cultural frame that attributes value to certain ways of being and doing (Appadurai, 2004), and the “*processes of recognition*”—the particular values, desires and assumptions about truth and validity informing the decisions of student ability for teachers—are powerful forces in the dynamic construction of cap(ability). Contrary to the dominant discourse which focuses on the individual agent, it is important to emphasise that cap(ability) is relational and structural. It is formed and enacted within specific normative frames and contexts, “depending on the opportunities and resources available to different groups” (Sellar, Gale, & Parker, 2009). In response to the need to reconceptualise WP, Sellar and Gale (2011) argue that this kind of rethinking equity is actually “about rethinking higher education itself” (p. 130).

What all of these effects illustrate is that the problem with WP policy has been its focus on attracting *capable people’s capacity to function*, as distinct from *developing people’s capabilities to function* (Sen, 1985, 2004). Within the dominant discourse on capability, learning as a powerful process of ‘becoming’ in *relation* to existing domains of knowledge and power is denied. Deconstructing the idea of cap(ability) that is woven through the seductive rhetoric of WP offers the possibility for challenging rigid, essentialist notions of who is cap(able) and why they are cap(able). The logic of capability—encompassing ‘ability’, ‘potential’ and ‘talent’—needs to be radically reconsidered and rearticulated in a form of WP policy that recognises the relational and processual dynamic of the construct rather than as a fixed, innate attribute of a gifted individual.

Subject position 2—The proper aspirant

Like the idea of capability, ‘aspiration’ has not been subject to rigorous definition in Australian WP policy. The focus on ‘raising aspirations’ was a “policy borrowing” (Halpin & Troyna, 1995) from the WP agenda of the UK New Labour (1997-2010) government, particularly that of the *Aimhigher* initiative, as Burke (2012), explains:

The discourse of ‘raising aspirations’ took central stage as the Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge initiative was introduced in September 2001. This initiative set out the Government’s aim to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who had the qualifications and potential necessary to enter higher education...but might have ‘lacked aspiration’. (p. 20)

The figure of the low SES person, with their distinct lack of the ‘proper’ aspiration, inhabits the policy texts of the Australian Labor Government. For example, the *Bradley Review* (Bradley, et al. 2008, p. 27) states that: “Barriers to access for such students include their previous educational attainment, no awareness of the long-term benefits of higher education and, thus, no aspiration

to participate.” The Labor Government’s major policy document, *Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 14), makes clear its “intention is to create leading practice and competitive pressures to increase the aspirations of low SES students to higher education.” By removing the government controlled limits (caps) on funded university places, the Labor government signalled its intention not only to raise aspiration but to meet demand, as this excerpt from a press release from Senator Chris Evans, (former Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations), suggests:

“We are determined that all Australians—regardless of their background or where they live—should have the opportunity to gain a university education,” Senator Evans said. “A university education is a ticket to greater career choice and to high skilled and high paid jobs. These are aspirations that thousands more Australians are now able to realise.” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

There has been spirited critical engagement with the idea of raising the aspirations of non-traditional students both in the UK (for example, Ball, et al., 2002; Burke, 2012; Slack, 2003) and Australian contexts (Gale, 2011a, 2011b; Sellar & Gale, 2012; Sellar, et al., 2009). Research suggests that many students from these backgrounds already have a ‘high’ aspiration for university study or an occupation requiring a degree (Bowden & Doughney, 2010; Prosser, McCallum, Milroy, Comber, & Nixon, 2008). Some commentators suggest that the idea of raising aspirations is based on a normative hierarchy that privileges university over vocational education, and middle class ideals over working class ones, thus feeding into existing deficit discourses about the working class (Ball, et al., 2002; Burke, 2012; Reay, 2001; Slack, 2003). In a comprehensive literature review, Gorard et al. (2007) found no compelling evidence that raising aspiration makes any difference to patterns of participation in HE. Indeed, in the Australian context, Sellar and Gale (2012) observe that the policy focus on aspiration is:

a ‘hinge’ concept that enables acknowledgment of social democratic imperatives while promoting neoliberal market logics as an appropriate means for responding to them... Those that are not aspirational in the (higher education) context are assumed to lack awareness about, and the desire to access, university. However, closer analysis of the discourse of aspiration in (higher education) policy suggests a relationship between the ‘problem’ of ‘students’ and ‘families’ ‘low aspirations’ and the economic aspirations of the nation. (pp. 96-98)

The focus on creating ‘proper’ university aspirants from low SES and other non-traditional groups has five interrelated, and we would argue, troubling effects which we will outline in this section of the article. Firstly, to aspire, be it at individual, institutional or national level, is not just an act of rational intention (cf. Gorard & See, 2013). Reducing aspirations to calculated choices diminishes

the feeling-rules that permeate governmental power relations, including how some subject positions are legitimised over others. If the policy problem is represented as people from low SES backgrounds not *feeling* the need to go to university then the solution is to target these people with a range of programs designed to massage their future-oriented desires (Sellar, et al., 2009). Working class subjectivity is positioned as ‘unknowing’ in terms of factual knowledge about the benefits of HE and ignorant of lost (economic) potential. The ignorance of the working class is contrasted with an idealised middle class subject who knowingly cultivates educational opportunities to achieve future social and economic potential (Reay, 2001). It could be argued that this binary opposition between those that aspire correctly (the middle class) and the unknowing (working class) represents a “grotesquely prodigious effort” at ignorance (Spelman, 2007, p. 120) by policy-makers and practitioners who prefer to devalue the range of aspirations held by the target populations of the WP policy.

The risks of emphasising deficit extend to the second troubling effect. The idea of raising aspiration can ‘muscle out’ a range of legitimate affective responses to HE like scepticism, indifference, ambivalence. Some commentators suggest that ambivalence is a genuine response by the working class towards HE (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Reay, 2001). Feelings of ambivalence are certainly apparent in the work of feminist academics from working class background (Hey & Leathwood, 2009; Skeggs, 1997; Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). Archer and colleagues (2010) point out that young people facing disadvantage have complex, multiply-held, sometimes messy aspirations towards the future (and HE) and that these can change over time. Ball et al. (2002) discuss the risks for the working classes in making choices about university:

The risks and reflexivity of the middle classes are about staying as they are and who they are. Those of the working classes are about being different people in different places, about who they might become and what they must give up... HE access and choice is a key arena of social reproduction struggles, but these struggles cannot be reduced to the emotionless and acultural deployment of ‘rational action’—wherein education is viewed simply as an investment in good. Non-choice, and aversion, and the non-rational and culturalist bases of choice are also important here; perhaps particularly for those students from families who have no previous experience of HE. (p. 69)

Feeling ambivalent is very different from feeling ignorant or apathetic or hopeless or lacking ambition. However, there is little room for ambivalence or messiness in the subject position of the proper aspirant of WP policy. The proper aspirant must display an ability to rationally calculate pathways to and through HE (and their subsequent career) for maximum benefit. The subject position of the ‘proper’ aspirant is an excellent neoliberal governmental technology—it dis-

penses with ambivalence and mess and the constraints of social structure and risk to dictate a mode of tidy, purposeful, rational, unrestricted conduct that is deemed beneficial to both the individual and nation state.

The third troubling effect of the proper aspirant position involves an institutional dynamic. The drive to create proper aspirants is often framed in unilateral terms, that is, as a policy action to be undertaken across the higher education sector. This totalising drive precludes serious engagement with the gross divide that exists between elite universities (older, league-table ascendant) and equity institutions (younger, lower-on-the-league-table) (Gale, 2011c; Leathwood, 2004). The unilateral framing of WP action erases the long and often impressive histories that equity universities have in engaging with non-traditional students and their communities. The totalising effect of WP discourse papers over the equally important equity divide between prestigious disciplines (medicine for example) that have very low numbers of non-traditional students and 'social mobility' undergraduate degrees (like teaching and nursing) which have the historically had the highest concentration of these students (Gale, 2011c). While the *Bradley Review* (Bradley, et.al., 2008) canvassed these points, representing WP as a solution to a problem common across the HE sector ignores the often excellent equity practices of second-tier institutions and erases a long history of exclusionary practice by elite universities and disciplines (Sellar & Storan, 2013).

Until histories of elitism are opened up for critical examination by those with an interest in higher education, the hoary discourse of 'quality' versus 'quantity' of students in universities will continue to raise its very ugly head. A common response to WP policy is that increasing the quantity of certain students through WP reduces the quality of university education (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler, & Bereded-Samuel, 2010). During the time it has taken to write this article, the Australian Labor Party had shifted its discourse from that of WP (represented as the 'quantity' of students) to being concerned with the 'quality' of undergraduate entrants. Furthermore, a number of elite universities have come out staking a claim on the 'quality' rather than 'quantity' divide. The election policy of the conservative Coalition government made no mention of equity or social justice in higher education (Liberal Party, 2013). In a short period of time, following the ousting of Prime Minister Gillard by her own party and the subsequent 2013 election won by the Coalition government, the problem has shifted from equity in higher education for social democratic and economic reasons to that of concern about the 'quality' of undergraduate students (Gale, 2011c; Leathwood, 2004). It is troubling that as non-traditional students aspire to and enter higher education they are often being positioned on the 'quantity' side of the political debate. Deficits in 'quality' have historically been applied to the working classes and other marginalised people (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Skeggs, 1997). Lawler (2005) notes that these deficits are linked to social narratives of decline,

and that these are “curiously ahistorical’ in nature (p. 436). The shift back to discourses of ‘quantity’ serves to position non-traditional students as the abject Other of ‘quality’ higher education.

The fourth effect, and one of the trickier things about the raising aspirations discourse, is that it situates itself within the emotional appeal of older social justice frameworks. Hey and Leathwood (2009) point out that “having aligned with a wider discursive appeal about promoting educational inclusion, participation and achievement, is a difficult ideological assemblage to be ‘against’” (p.104). The appeal of raising aspirations is powerful because of its emotional nexus to social justice. Education has long held a redemptive promise by severing the link between social origin and destination (Dale, 2007; Popkewitz, 1997). McWilliam and Lee (2006) argue that the problem with this redemptive promise is not in its desire for a better social order, but in the “seductiveness and elusiveness of that hope” (p.46). When such appealing but elusive hopes are not realised, because of the intense complexity of the problem, blame begins to be directed at those who are deemed the ‘target’ of the policy. Blame is rarely apportioned to those who formulate the policy problem and solutions in the first place (for an example of this see Connell, 2009).

The fifth and final effect that requires critical attention is the way the subject position of the proper aspirant acts as a repository for a neo-liberal construction of hope. Rose (1989) argues that governments have increasingly sought to manage their citizenry by focusing on the subjective and personal capacities of individuals. This is an example of governmentality in action where populations are managed through an emphasis on the individual self-realisation and self-enhancement (Ecclestone, 2007). Individuals “become, as it were, entrepreneurs of themselves, shaping their own lives through the choices they make among the forms of life available to them” (Rose, 1989, p. 230). The focus on aspiration in WP policy reflects a form of governmentality whereby, with a little help from universities, schools and ‘informed’ parents, certain people with pre-existing capabilities can transform themselves into proper aspirants and (so the narrative goes) improve their lot in life. University-led aspiration-raising activities funded through the UK *Aimhigher* and Australian *Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program* are based on this neoliberal logic. The affective, cognitive and habitual dispositions of people from low SES backgrounds are targets of psychological intervention based on this particular formulation of hope. This marks a shift in policy as outward-looking, societal-based intervention to an interiority approach that largely ‘psychologises’ the problem at hand (Binkley, 2011; Raco, 2009).

The focus on moulding the interior hopes and dreams of individual subjects, particularly young people, coincides with a contemporary notion of childhood-hope, as Kraftl (2008) explains:

[It] is not hard to see how preadulthood could become an enormous, permanent repository for hope. In our children we see (or imagine we see) the future. Children have the chance to make the world anew...[W]e can fill them and the very idea of childhood with our hopes and dreams. The seemingly logical alignment of childhood with futurity has engendered an affective *logic* of hope that operates on an almost *global* scale, and is evident in global policy making...(original emphasis). (pp. 82-83)

The logic of ‘raising’ a person’s aspirations so that they can self-actualise into something ‘better’ is part of the universal affective longing for childhood as an emancipatory force (and one that also has the same redemptive promise as education). Aspiration is a neo-liberal form of hope. People from particular backgrounds are required to invest in an affective orientation towards the future that is self-reliant, competitive and entrepreneurial: they must propel their own social mobility for the good of themselves, their families and nation. Despite the facade of freedom, neoliberal forms of hope and their attendant strategies of self-realisation, are underpinned by very particular, circumscribed subjectivities and trajectories (Reay, 2008; Walkerdine, 2003). Subjects are governed through an obligation to be free (Rose, 1989). This type of freedom with its particular form of hope may not resonate with many young people or their families and can even do them damage, as Brown (2011) explains:

Just as aspirations are an affective orientation to the future, work to *raise* young people’s aspirations also works on an affective level. There is undoubtedly emotional risk involved in such work, and a danger that unless WP initiatives attend to the broader emotional geographies of the young people they engage with, they could be setting them up either to failure or to alienation from the people and places that provide them with emotional security. WP practitioners need to reflect more on how they enrol emotions in their work and think more holistically about the emotional impacts and consequences of their interventions. (p. 20)

As the five effects outlined above demonstrate, the WP agenda can be problematic for all those enmeshed within it. It promises hope, freedom and a better life, and redemption from ‘deficit’. This is true for both its target population of potential undergraduate students, and for equity practitioners whose work is framed by the agenda. There are re-interpretations, resistances and re-imaginings of aspiration in WP policy and there are struggles to enact social justice in higher education that do not operate entirely as neoliberal techniques of governmentality. Documenting these lived counterpoints to WP are important. However, it is equally important, as Bacchi (2009) suggests to hold policy to account; to understand how the WP agenda frames the problem and mandates solutions and what assumptions and troubling dynamics underpin these.

EXCAVATION OVER (FOR NOW)

WP policy is premised on a quintessentially neo-liberal subject. The attributes of this subject are very specific. They must possess an innate intellectual cap(ability) and demonstrated longing for social mobility through HE. Both cap(ability) and aspiration are to be harnessed for the betterment of the self and the nation. The subject of WP is an entrepreneur, an individual that can self-propel along an educational and career trajectory unencumbered by their background. This is a subject who is obligated to be free (Rose, 1989): free from association with the abject Other (the incapable and ignorant) of their original milieu and not restricted by feelings of ambivalence, indifference or scepticism. To extend Ball's (1993) idea, WP policy poses problems for any subject who does not accept this obligation to be free (or be freed under WP); who refuses to admit to a psychological deficit of aspiration; and who recognises themselves to have cap(abilities) other than those assumed in WP policy.

It is important to acknowledge that WP policy has empowered individuals. However, it is equally important to understand that as a social justice project, WP is incomplete and misaligned. Part of this misalignment is due to its neo-liberal logic which locates both opportunity and blame within the individual. This logic does not attend to social, historical and contextual issues that produce educational inequalities, treating a lack of participation in HE as a 'problem' of innate ability and psychology rather than as a phenomenon that warrants complex understanding on its own terms.

Lest we think that the subject of WP represents a kind of radical break from older forms of subjectivity, it is important to acknowledge how its neoliberal logic weaves back into enduring discourses of exclusion and deficit. One of the tricks of WP policy is the way it (imperceptibly) links back into older meritocratic discourses about ability as natural and innate, with those who have it being able to rise to the top of society through sheer force of will. Likewise this meritocratic discourse underpins the 'quality' versus 'quantity' of undergraduate student debate that erupts in government circles and between HE institutions, with the subtext being that non-traditional students generally lack merit and 'quality'.

WP also rests upon older discourses predicated on the redemptive promises of education and childhood. If we accept these redemptive promises, then we must also seek to understand what problems they pose for children, young people, and their families and for educators and equity practitioners, alike. Such promises are not pure and unproblematic. They are implicated in messy relations of power (Bennett, 2012; Bennett et al., 2012; Southgate, 2012). WP can be inspirational and liberatory, and it can be cruelly dismissive of the knowledges and mores of those who are not its ideal subject—those who are not deemed cap(able) or sufficiently aspirational. Redemptive promises, particularly those that become

embedded in neo-liberal forms of social justice, require a cautiously hopeful rather than naïve response (Pain, Kesby, & Askins, 2012). Caution is especially required because neo-liberal versions of social justice have broad emotional appeal. However, this appeal masks the way the neo-liberal logic of WP distances those who make the policy from those who are meant to enact it. Both opportunity and fault are situated within the individual (student, their families, educators, equity practitioners), with scant regard paid to the difficulties of ‘doing’ and ‘living’ equity within messy social contexts. Under neo-liberal logic, if WP doesn’t work the individual, not the policy or policy-maker, is entirely to blame.

WP policy is a discourse that, to paraphrase Foucault (1977), determines certain modes of existence and functions for the subject. It is a form of governmentality that relies on a ‘new’ neo-liberal version of social justice, which rests on older, exclusionary notions of natural cap(ability), meritocracy and middle-class hopes for social mobility (Bourke, 2012). As a form of neo-liberal governmentality, it avoids addressing historical, social and contextual concerns about the production of educational inequality and it reproduces deficit discourses on social class. Its power is in the feeling-rules that stick to students, their families, educators and equity practitioners. These feeling-rules emerge from, but are different to, the emotional timbre of older social justice discourses. The common sense, seemingly inclusive logic of WP, with its sticky feelings of a brighter, better future, makes it hard to resist, query or argue against. Despite Foucault’s (1983) pronouncement that there is always a need for thoughtful critique, the feeling-rules of WP have made it difficult for us as equity practitioners and educators to carry out this very excavation.

Ball (1990) suggests: “We do not (just) speak discourse. The discourse speaks us” (p.18). In excavating the WP problem we have sought to uncover how WP discourse tries to ‘speak us’—non-traditional students, equity practitioners and educators—into certain ways of being. Within all discursive fields there are possibilities for subversion and resistance. By undertaking this analysis we want to make it more difficult for WP policy to restrain opportunities by narrowly defining subjectivities. Our analysis resists the redemptive pull of WP policy by revealing its roots in older, often conservative discourses. Hopefully, this excavation will make it easier to resist the powerful emotional appeal of certain forms of neo-liberal social justice. We think that this is a modest hope, but an important one.

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“Wherever I Am, I Am What Is Missing”

A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Subjectivity and Validity

Vittoria S. Daiello

Purpose

Critical writing practices in and around popular visual culture are under-researched and theorized in the visual arts education discipline. Addressing the research gap in visual arts education, this essay provides a theoretical reflection on a case study of undergraduate students’ writing in the *Criticizing Television* course. As an exemplar of a psychoanalytic approach to research of student writing, the essay foregrounds the generative, analytic qualities of writing, articulating in the process an alternative construction of research validity.

Design/Methodology/Approach

This essay is a theoretical reflection on a qualitative, interpretive case study of student television criticism writing. A psychoanalytically-informed methodology is derived from contemporary Lacanian and relational psychoanalysis theories. Data include student interviews, essays, survey, and the instructor-researcher’s reflexive journal. The analytic concept *peripheral vision* is developed to articulate, through writing, drawing, and reflection, the complexities inherent in theorizing subjectivity and representing research validity.

Findings

The case study reveals an irresolvable conflict: data that appear as signifiers of ‘evidence’ or ‘intelligibility’ may be the very mechanism that suppresses un-nameable affect, in the service of maintaining a unified, coherent subjectivity. The research finds that the impasses occurring in and around writing can be understood as the necessary gaps around which language creates an absent-presence, the traces of the writer’s and researcher’s unconscious. The study validates the presence of the unconscious in writing and its research, and articulates a method for re-presenting the slippery data of the unconscious as an expression of research validity.

Keywords: writing, validity, psychoanalytic theory, Lacan, subjectivity

— *What cannot be expressed only comes to me through the breakdown of language. Only when the structure breaks down do I succeed in achieving what the structure failed to achieve. -Clarice Lispector, 1986/1990*

PREFACE

| | **writer** | ... | **reader** | | *What is revealed and concealed through your reading of this essay is constituted through y/our subjectivities. I like to believe we are meeting in a space of clarity, where you encounter meanings in this text in the very way that I perceive I’ve constructed them. However, congruence is imaginary. Impossible. Together, we feel our way through this text within the limitations of language, attempting to capture, translate, and share experiences that are ephemeral, slippery, always in the process of becoming...other.*

Crafting this essay, laboring over myriad possibilities of revealing and hiding myself in/through words, I am caught within the cacophonies, silences, and sticky excesses of language. Language that, for all of its nouns, verbs, punctuations, and literary tropes, cannot secure a space of pure congruence between you, reader, and myself. Together, we are misalignment, misrecognition, contradiction. Together, we shift, blur, misread. But we imagine we understand. This is the beauty and terror of intersubjectivity.

INTRODUCTION

This essay is a theoretical reflection on the relationship of subjectivity and research validity, as conceptualized through a psychoanalytically-informed research methodology. The discussion focuses on the researcher’s process of addressing the resonance and affect that emerged from a qualitative, interpretive case study (Daiello, 2010b) of undergraduate students’ television criticism writing in the arts education course, *Criticizing Television*. The study, developed for my dis-

sertation research, focused on my (instructor's) experience of teaching writing within a visual arts education context and explored the challenges I encountered in creating the writing assignments, the complexities I faced in evaluating the students' writings, and students' perceptions of the writing they did in the course. While teaching the course, I began to question how my own subjectivity and desire, and, indirectly, the circulation of conscious and unconscious desires for particular pedagogical experiences within the discipline of art education, might have been implicated in the flows of engagement and resistance within my students' criticism texts and my assessments of their writing.

Criticizing Television is a writing-intensive, undergraduate-level course offered in an art education program within a large North American university. This course represented an important development for the art education program; *Criticizing Television* was the first art education course to integrate the University's writing-intensive course mission into the study of a popular culture phenomenon. I developed the curriculum for this new course and served as the instructor for six sections over a five-year period. The case study included data generated through participant interviews, an online questionnaire, students' course writing assignments, my instructor's assignment feedback, and my instructor/researcher's journal. While the 2010 study endeavored to describe and interpret the processes by which students developed critically conscious insights about contemporary television phenomena, the study revealed less about the relationship of television and critical consciousness and more about the failures of the language with which the students and I expressed and communicated our ideas. In short, I learned that subjectivity and language are inextricably intertwined, and that the peripheries of language, or unintended trajectories of signification, are replete in unconscious intersubjectivity/ies. Moreover, I found that unconscious subjectivity is a relational space; and, as such, is an incitement toward the conceptualization of research validity/ies that can accommodate the excesses and contingencies of subjectivity's constitution through language.

To this end, the research considered the ways in which writing, as process and artifact, simultaneously anchors and destabilizes subjectivity, ultimately impacting research validity. Building from psychoanalytic methodology derived from contemporary Lacanian and relational psychoanalysis perspectives (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Felman, 1997; Lacan, 1973, 2006; Lapping, 2007; Meek, 2003; Parker, 2005; Rogers, Stern, 1997), this essay seeks to complicate the implications of researcher subjectivity and research validity by proposing a psychoanalytically-informed method of sense-making conceptualized as *peripheral vision*.

The findings of the case study suggest that the most crucial aspect of the writing assignments in the course were the affects, denials, and uncertainties mobilized by unconscious aspects of subjectivity. The anxieties and impasses that fill and exceed the structure of a writing curriculum are often curiously invisible

and inexpressible in words. As conceptualized through psychoanalytic theory, the process of writing exacts demands upon the stability and coherence of a writer's subjectivity. A psychoanalytic perspective on writing finds writers to be fragile persons (Britzman, 1998) who struggle with a desire to be recognized by their audience, yet not be completely exposed and vulnerable. The work of writing is, necessarily, embedded within and constitutive of the uncertainties, messiness, and disorder of subjectivity.

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Addressing silences in the literature regarding writing and subjectivity in art education, this essay provides a view of writing as a generative, analytic process that can inform understanding of subjectivity, reflexivity, development of critical consciousness about self and research practices. To this end, I consider writing's potential as an experiential tool of translation and emergent discoveries. Drawing from Writing Across the Curriculum research (Anson, 1989; Carter, 2007; Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006) and Composition Studies (Bazerman, 2004; Berlin, 1982, 1992; Gere, 2001; Newcomb, 2012; Nystrand, 2006; Nystrand, Greene, & Wiemelt, 1993; Roozen, 2010; Smidt, 2002) this article follows from the idea that writing is not simply what we "do," but also contributes to our growth as critical citizens and creative practitioners.

Several terms used throughout the essay are defined here, with attention to their meaning for the research: *Subjectivity* is a concept that spans multiple disciplines and appears frequently in qualitative research discourses. *Subject* refers to the human person who acts and is acted upon in the world, and who generates and perceives phenomenological experiences within particular socio-historical contexts. In the case study of *Criticizing Television*, *subjects* and *subjectivity/ies* are conceptualized as an intersubjective, communal accomplishment. Lacanian psychoanalytic theory conceptualizes this process as *intersubjectivity*, a relational endeavor woven from threads both conscious and unconscious. Subjectivities are also inherently dialogic. As Bakhtin (1984) avers, "Truth is not to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (p. 110). Finally, a potential outcome of critical, reflective practices, *critical consciousness* refers to the reflexive awareness of social, historical, political contexts that constitute subjectivities and influence perceptions of, responses to, and expectations for visual culture phenomena.

Contextualization of this discussion within psychoanalytic discourse situates the topic at the intersections of psychoanalytic studies of education (Britzman, 1998, 2003); psychoanalytic research of texts, language, and subjectivity (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009; Parker, 2003, 2005; Ragland-Sullivan, 1984) and psychoan-

alytic approaches to the study of narratives, voice, and the ‘unsayable’ dimensions of experience (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003; Sorsoli & Tolman, 2008). Viewing writing as a “mechanism for the circulation of desire through culture” (Alcorn, 2002, p. 4), this reflection on the 2010 case study conceptualizes writing as a form of public discourse and a potential source of insight about the influence of desire on personal and communal understandings of self and society.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Psychoanalytic theory, as derived from the teachings of Jacques Lacan (1973, 2006) presents a compelling scenario of how subjects come into being, and offers a way of explaining how unconscious registers shape subjectivity. Lacan’s theories are important to qualitative research of human experience, for they have the potential to offer new insights into the inconsistencies and complexities of experience, as well as the affective currents that circulate beneath conscious awareness (Bracher, 1999; Brooke, 1987; Harris, 2001; Hollway, 2009). The psychoanalytically-informed approach examined here is not a therapeutic intervention. Instead, the methodology is conceptualized as a space of emergence for disrupting concepts of knowledge, truth, and reality. This is an approach that pursues insights into a research problem, yet admits the fallibility of knowledge constructed around the pursuit of the problem. In addition, a psychoanalytically-informed approach problematizes the subjectivity of the researcher, the conceptualization of the research problem, and the context within which the research emerges.

Because psychoanalysis as a practice creates and validates itself through the subjectivities it produces, a psychoanalytically informed approach must be relentlessly self-critical. Patti Lather’s expectation of “translation” (2000) is a cogent reminder of the responsibility of researchers who endeavor to represent, or translate, others’ experiences into texts. Lather asks: “What would it mean to think of translation as a knowing disruption, dissemination rather than containment?... Translation becomes neither mirror nor mimetic copy but, rather, another creation that addresses that which is untranslatable in the original” (2000, p. 158).

Looking Awry at Validity

The concept of validity in qualitative research has a rich history (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Mischler, 1990), following the trajectory of debates that address postpositivist constructions and legitimations of knowledge. Building upon naturalistic and constructivist paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007), poststructuralist methodologies (Cherryholmes, 1988), and discourse theories (Mishler 1990), researcher Patti Lather (1993) describes validity as an “incitement to discourse” (p. 674). Identifying forms of transgressive validity (ironic,

paralogical, rhizomatic, and voluptuous validities), Lather deconstructs the notion that validity is an object or goal of research, asserting instead that validity is unceasing process of reflection on and interrogation of research motives and assumptions. This essay follows from Lather's groundbreaking work, emphasizing a perspective of validity that is contextual, intertextual, and contingent upon the interactions among conscious and unconscious subjectivities.

The significance of research validity cannot be overstated: The articulations and discussions of psychoanalytically-informed subjectivity in this essay aim to keep in motion questions about validity, conceptualizing validity as a sidelong glance: A peripheral awareness. As I see it, the ethical validity of research originates in a researcher's acceptance of not only never finding direct, unobstructed views of experience, but also in the commitment to carry on in the face of these failures. Thus, establishing research validity would involve making visible the construction of subject positions, not by "capturing the reality of the objects seen, but of trying to understand the operations of the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced" (Scott, 1991, p. 792). In short, research should not "divest experience of its rich ambiguity," but instead it must be attuned to the "complexities and contradictions of existence," with the goal of "*getting people to no longer know what to do so that things might be done differently*" (Lather, 2003b, p. 8, italics added).

I Am What Is Missing

Mark Strand's (1979/2007) poetic observation "*Wherever I am, I am what is missing*" (p. 10) is an evocative homage to the slipperiness of subjectivity. Strand's poem is wrought by paradox. That is, "I" of his text is simultaneously present and not present. Here and not here. How is it possible to be present and absent at the same time? Kathryn Harrison (2006) explains that subjectivity is the result of an existential trauma of visibility and invisibility; recognition and misrecognition: "To...become fully human is traumatic. Whether we recognize it or not, each of us is poised between two existential terrors, that of remaining unknown and unseen, our anguish and our joys without witness, and that of being known so completely that we are left undefended" (para. 6). Our sense of being human, then, develops within conscious and unconscious processes of revealing and concealing the self in relation to others. Symbolizing the self through language creates a site of slippage where the quest to be acknowledged is fraught with the anxiety that language can never capture fully, or communicate clearly enough, our expression to the other.

Clarice Lispector (1986/1990) alludes to the uneasy beauty of language's failure by tying representation to disruption of signification: "What cannot be expressed only comes to me though the breakdown of language" (p. 192). Earl Fitz (2001) explains that,

(t)hrough her intense cultivation of writing as an ontological act, Lispector struggles with language and being in her work in a way that both concretizes and humanizes Derrida's 'grammatology,' thus embodying "Lacan's assertion that 'the law of language' is 'the law' of the human experience" (p. 189). As the substrate of human experience, as well as the thread that binds intersubjectivities, language—or, more generally, signification and sense-making—forms relational spaces wherein subjects can be both present and absent simultaneously.

Subjectivity and Language

Lacanian analyst Eugenie Georgaca (2003) posits that Lacan has "gone the furthest in terms of psychoanalytic approaches in theorizing the social and linguistic construction of subjectivity" (p. 542). Lacan "takes from Saussure the notion of language as a system of signs determined by their difference from each other, but for him the signifier produces a signified through a direct appeal to the field of experience, a positive condition" (Wright, 1999, pp. 62-63). However, unlike Saussure, who theorized signifier and signified as a sign unified through sound and concept, Lacan's conceptualization of signifier and signified is a site of contestation and struggle. Moreover, Lacan saw the signifier "intervening in the field of experience from which the signified is selected, not as arbitrarily bonded with an already existing signified as Saussure claimed" (Wright, 1999, p. 63). Language will never produce perfectly matched signifiers and signified because language is constantly in flux. In Lacan's view, the "only way of being in language is to be at odds with it, although language lures us in through a subject's narcissistic hope that the rules will be hers or his" (Wright, 1999, p. 63).

The interpretive work of a psychoanalytically informed approach to research concedes the impossibility of ever re-presenting the truth of a situation. Lacan's famous declaration *I always speak the truth* (1990) casts light on the curious approach to truth-telling in Lacanian psychoanalysis, a practice that has little to do with truth or honesty, as most people define it. Lacan's statement refers to the idea that all statements contain within them truths of which the speaker herself is not aware. In other words, any declaration that Lacan or any other person utters (or, for that matter, any text including this article), will speak the truth of the unconscious that may bear little resemblance to any 'truth' perceived and articulated by the conscious subject.

Lacan's method of truth-seeking aimed toward tracking the flow of affect within spoken or written discourse. Importantly, however, this method of tracking affects did not follow a template or design created in advance. Rather, the flow of discourse between Lacan and the subject created a unique landscape within which Lacan and the subject produced a distinctive dialogue that held clues for glimpsing connections between unconscious affects and the subject's actions in the world. In summary, psychoanalytic research requires a particular attitude to-

ward truth and objectivity, one that recognizes the unique relationship between researcher and the researched, the aliveness of affect, the unpredictability of subjectivity in context, and the importance of the unsayable in the constitution of self and relationships (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003; Rogers, 2006).

According to Lacan, both consciousness and the unconscious are constituted by language and are articulated in language in the subject's life. Elaborating on the dynamic of unconscious and conscious subjectivity within language, Georgaca (2003) explains that a subject's ego or sense of identity and "self" is but one of the parts of the subject, and, moreover, a part "whose function is to mask the heterogeneity of the speaking subject through sustaining a sense of self-unity and mastery" (p. 542) through language. Crucial however, is that subjectivity resists containment in language; the subjectivity of a writer or researcher will necessarily be articulated in the gaps between signifiers.

Lacan's psychoanalytic perspective posits that subjectivity is shaped through the unconscious interactions of registers known as the *real*, the *imaginary*, and the *symbolic* (Lacan, 1973). The register of the *real* refers to a primitive, undifferentiated state where fullness, unity and bliss prevail. Within the *real*, there are no needs, no desires, no lack—just completeness, wholeness and utter pleasure. Moreover, within the register of the *real*, there is no perception of an individual body that is separate from others. The *real* is disrupted by the mirror stage, a critical threshold that signals passage into the register of the *imaginary*. The *mirror stage*, which commences when a child (at approximately 6—18 months of age) sees their reflected image in a mirror (or other reflective surface like a caregiver's eyes), marks the beginning of a subject's conceptualization of themselves as an "I"—a whole, unified, and separate being reflected back to the subject. This self or "I" is validated by other people, such as the mother or caregiver, who points to the reflection and says the child's name, or responds to the child as a "you," thus confirming the separation between the subject and others.

The concept of the mirror stage supports Lacan's theory that the notion of a unified self is a misrecognition or "*méconnaissance*" (Lacan, 1973, p. 74). A subject's belief in the mirror reflection as proof of their integrated, unified "I" or true self, is a misrecognition since what is taken to be the "I" is actually only an image. The mirror stage and entrance into the *imaginary* register is significant, for what will come to be believed as the subject's autonomous self or "I" is actually an *image of an other* that the subject confuses with the idea of self. The subject's self, or ego, then, is external—a representation circulating among all other representations in the world. The external locus of the ego ensures that the self is always decentered and located in the Other.

The external nature of subjectivity means that fulfillment and security as a complete self is never achieved. For, having been split from the unity of the *real* by

recognizing one's self as separate and autonomous, what comes to be understood as one's identity is actually the result of complex social and interpersonal manifestations of an unflagging desire to fill the hole (or cover over the unattainable *real*) at the center of one's being. This separation from the *real* and subsequent longing for a return to its unity and fullness is critical to the structure of the unconscious.

The unbearable sense of loss and desire for return to the *real* originate at the unconscious level, ensuring that no object or action in the conscious world will ever satisfy these desires. The absence or loss of the *real* and its desired return inaugurate the subject's entrance into the *symbolic order*, the system of significations (language and culture) that become the means by which desires are expressed (signified) and pursued. The *symbolic order* and the *imaginary* overlap and coexist, for the image a subject sees in the mirror can only be expressed as "I" through the acquisition of the culture's symbols, or language. In this way, the specular and the spoken are woven together, becoming socially accepted substitutes for the *real*, and at the same time, shaping subjectivities.

In summary, the acquisition of symbols is the precondition of being an "I," an autonomous subject (Lacan, 1973). Thus, entrance into the *symbolic order* constitutes a bargain of sorts: the subject relinquishes access to the *real* to gain the symbolic tools (signifiers) with which to communicate with the mother, and later, others. The *symbolic order* assigns the concept of affect, or emotion, to the eruptions of the *real* that puncture the smooth surface of the *symbolic order*. Language, then, not only establishes the structure of self, it also establishes all other structures of sense-making known to a subject, including the experience of affect and, relatedly, the feeling of being at a loss for words.

INTELLIGIBILITY AND IMPASSE

A psychoanalytically-informed methodology creates an irresolvable conflict: data that appear as signs of 'evidence' or 'intelligibility' may be the very mechanism that suppresses un-nameable affect, in the service of maintaining a unified, coherent sense of self. Therefore, impasses and evocations can be understood as placeholders; and, language creates a truth-effect—confirming the presence of the unconscious in a research endeavor. An impasse, then, is not a concession to nihilism or meaninglessness. Nor is it a tourniquet that stops the flow and slippage of signification, a lesson I learned through my interactions with Robert, a research participant.

Robert used the word "tourniquet" to describe how the act of writing functions for him: "*I guess criticism has always been a tourniquet for me. A momentary relief of whatever mental pain.*" This sentence, tucked into the middle of a dense narrative about Robert's writing and art activities, was strikingly poignant for me. It occurred to me that the word tourniquet sounded like the phrase "turn" and

"quit." I found the word tourniquet, and the associated words "turn" and "quit" to be a persistent and potent subtext. The placement of the word "tourniquet" in Robert's writing was a point of overflow that functioned (for me) as an odd disruption in Robert's long narrative. The experience of this disjunction led me to wonder about the significance of disruption and distraction for Robert himself, in his writing. He wrote: "*I hardly ever just sit and contemplate or have an open moment. I live in a collective housing situation so there is always a distraction, I book shows, write zines, make artwork, go to school, go to work, have a partner (sometimes), curate things. I just always have a distraction...*" My association of the words *turn* and *quit* with the word tourniquet and the related idea of distraction in writing occurred at the time I was writing the methodology chapters of my dissertation. I realized that the peripheral distractions—the barrage of reading, drawing, and other activities that pulled me to the edges of my own writing—and distracted me from the sometimes overwhelming desire to give up on the research were not merely distractions and coping mechanisms but might be re-conceptualized as vital texts; an additional source of insight for my focal research endeavor. I wondered if my students had experienced distraction and insight in this way. I wondered, further, how writing might be taught to encourage the development and translation of peripheral reflections, particularly reflections upon experiences of impasse.

Reflection upon the impasses that characterize the development of writing will expand the territory wherein insights about writing can be perceived. These perceptions, along with their inconvenient, messy, and metaphorical residues, stretch beyond the centrality and smoothness of literalness and rationality. As Harriet Meek (2003) explains,

many of the difficulties and blockages we encounter while doing research take place because we are *not* listening to information available to us. We tend not to recognize this information as messages from ourselves which have arrived in a disguised way and need to be deciphered... We worry about giving up conscious control, even for a little while, but it seems likely that this may be exactly what is needed. (para.17)

Working from Meek's viewpoint, impasses are a call to rethink, and perhaps enlarge, the meaning and means of validity in qualitative research. As the focal issue in my case study, writing created a productive paradox: the impasses that confounded and constrained research progress could be reconceptualized as generative, valid data.

Writing is a slippery, fallible phenomenon. Writing never quite gathers up, or holds onto, the meaning it is meant to express. Complicating matters is a writer's unconscious subjectivity formed from inchoate and insignificant excesses that not only punctuate and disrupt the writing process, but also create gaps and dis-

sonances within the expression itself—gaps that a writer herself may be unable to see. The dissonances and silences of writing are metaphorical spaces that indicate the tenor and texture of the unsymbolizable unconscious. Seeking and locating the gaps and spaces began to define my work with the data. As I came to learn, these explorations were decentered, yet viable. Acknowledging the unconscious as a crucial part of a researcher’s sensitized perceptions is a *valid* position from which to theorize the affects and evocative experiences of a case study. The researcher’s unconscious is a kind of peripheral vision.

PERIPHERAL VISION

The concept of *peripheral vision* emerged from the challenges I experienced in applying psychoanalytic theory in a qualitative study of student criticism writing. An approach to data analysis, *peripheral vision* refers to taking an oblique approach to my perception of the student writing. The method affirms that human perceptions and written expressions are inevitably off center, always missing their mark, constantly emerging and receding at the edges of knowing. Data cannot represent a complete picture of the expansive, experiential landscape of a case. Moreover, the material a researcher culls from a data corpus will be only a slanted, oblique approach toward articulating one of many potential views of the case. Other angles, other meanings, other views, and other truths may be derived, and the researcher’s and audience’s subjectivities will produce a particular *truth-effect* in a relational context.

Emily Dickinson’s poetic assertion, “*Tell all the truth but tell it slant*” could stand as a subtext for psychoanalytically informed research. Truth, in a psychoanalytic perspective, is effected through positionings within a discourse, yet these positions do not offer points from which a clearer or more truthful assessment of a situation may be grasped. That is, there is no meta-knowledge, and there is “no external point from which it is possible to speak that is not also necessarily implicated in a certain kind of position” (Parker, 2005, p. 174). Truths, then, are not static knowledge, but are created through the angles and slants of subjects’ relationships and communications with one another.

A Lacanian perspective on truth is compatible with the idea of *peripheral vision*, a concept that refers to the conceptual locus of the study and its data, especially my (missed)-understanding of students’ writing artifacts and intentions. I discovered that writing to interpret and express the significance and meaning of the data was an endeavor that, instead of leading me to central or focal meanings of a text, looped repeatedly around the phenomena that I attempted to convey in language. However, in circling around the case study writings, comprised of student essays, interview texts, survey responses, and my researcher’s journal, I eventually saw emergent patterns. These circular, looping paths of words formed

layers upon layers of signification, pulling my attention outward into thickening accumulations of evocation and affect. I was dog-paddling around a space whose contours were tantalizingly obscure (Berlant, 2007).

Harriet Meek (2003) notes that periods of latency are common, perhaps occurring most in qualitative research. Meek usually "works on several things at once, with one project more in focus at any given time" (2003, para. 37); periods of dormancy are an integral part of her research process. Meek compares research growth and latency to the cyclical nature of farming: "On a farm, when crops are rotated, the fallow period is anything but stagnant; it is a very active time in which the microorganisms structure themselves for a new period of productivity" (2003, para. 37).

Taking seriously the peripheries, haziness, and misunderstandings of a phenomenon does not equate to a disregard of data or an abandonment of systematic research methods. Further, a belief in the ambiguity of meaning does not exempt researchers from responsibility toward participants or imply a lapse into nihilism. Rather, taking a psychoanalytically informed perspective on the indeterminacies of knowledge and meaning necessitates locating oneself in a particular position in relation to the data of a study. For example, instead of believing that I was capable of interpreting what a student intended to express in their essay, or what a student meant to convey to me in their interview, I held myself to a different set of expectations. Rather trying to interpret meanings located within the writing content, I viewed the writing as a relational space wherein eruptions of the *real* might offer opportunities for speculating on what a student and I may have expected of one another within the context of an assignment created during the course. Parker (2005) explains that the *real* is felt as a shock or trauma that is covered over immediately in language so it can be spoken of. The moments of unease, avoidance, confusion, and unspeakable affect that I experienced in my encounters with some student writing were points of emergence of the *real*.

My sense of discomfort and impasse became, for me, a significant (and, legitimate) form of emergent data. These data provided me with an opportunity to face the tensions and disruptions that threaten the smooth, coherent methodological structures of research. In so doing, I hoped to pursue the kind of reflective, generative, and creative speculations about experience that psychologist and researcher Nita Cherry (2008) describes as *symbolic self-curation*. Cherry's symbolic self-curation refers to a form of reflection on research or other professional endeavors that involves "creative, scholarly engagement with a set of practices found in work or life, in ways that clarify the past and present" (2008, p. 22). Symbolic self-curation offers a means of seeing one's theory and practice circumstances in alternate ways, leading to the imagination of significantly new possibilities for the future of one's practice. Reflective questions include the aim for meta-analysis of a researcher's context, actions, and perceptions:

(W)hat's being revealed about experiences that we haven't acknowledged or noticed before? In particular, what is being revealed about our aspirations; about our assumptions about the work we are doing; about our perceptions of the systems we work in; about the ways we engage with anxiety, paradox, and rejection; and about the effectiveness of our practice? Also, what does it (interpretation) reveal about the world we practice in; our care for that world; our impact on it; its impact and shaping of us; and our underpinning, implicit theories? (Cherry, 2008, p. 29)

An important aspect of symbolic self-curation is the validity of reflecting upon one's ways of engaging with anxiety and paradox. While such experiences are steeped in affect, they are usually not acknowledged in research. Yet, these experiences could be considered a form of data.

Symbolic self-curation validates the contextual, concomitant activities that surround what is considered to be a focal issue. For example, Cherry (2008) shares the story of Ern Reeders, a sculptor whose difficulty in crafting a group of wood bowls led to the emergence of unexpected insights. Reeders's process of turning the bowls on a lathe helped him to visualize and reflect upon issues in his life; his awarenesses of self, realized through the context and conditions of the creation process, were a form of *peripheral* data, as informative and significant for Reeders as the development of the bowl itself. In the context of psychoanalytically informed research, incorporating nuanced, peripheral awarenesses can enlarge and complicate the activities of description and interpretation of process. While these data may not be quantifiable in a positivist sense, they provide important dimensions of vulnerability and humanity to the research endeavor.

DISRUPTIVE VALIDITY/IES: COMPRESSION

Art educator Sydney Walker's (2009) psychoanalytically informed research of artistic practice affirms the role of the unconscious in the development of an artist's work. As Walker's investigation of Ann Hamilton's art process reveals, messages from the unconscious sometimes arrive as uninvited visitors, puncturing the conscious order of artistic practice, much like Freud and Lacan described the "disruption of conscious speech with slips of the tongue, jokes, and so forth" (Walker, 2009, p. 81). Importantly, these significant ideas, influential intuitions, and deep insights may be cultivated by designing modes of artistic practice that allow for an emergence of the unconscious (Walker, 2009). The use of repetitive drawing processes that follow a list of mark-making commands, incorporating chance into one's work, and relinquishing the urge to intellectualize or control the results of an artistic practice are methods of creating space for the unconscious to emerge. A significant finding from Walker's research is the prioritization of structure and process in artistic practice, specifically the ways in which an artwork's composi-

tional structure or an artist's process of working become a landscape within which the unconscious might appear in the guise of errors, insights, affects, or other notable experiences.

The image, *Compression* (Figure 1), is a sidelong glance at the unconscious; a manifestation of my efforts, over many months, to surround, capture, identify, and express the affects and resistance I felt in relation to the case study data. These affects and experiences were cumulative, thickening into the shape of a researcher's subject position that I could locate only retrospectively, and partially, in the *Symbolic Register*. Looking back, I conclude that the sequential, monotonous drawing processes, applied to the same image over time, functioned to create distance and disconnection from the original image within a structured dialogue. I've come to understand that repetition of process is important to my work, it creates a dialogue among tactile processes, perception, and representation. The repetition keeps me grounded within the impossibility of representation. It is a dance around the otherness of self and signification.

The *Compression* image is a portrait of sorts; not a self-portrait, but a group image that incorporates all of the people, texts, and contexts within which the study emerged. For example, one of the case study survey questions is implicated in this image. That is, with the intention of finding out how students perceived the writing assignments, I asked the research participants, "In regard to your writing in the course, how was your subjectivity positioned? *Who did the instructor think you were?*" Many responses revealed that students didn't seem to have a clear sense of how they were positioned:

"I feel I internalized more in my writing in this course than ever before. Some of my introspection felt, at times, more honest than a journal entry—embarrassingly... Who did the instructor think I was? Probably a sullen loner who lives in his own head. Which I am at times. I don't know who I am." (Anonymous)

Another student expressed doubt about my perceptions of their ability:

"I believed the instructor thought me much more intuitive than I really am. I'm sure she thought I was thoughtful, bright, and put forth effort, but I think she saw me as someone who could introvert into my psyche and interpret my thoughts and reactions... She was wrong. It was really, really hard for me to know why I do anything... I like what I like, I don't what I don't. I react according to those feelings, and I don't apologize for it." (Anonymous, 2009)

One response in particular caught me by surprise with its succinct candor: "*I don't really like to think about it.*" (Anonymous).

In addition to being surprised by this response, I felt uncomfortable. It is difficult to articulate in words, but I felt somehow that I'd been "caught." I felt trapped, but also exposed and vulnerable. I turned the words over and over in

my head. “*I don’t like to think about it.*” Then it hit me: I had been caught. I was caught up against a mirror that didn’t return a coherent, smoothly articulated sense of myself. In this looking glass, I could “see” myself and my questions within a larger field of desire—desire for a certain type of relationship with writing, with students. On the survey, I’d asked, “Who did the instructor think you were?” assuming a student would be open to, and capable of, speculating on my perceptions of their positioning within the class discourse. When I wrote that survey question, my motives were innocent enough: I believe I was hoping for answers that would let me off the hook, meaning that I would discover that students did not feel coerced or colonized by the types of writing I assigned in the course. However, what I did not count on was that students would resist thinking about how they were positioned. I am encouraged by this outcome, believing that resistance and the desire for “not knowing” is a valid site of future inquiry, one that could shape future curricula to acknowledge the desires and resistances that arise from the inevitable disruptions and failures in articulating subjectivity/ies.

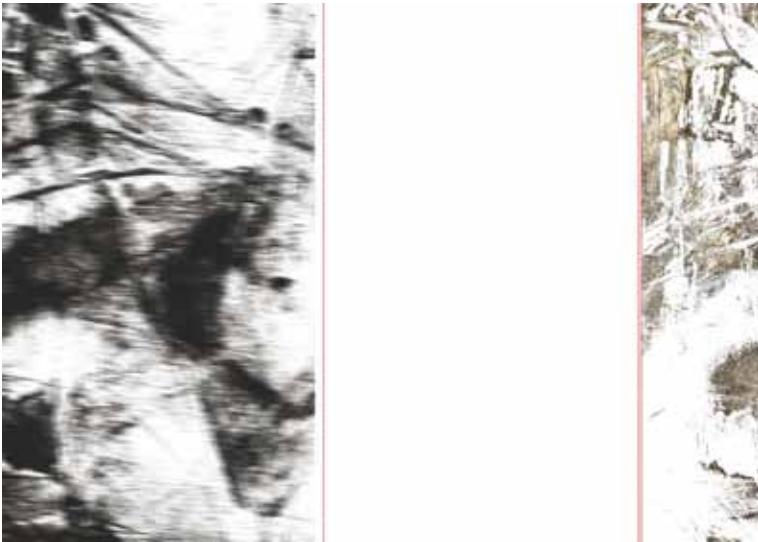


Figure 1: Compression

A peripheral yet vital result of the case study is the discovery that validity/ies may be realized through visual documentation. The image *Compression* (Figure 1) is a visual translation of my lived experience of data analysis in the 2010 case study. This image could serve as a psychoanalytic illustration of subjectivity: The *Real* is at the center—a field of profound silence and blankness that pushes against, and holds apart *Imaginary* and *Symbolic* resistors of subjectivity. In the image, the *Symbolic* is the frozen, wintry ground, sharply defined, almost painfully brittle. The *Imaginary*, the larger of the edge panels, is a view that is recog-

nizable to me, yet loses me in its deep blurriness. The image reflects subjectivity as slippage; negotiations of absence and presence—compressed and rendered in pencil, ink, and paper—a glimpse of research validity in its most vulnerable, untheorized form: *In a field, I am the absence of field.*

As a visual metaphor, *Compression* is a messy text, an emergence of my researcher's subjectivity and a form of emergent data in the research. It is a visual record of activities peripheral to the focal case study of student writing, providing yet another lens of signification to thicken and confound the notion of data interpretation, and serving as a visual representation of entangled desires and resistances around the role of logic and coherence in the case study. Logically, I knew that methods of qualitative discourse analysis could suffice as tools of interpretation and explication of the study's data. However, each time I examined students' writing with the goal of producing coherent reasoning and explanation, I bumped up against my desire to protect the ineffable qualities of the relational spaces experienced through my readings of the texts. I was reluctant to eliminate the frictions of my discordant perceptions by fitting the unruly data into codes, charts, and graphs. I realized that most research does indeed smooth out friction by suturing data into coherent narratives. But, creating a tidy, seamless story felt risky to me. What would be gained, what would be lost in the negotiations of revealing and concealing? It was difficult, even impossible, for me to draw lines around the "data" of the study, creating clear divisions between the subjectivities of self and others.

The emergence of the *Compression* image functions as a document of process, representing, most succinctly, the indeterminate work of being/becoming human. The labor of producing the image is not unlike the labor of seeking coherence and self-cohesion within intersubjective encounters with others. Sequential drawing processes, applied repeatedly to the same image over time, functioned to create distance and disconnection from the original image within a structured dialogue. This process is not unlike the work of research analysis wherein the same data is worked repeatedly, through various methods, to produce crystallizations of insight.

When mapped upon the concept of subjectivity, research validity becomes disruptive and unruly, revealing a flux of presence and absence, exposing subjectivity as an emergent and relational process. Somerville (2008) observes that alterative representations of experience are essential data, forms of "postmodern emergence" that do not replace the academic text, but create a mode of access to "other meanings and knowledges that stretch the boundaries of academic text" (p. 218).

PERIPHERAL VISION AS PSYCHOANALYTICALLY-INFORMED RESEARCH METHOD

The *peripheral vision* method that emerged from the case study research engages visual and textual explorations *in relation to the focal research topic* in an effort to trace and surround lived experience through writing, drawing, and reflection. This method provides a structure for articulating the slipperiness of subjectivity, while supporting other qualitative research outcomes:

1. *Promotes a proliferation of questions and resistance to closure:* The activities of seeking, documenting, and reflecting upon the evocative aspects of experience are undertaken in a quest for answers, but directed toward the generation of questions;
2. *Promotes a “plurality of thought:* There are many ways of being and acting in the world and myriad ways of expressing these diverse realities. Acknowledging unconscious aspects of subjectivity creates spaces for living with/in unexpected, unsymbolizable aspects of being;
3. *Provides strategies for critically examining the (im)possibilities of symbolizing subjectivities and “realities”:* In life, reality shifts and slips, revealing misalignments of expectation and actuality. To cope with disjunctions of reality that emerge through lived experience, epistemological and ontological adjustments are necessary. Strategies for visualizing and articulating reality anew are vital.

Peripheral data provide a field of possibility for invention to occur. Like the subject of Mark Strand’s poem, there exists a space of oscillation between absence and presence. This is the space of becoming a subject, a space rich in creative potential, and a site wherein validity/ies can be conceptualized.

CONCLUSION

| | **writer** | ... | **reader** | As the most intimate aspect of my/our subjectivity/ies the unconscious reveals itself without my/our conscious awareness. This extimate unconscious is the kernel of the *real* around which all my/our signifiers circulate in the service of repressing and deferring what I/we cannot bear to know. Every person has their own unconscious *real*, their own unthought unknown. This is the beauty and terror of being/becoming a subject.

Subjectivity is a space of fluidity and uncertainty where the work of being human cannot be accomplished without the other. Visualizing peripheral spaces

of subjectivity and the disruptions and impasses from which they arise—through writing, art, or other expressions—can provide richer, more intricate perceptions of intersubjective encounters in research. As psychoanalyst Dennis Shulman (2005) points out, psychoanalysis works through the intentional use of disruption and discomfort; that is, discomfort is the "irreplaceable ingredient that constitutes the necessary and sufficient condition for human growth" (p. 476).

When experiencing the frustration and discomfort of the case study endeavor, I sought to create my own structure of comfort by avoiding the research problem and losing myself in repetitive, peripheral activities of writing, drawing, and reading. In retrospect, I see these activities as a series of purification rituals aimed at removing the uncomfortable excesses of affect and evocation that could not be explained or made rational through theory.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, excess and remainders are a condition of speech. Words cannot possibly hold nor accurately represent the rich complexities of experience because experience is an amalgam of conscious awareness and unconscious drives. As we word the world for ourselves and for one another, we are always saying and hearing more and less than we know. We write and read excesses of signification, covering over the *real* of experience that necessarily eludes words. Language is always more and less than we need.

In the case study research, psychoanalytic theories did not offer a template for interpreting student writing, but pushed me to stay close to the data and find my own ways of being both absent and present within the excesses of signification. The patterns of exploration and writing that emerged over many months accumulated into peripheral texts and visual articulations. This peripheral work not only strived toward—yet failed to secure—coherence of subjectivity/ies, its visual traces can be considered a form of validity: evocative, unruly, and ultimately *real*.

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Stories of Researcher Beginnings and Becomings

Heather McLeod and Cecile Badenhorst

Purpose

We explore the problem of constructing strong researcher identities that are produced and owned by researchers rather than being produced by the prevailing neo-liberal academic discourse. This is currently important because strong pressures mitigate against it. Such pressures include: the necessity to write and publish in an academic context; for women to choose between family and career; the corporatization of universities and the emphasis on continual efficiency, excellence and productivity, as well as the pressure to focus on the product of research.

Design/Methodology/Approach

Through qualitative data collection and analyses we bring into focus how researchers understand themselves, their work, and their process. We video-recorded interviews with eight participants and we present 'slices' of lives showing how researcher identities unfold and emerge in multiple ways.

Findings

While publishing scholarly articles makes one a productive academic, the sustainability of this is dependent on developing researcher identities. A supportive, collaborative environment provides the seedbed for researchers who produce but

also find meaning in what they do. Better quality research is produced because researchers are wholly invested. This conflicts with the neo-liberal notions of the individual who is both productive and entrepreneurial and that in the neo-liberal university each academic conceived as a corporation is responsible for their own personal productivity.

Keywords: researcher identity, faculty writing productivity, becoming a researcher, developing researchers, academic development, developing academic writers

INTRODUCTION

We argue, in this article, that gathering, reflecting, sharing and producing knowledge is an important part of the process of constructing a strong identity as a researcher that is produced and owned by the researcher, rather than being produced by the prevailing academic discourse. We want to decentre the product (research as product) and bring into focus how researchers understand themselves, their work, and their process. In this way we aspire to address the question of what kind of knowledge do 21st century subjects produce and what does this mean for the researcher and researched?

Literature Review

Increasingly, faculty members are under pressure to write and publish in academic contexts. The literature on publishing productivity levels world-wide indicates that about 15% of researchers account for the majority of published articles (Stack, 2003) and that many academics, new and experienced, continue to struggle to publish their research (Pannell, 2002; McGrail, Richard & Jones, 2006). Calls for ongoing, regular, structured interventions to help faculty increase their writing output appear regularly in the literature (Campbell, Ellis, & Adebajo, 2012; Cumbie, Weinert, Luparell, Conley, & Smith, 2005; Galligan et al., 2003; Gillespie et al., 2005; Grant, 2006; Lee & Boud, 2003; McGrail et al., 2006; Moore, 2003; Morss & Murray, 2001; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). In particular, non-tenured faculty and women lag behind in the productivity stakes (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Damiano-Teixeira, 2006; Leahey, 2006).

Faculty members frequently experience extreme pressures particularly with the increasing corporatization of universities and the emphasis on continual efficiency, excellence and productivity (Hartman & Darab, 2012). Shore (2008) details the marketization of higher education, global competition amongst universities and a neo-liberal audit culture that counts outputs, within which context academics are increasingly pressured to publish quickly and continuously. Often a casualty of the pressures is meaningful personal growth, satisfaction and a sense of career fulfillment. Additionally, meaningful relationships suffer under the

pressure to focus on the product rather than the process of conducting research. As Tierney & Bensimon (1996) argue: “we must work toward the creation of a community that does not demand the suppression of one’s identity in order to become socialized into abstract norms. We support the development of organizations in which interrelatedness and concern for others is central” (p.16). In the face of constant urgent deadlines, few faculty members have time to engage in the deep thinking and ‘slow scholarship’ (Hartman & Darab, 2012) that leads to one becoming a sophisticated, inspired and satisfied researcher. Given these developments, this article explores the problem of developing a strong researcher identity that is produced and owned by the researcher.

Akerlind (2008) indicates that there are four phases in a researcher’s possible development: 1) becoming a confident researcher (developing the research and writing skills to publish); 2) becoming a recognized researcher (developing expertise and becoming part of a research community); 3) becoming a productive researcher (developing the skills to access grants, conduct research and publish regularly); and 4) becoming a sophisticated researcher (becoming a leading thinker in a field). Researcher development may build confidence and skills in any of these areas. We note the increasing levels of difficulty and accessibility associated with each of Akerlind’s phases.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research as a *product* lies in the realm of certainty. It exists, it is. Rather than providing a route to certainty, post-structuralists look at the instability of systems, the openness, and the potential for chaos. French philosopher and post-structuralist, Deleuze was, particularly, interested in how systems mutate or *become* in a context of the instability and the open dynamism of thought (May, 2003). Deleuze argued that no system or vocabulary could adequately capture the chaos of life. For post-structuralists like Deleuze, writing is not about representation but invention. If life, and writing, is not a closed system, then it is constantly in a state of change and renewing as it comes into contact with other influences. Research, like a rhizome, “has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25). Consequently, this approach does not look at what *is* but explores what is *becoming* and becoming is not a state but a series of actions. These actions are often repeated but never in the same way. When we feel we have become, the process begins again. We begin “to renew, to question, and to refuse remaining the same” (Colebrook, 2002, p. 8).

Our theoretical framework will be used to address the problem of developing a strong researcher identity that is produced and owned by the researcher. As we have noted, this is important because within a contemporary context strong pressures mitigate against such a development.

THE CONTEXT

Memorial University is located on the island of Newfoundland, and along with Labrador, makes up one of the Atlantic Provinces in Canada. Memorial is the only university in the province and the vast distances needed to travel hamper regular collegial interaction with other Canadian and international scholars. While not by any means isolated, in the age of technological connectivity, Memorial is not at the geographical hub of research practice. There are 14,825 undergraduates, 3,119 graduates and 1,108 fulltime academic staff at the university (CIAP, 2011). Once a college devoted specifically to teacher education, the Faculty of Education has transitioned into a research-based institution over the past 15 years. As the only Faculty of Education in the province, its ethos is still rooted in teaching practice and the education of pre-service teachers. Many faculty and teaching instructors come from the school system. Consequently, many new faculty have less experience in conducting research, applying for grants and publishing in scholarly journals than those in non-professional disciplines. Although teaching and service are considered important for gaining tenure, research productivity is a key area for assessment and evaluation. As a result, there is enormous pressure to publish and to secure research funding (Polster, 2007).

The Faculty of Education has an in-house non-peer-reviewed journal called *The Morning Watch: Educational and Social Analysis*, which has published academic research and discussion papers from faculty and students in the province for the past 40 years. It plays a developmental role and aims to provide the space for initial thoughts for more experienced academic writers and first papers for novice writers.

In September 2012, we (Badenhorst & McLeod) sent out a Call for Papers for a special edition of *The Morning Watch* with the theme of *becoming a researcher*. The purpose of the special edition was to initiate thinking and conversations on the *process* of being a researcher rather than on the *product* of research which is often at the centre of these discussions. We wanted to emphasize issues of identities ‘becoming’ and we framed the Call for Papers as *Stories of Self* (Arnold, 2011). In our introduction to the special edition, we articulated this further:

Moving aside abstract, distanced, non-emotional frameworks, the contributions in this volume embrace an embodied, interconnected approach to understanding selves as researchers ... and the process of reaching current settled and unsettled destinations. Contributions link the personal with the theoretical, the individual with the universal, factual with imaginary, and word with image to reclaim the inevitability of the personal in academic lives (Badenhorst, McLeod & Joy, 2012).

We envisioned the writing process as collaborative by initiating collegial discussions around proposed papers, hosting a workshop on narrative writing and by providing review comments on papers that were developmental rather than critical. We foregrounded the idea of working together, reading each other's papers and sharing ideas. Twenty contributions, including our own, on becoming a researcher were published in the in-house journal.

Alongside this project we decided to interview participants to explore issues of researcher becomings in more detail. We explored participant experiences of researcher development, meaningful collaboration and writing identity. Our broad research questions were: Did participants relate to Akerlind's (2008) four phases of researcher development? Did they find the separate *Morning Watch* collaborative writing initiative to be meaningful and did it contribute to their productivity? How did the answers to the first two questions influence the participants' developing researcher writer identities?

METHOD

Akerlind (2008) argues that researcher development encompasses a focus on feelings about oneself as a researcher (identity), a focus on one's performance as a researcher (networking, development of community, collaboration) and a focus on outcomes (productivity). To access developing researcher identities (Akerlind, 2008) we used narrative methods (Creswell, 2012; Kramp, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1983, 1988, 1989, 1995) and adapted and added to Feldman's (1987) organizing concepts of process, use, culture and portfolio.

Eight in-depth interviews were video-recorded with participants who contributed to *The Morning Watch* special edition. While the pool of contributors to the special edition of *The Morning Watch* included both men and women, our interview participants were all women. Pseudonyms were used for the storytellers. Using strategies of asking and listening, (Spradley, 1979) we elicited rich researcher stories. Our questions guided the establishment of a research relationship in which we invited participants to examine their developing researcher identities and to recall stories (narratives) about their research. The mostly open-ended questions took the form of a semi-structured interview that allowed follow-up prompts.

Transcripts of the interviews were prepared and we read through each several times. We noted individual participant's self-declared stage of researcher development (Akerland, 2008). We looked for keywords and phrases that had to do with collegiality or collaboration and identity as a researcher, academic, writer or any other identity. Finally we made note of anything that struck us as interesting or unusual.

Traditionally, in research, the ‘data’ we collect, transcribe and analyze, reflects a particular research agenda, and a deliberate construction of that research picture. The way we write that research confirms the picture in a particular way. By developing ‘findings’ we collate the bits and pieces into a coherent text. The practice of conceptualizing knowledge as ‘findings’ reflects a coded subtext of ‘science’ where knowledge is carved into chunks that are “summarizable, cumulative, and citable” (Richardson, 1995, p. 190). By making choices of what to include, what to exclude and how to piece it all together, we craft narratives and we write lives (Richardson, 1990, p. 10). Following the post-structural lead, we have chosen to present the paper as a range of sections or ‘slices’ of lives that present how researchers unfold and emerge in multiple ways. We have had to reduce and cut the stories for the purpose of this article and have also added summary sentences. We note that there is always an element of re-contextualization when a text is altered. However, all quotes used in this article have been confirmed for publication by the participants, and we believe that we have stayed ‘true’ to the stories and the voices they represent.

STORIES OF BEGINNINGS AND BECOMINGS

Andrea, becoming a productive researcher, full professor: “I think in some ways I’m not a very typical academic... I tend to do narrative writing... One of our colleagues here once said ‘Oh, I don’t do research, I just mess around with ideas’... I struggled to see myself as a researcher.” Andrea described herself as someone who tried to do traditional empirical research but found it difficult. “So you’re looking for themes that come up over and over and trying to establish patterns and so on. And I struggled and struggled with it and... I just felt that these people could speak for themselves and really didn’t need me to code what they did, they were very articulate people and they had important things to say but I just couldn’t, didn’t know what to do with it because I felt they spoke for themselves”. Andrea then described how she started doing freelance radio documentaries for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. “One of which was an hour long documentary that was this huge amount of work but it fascinated me, completely fascinated me and in the end I loved it... and I started seeing that as part of my research... And so doing that, I saw it more as something I wanted to do for myself than... my research. But really it just broke down all kinds of research barriers for me. And then I realized that is what I wanted to do... So I edited the stories people told me, you know I didn’t just play them completely the way I recorded them, I actually did quite a lot of editing and putting in sound effects and music and lots of things. But I wasn’t completely analyzing them. I’m not saying there is anything wrong with coding, it just wasn’t what worked for me, what I felt I could do or was good at. So after that I just thought this is what I want to do and I’ll just

find a way to do this kind of work and if the University doesn't like it... well I did publish all the articles, so... I knew that I was doing okay because of getting tenure and promotions”.

Andrea continued “So would I say I am a researcher? Probably not. If somebody asked me what I do, I would probably say I'm a professor but... I want to do different things... In journalism they say you have to have a brand, in university they say you have... to build expertise in a certain area... but I've always resisted that. So, I also resist saying I'm a researcher. I mean I'm obviously a professor because that's what it says on my job description and what I'm paid for. But to say I'm a researcher, or I'm a teacher, they're things that I do, but I think I'm a human being who does these things rather than I am these things.”

Cathy, becoming a confident researcher, untenured: “I've been involved in... funded research, since I was a graduate student and so that would have been seven and a half years ago. So... starting at the age of 22, I've been paid to do research... As a graduate student I did lots of work in terms of conducting interviews, transcribing interviews and coding the data. And I've only had an academic position... for two years so now it's fun to be on the other side, to be the one who is thinking about the research ideas and be able to garner support in terms of... having people to help with the literature reviews and helping to make that research possible...”

“You're always dabbling in a few different research projects. The hardest thing is finding the time to actually publish... I love my research... but its only 40% of your job... You're still expected to teach, you're still expected to sit on committees... When you're a teacher I find that you get these immediate emails from students, you've got marking deadlines; you have to have your grades in for a certain time. As a new faculty member... I've been developing new Masters courses, I'm teaching courses for the first time. When you get asked to teach additional courses on top of your teaching load... finding time to balance it all is what's most challenging... When you get stuck with meetings that take up all your time there are some resentments in terms of how your work day is spent.

I have... decided to be more collaborative and to do some papers with my colleagues to demonstrate that I don't just work alone... And so we did take up a paper... it was new literature that I had to delve into... I really, really enjoyed that project, it's interesting to me.

I struggle with calling myself a researcher... I feel like I'm still... new to this academia game... I think to some degree of a researcher as being someone who's foreign, maybe someone in a lab coat... of research as being somewhat the absolute truth as opposed to looking at the people who have written that research”.

Marie, becoming a recognized researcher, independent (not in an academic position): “I've always done a lot of writing in my life... outside of my... academic work and my legal work. When you apply a legal writing and research analysis

to problems that's a whole different narrative and it's very disembodied. And one of the reasons I'm interested in poetry, literary writing and poetic inquiry is because to me poetry is the antithesis of that, poetry is very embodied... From my perspective... the origins of poetry are in song. And song is a very body oriented process. And so... in *The Morning Watch* it's kind of an absurd piece but it... looks back at when I was a law student and... how I was changing my narrative... through a new language that I was acquiring... So because I'm in my 50's now, I can... look back as my career is... coming into a circle... at... how that... disciplined language that you acquire when you're young in a university setting profoundly affects how you think and how you express yourself. So that's what... the poem is about it. On the surface it's kind of a quirky prose poem, but there's a deeper element to it."

Marie reflected on her legal and policy research about violence in families, "My personal feeling is that the qualitative research to me is so much richer than just looking at numbers. So... another challenge that we have is that nobody has reliable numbers. Sometimes people are reluctant to make a change unless you can justify it with numbers. But their system isn't going about getting the numbers and so the whole relationship quantitative versus qualitative is quite a big debate... And the lawyers generally are... word people, rather than numbers people. But... people within government feel they can only justify making a change or institute a new program or respond to your research if you can present them with a real business case... And a business model and quantitative research to me isn't the way to go about solving very complex social issues like violence in families... "I don't have problems calling myself a researcher... But if somebody asked me about my work, I would say research is a part of my work but I wouldn't say it's the main thing that I do... I might say I do a fair bit of social action research... The research that I do is always very tied into social action and a desired outcome to move the system forward... It's a portion of what I do and a very important portion."

Babette, becoming a recognized researcher, Ph.D. candidate: Babette discussed research that she is passionate about, "When you get into that moment, there's a feeling that comes over you... I can't say it any other way, it's in your heart and you're just totally immersed in that project and finding out what you need to find out... Some people say when they're dancing, they feel electricity go through their body. I don't feel electricity going through my body but I definitely get a different feeling to my whole being when I'm working on a project... It's not like I go looking for it, it's just... in my path... I... stumble upon it and I go wow, that's really interesting... I think I want to know. And then you start pursuing it and it usually opens up really fast so there's... some amazing finds quickly that keep you going... It's like all these doors; I was in this box and the doors are opening and I'm seeing what I could do for research."

Gwen, becoming a confident researcher, untenured: “I have many more... doctoral level requirements at the practitioner level than at the researcher level. So then I come here and... you’re going to be a researcher 40% of the time... and... what does that mean?... I had really heavy teaching loads... so that limited my research... Finding a research agenda, finding out my identity and then being in the Faculty of Education has been a challenge... Colleagues have... helped me in a lot of ways to... see the broad spectrum of identities as a researcher. And then be able to figure out... where is it that I... position myself in how I see the world.”

Gwen discussed how her notion of research had changed; at first she thought that “a researcher is somebody who studies things from a distance and... much like a traditional analyst in terms of therapy... keeps themselves at a distance, doesn’t get too invested in their clients and doesn’t have any sort of emotional response and... has a blank affect and... has themselves over away from here. And that felt... horrific to me, I didn’t want to be doing that kind of work that wasn’t interesting to me... I... thought that when I came in and started doing research I would have to put away my therapy identity, like it would just go somewhere, I don’t know where I thought it would go, but... I couldn’t draw on it and there wouldn’t be anything really useful to me from this very well developed identity... like those skills wouldn’t be helpful here. And I’m finding over time that they are incredibly helpful.”

Sadie, becoming a confident researcher, untenured: “When I first came... I used the same techniques that I used in my doctoral work... I just picked that because I was familiar with it... It’s hard when you’re coming out of practice into a university environment that really... stresses the fact that you have to do research and pick up new methodologies... There were projects... that I would say no to if I were tenured, absolutely no question about it... One of my colleagues invited me to join a couple of research projects with him and I said yes of course because that’s one of the ways of starting to get established. But I wouldn’t do that if I were tenured... I would be very, very picky about what I choose to work on. I would choose the things that I am really, really interested in doing versus the things that... might result in a publication.”

“I still view myself... as a novice. I would say... I’ve done this research study and these are the results of these research studies but I don’t know if I would call myself a researcher at this point in my career. A researcher might be someone who’s been at the university and has done ... multiple research projects versus me... I have been co on a few and principal on a few, I wouldn’t consider... myself a researcher. I think I’m on that journey... and... even with tenure... I would continue to research... I want to be a part of a research community versus being an independent researcher... I find... that I do a lot better if I am working with other people to get things done... I would say probably the best part of the research is the data collection at the end. Like the interacting with other people.”

“Ethics are really important and making sure that I don’t harm or hurt anyone as a result of participating in a research study. And making sure... that things are comfortable, that things are ethical and morally right... I think the process is maybe more important.”

RESEARCHER IDENTITIES

Findlow (2012) argues that in professional disciplines, practitioners may find their professional identity external to the university more reliable and meaningful than academic ones. Coming into academic contexts from professional practice, academia is often perceived as isolating, and many feel a lack of confidence or authority in their identity as academics. Additionally, career changes increase feelings of inadequacy and anxiety (Snyder, 2011). While some of our participants’ experiences echo these points, it is also true that for Gwen her therapy skills have turned out to be very useful in her process of becoming a researcher.

Writing is a central way academics come to know their profession (Lea & Stierer, 2009). Indeed, it is an act of identity (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). Writing within an academic context is the way we constitute and express that identity. When one writes, one uses materials, resources, practices, and genres of other people in the discourse. We identify with that discourse, discipline or set of research/writing practices. By developing researcher identities, we align ourselves with the work we do. Through acts of research and disciplinary writing over time, that identity becomes consolidated (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). It is this identity/ies that motivates us to persevere through difficulties, to think deeply and to engage in ‘slow scholarship’ (Hartman & Darab, 2012). For example, Andrea discussed how her notion of research changed as a result of engaging in a new way of writing. That is after many years of struggling to do mainstream qualitative analysis she allowed herself to write some radio documentaries that she found fascinating and by so doing she “just broke down all kinds of research barriers”. Thus, she reconstituted the researcher identity to suit her purpose in conducting research.

COLLABORATION

One way to develop researchers in a supportive framework is through collaboration. The benefits of co-operative research relationships include a cross-fertilization of ideas; a variety of points of view; knowledge increase; quality assurance; increase in publications; quicker turnaround of papers; the formation of long-term relationships; and support and encouragement. Research and writing collaboration, research shows, results in greater levels of productivity (Chen & Anderson, 2008; Creamer, 2004; Kiewra, 2008; Mayrath, 2008; Steinert, McLeod, Liben, & Snell, 2008; Walton et al, 2011; Zutshi, McDonald, & Kalejs, 2012). Cuthbert,

Spark, & Burke (2009) suggest that writing collaborations result in both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ outcomes.

Hard outcomes refer to the quantity and quality of published papers, successful grant applications and engagement in research activities such as conferences. While soft outcomes refer to feeling supported, developing confidence, and being part of a community (Cuthbert et al., 2009). Collaborative writing projects are known to have positive effects on the broader research community (Walton et al., 2011), on helping faculty develop confidence around writing and publishing (Hara, 2009) and on developing participatory writing cultures (Clughen & Hardy, 2011). Collaborative writing projects are also a good way to develop professional academic identities (Cuthbert et al., 2009). Some of our participants reflected enthusiastically about how collaborating with others aided their process of becoming a researcher. For example, Cathy spoke of “really, really” enjoying a collaborative project within a context otherwise full of many stresses and multiple demands. Further, Sadie spoke of the importance for her of a research community and how she does “better” when she works with others.

We argue that while publishing scholarly articles makes one a productive academic, the sustainability of this productivity is dependent on the writer/researcher developing an identity as such. We further argue that a supportive, collaborative environment provides the seedbed for researchers who not only produce but also find meaning in what they do. A more solidified writer/researcher identity leads to better quality research because the researcher is wholly invested. For example, Andrea, Marie and Babette, the three participants in our study with the most research experience, spoke of the significance of having great interest in their projects. Indeed, Marie and Babette associated research with embodiment. Perhaps because of their understandings about how important research is to them, Andrea and Marie noted that it is only part of their complex identities and work. We note that collaboration conflicts with neo-liberal notions of the individual who is both productive and entrepreneurial and the idea that in the neo-liberal university each academic conceived as a corporation is responsible for their own personal productivity (Teelken, 2011; Waitere et al., 2011).

THOUGHTS, MUSINGS AND CONTEMPLATIONS

Within an ontology of multiple realities and constantly negotiated selves, the notion of a single, stable and transparent reality becomes hazy. Language, speech and writing help to create realities to construct beings and to create stories of becoming. Traditional categories and concepts become inadequate for transcribing meaning and making choices about identities. In the fluidity between data collection and research findings in qualitative research, the ‘data’ and ‘findings’ often cannot be partitioned off into tidy jigsaw pieces. In qualitative research, writers

often face dilemmas that will not be compartmentalized and will not go away (St. Pierre, 1997; 2007). We are involved in a continual process of integrating thinking, subjectivities and representation. In this research we faced this dilemma.

We found that the participants in our study constructed their subjectivities in relation to the constraints and possibilities they had access to. They negotiated spaces for themselves within various discourses and located strengths to maneuver within these limits. Often conceptions of what constituted ‘a researcher’ did not fit with their idea of themselves but they reconstituted the identity to suit their purposes in conducting research.

The postmodern critique of what counts as ‘truth’ and how that ‘truth’ is represented has opened the door on what research can signify. Alternative forms of representation including personal narrative, fiction, performance texts, poetry or metaphor can carry as much (or different) meaning as an academic essay. In this research and in the contributions to the *Morning Watch*, these alternative texts are in evidence and our interviewees appeared to find these representations to be meaningful ways of representing their ‘researcher selves’.

When we write research, we write the narrative of that experience. In essence what we are doing is telling a story. We word a world into being (Richardson, 2000a). Then we re-word it through revisions and drafts until we are satisfied. But this “ ‘worded world’ never accurately, precisely, completely captures the studied world” (Richardson, 2000a, p. 923). In narrative too, like science writing, the writer’s voice speaks for others. The writer still has authority and privilege. One way to decentre this authority is to tell ‘collective stories’ that cross the boundaries between the individual and a group, and between the private and the public. It is written from the perspective of subjectivity, but a subjectivity constructed in a particular place and time. In other words, we write as situated, positioned authors with a collective story to tell. In this way, the world we create, the one we ‘word’ into being, is “both true and partial” (Richardson, 1990, p. 28).

This is not merely a selection of a method, but an epistemological choice. As Richardson (1990) argues, “[w]e choose how we write, and the choices we make do make a difference to ourselves, to social science, and to the people we write about” (p. 9). We conclude that our research writing is both a theoretical and practical way of unpacking our epistemological positions, for questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, for connecting with others and for nurturing ourselves (Richardson, 2000b).

The narratives we have discussed inform our understanding of the problem of developing a strong researcher identity that is produced and owned by the researcher instead of being produced by the prevailing academic discourse. By seeking to decentre research as a product and instead to focus on how researchers understand themselves, their work, and their processes we have attempted to ad-

dress the question of what kind of knowledge do 21st century subjects produce and what this might mean for both the researcher and researched.

Acknowledgements

This research is supported by a Faculty of Education research and development grant, Memorial University, Canada.

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Becoming Partial for a Bit of the Other

Mark Vicars and Nicola Yelland

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to interrogate the practices associated with the social processes of ontology. We discursively problematize the role of the researcher in contemporary inquiries and consider the ways in which our identities focus our becoming(s) within the intellectual and emotional uncertainties of academe.

Design/Methodology/Approach

We address our experiences in the context of our social, cultural, gendered and sexual positionalities as a signifying ontology from which to reflexively address our ways of being that frequently conflict with the dominant and contestation of normalised borders.

Findings

The paper suggests that it is relevant to view subjectivity as an ongoing inter-textual event through which interactions with the world become the process of becoming culturally intelligible. What we offer here are partial narratives of self that reflect and illuminate educational possibilities as ontological understandings of becoming through time, and how, we as subjects re/interpret the social processes of becoming.

Keywords: positionality, identity, normativity, becoming.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is authored from critical perspectives of becoming attentive to *how* our practices of self have been constituted within ‘discourses of the social and the individual’ (Fox, 1997, p. 42). In research communities, interrogation of *the ways* in which ‘Persons are now recognised to have perspectives on their cultural worlds that are likely to differ by gender and other markers of social position’ (Holland, 2003, p. 31) has provided a critical lens for interrogation of the quotidian. We seek to discursively problematise the hyphenated Other (Fine, 1994) of the researcher/ researched in contemporary inquiry and as qualitative educational researchers, we address and take as our focus our becoming(s) of being stuck within intellectual and emotional uncertainties in/out of the academy. Here we ‘speak’ to the discursive renegotiation of the ‘Being Here’ space of the field, and the ‘Being There’ space of the academy (Geertz, 1988, p. 148). Our re/experiences of speaking back from these spaces draw in, and on, the presence of our social, cultural, gendered and sexual positionalities as a signifying ontology; we seek to reflexively address our ways of working against the dominant and contest normalised borders. As a be/coming relation, we rethink how discourses of ontology sanction the ways in which affect, power and identities are re/experienced.

CHANGING THE SUBJECT

The ways in which we choose to show something of the everyday habits, and ways of being, are as St Pierre (1997) notes ‘... formed in and by academic habitus as particular and collective, knowing and knowledge producing subjects’(p.10). Increasingly struggling with uncertain interiority, feeling unconnected and set apart in the academy, our ways of being can be read an analogue for the act of knowing. As a transforming relation being and becoming it is in itself a ‘mode of response to the very forms of power that each day reproduces it’ (Barker, 1989, p.88).

In our research practices, we, the authors, are engaged in trying to understand 21st century pedagogy as a socio-cultural phenomenon. We focus our interrogative gaze towards social and cultural experiences surrounding educational policies and practices. We make meanings that are borne from the dialogic lives that we lead that are grounded in a network of relations, of differences and displacements of self/Other. We never speak with one voice but with different voices borrowed from various encounters informed from our personal and professional interactions. Such a stance situates subjectivity as an ongoing intertextual event in which one’s performative interactions with the world become the processes through which one is formed as a culturally intelligible subject. Practices of becoming interpellate subjects within wider sociocultural ethnoscapas (Appadurai, 1996).

The concept of ontology, of *who* a researcher is, their histories and experiences, therefore becomes significant for understanding as it frames and politicises the act of research and is reflective of a wider social, political and cultural dynamic. The ontology of being and of becoming part of a social group is a productive frame from which to analyse the re/constructed subject. Ontology requires the researcher to critically enquire what voice is being used? Who is doing the talking? Where has this voice come from? A narrator's voice is invariably connected to the social, political, cultural and historical landscapes and can tell us something about of 'that which writes is still changing - still in doubt' (Crisp, 1977, p. 212).

Is it all about me?

I (Vicars) have come to recognize, in the tellings of myself, a story of continually negotiating separation in the ways that I belong, act, speak and represent myself as a Gay man, an educator and researcher. Having spent years listening to instructing parental and institutional voices that promulgated hegemonic social and cultural roles to do with gender and sexuality, I write this from a Queer perspective that uses what Hill (1996) has called 'fugitive knowledge'. Fugitive knowledges are forms of knowing that are used to disrupt heterosexualising pedagogies.

Drawing on Boud's (1985) concept of 'demonstration-in-use' where it is suggested that reflection on the complexity of lived experiences enables the deconstruction of the self as subject, I pause to consider Gubrium's & Holstein's (2000) suggestion that ethnomethodology can illuminate how social life is performed by subjects in the potential it offers for demonstrating 'how they concretely construct and sustain social entities, such as gender, self and family' (p. 490).

Sturken (1997, p. 9) suggests, in her concept of 'technologies of memory', how memories are produced through 'objects, images, and representations' and that these are 'not vessels in which memory passively resides so much as objects through which memories are shared, produced, and given meaning'. She notes how objects involved in the production of memory tend to attach themselves to places and sites and as I begin to reflect on the memory of myself, I enter the strange yet familiar world of the past and I am drawn immediately to its capital.

I was being daily reminded of what I was not and what I should not be. Schoolyard jokes inculcated heteronormative inscriptions of sexual identity (Herek, 1987). Football, motorbikes, cars, swearing, not being a 'swot' became the substance that facilitated enactments of male bonding. Reflecting on photographs taken throughout adolescence I detect a characteristic pose captured in the coerced smile, the sideward momentary look, the furtive gaze. Martel (2003) as noted that:

It often happens that we do not remember the first time we did something, or even any one particular time, but remember only the repetition, the idea that we did the thing over and over. (p.8)

I find in numerous other school and family photographs the same representation of a fragmented self. Focusing on these images evokes intense emotion. They take me to an intimate place where it is difficult to diffuse a truth from the clamorous voices of the past.

In the winter of my first term at university, towards the end of 1987, our lives and living room dramatically changed. It became a venue for weekly meetings of a small group of Lesbians and Gay men determined to activate a local 'Stop Clause 28' campaign. Clause 28 of the Local Government Act, a private members bill brought by UK backbench Conservative Dame Jill Knight, sought to stop local authorities from 'intentionally promote homosexuality' or 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. I attended mass rallies in Manchester and London and heard speakers list the growing number of local authorities removing from their shelves books. I listened as these actions were compared to the book fuelled bonfires of the Nazis. Emotions and tempers were getting heated.

Resistance rang out in the centre of Manchester and in the centre of London as thousands amassed around Trafalgar Square. I remember the sense of hope that came from a feeling of being connected to other lives. Looking around at the sea of faces I felt part of a wider community. And yet, I now struggle to recognise myself, seeing instead how I had become tied in to an identity and a way of being that could only ever reproduce the conditions of my 'dis/ease'. Seidman (1993) in summarising Derrida's deconstructionist approach to understanding identity states that:

The logic of identity is a logic of boundary defining which necessarily produces a subordinated other. The social productivity of identity is purchased at the price of logic of a hierarchy normalisation, and exclusion. (p. 130)

Lurking behind a relational identity category, I had struggled to express who I thought I was. Eschewing the experience of homosexuality as problematic, yet pinioned in opposition to institutional and cultural forces of heterosexuality, I began to think of the ways in which I was being delineated. The separation I felt from the roles I inhabited had started me thinking about how I was being embedded within various institutional and cultural practices.

My Queer ontology sought to disturb and expose the contingencies of identity and in doing so attended vigilantly to what the self wants and does. Leonard (1997) has pointed out that a 'Queer theory urges the discovery of subjugated knowledge, and the positing and exploration of sites of resistance within the pres-

sured “subject” who knows’ (p. 4). Queer is a process of constant becoming and movement and Queer ontology raises numerous possibilities for identity, numerous possibilities for pedagogy and, in doing so, disrupts and disorganises normative/productive understandings and organising and systemising procedures. My resistance in speaking from out of a culturally tamed identity category refutes the idea of the possibility of reincorporation as heterosexuality’s Other. As Kopelson (2002) points out:

while heterosexist institutions work to promulgate a heterosexuality that is expansive and hegemonic in its singularity, they simultaneously work to reduce the province of queerness by confining homosexuality to a position of aberrant and insignificant singularity. (p. 22)

The idea of the past existing as an ‘Othered’ place, as lack, waiting to be filled by potential meaning found in the present suggests how ontological work help resist teleologic statements in contemporary contexts. The social process of ontology filtered through a changing social and cultural nomenclature re/create on-going texts of identity. These textual markers are as Crossly (2001, p. 87) notes: ‘a partial perspective, in need for, completion,’ and opens up possibilities for speaking and writing into existence denaturalised ways of being that are obscured or simply unthinkable when once centred self-knowing story is substituted for another.

And me too?

When do we come into being? If, as Sturken (1997) suggests memories are enacted via objects, images and representations they depend on reflections and connections being articulated at a point in time. Today, as an academic and professor of education, I (Yelland) am engaged in activities of the intellect. To reflect on identity is important to me as it goes to the core of learning as well as being. Learning is about connections and transformations. The mantra for E.M. Forster in *Howard’s End* was ‘only connect’ - and you need to know who you are and have some idea of how you got here, to join the dots. Cavarero (2000) uses stories as her means of connection—she says that they make experiences ‘coherent and tangible’ (p. 1). Here we put together the stories with the social processes of ontology to illustrate some ways in which qualitative research is framed by the researcher and deconstruct how this might shape what we do and how it can be useful, valued and contribute to the research corpus in meaningful ways.

In adopting Foucault’s (1972) notion of genealogy as a counter history of the position of subject, my memories begin with the haphazard trajectory of shifting homes from Cornwall to Singapore, formerly and exotically known as ‘the far east’, and back again. The duality of ‘home’ which has since multiplied to even more locations has given me an itinerant ‘air’ which defies the geography of place and reflects a cosmopolitan identity of being neither Cornish, English, Singapor-

ean or now Australian. People always ask me where I am 'from' because they can't figure it out. While I view this as an asset, they seem to regard it with curiosity, and seek to define me by some other more established criteria that makes them feel comfortable. My memories of childhood are vivid. We were a group of multinational kids roaming free around our 'compound' in Singapore, building tree houses, eating raw sugar cane and rambutans fresh from trees. We were allowed this freedom not by design, but the fact that our ex-pat parents left us in the care of 'amahs' while they spent most of their time 'partying', and there were also a lot of other things Amah had to do than worry about us. None of us came to much harm (a couple of broken arms), but we felt invincible in our jungle environment and explored and discovered new things every day. This was to become a pattern in my genesis. Characterised by wanderings, exploration and not being good at receiving orders of how things should be done because that was the way it was always done. My school years were dominated by labels of 'feisty' and one report noted that I must realize that there are established ways of doing things that may not coincide with my own views and actions.

I came into being at University in the 1970s. This was a time of the revolution of ideas and the first TV war near to where I was brought up. We bussed up to London to march to the US embassy on Grosvenor Square. All the women I know had read Greer and Friedan. Marilyn French's (1977) *The Women's Room* became the bible of how we would overcome inequality and shun traditional practices. We applauded Mira for her boldness and scorn of those who criticized her. We endured scathing comments about our looks, sexuality, bodies and our purpose in life and we evolved in a society that placed us in a frame of being 'undesirable' to men because we wanted to be considered their equals in all aspects of social, economic, political and personal worlds. When I hear women in contemporary debates proudly state that they are 'not feminists' because there is no need to be in today's world, I am aghast. The backlash seems to be complete and they have been conned into thinking they have equality of opportunity and outcomes, while one woman is on the front bench of parliament and equal pay remains ethereal and invisible in the corporate and political worlds.

This social ontology based in counter movements of social justice (Personal Narratives Group, 1989) and gendered identities shape who I have become as a professor of education, a teacher, a mother, a grand mother, an aunt, a friend and so on. They are identities that shift each day but are underpinned by a sense of social justice and the belief that society undervalues the intellectual and physical capabilities of women in significant ways and lets semantics that apply to other attributes, be condemned in laws of racial vilification. Yet, if a woman is verbally abused we are usually told that we are too sensitive and we need to 'get over it'. John Lennon and Yoko Ono (Some Time in New York City, 1972) wrote a song describing women's subservience to men and it is politically incorrect to name it

fully—Women are the N*****s of the world. It emphasizes the female worker as the slave of society and especially the corporate world, yet women can be vilified with gender specific slurs - while doing the same to other groups is either enshrined in legislation or politically incorrect.

I speak as a subject (Weedon, 1987) and from a feminist identity (Personal Narrative Group 1989) so that when I talk about knowledge it is shaped and produced from a background that is working class, enshrined in beliefs about equity and grounded in seventies feminism (Millet, 1971). While Mark (Vicars) sought/ seeks to disrupt heterosexualising pedagogies, I have been more concerned with enabling practices to dismantle the heritage curriculum and practices of schools that came into being in the industrial revolution to control the working class and lead them to a life of subservience. My research has been concentrated in disadvantaged public schools and concerned with the ways in which pedagogies and curriculum might play a role in building the cultural and cognitive capital of the students in them. These are children who are often undervalued and underrated in terms of their capacity to achieve who have untapped potential to do amazing things.

Similarly, being a professor in a 21 century university, has left me feeling overwhelmed by the lack of concern regarding quality, while all the rhetoric abounds about the ‘student experience’ as being characterized by ‘engagement, excellence and accessibility.’ Most contemporary universities that I know have more administrators than academics. Yet the nature of academic work has become focused on administering procedures with inferior support and complaints from students that they can’t find anyone to help when they are on campus—which is rare, as most work a 35 hour week as well as being enrolled in a full time course. Doing research is tolerated if you are able to obtain funding, since it brings in commensurate income and kudos to the institution. Academics are ‘rented out’ as research consultants to produce reports that maintain the status quo or endorse the point of view of the funder. Articles have to be published in outlets that are nebulously given the ‘quality’ label and cited multiple times in order for them to be taken seriously. These new processes of social ontology shape epistemological debates and render the academic as left wing ideologues, as if that is something to be avoided rather than lauded. Desire for social justice and equity in a schooling system is now viewed as being divisive and playing the class card, to cut off debate and to maintain unequal sources of educational funding. Women remain the minority in senior leadership positions. Is this progress? Having *become* in the halcyon days of the 1970s, and recognizing that the social processes of ontology impact and shape identities, my views of the world, and my research interests are closely aligned with my being. They are underpinned by a quest to understand the social, cognitive, economic and emotional aspects of teaching and learning in the 21st century. They tell and retell scenarios that I hope will impact on the actions and

understandings of a new generation of academics and reflect the ongoing impact of the social processes of ontology on research in education.

SUMMARY

In this article, we have traced how our ontological awareness became “ a discursive... motif for that uprooting of certainty. [How in our lives] It represent[ed] an experience of change, transformation and hybridity” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 10). The ontology of being part of a social group was for us a productive lens from which we started to analyse how our taking up of positions, identities and standpoints was invariably connected to and informed by the wider discursive landscapes that had social, political, historical significance and pedagogical value. Our challenge to traditional epistemologies was located in our ongoing hermeneutic analysis of self as the situated Other. Ontology purpose/fully informed the narrating of presence as a re/constructing subject and as our narrating voices started to articulate something of our ongoing endeavours with the social performatives of identity, the social and cultural negotiations of self. ‘I’ became a defining position from which to speak and with which to re/narrate the story of self.

Our voices engage with the problematics of proximity and as we chose not to ignore the knowledge afforded with having experiences of detachment our analysis of ontology discloses the psychological, social and emotional rituals of power at work.

Interrogation of these formative and forming practices of self are within post-positivist, feminist and post-structuralist thinking, increasingly accepted as nuanced research practices. In re-encounter, the ontological practices of self through which we are being formed and reformed as agentic subjects help articulate the notion that it can be more profitable to view subjectivity as an ongoing intertextual event through which interactions with the world become the process of becoming culturally intelligible. In our various attempts and struggles with identifying with ‘difference as the grounds for identity’ (Britzman, 1995, p.161), we have sought to distance ourselves from inculcated understandings of ourselves as members of gendered, classed and (hetero)sexual communities of practice. Miller (1998, p 368) has suggested how:

addressing “self” as a site of permanent openness and resignifiability” opens up possibilities... for speaking and writing into existence denaturalised ways of being that are obscured or simply unthinkable when once centred self-knowing story is substituted on-going for another.

That is not to say the re/presentations are inaccurate or untrue; they are best understood as a partial synthesis of days, months and years spent re/working nar-

ratives of self. They are ontological understandings of becoming through time, and how, we as subjects re/interpret the social processes of becoming.

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Design (Research) Methodologies and Modes of Becoming

Large Group Interventions as Practice of Relations, Narrations and Aesthetics

Susanne Maria Weber

Purpose

The article is an inquiry into Large Group Interventions (LGI) and the underlying notions of becoming. In those systemic methods of collective learning and creative methodologies, participation of different stakeholder groups and multi-perspectivity is crucial. All LGI's belong to the epistemic mode of openness (Peters & Roberts, 2011). Nevertheless they follow different patterns of knowledge creation and underlying knowledge cultures of open transformation and research.

Design/Methodology/Approach

In a Foucauldian methodological perspective, a multilevel focus (research-)methodical, epistemological and subjectivation, is applied. Interested in the inventories and placement of knowledge, as well as the modes of creation. The 'archeology of knowledge' (Foucault, 1992) primarily analyzes societal 'real' relations (praxis oriented methodical models), secondly, 'reflexive relations' of academic discourses (research methodical approaches, methodological and theoretical foundations) and thirdly, 'discursive relations' (modes of causation, becoming and subjectivation). By analyzing some of the 'surfaces of emergence' (Foucault, 1992) of open processes and creative methodologies, the form of a discourse of open modes of becoming in organizational transformation (research) is addressed.

Findings

Connected to academic knowledge creation, to methodical and methodological reflection of research designs, specific ‘organizing principles’ and different grammars of emergence become visible. Their underlying schools of thought, their theoretical and methodological foundations and different models of causation at the level of individual and collective patterns of awareness, imply subject-positions created and the ‘becoming’ of the ‘Self’ as Practice of Relations, Narrations and Aesthetics.

Keywords: large group interventions, discourse analysis, organizational research and transformation, design (research-)methodologies, relations, narrations, aesthetics, modes of becoming

The initial point of this paper is an inquiry into Large Group Interventions, their significance in institutional transformative processes and their position in social discourse as a methodology of becoming. Large Group Interventions, as systemic methods of collective learning, are known to support self-organization, social learning and systemic knowledge management. In practice and research, the reception of Large Group Interventions (LGI’s) started in the mid 1990s (Bunker & Alban, 1996; Weber, 2005a), its relative novelty causing it to be largely unexplored in academic discourse and reflection.

The contribution at hand addresses the epistemic embeddings and ‘modes of becoming’ of those creative methodologies, where participation of different stakeholder groups and multi-perspectivity is crucial. Although in general all belong to the epistemic pattern of openness (Peters & Roberts, 2011), within this paradigmatic approach of systems thinking, different patterns of knowledge creation, as well as different, underlying knowledge cultures of open transformation and research can be found—and hence different modes and modalities of ‘becoming’ are inclined.

After presenting an introduction to Large Group Interventions as such (section 1), in section 2, some of the most well-known Large Group Intervention approaches (LGI’s), such as the ‘Future Search Conference’, ‘Open Space Technology’ (OST) and ‘Appreciative Inquiry’ (AI) are presented. Section 3, the use of Large Group Interventions as research settings comes into sight. Notions of ‘Becoming’ now are connected to academic knowledge creation, to methodical and methodological reflection of research designs and the bringing about of research knowledge. Within the notion of ‘open research designs’, specific ‘organizing principles’ and different grammars of emergence become visible.

In section 4, those open approaches to change and research are connected to their underlying schools of thought, which means to their theoretical and methodological foundations. The modes of ‘becoming’ addressed here are related to

causation at the level of individual and collective patterns of awareness, i.e. to an epistemic level.

In section 5, knowledge creation in society, research and epistemology will be connected to the mode and type of knowledge—and subject-positions created. Here, the notion of ‘becoming’ relates to the becoming of the ‘Self’ within and by transformational open system approaches.

With this multilevel focus, (research-)methodical, epistemological and subjectivation, a Foucauldian methodological perspective is applied, which is interested in the inventories and placement of knowledge, as well as the modes of creation. A discourse analytical ‘archeology of knowledge’ (Foucault, 1992) primarily analyzes societal ‘real’ relations (praxis oriented methodical models), secondly, ‘reflexive relations’ of academic discourses (research methodical approaches, methodological and theoretical foundations) and thirdly, ‘discursive relations’ (modes of causation, becoming and subjectivation). By analyzing some of the ‘surfaces of emergence’ (Foucault, 1992) of open processes and creative methodologies, the modal form of a discourse of open modes of becoming in organizational transformation (research) is addressed.

INTRODUCTION: LARGE GROUP INTERVENTIONS AS METHODOLOGY OF BECOMING

Over the course of the last 40 years, system-interventions, open innovation processes, and participative Large Group Interventions have become known as methodologies and methods of systemic change (Bunker & Alban 1996; 2006; Weber, 2005a, b), of open innovation processes and of participatory designs for organizational change and participatory research. They are seen as systemic approaches for change, offering paradigmatic shifts given by the ‘virtues of openness’, as Michael Peters and Peter Roberts (2011) put it. The following overview (Bunker & Alban, 1996, p. 9) illustrates the alleged paradigmatic differences between the traditional approach of ‘organizational development’ and the paradigm of open and systemic change approaches in organizations and networks.

Old paradigm:	New paradigm:
▪ Sequential change	▪ Simultaneous change
▪ Partial systems in one room	▪ The whole open system in one room
▪ Working on individual themes	▪ Goal definition is open to contributions from all
▪ Frequently problem-oriented	▪ Solution oriented
▪ Diagnosis of the field by few (teams, consultants, experts etc.)	▪ Diagnosis of the organization by all
▪ Control-oriented	▪ Not control-oriented, contextual control
▪ Slow change	▪ Fast change

Table 1: The paradigm of systems change (Bunker & Alban, 1996, p. 9)

As defined by Koenigswieser & Keil (2000), those developmental participatory processes that address 21st century problems, such as working with dispersed organizations and engaging people to get involved, are seen to unfold their co-creative qualities especially in groups above 30 participants. Participatory cooperation and research in large or very large developmental settings ranges between 30 and up to 3000 participants (Weber, 2000).

As Bunker & Alban (1996; 2006) show, the common asset of Large Group Interventions is to gather a whole system and to discuss and take action on the target agenda. Agendas vary from future plans, products, and services, to redesigning work, to the discussion of troubling issues and problems. Oriented towards cross-cultural cooperation in institutional, networked and global change, Large Group Interventions tend to create new patterns of cooperation and development. Mandl (2013) sees co-creativity as the practice of consensual effectiveness in organizations.

Those structured processes for engaging large numbers of people allow fostering change by information, by commitment, by a fusion of planning and implementation - by a shortening of time needed to conceive and execute policies, programs, services or projects. Particularly well-known approaches are the 'Future Search' Conference (Weisbord & Janoff, 1995), 'Open Space' by Harrison Owen (1997) and the 'Appreciative Inquiry' in a large group design (Bruck & Weber, 2000).

As methods of intervention and organizational change (Bunker, 1999; Oels, 2003; Polanyi, 1999; Weber, 2002; 2005 a,b), Large Group Interventions in general are seen as a trans- or inter-discursive space and a form of epistemic technology where explicit, but especially implicit knowledge becomes a space of individual and collective experience, as well. As a methodology for participatory practice and research, Large Group Interventions are object of academic research interests—and a methodology for research. In evaluative approaches (Oels 2003; Weber, 2002; 2005a) the outcomes and conditions for success of participatory methods for organizational changes have been analyzed.

Apart from their similarities as system change and research approaches, Large Group Interventions carry specific performative practices, attentional orders and modes of knowledge creation as well as patterns of subjectivation (Foucault). In the following, they will be analyzed as social methodologies of becoming.

LARGE GROUP INTERVENTIONS: SOCIAL METHODOLOGIES OF (COLLECTIVE) BECOMING

Inasmuch as they are based on development, education, the notion of learning, dialogue and transformation in the mode of emergence for practice and research, Large Group Interventions can be regarded as methodologies of becoming. The diverse methodologies of complex change all are based on the paradigmatically

new quality of systemic transformation (Weber, 2009). Embedded into the concept of the ‘learning organization’ (Senge, 1990), Large Group Interventions can be reconstructed as ‘rituals of transformation’, which fulfill particularly constitutive, conjunctive and innovative functions and can be understood as ‘transitional spaces’ to the unknown and to alterable futures (Weber, 2005a). Taking a closer look, we can identify different social spheres and spaces of knowledge creation and notions of becoming.

‘Future Search’ for Building Common Ground

‘Future Search’ is an approach of transformational learning, developed by Marvin Weisbord in order to create ‘productive workplaces’(1987). Based on earlier versions of this approach (1992), the ‘Future Search Conference’ (Weisbord & Janoff, 1995) addresses system change. It organizes a group of 64 stakeholders into mixed settings and a joint dynamic learning curve over 2.5 days, aiming to integrate system-learning, self-management and ‘committed action’ (Weisbord, 1992, p. 13).

The starting point of this approach and of an intervention is the diagnosis of time lines of 20 and more years back, addressing past, present and future. 64 participants coming from different experiences and institutional backgrounds are chosen by the planning and steering committee, in order to represent their perspectives and to develop common ground together. Adhering to the theories of Weisbord & Janoff (2000, p. 130), keys to success are to connect the goal with the right persons who are relevant for the implementation of this goal. Instead of wanting to change other people, the conditions under which people interact should be changed; ‘Future Search’ sees the potential to close the gaps of difference by working equally on shared problems. Basic principles of the ‘future search conference’ are to get the ‘whole system in the room’, to explore all aspects of a system before trying to fix any single part, to put common ground and future action front and center, to treat problems and conflicts as information, not action items, and to have people accept responsibility for their own work, conclusions, and action plans (Weisbord & Janoff 2000; 1995).

The approach is a highly standardized one, based on planning activities of an expert group, built in advance and organized over several months, in order to prepare the conference by identifying representatives of systematically defined stakeholder groups, including knowledge holders, the powerful, the engaged, and the affected ones. Eight stakeholder groups with eight representatives each should build the body of expertise to deal with ‘wicked’ problems. Participants and social spaces emerging are pre-structured - in order to establish a merging multiperspectivity within social complexity. Multidisciplinary cooperation is addressed in order to strengthen constructive collaboration.

The core principle of the approach is to involve the stakeholders in making social systems better (Weisbord, 1992, p. Xi) and in supporting ‘new paradigm planning’ shifting ‘from engineer to searcher’ (Hutzel, 1992). Situated and institutionalized knowledge is structurally represented (Weisbord, 1992, p. 11) and positioned in ‘microcosms’ arranged as a continuous, dynamic and integrative process (Weisbord & Janoff, 1995, p. X). ‘Differences are valued, but not worked on’ (Weisbord 1992, p. 5). Relations between participants are less relevant than relations to the world (p. 11). Groups are structured by systemic criteria following criteria for intentionally created communication. Collective problem-solving is imagined and envisioned as ‘being together in one boat’. All participants are regarded as experts (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 122) and members of a community of responsibility, taking into account ‘objective’ world and inner representations (p. 118).

Future Search Conferences are seen as ‘laboratories’ of learning, of creativity, establishing democracy as consensus-oriented practice of legitimate decision-making, where self-government is actualized against autocracy. This methodology follows the educational paradigm (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 115) of organizing as social practice.

‘Open Space’—Self-organization with Passion and Responsibility

This intervention methodology, based on self organization, was founded by Harrison Owen. He sees ‘Open Space’ as ‘a new way to hold better meetings’, as a natural laboratory in order ‘to perceive and explore the emerging potential of our common humanity in a transforming world’. This process uses the informality of an unstructured coffee break for its conference design. Conference agendas are created purely through the participation of participants. ‘Emergence’ and autopoiesis are the core principles of the so called ‘universal’ and ‘trans-cultural’ method (Owen, 2001, p. 25). Other core principles are ‘passion’ and ‘responsibility’ as the two central ‘attractors’ in self-organizing, energetic processes: passion also requires responsibility: ‘excitement and results’—or ‘having fun and doing something useful’ offers tension and productivity at the same time (p. 28).

In the mode of performative organizing, the contemplated practice of this methodology of becoming is oriented towards playfulness, passion and responsibility, the energetic circle and the emerging patterns of self-organization. Within the natural laboratory, openness (Peters & Roberts, 2011) is the basic principle, bringing about the learning chance of the ‘freedom shock’ (p. 73). Everybody should be ‘prepared to be surprised’. Emergence and naturalism, informal organizing, community and playfulness are the core elements to acknowledge at the level of performativity of the circle.

Here, ‘spirit’ becomes a new mental model of organizing ‘in the expanded Now’ (Owen, 2000, p. 73). Using Indian talking-stick-ceremonies, this approach

links to religious and mythical knowledge, Storytelling is intended to create spirit (p. 164) and a 'sense of oneness' (p. 164.). Being instead of acting, energy, non-intervention and holding the space are crucial patterns to be found in the performative practice of 'Open Space'. 'Doing nothing, with elegance' is regarded the principle of a 'working in the domain of spirit' (Owen 1997, p. 79).

'Appreciative Inquiry' into 'Heliocentrism'

The 'Appreciative Inquiry' approach focuses on desirable futures and a solution based approach. Hence, Appreciative Inquiry does not claim to be a method or management tool only, but also a philosophy and an attitude.

The approach is theoretically grounded, metaphysical and visionary and oriented towards normative, practical knowledge and pragmatic action oriented research (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2000, p. 87), as intentionally affirmative social methodology (Srivastva, Fry & Cooperrider, 1999, p. 1). The primary task of leadership is creating a context of appreciation, where positive and better mission statements and 'leitbilder' on a collective and dynamic basis can emerge (Cooperrider, 1999, p. 94).

Appreciative forms of knowledge are related to time, insofar they imply anticipations of the future. Relating to Heidegger's concept of 'Geworfenheit' (Thrownness) and of 'Entwurf' (Design) and a 'projective' existence (Cooperrider, 1999, p. 97), appreciative knowledge is a mental power, weaving future into the texture of the present. Based on empirical data of placebo research, social psychology and others, he shows the relevance of positive emotions, internal dialogue, cultural vitality and meta-cognitive competences. All are based on the relationship between positive images and positive action. Instead of 'social helplessness', Cooperrider addresses 'social helpfulness'. Positive affects widen the focus on wellbeing and solidarity, make us act altruistic and in a pro-social manner. Cognition then is reconstructed as dialogue with the self. Reflecting on cognitive ecology, metacognition is regarded to support the conscious development of positive images and positive 'self-monitoring'. Imaginative projections are key to the raising and the evolution of consciousness (p. 118).

The qualitative focus of the interview design integrates into large group settings, too (Bruck & Weber, 2000) and uses constructivism, simultaneity of interview and change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 17ff).

Philosophical, constructivist and postmodern approaches focus on subjective knowledge and positive futurism, on organismic and biocentric position of 'heliotropic science' with world shaping perspectives. Self-narrations enter into a theory of hope and metaphors of change. Cooperrider & Whitney (1999) see 'Appreciative Inquiry' as strategy for 'positive subversion', as the dynamic of positive protests is unstoppable, once in progress (p. 5).

	Future Search Conference	Open Space Technology	Appreciative Inquiry Summit
Philosophy	Complex solutions by orchestration of multiple perspectives	Free play of forces, order out of chaos Autopoiesis	Narrative constitution of the self
Principles and Core Elements	Representational system in a room, focus based on communalities and consensus, Conflic potentiality and responsibility	Self-organization of participants, informality, Energetic principle	Focus on solution, best practices as basis for change
Process	Standardized process in phases, pre-structured groups, preparation group	Self-organized themes and topics of participants and working groups	Appreciative Interview as affirmative social research
Goals	Collective consensus oriented, building 'common ground'	Broad information base, energizing of the system	Root metaphor intervention
Participants	Ideal size 64 participants	Unlimited between a few and some thousand participants	Unlimited
Planning Process	Systemically mixed preparation group, pre-organized setting	Sponsor plans, participation is voluntarily	Mixed planning group, participation is defined

Table 2: Matrix on Large Group Interventions

In a Foucauldian sense, the systemic management paradigm of openness we just touched upon, is not only found at the level of social methodologies for transformation and change, but is also connected to other 'surfaces of appearance'. In the next step, we will see the notion of becoming in academic knowledge creation. Here, the systemic paradigm of openness follows the qualitative research methodologies and new research designs are addressed. 'Becoming' relates to the becoming of knowledge within procedural and multi-perspectivity oriented research settings.

'BECOMING' AS A DIMENSION OF EPISTEMIC STANCES IN FUTURE-RESEARCH

In its emerging strands, organization and network research has been taking up the temporal and participative dimension of organizing and takes into account past as well as organizational futures (Strati, 2000). Organizational Development, as well as cultural approaches, gain acceptability in organizational analysis and research today. Inter-organizational perspectives come into sight and with this, loosely coupled systems and public policy become relevant for organizational analysis and research. In general we can observe a paradigm-shift of organizational research

from a dominant rationalist and positivist paradigm into emerging organizational methodologies.

'Becoming' as Narratological (Research) Practice

With this paradigmatic shift into the constitution processes of (research) knowledge, being and becoming is integrated into the research processes. Quality criteria of organizational research (Strati, 2000, p. 47) positions a common understanding by a list of do's and don'ts: a perspective on the research of (organizational) 'becoming' that is oriented towards complexity therefore implies new normative placements: accordingly, research approaches therefore should not

- have an overly rational image of the way organizations function
- construct organization theory, which reifies organizational goals in theory
- post ideologically conservative assumptions and methods of analysis
- consider organizations to be integrated by the consensus of their members and by the convergence of their interests
- be oriented towards an unhistorical analysis
- only focus on static aspects of the organization
- pay too little attention to power
- follow constrained images of organizations
- consider people to be devoid of free will
- take organizations as the exclusive unit of analysis

New concepts of organization and organization research (Strati, 1999, 2000) address a spatial, a knowledge, a social, as well as an organizational pattern of 'becoming' as collective creations and interweaving textures. Obviously, conceptualizations of 'organization' and of collective creation open up for 'becoming' at the individual and the collective level.

The epistemic stance and the grammar of 'becoming'—the rationality of paying attention and the place of operating comes into view here: Debates on action research show the question of power, actors, articulation and voice as relevant topics within the methodological reflection of 'open' research designs and processes. Researchers might still be initial actors and actively create the inquiry design, structure the inquiry situation and create a reactive research design. Action research discusses the option that the intervention initiative emanates from the practice

field, leaving researchers with the role of participatory observation and non-reactive data-gathering. Additionally, a third case comes into view, where research and practice design the setting co-productively and equally pursue research and transformation. A co-productive model of transformational research comes close to the ideal of action research, assuming the simultaneity of research and action. Systemic research approaches align with open and co-productive models of knowledge creation. As Large Group Interventions are seen as systemic processes, their potential for qualitative research or action and design research seems to be obvious.

Participative Planning and Preparation of the Research Process

Reflections on research methodologies ask for the knowledge that is coming into existence, the social space and time created by research design and research practice. In non-participatory formats, researchers develop research designs, carry out ‘pretests’. Still, group formats will be used, along with systemic research designs. Systemic research perspectives will assume that the interaction with the research subject is not a ‘one way street’, but also will touch the researchers and the research.

Research designs then will be discussed based on whether they are open to process and whether they create trust and allow latent issues to emerge. Principles of ‘openness’ and ‘narration’ are crucial. Research designs are considered to be alterable—as grounded theory would suggest (Strauss, 1991). ‘Respondents’ are regarded as active co-producers: Diversity and authenticity of opinions as well as the plurality of perspectives are to be made visible and audible.

Co-productive Research during the Process

In a co-productive structuring of the research design, it is not only the researchers but also the participants as a group and individuals who are responsible for the success of the research process. Data is not generated by virtue of isolation of the people to be questioned; rather, it is assumed that successful research processes display a high degree of self-organization. This is why action- or design-researchers are wanted to take a more context-designing than active role in the process. In systemic research designs, horizontal dialogues, open research designs and communication spheres are developed. Knowledge creation relates to experimenting dialogues.

Objective and Topic-Specificity of the Research Formats

Research designs with Large Group Interventions differ, too, with regards to timing and structuring, objectives (research or change focus), role of participants (‘informants’ or ‘changemakers’), etc.

Actors in the field will involve specific conceptualizations of participation and research, of power and knowledge, of ethics and values, of methodological

principles and methodical decisions to be made. Apart from the commonalities of a system approach, of procedural and narrational orientation, the notion of ‘openness’ itself refers to different aspects. In action or design research, the notion of ‘openness’ seems to be positioned in a topological space, where processes, too, may be pre-structured. A second difference addresses perspectivity: either we find ‘solution’ vs. ‘problem’-oriented approaches. Thirdly, ‘discursive’ vs ‘performativity’ oriented approaches are found. Hence, the paradigmatical shift towards ‘openness’ still will clearly have to be differentiated.

In his approach, the action researcher Scharmer (2007, p. 366) offers a set of analytical criteria for the epistemic stances involved in the analysis of participatory approaches: in his reflection on the social grammars of emergence he uses 10 categories: the gesture of paying attention, the place of operating, the seeing of the world, the knowledge coming into existence, the social space, the social time, the collective social body, the primary causal mechanism, the episteme coming into existence and the Self. With this set of criteria, he offers an epistemology of the human spirit (Scharmer, 2007, p. 368) in order to ‘navigate deeper transformations with greater transparency and ease’.

‘Future Search’: Researching Inter- / Multi-professional Cooperation

In contrast to research methods which apply the principle of openness and self-organization for processes of systemic self-exploratory research, we have seen that Future Search is a pre-grouping and systematizing approach. Pre-structuring is not only relevant regarding the perspectives, but is also true for the process as such and the participants. The participant constellation orients itself by system representation and the reconstruction of the system perspectives, grouping participants with regard to conceptual and demographic factors for representative, structurally heterogeneous group compositions.

However, groups are less concerned with ‘discussion’ in the sense of a comparison and an exchange of opinions and position than with dialogical processes or collective opinion-forming. The explicit search for commonalities does not stand as point of departure—as it does for the group discussion (Lamnek, 2005, p. 433)—for homogeneous groups which collectively form opinions, and reproduce them, or in which collective experiences are mirrored. In contrast, focus of LGI’s is the transformative process of dialogical understanding and collective learning through the arranged difference. Participants are regarded to be co-responsible for the process of the self-governing group and convey role-responsibilities. Those are supposed to be discharged which emphasizes the principle of shared, collective responsibility:

The given gesture of paying attention is to start to open up habitual judgments by the maximum mix of stakeholders and professions. Suspension of habitual judgments is the starting point of the prearranged setting, in order to redirect

habitual structures by direct contact. Multi-perspectivity is laid out in a method-pluralistic way insofar as group dialogues, scenic portrayals, new constellations into homogeneous or heterogeneous groups, as well as moderation methods etc. are integrated. Here, the inner dynamics within the group are not to be shaped by the researchers but rather by the system members themselves, who should switch their roles over the course of the process. During this process, changes of perspective are regarded as integral part of the method—structurally similar to the qualitative interview.

The here given attentional structure in research design is oriented towards inter-professional and inter-institutional multi-perspectivity. The research design operates at the boundary of organizations and professions and starts from the limitations of perspectivity, underlying each profession or institution. The representational order of participants manifests ‘becoming’ as a process of ‘Bildung’. The knowledge coming into existence is the search for ‘common ground’ and its potentials and further needs. The social space created refers to the multi-level and complexity oriented shift from ‘mental models’ towards potential collective ‘leitbilder’—and a new common ground for cooperation. The Social Time created is a chronologically structured one: Past—present and future is the temporal order of this ‘search’.

‘Open Space’: Researching Grammars of Becoming in Self-organizing Fields

Open Space (Owen 1997; Weber 2000) as the most open and least pre-structured method of Large Group Interventions only predefines a challenging and intriguing framing topic defined in advance as part of preparing participants (and possibly cooperating researchers). Participants decide on the basis of their own ‘passion and responsibility’ to bring in topics they regard as important and worth working on together with others. As any participant may offer or join ad-hoc-workshops and contribute—either sharing or learning, relevant topics are addressed in ad-hoc dialogues, documented by the participants themselves.

Depending on whether the process or data assessment is initiated and actively conducted by either research, praxis, or both in a co-production, it is either a reactive or non-reactive setting. If research takes part in the naturally feeding processes ‘in the field’, it has the role of a participating observer and is involved in the self-researching process of the organizational system. Such self-feeding, dialogic-interactive processes can be co-executed via video or audio recording. Additionally, print materials in the form of note cards, pin boards or flip chart transcripts or an electronic or print documentation are created by participants.

In this large group format, intervention by researchers is structurally ‘minimally invasive’—research may stay in a purely observing position. With regards to research logic, ‘open space’ then is seen close to the narrative interview in the sense

that the collective ‘narration of the system’ can be traced (Weber, 2005a) within the emergent process. Similar to an autobiographic narration, open space allows collective patterns of emergence. Explanatory texts, action- and event-reporting descriptions and scenic reconstructions of meaning are data and material, which adds to the collective narration to be analyzed here.

The attentional structure of Open Space as a research design is based on emergence and the free place of forces. The approach implies the perspectivity of auto-poiesis and radical openness for emergence. Following this energetic principle of self-organization, it allows a non-reactive design. The knowledge focused on and brought into existence is ‘passion’ and ‘responsibility’. The social space created is based on dialogical and reflective approaches, where authenticity and trust is raised. Social time bases on attractors and synergies, the emergence of systemic relevance by the ‘flow’ of deceleration and presence, the fluidity, where non-activity as well is a legitimate position.

Appreciative Inquiry—Into Visionary Imagination and Self-Creation

While ‘problem’-oriented approaches are not addressed within this contribution, Appreciative Inquiry suggests a solution-oriented research paradigm. Following the tradition of action research, Cooperrider (1999, 2000; Senge et al. 2004) intends a strong connection between transformation and research. In his view, perspectivity underlies research questions—and therefore shapes reality. Unquestioned normalities are regarded as revisable. Thus, Cooperrider demands a solution and appreciation oriented focus of academic knowledge production (Srivastva, Fry & Cooperrider, 1999, p. 1). Academia and research should change its perspective towards a ‘resources and solution focus’. As any utterance is an anticipation of the future, a reflexive ‘looking forward and backwards’ comes into perspective, here.

At its methodical basis, it is a conversation guideline for a qualitative interview. This analytical interview (Lamnek, 2005, p. 334) aims to examine the conditions of practice. Participants focus on their qualities and contribution for the analysis of dimensions of success. The Appreciative Inquiry as a ‘transformative interview’ refers back and compels the subjective narration of an individual into collective narrations. As it usually happens in the form of a partner interview, the asymmetry of a classical interviewer-interviewee (p. 335) does not appear.

The here given attentional structure refers to the emergence of desired futures, which are focused by memorizing experiences of the desired quality in the past. The Research Design operates in a luminal space between past and future—analyzing ‘eupractical’ knowledge. The here underlying perspectivity is an affirmative analysis into the emerging field of the future of a social and organizational system. The knowledge, which is brought into existence is the root metaphor of future knowledge, the generative imagination analysis. The social space created

focuses on the collective emergence of the desired and analyzes emergent collective imagination.

	Future Search Conference	Open Space Technology	Appreciative Inquiry
Attentional Structure in Research Design	Interprofessional and inter-institutional multi-perspectivity as a systematical starting point	Free play of forces, Autopoiesis, radical openness for emergence	'letting come' - emergence of desired futures
The Place where Research design operates	Representational operating at the boundaries of organizations and professions (Pre-structuring by Participants or researchers)	(Observing the) self-organization of the system, Energetic principle, (non-reactive design)	(Observing) Dialogues in the liminal space between past and future—emerging 'eupractical' knowledge
Perspectivity and Seeing of the World within the Research Design	Conflict potential, power and limitations of perspectivity—'becoming' as a process of learning /'Bildung'	Freedom as organizer: 'Passion' and 'Responsibility' as 'organizers' of knowledge creation	Affirmative future research into the emerging field of the future
Knowledge focused on and brought into existence	The effectiveness of overcoming institutional and professional limitations—analyzing the process towards the search for „common ground'	The Spaces of / for authenticity and trust based dialogical reflective knowledge	Root Metaphor of future knowledge / Generative Imagination Analysis
Social Space observed by (action-) research design	The multi-level (global, topic, individual) dynamics on the way from „mental models' to potential collective leitbild / joint planning and action	Knowledge Creation without pre-structuring—attractors and synergies, energetic 'flow' towards emergence of systemic relevancies	Collective Emergence of the Desired
Social Time observed by (action-) research design	Chronologically structured (past—present—future) within a temporal order of a future search	Deceleration and presence, fluid, non-activity as a legitimate position	Analysis of emergent collective imagination

Table 3: Grammars of Emergence of Knowledge in Social Action and Design-Research

We have seen that Large Group Approaches focus on participation, emancipatory change, reflective practice and design. Taking a closer look, we have identified different patterns of knowledge creation and different underlying notions

of becoming of individuals and collectives within fields of social complexity. In their different potentials and perspectives, Future Search systematically focuses on multi-professional cooperation, Open Space focuses on self-organizing fields and Appreciative Inquiry on Vision-Creation and future-research at the level of subjective and collective desired futures as transgression into the future.

Beyond the level of methods, we have to ask for the notions of becoming bringing along theoretical foundations and perspectivity. How, then, do theoretical positions, schools of social systems theories and thought play out for attentional structures for social transformation and research knowledge to be created?

In the approaches and theoretical roots of knowledge of Large Group Interventions, we find an interdisciplinary field of social psychology, system theory, cybernetics, group dynamics and psychoanalysis, a field of chaos research as well as complexity and self-organization theories. Early roots of Large Group Intervention knowledge date back to American pragmatism in the educational philosophical works of Dewey (1980), to Lewins' (1982) social psychological studies of group dynamics, democratization and collective leadership in the 1930s, to early knowledge in sociology, developed by Mannheim (1980) and to Bertalanffy (1976) general systems theory in the 1940s.

On one hand, in organization and network research, Large Group Interventions fit into methodologies of organizational learning (Argyris & Schoen, 1978). On the other hand, they follow the qualitative and design research paradigm, connecting to interpretative interaction methodology and cultural approaches like cognitive maps methodology. Both perspectives of reflexivity and creativity focus on cognitive schemes, metaphors (Strati, 2000, 50), and its alternatives. In addition, semiotic methodologies and perspectives of performativity become a major perspective in the analysis of narrative structures (Czarniawska, 1998), communication and discourse analysis at the level of organizations. Picking up on the thoughts of Bohm (1998), 'becoming' here is created in dialogical, relational creative thinking. Bohm sees a 'social enlightenment' as necessary in order to overcome the fragmentation of the world and to attain a higher social intelligence. 'When you listen to somebody else, whether you like it or not, what they say becomes part of you' (p. 119). Dialogue aims at a consensus on the level of a deep understanding. The transgressive dialogue is supposed to open up trust and belonging. How, then, do theories, underlying the social (research) methodologies, imply specific notions of emergence and becoming?

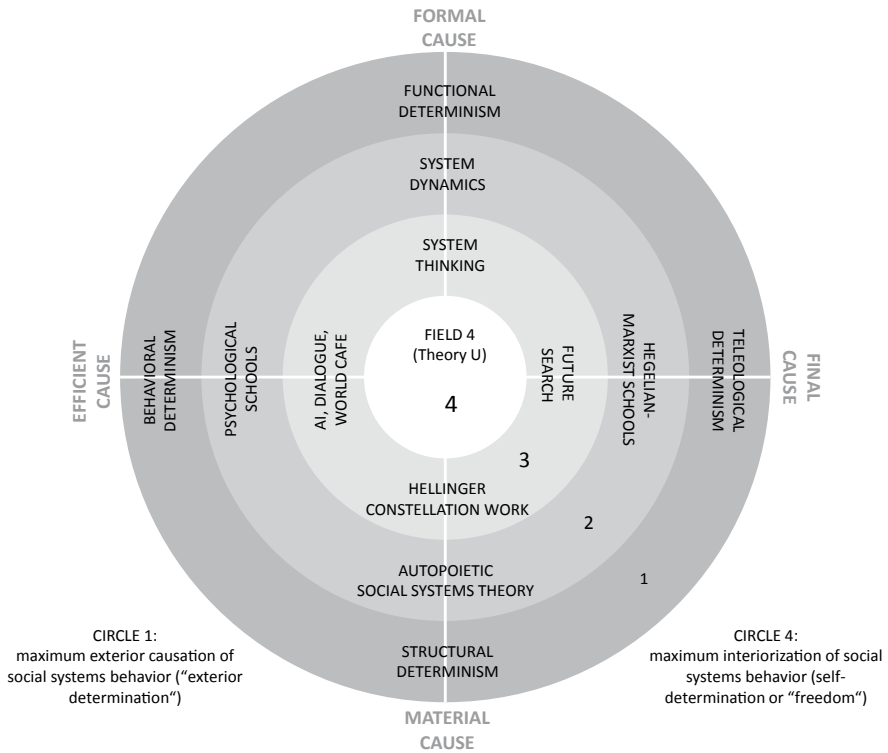


Figure 1: Four causes, four types of causation (Scharmer 2007: 369)

GRAMMARS OF EMERGENCE, TYPES OF CAUSATION, EPISTEMOLOGY OF BECOMING

As the management theorist, consultant and social movement representative Otto Scharmer explains, the behavior of social systems is a function of the field structure of attention (and of consciousness) from which a system operates. He poses the following question: ‘According to which rules do these shifts happen (from one field structure to another)? What driving forces trigger those shifts?’ (Scharmer, 2007, p. 365). As he shows, different theoretical roots and connections relate to different notions of becoming and ‘social grammars of emergence’.

Referring to Aristotle (1985), Scharmer (2007, p. 369) suggests a framework of four different types of causation. Here, he maps two distinctions—the field structure of emergence and the different schools of thought in social systems theory. He explains the figure to be found below:

‘While some theories conceive the cause of change as exterior to the boundaries of the system, the inner most circle conceives of the cause of change as something that is connected to a deep opening process and a collapse of boundaries

and that emerges from within. The two middle circles map the intermediary space between the two poles. While the four circles map the increasing interiority of causation from the outside to the inside, the four axial arrows represent the four Aristotelian types of causation: material cause, formal cause, final cause and efficient cause' (Scharmer, 2007, p. 370).

By setting up a landscape of the different schools of thought of social systems theory and connecting them to types of causation, the approaches of Large Group Interventions and their 'epistemologies of becoming' are set:

Causa Materialis: the material cause addresses the material, physical or structural conditions that shape the way reality unfolds. Regarding material orders, it is the unformed material and 'being' of objects, which is to be constructed, shaped and created to a concrete, real thing by a creator or shaper. This structure focused view of material cause and exterior causation (outer circles) for example is the autopoietic social network theory. 'With this in mind, social systems are a function of the communication structure, which produce the system and reproduce themselves (independent of the attention and intention of the participating individuals)'. Approaches like morphic resonance of the field or constellations alike work focus on historical memory and structure of the roles and relationships among the key players of the system. Here, reflexivity is crucial in order to enable and to make another move, to interiorize and change the causation of the system (Scharmer, 2007, p. 369).

As a second example, Scharmer draws on the methodology of system dynamics: here, social systems are analyzed in terms of their pattern or the forms they collectively enact. This refers to the Aristotelian formal cause, *Causa Formalis*: while the material cause relates to the material given, the formal cause relates to the shaped form of existence. The causation lies in the patterns of existence, the idea and shape of the object. The formal cause relates to the pattern, form or shape into which something comes into being. In the outer ring of external causation, Scharmer (2007, p. 369) here sees the mode of functional determinism.

A third example refers to the psychological schools, 'conceiving social systems as in terms of the personal motivations that drive people to behave one way or the other. The efficient cause is the actor as the beginning of the movement' (Scharmer, 2007). *Causa Efficiens* and *Causa Finalis* relate to the becoming of objects, results and effects. While *Causa Efficiens* is understood as impulse and initiating the movement, *Causa Finalis* relates to the goal and reason - why to act. So the final cause relates to goal-focused actions and not to the causal reason, why to act.

Causa Finalis: The final cause or the final goal or purpose that drives what we create in the now (Scharmer, 2007, p. 369f). Key driving forces are for example Hegelian Marxist theories, which look at the process of history as gradual realization of a final cause that manifests itself according to objective historical laws. While in the second circle, the focus of causation still is exterior to the attention

and intention of the people that live and enact the system at issue. Be it communication patterns (social system theory), be it psychological patterns that drive people's behavior, be it objective laws of history that drive the historical process toward its final stage—all stay in exterior causation. The two inner circles therefore refer to interior causation of change and to a self-reflective turn of a social field. The interiorization of the collectively enacted pattern (formal cause) happens by seeing the blind spot—the collectively enacted patterns which then can be collectively reflected on. 'Constellation work can enable clients to make another move, to interiorize and change the causation of the system' (Scharmer, 2007, p. 372). The interiorization of social change, too, is given in the 'Future Search Conferences', which focus on discovering common ground. Creating shared visions of the future catalyzes change. Deep existential opening and encounter merge into self-causation or non-causation, 'that connects the respective human or social system with its deepest source of becoming and freedom' (p. 372.). While field 3 is self-reflected, field 4 is self-caused. The level of operating shifts 'from the outer to the inner circles of (self-)causation'. This is the field of *Causa Efficiens*.

Causa Efficiens is the efficient cause or the beginning of movement or agency. In the Aristotelian differentiation we find the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*) given in behavioral determinism, provided by psychological schools and the methods like Appreciative Inquiry, Dialogue and World Café (Scharmer, 2007, p. 369). In this perspective, psychological patterns drive people's behavior. In the efficient cause lies the change makers', creators', enactors' position of individual and collective agents. Becoming is to be seen as self causation and as accessing positive energy that moves through and empowers people to take action. Social systems or social fields (as the totality of relationships among actors in a system) begin to see themselves, and begin to illuminate their blind spot (p. 371). They see the jointly enacted patterns and collectively reflect on them. The efficient cause and notion of becoming conceives social systems in terms of the personal motivations that drive people to behave one way or the other—here, the actor is seen as the beginning of the movement (p. 369). *Causa Efficiens* is the source of a change. This cause determines change by activity or by the actor. In this perspective, the creators of change, individual or collective agents use their experience in order to access the positive energy that moves through and empowers people.

EPISTEMOLOGY OF AESTHETIC BECOMING IN SOCIAL (RESEARCH) METHODOLOGIES

In the following, we will use Scharmer's perspective on causation for the analysis of modes of becoming within the discussed transformational (research) methodologies. With three different models of Large Group Interventions, we see three different modes and patterns of becoming—at the level of individuals and collective social complexity.

Becoming towards a 'Relational' Self

Scharmer (2007, p. 369) places this notion of becoming within the school of thought of teleological perspectives and in the rationality of the Aristotelian final cause. While he differentiates the 10 categories referring to his approach 'Theory U' (pp. 266-267), they can inspire our reflection on attentional structures and social dynamics in different social methodologies. We have been reflecting on modes of knowledge creation, different starting points, and modes of becoming, in design-research. In order to get a deeper understanding of the connectedness of theoretical underlying positions and the implications of becoming, a specific 'epistemology of becoming' within transformative change and research will be unfolded in the following.

In Scharmer's figure, levels of causation and placement of knowledge are connected. He connects a teleological position (seen in one of the rings of external causation) to the method 'Future Search' and therefore sees the Aristotelian 'final cause' given. What, then is the mode of becoming, subjectivation and 'Bildung' that is taking place here?

The gesture of paying attention that is systematically underlying this notion of becoming, is to suspend habitual judgments, to redirect and to pay attention in order to build 'common ground'. The place of operating is a shift from the center of one's own organizational boundary towards its periphery. The view of the world shifts from a projected mental image to a set of interacting objects. The knowledge coming into existence shifts from situated knowledge towards a systematical multiperspectivity of 'knowing what' to a 'knowing how'. The social space addressed here shifts from spaceless (one-dimensional) mental images to connections between observers and observed ones—and towards collectivity and a collapse of boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. The social time underlying this notion of becoming is a shift from 'disembodied' knowledge towards a chronological reconstruction. The collective social body addressed here, shifts from 'linear' complexity towards auto-poietic living systems and a notion of dynamic complexity.

The primary causal mechanism coming into play here is one from exterior causation (determinism) to a largely interiorized (self-)causation. The episteme coming into existence shifts from the primacy of subjectivity to intersubjectivity and hermeneutics. The self here is understood as shifting and becoming different - from an unquestioned habitual 'center'-self to the rational self and eventually towards a relational Self.

Becoming towards an 'Authentic' Self

In the social methodology 'Open Space' technology, we can connect the type of formal causation: Scharmer (2007, p. 369) sees a mode of becoming based on the Aristotelian formal cause: a rationality, which—in the mode of external causation—would follow the notion of a functional determinism. In an internal causa-

tion, system dynamics and systems thinking would refer to this pattern. In ‘Open Space’, the ‘circle’ as basic human pattern of community - and the ‘breath’ of the system offer a quasi-mythological and spiritual framework, which becomes relevant regarding its underlying attentional order and structure of awareness. This also spatial arrangement of one big circle in the room, gives a completely different notion to the ‘arranged microcosms’ given in ‘Future Search’. It intends to create a different pattern of emergence of knowledge and of becoming:

The gesture of paying attention in Open Space relates to the notion of letting go and connecting to stillness. It is related to a different place of operating—working from the deep source of one’s energetic self. The seeing of the world relates to energetic attractors and drivers and is based on the romantic idea of passion and responsibility. The knowledge, ideally or intentionally coming into existence here, is related to self-transcendence by the ‘future shock’ of freedom. The social space is a holistic space of four dimensions, where vision, community, management and leadership are given in space and time. The social time created here systematically, is a fluid and temporal one, which is related to presence in sacred stillness and true moves to be made. The collective social body addressed here is the presence of deep emergence—emerging complexity in process. The primary causal mechanism is the one of a fully interiorized (self-)causation. The episteme coming into existence are the primacy of trans-inter-subjectivity and development. The Self imagined and brought about here systematically in the given discourse is the authentic self, the ‘I in Now’.

Becoming towards a Transcendent ‘Future’ Self

The third approach embeds the above described ‘empirical principal’ of simultaneously academic and transformative practices in organizations, it refers to a biographical-reflexive memory work. The gesture of paying attention here is ‘letting come’ the future that wants to emerge. The place of operating is the one from being in dialogue with the future that wants to emerge. The seeing of the world is focused on the emerging field of the future. The knowledge coming into existence, relates to the highest future possibilities—the self transcending knowledge. The social space elaborated here is four dimensional—connecting to source in order to envision the emerging future. The social time is related to presence in emerging imagination. The collective social body is based on emerging complexity. The primary causal mechanism here is connected to the efficient cause and generates the subject-position of a fully interiorized (Self-)causation. The episteme coming into existence are the primacy of trans-inter-subjectivity: the integral collective phenomenology of emerging systems. The Self that is intended to be generated here is the authentic Self—the transcendent Self into the future.

Those modes of becoming underlying social methodologies of collective change and design research, can be analyzed as epistemology of becoming—to

be discovered in the ‘surfaces of appearance of a discourse’ (Foucault) and in the practice of social methodologies and design research. The here given notion of ‘openness’ (Peters & Roberts, 2011) becomes crucial for the ‘design mode’ of transformation and research (Weber, 2014), which is inherent and underlying those social methodologies.

Matrix	Future Search Conference	Open SpaceTechnology	Appreciative Inquiry Summit
The gesture of paying attention	Suspend habitual judgments, redirect and pay attention to build ‘common ground’	Letting go and connecting to stillness	‘Letting come’ the future that wants to emerge
The place of operating	From the center of one’s own organizational boundary towards the periphery of one’s organizational boundary	From the deep source of one’s energetic Self	From being in dialogue with the future that wants to emerge
The seeing of the world	From a projected mental image to a set of interacting objects	From energetic attractors and drivers: Passion and responsibility	An emerging field of the future
The knowledge coming into existence	From situated knowledge towards systematical multiperspectivity of ‘knowing what’—and ‘knowing how’	Self-transcending by ‘freedom shock’	Highest future possibility—self transcending knowledge
The social space	From spaceless (one dimensional) mental images to connection between observer and observed—and collectivity (collapse of boundaries)	Four dimensional time and space: perception from Source	4 dimensional space: connect to source to envision the emerging future
The social time	From ‘disembodied’ towards chronological reconstruction	Fluid, temporal, presence in sacred stillness	Presence in emerging imagination
The collective social body	From ‘linear’ complexity to autopoietic living system (dynamic complexity)	Presence of deep emergence: emerging complexity	Emerging complexity
The primary causal mechanism	From exterior causation (determinism) to largely interiorized (self-) causation	Fully interiorized (Self-) causation	Efficient cause—fully interiorized (Self-) causation
The episteme coming into existence	From primacy of subjectivity to intersubjectivity and hermeneutics	Primacy of trans-inter-subjectivity: development	Primacy of trans-intersubjectivity: integral collective phenomenology of emerging systems
The Self	From unquestioned habitual ‘Center’-Self to the rational self towards the relational Self	Authentic Self: ‘I in Now’	Authentic Self: I-in now/ you

Table 4: Epistemology of Aesthetic Becoming in Social Methodologies

Moreover, besides the notion of openness, we have to focus on the dimension of aesthetics: As we can see, all of the presented Large Group Interventions as social methodologies of transformation and of research are to be seen in the mode of aesthetic transformation and research. Even if performativity is not staged intentionally in every Large Group Intervention method, it becomes a relevant perspective for participative and creative change and research methodologies. The aesthetic dimension becomes crucial for the question regarding the notions of ‘becoming’. The three different social methodologies all imply aesthetical transformation and research—and bring about different aspects of subject-positions: the relational, the authentic and the transcendent Self.

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Future and Design Research in the Field of Collective Aisthesis

Thus, the text unfolds different notions of becoming: The notion of ‘social becoming’ in Large Group Interventions (1), the different approaches and modes of becoming within the field of Large Group Interventions as a methodology of open transformation and change (2) and as a research methodology in participative research designs, where knowledge creation is the relevant focus (3). In section 4, the different types of causation in the Aristotelian model (4) as epistemological modes of becoming are presented and in section 5, the different modes of open knowledge creation lead to ‘becoming’ of subjects and Selves. With this, the article shows the variations within the notion of ‘becoming’—within the general mode of becoming as patterns of institutions, research, and the epistemic Self of the 21st century as relational, narratological and aesthetical.

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