Creativity and Imagination: research as world making!

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Abstract
The paper addresses the role of creativity and imagination in research. It challenges the dichotomized view of research, working with oppositional options: qualitative X quantitative or academic X applied, offering a more pragmatic and context-oriented approach. This view is grounded in an epistemology that embraces research as a social practice. The paper presents a research project where methods from the arts are applied as a way to embrace creativity and imagination in research. It concludes that this approach shift research from discovery to generativity. It also moves research away from just hypothesis testing to a focus on local knowledge. Finally, the role of the researcher also shifts from the "power over" to a position of "power with" by virtue of an openness to consideration of whose voices are heard, included, excluded, and so forth.

Keywords: Creative research. Imagination in research. Art methods.

It is an honor to contribute to this revolutionary book on arts-based research by adding my experience on creativity and imagination in inquiry, sharing how I look at and work with research as a creative and imaginative endeavor[1].

From my first involvement with research, I have always worked with complex, dynamic and unpredictable topics such as interactions and relationships in community/organization development, with special emphasis on thriving and transformation. Within this context, I have struggled with the traditional approach on research, or with what Woolgar (1996) calls the "received view of science" – RVS. The RVS is what we classically learn about research, that it is neutral, objective, replicable and so forth. The RVS posits that the world is made up of independent entities that can be discovered, understood or known through "objective" systems or practices. These assumptions lead, in turn, to causal relationships in research such as "if...

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then", embracing a linear view of reality usually not considering history, culture and context (McNamee, 2010).

Working with people and relationships in certain contexts invites a way of investigating that focuses on local knowledge, diversity of voices and dynamic changes. Therefore, the RVS approach to research and its inclination toward prediction and control is challenged. Questions for me emerge. How can I write a research proposal without knowing what my community wants/needs? How can I be neutral if I have some ideas and hopes for my investigation? How can I be objective if every question I formulate for my research has some assumptions coming from my expertise, experience and the theory I embrace? How can my findings be replicated if each group has their own history and culture?

Very early in my research career, I became focused on one question: How can I develop an organic research program that involves people, communities, cities, and social transformation while simultaneously receiving academic recognition by demonstrating the rigor, quality and relevance of my research?

The classical approaches on research would give two oppositional options: qualitative X quantitative or academic X applied research. Within these dichotomized distinction between the approaches there is an overwhelming amount of supportive literature separating quantitative from qualitative methods. Generally, quantitative approaches are associated with the hard sciences where measurement, replication, prediction and control are valued. Qualitative approaches, on the other hand, are identified in the literature as soft science due to the focus on subjective aspects, meaning making and words rather than measurement and numbers. However, this caricatured separation maintains the dominant view of science (the RVS), where hard science (universal knowledge) is separated from qualitative approaches (often believed to be "soft" or "fluffy").

The other common dichotomy is the distinction between academic and applied research. Here, academic research is given higher status and is connected to "what science really is," which includes numbers, randomized studies, evidence-based approaches. Applied research, on the other hand, is focused on practice and therefore assumed to be less rigorous, thereby holding the research to different standards because, after all, applied research is conducted by practitioners, not real scientists.

You might be thinking by now that the research world has moved on from such dichotomized distinctions and this is an outdated critique. While I do not agree with the research opposition described above, I still experience such division in my working environment, especially in the educational setting, among colleagues and students. As a scholar, very often we are confronted with research funds coming from a diversity of places. All of them use the language of the RVS, requiring hypotheses, methods, and predicted results to be specified in advance. I am also witnessing, in research classes, that students have a

hard time moving away from universalizing talk of research and science. My colleagues and I, working in a university of applied sciences (there is a division in the Netherlands regarding vocational universities and academic ones), very often confront questions of whether the research we or the students are develop is academic or applied.

Having worked with these distinctions for a while and having struggled to find language to go beyond these differentiations, I learned the magic word that changed my whole approach to science, knowledge production, and ways of talking about research: epistemology.

Epistemology can be described as the study of knowledge, investigating questions such as “how do we know what we know?” Yet, there are different answers to that question. For some, knowledge is discovered and for others it is constructed. Thomas Kuhn (1970), was the first scholar to talk about paradigms in science. He problematized the scientific notion of progress toward truth, stating that all our propositions about the world are embedded in an array of assumptions about what exists and how what exists functions, can be assessed, and how scientific work ought to proceed. Thus, even the most objective and neutral question emerges from within a paradigm, a specific framework about the world. According to Kuhn, scientific knowledge is a byproduct of negotiated agreements among people concerning the nature of the world.

However, the classical paradigm in science, the rational foundation for scientific knowledge, states that a reality of facts and laws can be verified through the right methodology (Shawver, 2005.). Central to this paradigm is the view that an empirical description of the world has no ideological, social or political bases. The epistemological account in this approach is an empiricist one – knowledge production is testing hypothesis against reality (Heron and Reason, 1997). It is about *discovering* reality.

This classical paradigm was challenged when Kuhn introduced the idea of knowledge as the byproduct of negotiated agreements within the scientific community. Now, the empiricist epistemology is viewed as *one* negotiated understanding of knowledge, not *the* understanding of knowledge. A relational paradigm challenges the empiricist epistemology. A relational paradigm views scientific knowledge as a byproduct of historical, social and cultural process (Shawver, 2005). With this orientation in hand, we are positioned to consider science as a social practice. Thus, a transformation takes place in the concept of knowledge production and what is taken as truth, objectivity and validity. The epistemological approach here is experiential, propositional and co-created. Adopting these epistemological distinctions when talking about research clarifies the approach one is embracing and justifies the research design. Each epistemological orientation provides different criteria for evaluating and assessing research in terms of its quality and validity.

Returning to the relational paradigm, we must ask: how has this experiential, propositional and co-created epistemological approach emerged and developed in research?

During the 20th century, a critical movement in science developed. This movement highlighted the epistemological accounts of science. This critical movement was happening in a very important moment in history, the counter-culture movement. This movement questioned pretty much all forms of our taken-for-granted social order. We had the feminist movement, the black power movement, and the gay movement. And, within the social sciences, we had the developments of critical theory, feminist theory, post-colonial theory all carrying a very revolutionary approach (Gergen, 1994).

This movement brought a profound shift in the conception of knowledge (bringing the concept of epistemology to the surface) which, until then, was seen as universal and given (especially in science). This shift pointed toward the ideological, social and political aspects of the objective and neutral discourse of science and society. New ideas and theories concerning knowledge production emerged from these movements, bringing a critical view on how knowledge is produced and how reality is investigated.

There are three main critiques that really played a role in questioning the universality and neutrality of knowledge/science that are worth mentioning: the ideological, the literary-rhetorical and the social (Gergen,1994).

Ideological critique attempts to reveal the valuational biases underlying claims to truth and reason, thereby showing the process in which science is ideologically constructed. Scholars involved in this critique exposed the ideological, moral and political purposes within what had, until that time, been presented as an objective or neutral account of science and society. Today we can recognize that all scientific claims are ideologically biases. The aspect of science that is challenged in this critique is its neutrality and the production of the truth. Ideology critique points to the existence of personal/professional/corporate interests, economic purposes, moral and ideological values behind an allegedly neutral claim.

Literary-rhetorical critiques claim that the way in which we structure knowledge, and therefore the way we understand the world, is a byproduct of linguistic processes. There was an attempt here to demonstrate that accounts are determined not by the character of events themselves but by literary conventions. To the extent that theorists see the world from the perspective of their own theory, they are limited in how they talk and write about that world. Observations and statements of the world cohere against a background of established knowledge. Therefore, there is no knowledge beyond the literary. Or, to say it otherwise, descriptions of the world are limited by the language available. This kind of critique points to the importance of language in creating our reality and not in representing it. There is no knowledge outside of language.

What it is emphasized in the above critique is that all the scientists' pursuits, such as universal and general laws, accurate description of subjects, and the right claim about those

subjects are all embedded in language and language is a collective creation, related to a place and culture (Gergen and Gergen, 2000).

Scientists see the world through the lenses of their theory and their theory has rules indicating how to properly describe that world – hypothesis, methodology, analysis, results and so forth. Thus, if you engage in the research process according to a specific theory, you will achieved validity, or, in other words, the truth. The core of this critique is that science is rhetoric; it is a discourse or a way of talking. It is not the ultimate truth. Each discourse belongs to a specific community with its own rules.

The third critique displays the social genesis of scientific thought. The authors point toward the cultural context where various ideas take shape and the ways in which those ideas, in turn, give form to scientific and cultural practices. This critique shows the micro-processes by which we construct knowledge. In other words, scientists create “facts”.

These three critiques provide the context for a movement in which a new wave of researchers, and new theories emphasizing the construction of knowledge, emerged. The movement has many names such as post-modernism, post-structuralism, liquid modernity. What these researchers have in common is the incredulity towards meta-narratives where theory is viewed as a representation of reality. When theory is viewed as a meta-narrative, the assumption is that theory can be translated as an explanatory map that would inform, predict and provide standardized procedures of what the world is about. Theories in the post-modern approach are not taken as maps of the world but as frames for seeing the world and constructing it.

This movement brings light into the social construction of knowledge, emphasizing that each approach to knowledge production has a context and its own models, concepts and questions. This is what we refer to as the focus on epistemological issues. Theories provide the parameters for how we can know what we know (again is about epistemology).

If we take this radical attitude where theory is viewed as a frame that constructs the world in which we live, then we do not need to be faithful and exclusive to one theory. We can enrich our research by making use of theories as generative frameworks and resources for social change. We can then embrace a creative, imaginative approach to research without opposing traditional research, but being centered/positioned in a different epistemology.

A creative and imaginative approach to research is grounded in an epistemology that embraces research as a social practice, a collective action, a practice of inquiry (McNamee and Hosking 2012). This is dramatically different from viewing research as a representation of reality which requires a neutral, objective, controlling stance in order to reach this ultimate reality. Creativity and imagination in research is about evoking meanings to form a better future rather than denoting them (Gergen, 2014).

Creativity in the research context

Creativity can be defined as an act of bringing together ideas and perspectives that seem paradoxical in the sense that they hold characteristics that are normally not held together or at least not thought together (Montuori, 2006). In Creative Inquiry, the researcher moves away from the logic of either/or and navigates towards the spectrum of opportunities, all the while, not thinking in oppositions or polarities, but embracing an intuitive and rational ambiguity (Montuori, 2006).

Traditionally, the concept of creativity has addressed individuals and their uniqueness in having brilliant ideas. This understanding is based on the theory of a single genius whose talent is innate and a gift from God. More recent studies have shown a collective approach to creativity (Catmull, 2008; Montuori, 2011) where people come to exercise together their creative thinking and come up with innovative ideas. This is also called collective creativity. Collective creativity refers to the innovative thoughts that arise from the interaction of the ideas of diverse people rather than from the individual mind of one person (Marion, 2012). Creativity in the research context refers to the capacity to be curious and open-minded in order to explore and investigate beyond what is given (the data), aiming at creating an unimagined future. It is about framing research as a creative process (Montuori, 2005), freeing ourselves to create what “might be” instead of sticking to “what it is.” The core of creativity in research is to give form to loose ideas, apparently not interconnected, and frame that into possible connections, further understanding and ultimately new actions.

This creative approach to research challenges universal knowledge and its inclination to predict and control, instead inviting a closer look at local knowledge, at different voices and perspectives and at the dynamics of our ever-changing world/society. If knowledge is co-created in relationship, in context and in history, this approach to research invites not just an understanding of this creation but also a recreation to new forms of knowledge, focusing on what Gergen (2014) calls future forming research. Future forming research differs from traditional research where the research is understood to be a mirror of reality. In a future forming research, the aim is not to look at what “is there,” but to create new forms of action thereby creating alternative possibilities for society, organizations and community. For this, creativity and imagination are key.

Imagination in research: enabling new futures

To imagine is the capacity to go beyond the established, agreed reality and experiment with new combinations of meaning. When imagination is unleashed, meanings gain freedom and new knowledge can arise. This is because imagination adopts a fluid and less fixed view of meaning, encouraging ingenuity, spontaneity, and novelty. Through imagination we can

form new images and scenarios never thought before and, by imagining these images and scenarios, we open the opportunity to bring them into reality. Imagination also gives space to emerging processes which are seeds of ideas that, when combined together, can bring new possibilities. Such processes generate new forms and shapes rather than focusing solely on what is already there. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005), our collective imagination can enact powerful resources and favor possibilities of creation and change. When many participants voice their views and ideas on a topic, the potential to create meaningful experiences is amplified.

Some approaches on research are already oriented towards enabling imagination of researchers and participants. Narrative approaches, for example, rely on holistic and heuristic properties that invite interpretation, variation, collective creativity, sense-making and imagination (Gergen and Gergen, 2010). Nijs (2015), in describing the design method of Imagineering, one form of a narrative approach, explicitly differentiates the logico-scientific reasoning in research from what she calls the narrative mode. According to the author, scientific reasoning pursues an 'objective' approach to understand phenomena, while the narrative mode tries to understand in terms of human experience and purpose. The narrative approaches to research, which is pretty much aligned with the Imagineering approach, is not focused on convincing through use of objective truth but through the use of imagination to appeal and creating a compelling narrative that empowers new realities. "Designing in the narrative mode engages people in a subjective, future oriented and creative way" (Nijs, 2015, p.17).

Imagination in research is meant to offer new intelligibilities and creatively construct new realities. When embracing imagination in research, we move toward forming new futures and therefore we want to stimulate people to imagine their needs and wants. In this direction, other expressions of language are needed in order to explore such imagination (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011). Narratives, social poetics, images and videos can be used in order to produce new knowledge and expression.

An epistemological orientation on research embracing creativity and imagination

One epistemology that embraces creativity and imagination in research is Social Construction (Camargo-Borges and Rasera, 2013). This orientation is very much grounded in a relational and constructed understanding of knowledge developments (Gergen, 1999; Anderson, 2014; McNamee and Hosking, 2012) which holds four main core assumptions.

The first and core assumption is the constructed character of the world. This assumption challenges the idea of an "essence" of the world that one could grasp through careful observation and empirical methods. According to the constructionist view, the categories we

use to name, are circumscribed by the culture, history and social context. The intelligibility of our accounts of the world derives not from the world itself, but from our immersion within a tradition of cultural practices.

Saying that the world is constructed, the second assumption points into the quality of this construction. Reality is produced by interactive exchanges among people in their relational processes. This means that whatever account we give of the world or self has its origins within relationships. Therefore based upon this, knowledge production is situated.

Embracing these two first assumptions – the world is constructed and its construction is achieved in social interaction – gives way to the third assumption. The validity and sustainability of knowledge is maintained throughout time not by its empirical truth but by social processes. This means that what we take to be true is the byproduct of social, interactive practices.

The fourth assumption is about language as action. Language, in this approach, is not conceived of as describing and representing the world, but as a way of constructing it. Therefore, language and knowledge can not be separated. Knowledge production is a form of social action. According to authors grounded in this approach, language gains its meaning from its use in context (McNamee, 2004; Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1994). The constructionist approach emphasizes the ability to create realities in language.

Given such assumptions, research/science is also an act of construction or re-construction. Research is a performance/activity that we undertake with discernment. McNamee (2010) states that within the social constructionist approach, “each theory, model, and method is a communally constructed discourse” (p. 10).

If we embrace this epistemological approach and view science as a social practice, then we are talking about a communal construction of a certain community. According to Gergen (2014), the traditional vision of science is one that holds knowledge as a cumulative understanding of the world, producing realist assumptions about the world and society, which in turn is embraced as the “truth.” If we embrace the epistemological approach on research as a construction, then we do not need to restrain ourselves with positions such as objectivity and neutrality towards the phenomena of study, trying to discover what it is but rather, we can open our imagination and use our creativity to focus on what it might be. Gergen invites us to re-frame scientific inquiry from a passive mirror reflecting what is to an active, relational process that shapes what could be (the future) (Gergen, 2014).

Gergen (2014) challenges,

> If we find ourselves in a world where increasingly unpredictable fluctuation marks every facet of life – from self-conception, family life, and community to global configurations of power, economy, and illness – what is the place of a research tradition that attempts to mirror a stable state of affairs? In what sense can we sustain

> an assumption of progress in knowledge? As I'm proposing, the more promising vista lies in a science that engages in the very shaping of the directions of change. (p.11)

The concept of research as future forming (Gergen, 2014) moves from mirroring into making, illuminating what can be created rather than what is "there." This is a pro-active approach to research, developed through coordinated activities among those involved (researcher and participants). Together, through imaginative and creative processes, participants generate alternatives that construct new knowledge that is sensitive to the specific context and useful for those involved.

Designing research: forming futures

The constructionist approach on research is critical in cultivating and understanding viable forms of living together. It is a radical departure from pure discovery. Living in the 21st century, with rapid societal and organizational change, calls for new forms of research. However, in order to design relationally oriented research – that is, research that embraces constructionist ideas and concepts of creativity and imagination, new and innovative practices are invited.

Traditionally, data is understood as something the researcher will collect from participants by asking the right questions about the nature of things: the nature of behavior, the nature of knowledge, and so forth. This assumes a fixed world to which participants are asked to refer "back." These kinds of questions presume there is something already existing that is ready to be discovered. According to Paré and Larner (2004), "research is not simply an act of finding out, but is also always a creating together process" (p. 213). A creative and imaginative approach to research invites a more pragmatic orientation to questions: What do we want to achieve here? Who is included? Who is excluded? What else can be possible? These kinds of questions instigate our imagination to envision what is not yet there, inviting the creation of novelty.

I would like to offer one possible way of designing research that embraces the ideas presented here. In order to bring creativity and imagination into research, my colleague and I developed an approach that we call "designing research" (Bodiford and Camargo-Borges, 2014). Together, we investigated practical ways of developing an approach to research that could be designed as the locality demands. The term *designing* comes from the field of design, which, by its nature, adopts a people-centered approach as well as actionable knowledge (Romme, 2003; van Aken, 2004). Designing also implies movement, engaging and inviting research into practice and practice into research (Mohrman, Gibson and Mohrman, 2001; Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001).

We define four core principles of designing research (Bodiford and Camargo-Borges, 2014) that are constructionist based. With these principles, we invite viewing our taken for granted aspects of the world as socially constructed, thereby opening space for alternative constructions to be forged as well as new ways to engage people in research. The first principle concerns embracing research as **"relational and collaborative."** Designing research holds relationships as central in a collaborative journey. The invitation is to conduct research with and not for others. Participants are invited to bring their skills, knowledge, interests, experiences and stories together to co-create the research process. As we engage in relational and collaborative endeavors, there is a move from the researcher-as-expert to the researcher-as-offering-expertise; this is a shift from researcher and subjects toward research co-designers and co-participants.

The second principle positions research as **"useful and generative,"** centering on the utility and pragmatics of research. Focus is on how researchers engage in the investigation, aiming to create generative possibilities and not assuming that they know a-priori what the topic and the goal is or should be. As participants come together throughout the process, new understandings, new meanings and new opportunities are co-created. Ultimately, the creative process of designing research produces meaningful solutions where we appreciate each system as unique, accepting past experiences, and considering and embracing future possibilities (Brown, 2008; Kimbell, 2011).

The third principle of designing research refers to the **"organic and dynamic"** (or emergent) aspect of inquiry. This principle emphasizes the act of conducting research as a fluid, dynamic and continuous practice, allowing an unfolding as participants engage. While there is an emergent and organic nature to this way of thinking about research, this is not to say that there is no framework to support and conduct the inquiry. Having an articulated purpose, principles and direction are important to support people in collaborative inquiry. Designing research is dynamic in the way that participatory practices are co-created throughout the entire process, involving researchers, participants, theories and methods.

The fourth principle of designing research focuses on **"engaging in complexity and multiplicity."** Designing research avoids causal or dualistic positions and engages complexity and multiplicity as rich, new soil for action. Embracing complexity and multiplicity with a relational sensibility expands our view to involve the whole system. It is about considering and appreciating the many different voices involved and welcoming other opinions and points of view to multiply new options and enhance plurality in the research. We might ask "What new ideas, knowledge, understandings are emerging? What are we creating together?" With such questions we begin to see the relatedness and appreciate the interconnections that enrich possibilities.

Designing research, as an orientation, focuses on research that is developed through creative and imaginative, emergent processes that involve a community of people constructing and re-constructing knowledge and practice. This approach forges new ways of engaging in research, opening up space for alternative designs, focused on locality and on the generativity of knowledge and practices. This attitude toward research requires a dynamic process of interpretation, one that remains open, flexible, and empathic, where the researcher moves from "'methods of research' to 'practices of inquiry'" (Gergen, 2014, p. 51).

We are now positioned to ask about the possibilities and opportunities generated within this form of investigation. In addition, our concern turns to the implications of embracing this approach to research. An illustration of designing research will be useful to translate the ideas discussed into practice.

Designing research in Uganda – an illustration

My partner, Kristin Bodiford, and I, along with a former student, Shirley Jane Timotheus, partnered with two NGO's in Uganda (Hope for Youth Uganda & Health Nest Uganda) to engage in a collaborative inquiry. These NGOs work with the community in Uganda focusing on local developments in healthcare and education. The aim of the inquiry was to explore possibilities for establishing partnerships and to get to know more about the local community. We began with some skype meetings together to get to know each other, our interests, curiosities and then establish the theme of the research.

We were not there to discover or measure anything about the culture, the organization or the community, but to co-create with them. We enter the field as co-researchers, which meant that we were not there as experts, but as participants with *some* expertise that we hoped to combine that with the expertise of our partners in Uganda This first designing phase focused on the first principle of positioning oneself (as researcher) as "**relational and collaborative**" by getting to know the team, the context, and placing facts and figures in the local context. As a team, we start designing the research months before entering into the field. However, instead of relying solely on a review of literature and other academic sources to define "the gap" that needed to be filled, we tapped into our creativity and imagination by envisioning together what might be possible **("engaging in complexity and multiplicity**"). This positioning also helped us fulfill the second principle of being **"useful and generative"** to the local environment. This first phase resulted in a research proposal entitled, "Discovering the Beauty of Uganda", with the aim to engage in an exploration of the community through the youth's meanings of their positive experiences and impressions of Uganda.

The research approach that we embraced invited for some more creative and imaginative methods, such as the arts-based methods. We introduced participants to the Photovoice method (Griebling et. al., 2013) to grip the needs and interests as articulated by

the participants in the context of research/intervention. This method builds on the power and potential of photography to enable and encourage participants to be creative and reflective. It invites participants to imagine alternative futures on a specific topic. With Photovoice method we offered a prompt, which was to take photos of something that was meaningful to them, that had a meaningful story or represented an important experience. Then, we encouraged participants to work interdependently, inviting creativity and imagination as they freely choose what they would like to share about themselves and their surroundings in a visual manner. With their camera, participants are able to document and reveal what they appreciate about Uganda and what they would like to share. Pictures and visuals with a fusion of autoethnographic encounters are powerful narratives as they go beyond rational linguistic representation, thereby amplifying stories and providing a more complex view of a topic (Leavy, 2009).

The field phase focused on the third designing research principle: "**organic and dynamic**." While in the traditional view of data, there is the assumption that, with the right method, the research will "discover" how things "really are" from a designing research orientation, we can say that we are not collecting data but we are generating (creating) data, meaning that it is the interaction among participants-method-team that promotes the emergence of new ideas and material with which to work. The arts-based method used here enabled participants to tap into their creativity and invited interaction.

The data collection unfolded as the participants engaged with the topic, the method, and co-created meaning together with visiting team. We gave digital cameras to 20 youth, ages 8 to 26. They moved around the city and took pictures of what they saw as the beauty of Uganda.

The next phase was to collect all the pictures taken. The participants sit together in small groups and started telling the stories their photos portray. Their stories got richer as they shared them with each other. After choosing some pictures and they were printed they managed to find shared meanings and also find what was special about their own experiences and stories. The research project ended with a final exhibition in the park of the community where by sharing with the community members and leaders it extended the meaning making.

Storytelling was used as a research method (Bochner and Rigg, 2014) to frame the findings (the pictures selected) and to create the collective meanings by developing new stories together. This research method is a combination of stories and narratives. A narrative is constructed by combining what is common among each individual story, thereby producing a collective cultural story. It is less rational and more symbolic and subjective. A story can brings out multiple voices, multiple constructions and build a relationship between the person and the topic. "Work of this kind can open up new ways of being in relation and new possible worlds" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 53).

It is important to note that designing research requires a commitment to research as a relationally engaged and responsive practice. This means that creative and imaginative processes are necessary to insure that the research makes sense to all involved.

The Uganda research, provided an opportunity to create “an inquiry space where diverse views can be in dialogue with each other” (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000 in McNamee, 2010, pp. 16-17). When conducting research dialogically and in community, the notion of designing research open up new possibilities for partnerships and also new stories within the community. It was a powerful way to co-create new conversations and realities and encourage participants to embody their conversations through “construction and use of artifacts together with other bodies, sentient or not (McNamee and Hosking, 2012, p. 67). Sharing stories, creating art together and preparing a final presentation enacted possible ways in which non-verbal activities amplified participants’ sense of understanding and possibility.

Conclusion

The question remains: Are we still talking about science? My understanding, grounded in the research epistemology of Social Constructionism, is that research belongs to a community of practice and is always context-contingent. Based on this understanding, I would state that because we all engage with curiosity, creativity and imagination, we are all researchers, in the sense that we are always longing for meaning, for understanding and for creating new paths and practices in our professions and lives. In the specific context of academia, considering this sort of process as research and good research requires an extra effort finding a common language. This book is an important step in that direction. It assists us in developing an alternative language for science/research that can create a strong narrative, offering different forms of practice. The hope is that these forms of practice will be embraced and accepted academically as research.

What are the implications of embracing this creative, imaginative approach to research? The first implication is from the researcher’s side. The research shifts his/her understanding of research from discovery to generativity, focusing on the question “for whom this information/knowledge useful?” “how will this information/knowledge help this community 'go on together?'“ (McNamee, 2010, p. 17). Considering this question has implications for the research itself, moving away from hypothesis testing and validation of knowledge to a focus on local wisdom/local knowledge, on what is needed/wanted and what is possible to create together.

In relation to the methods embraced in the illustration provided, rather than adopting and working within the parameters of “generally agreed set of methods, rules and procedures” (Woolgar, 1996 apud McNamee, 2010, p. 10), the methods were chosen in relation to the context and the research questions asked were “based upon a wide range of concerns

including what is pragmatic, what is responsive to research participants, what forms of inquiry might be most compatible with participants, and so forth" (McNamee, 2010, p. 14).

The role of the researcher shifts from the "power over" position that is implicit when "those with knowledge (researchers) are rational and have power over their subjects (those researched)" (McNamee, 2010, p. 11), to an approach that invites a position of "'power with' by virtue of an openness to consideration of whose voices are heard, included, excluded, and so forth" (McNamee, 2010, p. 15).

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