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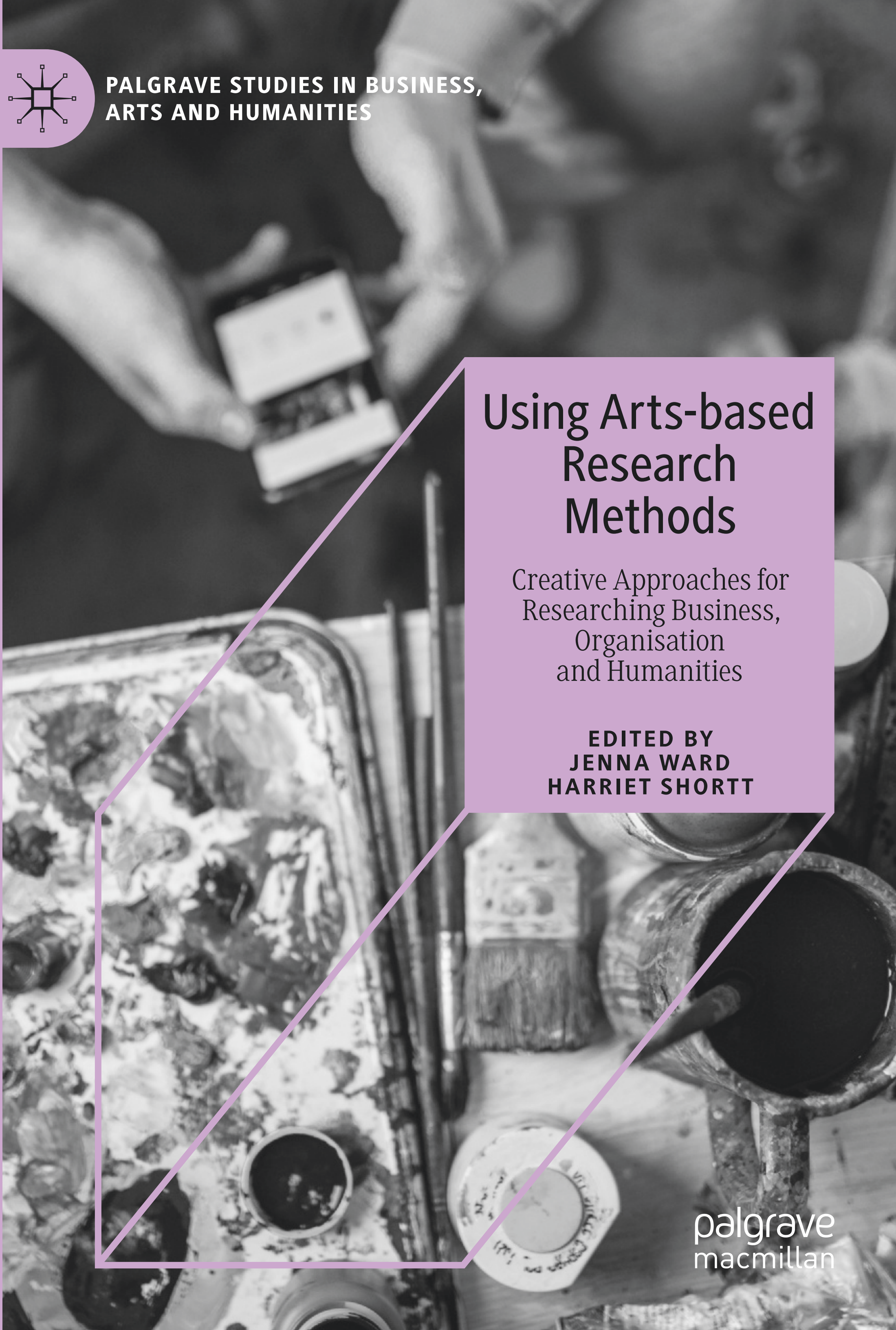

# Using Arts-based Research Methods

## Creative Approaches for Researching Business, Organisation and Humanities

EDITED BY
JENNA WARD
HARRIET SHORTT

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Jenna Ward · Harriet Shortt
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*Editors*
Jenna Ward
School of Business
University of Leicester
Leicester, UK

Harriet Shortt
Bristol Business School
University of the West of England
Bristol, UK

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# Foreword

This volume contains essays, images and illustrations by a selection of fine, committed and talented scholars who are making a difference to the world of work through educating the next generation of potential managers and decision makers. This is an important work. They are choosing to undertake this task using unusual and idiosyncratic arts-based methods and their enthusiasm for what they do spills from every sentence. Why, then, have the editors of this book asked me to write the foreword? I expect it is because for thirty years now I have been a practitioner and supporter of arts-based methods in business and management research.

My arts-based research has always been centred on making textiles in which I have attempted to capture the essence of a company, its contradictions, self-deceptions, motivations and culture. I have worked at putting corporate narrative on cloth. I have made quilts about Nike, Marks and Spencer, Laura Ashley and the Body Shop, and I have explored, in fabric, management issues like leadership, corporate excess and employee engagement. I have won prizes for this work, although admittedly as a large fish in a small pool. I have also worked with storytelling and narrative, particularly regarding foundation myths and the impact these stories have on corporate ethics and responsibility. Yet although this work has had the support and approval in some critical management forums, I have had the experience of this work not having been taken seriously in the 'mainstream' for most of the afore-mentioned thirty years. And so, I congratulate the publishers and editors of this volume on their acuity and courage.

Why is this book so valuable and important? There are a number of principles I drew out of my reading. I will delineate these and add some briefs comments from my own experience. The first of these principles is one which is very frequently evoked but seldom sincerely respected, and that is that research should be participative and generative. Research should be done for people and with people, and not on people, as the action researchers have been telling us for years. This sounds lovely until you actually do it, and then any idea of the principal investigator managing the research goes out the window. Let people loose with the materials or the technology or the story prompt and off they will go, no matter what you want them to talk about. This is important because it challenges the whole edifice of academic research as monolithic truth. Knowledge, we acknowledge, is partial and temporary. Arts-based research, because so much of it is improvised, shows how knowledge moves, and how much it is embedded in its context. It embraces and encourages and goes out of its way to produce and celebrate the protean.

The scholars in this volume insist that numbers and statistics are not the only way of knowing the world, in fact, they might argue that they are a poor way of knowing much at all about the people who inhabit it. For these 'scholar activists' authors images and stories speak much louder than statistics. They know, consciously or unconsciously that what changes policy is not just statistical reports but a well-told story that engages our whole being and moves us emotionally. A fine example of this, as I write, is climate change. There have been endless reports on the impact of the anthropocene, but it has taken one little girl, Greta Thunberg, to re-energise public awareness. It has been through her storytelling, her words and her images that the world has engaged, and it is through these approaches that people have been moved to make change.

On that basis, arts-based methods of research have an undeniable ability to engage researchers, participants and audiences emotionally. You will see from the following chapters that there is an insistence on the centrality of the body in organisations. It is impossible to say what an organisation actually is, but one useful definition is 'a group of people who come together to achieve a common aim'. A group of people, and not a group of brains in jars. In work on dance in organisations, this is perhaps obvious, but each of the chapters have something to say about the five senses and the bodily experience of organisation. Arts-based methods are a wonderful way of exploring what it is like to be a sensate human body in an organisation, and how that affects the employee to make their contribution. This mode of knowing, as action researchers call it, can be used simply to ramp up employee engagement, or to make people more productive. But management educators, like the ones in this book, predict a bodily engagement which potentially makes people less rather than more malleable. Asking students to produce art-work is to ask them to pay attention to what is going on around them; it appeals to their senses and emotions. It also introduces them to the notion that art-work is curated, as well as edited, chosen and shaped. What is left out is as significant as what is left in. In this way students are gently coached to recognise and challenge well-worn assumptions and corporate sophistry.

With all that said, and despite the fact that we know arts-based methods are a wonderful way of exploring what it is like to be a sensate human body in an organisation, we may still face the thorny question: Is there any validity in the claim that arts-based knowledge can give you better or different knowledge to that which a skilled interviewer could obtain? I think this is an excellent test to set for yourself as a researcher and it is my validity test.

It brings us to another strength of these methods, which is the co-construction of knowledge revisited when we display the artwork. My own work was always left ambiguous. My Starbucks quilt could be seen as a paean to the vision of its founders, or a critique of its part in the homogenisation of the high street depending on how you looked at it. Exhibiting it opened up a discussion about corporate ethics, missions and leadership in a lively way. And people would see all sorts of things in the visual elements included in my quilts which I had not intended. Reception theory might well be the next step in this form of research.

To return to that thorny question—is there any validity in the claim that arts-based knowledge can give you better or different knowledge to that which a skilled interviewer could obtain? I think I would have to say that I still do not really know. But what I am certain of is their ability to capture the shadow side of organisations well. They *can* tell you about the components of corporate culture which normally go unnoticed. They *do* engage and therefore motivate and sometimes empower.

The final point that I would like to make in this foreword, is one which is very seldom mentioned when academics talk about what they do, and why they continue to do it. It takes me back to my earlier point about the body in research. Making art is a joyously human thing to do. There is evidence that other animals also make art, all but the most traumatised baby humans love to do it and some adults are lucky enough to hang onto that delight in maturity. We hardly ever discuss how much we enjoy our work. We might describe the intellectual satisfaction of working something out, but we shy away from ever mentioning that doing our work brings us pleasure, and bodily pleasure at that. This is the last academic taboo. Reading this collection of ambitious chapters has given me the courage to say that I worked with textiles because of the embodied joy the process brought me, and the delight I often took in the beautiful things I produced. The tired old question of which is more important, in art-making or arts-based therapy—the process or the product—is largely irrelevant for those committed to working with the aesthetic. They are so bound up with each other it is impossible to choose. It also raises questions of slow research. For me, pulling thread through fabric produced a deeply felt physical joy which slowed the world and my analytic thinking down—for the better.

This insistence on what William Morris advocated in the nineteenth century as joy in work is what the writers in this volume experience. Making with the hands is deeply human and deeply connected—'making is connecting' as David Gauntlett pointed out so eloquently. We connect with the work, with others in our communities and with ourselves. And so, arts-based methods allow us a deeply seditious way of working which is centred on the fundamental human experiences of joy: joy in connection, joy in work and joy in making and coming to know ourselves as well as our co-inquirers better. For this reason this is a timely, dangerous, important and above all optimistic volume.

Bath, UK

Dr. Ann Rippin
Academic Quilter
Reader in Management, Humanist Celebrant

# Acknowledgements

We are excited, relieved and proud to be writing the acknowledgements to this volume. This has been a labour of love and seeing the text in print, including so many wonderfully inspiring colour images is incredibly rewarding. This has truly been a collective effort and so it is only right that we begin by thanking those who have made it possible.

First, it would be remiss of us not to express our sincere thanks to Professor Heather Höpfl, who inspired a generation of scholars to challenge the functionalist ideology that underpinned orthodox organisational theory and make space for the study of organisational aesthetics. The Aesthetics of Organising (2000) is a must read. We have both been inspired by her work and know that we, along with the organisation studies community, miss her presence very much. We hope that she would be pleased that her work and ideas continue through volumes such as this.

Secondly, we would like to thank the organisers of the very first Art of Management and Organization conference in 2002, Ceri Price, Stephen Linstead and Ian King. The event at London's Southbank in collaboration with the Tate Modern, was more than just an academic conference. It was an experiential and experimental event that critically challenged the fundamental premise of management and organisation studies by asking whether management is an art or a science.

Since then, the Art of Management and Organization conference has developed into an internationally renowned 'safe space'. Priding itself on its willingness to embrace a cornucopia of ground breaking, exciting and informative encounters, the conferences have thus unfolded as an endeavour to draw in, and provide a space for, new, promising, burgeoning and potential avenues of exploration that are evolving in and around organisation studies. They have encouraged material from other critical traditions in the humanities and arts, which may be unfamiliar to those working in the organisation and management field—a selection of which are showcased in this volume.

We would also like to acknowledge other supportive communities too, such as SCOS (Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism), who have also provided a safe home for scholars looking to push traditional boundaries surrounding the fields of business and management and the humanities. In particular, the 2010 conference in Lille, led by Samantha Warren and Beatrice Acevedo on the theme of 'Vision' provided a space in which the organisation studies community (and beyond) came together to experiment, discuss and interrogate the place of visual methods in our work.

Thirdly, we recognise the impact that the ESRC funded inVisio (*The International Network for Visual Studies in Organization*) project had on developing the field of visual studies in business and management research. Not only did inVisio run a successful national ESRC Seminar Series and conference, but also won further funding as part of an ESRC RDI initiative that developed 'inVisio inspire', an online resource for visual researchers in business and management.

And then, of course, there are the dedicated, creative, maverick contributors to this collection. At the forefront of developing new methods of research and diversifying the field of practice. We are grateful for your willingness to share your knowledge to help us think about ways in which we can do research differently. Your contributions are rich and varied and we are delighted they provide such fertile ideas through which other researchers can be inspired and guided.

Jenna Ward
Harriet Shortt

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# Notes on Contributors

**Kristina Ahmas** is the manager of K.H. Renlund Museum in Kokkola, Finland. She completed her Ph.D. at University of Vaasa in 2014 on collective expertise. She continues to delve into the field of research while managing the museum. Aesthetic organizing continues to be the focus for her second doctoral dissertation in art history in the context of city planning at the University of Helsinki. Her thesis draws on the theory of persuasive narrative, enacted towards the shaping of the garden city in the early 20th century.

**Andrew Armitage** is an Honorary Fellow of the Business and Law Faculty, Anglia Ruskin University. Andrew's research interests are the use of Arts Based Initiatives in the HR curriculum, and challenges of HRD in the post-global financial crisis, Andrew was the winner of the 2016 outstanding paper Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence paper with Diane Keeble-Ramsay for the paper *HRD challenges faced in the post-global financial crisis period—insights from the UK* published in the *European Journal of Training and Development*, and contributed a chapter to the R. Wayne Pace Outstanding Book of the Year Award, Academy of Human Resource Development edited by Callahan, Stewart, Trehan, Sambrook and Rigg (2015) *Realising*

*Critical HRD: Stories of Reflecting, Voicing, and Enacting Critical Practice*. Andrew, together with Diane Keble-Ramsay was also the winner of the 2015 UFHRD Alan Moon Prize. He has also published in the area of poetry in the workplace in the journals of *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, and the *Journal of Critical Organizational Studies*.

**Zev Farber** is the founding Director of the Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers at OCAD University in Toronto, Canada. He is an experienced leader and intrapreneur who has spent the past 18 years working in higher education and the arts and culture sector. His background includes professional development, creative technologies, strategic program development and implementation, fundraising and leading change. Zev has an active New Media studio practice and has also continuously taught related undergraduate courses for the past decade. He holds an MFA in visual art from York University and his undergraduate degree from the University of Toronto.

**Daniel King** is Professor of Organization Studies at Nottingham Trent University, UK and co-director of the Centre for People, Work and Organizational Practice. Dr King's research focuses on three main, interconnected areas: the contribution critical perspectives of management can make to transforming organizational practice; alternative organizations and alternative ways of organizing; and critical perspectives of managing in the Third Sector. He has published in Organization Research Methods, Organization Studies, Human Relations, Management Learning and Non-profit Voluntary Sector Quarterly. Daniel reviews for a number of leading journals and is an editorial board member for Work Employment and Society and co-series editor of Organizations and Activism, Bristol University Press. He has recently written an undergraduate textbook Organizational Behaviour 3rd Edition, with Scott Lawley (Oxford University Press).

**Niina Koivunen** is Associate Professor at the Department of Management, University of Vaasa and Docent at Turku School of Economics at University of Turku, Finland. Her research focuses on aesthetic leadership, collective expertise and leadership development. Her research has been published in academic journals including the

*Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *Leadership, Journal of Management & Organization* and *Journal of Consumption, Markets and Culture*. She has also edited a book Creativity and the Contemporary Economy, together with Professor Alf Rehn.

**Robert McMurray** is Professor of Work and Organisation at The York Management School, UK. His research interests include the organisation of health care, professions, emotional labour, dirty work and visual methods. Other collaborative book projects include: *The Dark Side of Emotional* (2016), *Urban Portraits* (2017), *The Management of Wicked Problems in Health and Social Care* (2018) and the Routledge Focus on Women Writers in Organization Studies series. Robert also produces a street photography blog http://robertmcmurray.blogspot.com/.

**Diane Ramsay** is an Honorary Fellow of the Business and Law Faculty, Anglia Ruskin University. Diane is a Principal Fellow of HE Academy, a Chartered Member of the Institute of Personnel and Development, and a member of the British Psychological Society. Her current research reviews organisational working practices making links to the experiences of employees in terms of menopause and positive ageing within organisations since the global credit crisis. She has published with Andrew Armitage, receiving the Emerald Award for Excellent paper with regards to the changing nature of work, and also has also published on the impact of the raised national default retirement age, maternal discrimination and research methods. As an active Forum member for more than a decade, she has received awards from the University Forum of Human Resource Development for the use of arts-based interventions.

**Harriet Shortt** is Associate Professor of Organization Studies at The University of the West of England, Bristol, and Visiting Research Fellow at The University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Harriet's research focuses on organisational space, artefacts and the materiality of work, and she has an expertise in visual methodologies. Her research has been published in leading journals including *Human Relations*, *Organizational Research Methods*, *Management Learning*, *Visual Studies* and the *International Journal of Work, Organisation and Emotion* and was awarded 'Paper of the Year 2015' by *Human Relations*. She is a founding member of 'inVisio' (*The International Network for Visual Studies in Organization*) and part of the 2012 ESRC RDI funded team that developed 'inVisio inspire', an online resource for visual researchers in business and management. Harriet has been/is Principal Investigator for 5 industry-funded visually-led research projects. Harriet has led research projects in both public and private sector organisations, such as the Environment Agency, NHS, Stride Treglown Architects and ISG Construction that examine spatial change and the impact of workspace on employees' everyday working practices.

**Claus Springborg** is a leadership consultant, author and lecturer at Copenhagen Business School. With a Ph.D. from Cranfield School of Management on practices that can help leaders to solve seemingly unsolvable problems, Claus has over ten years' experience teaching entrepreneurship, management theory and personal development. His work is greatly influenced by his background as a tango and contact improvisation teacher, choral conductor, and his work as a psycho-spiritual teacher. As the author of the book Sensory Templates and Managerial Cognition - Art, Cognitive Science and Spiritual Practices in Management Education (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), Claus enables leaders to improve their effectiveness by deepening their presence. Using an evidence-based approach, Claus brings humanistic principles, precision, reflexivity and humour to his teaching and consulting work. Contact Claus on claus@cocreation.dk or http://cocreation.dk/.

**Chris Stamper** is a doctoral researcher at the University of Leicester. Based in the School of Business, Chris's research focuses on the lived experience of work, and he has an interest in alternative methods of qualitative inquiry. His Ph.D. thesis brings together research from organisational, sociological and criminological disciplines to explore criminal record holders' experiences of gaining and retaining employment, particularly in relation to criminal background checks.

**Jenna Ward** is Associate Professor of Work, Organisation and Emotion and Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching at the University of Leicester, School of Business. Jenna's research focuses on exploring emotionality within organisations, organising and managing. Prioritising marginalised voices, Jenna employs and develops innovative arts-based research methods that complement her ethnographically informed research designs to observe and probe beyond the surface of both organisations and individual experiences of work and organisations. Areas of interest include: emotional labour, visual and arts-based methods, creative industries, health care, death work and the management and organisation of voluntary work and volunteers. Research has included working with organisations such as the Department of Health, National Trust, City of London, NHS and Samaritans. Jenna is also Director of the Art of Management & Organisation (2013–present).

**Samantha Warren** is Chair in Organization Studies and HRM at University of Portsmouth. She is an interdisciplinary scholar, researching, using and writing on visual methodologies for 18 years. She has written journal articles and book chapters on and/or using visual methods, including *Organization Studies; Organizational Research Methods; Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal;* and collections edited by Sage and Routledge. She is a co-founder of the International Network for Visual Studies in Organizations (*in*Visio), Principal Investigator for the two ESRC grants that supported that work between 2007 and 2012, and a co-editor of the (2014) *Routledge Companion to Visual Organization.* She is currently a Series Editor for the *Palgrave Series in Arts, Business and Humanities,* and an associate editor of the journal *Organizational Aesthetics.*

**Alia Weston** is an educator, designer, and entrepreneur. She is currently an Associate Professor of Creative and Business Enterprise at OCAD University, in Toronto Canada. Alia's research examines the intersection of business, creativity and social change, through interdisciplinary themes such as social innovation, experiential food pedagogy, decolonial business and creative economies. Alongside her research she hosts workshops and exhibitions which engage with issues related to creative and sustainable work practices. At OCAD Alia co-leads the Minor in Entrepreneurship and Innovation and teaches a range of courses that support art and design students in developing socially beneficial business capabilities. Her academic work is supported by her practice as a jewellery designer and entrepreneur.

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## Photography: Using Instagram in Participant-Led Field Studies

# Using Arts-Based Methods of Research: A Critical Introduction to the Development of Arts-Based Research Methods

Jenna Ward and Harriet Shortt

As academic researchers we are schooled in rigorous, scientifically informed research practice. From identifying our ontological and epistemological assumptions, writing detailed and focused research questions, selecting appropriate methods of data collection, ensuring our research has ethical approval through to engaging robust methods of analysis. Every PhD programme in every University will be focused on delivering this learning. Of course, this teaching is absolutely necessary to ensure we produce research that is ethical, has integrity and is the product of robust research practice. Yet, at the same time, these rules, processes and procedures have at times unintentionally stifled academic creativity and innovation in relation to methods of research. In fields of qualitative enquiry, the semi-structured

J. Ward (✉)
University of Leicester, Leicester, UK
e-mail: jw704@le.ac.uk

H. Shortt
University of the West of England, Bristol, UK
e-mail: Harriet.shortt@uwe.ac.uk

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interview reigns supreme, closely followed by focus-groups. But what is this monochrome palette of qualitative methods doing to, and for, qualitative research? Are these methods always the most suitable for exploring our research questions? What might they leave untouched, unspoken or unaddressed? Are they fit for purpose in a visually led twenty-first century?

Our concern in editing this book is not to dismiss the methodological orthodoxy or even to directly challenge its supremacy in the field of organisation and management studies. Instead, we intend to consider other methods of qualitative enquiry and what they might contribute to our understanding of contemporary organisational life. In order to achieve this, we must step out from the comfort provided by the routines and familiarity of the semi-structured interview to embrace the discomfort, unfamiliarity, disruption and uncertainty of alternative methods of qualitative inquiry. More specifically, we are concerned with exploring the potential of arts-based methods of research in business and the humanities.

Arts-based methods of research including visual, performative and collaborative forms of enquiry have the power to mobilise and provoke individuals and communities to reflect and engage (Mitchell 2011). Visual works facilitate reflexivity (Berger 1972; Sontag 1977) by situating the individual within. In this way, art has the capacity to engage with tensions and ambiguities whilst holding open possibilities for critical reflection, reconstruction, sense-making and change (Wicks and Rippin 2010). As Schein (2013) identifies, art provokes, shocks and inspires us to see, hear and experience ideas, concepts and contexts differently. In this way, art and artists have the potential to inspire change, or in the vocabulary of the academy—to have impact.

Arts-based and visual methods of research have the potential to elicit deeper, more emotional, more reflexive accounts when compared to more traditional approaches to qualitative research, address a variety of power dynamics within the researcher/participant relationship and are particularly useful in reaching vulnerable or marginalised voices communities and stakeholders (see Easterby-Smith et al. 2012; Slutskaya et al. 2012). By way of extension, artistically informed approaches to research have the residual potential not only to elicit richer data but might also engage a wider variety of audiences more readily.

Indeed, a variety of arts have been used in management and organisation research including poetry (Armitage 2014); textiles (Rippin 2013), photography (Warren 2002; Shortt 2015; Slutskaya et al. 2012; Ray and Smith 2012); drawing (Vince 1995; Vince and Broussine 1996; Stiles 2004, 2011, 2014; Ward and Shortt 2012, 2018), film (Wood and Brown 2012) and knitting (Ahmas and Koivunen 2017). Each method has begun to speak to the value of exploring 'a different way of thinking, feeling and doing' (www.artofmanagement.org). Certainly over the past two decades we have seen a steady growth in the number of papers, special issues and books that have advanced the arts-based field in business and management research and offered new and creative routes for research design and method for new and experienced researchers, as well as practitioners across the business, management and humanities disciplines.

But why this book, and why now? One of our key concerns in editing this book is to foreground the range of visual, creative, arts-based methods on offer to researchers and bring them together in one place. Our hope is that this book will help readers explore and consider the ways in which the arts can be embedded into research design and enable them to understand alternative ways of researching. We want to take this opportunity to highlight the growth in the field—both from a researcher and practitioner perspective. We can no longer say that visual, arts-based methods are overlooked—indeed, as we evidence in our acknowledgements, conferences, communities, special issues and leading scholars in this field have all helped to build capacity in the arts-based methods field, certainly over the past 15 years or so. However, we feel it is time a volume brought together some of those scholars who have been instrumental in developing such methods over the past decade and, most importantly, draw on their experiences and evidence to help support those wishing to develop their methodological knowledge and practice.

Our other key concern for creating this book is to address a gap in the arts-based methods field. This is a practical and pragmatic gap; not only did we want to showcase some of the current, leading-edge approaches in arts-based methods, but we wanted to compile a guide on *how* to actually *use* these methods, in practice. So, we want to provide readers with a 'how to…' guide and help our readers navigate their way through these non-traditional methods in terms of understanding the foundations from which they have emerged, how they might be applied to a specific research project, and step-by-step what to consider in relation to, for example, ethics, participant's emotions, and how to manage and analyse the data gathered. Too often (we find!) the messy, challenging and unexpected parts of research are ignored or left out of methods books. We find methods are presented as 'clean' systematic processes and, as we know, most research does not follow this neat pattern. It has been important to us to present the 'real life' of these methods and we hope this 'how to' approach throughout this volume tells such a story.

The authors in this volume present their stories from practice and experience and, as you will read in the chapter summaries below, they map out their own guides on how to navigate each distinct method and steer the reader through the exciting opportunities and complex challenges that such methods present.

Jenna Ward and Daniel King, in Chapter 2, provide a review of participant-produced drawing methods and address how under-utilised this method is in business and management research. They focus on the advantages of this method in order that researchers can potentially awaken or reveal difficult or challenging emotions in the context of their research studies, and the power drawings have in expressing emotions that people might find difficult to articulate verbally. Their 'how to guide' includes: *how to plan a drawing activity, how to tackle challenges you may face like participants' graphic aptitude and lack of self-confidence, and how to choose your drawing materials and other resources.*

In Chapter 3 of this volume, Claus Springborg presents how dance might be used in business, management and humanities research. He suggests that this particular arts-based method is useful for those researchers keen to study the unconscious, affective and aesthetic aspects of organisational life. A history of dance as a research method is presented first, followed by reflections on what sort of research questions this method may be most appropriate to explore. A step-by-step guide is presented in terms of how researchers may go about designing research that incorporate dance, movement and the body and how to go about collecting data. Throughout the chapter Springborg illustrates the research process using detailed vignettes from his own research practice. This 'how to' guide includes: *how to observe dancing, movement and bodies, how to design dance* *sessions in order to engage participants, how to capture relevant data, a variety of approaches to transcribing and analysing dance data and movement data, and how to use dance and choreography as a metaphorical lens to analyse non-dance phenomena.*

In Chapter 4, Robert McMurray draws on his experience of using pocket-films with first year undergraduate and MBA students. He presents a case for using film and film-making on smartphones in the context of learning and teaching and provides an argument for the pedagogic merits of such a method. In particular, he shows how film-making may encourage research-based learnings and how film may persuade students to think differently about their world and their experiences. McMurray also addresses the value of film-making as a form of collaborative enquiry. This 'how to' guide includes: *a user-friendly, nine-step guide to using pocket-films for researching and learning, how to write a film assessment marking criterion, and how to write ethical principles for film-making for your students*.

In Chapter 5 of this volume, Alia Weston and Zev Farber introduce us to food in organisational research. They show how food and eating can be used in a research context for examining social engagement and how food can be used as a tool to enhance and enrich social interaction within a research context. They offer two illustrative examples from their own practice, and reflect on how food can be used firstly, as an arts-based method in action research as part of an artist-talk dinner series, and secondly how food can play an important role in disseminating research knowledge. This 'how to' guide includes*: how to set up your own food intervention using different approaches to a 'dinner series'—including the ingredients you will need for orientating your participants, the intervention itself, and how to manage a debriefing session.*

Chapter 6 presents a case for knitting and handicraft and its potential as an arts-based research method. Niina Koivunen and Kristina Ahmas draw on their work on guerrilla knitting as an organisational intervention that inspired, empowered and mobilised a resistant museum workforce into collective and creative action. They present a culturally sensitive review of the gendered and material nature of knitting and other handicrafts. This 'how to guide' includes: *reflections on how to privilege silence in organisational research settings, exploring participatory action research and how to create 'data' for analysis from handicraft projects.*

In Chapter 7 Chris Stamper introduces us to the art of letter writing and how it can be used as a research method. Drawing on research from English literature to criminology, he shows how the hand-written letter can be a visual, textual and sensory tool with which to engage with a variety of participants in research studies. Stamper's chapter specifically examines how letter writing can be a fruitful method of qualitative inquiry when working with hard to reach groups—namely here, prisoners and those with a criminal record. Along with vignettes and examples from his own study, Stamper moves through the research process and guides the reader through sampling, correspondence, storage and analysis, and candidly reflects on his own mistakes and what we might learn from them. This 'how to' guide includes: *detailed guidance on how to sample, recruit and select your participants, how to write your own and read others' letters, and how to transcribe and make sense of hand-written correspondence.*

In the penultimate chapter of the book, we see Andrew Armitage and Diane Ramsay show how the visual production of poem houses alongside poetic text creates a unique sense-making process for exploring organisational experiences. The chapter examines how poetry provides an alternative way of understanding organisational challenges to the more dominant organisational voices and discourses we are used to. The authors show how 'poem houses'—an assemblage of found objects and poetry in a box, using arts-based materials and words—provides a visual narrative of individual and/or collective organisational experiences. Armitage and Ramsay showcase powerful examples from their own practice through vignettes and images. Through their reflections, they make useful suggestions and recommendations for those wanting to follow such a method in their own research or organisational intervention. This 'how to' guide includes: *how to work with 'non-poets' in your participant group, how to make poem-houses and how to make sense of poem houses with your participants.*

In the final chapter of our volume, Harriet Shortt and Samantha Warren offer a guide for those researchers keen to engage with social media platforms as a research tool. Specifically, they examine how Instagram can be used to gather visual data as part of participant-led field studies. They discuss the recent advances made in visual studies and how social media platforms bring a 'new wave' of visual studies into focus. In order to contextualise the use of Instagram in a research study, they draw from their own research practice and present a field study, that explores the post-occupancy evaluation of a UK Business School building. They provide some useful and insightful reflections from this work, involving the complexities of participants' attitudes to social media and how this might impact research and researchers, as well as considering the ethical issues associated with using visual public platforms for data collection. This 'how to' guide includes: *how to set up your Instagram feed , how to create a suitable hashtag for your research, how to manage your data on your Instagram feed, and how to analyse the images posted, and their captions.*

Together, our authors and their 'how to' guides will help new and experienced researchers navigate their way through a rich variety of arts-based methods. Yet, not only is this text a useful resource for sharing best practice, within and across the diversity of methods, contexts and vignettes presented we see recurrent themes emerging which, we propose, act as an agenda for those interested in advancing the field of arts-based methods in business and the humanities. Here we present an overview of those critical questions and themes that are beginning to percolate.

## Inclusivity and Exclusivity

To what extent are these participatory methods inclusive? The use of social media and participant-led pocket–film-making for example, allows us to access those we might, as researchers, not otherwise be able to reach. However, although we may be drawn to such methods because of their wide-ranging and wide-reaching capabilities, we must critically reflect on how *exclusive* these methods can be. Whilst participatory methods are an appropriate vehicle through which to raise the voices of the unheard or overlooked, some of our contributors in this book have helped us consider how this might not always be the case—there are groups we may work with who do not have access to social media, or smartphones or are not technologically enabled, adept or culturally literate in these forms of communication (see Chapter 2 for a critical discussion of participatory visual methods). Or, even those who *are* technologically savvy with regards to social media (such as the undergraduate students in Shortt and Warren's chapter), may not wish to engage with them in a research context as it does not fit the cultural setting in which they would ordinarily use this mode of engagement– for some students Instagram is a place for the presentation of a certain identity, which may not include 'work'. Furthermore, our Drawing chapter notes the expense associated with participatory drawing methods—Ward and King remind us that some resources and materials used in arts-based approaches require researchers or research teams to have a substantial budget. And we might continue to question what groups or individuals may be excluded from some of the other methods we discuss—some might argue a number of these methods are for the able-bodied only, or would question how such methods might be used when working with people who are visually impaired, and how might some writing/word-based methods (see Chapter 7 on Letter Writing and Chapter 8 on Poetry) work with those who are dyslexic or who struggle with language barriers? We encourage our readers to reflect on such questions.

## Technology vs. Handmade/Handcrafted

With the above point in mind, this leads us to consider how technology can play a role in research with regards to what it both enables and removes from field studies. In this book we see the use of both smartphones and social media, as well as craft-based 'handmade' approaches. For example, we see how Instagram based, visually-led projects can enable a researcher to work with large sample sizes, but how the brevity of captions about the images taken for the research project at times compromises the richness of the data gathered. In the Letter Writing chapter, Stamper reflects on the hand-written letter (rather than email) in data gathering and notes the importance of the sensory elements of letters received from participants—the doodles at the side of the page, the smell and the feel of the letter itself. The material, physical elements of these pieces of data add something to the research that would perhaps be lost if letters were made digitally. That said, some of our authors have reflected on the possibilities of incorporating technology into methodological approaches that currently prefer handcrafted ways of working—for example, the benefits of participatory drawing on tablets, rather than paper removes some of the 'exclusionary' elements of the method we noted above in relation to high-cost resources such as paper, pens, pencils, and the ability to scan in handcrafted drawings for the purposes of publication. As readers work their way through this book, the benefits and drawbacks of each method should be questioned in relation to contemporary digital ways of working.

## Ethics

As technology develops and our access to tools and materials with which we engage with research methods advance, so too must our ethical guidelines. Such advancements offer new and exciting opportunities, but they often present new challenges for both research teams and ethics committees. Across this volume authors reflect on the ethics associated with their own practices and their experiences of dealing with (often) University ethics committees and usefully outline how others might go about seeking approval for projects that use non-traditional methods. But in speaking with our authors we have found that so often arts-based approaches are not fully understood by the processes and procedures associated with research or by those 'signing off' on such projects. As we highlighted earlier in this introductory chapter, this lack of understanding has at times unintentionally stifled academic creativity and innovation in relation to methods of research. We therefore hope this volume helps to build capacity in the area of arts-based methods and their associated ethical guidelines, as well as helping our readers build their confidence when designing rigorous research projects and negotiating with procedural gatekeepers.

## A Hierarchy of Methods

The methods discussed here also highlight a hierarchy in the arts-based methods field itself. For example, as Ward and King note in their Drawing chapter, visual methods specifically have seen the dominance of photography and participant-led photography in visually-led research. Drawing is at times considered secondary in the visual field. We would like to see other arts-based and visual methods that are not so familiar (to researchers and participants alike) to be considered on an equal footing. Each should be contemplated in relation to its specific context and what it offers the researcher and the research: Drawing, for example, may initially worry some who feel they 'can't draw' but the emotions it raises in interviews and the freedom and power it gives participants to express themselves gives a depth to research findings that are arguably unprecedented. Although a variety of methods might be used with participants in order that they reflect on embodied experiences of everyday life, surely a method such as dance and the observation of bodily movement (see Chapter 3 on Dancing) fits perfectly with such a project; and despite a wealth of approaches we might use to disseminate research findings beyond the academy, there are few other practices that really bring communities and people together like food and eating (see Chapter 5 on Food). We therefore encourage our readers to consider this book as a palette of methods from which they can select the most appropriate for their own project and move away from simply considering the methods that have perhaps been traditionally privileged.

## Activism and the Power of Creativity

Our contributors' work across this book has enabled the unseen to be seen. Hidden emotions, experiences, and elements of the workplace that would otherwise be invisible or overlooked have been made visible, and as such enable us to shed new light on our organisational understandings. In line with the *Art of Management and Organisation's* 2020 conference theme, we could understand this advancement in the field as a form of activism. The authors in our volume are artists in their own way and are using their arts-based methods to disrupt, to confront and to question the status quo. Art can be used as a mechanism of protest, as a way of speaking truth to power and as a sense of possibility to fuel motivation for change. We are firm believers that art is created for and engaged with not just for arts' sake, not in an abstract pursuit of beauty, but with an activist purpose to challenge, to mock, to shine a light where it has not shined before. Whether it be performance art such as Dance or a socially engaged practice such as using Food or Knitting facilitate experiential learning or as a method of disseminating research knowledge, art is a form of political currency for actively addressing the social structure. Here, in this book, authors have embraced topics such as organisational change, power, social responsibility, and resistance and have successfully brought this together using arts-based methods. We hope our readers will see this volume as a call to explore the unseen aspects of art as activism in relation to management and organisations, as well as an object of activism.

Broadly we hope that the methods presented in this book will empower researchers and permit them to think differently and practice differently when designing and planning research projects. It is worth remembering the words of Edgar Schein when he identified six contributions art and the artist can and do make to 'other elements of society like business and government' (2013: 1).

- Art and artists stimulate us to see more, hear more, and experience more of what is going on within us and around us.
- Art does and should disturb, provoke, shock and inspire.
- The artist can stimulate us to broaden our skills, our behavioural repertory, and our flexibility of responses.
- The role of the arts and artists is to stimulate our own aesthetic sense.
- Analysis of how the artist is trained and works can produce insights into what is needed to perform and what it means to lead and manage.
- Art puts us in touch with our creative self.

And so, we hope this book and the creative and innovative approaches our authors present provoke, shock, inspire and stimulate you and your research…

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# Drawing Out Emotion in Organisational Life

Jenna Ward and Daniel King

## Introduction

Drawing in research contexts has a long and established history in disciplines such as medicine, psychology and sociology. Elsewhere, graphs, charts and maps are accepted modes of communication (Meyer 1991) in disciplines such as geography, economics and mathematics. However, drawing, along with other visual and arts-based methods of research, have been generally less well-received in management and organisational research. (Reasons for this have been outlined elsewhere see Bell and Davison 2013; Ward and Shortt 2018 for a discussion.) Yet, as we will argue

J. Ward (✉)
University of Leicester, Leicester, UK
e-mail: jw704@le.ac.uk

D. King
Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK
e-mail: Daniel.king@ntu.ac.uk

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in this chapter, drawing as a research tool, particularly for eliciting alternative insights from research participants, has significant strengths, which support its inclusion in the researchers' toolkit.

The 'linguistic turn' (Rorty 1970), represented a major shift in twentieth-century understandings of management and organisation studies, away from dominant positivist research methodologies that sought objective truths, facts and logics, towards an appreciation of language as constitutive of meaning. The linguistic turn facilitated the development of discourse, narrative and conversation methodologies that challenged positivist positionings of language as neutral and transparent. Whilst the linguistic turn opened up the field of management and organisation to a critical appreciation of social and organisational life, Bell and Davison (2013: 169) have argued that it may have '…gone too far in asserting the primacy of language in the constitution of socially constructed reality'. Consequently, our field faces potential opportunities in *visual* methodologies that may provide access to under-explored voices, issues and ways of knowing. We look to explore these opportunities in the chapter that follows.

Whilst there has been a proliferation of types and use of visual methods in management and organisational research, a hierarchy of visual methods is emerging. Visual studies have evolved in such a way, that photographs and photography has assumed a position of hegemony, not only in terms of the proclivity of photographic methods but also in how visual and arts-based methods are conceptualised, theorised and made sense of. Perhaps this is due to the ease with which technology makes photographic methods accessible or maybe it is connected to the visual culture in which we are immersed. Whatever the reason, some find this photographic dominance problematic. Emmison and Smith (2000: 2) argue that '…the major impediment to the development of a vibrant research tradition in visual research' has been the focus on photography, whilst other visual methods such as collage, textiles, crafting and drawing require equal attention.

Rich and deep discussions can be accessed by providing participants with opportunities to recount events and experiences without reliance on words alone. Emotions and emotional narratives, can be accessed through drawings and consequently this method often allows researchers to explore sensitive or difficult topics (Ward and Shortt 2013, 2018). In particular, the method, as we argue below, enables research participants to express thoughts, ideas and feelings that sometimes are not expressed in more common research approaches such as semi-structured interviews. As our case example illustrates, using drawing as a medium for expression, enabled our research participants to communicate, in visual and metaphorical ways, issues they were not able or willing to articulate in verbal form. Drawing offers a tool to express feelings and experiences (Hogan 2015) that may perhaps be difficult to express. However, this requires researchers to be attentive to the ethical implications of using participant-produced drawing methods. In particular, we consider the importance of giving due care and attention to implications for the researcher, participants and the audience. Finally, we explore ideas of power and inclusivity in relation to drawings. But first, in order to understand how we might encompass participant-produced drawing more readily in our repertoire of constructionist and visual inquiries, we need to turn to its development and legacy in alternative disciplines.

## Participant-Produced Drawing as a Research Method

Participant-produced drawings are images produced (often hand drawn), by those *with* whom researchers are working. Participants are asked by the researcher to draw, typically using pens, pencils, crayons, pastels and paper, an image that relates to the topic in question. This participatory method, located firmly in constructionist roots, broadly asks those with whom the researcher is working to visually project their experiences, feelings, emotions and thoughts on to paper in an attempt to explore and make sense of them. For example, Guillemin (2004) asks women to draw their experience of heart disease and to 'draw how they visualized their condition' (p. 276) whilst Cross et al. (2006) ask participants to draw their experiences of spinal injury. In management research, Ward and Shortt (2013) explored the learning experiences of students in a UK business school, asking them to 'draw how it felt to be a student on [module title]'.

Before we go any further it is important to note that whilst this chapter makes use of the term 'participant-produced drawing' (Kirkham et al.

2015; Ward and Shortt 2013; Kearney and Hyle 2004), similar methodological practice has also been referred to as 'projective drawing' (Vince and Broussine 1996; Vince 1995), 'elicited drawing' (Cross et al. 2006), 'participant-generated drawing' (Guillemin and Drew 2010) and a 'collaborative drawing method' (Morgan et al. 2009). The diversity in terminology can be attributed to the infancy of the method but also to the disparate and siloed nature of its development. Indeed, where these methods have been employed, the focus of the publications in which they are noted is not exclusively the method itself but is instead a discipline-centric conceptual or theoretical focus. For example, in health-related literatures drawing methods have been used to explore participant experiences of heart disease, vaginal thrush or spinal injury. This is not to imply that these studies lack methodological rigour, instead, we raise it here to impress the need for those looking to develop the use of drawing methods to undertake multidisciplinary literature reviews because whilst participant-produced drawing is by no means an established method of inquiry, its proliferation is obscured by the variety of names by which it is referred.

Undertaking a multidisciplinary review reveals a variety of ways in which participant-produced drawing methods have been administered (see Ward and Shortt 2018 for an overview), including structured (Meyer 1991), semi-structured (Nossiter and Biberman 1990; Weber and Mitchell 1995) and unstructured (Zuboff 1988; Kearney and Hyle 2004; Morgan et al. 2009; Ward and Shortt 2013; Kirkham et al. 2015) approaches taking place within individual interview (Meyer 1991; Nossiter and Biberman 1990; Kearney and Hyle 2004; Guillemin 2004; Morgan et al. 2009; Kirkham et al. 2015) or focus group (Vince 1995; Vince and Broussine 1996; Ward and Shortt 2013) contexts. Details of participant-produced drawing method processes will be detailed in the 'How to Guide' below. Importantly, in what follows in the remainder of this section, we turn our attention to a consideration of how and why participant-produced drawing methods are used as an arts-based method of research in business, management and the humanities.

## Why Should We Use Participant-Produced Drawings as a Research Method?

In 2012, Helen Pain's literature review evaluated the choice and use of visual methods, as detailed in 'a wide range of disciplines' published between 2000 and 2010. Despite noting how there are '… few studies that directly compare non-visual methods with ones that incorporate visuals' (2012: 313) Pain concludes that researchers working with visual methods have claimed and evidenced that visual methods of research elicit rich qualitative data and support the researcher—participant relationship. We take these two broadly defined benefits as the basis of our discussions here.

Fundamental to constructionist approaches to research is a desire to foreground the voices, experiences and feelings of our participants through elicitation of rich stories, personal histories and individual journeys. Drawing has been noted to offer a powerful tool for eliciting rich responses, in particular responses that can be categorised as emotional and temporal. Jensen et al. (2007: 359) argue how 'non-rational forms of self-expression can elicit [the] non-verbal, tacit, emotional knowledge…'. It may not be the drawing itself that depicts emotion, as Kearney and Hyle (2004) suggest, but the subsequent narratives from participants that are emotionally charged. Giving participants space and *time* to draw before discussing the topic in question, arguably gives them time to provide a more considered response and one that articulates feelings and emotions. Indeed, Kearney and Hyle (2004: 380) advocate that beyond the image, it is the process of participant-producing drawing methods that reveal 'more meaningful and honest verbal reports' (380). Noted characteristics, such as these, are reminiscent of those rehearsed in art therapy (see Dalley 1984 and Hogan 2015). Indeed, Malchiodi (1999: 16) argues that '…art has the capacity to provide patients… with a non-verbal voice to express both the rational and less rational beliefs about their perceptions…' In this sense, it is important for those who employ visual methods, such as participant-produced drawings, to consider what we might learn from art therapy and art therapists (Kapitan 2012; see Ward and Shortt 2018 for a discussion of participant-produced drawing's legacy in art therapy and the associated challenges this presents.)

The images produced and the stories participants tell when discussing their drawings, often depict the past, present and future (Cross et al. 2006; Ward and Shortt 2013). Such temporal accounts allow the researcher to delve deep into how participants make sense of contexts and events in ways they may not have been able to recount using words alone (see Weber and Mitchell 1995). Methods rooted in verbal and textual modes of communication require linear representations of time and causality. Providing participants with, what is literally an entirely blank canvas, liberates them from boundaries imposed by other methods. They are free to depict events, feelings, ideas and reactions in ways that are non-linear, non-binary and non-logical. The only constraint is their imagination.

For some, of course, a fear of graphic aptitude can and does act as a barrier to engagement (Morgan et al. 2009; Guillemin 2004). Often participants are concerned that they 'cannot draw', with anxieties about their artistic competency stemming from childhood. Yet this can often be ameliorated through reassurance and an encouragement to think of representations in abstract forms (see How to Guide for more information and support). Drawing then allows participants to transcend the rational, temporal and static logics that verbal, textual and other 'mechanically-driven' visual methods such as photography are constrained by. This can be empowering for participants who are able to 'set their own agenda' (Ward and Shortt 2013) in terms of what is or is not 'acceptable' for discussion on a particular topic. These characteristics of participant-produced drawing methods are illustrated by Ward and Shortt's (2013) project with business school students in relation to the evaluation of their teaching and learning experiences.

Ward and Shortt (2013) asked final year undergraduate students, in a focus group setting, to draw a response to 'How does it feel to be a student on [module name]?' Their responses were illustrative of participant-produced drawings' ability to (1) giving space to emotionally respond (2) acknowledge the temporal aspect of experience (3) offers the opportunity to set and shape the agenda. Each of these aspects are illustrated in Fig. 1 in the following ways: (1) this response is emotional, metaphors such as 'going over the fire' and 'going to the top of the mountain together' are powerful representations of how these students felt, along with the claim of certain aspects of the module being 'so depressing'. But interestingly

P: So I start with a long way through. At the start there is a lot of people trying to get through the area – over the fire. Some decided to stop at the beginning because it was too hard. So, they prefer holidays, staying near the sea…So they don't go to the lectures. But then people train to go through the fire…go through 'the way' and there is a big hand stopping them. Because each time they go to a lecture they find it so depressing. And there is another hand trying to help them…and they are going to the top of the mountain together.

R: Who is the green hand?

P: It is the tutorial!

(Ward & Shortt, 2013)

**Fig. 1** Participant-produced drawings allow participants to set the agenda

the images demonstrate how the experiences changed over time. How the challenges were met with rewards which is an important demonstration of an ability to critically reflect and engage in learning as a journey of development. Finally, we must return to the question the students were asked to respond to 'How did it feel to be a student on [module title]?', in response the images and discussion touched on the different learning contexts, e.g. tutorials and lectures, the teaching styles of different staff, varying levels of engagement and resilience of students. The diversity of experiences, issues and characteristics of the teaching and learning experience was captured much more holistically using the participant-produced drawing method than it otherwise would have been through traditional methods of teaching evaluation such as questionnaires.

Participant-produced drawing methods offer researchers the potential to explore sensitive or difficult topics. In the field of health and illness alone, the methods have been used research experiences of spinal injury (Cross et al. 2006), menopause (Guillemin 1999), heart disease (Guillemin 2004), chronic vaginal thrush (Morgan et al. 2009) and post-natal depression (Guillemin and Westall 2008). Asking participants to draw something provides them with an opportunity to articulate feelings around personal and private experiences that may enable them to 'express the unsayable' (Guillemin and Drew 2010: 5). Elicitation of 'affective' responses enables research beyond the cognitive domain.

Drawing, therefore, offers a powerful mechanism to express 'unexamined attitudes, beliefs, feelings and fantasies' (Gould 1987, cited in Nossal 2013) by giving 'voice to the things that previously could not be named' (Nossal 2013: 72). This is not to imply that participative visual methods have the ability to elicit from research participants' experiences and feelings that they do not want to communicate. These are not invasive methods in that way. Instead, engagement with creative and artistic methods offers participants the possibility of 'seeing more and seeing differently' (Barry and Meisiek 2010) which they then have the power to communicate to the researcher if they feel comfortable doing so. Thus, participative methodologies such as drawing are designed to challenge traditional hierarchies of power between researchers and their participants (Hogan 2017).

Traditional management research, predicated upon positivist assumptions, can often be driven by the political interests of those in positions of power, yet in the case of constructionist, collaborative research relationships with participants differ. Research of this type often seeks to access and give voice to those whom we might consider marginalised, vulnerable or less-powerful (Morgan et al. 2009; Reedy and King 2017). Participant-produced drawing methods are participant-centric in that they position participants as experts in relation to their own experiences, thoughts and feelings. They are often used as part of a face-to-face interview, or focus group, where the drawings are made by participants and an interview, or group discussion, ensues in order to explore why the participant drew that particular image, what it means to them, what it represents, how it makes them feel and so on. The drawn image itself acts as a third party within this discussion. Both researcher and participant(s) are usually looking at the image, exploring and examining it together. As an artefact then, the physical drawing becomes the focus and we see a 'redistribution of power' (Shortt and Warren 2012: 24) between researcher and participant as the *participant* describes the image. Indeed, the spatial dynamics of the research method are important factors here, for semi-structured interviews we usually sit across from our participants, clipboard or notebook in hand. Sitting directly across from someone, can be perceived as confrontational, uncomfortable and even exposing. However, the drawing method, along with other arts-based methods, allows for a more feminist, collaborative approach in which spatial power dynamics between the researcher and participant(s) are redefined. The pen (or camera) and image is in the hands of the participant, meaning we are able to 'bridge the gap' between the two parties and shift authority away from the researcher. Sitting side by side so that you can both see the image drawn, or in a circle around a shared table, in the case of a focus group setting, allows for a more participative, non-hierarchical approach to understanding lived experiences.

However, this is not to say that visual or arts-based methods can generically be positioned as more inclusive and participatory. Due care and attention must be given to the research context, participants and methods utilised. Packard's (2008) implementation of photo-elicitation methods with chronically homeless participants in Nashville challenges the assumption that visual research methods decrease the power differentials between researcher and participants. Through a visual analysis of the photographs taken as part of the study, Packard concluded that the homeless men had struggled to use the cameras he provided them but had been reluctant to admit to their technical incompetence as it would threaten their dignity. Instead, when they were asked to discuss their photographs with the researcher some struggled to articulate themselves, grew quiet or would critique their own images. Their technical competence in using the cameras provided thereby detracted from the central research focus. Rather than elaborating and eliciting richer data the photographic element of the research method had the opposite effect. Packard's (2008) study reveals the importance of subjecting visual and arts-based methods to the same level of ethical scrutiny as other methodological approaches.

Whilst technical competence is not directly applicable to participant-produced drawing methods a fear of graphic aptitude must be a consideration. As children we make marks that quickly develop into stick people and abstract representations of our imaginations, realities and feelings. Yet, as we mature the validity, usefulness and confidence in our artistic abilities are challenged and threatened. Consequently, a very common response to participant-produced drawing methods by participants is 'But I can't draw!' A fear of graphic aptitude, is then a very real issue in the application and ethical considerations surrounding participant-produced drawing methods. Indeed, drawing methods are used a lot with children or those who struggle to communicate via verbal or textual means, yet for those for whom these labels do not apply we position the visual as secondary to verbal means of communication. Both Kearney and Hyle (2004) and Stiles (2004) report graphic aptitude to be a barrier to engagement in drawing methods, indeed Morgan et al. (2009) and Guillemin (2004) found participants' perceived ability to draw actually created some degree of anxiety. However, in our experience, whilst there are often some protestations regarding ability to draw these are usually easily allayed with the reassurance that everyone will get to verbally present and discuss their images. In more than 10 years of implementing participant-produced drawing methods only 1 participant has refused to draw.

One final consideration, in relation to the benefits of using participant-produced drawings, is to participants themselves. As researchers of organisations, business and management seek to see beyond the surface of organisational rhetoric and dominant corporate discourse to explore the messy, emotional and often challenging narratives and experiences that reside just below the surface and yet are central to organisational life, we must consider an ethics of care (Ward and McMurray 2016) and responsibility regarding the emotional welfare of our participants. If we want participants to share their emotions and feelings, we, as researchers, need to be prepared to handle them in empathetic, sophisticated and considerate ways (see Taylor and Statler [2014] for commensurate links to the practices of art therapists). The documented therapeutic nature of art might be one way in which we can seek to support our participants through these experiences yet this must be commensurate with attendance to the complexity of the ethical challenges this also poses (see below for more detail).

## How to Use Participant-Produced Drawing as a Method of Research

Having introduced the benefits of using participant-based drawings the following section focuses more on the practical steps involved in designing, executing and analysing the data produced by participant-produced drawing methods. What is presented here is an overview of issues, considerations and ideas that will require consideration if you are thinking of or planning to use a participant-produced drawing method. The exact approach you will want to take will be dependent on the context, nature of respondents, epistemological and ontological assumptions (research paradigm—see Burrell and Morgan 1979) and your overarching research questions.

## Planning: What Do I Need to Consider?

Before you begin to evaluate whether participant-produced drawing is a suitable method you must first be able to articulate:

i. From which research paradigm am I approaching my research?
ii. What types of knowledge are valued in my chosen paradigm?
iii. What are my research questions?
iv. What types of data/knowledge will enable me to explore my research questions and make a constructively aligned contribution to the field?

### To Consider

Your methodological research paradigm forms the foundations upon which you will build your research design. It is therefore, vital, that you establish your own epistemological and ontological assumptions before you even begin to think about your own empirical research. Burrell and Morgan's (1979) text is invaluable in this regard and a must-read for all organisation and management studies researchers. For example, participant-produced drawing methods are resource-intensive in terms of both time and money. Consequently, it might be difficult to use these types of method to carry out research on a very large sample population. If your research is rooted in positivistic assumptions about generalisability and viability it may be difficult for you to justify using participant-produced drawing methods.

Location of your sample population is also important to consider when preparing a research design. Participant-produced drawing methods are largely to do with building a connection or relationship between researcher and participant. Would it be possible to foster these relationships over a distance? How might you think about using technology to help support this? What might you need to consider if you were to conduct a participant-produced drawing focus group via a video link? Would drawing on an electronic tablet elicit the same rich data as asking someone to physically put pen to paper? The infancy of this method means there continues to be a host of research opportunities available to extend our understanding.

## Preparation: What Do I Need to Prepare in Advance?

Once you have determined how participant-produced drawing methods align with your research paradigm and will enable you to generate data to explore your research questions you now need to think about planning the implementation of the method. You might find it useful to consider:

i. How will I frame the drawing activity? What one question will I ask my participants to respond to?
ii. Where will the research take place? Will I need to transport materials with me to different locations?
iii. What budget do I have for materials?
iv. What materials will I need to source and provide?
v. How might the materials I choose impact the responses participants provide?
vi. Are there any specific ethical issues I need to consider?

### To Consider

Participant-produced drawing offers a tool to unlock alternative perspectives on research topics by enabling the participant to offer more imaginative and creative responses. In particular, participant-produced drawings are good for issues that are emotion-laden, issues in which the research is seeking to 'surface unspoken thoughts and feelings' and 'tap quickly into the emotional lives of participants' (Kearney and Hyle 2004: 362). The framing of the question therefore is important to allow the participant to respond in a way that enables such unspoken thoughts and feelings to be surfaced. There a variety of ways in which this can be facilitated using structured (take a print out of a diagram or model and ask participants to alter/amend it in accordance with their own experiences), semi-structured (e.g. ask participants to represent their organisation or experience as an animal (Stiles 2004)) or unstructured approaches (using open-ended questions and blank paper) (see Ward and Shortt [2018] for detailed guidance on each approach). Whichever approach is decided upon it is important, when setting the prompt question to include instructions not to use words, annotations or labels.

The ability of participant-produced drawings to bridge emotionality and rationality means we also have to be sensitive to the ethical considerations of the research. Having the ability to facilitate a deeper, emotionally reflexive response from participants does not mean that we should. What is it that your research questions are requiring you to explore? Where are the boundaries and how will you maintain these in the research context? How will you protect yourself? Do you have a colleague to whom you can debrief and exercise any challenging emotional reaction to what you hear? It is important to reflect on the ethical considerations of your research project and be prepared for the unexpected. In our experience, it is always useful to be prepared with tissues, water and the freephone Samaritans telephone number.

Collecting and setting up the materials for the drawing is one of the key preparation tasks. In addition to clearly worded Participant Information Briefs and Participant Consent Forms you will also need a range of other materials. The following range of materials is not exhaustive (you could for instance use paints) but neither do you need to use all of these materials. The exact choice will be a matter of judgement based on your experience, the degree of comfort you anticipate for your research participants, the available space in which you will conduct the drawings and the resources you have available. Depending on the analytical perspective that you take (see below) the exact use of materials can have symbolic meaning (for instance crayons could be understood as offering more childlike depictions) which can aid interpretation. However, the potential benefits that this can bring need to be judged against the possibility that the participant might feel overwhelmed by too many options.

### DrawingMaterials

- *Felt tip pens* offer a great tool for drawing as they come in a range of colours, most people are familiar with felt tips and they are cheap to purchase. Different thicknesses of pens can be useful to allow for detailed work and also thicker, bolder lines.
- *Coloured pencils* like felt tip pens are commonplace, have a range of colours and most people are comfortable using them. Remember to bring a sharpener!
- *Pastels* offer possibilities for more creativity as they can be blurred and blended into one another. However, be aware pastels can smudge so a fixative spray or two sheets of wax paper can be used. Remember to bring wet wipes for messy hands!
- *Wax crayons*—whilst they might be more associated with children, crayons offer a highly tactile and expressive material to draw with. Not only do crayons produce quite bold images, they also provide opportunities to layer, rub or melt.
- *Finger paints*—can be highly creative and fun to use but they are messy. Remember to bring wet wipes and check with the venue if they are ok with you using paint.
- *Paper*—Think about the size of the paper you want to use. How much space will participants have at the venue? Will you need to transport the drawings on public transport?

### Other Useful Resources

- *Folder to store the drawings*—a protective folder is vital in order to store the drawings. If you are using pastels or other potentially messy materials extra storage facilities might be useful.
- *Lockable storage for the drawings*—the images produced need to be stored in ways that are secure and confidential. The images and the

accompanying discussion are data and need to be treated in the same way as interview transcripts and other forms of data are.

- *Recording device*—the interpretation that the participant gives to their work is an important part of the research process. Therefore, a quality recording device will be useful. Remember to ask permission from all participants to record interactions.
- *Digital camera or scanner to digitise the image*—digitising the images produced can have two key purposes. Firstly, they are important to store the images and enable the team to collectively analyse the work, particularly if they are in different locations. Secondly, increasingly publishers are allowing, either within the text or on accompanying websites, the display of images. Therefore, high-quality digitisation, ideally with professional scanners, are important to capture good quality images. Third, paper deteriorates over time. It is important that you maintain records of your data for the life of the project. Digitisation is an important part of this process.
- *Digital archiving*—once an image has been digitised it is important to have it saved in more than one secure location. Furthermore, be aware that file formats can change over time can therefore data can suffer from digital obsolescence. Saving files in multiple formats, particularly including more ubiquitous formats such as PDFs can be part of a digital preservation strategy.

## Process: What Should I Do?

It is important that you enter the research setting with a confident plan of the methodological process. You might find it useful to map out a plan on paper for you to take with you. Here are some useful questions for you to consider:

i. Where is the research taking place? In a café, at a University, at a workplace?
ii. How much space will there be for the drawing activity?

iii. Will the drawing take place in a focus group setting or as part of a one-to-one interview?
iv. How might you respond to resistance or protestations to the drawing activity? Are your participants prepared to draw? What have been the reactions?

## To Consider

Participant-produced drawings have been used in a variety of contexts including in one-to-one interviews and focus groups. How you choose to implement it should be aligned with your research objectives and questions. How will asking people to draw in a group setting extend or constrain responses in relation to your topic? Whilst the image-making itself is an important part of the process, it should not be seen in isolation. Instead the drawing can be seen as a catalyst to produce access to alternative perspectives or new insights on issues that have been covered in the interview itself. Sufficient time should be built into the interview to enable discussion of the drawing and different interpretations of the image that has been produced. How much time is useful?

As suggested earlier, many research participants may, at first, be reluctant to draw. Being asked to draw, either in group or individual contexts, can be intimating or uncomfortable for some. This can be particularly challenging in business and management research where research participants, particularly senior managers, often avoid situations in which they feel uncomfortable or exposed, and drawing can produce these very emotions. Making participants feel comfortable is therefore critical to engagement. Acknowledging participants' fears and even joking about them to put the participant at ease can go a long way in creating a safe and supportive environment for sharing and exploring difficult experiences. In particular, it is important to stress that this is an opportunity to express themselves. And that they will get the opportunity to explain what they have drawn and why during the session. Having a calm, approachable and friendly tone can help create, what art therapists call a 'safe space' in which they can express and explore emotions and undertake the drawing. Clear explanation about what they are about to do, why you are using drawing (to enable them to express visually and how you will analyse the material [it is about expression not artistic ability]) generally puts people at ease. Continual reassurance about the type of drawing that you are looking for, that line drawings are fine and stick people are acceptable, or that it can even be abstract can lower reticence surrounding the process.

In order to create a conducive atmosphere preparing the art materials is also important. It is important to make sure that you have all your art materials to hand, and laid out in an accessible manner or in a way that can easily be presented to the participants.

Whilst designing the methods it is important to give the participant time to respond. Often 10–15 minutes is sufficient to give the participants enough space. Whilst each participant is different our experience suggests that often participants need some personal space whilst drawing. It is important not to intervene whilst the drawing is taking place, but be available to answer any questions or offer participants reassurance that the quality of the artwork is not significant. Quiet and calm activity in the background, such as tidying up notes or sitting away from the participant will help create a conducive atmosphere for reflection and dialogue by giving participants space without them feeling self-conscious.

## Analysis: How Do I Begin to Make Sense of My Data?

There are two schools of thought dominant in the area of arts-based data analysis (see Ward and Shortt 2018). The school of thought you align yourself with will be dependent on the research paradigm you identified at the beginning of your research design process. The key questions in understanding your position are:

1. Can I interpret the meaning of the drawings myself, as a researcher?
2. Do I need my participants to interpret the meaning of the drawings they themselves produced?

## To Consider

Broadly, psychoanalytic perspectives may best align with those comfortable with the first proposition. This is not an approach that we, as researchers, take and so we will not spend time discussing that here. Instead, given we root our own research practice in inquiry-led approaches, we believe it is the participant's right to interpret the images they have produced in their own words. The images need to be considered as supporting the verbal or textual accounts elicited during the research process, rather than fundamentally having meaning in and of themselves. Taking this approach privileges the participant's voice in the research. Giving equal voice to every experience, we do not seek to uncover generalisable, global or universal causes or experience but instead value the individual and personal reflections of each participant.

Given the importance of participant interpretations of their own images, or indeed, the collective meaning-making that may take place in focus group settings, you will need to consider how you will transcribe your data so as not to lose the connection between the images and the text. How will you store and analyse the data? By hand? Using software? Qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo now include the capability to upload image files as data which is useful and can, at the very least, offer a repository for storing your images.

Analysing visual and textual data together is challenging. There are no formally recognised methods for doing so. However, developments are being made in terms of participant-produced photography that we might find helpful (see Shortt and Warren [2019] for an introduction to Grounded Visual Pattern Analysis). What is important, however, is to root the methods of analysis in pre-existing approaches and where appropriate, work to privilege the voice of your participants. Thematic analysis for example can work well for visual data as it can for text. Yet, it is vital not to impress your own meaning-making on to images or to refute the descriptions and sense-making of the participants themselves. Focusing on the themes and ideas that emerge from the text alone, however, may relegate the visual richness of the data. It is important that the process of analysis oscillates between the two data forms to ensure the analysis and sense-making encapsulates both modalities.

## Presentation: What Should I Keep in Mind When Writing Up My Work?

Presenting and reporting research findings from participant-produced drawing methods comes with a host of exciting opportunities and some challenges that are worthy of consideration. Things you might want to consider:

i. Where do you want to publish your research?
ii. How will you engage interested parties in your findings?
iii. Where can you present your work for maximum impact?

### To Consider

During the planning stages it was important for you to identify your research paradigm in order to structure and constructively align your research design with your epistemological and ontological assumptions. The issue of paradigm is just as important here. Academic publications are broadly aligned to publishing research from particular paradigms therefore it is important that you are identifying journals or peer-reviewed outlets that align with your core ideas. However, there is an increasing interest and tolerance in a range of publications for alternative methodological approaches. Crucially, most publication platforms now have the ability to include image files into their online publications. In spite of these developments, you must be prepared to have your work and approach evaluated as 'alternative' or 'different'. This will require you to work to justify your methods and findings in ways that are not expected of more traditional approaches.

Having visual images is a real asset to any research project as they allow you to tell the story of your research and your findings in a way that is engaging and innovative. In an environment in which academics are increasingly charged with needing to evaluate and measure the 'impact' of their research it is vital that we do more than write up our research for solely academic audiences. Practitioners, organisations, publics and other stakeholders do not have the time or the appetite for reading academic journals or long management reports. Instead, they are often looking for short, snappy, social media friendly representations of your findings. Visual data facilitates this approach and offers you the building blocks to pathways of engagement and impact. You might want to create a gallery, a video or an infographic of your findings but whatever you chose to do, please ensure you have the permission of your participants written into the consent.

**Vignette 2.1: Devils and Nazis**

The following account is taken from research that one of us (Daniel) undertook. The narrative is based on research notes and personal remembering of experience (Bell and King 2010).

The Regional Building Society had been through a major organisational change programme in which front-line staff were expected to speak to all customers about financial planning and products. In essence, the change meant what had previously been a customer-facing processing role (e.g. cashing cheques, taking deposits, paying bills) was now a sales role. Whilst the change process was officially deemed a success, with targets, which previously had consistently been missed now comfortably met, the staff involved had struggled with the expectations that were now placed upon them. Many had chosen to find employment elsewhere. I wanted to understand more about these relational dynamics and how such a 'successful' change programme could have led to so many long-standing members of staff leaving the organisation.

In order to find out more about the individual experiences of those involved, I set up a focus group with three ex-cashiers and a one-to-one interview with the manager. In both settings, I used the participant-produced drawing method. The participants were given a range of art materials, felt tip pens, coloured pencils and crayons and sheets of blank A4 paper and given the following instruction:

> I want you to imagine that the change process had its own personality. Please draw what this personality looked and felt like to you.

After completing the picture, the participants were then asked to briefly describe what it represented for them. Two of the drawings are presented here for discussion and illustration (see Figs. 2 and 3).

**Fig. 2** The cashier's drawing

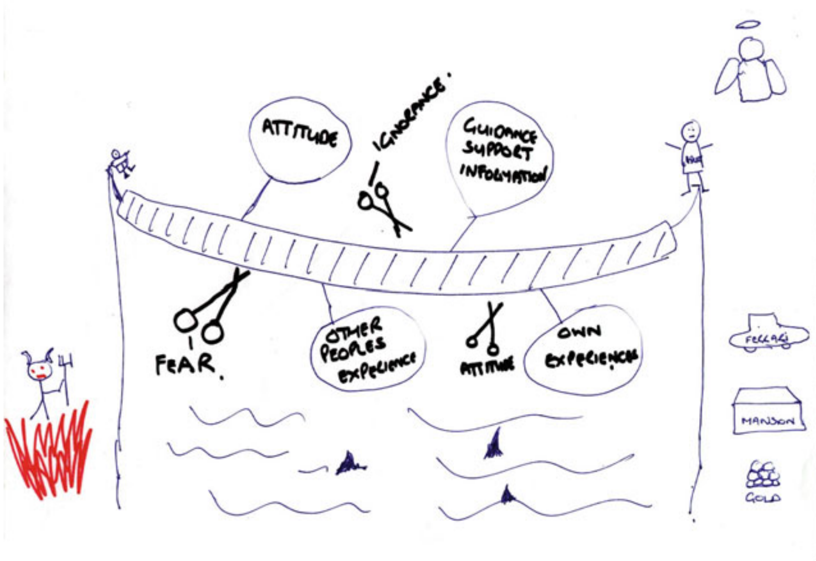


**Fig. 3** The manager's drawing

'Jackie, can you explain your picture for us?' I prompted. 'Well', began Jackie, picking up her picture, 'This is how I felt about the change'. We gaze at the image for a minute. Drawn in pink pencil in the foreground is a stick-person, looking slightly gaunt, with small amounts of spiky hair. Pound signs are pouring down the face with the words MORT (representing mortgage sales) and FPS (Financial Planning Services) the two sets of targets that the cashiers had been measured by post-change. In one hand the stick-figure holds a broom, the floor from vigorous sweeping. Slightly behind this figure is a stick-person, also drawn in pink but with a much sterner expression. This figure has short hair, large eyes and a flat (and rather strongly marked) mouth. Most noticeable though is the Swastika, on his forehead. The stick-person, we learn, represents the manager.

Jackie, who had worked for the Regional Building Society for four years, began describing the pain and suffering she had experienced in the last couple of months before she left. How she had hated selling, the targets that surrounded them and the pressure that she and others felt. Looking at her drawing she began to vocalise, in quite strong terms issues that had previously been expressed, but in significantly more muted tones, during the interview. 'Do you see him as a Nazi?' I asked, 'I, I don't know'. she replied, perhaps taken back by her own depiction.

The symbolism was clear for all to see. Drawn with childlike simplicity but speaking of adult pain, in a stark, bold red line drawing were two stick-like figures. It was an austere image, full of strong emotions. The picture comprised of two figures staring into the distance, the drawing lacked any distinguishing features, flat, motionless, blank, fixed expressions, impassive faces, having little by way of personality … they were almost inhuman, blank, detached, cold and emotionless … Emotionless that is, apart from the tears that seemed to almost leak from the cracks in the face of the figure in the foreground. It seemed that despite the cold, hard impassive exterior, internally the figure was full of pain and suffering. Tears were represented as pound signs rolling down her face. In contrast, emblazoned on the forehead of the figure in the background was a Swastika.

The others in the group put forward their images too. Each of the pictures spoke of violence and domination, cruelty and suffering. Whips, crushing and oppressive weights, torture and agony were all present in equal measure. The participants described how the dominant character in each of their images symbolised their manager who had oppressively demanded 'more and more'.

By way of contrast, the manager to whom they referred, had also been asked to draw a response to the same question in a one-to-one interview with me the day before. His image can be seen in Fig. 3. The picture was of a bridge. On one side there was a baby who had to cross the bridge to reach adulthood. Holding up the bridge were balloons labelled 'attitude', 'guidance, support information', 'other people's experience' and 'own experience'. These he described as the key ingredients to the change being a success. However, the change programme (represented in the image as a baby) had been continually threatened by certain members of staff. These he had represented as huge pairs of scissors labelled 'ignorance', 'fear' and 'attitude'. If the baby managed to cross the bridge and reached adulthood then they would be greeted with gifts of 'gold', a 'mansion' and a 'Ferrari'. However, if the baby was unsuccessful in crossing the bridge, they would come face to face with the Devil or fall into shark-infested waters below.

These drawings and the accounts that accompany them are imbued with emotion and give a real sense of the lived experience of those working in the Regional Building Society throughout the change process. With cashiers depicting their manager as a Nazi and the manager viewing cashiers as saboteurs engaging in devilish behaviours, we get a real sense of the entrenched positions, pain and tension that existed within that organisational space. Yet, interestingly, prior to being asked to draw, the first half of the interviews were 'strangely flat' (King, field notes) with participants giving 'prosaic, formulaic and moderate answers'. In fact, rather than being critical of the change process the overarching sense was that it had been a success. All participants, prior to the drawing, recounted how the change had brought success and targets had been. The participant-produced drawing method allowed them to tell a different story; a story that was, in many ways more difficult to tell; a story imbued with emotion.

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# Designing Dance into Qualitative Research

Claus Springborg

## History of Dance as Research Method

Over the last two decades, there has been an increasing interest in using methods borrowed from the arts as part of research designs (Barone and Eisner 2011; McNiff 1998, 2004, 2010; Leavy 2009; Grierson and Brearley 2009; Barry and Hansen 2008; Knowles and Cole 2007). However, interest in using dance as a research tool, outside the various dance communities, is much more recent (Biehl-missal and Springborg 2015). Dancers, and artists in general, often refer to their art creation as a form of research. In this sense, the use of dance as research has older roots among dancers.

The development of new dance techniques such as the techniques of classical ballet, the techniques of Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Lester Horton, flying low (David Zambrano), the release

C. Springborg (✉)
Copenhagen Business School, Frederiksberg, Denmark
e-mail: claus@cocreation.dk

CoCreation.dk, Frederiksberg, Denmark

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technique (Joan Skinner), contact improvisation (Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith, and others), the Gaga technique (Ohad Naharin), Butoh (Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo), to name a few have often been motivated by the desire to explore and express new aspects of human experience beyond what could be explored and expressed through the techniques available at the time. Furthermore, the development of new dance techniques has often found links to contemporary research in non-dance related fields. For example, when Steve Paxton, one of the founders of contact improvisation, met Daniel Stern and was introduced to Stern's work on attunement between mothers and infants, he realised that his work on contact improvisation was an exploration of how adults attune to each other through movement. Similarly, the development of the release technique is related to research in therapeutic movement such as the Feldenkrais method (Moshé Feldenkrais), the Alexander technique (Frederick Matthias Alexander), Cranio-Sacral Therapy (John Upledger), and Body Mind Centering (Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen).

However, even though the work of dancers in their own field can be considered a form of research in itself, it will often not live up to the standards of rigour, validity, reliability, and generalizability that are normally demanded of scholarly research. This chapter aims to show how elements from the world of dance can be used as part of rigorous scholarly research in business and humanities—as well as other fields beyond dance. This may include research on topics, such as leader–follower interactions, performativity of leadership, organisational culture, and embodied aspects of communication.

## The Use of Dance in Research Design

When considering using dance as part of a research design in business, management, and the humanities, one has to consider how dance relates to all stages of the research process. Since the use of dance in research is often conceived as a means to interview participants bodies, rather than their minds (Hujala et al. 2015) I will in this chapter use the different stages of interview research to give an overview of how and when in the research process dance can be used. The stages below are adopted from Steiner Kvale's renowned work on the interview method (Kvale 1997: 95).

- **Research question**: Clarify the research question and the why and what of the research design and then consider whether the medium of dance is suitable for capturing the kind of data needed to explore the research question, i.e. whether dance is suitable for the how of the research design
- **Design**: Design the process through which the data (the dance) will be produced. This includes considerations of who should dance and of what instructions should be given to the dancers to secure data that is relevant to the research question
- **Data collection**: When carrying out the dancing one has to consider a range of interpersonal conditions
- **Transcription**: How to transform the dance into a permanent form that is suitable for analysis
- **Analysis**: Decide on methods for analysing the data. For example, is this the role of the researcher alone or in collaboration with dancers?
- **Validation**: How to deal with questions of generalizability, reliability, and validity
- **Reporting**: How (and where) to report on the research

Throughout the chapter, I will discuss how researchers can use dance in the various stages of the research process in practice. I begin by considering which kind of research questions can be usefully answered by including dance in the research design. However, before doing so, it is useful to address the issue of philosophical stance.

## Philosophical Stance

The use of dance in research is not restricted to a particular philosophical stance. However, researchers with different philosophical stances will understand the research process differently. Due to limited space, I cannot discuss philosophical implications throughout the chapter. Instead, I will here give an example of how the reader can think about what is presented in the chapter from their philosophical perspective of choice. Collecting data through dance exercises can be seen as an interview where the body contributes to the dialogue (more on this below). As with interviews, the researcher can think of this process from different philosophical positions, such as the realist, interpretivist, participatory, or pragmatic perspective.

From the realist perspective (Philips and Burbules 2000), dance may reveal truths that can be hidden by the interviewees' lack of awareness, self-deception, or deliberate lies. From the interpretivist perspective (Berger and Luckmann 1966), the use of dance in data collection brings richer data and, thus, the opportunity for richer interpretations. In a way, the advantage of using dance in data collection is not that it reveals hidden truths but that it provides more building blocks for constructing interesting and useful meanings and narratives. From the participatory perspective (Kemmis and Wilkinson 1998), the use of dance in data collection can be seen as a method for letting the marginalised voice of the body, the affective and/or the aesthetic be heard. Thus, what comes through the body in dance is neither hidden truths, nor new building material for meaning-making. Instead, it is a voice that has hitherto not been allowed to participate in the research process. And the inclusions of this voice can bring about knowledge that is informed by a larger whole.

My personal stance, and the stance from which this chapter is written, is more the pragmatic stance (Cherryholmes 1992). Thus, I may in the following speak from all three above-mentioned viewpoints. Which one I speak from will be guided by an overall concern for the creation of knowledge in support of action.

And now, let's look at how to use dance as a method of research in practice.

## Research Questions

New research methods are often born out of difficulties with answering new sets of research questions. The development of art-based research methods emerged from a desire to answer new kinds of research questions that could not be adequately explored by existing methods. At the same time, the development of art-based methods stimulated researchers to ask new questions they had not conceived of before. The new kind of questions that emerged together with art-based methods in general included questions about unconscious, affective, and aesthetic aspects of human experience.

Dance, in particular, has been seen as suitable "for diversifying research on such phenomena as power relations, emotions, and identity, which are something we can feel, but which are not easily explicitly reached by words in conventional interviews" (Hujala et al. 2015: 11). Dance can be particularly useful when asking questions about unconscious, affective, and aesthetic aspects of such topics. In the first case, unconscious beliefs, feelings, attitudes, etc. may be visible in how people move in dance. In the second case, dance offers a medium through which affective and aesthetic experience may be more readily expressed as compared to the medium of language.

Thus, dance can be used to explore research questions, such as:

- How do managers manage conflict?
- How do managers feel about leading in unfamiliar situations? (Springborg and Sutherland 2014, 2015)
- How do employees experience and interpret the leader-follow relationship with their bosses? (Hujala et al. 2015)
- How do managers use sensory-motor states in problem-framing and problem-solving (Springborg 2018)
- How do teachers use the embodied dimension of their classroom performance to support their teaching? (Andrews 2018)

## Surfacing Unconscious "Stuff"

It is possible to research such questions through interviews or questionnaires. However, it is a well-known issue, that interviewees and respondents may provide false, misleading, or low-quality information. They may do so for various reasons—including image management/organisational politics, lack of awareness, and self-deception.

Interviewees and respondents may deliberately lie in order to uphold a particular presentation of self or protect themselves. Employees may, for example, lie about their negative feelings related to work because they are concerned about what would happen if their manager found out that they are dissatisfied with their work, their workplace—or the manager. Similarly, managers may be unwilling to admit to their aggressive ways of dealing with conflict or their fears or sense of inadequacy related to leading in unfamiliar situations if they believe such emotions are not seen as socially acceptable in their position. Skilled researchers can counter this by applying various techniques to access richer information that transcend the logics of presentation. Such techniques include creating an environment of confidentiality and emotional safety during the interview and challenging the interviewee's statements by carefully pointing out inconsistencies.

However, even if interviewees and respondents are honest in their answers, they may still be unconscious of the kind of information the researcher is interested in. Teachers may, for example, use their bodies to skilfully communicate theories and concepts, but be unaware of how they do this—or even that they do this. Employees may be unaware of their deeper feelings in relation to various leader–follower relationships. Managers may be unaware of how they deal with conflict or unfamiliar situations. In these situations, interviewees and respondents would simply report that they do not know the answer or state that they never thought about it and do not know. In such cases, the interviewer and the interviewee may engage in an exploration to unearth or formulate the knowledge around this. This can be a very exciting process for the interviewee as they will learn something new about their own practice through this process.

However, sometimes interviewees and respondents are not only unaware of certain things, but they are also unaware that they are unaware. Argyris and Schön (1974) have shown how people will often *believe* they know how they act and feel in certain situations (their espoused theories of action), while, in fact, they are unconscious of how they truly act and feel (their theories-in-use). A manager may believe (and report during an interview) that she feels calm in conflict situations, but when one observes her in conflict situations it may be apparent that she is very tense and anxious. That is, what can be observed in the situation is difficult to reconcile with her own statement about how she feels in the situation. Similarly, an employee may believe that he is powerless in relation to his boss, but when observed while interacting with his boss it may become apparent that he is, in fact, to a large degree influencing or even controlling the manager's decisions. In these situations, the interviewees and respondents may answer what they believe to be true—yet still provide a partial narrative.

To remedy this, Argyris and Schön suggest that interviews can be based on observations of actual behaviour. This gives the researcher the possibility of pointing to concrete behaviour that may contradict what an interviewee claims about his or her own actions and affective states. Examining concrete observed behaviour together with interviewees can make the interviewee more aware of and better able to talk about what is going on.

Unfortunately, combining interviews with observation of concrete behaviour is not always practicable and does not guarantee good results. First, observation can be too time consuming to be practicable. Second, it may not be possible to observe interviewee's behaviour in natural work situations, if the situations in question are confidential, rare, or dangerous. And third, even when it is possible to observe behaviour, what can be observed even by a trained observer may not speak to the theme of the research. For example, Taylor (2002) was interested in employees' aesthetic experiences during instances of leadership storytelling. Even though he observed the meetings where such storytelling took place it was still difficult for him to elicit information about the participants' aesthetic experiences in subsequent interviews. Art-based methods provide a useful alternative to observation as a means of enriching data collection.

Art-based methods provide another way of raising interviewees' awareness of the topics the researcher is seeking to explore. Using various art forms to surface unconscious "stuff" has been referred to as a projective technique (Taylor and Ladkin 2009), analogically mediated inquiry (Barry 1994). It has been shown that different art-based media are useful for surfacing different kinds of unconscious stuff. For example, building sculptures in clay is more likely to raise interviewees' awareness of affective states than building sculptures in Lego (Taylor and Statler 2014). Dance as a medium allows for a focus on affective, performative, and, relational aspects of experience.

For example, Springborg and Sutherland (2014, 2015) used dance exercises to raise managers' awareness of how they experience and deal with being in leader and follower roles in their work. They did this by assuming that the way managers lead and follow in physical dance exercises reveal a lot about how they feel and act in their roles as leaders and followers in the workplace. They, therefore, asked managers to engage in a series of dance exercises—both in the role of leader and in the role of follower. They then made observations about the physical movements and used these in a subsequent interview about how the manager deals with leading and following. One of the observations made by Springborg and Sutherland was that managers in the leading role were observed to lead steps without waiting for the follower to be on the right foot. When the managers were asked about this behaviour in a subsequent interview, they became aware that they expect resistance from followers and that they therefore were afraid of giving their followers time to find their balance. This fear of being met with resistance from their followers also impacted the way they were leading in their organisations.

Similarly, Springborg and Sutherland observed that several managers in the role of follower moved before the leader had a chance to clearly indicate the direction they wished the followers to move in. Bringing up this observation in the subsequent interview led to the discovery of a deep, general distrust in leaders. As one participant expressed it: "The sooner I can get out of my boss' office, the sooner I can regain control over my project and the less likely it is that my boss will place unhelpful demands on me that will prevent me from doing a good job".

Neither the fear of resistance from followers, nor the distrust in leaders was something the managers in this research were aware of (or willing to talk about) before they were presented with the physical evidence observed during the dance exercises. In this way, dance can be used to surface unconscious stuff when observations of movement patterns are analysed together with the research participants during interviews.

## Expressing Ephemeral Aspects of Experience

The research questions mentioned above also address aesthetic/emotional aspects of human experience that the individuals may be *unable* to express through language even if they are conscious of it. They may simply lack an adequately expressive vocabulary. When describing one's inner life of emotions, drives, intuitions, and feelings, language can often feel very inadequate. Inversely, most people have experienced how a play, a dance performance, a painting, a poem, or a piece of music can express what they feel better than they themselves can do using their own words.

Susanne Langer writes that "the primary function of art is to objectify experience so that we can contemplate and understand it" (Langer 1962: 90). Langer points out that different media are useful for capturing different aspects of human experience. In particular, Langer points out that language has limitations as a medium for capturing human experience and that using various art media to capture experience can help us overcome these limitations. Langer writes: "all language has a form which requires us to string out our ideas even though their objects rest one within the other; as pieces of clothing that are actually worn one over the other have to be strung side by side on the clothesline" (Langer 1951: 65). Anyone who has written an academic text knows the struggle one goes through when trying to present a complex system of mutually interlinked ideas in the linear manner required by language.

The same goes for trying to express complex emotional states where several emotions are interlinked and dependent on each other, such as when one simultaneously loves another person and resents that person because of the sense of dependency loving that person seems to bring. When describing such emotional states in language, it is necessary to mention the emotions and their interconnections one at a time (in the above I chose the sequence: Love—resentment—dependency) even though they appear simultaneously and their very coexistence is a key aspect of the intensity of the state. Using the media of various art forms (both the materials and techniques for manipulating these materials) to capture experience allows us to overcome the barriers of language that Langer points out. When using music to map a complex of interdependent emotional states, one can use different instruments to capture different aspects simultaneously and thus depict the intensity of their juxtaposition. The medium of dance, like music, can capture both complex and contradictory experience and the development of this experience over time. In summary, using dance as part of research design can be relevant, when asking questions about unconscious, affective, aesthetic, performative, and relational aspects of experience.

## Research Designs

To outline the diversity of how dance can be used in research, I present four different designs, that can be somewhat overlapping. I have named the designs after the kind of phenomena they ask questions about.

1. Develop new theoretical models
2. Understand bodily practices
3. Surface unconscious practices and meaning-making processes
4. Establish links between movement and interpersonal experience

### Develop New Theoretical Models

Some researchers are interested in developing new theoretical models or categories that are useful for capturing hitherto unnoticed aspects of organisational practices and guiding practice. For example, Bozic and Olsson (2013) studied how choreographers and dancers develop new dance performances and based on their findings they developed a model for how organisations can develop a culture that supports innovation (for more examples see section below on using dance as metaphorical lens). Researchers who are interested in developing new theoretical models to use in organisational research can follow the design below:

1. Identify a dance-related context that is relevant to the organisational phenomenon of interest

2. Use the anthropological method, interviews, and/or participant observation to thoroughly familiarise yourself with the selected dance context
3. Transcribe interviews/organise field notes
4. Analyse data using meaning condensation, narrative structuring, meaning or categorization/coding. For an in-depth description of these analysis methods, see Steiner Kvale (1997)
5. Use findings to develop a model or framework for the organisational phenomenon of interest
6. Establish communicative, pragmatic, and transgressive validity (see section "Validation")
7. Present the theoretical model.

## Understand Bodily Practices

Some researchers are interested in how bodies are used in organisations. For example, Andrews (2018) studied how teachers use their bodies to communicate when teaching (see section "Vignette 3.2"). Researchers who are interested in understanding bodily practices can follow the design below:

1. Observe/record the relevant people engaged in the organisational context of interest
2. The movements can be "transcribed" in two ways
   a. A dancer can observe and learn the movements
   b. The movements can be noted down using a dance notation system
3. The data can be developed in two ways
   a. The dancer can describe the affective/aesthetic experience of performing the movements
   b. Enriched reflective interviews: The dancer can show the movements people who originally performed the movements and interview them about the function and meaning of these movements
4. Transcribe interviews and organise reflections

5. Analyse the dance notation, dancers' reflections, and the interviews using meaning condensation, narrative structuring, meaning, categorization/coding, or interpretation. For an in-depth description of these analysis methods, see Steiner Kvale (1997)
6. Establish communicative, pragmatic, and transgressive validity (see section "Validation")
7. Present the findings in a qualitative report format—possibly supplemented by video clips of the dancer performing the moves.

## Surface Unconscious Practices and Meaning-Making Processes

Some researchers are interested in organisational players' often unconscious processes of acting and meaning-making. For example, Hujala et al. (2015) studied academic employees' perception of their interactions with their bosses (see section "Vignette 3.1"). Researchers who are interested in this kind of research can follow the design below:

1. Design a dance session through which participants can use movement to explore the phenomenon of interest
2. The data may or may not be enriched by feeding selected movements back to the participants
3. Conduct enriched reflective interviews: After the dance session, the participants can be interviewed about the phenomenon of interest
4. Transcribe interviews
5. Analyse the interviews using meaning condensation, narrative structuring, meaning, categorization/coding, or interpretation. For an in-depth description of these analysis methods, see Steiner Kvale (1997)
6. Establish communicative, pragmatic, and transgressive validity (see section "Validation")
7. Present the findings in a qualitative report format—possibly supplemented by video clips of the dance performances to evoke relevant affective/aesthetic states.

The advantage of this design is that the dance session can give participants language to talk about affective and aesthetic aspects of their organisational experience that might otherwise remain unconscious or difficult to express in words. The disadvantage is that many people may hesitate (or refuse) to participate in a dance session.

## Establish Links Between Movement and Interpersonal Experience

Some researchers are interested in establishing links between patterns of movement and interpersonal experiences. For example, Himberg et al. (2018) were interested in the link between group movement and the interpersonal experience of togetherness. Researchers who are interested in establishing such links can follow the design below:

1. Design a dance session in which participants engage in different patterns of movement or move in various physical environments
2. Measure relevant biometric data (EEG, movement tracking, hormone levels in before and after blood samples, etc.). Some biometric measurements will necessitate extra ethical precautions
3. Measure interpersonal experience using psychological scales and/or interviews
4. Analyse data using statistical methods. See, for example, Andy Field and Graham Hole (2003) for details
5. Establish validity using statistical significance
6. Present findings in a quantitative report format.

These designs are summarised in Fig. 1.

In the following sections, I will describe in more detail how to use dance in the various phases of the research.

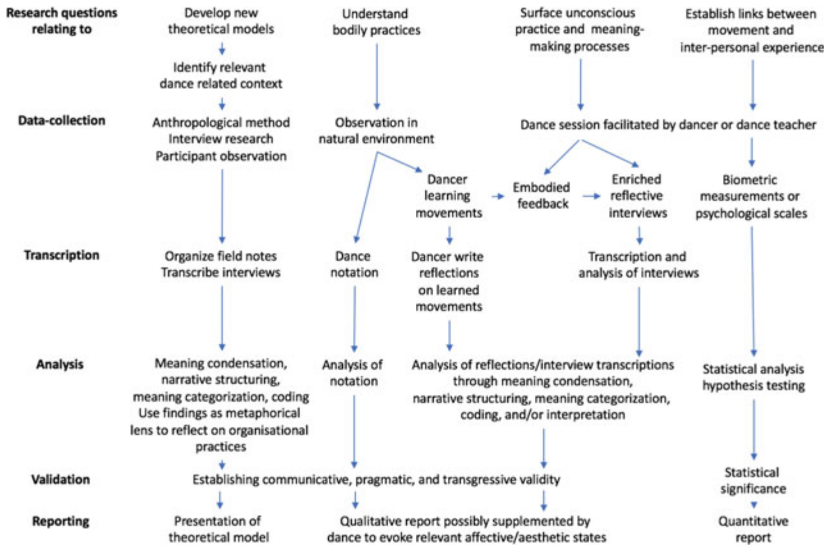


**Fig. 1** Research design summary

# Data Collection

The main concern in the design and execution of data collection in any research is to elicit and capture data that is specifically relevant to exploring the research question. If the design and data collection is too narrow in its focus nothing new will come out of the research. If the design and data collection is too wide in its focus, the researcher will drown in data and the analysis will be too time consuming. Three themes are particularly important in relation to designing and executing data collection sessions using dance: Creating a safe space for the participants, designing and framing the dance session, and capturing movement data.

## Creating a Safe Space for the Participants

Just as is the case with interviews, it is important to make participants feel at ease during the data collection session. If participants are worried or ill at ease due to the unfamiliarity of the research context, this can affect the data. Researchers can do a number of things to make participants feel at ease and prepare them for a dance session.

First, it is important to give participants information about how the data will be used, tell them what precautions will be used to ensure their anonymity, and answer any questions the participants may have relating to the formal structure of the research process and data handling.

Second, if the participants do not already know each other, it is important to take time to establish a certain level of trust and make participants feel at ease with each other. This can be done using power mingling exercises, i.e. short (typically 2–5 minutes) exercises where the participants can develop relationships by getting to know a bit about each other, laughing together, collaborating on simple tasks, etc. Many such exercises can be found online by searching for "power mingling" or "energizers". One simple possibility is to give participants 2–3 minutes to walk around the room, shake hands with everyone and tell each other why they are participating in the research.

Third, researchers should consider using the term "movement" rather than "dance" to avoid more formal notions of established dance styles interfering with the research process or participants perceptions of what is expected of them. Indeed, using the term dance may scare off some participants who believe that they "cannot dance".

Fourth, it is highly recommendable to do a warm-up session consisting of exercises that will enable participants to clearly understand how the dance sessions will work and will give participants confidence in their ability to participate. This is done to prevent the situation where the dance session has to be stopped in order to clarify technical matters or where the dance session is inhibited by the participants doubts in their ability to engage in the dance session.

## Designing and Framing the Dance Session

When designing the actual dance session, it is important to both consider the research question and the participants' abilities. Researchers can use questions, themes, stories, and/or physical instructions to frame the dance session.

Hujala et al. (2015) asked research participants to do solo dance improvisations as a way to express their experience with leader–follower relationship at work. The dance session was improvised. The session was framed by giving participants a theme and by asking them a few carefully selected questions (see the vignette below for more details). Springborg and Sutherland (2014, 2015) used highly prescriptive physical instructions—i.e. dance exercises drawn from tango and contact improvisation as a means to surface managers' unconscious assumptions governing their behaviour as leaders and followers in the workplace. Since none of the participants had danced these dances before, the researchers used exercises normally given to complete beginners.

It is often a good idea to involve a professional dance pedagogue to facilitate the session if the researchers are not themselves dancers/dance teachers.

## Capturing Movement Data

Capturing data consisting of human movement poses a methodological challenge. It is not easy to capture movement in ways that makes it available for rigorous analysis. If researchers are concerned with capturing *all* of the data, rather than capturing *relevant* data, it may be tempting to think of using video recording or even motion capture technology to capture the movement data. However, this may not necessarily capture the kind of data that is most relevant to the research question.

The appropriate data collection method depends both on the research question and on the method the researcher plans to use to analyse the data. The relationship between research question and data collection method can be illustrated by a few examples, set out in Fig. 2.

Similarly, the relationship between method for analysis and data collection method can be illustrated by thinking of the situation where the researcher plans to explore unconscious aspects of participants' experience.

The researcher can use dance to make participants aware of previously unconscious aspects of their experience and analyse participants' descriptions of their discoveries. In this case, the most relevant data will be the statements of the participants' and video recordings will be of lesser value.

| Research questions | Data collection |
| --- | --- |
| Explore the participants' experience of certain relationships or activities and dance is used to surface unconscious aspects of this experience and to challenge and complexify the participants' conscious narratives | Participants' reflections on dance session<br><br>Selected observations by research/ dance pedagogue |
| Explore aspects of the participants' experience, which may be difficult to express in words, | Oral statements from participants<br><br>Dance session recorded on film and watched by researcher and participant together |
| Explore to what degree participants under various conditions imitate each other's movements | Video recording of dance sessions.<br><br>Editing of recording can be sliced to highlight illustrative examples |

**Fig. 2** Relationships between research questions and data collection methods

If on the other hand, the researcher plan to do a visual analysis of the participants' movements drawing on theories which links observable physiological activity to inner experiences, then video recording becomes the most relevant data to collect.

It is also possible that the researcher plans to draw on theories that link non-observable physiological activity, such as micro activity in muscles or neural activity in the brain, to inner experience. In this case, the researcher would have to fit the research participants with electrodes during the dance session to collect relevant data.

The following section gives a concrete example of research in which a dance session was used to collect data about research participants' experience of leader–follower relationships.

### Vignette 3.1: Dancing with the Bosses

Hujala et al. (2015) studied academic employees' perception of their interactions with their bosses. The researchers used themselves as research subjects. They first engaged in a dance session led by a dance pedagogue and then wrote about their experience using an auto-ethnographical approach (Essén and Winterstorm Värlander 2012). They conceived of the dance session as "'a living and embodied interview', aiming to harness each participant's entire physical body to create knowledge about the leader-follower relationship" (Hujala et al. 2015: 11).

Hujala et al. furthermore, consider four meta-theoretical perspectives (social constructionism, critical realism, pragmatism, and phenomenology) and proposes that the use of dance is most strongly connected to phenomenology—in particular phenomenology of the body. They argue that through dance the individual can become aware of how he or she feels about (rather than think about) the relationship to his or her superior. They write that: "dance can help us to step aside from our everyday simplifying attitude, in which we take the leader-follower relationship for granted. Instead of 'thinking', we try to 'feel' leadership and followership: we let our body tell us how we feel in the relationship with our boss(es)" (Hujala et al. 2015: 18–19).

The dance session took place in a university classroom and consisted of six stages.

1. The dance pedagogue led a warm-up session to get the participants into a creative mood
2. Each of the six participants did an individual performance reflecting their own experience with leader–follower relationships. The participants performed to music they had selected themselves before the session, which they felt reflected their attitudes and experiences with leader–follower relationships
3. After each individual performance, the other participants would imitate the movements of the performer using the same music. This was a physical way of giving feedback. The individual performances and the feedback performances were all video recorded
4. After each feedback session, the dance pedagogue led a reflective dialogue
5. After all performances, the participants reflected on the experience and wrote down their reflections on three questions: "what kinds of feelings did my own performance arouse? What did the creative movement reveal about my own leader-follower relationship (a current relationship or in general)? How did I feel about this experiment with dance/creative movement as a method?" (Hujala et al. 2015: 20). The two first questions aimed to generate knowledge about the participants' experience of the leader–follower relationship. The third question was included because

the research in addition to exploring followers' experience of the leader–follower relationship also set out to explore the methodological question of how dance can be used as a research method

6. In the final stage, the video material was analysed in the light of the written reflections by the dance pedagogue and the two participants. The outcome of this analysis was short narratives describing each of the participants' experience of the leader–follower relationship.

The result of the research was a series of highly evocative descriptions of the participants' experiences of leader–follower relationships in which the physical dance exercises served as a means of expressing this experience. For example, one participant chose a Finnish tango for her performance. In her reflections after her performance, she wrote:

> I chose as my movement a dance for two, which I do not like and which I cannot really do. Bodily I felt clumsy and the movement with my boss was a constant search for a common tune. I felt the relationship physically. Emotionally I was a bit weary and uninterested. Life goes, like a dance for two by mediocre dancers… one bends and sometimes can be happy, but mostly it's making compromises and taking care not to step on somebody else's toes. The cooperation is mainly fluent, but the final touch of passion and cooperation is lacking. (Hujala et al. 2015: 23–24)

This description illustrates how the dance enabled the participant to express her experience in a very eloquent and evocative way by drawing on the physical experience of the dance session. In their final reflections, Hujala et al. writes: "We did not ponder the relationship 'rationally' as we probably might have done through the traditional discursive interview. On the dance floor it was easy to forget the everyday reality and just let the feelings come out through movement" (Hujala et al. 2015: 29).

While Hujala et al.'s (2015) approach was innovative, it prompts a number of methodological questions.

First, one can ask to what degree did the performance reflect how the participants already experience the leader–follower relationship at the workplace and to what degree did it shape and change how the participants experience this relationship? For example, the tango dancer mentioned above expressed her dissatisfaction with what she perceived to be poor leadership. However, the session also led her to reflect on her own role and what she could do to change the situation. Another participant realised that even though she was a follower, she was a remarkably powerful actor. In fact, "all participants felt that their dances ended in some kind of empowerment" (Hujala et al. 2015: 28). Thus, the session did not merely reveal the participants' experience of the leader–follower relationship. It also changed this experience.

Second, Hujala et al. notes that it takes courage to participate in this kind of research. Not everybody would be willing to dance their relationship to their boss. Furthermore, the method can bring up strong emotions and it is important that the facilitator is competent to deal with situations where participants might experience overwhelming emotions (Hujala et al. 2015: 29). This is, thus, an important ethical consideration related to the research design.

Third, when researchers use dance sessions as a way of generating data, they must be ready to face critique from reviewers and others who will see the method as being unscientific. Hujala et al. question why interviews are readily accepted as a legitimate way of producing knowledge and embodied interviews are not. I will return to the question of how to argue the legitimacy of research using dance in the section on validation of findings.

## Transcription and Analysis

In this section, I will present three approaches to transcription and analysis of data that are useful in dance-based research. These methods are not exhaustive but rather meant to illustrate some of the possible diversity in this phase.

The word "transcription" in this context is used to refer to any transformation of data into a form that is suitable for the intended analysis. Thus, there can be a more fluid boundary between transcription and analysis than what is perhaps usual in interview research.

First, researchers can transcribe movements from a dance session into written text by asking participants to produce written reflections on their experience of the dance session or by conducting reflective interviews with the participants about the dance session and transcribing these interviews. This written text can then be analysed using traditional methods. Second, researchers can use methods originally developed for analysing dance to analyse movement beyond the realm of dance. Third, researchers can use concepts from dance as metaphorical lens to analyse non-dance data.

## Using Traditional Methods to Analyse Dance Data

In the research recounted in the previous section, dance was used to generate data which through several iterations of reflective acts were transformed into written text. This text was then analysed using the methods of meaning condensation where the text is condensed to shorter meaningful statements (Kvale 1997: 192) and narrative structuring where the "interview" is transformed into an overall narrative (Kvale 1997: 197). Other traditional analytical methods used in interview research could also have been used. For example, meaning categorization or coding where sections of the text are assigned to categories depending on the degree to which they represent specific phenomena (Kvale 1997: 194) or interpretation where the text and the movements are interpreted, for example using psychoanalytical theory or other relevant theories (Kvale 1997: 199).

To use such methods of analysis, the research has to bring the data into the form of written text. In the research above, some of the data was collected as text (the participants' written reflections) and needed no further transcription. Other data was collected as spoken language and needed to be transcribed (Kvale 1997). Yet another part of the data was collected as video. This data was not transformed into text and the movements were not analysed in detail. Watching the videos was used to support the analysis of the texts.

## Using Methods from Dance to Analyse Movement Data

Some scholars use methods originally developed for analysing dance to analyse other forms of movement. For example, Andrews (2018) used tools and techniques from dance to analyse the embodied aspects of two teachers' performances when delivering lectures. In short, she used her skill as a dancer to learn the movements of the teachers as if they were movements given to her by a choreographer or dance teacher. Once she learned the movements, she described them in detail and sensed into their affective qualities, i.e. she felt what affective states performing these movements called forth in her. Later, during interviews with the teachers, she would show them their movements and ask them to reflect on their communicative function.

Even though Andrews did produce written text in the form of her own written descriptions of the movements she learned and the transcribed interviews with the teachers, learning the movements and describing their affective qualities as they appeared to her goes beyond mere data collection and must be seen as an important part of her analysis. In this way, Andrews used physical methods she has learned through her training as a dancer/choreographer in her analysis of the data. I will describe Andrew's method in more detail below (see section "Vignette 3.2").

Other scholars have suggested that Labanotation, a method for representing human movement in a written form developed by Rudolf von Laban, can be a useful tool for turning various forms of movement into written symbols and thus making movement available for rigorous analysis (Kolo 2015; Zeitner 2015). This and similar notation techniques offer a structured way of talking about movement, which can be useful for analysis of video recorded (or simply observed) movement. It enables researchers to systematically consider the complete body movement, countering attention biases, and gives communities of researchers a shared language through which they can speak about movement.

## Using Dance and Choreography as a Metaphorical Lens to Analyse Non-dance Phenomena

Some scholars have used dance as a metaphorical lens to analyse various non-dance phenomena. Using one domain as analytical tool to understand another domain is a natural cognitive function in humans which is explored in the field of Cognitive Metaphor Theory (Grady 1997; Lakoff 2012; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999). It has been shown that for example theories of organisations can be grouped depending on whether they use machines, biological organisms and ecosystems, cultures, brains, or other domains of experience as metaphorical lens to analyse the phenomenon of organisations (Morgan 2006).

There are many examples of scholars who have used various practices from the world of dance and choreography to analyse non-dance phenomena. For example, many scholars have used various couple dances as metaphorical lens to analyse leader–follower relationships in organisations (Matzdorf 2015; Springborg and Sutherland 2015). Robin Denise Johnson (2013) has used the dance practice Five Rhythms to analyse differences in leadership style.

Five Rhythms is a popular dance practice where dancers improvise together in groups and this improvisation moves through a sequence of five different overall movement qualities: flow, staccato, chaos, lyrical, and stillness. Johnson used these five modes to create five categories into which she fit important aspects of leadership. Ropo and Sauer (2008) use their ideas about the contrast between ballroom waltz and techno rave dancing to analyse the difference between leadership understood through a hierarchical logic and leadership understood as a collaborative and distributed practice. Robert and Janet Denhardt (2006) interviewed dancers about their practices and developed from these interviews categories for analysing leadership. John Chandler used concepts from dance to analyse "movement, gendered, embodiment, audience, emotion and rhythm at work" (Chandler 2012: 865). Nina Bozic and Bengt Köping Olsson (2013) studied the collaboration of choreographers and their dancers and used their findings as an analytical tool for looking at innovation processes in organisations. Brigitte Biehl-Missal (2018) studied improvised live performances of techno DJ's and how they read and influence the movements of the dancing crowd and used her findings to analyse how embodied and relational leadership emerges in the space between leaders and followers (Biehl-missal 2018) and "how organisational spaces and human interaction enable, produce and negotiate experiences that are transitory, embodied and difficult to pin down" (Biehl-missal 2019: 16).

Common to the above examples is, that they use an aspect of dance and choreography, as a metaphorical lens to analyse something that is not dance. Two aspects are important when using dance/choreography as metaphorical lens for analysis: A thorough familiarity with the dance/choreographic practices used and a good link between these practices and the phenomenon they are being used to analyse. If researchers do not have thorough experience with the dance practices they use as analytical tools, the resulting analysis will most likely provide little more than colourful language through which they can promote preconceived ideas about the subject of their analysis.

When using dance/choreographic practices as metaphorical lenses, it is important to have a good rational for using a particular dance practice to analyse a particular non-dance phenomenon. For example, it is easy to argue why couple dances provide a good metaphorical lens for analysing leader–follower relationships, since couple dances contain physical leader–follower relationships, which can be used to sharpen our concepts of non-physical leader–follower relationships. Similarly, Bozic and Olsson have a strong argument in comparing the choreographic work with innovation insofar as the choreographer is striving to create something truly new. If the choreographers they studied were merely creating series of performance similar to their previous performances the argument for using their practices as a lens to analyse innovation in organisations would be considerably weakened.

**Vignette 3.2: Choreography of Education**

Andrews' (2018) study of the embodied dimension of teaching provides an example of how tools and techniques from dance can be used in relation to data analysis. Andrews is interested in how excellent teachers use physical movement as a tool for communicating while teaching. To capture and analyse this embodied aspect of the teacher's performance, she applies "tools and techniques used to study movement and choreography in dance" (Andrews 2018: 18).

Her method can be described in four parts: dwelling, interiorization, transcription, and translation. In the first two phases of her method, Andrews drew on her background as a professional dancer and choreographer. She would sit in class and observe a teacher move (dwelling) in the same way she would observe a dancer perform a choreography she would have to learn. She would then engage her "kinaesthetic awareness and knowledge" and "very subtly allow my body to move and respond to the teacher's movements and later conjure the felt sensations when reconstructing movements, gestures and postures observed in class" (Andrews 2018: 23). This is what Andrews (following Michael Polanyi) calls interiorization. After having learned and practiced the movements of the teacher by using her own body and her ability she has as a dancer, she would first create a detailed description of these movements (transcription) and second describe the "feeling, tone, and overall affect of the movement within the context of the situation" (Andrews 2018: 23). For this last description, she would draw on poetic images and metaphors. Through this process, Andrews would become thoroughly familiar with the gestures of the teachers and this enabled her to show these gestures and ask about their meaning and communicative function in later interviews with the teachers.

Andrews used this method to analyse the performance of two teachers with very diverse styles. She found that teachers were mostly unaware of their own gestures, yet these gestures supported the teaching. Andrews writes: "The structure of the class provided a narrative, yet the embodied performance of each teacher acted like a perfume that permeated the class. The percussive quality of Alexandra's performance and tight narrative created an atmosphere where one needed to sit up and be ready to go… The more melodic and casual quality of Julie's performance created a relaxed environment" (Andrews 2018: 33).

Andrews' method is a way of enriching a later interview. However, it is important to notice how the analysis begins already in the process of transcription and translation. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) points out that data collection inevitably contains an interpretive element since data collection distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant data. However, in particular the transcription phase of Andrews' method seems to go beyond this level of analysis. In this way the interview can be seen as a development and verification/falsification of the first round of analysis carried out during the transcription phase.

It is worth noting that this method is contingent on Andrews' skill as a professional dancer. Without this skill, it will be difficult for a researcher to use this method. However, this is not different from other research methods where the quality of the research is contingent on the researcher's skills. For example, researchers who use interview methods need to learn skills, such as, avoiding leading questions and bracketing their own perspectives in order to better capture those of the interviewee.

Andrews mentions that the interiorization was difficult for her because she could not move during the lecture—and thus had to rely on very subtle movement. Other researchers who consider using this method, could consider watching video recordings of the lectures, giving them the freedom to move as they like without disturbing the class.

## Validation

How researchers ensure validity of the knowledge produced through the kind of dance-based research designs I have outlined in this chapter will vary depending on the researcher's philosophical stance and the particular research design. Beneath, I will describe three approaches that go beyond validation through statistical significance described by Sandberg (2005): Communicative, pragmatic, and transgressive validity. These approaches can be used simultaneously in any research project.

Communicative validity refers to establishing a common understanding between researchers, research participants, and the broader communities of researchers and practitioners. For example, during dance sessions and interviews, communicative validity means establishing "an understanding between researcher and research participants about what they are doing" (Sandberg 2005: 54). During data analysis, communicative validity means generating interpretations that both account for as many parts of the empirical material as possible and makes sense to researchers and practitioners in fields related to the research. Thus, to achieve communicative validity, researchers can invite research participants to comment on whether the findings make sense to them, explain findings to colleagues to test whether they make sense to them, have an external auditor review the research, and compare multiple researchers individual coding of interviews and field notes to test for inter-coder reliability.

Researchers can also collect several kinds of data that can be compared. This is commonly called triangulation and was applied in both vignettes described above. Hujala et al. (2015) collected video material, reflective dialogues, and written reflections for analysis. Andrews (2018) collected both personal reflections on the first-person affective experience of the teachers' movements and conducted interviews with the teachers. One of the main problems with triangulation is that it expands the scope of the study significantly as the researcher has to allow time for additional data collection and analysis. Another problem with triangulation is that the different kinds of data may not always speak to the same question.

Pragmatic validity refers to testing the produced knowledge in action. For example, after developing ideas about how to use body movement patterns as a teaching tool, Andrews (2018) could achieve pragmatic validity by teaching these movement patterns to teachers and observe whether these teachers could use them in their classes. Similarly, Bozic and Olsson (2013) have travelled and taught managers the model of how to create a culture for radical innovation they developed from interviewing choreographers and dancers about how they develop performances. If managers are able to use the model in practice to generate a culture of radical innovation in their organisations, the knowledge produced by Bozic and Olsson has pragmatic validity.

Transgressive validity refers to the process of showing how the knowledge produced is ambiguous, complex, contradictory and is based on the researcher's personal assumptions. In practice, the researcher can implement practices of transparency that will make it possible for readers to draw their own alternative conclusions. Researchers can, for example, make their data available through rich, thick descriptions, extensive quotations from interviews, strive to become aware of their own biases and be transparent about these, and make a point of presenting information that counters their knowledge claims. Keeping a research journal in which one writes about ambiguities, contradictions, biases, and personal emotional reactions can be of great help in developing transgressive validity.

## Reporting

Finally, one can consider how to use dance in relation to the presentation of research findings. In this chapter, I propose two areas where dance can bring unique contributions to the presentation of research findings: The use of dance as an expressive medium and the use of dance to make researchers aware of and the embodied nature of their thinking.

### Dance as an Expressive Medium

Since 2011 John Bohannon has hosted a yearly competition called Dance Your Ph.D. (Bohannon 2011). In this competition, scholars are invited to make videos in which they present their Ph.D. research in physics, chemistry, biology, and social sciences through dance. John Bohannon did a TEDx talk in Brussels in 2011 proposing that scientists should replace their PowerPoint presentations with live dances.

The videos produced for this competition generally are a form of edutainment where students draw on various social dances, tap dancing, ballet, or simply moving around, combined with various props to make entertaining representations of phenomena such as particle formation, heart surgery procedures, and social interactivity. In most cases, the videos contain a series of sentences explaining the research, which could have stood alone, and the dance seems to serve the dual purpose of making a dry topic funny to watch and of creating low-tech visualisations to illustrate the concepts used in the text. The first is only necessary to grasp the attention of people who are not particularly interested in the topic and the second can be achieved through any animated visualisation. Thus, neither necessitates dance as such.

This raises the question, whether dance has something unique to offer in relation to the presentation of research findings and what kind of research findings can be represented through dance. One answer to this question could be that in the same way as dance (and other art-based media) better capture affective and aesthetic experience, it also better evokes it and thus represents it. Laura Brearley (2002) researched the emotional responses of "middle and senior managers during an amalgamation process, in which all of their jobs had been spilled and their previous organization absorbed into a larger entity" (Brearley 2002: 298). She chose to represent her research findings by constructing a poem from the interview transcripts. Laura Brearley, who is a musician, further experimented with setting the poem to music. Thus, Laura Brearley used music and poetry as an integral and indispensable part of the presentation of her research findings. Using these art forms allowed her to represent the emotional tone by evoking it in the listener. This would have been very difficult to do through a traditional academic presentation.

The famous dancer Isadora Duncan, one of the pioneers of modern dance, is said to have responded to the question of what her dance meant by saying: "If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it". Just like music and poetry enabled Laura Brearley to evoke the emotional tone she had been exploring, we need to ask what kind of phenomena we can evoke through the medium of dance and how this can be used in relation to the presentation of research findings.

## Creating Awareness of and Transparency About the Embodied Ground of Their Thinking

Through dance training the researcher can increase his or her proprioception, the ability to perceive the movement of one's physical body, his or her interoception, the ability to sense subtle internal movements in the body, and his or her felt sense, "a body sensation that is meaningful" (Cornell 1998). Such skills are important, recent developments in cognitive science suggests that even the most abstract concepts are grounded in sensorimotor experience (Ackerman et al. 2010; Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings 2005; Wiemer-Hastings and Xu 2005) and that if two people ground the same conceptual term (the word) in two different sensorimotor experiences (different sensory templates) it will, in fact, operate as two different concepts and enable the two people to perceive and act in very different ways (Springborg 2018; Springborg and Ladkin 2018).

Therefore, it is important for researchers to be explicit about what sensorimotor experiences they use to ground their concepts. One example of this is found in the book Presence: An exploration of profound change in people, organisations, and society (Senge et al. 2005). In this book the authors several times use descriptions of the sensorimotor experience in which they ground various concepts as a tool to distinguish between a common use and their particular use of these concepts. Joseph Jaworski talks about how the concept of "commitment" is commonly grounded in the physical tension one can feel when determined to do something. He then goes on to point out that he himself grounds the concept "commitment" in a sensorimotor state of relaxation and surrender. Therefore, he often uses the phrase "surrender into commitment".

Being transparent about the sensorimotor states in which one grounds various key concepts is a good way to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretations. Stephen Fineman laments that many of the concepts from humanistic psychology, such as "empowerment", have been adopted and misused by managers: "Beneath empowerment's humanistic trappings, one can see a subtle form of control aimed at getting more performance from workers, often for relatively less reward" (Fineman 2008: 4). By changing the sensorimotor experience in which the term is grounded, it is possible to maintain the same coercive and exploitative managerial practice, while shifting the social discourse around this practice from a negatively laden to a positively laden discourse. This is only possible insofar as the description of the sensorimotor ground of concepts is omitted from the presentations of research. Thus, developing awareness of the sensory templates, the embodied ground of their own thinking, and developing the ability to put these into words is important for researchers to attain accuracy and transparency in their research presentations (Springborg 2018). Such awareness can be developed through somatic practices, including dance practices.

## Conclusion

Dance offers exciting new possibilities for researchers. In particular, dance offers new methods for exploring unconscious, affective, and aesthetic aspects of organisational life. In this chapter, I have presented a collection of possibilities for using dance in relation to various parts of the research. Furthermore, I have described how these ideas can be used in four different research designs. It is my hope that this chapter can inspire readers to develop many more interesting research designs using elements from the world of dance.

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# Film-Making: Researching and Learning Through Pocket Film-Making

Robert McMurray

## Introduction

This chapter considers how filming—specifically the creation of pocket films—might stimulate research and learning. This is not, however, a film-making masterclass. I do not teach in a film school. My students are not nascent directors, producers or cinematographers. Rather, I am a management scholar interested in inculcating students of business, management, marketing, accounting, administration and finance into the practice of critically engaging with the world around them. In what follows, I consider how and why filming can encourage the reconceptualisation of management, business and organising.

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R. McMurray (✉)
The York Management School, York, UK
e-mail: Robert.mcmurray@york.ac.uk

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Why should we reconceptualise management, business and organising? In part because of the 2007 financial crisis. This was a crisis that spanned the globe, reaching into the pockets and arresting the hopes of the poorest individuals and the wealthiest nations. Measured in job losses, sovereign debt, fiscal austerity and welfare state retrenchment, the crisis stemmed not from flood, earthquake or other natural disaster (De Cock et al. 2011) but in the locally enacted and internationally communicated actions, interactions, regulations, models, instruments and systems of the financial community. It stemmed from the actions of managers, many of whom left universities with management degrees and MBAs. Why does this matter? It matters because there is a suspicion that our schools of management and business have contributed to the crisis by creating unreflective and unethical managers who were spoon-fed a priori categories and ill-conceived models which were then unthinkingly inflicted upon the wider world (Vaill 1983; Chia 1999; Shaw 2016). It matters because those of us who teach in such schools stand accused of producing the graduates who brought the global economy to its knees (Alajoutsijärvi 2012; Parker 2018b). It matters because managers (whether they are technically our graduates or not) are implicated in a never-ending slew of corporate scandals (e.g. Enron, Arthur Anderson, News of the World, Parmalat, Lehman Brothers, AIG, British Petroleum, Volkswagen, Carillion, Oxfam). It matters because we are suspected of contributing to an educational system dedicated to the promotion of poor management and institutionalised avarice (Croft and Binham 2012; *The Economist* 2012; Rhodes 2015).

Equally worrying is the suggestion that degrees in management, finance and business have no intrinsic worth. It is suggested that students do not attend such courses because they are excited by the principles and practice of organising, management or business, but rather, as an investment wherein escalation personal debts stand as a hedge against future status and income (Vernon 2011; *Huffington Post* 2012). Consequently, there is a 'perception of management as a field of study for young people [that] is entirely instrumental—an effective stepping-stone to launch a career; but one devoid of either intrinsic interest or social value' (Gabriel 2009: 379). Similarly, host universities appear to value schools of management and business more for their revenue-raising capacity than their potential contribution to the academy (Parker 2018a). No wonder such schools have been described as 'cash cows' that 'serve the one percent' while 'reproducing the values, skills and mind-set of much of what is wrong with contemporary capitalism' (Contu 2017).

Responding to these claims, and drawing on the work of Whitehead (1929), I look at how we might realise that which the best social science research and teaching has always afforded, namely, pedagogic spaces that connect faculty and students in the 'imaginative consideration of learning… to construct an intellectual vision of a new world' (Whitehead 1929: 93). Specifically, I explore how the smartphone camera can be recruited as a tool for promoting new 'ways of seeing' (Berger 1972) as part of student-led research that encourages learners to question, interrogate, investigate, recombine, challenge, problematise and represent the taken-for-granted in the world around them. The focus of this chapter is primarily on the use of film with students—with those who are about to embark on research for the first time. Even so, many of the lessons hold for the use of pocket film by doctoral students and seasoned academics who might consider new ways of seeing and communicating classic research problems. Moreover, the chapter speaks to the ways in which we might encourage stakeholders to investigate their own worlds as a part of visually informed participatory research methods. In this sense, the focus on teaching allows us to concentrate on a single consistent application. The challenge to you, the reader, is to consider how you might adapt such methods to your own research and learning needs.

The chapter opens with a consideration of the challenges inherent in engaging contemporary learners, focusing on Whitehead's (1929) notion of a 'romance for ideas'. The potential for film to engender romance is then considered, as part of a consideration of the nature of pocket films and the research potential of smartphones. In so doing, I draw on feedback from my own students to illustrate key points (note, there is no claim to systematic collection or probabilistic generalisation in respect of these comments, they are collected at the end of lectures in a cardboard box with a view to improving my own practice on an on-going basis—they are included as illustrations of the feedback that has informed my own practice over two decades). The paper then outlines Whitehead's rhythms of learning—and the place of romance therein—as a template over which a 9-step approach to encouraging ethically informed research and learning through the production of pocket films is outlined. The chapter ends with a reflection on the process and its value.

## Romance for Ideas

Contu (2017) argues that the answer to the challenges of instrumental, narrow and stilted management education and research lies in harnessing the power of ideas. This is not a new call to arms. Writing on the *Aims of Education* (1929) Alfred North-Whitehead argued that 'unless the pupils are continually sustained by the evocation of interest, the acquirement of technique, and excitement of success, they can never make progress, and will certainly loose heart' (Whitehead 1929: 38). Whitehead was concerned that 'above all things we must beware of what I will call "inert ideas"—that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested or thrown into fresh combination' (Whitehead 1929: 1). His was a vision of education that explicitly resisted the drip-feeding of a priori categories and ill-conceived models (Vaill 1983; Chia 1999; Shaw 2016). To this end, Whitehead notes that:

> What education has to impart is an intimate sense of the power of ideas, for the beauty of ideas, and for the structure of ideas, together with a particular body of knowledge which has peculiar reference to the life of the being possessing it. (Whitehead 1929: 12)

What is at stake is the possibility of demonstrating to learners and researchers how the various disciplines that inform the practice of management hold specific interest and use by 'promoting the imaginative consideration of the various general principles underlying the career' (Whitehead 1929: 96). Such consideration may imply critical reflection on: what it means to relate to others as a member of an occupational grouping, the principles of effective managing, different theoretical perspectives on organising, or the place of business in the wider world. Whitehead's focus on imagination parallels Wright-Mills' (1959) assertion that we need to free sociologically imaginative modes of thinking that encourage the student 'to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals' (Wright-Mills 1959: 11). Again, Wright-Mills was not speaking of some narrow vocational self-interest, but a playfulness of mind that allows for the (often unexpected) combining of ideas 'as well as a truly fierce desire to make sense of the world' (Wright-Mills 1959: 233).

Move forward another half-century and there are calls for education and research capable of identifying 'structural and economic inequalities, systems of power relations and modes of domination' (Cunliffe and Linstead 2009: 5) with a mind to considering or even enacting alternative modes of organising predicated on more inclusive, responsible, humanistic or emancipatory principles. In Whitehead's terms this translates into an education system that 'preserves the connection between knowledge and a zest for life, by uniting the young and the old … to construct an intellectual vision of a new world' (Whitehead 1929: 93). I want to consider the ways in which film, specifically 'pocket-films', might serve as a research tool that enables us to see the world anew.

## What Is a Pocket Film and Why Make Them?

Pocket film describes the practice of capturing and disseminating audio-visual images via mobile devices such as the internet-enabled smartphone. Such films tend to be of short duration—30 seconds to 20 minutes—and are aimed at communicating an artistic or intellectual vision. Pocket films are thus consciously created/constructed (rather than momentary snaps or outtakes) and may include animation, stop-motion, reportage, documentary, drama, surrealism and live action. A useful early source of such films is to be found in the link to the Festival Pocket Films—Création avec téléphone mobile (http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/spip.php?article700).

The rise of pocket films has paralleled a growth of mobile technology that has effectively democratised the reproduction of still and moving image. It has also accompanied what has been described as the 'visual' or 'pictoral' turn (Mitchell 1984) within social science that serves to question our ability to understand the world around us in solely linguistic (textual) terms and points to the increasing importance of images in describing, shaping and transforming both identities and social reality. Reference to shaping and transforming indicates that the visual does not just describe a mode of representation and dissemination but also of 'knowing'. Indeed, there is a growing emphasis on employing photography and film as modes of inquiry through which we collect data on, and make sense of our worlds (Mitchell 2011). To this end, the special value of film has been identified as filling an epistemological gap in text-based language-centred science in aesthetic terms (Miko et al. 2018). Specifically, film usefully provokes new thoughts as an aesthetic mode of expression that 'disrupts the relationship between, researcher, subject and user' (Wood et al. 2018). Indeed, director Mike Figgis notes that looking though a camera lens makes you 'suddenly realise this is a whole different way of looking at things' (Figgis 2007: 3). In this sense, film-making is very much about research and knowing as well as teaching and learning.

The presence of the lens changes the way in which the person views and interacts with the world around them, moving-with rather than independently from the would-be researcher: affecting their modes of engagement with, and embodied experience of, the environment they are in and representing (Pink 2009). Moreover, the nature of the pocket-lens is transformed according to the techniques—cinematic, documentary, vérité, reportage—that are brought to bear by the researcher. In these ways the deployment of smartphone lens has the potential to change—to usefully disrupt—our taken for granted ways of seeing.

Effectively, the camera places the researcher/film-maker at the scene and invites the viewer to follow, to see as the film-maker does and to frame their own interpretation of the encounter. This allows the viewer's own affective reactions and sense-making to become 'part of the investigative process' (Hassard et al. 2017: 11). In this way film goes beyond the bounds of management texts to afford a different type of immersive audio-visual encounter that is both denotative (e.g. literally defines or describes an item, time or place in cultural, social and sociological terms) and connotative (e.g. going beyond the primary description or definition to convey the personal meanings, stories or feelings attached to a particular item, time, process or place) in nature (Mitchell 2011). Imagery and sound combine to give a sense of the tacit, embodied and processual nature of being and organising. Film and filming can therefore be considered as multisensory modes of knowing, researching and learning (Bell et al. 2014).

While the process of film-making is itself a mode of research, it also tends to be underpinned by 'traditional' research techniques. Film-making, and social science films in particular, are underpinned by extensive research, and are often informed by in-depth observation, interviews and conceptual rigour that '*enacts* rather than merely *records*' (Wood et al. 2018: 5) the arguments, positions, questions or theories of interest. It is a participator mode of researching that is often deeply reflective and reflexive. Film-making is, in short, an unfolding process of planning, producing, collaborating, storying, editing, presenting, viewing, reinterpreting and sense-making. It is, to put it bluntly, a form of research and learning in its own right (Miko et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2018). As such, it is an entirely appropriate means through which to enact research and learning in the fields of management, business and organising.

## Smartphones and Pocket Films

Most of us own, or are at least familiar with, a smartphone. As fully fledged citizens of the YouTube generation, new entrants to academia are not only comfortable with the invitation to *broadcast yourself*, but also to broadcast their wider life in terms of: online gaming exploits (Twitch), hobbies and fashion (Pintrest), news and politics (Twitter), moments (Instagram), work profiles (LinkedIn) and humour (Vine), not to mention streams of information on friendships, thoughts, concerns, anger, intimidation and hope (Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat, Snapchat, Sina Weibo), all with the aid of a device that sits within the palm of the hand. They are part of a generation well versed in seeing the world in visual terms and picturing—placing—themselves in that world (Fig. 1).

Of course, a concern with the smartphone and the visual goes well beyond the YouTube Generation. As Bell et al. (2014: 2) note 'Organizations and individuals inhabit (and generate) a visually saturated culture'. Branding, marketing, advertising, desktop icons, multimedia communication, annual reports, picture identification and power point presentations

**Fig. 1** Selfie generation (*Source* ©R. McMurray, http://robertmcmurray.blogspot.co.uk/2015/04/blog-post.html)

all proclaim the ubiquity of images within business, management and organisation. The CEO and MBA candidate are just as familiar with the workings of the smartphone as the undergraduate. For those in business the smartphone is a tool for flexible working, communicating, networking, planning, coordinating and monitoring as part of the hyper-connectivity that, for better or worse, characterises organisational life (Obushenkova and Pelster 2018).

The smartphone is then a point of connection—of familiarity—between the world of the undergraduate/MBA student and an academic concern with encouraging new ways of seeing and researching. Indeed, Mitchell (2011) suggests that such novel visual tools can help novice researchers explore the possibilities for eliciting critical and engaged commentary as part of a more inclusive exploration of that which constitutes 'data'. It is then a logical step to extend our familiarity with the smartphone 'as communication tool' to an academic emphasis on the potential of the smartphone as 'research tool'.

The next section formalises my approach to employing the smartphone as a research tool in student learning. Drawing on examples from my teaching with first-year undergraduates (groups sizes, *n*~100–180) and MBA students (groups sizes, *n*~25–60) the approach is presented as a 9-step process for researching and learning through pocket film (see Fig. 3). The approach aligns with that which Whitehead (1929) identifies as the rhythm of education: a three-part cycle described by the stages of romance, precision and generalisation. I briefly describe these stages before considering the associated 9-step process.

## Romance, Rhythms and Pocket Films

For Whitehead, imparting knowledge and constructing a vision of the world through research and learning occur through a three-part learning cycle (see Fig. 2). The three parts are described as romance, precision and generalisation.

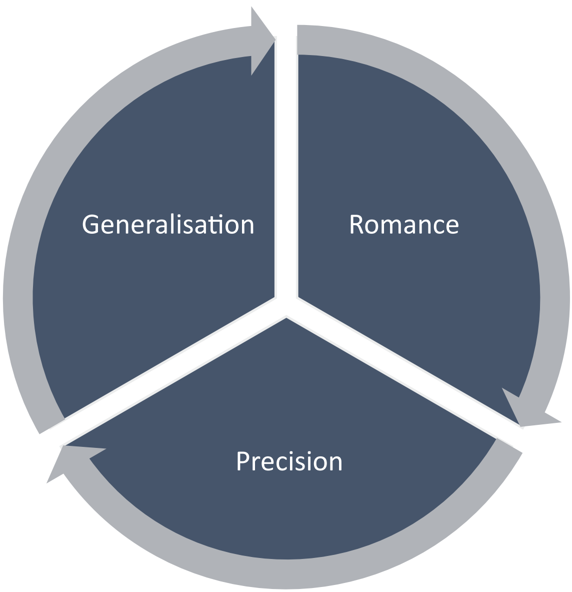


**Fig. 2** Whitehead's Rhythm of Education (1929)

*Romance* points to the importance of introductions, excitement, broad theory, inexact and disorganised intellectual discovery and adventure. During this stage, students should be free to explore a new subject area surrounded by materials that can stimulate the imagination and not dull the sense of adventure and wonder (Garland 2005). This is 'the' crucial stage as 'There can be no mental development without interest. Interest is the *sine qua non* for attention and apprehension… without interest there will be no progress' (Whitehead 1929: 31). Indeed, Whitehead goes as far as to state that 'It is my strong belief that the cause of so much failure in the past has been due to the lack of careful study of the due place of romance. Without the adventure of romance, at best you get inert knowledge without initiative, and at worst you get contempt of ideas–without knowledge' (Whitehead 1929: 33). It is only once enthusiasm for the subject has been firmly established, that research and learning can move to the precision stage.

In the *precision* stage, we are invited to impose order on the relatively free and disorganised understanding that was encouraged in the romance stage. It is a stage of careful analysis, specification and classification and is 'dominated by the inescapable fact that there are right ways and wrong ways, and definite truths to be known' (Whitehead 1929: 34). Within management education and research the notion of 'definitive truths' is highly problematic (particularly within critical management studies). There are however tried and tested methods for obtaining and critiquing extant knowledge, as well as pre-existing theories, concepts and processes that need to be studied and understood in-depth. In this sense, precision is about considering ideas already apprehended but in greater detail.

The final stage is that of *generalisation*. Whitehead characterises it as a point of Hegelian synthesis in which there is a return to romance with the added advantage of classified ideas and relevant technique. Many of the necessary details acquired in the precision stage are set aside (dropped in Weick's [2007] terms) in favour of broad principles that are applied to and tested in the real world. At this point simple knowledge is operationalised as part of a developing wisdom, where the latter 'concerns the handling of knowledge, its selection for the determination of relevant issues, its employment to add value to our immediate experience… [to attain] the most intimate freedom obtainable' (Whitehead 1929: 30).

When I ask my own students 'what three things de-motivate you when it comes to studying' the most readily cited factor is boredom. In particular, 'boring lectures', 'a poor lecturer who doesn't motivate you to be interested in the module' and 'lack of relevance' (see also Money et al. 2017). My students note that boredom can be compounded by 'lack of clear course objectives', 'confusing tasks and unclear structures', 'bad presentation' and 'poor teaching methods'. Of course, we are well aware of the tendency for people to externalise difficulties, but even allowing for this, students confirm the general belief that what we do as research active educators can have a significant impact on learning (Dahlgren 1984; Marton and Säljö 1984; Ramsden 1984; Hand et al. 1996; Biggs 1999; Lizzio et al. 2002). This relates in part to how we organise our learning environments (Sander et al. 2000) but crucially, I would argue, also our ability to evoke romance, encourage precision and then afford chances for meaningful generalisation. As one of my students noted, what they want 'On the one hand [is to] to understand the merits of theory. On the other hand, to apply theories to a real world'.

This need to address boredom through imaginative research and learning brings us full circle to the concern—to the accusation—that all too often management graduates have been spoon-fed a priori categories and ill-conceived models which are then unthinkingly inflicted upon the wider world (Chia 1999; Shaw 2016): that those who attend schools of business are potentially bored by the very idea of managing (Vaill 1983). It reinforces Whitehead's assertion that the role of university is to consider the general principles that underpin a career and that the role of ideas is to re-imagine worlds. Researching the world through pocket films can help us meet these demands, providing an antidote to boredom and stale ideas.

## 9-Step Process for Researching & Learning Through Pocket Film

It will be clear by now that I am in agreement with Whitehead's (1929) contention that there can be no learning without interest. Where Whitehead spoke of 'romance' we now talk of 'motivation', recognising that the success of research and teaching endeavours is dependent on the commitment of individuals in terms of intrinsic, extrinsic and strategic impetus (Gibb et al. 1984; Griffith 2003; Newstead and Hoskins 2003). Whitehead framed this in terms of the problem of keeping knowledge alive for the learner/researcher, noting that 'the best procedure will depend on several factors, none of which can be neglected, namely, the genius of the teacher, the intellectual type of the pupils, their prospects in life, the opportunities offered by the immediate surroundings of the school and allied factors of this sort' (Whitehead 1929: 5). Mode of delivery (Dahlgren 1984; Ramsden 1984; Lizzio et al. 2002) perceived workload (Ramsden 1984; Lizzio et al. 2002) clarity of goals and structure (Lizzio et al. 2002) control and independence (Ramsden 1984; Lizzio et al. 2002) managing anxiety and threat (Marton and Säljö 1984; Ramsden 1984) how the work is to be judged (Entwistle 1984; Ramsden 1984; Hand et al. 1996; Biggs 1999; Lizzio et al. 2002) and the aims of those involved (Pearson and Chatterjee 2004; Woodhouse 2005) all impinge on motivation to learn and research.

In terms of the production of pocket films, I have conceptualised this task as a 9-step process. It will be noted that the steps broadly correspond to different stages of Whitehead's (1929) rhythm of learning. Steps one through to three equate the with stage of romance; four to six equate to the precision stage; and seven through to nine to the stage of generalisation. Most focus is placed on steps 1–3 (romance) below as 'without interest there will be no progress' (Whitehead 1929: 31) (Fig. 3).

## Step 1—Challenge

Step 1 is to challenge. It requires some 'freshness in the knowledge dealt, or some novelty of application to the new world of new times' (Whitehead 1929: 98) or both. This may take the form of outlining a problem, specifying a goal, or actively seeking to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions of learners such that the need for further research becomes clear.

With all students, but particularly first-year undergraduates, I seek to emphasise that not everyone sees the way that you do. Opening lectures stress that there is more than one way of 'seeing' (drawing on the work of

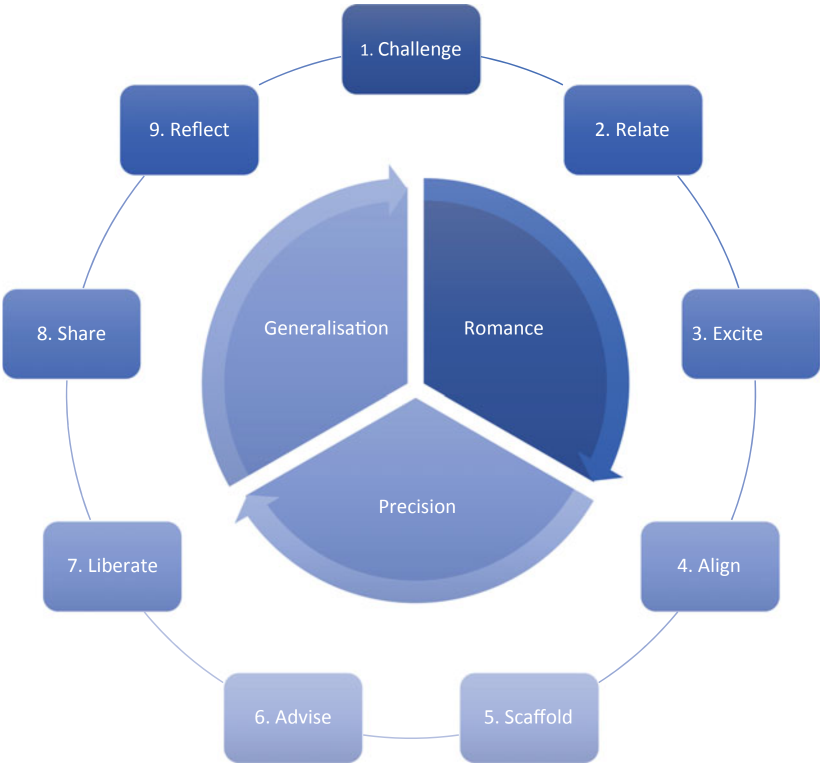


**Fig. 3** 9-Step process for research and learning through pocket-film making ('Video 4.1: Kickstarter Films' https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUc6HGJZ8AFbLtRp09lNlu7r__Z-HDUL8)

Berger 1972). Moreover, I stress that how and what we see fundamentally influences approaches to enacting and 'being' in the world. On a first-year research methods course this is couched in terms of a discussion of the different implications of competing research paradigms (Burrell and Morgan 1979) and the possibility that there are different ways of seeing the worlds of work, managing and organising. Follow-up workshops involve exercises designed to encourage students to explore how our senses may be deceived (e.g. Ames room, Rubin's vase, paintings of Salvador Dali), how different cultures respond to risk (e.g. Douglas 1966, 1978) as well the manner in which business practices such as advertising may be critiqued (e.g. Berger 1972). Effectively, students are invited to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about what they think they know, how they obtain knowledge, and indeed the usefulness or otherwise of unconventional ways of seeing.

Effectively, I am seeking to disrupt their world view so that they might begin to think of the world anew (Whitehead 1929). This disruption includes making it clear that a major part of their module mark will depend on a group produced pocket film. They are informed that the 2–4-minute film will require them to research and explain a management concept (e.g. rationalisation, commodification, externalities) to a lay audience in a manner that is informative and engaging. At one level making such a film requires the use of classic research skills based on literature searching, critical reading, in-depth observation, interviews and conceptual rigour (Woodet al. 2018: 5). Yet it is simultaneously disrupting and challenging because, while most of the students I teach are well versed in the production of essays and the closed exam, they are new to viewing the world through a lens. The production and dissemination of knowledge in the form of social science film (Miko et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2018) is in and of itself a challenge.

The effect is similar on MBA students, particularly those returning to higher education, for whom the very notion of producing a film challenges them to reconsider how they communicate with an audience, and indeed who the intended audience is. For these students the challenge is different, more applied, as they are asked to work in groups to develop a business idea or opportunity that is to be presented as a 'Kickstarter' style film (see https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUc6HGJZ8AFbLtRp09lNlu7r__Z-HDUL8). For MBAs and undergraduates alike, the response is a mix of enthusiasm, puzzlement and, for some, anxiety. At this point, the key is to remind them that you are not expecting something to rival a film by Spielberg. The social science film is about producing and transmitting knowledge. I note that such films are judged by different criteria, and that the work required to meet those criteria will be covered during the course (see below).

## Step 2—Relate

Having challenged learners to think again about how they see the world, Step 2 seeks to link lectures and film to the interests and experiences of the student-researcher. Put simply, the task is to convince them that producing a pocket film is worthwhile as part of the 'imaginative consideration of the various general principles underlying the career' (Whitehead 1929: 96). This is the task of any researcher. Whether we are submitting a grant application to a funder or a paper to a peer-reviewed journal we are required to demonstrate how and why our research relates to the life of the other.

For MBAs the production of a Kickstarter style film relates easily to the emerging world of business. For many it offers a chance to build on a business idea that they already have. For others, it is the culmination of their learning in respect of exploring, costing and pitching new ideas to a global audience.

For undergraduates 'relating' is a looser and more varied process. For some the subject of the film is of inherent interest (e.g. the effects of rationalisation on modern life, or the costs associated with pollution as an externality). Added to this are a range of pragmatic, instrumental and strategic concerns arising from the assessment of the film (generally 30–40% of the overall course mark). While it is essential to attend to instrumental motivations of students, it is equally important to recognise that learners often have an accompanying intrinsic desire to 'understand the subject', which my students express in terms of the wish to 'learn something about the way organisations work' to 'gain a deeper understanding, especially of human behaviour in business' or to 'understand theories more and apply them to the social world'. Accordingly, I explain to students how producing a film on a given topic will demonstrate their ability to define, research and apply key management topics to the real world. Presenting this understanding in the form of a group film will also help to develop the kinds of soft skills regularly identified in popular media (see Leighton 2018) as desired by employers and, therefore, of value to students. This includes team working, collaborating, communicating, leading, listening and time management.

The importance of relating the process of film-making to the lives and interests of those involved should not be underestimated. Whether the process relates to students, a research funder or action research collaborators, the enterprise is unlikely to succeed unless there is buy-in. Those involved need to understand how a pocket film can be produced, what it will and will not involve, how it will align with their interests, and why it is better than other modes of researching and communicating. In each context the specifics (and message) will be different. For a research funder the emphasis may be on the ways in which film has been identified as filling certain epistemological and aesthetic gaps left by text-based social science (see Miko et al. 2018) while for participatory action research it may centre on reaching and working with audiences who are more comfortable with producing and/or viewing YouTube content than a formal report that must be written and read.

## Step 3—Excite

Step three is the culmination of the initial stage of romance and speaks to a 'subject matter that has the vividness of novelty; it holds within itself unexplored connexions with possibilities half-disclosed by glimpses and half-concealed by a wealth of material' (Whitehead 1929: 17).

To this point (about a fifth of the way into a given course) I will have worked to disrupt base assumptions, present alternatives, outline the broad sweep of key concepts or theories and propose that visual research can serve as a tool for understanding and interacting with the wider world. This is achieved partly through lectures, one of which will introduce the topic around which the film is to be made (e.g. rationalisation). The lecture broadly describes key concepts, theorists and reading that relate to the topic. It seeks to excite student interest into the pervasiveness of a phenomenon and get them to consider how it relates to their life and the wider world.

Lectures are supplemented by workshops and exercises designed to excite interest in visual methods. Here the emphasis is on learning-by-doing. For example, a couple of weeks into my undergraduate course I challenge my students to work in their groups to create a photo essay. The photo essay combines image and text with a view to conveying something more of the context, culture, emotion and experience of a scene in an attempt to provoke a response in the viewer (Mitchell 2011; Rose 2012). Among the various exponents of this art were the photojournalists of Life Magazine (see http://time.com/tag/life-photo-essay/).

Working in teams, students are briefed to 'take five pictures to form a photo essay on "routines of student life"'. They are given 40 minutes to consider what they have already learnt in terms of the purpose, potential, limits and ethics of employing visual methods in research; and informed that they are required to present their essays to the workshop (as a PowerPoint presentation) followed by a brief reflection on approach and message. In this way students are being required to move intellectually from consideration of presented images, to representations of their own experiences through visual imagery in a way that relates (step 2) to their own lives (see Fig. 4 for an example).

The results are photo essays on routine, learning, independence, similarity, difference, exchanging cultures, collectively, isolation, debt and alcohol. Students position themselves in front of as well as behind the lens as part of deliberate accounts of the embodied experience of routines with regards to stress, relaxation and excess. This is achieved while playing with the anonymity of body parts (Mitchell 2011; Petersen and Østergaard 2003) as hands, groups of arranged feet, turned faces and the obscuring of distinguishing marks are all employed as symbolic representations of a larger whole. In part this reflected a growing concern with the ethics of representation in terms of consent, anonymity and an ethical responsibility (see below, step 5 Scaffolding). It also speaks to attempts to see more deeply, as objects and body parts are presented for their connotative as well as denotative meanings. Thus, in Fig. 4 the first image was said to represent the new routine of having to stand on your own-two-feet while also forming new relations. Image 2 spoke to student debt, and relatively easy life for others—image 3. The shared experience of study and socialising conclude the essay (images 4 and 5).

The point of the photo essay is to encourage a shift in students away from the search for concrete answers and definitive solutions to the presentation of images of their own lives as linked to the wider theme of 'routines'. Students take up the challenge of turning the smartphone camera lens safely upon themselves as part of a first tentative attempt to identify, understand and represent the lived experience of the everyday and mundane, shifting


**Fig. 4** Photo essay on the ‘routines of student life’

from 'one perspective to another' to begin to 'build up an adequate view of a total society and its components' (Wright-Mills 1959: 232).

Just as importantly, experience of successful completing, presenting and discussing these essays serves to excite an appetite for the construction of a pocket film. This is important because, as Whitehead points out, unless learners are continually sustained by the 'excitement of success, they can never make progress, and will certainly lose heart' (Whitehead 1929: 38).

## Step 4—Align

Alignment is concerned with establishing in the mind of the student the link between concepts, activities, film-making, researching, learning and success. We are moving now into the *precision* stage (Whitehead 1929) wherein students are invited to impose order on the relatively free and disorganised understanding that was encouraged in the romance stage. Central to this clear and constructive alignment of teaching, learning and assessment.

The importance of constructive alignment in effective learning and teaching is well established (Entwistle 1984; Ramsden 1984; Hand et al. 1996; Biggs 1999; Lizzio et al. 2002). Suffice to say that I repeatedly explain to undergraduates and MBAs how: the concepts in lectures are developed in hands-on workshops, the activities in workshops nurture the knowledge and skills required for success in the summative assessment, and how all of the above can inform the world of management, business and organising. This is reinforced by regular formative feedback in class.

Inherent within this is a very clear statement on what constitutes an excellent, good, satisfactory fair or failing film. Examples of the criteria made available to students are (Table 1) based on Bigg's (1999) SOLO taxonomy.

Note there is no prescribed content or cinematic style. The emphasis is on conceptual understanding, application and creativity. Of course, students need clear guidance in meeting the criteria for excellence.

**Table 1** Film assessment criteria

| | |
|---|---|
| 70+ | The film shows evidence of excellent understanding with respect to connecting, applying and extending ideas and images on rationalisation. There is evidence of deep and thorough understanding of different meanings associated with rationalisation, along with the different forms that rationalisation may take. This includes an appreciation of the ways in which individual rationalised actions link to, represent and reproduce wider rationalising trends within work business or society as a whole and how these may be interlinked. There is also evidence of an ability to link this understanding to other relevant concepts and ideas from outside the course which suggests some originality of thought.<br>The framework underpinning the film is clear, as are the theoretical or research perspectives from which the framework is derived. Detailed knowledge of the topic is combined with evidence of critical judgement in selection and analysis of relevant material. The work is characterised be careful and thoughtful observation.<br>Visually, the images are very well presented and connected into a coherent whole with evidence of good scripting and editing. The film is highly engaging and informative and likely to make a good connection with the intended audience.<br>Overall, the film would be defined as '**extended abstract**': the students are making connections not only within the given subject area, but also beyond it, able to generalise and transfer the principles and ideas underlying the specific instance. |
| Fail >40 | The film gives the sense of having simply acquired and compiled bits of unconnected information, which have little organisation or meaningful sense. There is little or no theoretical framing of or underpinning to the film. In places the film and its representation of rationalisation appears confused, even mistaken. The work shows little or no evidence of thoughtful observation in respect of concepts, work, business or society. The film itself is poorly presented, in terms of image use, shooting, scripting and editing.<br>There may also be concerns with respect to adherence to ethical guidelines.<br>Overall, the film would be defined as 'pre-structural': here students are simply acquiring bits of unconnected information, which have no organisation and make little or no sense. |

## Step 5—Scaffold

Scaffolding refers to the practice of providing a range of supports designed to facilitate working, research and learning, where the level of external assistance reduces as student competence increases. Scaffolding is a 'dynamic intervention provided to facilitate and be responsive to students' learning progress. The idea is to give support based on students' needs and with a clear purpose of fading out the assistance in line with students' learning progress (van de Pol et al. 2010, 2012; Howe 2013; Cappetta and Paolino 2015)' (Stratling and McMurray 2018: 2).

My concern here is to ensure that students: (1) understand the principles of group working, (2) appreciate how to search and critique literature—so as to collate the content to construct the film, (3) have an appreciation of the principles of pocket film-making, and (4) attend to the ethical principles of the university. Instruction and exercises are provided in all respects as part of a commitment to greater precision in enquiry. In the early weeks I play a much more directive role, as different models of group-working are discussed at the beginning of the course and students sign collective contracts describing how groups will work, who leads on particular activities and how group disputes are to be resolved. I am heavily involved in the setting up of groups, comparing models and developing contracts.

It is in this phase where I also attend to ethics, dedicating a session to ethics in general and filming in particular. Working with image and film opens issues that might not always have been considered before, whether by student, experienced researcher, host institution or professional body. Issues might include who can be filmed, under what circumstances and when, or where, is it reasonable to obtain consent in public spaces. For example, in the UK there are no specific privacy laws and no laws against filming in public (Trotter 2010) while the British Psychological Society (BPS 2009: 13) advise to 'restrict research based upon observations of public behaviour to those situations in which persons being studied would reasonably expect to be observed by strangers, with reference to local cultural values and to the privacy of persons'. Context, culture and local laws are thus key issues (it is perhaps worth noting that, not surprisingly given the marginality of visual methods to the area, the British and American Academies of Management make no reference to filming, while reference to public observation is also removed from the 2018 version of the BPS code).

Building on university ethics requirements, nascent film-makers are tutored in issues of honest reporting, fair dealing, integrity and avoiding treating others as means, all of which is reinforced by assessment rubrics stating that transgression of ethical guidelines will result in a zero mark.

YouTube's rules on copyright are co-opted to reinforce academic concern with ethicality, while students are reminded that the use of objects and anonymised bodies can be employed as symbolic representations of a larger whole (Mitchell 2011; Petersen and Østergaard 2003). In practical terms, students are issued with a set of ethical principles for film-making (Fig. 5) based on the below:

> Of course, no list of principles can force a film-maker to be ethical. The aim is to inculcate students with an appreciation of the need to treat others as special, while also understanding what might be implied by an ethics of care. (Gabriel 2009)

During this phase I also provide detailed instruction in the proper methods of literature searching and critique. I spend time going through the

Film/photograph only in public spaces where people have a reasonable expectation of being observed or filmed.

If you want to film in private or semi-public spaces (e.g. pavement cafés, offices) only do so where you have permission.

Only film individual people in detail where you have asked for and they have given their consent. In gaining consent tell the individual why you are filming, what the film will be used for and that it will be posted on You Tube. If they decline to take part respect their decision and do not film.

Do not work or film in places that expose you to more risk than would be expected as part of daily life

Filming covertly (in secret) is not allowed and will result in a FAIL.

Use of deception is not allowed and will result in a FAIL.

Filming must NOT involve children or vulnerable people (you have not been trained to work with such groups and consent/ascent is complicated in these cases). Such filming may result in a FAIL.

Do not film or use any material that you know is liable to cause offence or which may bring the University into disrepute.

Do not use material that is copyrighted (or belongs to someone else unless you have permission).

If in doubt consult Prof Robert McMurray (course leader).

**Fig. 5** Ethical principles for film-making

3 Ps of film production (Table 2) while also examining examples from different genre and sites. Useful resources here include the BBC film network (http://www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork/filmmaking/guide/) and Festival Pocket Films (http://www.festivalpocketfilms.fr/) and tips for pocket film-making (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oljt8IU0Npk).

**Table 2** A rough guide to the 3 Ps of film production

| | |
|---|---|
| Pre-production | • Idea, concept definition, library research & reading<br>• Perspective<br>• Planning<br>• Intended audience<br>• Location scouting<br>• Obtaining permissions/consents<br>• Detail observation & note-taking prior to filming<br>• Scripting/story boarding<br>• Shot plan<br>• Choosing your equipment & software packages |
| Production | • Setting<br>• Equipment: all charged, understand all settings and features<br>• Shooting skills: e.g. avoid very bright light (try softer indirect light when interviewing), not too much camera movement<br>• Pieces to camera?<br>• Acted sequences?<br>• Animation?<br>• Look after your equipment and footage<br>• Back-up copies |
| Post-production | • Editing, slicing together<br>• Adding titles, music, voice-overs and graphics<br>• Quotations or references?<br>• Credits & authors (e.g. full names of members of the team being assessed)<br>• Exporting/sharing (YouTube)<br>• PILOT viewing/audience testing?<br>• Final edit<br>• Meeting deadlines<br>• Allow time for upload<br>• Allow time for format conversion<br>• Allow time for technical difficulties/failures<br>• Email full details (links, names) to Prof McMurray |

As the weeks progress my hands-on involvement is reduced to the point where I am consulted if needed or called in where dispute resolution is problematic. In this way, scaffolding is removed as I switch from detailed instruction to advice giving.

## Step 6—Advise

Step 6 is an extension of the previous step and reflects the need for the lecturer to move from centre stage. Rather than instructing on specific concepts, methods or processes, attention switches to responding to question initiated by learners. Within my courses more time is directed to lectures and workshops in the first half of the module. These are replaced in the second half by drop-in sessions and advice clinics. Within these, I clarify assessment queries, discuss interpretations of theories, consider the validity of sources and review initial ideas for film-making. Here, then, attention moves to encouraging students who are '*uncovering* the topics in our course rather than listening to us *cover* them' (Whetten 2007: 349) as they are guided to construct and own understandings of the world and their place within it (Dahlgren 1984).

## Step 7—Liberate

As the films are being made and students seek to determine whether they are 'getting it right' or 'what the best approach is' my role is to stress that there is more than one path to the production of a good (and well graded) film. A catalogue of films from previous cohorts can serve to demonstrate diversity of approach, while constantly changing the subject of films reduces the likelihood of copy-cat production. Never revealing the marks of prior films also helps in this sense. For MBA students a look through the official Kickstarter site quickly reveals a diverse range of approaches to attracting an audience and funders.

In practical terms, the above means reiterating that there is no preferred genre or mode of film-making. It means making it clear that they are freed from the structures of the classical academic essay, and it is up to them whether they include text and references on the screen or choose to include them in comments. This is the stage at which learner and lecturer alike need to hold their nerve as simple knowledge is operationalised as part of a developing wisdom, where the latter 'concerns the handling of knowledge, its selection for the determination of relevant issues, its employment to add value to our immediate experience… [to attain] the most intimate freedom obtainable' (Whitehead 1929: 30). Film forces the learner to let go of the detail of the precision stage in favour of the broad lessons that are to be readied for generalisation (long quotes, heavy text and laboured references will not work in a film). The only restrictions at this stage include length, hand in date, compliance with the university's ethical guidelines, and adherence to YouTube's terms and conditions. The latter is important because all films will be posted on YouTube ready for assessment and sharing.

## Step 8—Share

Within my courses, sharing takes two forms. First, films are submitted to my YouTube site for marking: Management Learning Channel (https://www.youtube.com/user/ARBSchannel) (Fig. 6).

This has the advantage of ensuring that the films are shared with the wider world and that students consider an audience beyond the classroom when constructing their films (it is not unusual for the films to be view hundreds of times, some approaching 7000 views—see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ly6grTZgxU&index=14&list=PL52A0BB5EA2D477D3). It also imposes the added challenge of not infringing copyright (if the films are taken down by YouTube on copyright grounds the assessment is failed).

Second, a selection of the films is shown in the last lecture of the term/semester. They are selected for their variety and inventiveness not on the basis of the mark awarded. The purpose here is to celebrate our collective research and learning. Large screen format, snacks and conversations all speak to a shared event. It also allows learners to see the different ways in which the same subject can be variously researched, interpreted and presented by others. In presentational terms this variety encompasses the documentary, claymation, mime, reportage, drawing, stop motion,

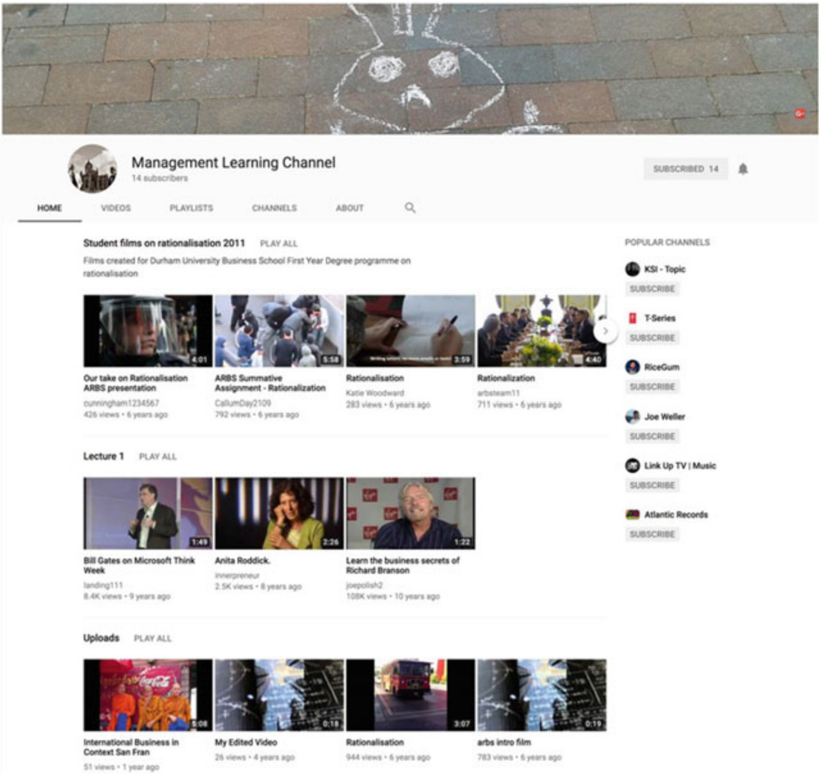


**Fig. 6** Management Learning Channel for student films

silent film, pieces to camera, poetry and acted-out. In conceptual terms theory is realised in relation to individuals, businesses, countries, processes, world events, social problems, possible solutions and new questions. This variety brings us back to step 1 in the process as students come to understand that not everyone sees and enacts the world the same way as they do.

What the shared visual language of film does afford is a levelling of the playing field for those whose first language is not English. Imagery can convey meaning where words may be lacking, while time to plan and edit affords a chance to be heard before others jump in. Finally, the audience 'hear and see' those who may be silent or silenced in other contexts. This is also true in the case of social science films more broadly. Katharina Miko et al. (2018) social science film 'Warm Feelings' explores the experience of being gay and lesbian in the post-war period where to love or be intimate with someone of the same sex was often unspoken and hidden. The film serves to reconstruct, represent and voice those experiences decades later. Both the process of making and presenting allow new voices and perspectives to be disseminated. The impact of such films is to: challenge ideas, challenge the status quo of academic work as written work and, connect with public audiences that the closed world of academic journals simply does not reach (Wood et al. 2018).

## Step 9—Reflect

By reflection I have in mind two separate but linked processes: student assessment and learning effectiveness.

Using the assessment guide (see Table 1) I tend to mark all of the films within a few days and feedback to students within a week. Moderation depends on specific institutional requirements but discussion between markers is of course key (especially when marking and feedback may be across multiple staff and hundreds of students). I return marks within a few days because I want students to reflect on the learning outcomes and processes while they are still fresh in their minds. The feedback is face-to-face so that the groups of students can ask questions and understand the grade. In this way students are invited to reflect on their individual process of research and learning.

The second form of reflection is on the usefulness of the course generally and of pocket films in particular. In terms of outcome, the grades awarded to films give some indication as to the extent to which students have come to understand and apply theory. In terms of process, I once again ask students how they found the course and film-making. Broadly, students report finding the task of producing a pocket film challenging in terms of time, organisation and the necessity of 'being there' in order to produce images. The act of having to look at and re-present a world beyond books is generally said to heighten their understanding of concepts such as rationalisation, commodification, power or externalities (all film topics over the years) in terms of their effect and pervasiveness in the observable world. This echoes Wright-Mills's (1959: 232) observation that once you are really into a subject you see it everywhere once you are sensitive to its themes.

Students reported having to engaging more deeply with concepts in readiness to present them clearly through visual media to a wider audience. Moreover, the very act of presenting was perceived by students to have embedded their understanding of the subject more deeply than exam or essay. Students noted that interviewing and observing others as part of filming opened them up to alternative viewpoints and perspectives, while also increasing their awareness that others may interpret the finished films in different ways. This was felt to be enhanced by the possibilities offered by sound, soundtrack and poetry as supplements to the creative process which helped convey meaning and elicit emotion. Finally, students stated that the process had generally been rewarding and fun. This chimes with claims that one of the benefits of utilising film in learning and research is the sheer joy and sense of fun that accompanies the process (Mitchell 2011) thus 'enhancing the aesthetic dimension of the research itself for all concerned' (Warren 2002: 243).

Not all remarks are positive. There is a minority who would prefer the written examination and essay for which they have been trained and displayed excellence. Others resent working in a group, particularly where said group struggles to cohere or engage effectively. MBAs find the challenge of coordinating more difficult when combining such an assignment with full-time work. Even so, overall there is a sense in which the smartphone camera affords students the necessary freedom to consider new ways of seeing, and developing their sociological imaginations. The films stand as evidence of their ability to grasp complex concepts, study them in-depth and then generalise them as part of an engaged consideration of the wider world. Many show them to family, friends, work colleagues and old school teachers as evidence of their university learning.

For my part, I review the films to incrementally improve my courses year on year. This has tended to lead to more structured scaffolding, more attention to the three Ps, and an emphasis on assessing the films as evidence of learning and creative engagement with the world—all the while stressing to students that we are engaging with images because they are increasingly important in management business and organising (not because we are a film school).

What lessons do I take from the above? First and foremost, go out and get your hands dirty! Make your own film as I did (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n–0INNVLbQ) so as to better understand the process, problems and possibilities. Getting your hands dirty will help overcome any technological concerns you might have and allow you to teach students, other researchers or participative stakeholders from your own experience. It will also let you consider the ethics of seeing and representing others first-hand. How you apply the process outlined here will of course depend on your context. It will be markedly different for the individual working with a few research participants compared to a lecturer leading a course of 800. There are no one-size-fits- all solutions, but good planning and support are often key.

## Conclusions

Encouraging research and learning through the use of pocket film has resulted in some of the most enjoyable and engaging teaching (and marking!) of my career. When you combine an academic's intrinsic enthusiasm for their subject, with the excitement of research and learning through film production, it is easy to invoke a romance for ideas in those we teach. Employing Whitehead (1929) I have contended that romance is a necessary prerequisite to research and learning: the precursor to developing precise understanding and generalisable knowledge. Furthermore, I have set out a case for, and a process of, working with film as an arts-based method for research and learning. Specifically, I have argued that film encourages a different mode of engagement with the world based on a participatory mode of researching that is often deeply reflective and reflexive. It goes beyond the bounds of management texts to afford a different type of immersive audio-visual encounter that is multisensory in nature (Pink 2009; Bell et al. 2014) as part of an unfolding process of planning, producing, collaborating, storying, editing, presenting, viewing, reinterpreting and sense-making that can be seen as a form of research and learning in its own right (Miko et al. 2018; Wood et al. 2018). This form of research and learning has been made increasingly accessible by the ubiquity of the smartphone: a device that bridges and facilitates the social lives of undergraduates, the work of managers and the research practices of academics.

Finally, I value the smartphone enabled creation of pocket research films because it encourages different ways of seeing and communicating (Berger 1972) that push back against the often-unfounded claims that schools of management and business peddle a priori categories and ill-conceived models which are unthinkingly inflicted upon the wider world by alumni bored with the very idea of management (Vaill 1983; Chia 1999; Shaw 2016). I am not suggesting that all education and assessment should be channelled through film. Rather, as an arts-based method I would argue that it offers another way of seeing, engagement with, and being in the world that can be added to the very best modes of research and learning that we already provide.

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# Food as an Arts-Based Research Method in Business and Management Studies

Alia Weston and Zev Farber

## Introduction

It has already been firmly established in this book, and beyond (Leavy 2015; Finley 2011, 2008), that arts-based research is about seeing and building knowledge in different ways to enable a holistic, creative, and critical view of the social experience. A key aspect of these perspectives is to bring together the artist and researcher self in a way that is more authentically attuned to the rich subtleties and nuances of everyday life as it is lived. In this chapter, we position food practice, alongside other arts-practices, as a research method that enables an enriched understanding

A. Weston (✉)
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, OCAD University, Toronto, ON, Canada
e-mail: aweston@faculty.ocadu.ca

Z. Farber
Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers, OCAD University,
Toronto, ON, Canada
e-mail: zfarber@ocadu.ca

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of behaviour in organizations. We do this for two reasons. First, food has been used as an artistic medium that enables the sharing of ideas and an embodied understanding of social experience that is gained through eating of food (O'Loughlin 2016). Furthermore, food is such an integral part of life that, similar to other arts-based approaches, there is a deep congruence with subject matter and method (Leavy 2015). In this chapter we examine how food has been used as a lens to conduct research about working life. Shortt (2018) comments that food is an under-researched context in organization studies. We add that while food-related research methods have been the focus in wider areas of food studies like nutrition, anthropology, cultural studies and historical research (see Miller and Deutsch 2009; Chrzan and Brett 2017), there has been a lack of focus in business and management studies. This chapter addresses this gap by articulating how food can constitute an important part of the research methods available to business, management and humanities scholars.

Leavy (2015) positions arts-based research as informed by three perspectives: art as a mechanism for learning about social life, artistic practices as social research and creative arts therapies. We see a resonance with these trajectories and the previous work completed concerning the scholarly and practice-based engagements with food. First, food is a compelling context for research as it can be used to examine diverse issues related to people's social experiences in the workplace (e.g. Shortt 2018). As such, food practice is a distinct research setting that provides a situated understanding of everyday organizational relationships that are shaped by food (e.g. Counihan and Højlund 2018). In addition, food, like art, has singular capabilities that can actively initiate healing, change and organizational transformation (e.g. Stroebaek 2013). We draw on this framing to support our goal in this chapter, which is to articulate a conceptual perspective that situates food as a methodological tool for research in business and management contexts.

This chapter is structured as follows. In the first section we explore food as a context for research. Here we illustrate that food is a universal language that enables an enhanced understanding of social and organizational life. Equally, it offers a unique lens for examining people's everyday interactions with food in the workplace. In parts two and three we draw on Miller and Deutsch's (2009) distinction between food as a field of study that can be examined from diverse disciplines with a variety of research methods, and food as a tool that can enhance research methods. In the second section we review a range of qualitative research methods that have been used to document and examine people's food-based experiences in the workplace. We highlight the use of traditional interpretive approaches, ethnographic practices, and process methods. In the third section we examine how food has been used as a tool to accentuate and enrich social interaction and research methods during the research process. The latter is what we refer to when we describe food as an arts-based research method.

In the final section we offer two illustrative examples to demonstrate our approach, both in practical research and as a mode of knowledge dissemination. Our first example centres around *Hang @ Home* and *Good w/ Food*, two artist-talk dinner series which were developed to facilitate experiential learning for students at an art and design university. We outline a participatory action research strategy[1] for examining student's food-based learning about career development and working life. In our second example we give an overview of *[Re]$^2$ Reconstructing Resilience,* a multidisciplinary research symposium about sustainability, to demonstrate how we used food as a method for disseminating research knowledge about sustainable employment. Our participatory approach would be equally valuable in other business and management research contexts such as marketing and consumer research, socially responsible business and corporate social responsibility, entrepreneurship and innovation, or studies of business and economic futures.

[1] Note that we do not prescribe a philosophy in this chapter. Given the diversity of research methods that can be applied to examine people's engagement with food there are as many philosophies to accompany them. However, Barbour (2004) offers an argument for embodied ways of knowing which are gained through lived experience and movement, which may be useful for understanding embodied experiences with food. Equally if participatory action research is employed (as in our example) MacDonald (2012) highlights a postmodern perspective that encompasses multiple shared realities.

## Food as a Context for Organizational Research

Food connects us to one another on a human level since everyone requires regular sustenance and understands the experience of eating (Barber 2014). Yet food functions as more than mere nutritional sustenance. It permeates all aspects of life and culture, from the intimately personal to the professional (e.g. Valentine 2002; Driver 2008; Di Domenico and Phillips 2009; Kniffin et al. 2015; Strangleman 2010; Shortt 2018). This is a reminder that beyond sustenance food enables an augmented bodily understanding of the world (Roe 2006; O'Loughlin 2016). As an integral part of life, it communicates meaning about the social–cultural relationships entwined with food and provides a lens through which to examine these interconnections (Sutton 2010; Bonnekessen 2010; Østergaard Rasmussen 2018; Greene and Cramer 2011; Counihan and Højlund 2018).

An integral property of food is that it enables an understanding of social experience gained through all five senses (Barber 2014; Roe 2006). This embodied experience is amplified by the triggering of emotional responses to food, the sensorial memories of things tasted, felt or smelled in the past, and even future imaginings of the experience (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999; Ferguson 2011). Beyond the human body, it holds a position of central importance in society since every interaction with food is a form of cultural production (Montanari 2006). For instance, cuisine is a distinct expression of cultural heritage (Brulotte and Di Giovine 2014; Khare 1992), while rituals centred around food—e.g. the eating of birthday cake, or the marriage feast—mark significant rites of passage (Greene and Cramer 2011). Thus, food serves as a system and agent of communication when people express symbolic engagements with food, and as a mechanism for socialization through which people gain understanding of the world around them (Greene and Cramer 2011). It holds further value as an artistic medium which communicates ideas that are eaten and known within the body (O'Loughlin 2016; Eliasson 2016).

The cultural relevance of food is also a central part of working life. For instance, food has had an unprecedented impact on organizational practices during the industrial revolution. British society's consumption of foodstuffs like biscuits significantly altered contemporary manufacturing and distribution practices (Goody 1982). In today's workplace, the consumption of food and drink are a seamless part of organizational life. Activities such as coffee and tea breaks, taking a homemade lunch to work, eating in the office canteen and going for afterwork dinners and drinks with colleagues illustrate the embeddedness of food in workplace relationships (Shortt 2018). Since food is seamlessly woven through multiple aspects of working life it provides an opportune context for researching ongoing organizational engagements (e.g. Valentine 2002; Driver 2008; Di Domenico and Phillips 2009; Kniffin et al. 2015; Strangleman 2010; Shortt 2018).

Research has documented diverse issues that surround food in the workplace, ranging from worker well-being, to stigmatization and exploitation. For example, the social pressure to conform to particular body types and to adhere to certain consumption patterns in the workplace (Shortt 2018) is a key contributor to worker health and well-being (Bordo 2009). Manalansan (2006) examines the marginalization of diverse workers through the stereotypical association of 'smelly' foods with immigrant workers. Finally, the experience of migrant workers highlights the plight of temporary labourers by demonstrating how the food system is upheld by a precarious, predominantly female workforce (Barndt 2001, 2013). In contrast, research has also highlighted the politicized role that food plays in organizational revitalization. For instance, studies have shown the indelible impact of food justice organizations on community organizing (Click and Ridberg 2010; Levkoe 2013) in ways that emphasize situated relationships that are ecologically and culturally connected to place (DeLind 2006). In Wales the alternative Cittàslow (Slow City) movement was found to develop social cohesion and place-making for local organizations (Pink 2008). While in Glasgow, a focus on artisan food highlighted the creativity of small business owners and their contribution to local productivity (Simpson et al. 2018). Further examples are initiatives like *Fair Trade* which have sought to increase market access for marginalized businesses and food producers (Low and Davenport 2005; Jubas 2015).

The highlighted examples illustrate the significance of food in organizational contexts. For example, the level of health and well-being directly impacts a person's capability to work, while the social pressures of diet and body image are just as real in the workplace as outside of it. In addition, stereotypical marginalization of foods is harmful to immigrant small business owners. Finally, community building and food movements, have been linked to economic revitalization and the resurgence of local, small businesses. The wide and varied ways that food is woven through everyday life at work demonstrates its value as a context that can deepen understanding of organizational engagement. Having addressed the ways that food has been used as a lens for examining people's engagements in the workplace, in the next section we highlight a range of research methods that have been used to document and provide an understanding of these food-related experiences.

## Food as a Setting for Organizational Research

Research has typically explored food as a part of everyday life, often taking a theoretical focus. When applied, methods are used to understand the social relationships surrounding food, both within and outside of organizations. As Miller and Deutsch (2009) have emphasized, food studies can accommodate a diverse range of qualitative and quantitative research methods which are the same as in any other field. Within the food studies discipline they highlight four noteworthy methodological approaches. These are historical methods that explore oral histories and artefacts, ethnographic approaches including observation and narrative methods, material culture approaches that follow the food object, and quantitative methods like surveys and experiments. In business and management contexts research methods are typically qualitative and range from interpretive approaches that examine food-related engagement after it has unfolded, to immersive methods that examine the ongoing performance of events as they occur. In keeping with the arts-based focus of this book, this section highlights a range of qualitative research methods that have been used to document and examine people's food-based experiences in the workplace. We include examples of traditional interpretive approaches, ethnographic practices, and process methods.

## Interpretive Methods

Interpretive methods are used to examine the representations and meanings of food. This enables the researcher to gain an understanding of the subjective experiences that organizational members have surrounding food in their working lives. The following are examples of qualitative research methods that go beyond simple case study and interview approaches (i.e. Messeni Petruzzelli and Savino 2015; Lane and Lup 2015). For instance, Driver (2008) employed a reflexive discourse analysis to interpret the social constructions of food and how these shape organizational practices. She collected and analysed narratives from five theoretical perspectives (i.e. empiricism, hermeneutics, critical theory, postmodernism, and psychoanalysis). The aim of this research was to demonstrate that food shapes organizational life through everyday interactions, and there are varied discourses of food in organizations. Participants were instructed to write reflective, emotive stories (c.f. Boje 2001; Gabriel 2000) about their subjective experiences of food at work. Participants were employed at a range of organizations within the fields of health care, retail, financial services, public administration, manufacturing, hospitality, consulting, military, chemicals, automobile racing and telecommunications. Thirty-five individuals self-selected to be part of the study and data was collected over 4 months. Participants submitted their stories and responded to follow-up questions over email. Driver (2008) employed a thematic narrative analysis (c.f. Fineman and Sturdy 1999) to examine recurring patterns in the data.

Driver's work was influenced by Valentine's (2002) earlier research about food, place and identity. Valentine's (2002, 1998) project was conducted over a two-year period in Yorkshire, UK, and employed a case study approach which integrated a range of qualitative and creative methods. Research participants were recruited through a snowballing process after contact with participants recruited through advertisements. Data was collected from 12 households through themed interviews with household participants who worked in a range of industries. Participants were also asked to record the eating practices of their households through video/photographic diaries and drawings. In addition, the research encompassed participant observation in 3 institutions, a prison and 2 schools.

The data was analysed to examine participants' attitudes to various issues surrounding food, including shopping, embodied identity, and eating at home, school and at work.

More recent work is Shortt's (2018) Lefebvrian analysis of food in the workplace, which explores the interconnectedness of food, work, people and space. This in-depth qualitative study was conducted over 18 months with a government agency in the UK. The research examined the post-occupancy experiences of organizational members after they were relocated to a new office space. It included a range of staff across all variety of functions in the organization and employed visual methods to explore their subjective experience of engaging with food in their workplace. Participants captured 6–8 images of their everyday work practices over 3 days, using disposable or their own cameras. The printed photographs formed the basis of photo-elicitation interviews where the researcher discussed the images with each participant to gain meaning about their experiences. The data was examined with an emergent, thematic coding analysis which highlighted themes relating to workplace well-being, spatial practices and food. Shortt's findings highlight the formal and informal eating habits of employees, and the ways that eating and the spatial engagements with food are representations of power and resistance in organizations.

## Ethnographic Methods

Although there is a long history of ethnographic work on food, there are limited examples of the technique employed in organizational contexts. The earliest are Rosen's (1985, 1988) ethnographic studies of the working lives of people employed in advertising agencies. Through 10 months of ethnographic immersion (c.f. Van Maanen; 1979) he sought to examine how organizational members engage in and make meaning about their working lives. Rosen collected data by observing participants in daily work activities by sitting in their offices and listening to phone conversations, as well as following them to client meetings, shooting sessions, and lunch. Observations also extended to social activities such as playing Softball, evening beer drinking, weekend fishing, and lunchtime walks. Observational data was collected opening and visibly with a pen and notepad. Supplementary data included drawings of organizational charts made by participants, public relations materials published by the organization, photographs of organizational documents, materials rummaged from 'trash cans', and any organizational memos sent directly to Rosen. Rosen specifically examined food in the workplace, from his experiences of the ritualized agency Christmas party (1988) and the agency breakfast (1985), viewing both events as forms of social choreography in a broader organizational drama. In addition to immersing himself in the gatherings as an audience member, Rosen (1988) interviewed organizational members before the social gatherings to gain further contextual understanding about the history, meanings, and preparations. At the events, organizational members were observed engaging in familial relationships as they ate food and drank together. Through these relationships Rosen examines the organizational community created through commensality.

Di Domenico and Phillips (2009) similarly performed an ethnographic study to understand ritualistic engagements with food in the workplace. They analysed the formal dining hall rituals at a series of Oxbridge Colleges. They employed opportunistic ethnography (c.f. Reimer 1977) which involves researchers studying contexts in which they are already regularly immersed. The study included 2-hour long participant observations of 22 formal dinners, in 10 Oxbridge colleges, over a period of 24 months. Fieldwork data was collected primarily by the first researcher through reflective diary accounts, and participant observations. Additional data was collected from ethnographic interviews which consisted of conversations and interactions with people. Autoethnographic comments were also recorded to document the researcher's own experiences and interactions. The second researcher added supplementary ethnographic commentaries and reflections through the lens of a 'critical friend' (c.f. Costa and Kallick 1993). The findings emerged through analysis of the data and highlight the importance of rituals in organizational practices.

Pink (2008) used ethnography to examine place-making in Wales. She used an urban tour as a moving case study to understand the social and sensorial dimensions of shared eating and drinking. The tour wove through the town merging through interior and exterior spaces owned by local organizations including cafes. Data was collected alongside, and with, research participants while they enjoyed various types of foods such as tea, coffee and biscuits. The immersive ethnographic process enabled the researcher and participants to engage in a multi-sensory experience encompassing sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. Participants recorded their experiences through photography, audio/video-recordings, written text and verbal descriptions. The data was reflexively analysed to gain understanding of the discourses and practices of the Cittàslow (Slow City) movement. In this example, Pink's (2008) research highlights the relevance of embodied, sensory examination of working life. Sensory ethnography has become recognized as a salient research method for examining food related experiences. A further example depicting an organizational context is Østergaard Rasmussen's (2018) ethnography of a professional Danish restaurant. See Counihan and Højlund's (2018) edited volume for this work and an extended collection of anthropological examples that explore the sensory engagement with food.

## Process Methods

Process perspectives view organizations as defined by an ongoing process of becoming (see Hernes et al. 2013). Research methods thus examine the becoming of social interactions and illustrate the movement of processes as they are in action (see Hernes 2010). The following are examples of research methods that have been used to examine how people perform and shape their lives while in the process of working with and eating food. Bouty and Gomez (2015, 2013) examined the creative process in haute cuisine restaurants to understand the flow of the activities and events within creative food-work. The authors employed a comparative, qualitative analysis and examined the data from a process perspective (c.f. Langley 1999, 2007). Data was collected from 3 Michelin-starred restaurants in France, and the approach included the collection of multiple sources of evidence from primary and secondary data sources to provide a rich qualitative data-set. Primary data included formal interviews and informal conversations with the head chef. Secondary data included the observation of visual material from video documentaries depicting the creative work of the head chef with key collaborators and their kitchen teams. Additional materials included physical materials such as menus, recipes, drawings, press articles and collages. The videos were particularly important for the process methodology because they enabled observation of the creative process of the chefs in real time, both inside and outside the kitchen. The researchers utilized the video data as observation material to analyse the people, conversations, gestures and places as they are entwined with food. The data was analysed in two phases. The first phase involved a coding analysis which identified three threads of creative process engagement. In the second phase these threads were further compared across the three restaurants to highlight recurring dynamics of creative behaviour. Simpson et al. (2018) similarly explored creativity of food-workers. This research examined the performativity of food practice by drawing on Urry's (2007) notion of travelling concepts. The research went beyond a representational focus on food and explored the organizing practices that artisan food producers use to playfully and creatively navigate their organizational lives. Data was collected through narrative inquiry which included conversations and photo-elicitation (c.f. Bramming et al. 2012). The research was conducted over a period of 4–6 weeks and participants collected images that reflected meaningful encounters in their everyday work experiences, and then discussed key images with the researchers. The data was examined to understand how participants creatively perform and shape their working lives.

Roe's (2006) specialty are research methodologies which depict the performative material nonhuman. She employed Actor–Network Theory (ANT) (c.f. Murdoch 1997) to examine the embodied practices of consumers by tracing the connections between humans and their food. She advances methods which follow the nonhuman commodity through the agro-food system (c.f. de Sousa and Busch 1998). Roe explains, '[y]ou cannot imagine talking to a carrot, but you can imagine a carrot in a larger network of fields, farms, industrial processing and supermarket-shelving' (109). Data was collected to document how things become food during the processes of making and eating food. Data included video diaries made by organic food consumers, as well as Roe's own observations of a live art sushi-making performance entitled 'Beauty is Perfection', by artist William Speakman who staged a sushi kitchen as an art installation. The live performance underscores the importance of engaging with the nonhuman actant as it is in the process of transformation.

## Food as an Arts-Based Research Method in Organizations

The previous section demonstrates that there is a small but growing area of research that examines the use of food in business and management studies. In the examples we demonstrated how traditional qualitative methods have been utilized to capture the social interactions between humans and food in the workplace. In this section we outline examples of what we consider to be arts-based food research methods. These are research approaches that go beyond traditional methods and use food as a tool to accentuate and enrich social interaction and research methods during the research process. We give examples of food being used to actively facilitate community building in research projects, and to disseminate research knowledge.

## Food as a Method for Community Building

The following examples highlight how food has been used to actively facilitate social interaction and community building in working life. Stroebaek (2013) employed a qualitative study of caseworkers in a public sector Danish organization dealing with public family law. She examined informal workplace culture during a large-scale merger to understand how communities of coping were developed through communal coffee breaks in response to workplace stress and exhaustion. The study employed interview and focus group methods. The study integrated food in the data collection process, reflecting Hannam's (1997) investigation of the making and drinking of tea, while participants drank tea. In Stroebaek's (2013) study, focus group participants engaged in structured interviews to inform decision-making for the segmentation of the focus groups. Eight small focus groups of 2–3 people were facilitated to ensure active engagement of all participants. The researcher moderated each focus group to create a comfortable atmosphere which encouraged open and friendly dialogue. Refreshments were served to facilitate the feeling of a 'coffee break'. To facilitate discussion the researcher posed questions on a whiteboard and invited responses via post-it notes on a custom-designed poster. The study employed critical discourse analysis (c.f. Fairclough 2005) to examine the plots and storylines (c.f. Gabriel 2000) in the interviews and visual material. Published findings were depicted through rich descriptions to illustrate the emergent insights about food culture in everyday office life.

Researchers have also used food as a tool to enhance relationships, and thus the quality of data. Abarca (2007), for instance, examined the entrepreneurial efforts of working-class Mexican women to understand how they use home cooking in public food stands as an economic resource to support themselves and their families. She developed an ethnographic approach accentuated by food, which she calls *charlas culinarias* (culinary chats). Abarca collected data about the women's food related experiences by engaging in conversations with them at their food stands as she savoured their food. Situating the interactions over food made the conversations more evocative and culturally sensitive. Similarly, Deutsch (2004) intentionally collected data about food over food-related interactions. He conducted research with men about food and masculinity by carrying out interviews while the men were cooking. This enabled a richer conversation where the participants volunteered insights. Emilson et al. (2014) purposefully used food to develop collaborative practice in their research with a marginalized womens' group. Rather than using typical structured research tools for facilitating collaboration, they focused on building bonds through slow, informal meetings. These meetings revolved around the discussion of everyday activities and the familiar act of drinking tea. Here the social engagement was cemented through the simple interaction with a foodstuff that everyone involved could relate to and which made everyone feel at home. Finally, Artist Olafur Eliasson also used food to build community. Most famous for artworks that emphasize the natural elements, an intriguing part of his practice is the food-work in his Berlin studio. A specially designed kitchen became a gathering place where studio staff shared meals and their lives (O'Loughlin 2016). The all-female kitchen acts as a social leveller and brings an element of compassion (Eliasson 2016).

Food has been intentionally used as an arts-based research method that facilitates active healing and social change in relation to work practices and working life. This is exemplified by Brandt (2013) who used food as an arts-based research method to highlight the plight of agricultural migrant workers in Canada. She incorporated activist art into a critical educational framework to highlight tensions and contradictions about labour practices. The research incorporated artistic installations evoking the Mexican practice of *ofrendas* (domestic alters) following the work of the Chicana artist Mesa-Bains (c.f. González 2008; Hooks and Mesa-Bains 2006). The installations incorporated foods and objects representing food in the workplace to highlight notions of food justice and provoke dialogue about sustainable production and labour. The objective of the approach was to use food as a tool to creatively engage with the complex politics surrounding labour in the food industry, and in this way mobilize activists to engage in social justice. A further example is the artistic practice of Lisa Myers, is a First Nations artist, curator, musician and chef in Ontario, Canada. Myers considers walking and cooking as research methods in her working life as a practising artist. She intentionally uses food as a research method and intervention tool to comment on power, ideas of value(s), and social relationships (Myers 2018). An example of Myers' work is *Blue Prints* (2012 and 2015) a collection of prints and a stop-motion animation made with anthocyanin pigment from blueberries. The works map the path followed by her grandfather when he ran away from a residential school, depicting the traumatic impact of settler colonization and displacement on her family (Springgay and Truman 2017). In addition, she introduces an interactive component to the exhibition space by curating participatory performances that include the sharing of blueberries and other foods in these social gatherings (Myers 2018).

## Food as a Method for Knowledge Dissemination

There is a renewed interest in the creative power of food as a medium that fosters sensory learning and engagement in the world (Flowers and Swan 2015a). As highlighted in the previous section there are examples of food being used to educate and provoke social change in the art contexts. Given the growing importance for research knowledge mobilization and exchange it seems relevant to explore how arts-based methods have been used for knowledge dissemination. The following are examples of methods used to share knowledge in educational and creative contexts.

These include formal educational programs, as well as informal initiatives via the media and in local communities (Flowers and Swan 2015b). In addition, we provide an example of a food-inspired academic research conference to illustrate how these approaches can be applied to business research contexts.

In formal educational institutions, food has been used as a tool for critical literacy and participatory learning experiences (Adelman and Sandiford 2007; Rahm 2002). This involves learners engaging with food in all aspects of the curriculum (Duster and Waters 2006). The appeal of this method is that it facilitates social interaction and enables holistic learning which draws connections across all subjects and aspects of life (Menand 2001). Programs range from ecological interventions involving growing food to community-run gardens that offer training and employment. Bonnekessen (2010) used food to activate critical pedagogy in a formal educational institution. She used food as a lens to critically examine social issues, such as the historical impact of the colonial appropriation of food and the role of food in discrimination. For instance, students learned about geopolitical history through the potato. Bonnekessen highlights that an important outcome of the class was that students learned that food was more than a gourmet item to eat on a plate. Williams-Forson examines what food objects mean to people and what this tells us about society (e.g. Williams-Forson and Counihan 2013). As a scholar of material culture, Williams-Forson examines how food objects 'speak' in society. Her methodology is to put food at the centre of a research study and use a range of theories to examine it. She uses this approach as a form of pedagogy to educate students about the social relationships and behaviour surrounding food objects. In an interview about her scholarship she gives an example of teaching students about the race and culture in the United States through the object of a chicken that sparks conversation about the urban legend of the chicken bone express (see Miller and Deutsch 2009: 191–197). A further example is an ecological approach in a primary school. Through the production and sales of a cookbook students gained applied learning of agriculture, cooking science, letter writing and entrepreneurship(Langhout et al. 2002). This latter example highlights the use of food as an integrated tool for disseminating knowledge about diverse subjects including business knowledge.

An example of informal community initiatives are the critical arts-based food interventions used in the *Food for Thoughts* project. *Food for Thoughts* was a discussion series facilitated by EyeLevel Gallery over the summer of 2016 in Halifax, Canada. The aim of the series was to promote critical discussion about art practice, presentation and social issues. Food was used as an engagement method and brought people together to share their thoughts over a meal. Events included a picnic run in collaboration with *Loaded Ladle*, a student run co-operative at the University of Dalhousie which works to provide students with fresh and affordable food, and a 'potluck' (a meal or a party where guests all guests bring a dish to share) that was shared and consumed during a feminist film screening (EyeLevel Gallery 2016). Hollenbach (2016) narrates her experience of participating in a further iteration of the series, which took the form of a food-based artist-talk by the Toronto artist Amy Wong, situated in the exhibition space showcasing her installation. A select number of guests were invited, through a lottery, to participate potluck style while the artist prepared and served a healing Chinese soup. The work and food practice prompted dialogue about intersectional feminism and decolonization. The format used food as a method to forge intimacy, subverted hierarchies and facilitate social interaction (Hollenbach 2016).

There has been increased popularity for food-related televisions shows and documentaries (Flowers and Swan 2015b) which depict the working practices of food producers and food-workers such as chefs. The examples below highlight the use of media as a method of the representation and dissemination of knowledge about food in the workplace. They equally show the influence that the media has had on live events that share knowledge about food issues through the eating of food. Examples include the activist documentary *Food Inc*. *Food Inc.* is an activist film produced by film-maker Robert Kenner. It critiques the global capitalist food system by representing knowledge about food-based social movements (Flowers and Swan 2011). *Just Eat It* is a documentary which raises awareness about food waste and food rescue, which revolves around the real-life events of a Vancouver couple who eat only rescued food for 6 months (Peg Leg Films 2014). Similarly, *The Theatre of Life* follows the culinary pursuits of the renowned chef Massimo Bottura, which are aimed at social change. Capitalizing on his status as a celebrity-chef, Massimo provokes awareness of food poverty and food waste by establishing fine-dining soup kitchens that raise awareness of hunger and food waste. Consequently, he established the *Food for Soul* initiative to instigate active change in communities. This organization has established numerous fine-dining soup kitchens across the globe including London (UK) and Rio de Janeiro (Refettorio Ambrosiano 2016).

Inspired directly by Massimo's advocacy, the *Zero Waste Food* conference was hosted in New York City in 2017. The event hosted panel presentations at the New School alongside cooking demonstrations at the Institute of Culinary Education. This academic intervention enabled a range of stakeholders and contributors from across the food system to engage in dialogue and in applied learning about issues of sustainability, food waste and sustainable business models. Attendees ate food made from ingredients that would ordinarily be discarded. The event fostered an environment that enabled a range of organizations from across the food system to interact and it mobilized knowledge of shared interests (Zero Waste Food 2017). Similarly, *Trashed and Wasted*, an alternative Food Festival in Toronto, saw socially conscious chefs and food suppliers turning rescued food waste into unexpected delicacies. Festival-goers were engaged in embodied learning through experiencing the edible transformation of traditionally discarded foods (Greif 2017). Offerings included beer brewed from stale bread as well as spirits made from leftover milk. A local restaurant also educated the public on the culinary value of the *Pygostyle* (also called the Pope's Nose) by serving up fried chicken-tail pops. Despite critiques about the level of impact that celebrity chefs have on public consumption patterns (Flowers and Swan 2015b) these examples illustrate the value of approaches that creatively and materially employ food as a method for knowledge dissemination. They demonstrate ways that food can be used for learning, which is gained through eating foods imbued with social issues. They equally demonstrate the power that informal media events have to inspire academic knowledge exchange and research dissemination.

## Our Food Practice: Using Food as an Arts-Based Method

In the previous sections we highlighted how food has been used as a lens to examine working life. We explored this from three dimensions: food as a context for researching salient issues in the workplace, food-based research studies to which a range of qualitative research methods can be applied to understand working life, and food an arts-based method for research and knowledge dissemination. In this section we offer two illustrative examples to demonstrate how we have used food as an arts-based method to facilitate and accentuate understanding about working life and sustainable employment, both in practical research and as a mode of knowledge dissemination.

Conceptually we position food as a tool for critical learning (Adelman and Sandiford 2007; Bonnekessen 2010; Williams-Forson, cited in Miller and Deutsch 2009) and embodied engagement (Menand 2001; Roe 2006). Our method resonates with the creative approach of Eye-Level Gallery since we use food interventions to forge intimacy, subvert hierarchies and facilitate collaboration (Hollenbach 2016). Our first example centres around two artist-talk dinner series *Hang at Home* and *Good w/ Food*, which were developed to facilitate experiential learning for art and design students. In addition, we outline a participatory action research strategy for examining students' food-based learning about career development and working life. In our second example, we give an overview of the 2016 *[Re]$^2$ Reconstructing Resilience* symposium to demonstrate how we used food as a method for disseminating research knowledge about sustainable employment. We hope these examples will provide a useful guide to others who are considering using food as an arts-based method in their own research.

## Food as an Intervention and Research Method for Career Development

*Hang @ Home* and *Good w/ Food* are artist-talk dinner series that enable senior OCAD University students to engage in meaningful dialogue with professionals to enhance their early-career development. The beginnings of the *Hang @ Home* dinner series are rooted in collaboration. The Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers (career development unit) was exploring ways to engage students through novel and meaningful career-oriented programming. Looking across OCAD University for strategic advisors, one group stood out as successful community animators—the programming duo of Vanessa Nicholas and Caroline Macfarlane at OCAD U's Student Gallery. Several discussions revealed a gap in opportunities for students to participate in facilitated professional dinner events. As the lifeblood of career-advancement within arts and culture, it quickly became apparent that the chance for students to connect with practitioners over a meal could be of immense value, particularly among the University's Faculty of Art. The collaboration was structured in two basic parts—student outreach and skills development to be conducted by the Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers, and outreach to professional practitioners and event logistics undertaken by the Student Gallery. Resources to support the material costs were sourced through private foundation funding. In the fall of 2014, *Hang @ Home* first brought select OCAD University students together with art and design community leaders over a curated dinner. The images shown depict the dinner made by collaborating artists Basil AlZeri and Mikiki (Figs. 1 and 2).

The second dinner series, *Good w/ Food*, was first held in the summer of 2018 (see Fig. 3). The dinner brought students from across all Faculties to engage with industry professionals over food prepared with a social mission. The series integrated food prepared by social enterprises such as Hawthorne Kitchen, a Toronto-based restaurant that serves 'farm-to-fork city food' prepared by people in need of skills and employment. One outcome of *Good w/ Food* was that students gained experiential learning about socially responsible careers and business practices. Both dinners were intentionally kept small and held in private spaces that served as exhibition venues, studios or homes. They demonstrated the value of hybridizing

**Fig. 1** Curating food as art at Hang @ Home Event

**Fig. 2** Forming social relationships over food at the Hang @ Home Event

personal life with professional practice. The guest lists, intimate settings and models for creative work gave students an impactful, enlightening and critically novel experience of working life and socially responsible careers. The food itself was also a catalyst for conversation. Being ethically sourced and/or prepared by a social enterprise meant that the meal

**Fig. 3** Communal salad making station and food table at *Good w/ Food* Event (June 2018)

sparked dialogue about principled practice, community and sustainable consumption. These thoughtfully curated meals were essential in facilitating meaningful relationships and in elevating the experience beyond 'networking' or 'professional development'. Ultimately, both dinner series were about making networking less intimidating and encouraging students to consider social activity, relationships and fun as integral to a thriving career in the arts community.

What follows is a 'recipe' for success for others who wish to adopt this approach (Fig. 4).

The preceding examples can be employed as food interventions that catalyse critical learning. In these formats the experience is the crucial element and it does not necessitate documentation. However, if data collection is required, we offer the following as a research approach that can be used to examine participant's engagement in food-based learning about career development and working life.

We suggest a research strategy like participatory action research (McIntyre 2007) which enables researchers to co-develop and co-implement research with participants. This approach incorporates methods of data collection that enable an active examination of theoretical concepts and simultaneously gives participants the opportunity to build real-world

*Hang at Home*

*Accommodates 10-15 people with a 1:1 ration of students to professionals*

*1-2 Hosts*

*2 Special guests*

*6 Students*

*2 Institutional representatives*

*1 Vegan meal prepared by a social enterprise*

*Adult beverages to taste*

*Select hosts who model creative and mindful professionalism and who live or practice in distinctive spaces that will comfort and inspire. Special guests ought to complement the host selection, and may, in fact, be invited by the hosts themselves if a level of social familiarity is desired. Compose a group of inspiring people that have a balance of experience and influence to offer the keen student attendees.*

*Make sure you have two representatives on hand who are able to relieve hosts and guests alike of kitchen duties. At the venue, set the desired tone with low-level lighting and music. The meal served should be responsibly sourced in order to nurture the corresponding ethics of community and ecology that underlie Hang @ Home. Offer beverages and season guests with chips and chocolate as needed.*

*If recording, filming or photographing the event, ensure consent has been sought and gained. Follow your university ethics guidelines regarding consent and storage of data.*

*Outcomes will vary.*

**Fig. 4** A recipe for a collaborative food event

knowledge and skills. In addition, we recommend research methods that include a combination of documentation and interventional approaches, such as critical learning through food practice (Hollenbach 2016), focused ethnography (Knoblauch 2005) coupled with sensory ethnography (Pink

2008), and photo-elicitation techniques (Bramming et al. 2012). We propose the research is carried out in three parts consisting of (1) an orientation workshop, (2) a curated food intervention and (3) a debriefing conversation.

Part 1: An orientation workshop: This will socialize participants to the research, and orient them to the curated food intervention (Part 2). This workshop should explain what the research intends to achieve and the benefits to participants. An interactive activity can be used to gauge the level of understanding of participants, regarding topics (e.g. precarious work; social capital; experiential learning and career framing; and critical food practice) and provide them with a base level of knowledge. The meeting should also orient the group to the food intervention and provide the opportunity for participants to co-develop and shape the intervention to their learning needs. Importantly, this workshop should be where you seek and gain consent in accordance with your university ethics guidelines. Particular attention should be paid to images or videos that you, or your participants, intend to capture as part of the research, and suitable guidance and information should be shared with the group.

Part 2: A curated food intervention: Like *Hang @ Home* and *Good w/ Food*, this will facilitate experiential learning. As highlighted, the interventions offer actual environments that enable students to engage in experiential career development. The interventions can be themed with a guiding topic that is embedded in the food and serves the dual purpose of focussing the learning experience and socializing participant interaction. The intentionally curated meals are essential in facilitating meaningful relationships (Hollenbach 2016). Focused ethnography (Knoblauch 2005) can be used to facilitate immersive deep-dive data collection through a range of formats like observations, pictures and video material. Since food is a key aspect of the intervention, sensory data can be captured (Pink 2008).

Part 3: A debriefing conversation: Participants should be invited to engage in debriefing conversations after each learning intervention to share their personal learning experiences. We suggest photo-elicitation (Bramming et al. 2012; Simpson et al. 2018; Shortt 2018) as a method for engaging in follow-up conversations. Participants should be given the opportunity to discuss their experiences and learning from the event through the meaningful moments they have captured in, for example, their photographs.

## Food as a Method for Knowledge Dissemination

In this example we illustrate how food can be used as an embodied method for disseminating research knowledge. The 2016 *[Re]$^2$ Reconstructing Resilience* symposium, funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections Grant, was designed to exchange research knowledge about critical issues on sustainability in contemporary society, such as sustainable employment. The event was hosted at OCAD University in the form of a conference and art exhibition (Clough and Weston 2016; Weston and Clough 2016). The event began with the premise that resilience refers to a community's ability to creatively adjust and sustain itself given the rapid and sometimes negative changes in society. It proposed that effective sustainability initiatives should integrate interdisciplinary dimensions including economics, ecology, politics and culture. The event showcased thought-provoking interdisciplinary research projects and art installations from a diverse range of subjects including climate change and bioremediation, community empowerment and social justice, and sustainable art and design practice.

The curatorial perspective of the event emphasized the value of integrating food as a lens to promote critical engagement with multidisciplinary, critical issues and challenged participants to question the ways that people engage in social change. Since sustainability is a complex topic, the event was intentionally infused with art, design and food practice to make ideas more tangible and accessible to participants. The event showcased examples of sustainable organizations and working life through a diverse range of formats, including research presentations, art/design installations, participatory interactions and food experiences. For instance, participants sat among artwork as they listened to research presentations. One art installation highlighted the environmental challenges of industrial communities (Kornet 2018) while we listened to a presentation about economically sustainable models that provide marginalized communities access to clean water (Tranum 2016). In addition, participants participated in creating an interactive art installation that highlighted the tensions between waste and resilience. The interactive format was crucial in facilitating community building and applied learning among participants about these issues.

A core part of the event was engagement with food that was subtly woven throughout the day. Food consumed by attendees was carefully chosen to reflect resilience and sustainability in organizations and working life in order to deepen participants' understanding of the overarching theme. This was achieved by sourcing refreshments from local community businesses like Loft Kitchen and the Cider Keg. The Cider Keg is a family business that creates award-winning produce in Vittoria, Ontario. They take care of the whole process of food production including growing the apples that end up in their beverages and condiments. The event was catered by Loft Kitchen, a social enterprise that exemplifies socio-economic sustainability. Like Hawthorne Kitchen, Loft Kitchen supports people with socio-economic barriers to gainful employment by training them in hospitality services. The proceeds from their catering services are fed back into the organization. Participants gained an embodied understanding of sustainability and resilience through consuming locally produced, sustainable food and drink, as well as through interacting with members of Loft Kitchen who also participated in the event.

An additional way that the event reinforced the theme of sustainability was through the co-design of recycled 'seed paper' name tags with the OCAD University student group grOCAD. This was a creative opportunity to enable students to engage in the planning of the event, as well as to produce artworks that then embodied the concept of the event. Participants were given the seed paper name tags at the conference. These artworks connected participants by enabling them to share their information, as well as engage in dialogue about sustainability, art and the origins of food. Participants were invited to take the seed paper home to grow their own plants. These interactions were intentionally curated so that participants would bring the theme of resilience and sustainability back home into their lives and provide them with a long-lasting connection with the conference (Fig. 5).


**Fig. 5** Seed paper name tags, food selection, and art exhibited at the *[Re]$^2$ Reconstructing Resilience* Conference (January 2016)

The following are ingredients for success:

1. Conceptual Framing: Consider, from the start, your framing concepts and how they could relate to food. Go beyond simply adding food to an event as an afterthought. How can you serve food that embodies the theme you are working with?
2. Embodiment at the Event: Consider what it would it take to eat this concept and experience it with your body? How can eating and interacting with the food give people a deeper understanding of your topic?
3. Place and People: Consider where the event is held and who is participating. How can you intentionally choose a space or setting that connects to the framing concept or food choices? Who is on the guest list, how can you facilitate connection between the guests?
4. Take Aways: Consider how food can be used to create a lasting impression. What can participants take away that will leave them with a lasting impression of the topics and ideas covered?
5. Social Impact: Consider what local businesses you can support. Are there any community businesses or social enterprises that support social causes which resonate with our conference?

6. Costs and Resources: Consider how much will this cost to integrate. Can you get funding to support the work from a research grant or partnering with an organization (e.g. SSHRC Connections Grant or ESRC Knowledge Transfer Partnerships or Seminar Series)?

## Conclusions

In this chapter, we have positioned food as an arts-based research method that can be used to accentuate and enrich social interaction in research about working life. Although a prominent topic in nutrition studies and anthropology, food is under-researched management studies. This is surprising given the embeddedness of food in working life. We are clearly missing out on the depth of knowledge this medium can offer us about organizational practices. We addressed this gap by examining how food intersects with organizational practices from three perspectives: food as a research context for examining organizational issues, food as a setting to which diverse research methods can be applied, and food as an arts-based research method wherein food, as a physical substance, is used as a tool to accentuate and enrich social interaction and research methods during the research process.

As a context for research in the workplace, food offers a unique lens for gaining a situated understanding of issues in the workplace. The highlighted examples illustrate the significance of food in organizational contexts. For instance, a person's level of health and well-being directly impacts their ability to work, while the social pressures of diet and body image are just as real in the workplace as outside. We also highlighted the challenges of immigrant small business owners and migrant workers to demonstrate how research can highlight inequalities in the workplace. As a contrast, we also highlighted the links between economic revitalization and politicized food movements to demonstrate how research about food can indicate business growth. The wide and varied ways that food is woven through everyday life at work demonstrates its value as a context that can deepen understanding of organizational engagement. As a setting for research, food-based engagement offers an untapped opportunity for documenting people's experiences in the workplace. In our review of methods used in food research we found three approaches that are typically used to enable understanding of distinct aspects of organizational engagement. Interpretive approaches offer the subjective experience of organizational members, while ethnographic practices offer an immersive understanding of working life as it occurs around food, and process methods enable researchers to capture the ongoing movement food-workers as they engage in work practices. In the third section we went on to define what constitutes food as an arts-based research method by explaining food has been used as a tool to accentuate and enrich social interaction and research methods during the research process. Here we examined how food is intentionally used to build community and facilitate research in organizational contexts, both as a method of data collection and as a method for research dissemination.

Given that this is a book about arts-based methods, we see the latter as our most distinctive contribution because we go beyond representational methods and demonstrate how food has been used in the research process. We highlighted examples of research that uses the cultural and emotive qualities of food to shape engagement in the research process as it happens in working life and to illustrate the opportunities available to researchers. In addition, given the increasing need for innovative forms of research exchange, we also emphasized the use of food in research dissemination. Finally, to further emphasize the value of this approach we offered two illustrative examples to demonstrate how we have used food to shed light on working life and sustainable employment, both in empirical research and in knowledge dissemination. Our first example provides a practical format for food-based learning interventions—in the form of an artist-talk dinner series—that can support students in their career development, and we supplement this with an overlaying participatory action research strategy. In our final example we illustrated how we used food as a method for disseminating research knowledge about sustainable employment. In discussing both of these approaches we have mapped out some guidance for other researchers so that they might successfully engage with food as an arts-based method in their research practice, and, we hope, add to broader developments in qualitative research in the business and management field.

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# The Ways of the Hand: Knitting and Handicraft as a Method of Research

Niina Koivunen and Kristina Ahmas

## Introduction

There are very few other studies about how knitting has been used as an artistic method in organizational inquiry (exceptions include Vacchani 2013; Biehl and Reynolds 2018), so we have drawn on other handicraft methods to form an understanding of what is so particular about these methods that involve working with hands on different materials. We extend our research material with two DIY workshops in the museum: *a workshop* to kick off a planning session for outsider art by painting second-hand shoes with acrylic colours and a *mixed-material workshop*, a well-being day for museum personnel held in an art studio, designed by an established wood sculptor.

N. Koivunen (✉)
University of Vaasa, Vaasa, Finland
e-mail: niina.koivunen@uva.fi

K. Ahmas
K.H. Renlund Museum, Kokkola, Finland
e-mail: kristina.ahmas@kokkola.fi

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There is plenty of research on how different artistic methods and interventions have been used to develop organizational processes or leadership skills (Austin and Devin 2003; Darsø 2004; Parush and Koivunen 2014; Taylor and Ladkin 2009; Springborg 2012). Two extensive handbooks have been published: the first addressing artistic interventions in organizations (Johansson Sköldberg et al. 2016) and the second focusing on sensuous learning for practical judgement in professional practice (Antonacopoulou and Taylor 2019). Yet, there is considerably less research on how artistic methods have been used as a method of research. It is this we explore in this chapter by developing a framework about knitting and handicraft as a research method.

While knitting used to be, and still is, a predominantly feminine activity, there is some evidence of younger generation men finding knitting attractive. Knitting woollen hats for oneself is popular in some subcultures, such as snow-boarding and skateboarding. For example, in the Sochi Winter Olympic Games, the Finnish Alpine Skiing Team received wide international media coverage because the male coach of the skiing team was caught knitting during a very exciting final phase in the competition. He described finding it relaxing in the midst of the excitement and adrenalin. We also learned from this piece of news that many other skiing team members knit, and that the biathlon champion Kaisa Mäkäräinen had initiated a joint effort to knit tiny squares for a baby blanket, later given to the newborn son of the President of Finland. Medical students, particularly those aspiring to become surgeons, are known to knit during lectures to enhance their haptic dexterity. Despite these high-profile examples of men engaging in knitting, it remains a feminine activity. Such gendering may prevent some researchers from choosing it as their research method.

This chapter is organized in the following manner. After introduction we discuss studies which deal with knitting or other handicraft methods as well as theoretical research on knitting, in particular the new interest for knitting groups and DIY culture. In this theoretical section, we identify aspects of knitting and handicraft which in our opinion make them interesting as research methods. We then present our fieldwork material from the museum to familiarize the reader with our experiences of the knitting and handicraft activities. With the help of the theory section and the case examples, we formulate three ways in which knitting could be used as a research method. We conclude by discussing some of the potential limitations of knitting as a method of research.

## Understanding Knitting and Handicraft Methods

Published research on knitting as a research method or as an art-based method in the field of management and organization studies is sparse. In addition to our guerrilla knitting study (Ahmas and Koivunen 2017), we found Biehl and Reynolds' study about guerrilla knitting in a business school (2018). Knitting as a tactile and emotional form of everyday creativity was studied by Vacchani (2013). Fortunately there are ample amount of studies that employ very similar handicraft methods, such as doll-making (Gayá Wicks and Rippin 2010), poem houses (Grisoni and Collins 2012), studio techniques (Taylor and Ladkin 2014; Barry and Meisiek 2014), materiality (Taylor and Statler 2014) and abstract painting (Van Meer 2019; Adler 2015) that are helpful.

There are also theoretical articles about knitting and its links to new cyberfemininity and new materiality (Minahan and Wolfram Cox 2007), everyday creativity (Vacchani 2013), activism and popular culture (Bratich and Brush 2011) and contribution to urban landscape (Hahner and Varda 2014). We also draw on other work on art-based methods to explore what aspects of handicraft and materiality are relevant for our inquiry. In the following, we discuss materiality, process of making, space and creative tensions in more depth.

### Materiality

Most artistic methods use some materials in the workshops, and researchers tend to agree that the choice of materials is important. Barry and Meisiek (2014: 163–164) suggest that the choice of material may follow a mimetic logic. This means that if one uses the same materials as artists in their process, the work will automatically take on desirable art-like properties. For instance, if one wants to learn about public speaking, having suitable stages, props and scripts should help. Sculpting material should result in haptic exploration and whiteboards, poster paper and markers would help develop interesting business visions. In other words, different materials elicit different kinds of engagement and reflection.

Taylor and Statler (2014) have studied the role of materials in a learning process. They explain that when people are more emotionally engaged, they learn more effectively. Different materials can either enable or constrain the level of emotionality in learning processes. This is very important since much of management education lacks emotional energy and avoids addressing emotions and embodiment. In a similar fashion, mainstream conceptualizations of organizational life are void of emotional expressions and bodies. Cognitive skills and rational thinking dominate the teaching agenda and descriptions of working life. It follows that artistic and handicraft methods play an important role in creating circumstances in which people may become tuned into their emotions, break through the sphere of rationality (Ward and Shortt 2011; Niemi-Kaija and Aaltio 2019; Darsø 2016: 32) and find ways to express their emotions. Artistic methods can thus also function as research methods to generate data about the emotional and embodied aspects of organizational life.

Taylor and Statler (2014) refer to the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) which describes how various intrinsic characteristics and extrinsic affordances of the materials can have specific effects on the healing process in therapy work. The core idea in this theory is that the relationship between materials and the process is that materials "are perceived as the carriers of expression" and "the assumption that psychic energy is discharged through motor behaviour" (Kagin and Lusebrink 1978: 172, in Taylor and Statler 2014: 592). In other words, materials help express emotions and feelings and doing something with your hands, the process of making (Taylor and Ladkin 2009) mobilizes that energy.

Furthermore, more fluid materials, such as clay, elicit a more emotional process than more resistive materials, such as hard, plastic Lego bricks (Taylor and Statler 2014: 592). Materials such as wet clay, watercolours and finger paints are referred to as more fluid since they flow easily, while resistive materials, such as clay, tend to elicit a more cognitive and less emotional response. We compare Taylor and Statler's thoughts on materials to our experience with yarn in the knitting activity. Although yarn is not a flowing material in the sense that watercolours are, we consider it as fluid in the sense that yarn flows through the fingers when knitting, it is soft and feels warm and is often made of natural materials, such as wool.

Other important qualities materials have in addition to fluidity are, according to Taylor and Statler (2014: 596–599), ambiguity of form, boundaries, quantity, mediation, kinaesthetic and sensory awareness. To discuss a few of these, the physical boundaries as well as the quantity of material can limit or contain the expressive potential of the process. For example, a large piece of paper allows for greater expression than a smaller piece of paper, and a larger amount of yarn allows for more emotional expression than smaller amounts of yarn. Also, mediators, such as tools used to work with material, can influence the expression: they interrupt the flow of expression between individual and material and create greater reflective distance. It follows that researchers designing art-based interventions and research should carefully consider the materials, their quantity, boundaries and the mediating tools available in their workshops.

## Process of Making

It appears that the process of making, doing something with one's hands, can be very healthy and meaningful. It is common knowledge that engaging in a handicraft is pleasant and relaxing, in particular for those of us working mostly with computers. The popularity of adult colouring books, knitting, felting and making decorative items illustrate the joy of making something concrete with one's hands, enjoying the feel of the materials, beautiful colours and the sheer delight of seeing the result of one's effort. All of this provides a much-needed contrast to the more abstract nature of knowledge work. Researchers have discovered similar effects. Metcalf (1993, in Minahan and Wolfram Cox 2007: 14) suggests that craft is intimate, useful and meaningful, and that it should be viewed as a site for reinforcing personal identity and meaning. Taylor and Ladkin (2009: 60) depict how "artistic making draws upon the richness of inner life and allows it to flourish and contribute to our experience of a more fulsome living". Taylor and Ladkin continue by explaining how art therapy recognize the power of art making as very healing, regardless of what kind of artefacts are produced.

In addition to the satisfaction received from making art, the physiological process seems to be calming. The repetitive, detailed work often part of many forms of making art, such as carving wood or needle-work, can be very meditative and produce a contemplative state (Taylor and Ladkin 2009: 60). The process of making art can provide a means of reflection and even meditation.

Vacchani (2013: 93) explains how making is connecting: an enjoyable process which brings together people and materials into an activity of making something new. She refers to Gauntlett (2011: 2, in Vacchani 2013: 94) who writes about making being connecting in three senses. First, making is connecting in the tangible sense that materials, ideas or both are connected to make something new. Second, it is connecting in a social sense in which acts of creativity usually involve a social dimension that connects other people. Third, making is connecting in the sense that making and sharing things in the world increases our engagement and connection with our social and physical environment. It is also our experience from guerrilla knitting and mixed-material workshops that making enhances connections between people. A special kind of togetherness is created that involves helping others and appreciating other people's craftwork.

## Space

When studying knitting we find it an activity rooted in experiences of space and place. Place matters as Barry and Meisiek (2014: 165–166) note. Place affects research in many different ways: it can, for example, steer inquiry targets or make a big difference in how inquiry unfolds. Barry and Meisiek comment on a studio setting where the intrinsic uncut roughness seems to encourage people's imagination and creativity, advance focusing on the task and experimentation. Berthoin Antal and Strauss (2016: 37) talk about interspaces that are temporary social spaces within which participants can experience new ways of seeing, thinking and doing things. Darsø writes about spaces of constructive disturbance (2016: 25), also addressing the inherent role of space.

Culturally knitting is indeed a feminine craft. Consequently, the knitting space is always attributed to individually experienced or culturally interpreted qualities. An elderly woman knitting alone at home is an archetypal image rooted in the traditional craft culture—a grandmother preparing socks for her grandchildren. It represents a woman in domestic arts, solitarily crafting out of public sight in the silence of her home and behind the closed doors while looking to the outside world. Knitting as a female craft has never been associated with high status, it is rather characterized by lowly media and cultural commentary of domesticity. It has had been stigmatized as a private individualistic activity, a recreation or lowly public work. Therefore, knitting together in public has made an interesting change to the culture of knitting. Knitting together is on the rise today and the global connectivity provided by the new communication media has opened new platforms for female crafts. Knitting in particular has inspired large amounts of craft's people into establishing knitting blogs as well as interacting in virtual networks, chat rooms and online groups. Moreover, local knitting societies and loose groups for knitting in public places are emerging, encouraging to share patterns or life experiences. They make a part of the DIY culture and the new domesticity (Bratich and Brush, 238). We discuss this shift from private to public sphere and the evoked feelings in more detail in the subsection titled "Creative Tensions".

Minahan and Wolfram Cox (2007: 6–7) identify those involved in collective, public knitting "Chicks with Sticks" or "Stitch'nBitch" groups. The terms are applied to mostly young women who get together in local cafes or other public places to knit, stitch and chat or meet virtually through the global internet. We understand the Stitch'nBitch groups as an example of a new way of connecting in a space that is based on material production where traditional craft skills and materials like yarns are applied, but which are alternatively connected virtually by telecommunication technics such as optical fibre and twisted pair cable. The phenomenon may be interpreted as an embodiment of the glocal, acting both locally and being connected globally and an application of the 24/7/365 information society. For the Stitch'nBitch members knitting seems to provide a virtual space for connecting and even promoting a resistance theme for commenting on gender (Minahan and Wolfram Cox 2007: 8, 11).

Connectivity that takes place in a workshop or in a (virtual) knitting get-together opens up a space for social activity and individual creativity, a third place separate from home or work (Minahan and Wolfram Cox 2007: 10). Tarr et al. (2017: 2, 6–7) have studied arts-based workshops in a hospital space in which the art-based methods created an imprographic space. It provided a space for an experience of producing pieces of art or craft together. An imprographic space draws on performative live encounters, arts-based methods and performance. An imprographic space arises from a combination of improvisation and choreography within a set of structured elements. Improvisation draws on involving participants in personal expression and engaging them with a space. On the other hand, the participants are guided by choreography that steers the steps and movements in a given way. Tarr et al. (2017) emphasize the significance of liveness of the process within an imprographic space, while the experience of producing art together makes the most interesting and productive part of it, not necessarily the art itself. Since liveness proves to be an essential part of the imprographic space, it allows for lively unrepeatable context-dependent encounters, expressions and tensions which may even evoke new interpretations of old themes and create innovative perspectives.

The new popular cultural forms of knitting together in a space provide elements that may be interpreted politically activist, gender empowering or resistant. The new domesticity (Bratich and Brush 2011: 238–239) seems to have an agenda of questioning or fading out the border of domestic and public spheres. It has a message of reclaiming as it demands reappropriation of oppressive and violent stereotypes and epithets of gender regarding e.g. space or previously negative charged meanings loaded on femininity. The phenomenon of guerrilla knitting locates itself here.

## Creative Tensions

Guerrilla knitting and knitting groups produce several creative tensions. They bring a traditionally domestic activity into public space, like a café, pub, park or mass transit. An activity that has traditionally been carried out at home, is suddenly taking place in public. As Bratich and Brush (2011: 237) state, knitting in public is out of place and can create surprising discomfort. Or, as Darsø would put it, knitting creates constructive disturbance (2016: 22–25) Furthermore, a lone activity is turned into a collective endeavour that is practised together with other people. The nature of knitting suddenly becomes entirely different. When a group of people knit together in public, it becomes more powerful than solitary handicraft at home. A group of knitters creates a different atmosphere, a more dynamic atmosphere than lone knitters. There is something refreshingly bold yet inoffensive in knitting together with others.

Another creative tension or alteration to traditional knitting is produced when it is often young women who get excited about knitting in contrast to grandmothers who used to knit in their rocking chairs alone at home. Yet another aspect of creative tension can be identified in virtuality—young women sharing and exchanging their knitting models via cyberspace (Minahan and Wolfram Cox 2007). Minahan and Wolfram Cox call this a new domesticity.

The third space, or a location of creative tension, could be a fruitful space to generate research data about other tensions or paradoxes. Knitting could help connect to a research topic in which a person is in a confusing situation or grapples with a paradox. For instance, s/he can be in between different professional roles or organizational positions or try to make sense of a contradictory situation. Engaging in a knitting activity, feeling the yarn with one's hands, can help reflect on creative tensions. In other words, knitting can build a generative space.

## Case Examples of Knitting and Handicraft Methods

We present three examples of different handicraft methods. They have all taken place in a Finnish museum organization between 2010 and 2017. This museum, the K.H. Renlund Museum (KHRM) in Kokkola, specialized in outsider art (a bold strategic choice) and its manager completed a Ph.D. in Business Administration to better manage her museum and lead and inspire her expert employees. Be it these reasons or some others, the

**Table 1** Three artistic events in a museum

| | Purpose | Method and end product | Time and space |
|---|---|---|---|
| DIY workshop, painting shoes | Plan for an unconference about outsider art, called "Outsider art on the move" | Ideation for promoting outsider art<br>1. Painting second-hand shoes with acrylic colours<br>2. Brainstorming and collection of ideas | K.H. Renlund Museum and Kristina's home, 4–5 November 2010, around very large dining room table<br>5 participants |
| Guerilla knitting | Create local visibility for ARS 2011, an African outsider art exhibition | Knitting together and alone | Kokkola, Autumn 2010—Summer 2011, in museum offices, at homes, in museum café<br>10 participants in museum, 50 in museum café |
| Mixed-material workshop<br>DIY workshop "Wood sculpting with artist Tapani Kokko" | Work wellbeing day for museum staff | Do it yourself, wood sculpting, led by professional artist Tapani Kokko, installation box frames (5–6 phases) | Kokkola, 27 November 2017, Old stone building, art studio space, used in art therapy and social work for young people<br>15 participants |

museum organization has developed rather innovative work practices that also warrant scholarly attention. In addition, we hope that these examples can provide inspiration and encouragement for fellow researchers. We describe three artistic interventions or events that have all taken place in the museum organization (as set out in Table 1).

**Vignette 6.1: Shoe-Painting Workshop**

The first artistic workshop was concerned with outsider art. The museum manager had invited two key partners from Helsinki, both leading experts in the field of outsider art, to visit Kokkola for two days. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and plan the promotion of outsider art in Finland. One of the original ideas was to hold "an unconference"—an event that resists the formality of a traditional conference yet brings people together to experience and appreciate outsider art. The method for planning such an unconference had to be similarly unconventional and self-made as outsider art is in the field of classical arts.

The first day of this activity included a DIY workshop to paint old shoes and an opening of a new exhibition in the evening. The second day included visiting various museum spaces. The museum manager, Kristina, had gone shopping to second-hand shops and returned with a large bag full of old shoes and another bag filled with acrylic colours and brushes. Kristina, Niina, one museum staff member and the two partners were present. We were gathered around a very large old dining table. We chatted, talked about the shoes and fairly soon found the ones we wanted to paint. After selecting paints and brushes, some hesitation and downplaying of one's artistic skills, everybody began to paint their shoes.

It turned out to be the most delightful and meditative activity in almost complete silence. It continued for an hour (we had set a schedule), maybe even longer, since we were reluctant to stop and move to the next phase. The painting, or colouring of these old shoes was rejuvenating and joyful. For example, Niina chose to apply pointillism to her pair (see Fig. 1), while Kristina used bright yellow, orange and green to her darker leather shoes. The museum staff member created a medieval pattern to her shoes.

**Fig. 1** Pointillism-inspired white shoes

After reviewing and appreciating each other's works, the group moved to the next phase: ideation. The artful activity had unleashed new energy and new ideas and suggestions poured out of us. Since we had worked with shoes, and the vernissage that evening was to a shoe exhibition, we continued with the theme. To give some examples of ideas proposed that afternoon, we mention a few: let's send second-hand shoes to celebrities by post and ask them to paint them and return to museum, let's create an exhibition of these shoes, let's bring more shoes to the exhibition and give the audience a chance to paint and remake them. We also nurtured an idea to create a Salon de Refugees to those celebrities who would not accept the DIY shoe challenge.

To conclude, this shoe workshop proved very concretely how a handicraft method can create a meaningful interspace to work on a topic, to brainstorm and create ideas. The atmosphere was pleasant and the feeling afterwards light—not at all heavy as is often the case in traditional meetings where people sit with their notebooks or computers and try to be creative.

### Vignette 6.2: Guerrilla Knitting

We conducted an action research project in a museum organization to develop its collective expertise and leadership practices (Ahmas 2014; Ahmas and Koivunen 2017). This study, consisting of three different interventions, included one intervention that came to be called "guerrilla knitting". The process started very organically and was suggested by one employee in a situation when an exhibition was facing severe resistance in the museum. What started as a way to create visibility for the exhibition soon became meaningful as an organizational process, too. This organizational process of guerrilla knitting had many organizational and institutional impacts. First, the effects of guerrilla knitting on organizational processes included increase in participative decision-making, sharing of information and ideas, dialogue and listening. Second, the knitting activity helped the museum staff members cross several invisible yet profound institutionalized borders, such as work practices, the culture of individual achievement, management practice and the notion of physical museum space.

**Fig. 2** Example of African Outsider Art by Julien Yemadje

The guerrilla knitting study was carried out at the K.H. Renlund Museum (KHRM) in Kokkola, Finland (Ahmas 2014; Ahmas and Koivunen 2017). One of the tasks of this museum in 2011 was to organize an African outsider art exhibition, *ARS11 This is Africa*, for the summer of 2011. Outsider art in general has a "self-taught" label that applies to art that is produced outside of the familiar art-historical narrative—art that is not of the academy (Gómez 2017; Maizels 1996: 150). African outsider artists also contrast with the anonymous tribal creators of the past and come forward as individual artists of their own right. See Fig. 2 as an example of the African outsider art. This was a cooperative project produced by a public–private partnership and curated by external curators. Despite this, plenty of work remained for the museum to do, including ensuring local visibility.

The ARS11 exhibition was arranged according to an authorized programme. All the exhibiting museums of the ARS11 project had agreed on a framework of marketing which included the five official ARS11 colours to be used. In January 2011, the local visibility planning commenced at the KHRM museum. The budget for visibility was limited which forced the staff to look for innovative and creative ideas. It was the museum manager's task to make the staff understand that creating attractive visibility was of great importance. She started asking questions and initiating discussions about ideas or possible activity plans for carrying out the visibility project. Despite discussions and several brainstorming sessions no ideas emerged. The project was in jeopardy.

An air of resistance began to emerge among some individuals. They argued that African art had nothing to do with the KHRM museum profile. Resentment of the exhibition project spread among the group and the protagonists vociferously criticized the choice of theme. Those opposed to the presence of the ARS11 at KHRM attempted to garner support to have the exhibition cancelled. They argued strongly that the museum should focus only on national and regional content. The opposition also manifested itself passively in some staff being unwilling to cooperate and delaying the completion of their tasks. The weekly staff meetings became the arena for the debate. In one of these meetings one member of staff related how she had heard of a fascinating idea called guerrilla knitting. The concept of guerrilla knitting is an interesting mix of hard and soft, of protesting and producing something soft. In the art world, the infamous guerrilla girls (www.guerillagirls.com) are well-known for their activities to protest against the low number of women artists' works in art museums. The knitting theme prompted lively discussions and an exchange of ideas, and finally the staff decided to utilize it to achieve local visibility. The guerrilla knitting idea appealed to a broad spectrum of the staff including the primary opponents of the exhibition.

The museum manager bought several pairs of needles and bags of yarn in the five colours of pink, turquoise, lime green, cobalt blue and gold. One of the co-workers brought a large yarn basket from home to be put in the middle of the meeting room table and filled with yarn. The museum staff started to knit. Almost everybody knitted in meetings, at their desks, during the lunch hour and coffee breaks. The knitting became a part of the daily work and duty. Many enjoyed knitting so much that they took the pieces home to continue the work in their spare time. Some yarn was even sent to friends and partners in other towns to involve them in the process, and they proved eager to join. Later in the summer a basket full of yarn was also available to customers of the museum café.

People enjoyed the fact that they could start to knit a piece and leave it in the basket for the next person to continue. However, taking up someone else's knitting and continuing in their own style and "handwriting" was not easy for the participants to do. Nevertheless, the participants became used to the sharing system that came to form part of the knitting process, and which made several of the pieces shared works of knitted art.

**Fig. 3** Knitting together

There were often opportunities for staff to knit together, and people often got together around the meeting table to discuss knitting either in official meetings or just for fun (see Fig. 3). Many life anecdotes were shared and were often accompanied by lots of laughter. Those same discussions also led to several spirited ideas on the issues of museum work being presented. A few of them were even refined to be carried out in practice. Handicraft was integrated into intellectual creation stitch by stitch and the process of artistic creation merged with conceptual creation and became reasoning without words. The visibility task that started as an intangible idea was being resolved and executed by the skills of making things by hand.

The guerrilla knitting process was initially unstructured and any style and size was acceptable. The plan was very loose: to decorate the museum courtyard with the knitted pieces. Eventually some people started to structure the knitting process and made a plan of display including a table of required sizes of pieces. All pieces were collected together. Individual pieces were connected to each other in accordance with plans made previously. The long shawls of guerrilla knitting were attached to the museum's iron gate, hand railings, drainpipes, tree trunks and lamp posts in the museum courtyard and in the streets adjacent to the museum (see Fig. 4). The museum manager felt it was empowering to beautify the local environment. The juxtaposing of brightly coloured wool against the harshness of the physical surroundings felt meaningful (Vacchani 2013: 96). The ARS11 exhibition knitted local visibility project was completed and accompanied by placing empty oil barrels, also painted in the ARS11 colours, on street corners.

**Fig. 4** Attaching the final knitted pieces to the museum gates

*The research design in guerilla knitting* was guided by the principles of action research (Reason 2006). The data were collected during and after the knitting process and consist of field notes collected by observations and the museum manager's (Kristina) journal recording her experiences. The data also include observations by one of the participants (Mrs. Q), dozens of photographs and hundreds of handcrafted pieces. After the project ended the staff were invited to a retrospective discussion about the entire process. This discussion was also audio-recorded and included as data. This set of data was analysed from the perspective of organizational processes and activities.

The data of the knitting project are part of a larger action research project at the museum that included interviews and developmental interventions. The overall objective of this action research was to develop the museum's working practices from being oriented around individual activities towards more collective ways of creating and sharing knowledge (Ahmas 2014). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016: 165–179), action research is most often described as being an inquiry with people, rather than research on people. It refers to interactive research design that often consists of several research methodologies and pursues action and research at the same time. Action research is not a strict research method; rather, it is a systematic approach to such research that takes involvement, a close relationship to the research object, and participatory, sometimes even emancipating actions as key points of departure for the research.

This study could be characterized as participatory action research since the museum manager was researching her own organization and participating actively in the knitting project. Her objective was to organize the African outsider art exhibition together with her staff. The particular way to organize this event did not come from the museum manager; it came from one staff member. The manager's role was to facilitate the project and make observations about the key events in the process. This experience of using knitting as part of action research is important for our purpose of developing the approach of knitting and handicraft as a research method later in this chapter.

### Vignette 6.3: Mixed-Material Workshop in Art Studio

Since knitting is a particular method, we thought it would be useful, and fun, to explore other kinds of handicraft methods as well. We therefore decided to participate in a mixed-material workshop, designed and run by an established wood sculptor Tapani Kokko, and to treat the experience as data. The workshop was organized for museum employees as a one day long work well-being activity. The participants were told in advance that they would be working with plywood and should bring along some flower-patterned fabric. The workshop was held in an artistic studio space which had a large table and was full of different materials, such as fabric, lace, feathers, colour papers, paints, pencils, yarn, strings and tools. The purpose of the day was to relax, spend time with colleagues and do something different from ordinary work. There was no official agenda to work on developmental issues or idea creation.

We joined the workshop as regular participants. The data collection activity included participant observation, taking photographs during the day and asking for volunteers to be interviewed on the following day—all this while being immersed in the artistic activity. We also reflected on our own experiences of the day in the evening and took some notes. On the whole, during the workshop we concentrated fully on the process of making and only lightly on the research angle. We felt it was important to become fully immersed in the workshop. The following day Niina conducted five interviews with seven people (three one-to-one interviews and two interviews with two persons). The interviews entailed general questions about how the participants had experienced the workshop, what had they thought about the process and materials and if they had experienced any similarities to their own work.

The workshop took place in a rather cold and dark November day in Kokkola. The studio was located in the premises of the art museum, not in the main building but in a smaller additional building in the courtyard. The old stone building was not used every day, thus it was quite chilly in the morning, and our hands were freezing. Tea and coffee was available. We heard the story of how the art studio had been used for a year-long social programme to help teenagers and young adults know themselves and find their place in society. Some of the drawings from these sessions were hanging from the walls. The tough yet hopeful stories of these young people touched our hearts.

The art object to be created was an installation box frame. The workshop leader had prepared wooden box frames in advance. The first advice was to make a drawing on the plywood. This caused some anxiety in partipants since they experienced flashbacks from school-time's drawing classes and the inability to draw. This threshold was soon overcome when most participants grabbed the nearest pencils and started drawing. A few participants chose to visit the museum exhibition rooms to find works of art or a piece of furniture and make sketches of those objects, thus taking a little longer time. After completing the drawing, we were given further instructions to colour the drawing, choosing from several colour pens available. The next step was to cover the frame with spray paints. This was followed by creating ornaments with black pen on top of the spray-painted frame. In addition, the flower-patterned fabrics, and basically anything else that could be found in the studio base, were glued on the frame. People became very creative and experimented with plastic figures, buttons, feathers and chains (see Figs. 5 and 6). As a finishing touch, the box frame was closed with a transparent plastic cover (Fig. 7).

**Fig. 5** Participants exploring materials

After the initial hesitance and reluctance, most participants were really excited about the workshop and found it highly enjoyable. Comments such as “the workshops was very empowering”, “it liberated us”, “it was very relaxing, I completely forgot about work”, “ my head is completely empty and I’m exhausted”, “the activity was really absorbing” and “the most important point is to do something together”. After the workshop all box frames were collected together for photographing and collective viewing and admiration. A fascinating thing happened at this point, people just stayed on and were reluctant to go home, as if willing to hold on to the stimulating atmosphere of the workshop and the captivating activity of creating something with one's hands. This further convinced us that handicraft methods can help create a reflective space.

**Fig. 6** Participants experimenting with materials

**Fig. 7** Completed box frames

While this workshop was originally not intended as a part of a research project or organizational development, it helped us develop our notion of handicraft as a research method. It helped us understand the creative process people engage in, the experiences of flow, the central role of materials, their quality and quantity. It taught us many things about the rhythm of the process and the phases of it. Our participation also established the importance of liveness and collective experiences of "being there" as important yet difficult-to-record parts of the data, as discussed by Tarr et al. (2017). These aspects of knitting and handicraft in mind, we now turn to discussing how these activities could be used in research design.

## Research Methods Involving Knitting and Handicraft: A How-to Guide

Based on earlier studies and our research experience, we propose three ways of how knitting and other forms of handicraft can be used as research methods. First, they can be used as an *intervention in action research*. Action research can be designed to study various organizational processes, work practices, management or leadership, for example. Second, it is possible to use knitting and handicraft as a way to create a *space for reflection*. The knitting activity, in particular knitting together with a group of people, helps sensitize one's sense perception and emotions and become tuned into the atmosphere and into other people's emotional state. During or after the handicraft activity, it is then possible to collect data by one-to-one interviews, focus group interviews or other similar methods. Third, handicraft can function as a method to create research material for *aesthetic analysis*. In other words, the knitted or other handmade products can be collected as field material and analysed as meaningful and interesting data. In the following, we discuss these three alternatives in more depth.

### An Intervention in Action Research

Knitting activity or handicraft workshops can be a meaningful way to initiate action research in an organization with the purpose of developing some aspects of organizational life. They can be the only form of intervention in an action research project or one intervention among many interventions. Action research typically consists of several interventions which are designed to develop the organization in a particular direction. The researchers then conduct fieldwork and collect research material during these interventions as well as during "ordinary" circumstances in the organization. Action research typically involves observations, interviews and collection of various documents (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2016).

Our study on guerrilla knitting in a museum organization built on participatory action research. The unusual nature of this knitting activity was the fact that it was not purposefully designed to be part of the ongoing action research. Guerrilla knitting emerged organically from the group of employees as a suggestion to a difficult art exhibition which the employees were rather strongly resisting. The approach became so popular and productive that it was soon chosen as one intervention in the action research project. The participatory element was there since the museum manager (Kristina) participated in the knitting and also worked as a researcher, making observations and taking field notes.

When designing action research that involves handicraft, various alternatives exist. It is possible to organize specific workshops when handicraft can take place or enable it in a more organic, self-organizing manner. In our guerrilla knitting case, the yarn and sticks were freely available in a combined coffee room and meeting space, inviting people to knit during breaks and also during some of the meetings. Museum employees were also allowed to take the knitting home and continue to knit there—some people did.

Whether the employees are encouraged to work on a specific developmental topic during handicraft is up to the researcher. Handicraft can be used as a way to actively talk about a developmental topic, a way to let opinions flow freely and a space to reflect on those topics and ideas. It is also possible to engage in handicraft without any particular organization-related topics and just let the participants concentrate on their activity, like in "knit and natter groups" (Biehl and Reynolds 2018: 7), trusting that this creative craft method will eventually help advance processes under study (Fig. 8).

It is up to the researcher to decide on the material, its colours, quality and, quantity to best suit the research setting. Taylor and Statler (2014) mention how the quantity of the material is relevant to the process since it guides participants' ways of working with the material. The researcher should also consider how specific instructions s/he wants to give to participants, whether there is a clear goal for the activity and whether the participants should work independently or in groups. Most often workshops are organized as a group activity which provides good possibilities for a researcher to observe how people work together, how they help one another and how they connect their work to someone else's work. One can collect research material about what happens in handicraft activity in the first place and also how these interventions affect the organizational processes or phenomena that are the focus of the study.

**Fig. 8** Connecting through knitting

An essential part of action research includes keeping a field diary about important events, thoughts, ideas and open questions. Ideally the researcher writes in the diary every day, or at the end of each day in the field. If writing occasionally becomes too tiresome, it is entirely possible to record one's observations and transcribe them later on. Some organization members can also be asked to keep a research diary about their observations and thoughts. They can either write the diary in a free format or reflect on a few assigned topics which may help them organize their thinking.

## A Way to Create Space for Reflection

Knitting or other handicraft methods have the potential to create a special space for reflecting on a topic, a dilemma or a sensitive problem. It is often challenging to bring interviewees to a right mindset in which they can fruitfully connect to the topic of research and reflect on it. This is particularly true when difficult, complex and sensitive research topics are concerned. If and when reflecting and learning about complex phenomenon through artful approaches is working so well in teaching and education, as one of the pioneers of this field, Lotte Darsø (2016: 29), suggests, reflecting and learning is likely to happen even in the presence of researchers. We suggest a handicraft activity helps people concentrate on the process of making and create a relaxed feeling which should in return help generate rich research material.

The collection of data can include interviews, either one-to-one interviews or group interviews, the participants can themselves write short narratives or reflections about a given topic. The interviews can take place during the handicraft session, if this is considered possible, or then after it.

Our experience suggests that it is beneficial to have a group of people engage in handicraft activity together. For example, there is something meditative in the knitting process, working together with others, chatting about various topics, or perhaps working in silence. Knitting evokes memories of old traditions, femininity, home, perhaps of one's mother and grandmother. We assume this is the core reason why contemporary knitting groups, such as "Chicks with Sticks" or "Stitch'nBitch", have become so popular around the globe: re-living memories together. It is clear that guerrilla knitting created a very special temporal interspace in the museum organization (Darsø 2016: 31).

The aspect of silence is worth mentioning. We are tempted to suggest a concept of *silencescape* to emphasize the pleasant, friendly silence that occurred in all our case examples. Guerrilla knitters often knitted in silence as there was no need to fill the space with spoken words. The art studio process included long silences in which concentrated work took place. The shoe-painting workshop began with a long silence that lasted almost 60 minutes.

Furthermore, our field notes about the mixed-material workshop as well as the interviews of them reveal that most participants felt the group aspect to be very important. “It did not matter what we were doing, but it was important that we did it together” (museum employee A). Also, Tarr et al. (2017) in their study of artistic workshops for patients with chronic pain explain how live encounters were crucial to the patients. In their words: what was most interesting and productive was not necessarily the art itself, but the experience of producing art together. This collective aspect seems to be very important. Biehl and Reynolds (2018: 7) also emphasize the role of groups and call for further research on the collective potential of guerrilla knitting. For example, the role of “knit and natter groups” seems to go way beyond nattering and involve talking, plotting and planning.

Another important aspect in the group setting is that it renders the participants and their roles slightly different from the ordinary—be it a work position or a position of a patient in relation to doctors and nurses. When engaged in an artistic activity, knitting or otherwise, the participants take distance to their daily routines and work tasks and view them from a different perspective. This may ignite new ideas or thought processes which is often one target of research and certainly the target of organizational development. Tarr et al. also (2017: 5) explain how this improvisational element was most effective since “each person was slightly off balance in terms of their usual role”.

Tarr et al. (2017) explain how the hospital patients were able to have new realizations about their experiences of pain with the help of various artistic methods. They were also able not only to verbalize their thoughts better but to “rework chronic pain communication itself, by changing the frame in which it occurred: from a series of isolated interaction between a clinician and patient, ---, to a collective space for discussing, sharing and reinterpreting the experience of pain” (ibid.: 3). Being able to express oneself and become heard is an important human need that was met in these workshops. If and when people can fully express themselves, or at least have better possibilities to do so, it means they are likely to produce rich research material. If people who are asked to be interviewed are first participating in a stimulating artistic experiment, they are likely to be better able to express their thoughts and ideas in an interview afterwards.

Addressing difficult topics may be easier while engaging in an artistic workshop. If there are tensions and conflicts in an organization, they are likely to arise in the workshop situation too. It is then possible to observe and address them in a gentle manner and by drawing parallels to a person's way of conduct in the workshop and at workplace. In this way, knitting can function as an analogous artefact (Barry and Meisiek 2010) that helps participants to reflect on a topic by moving between two contexts—the workshop and the work organization. One interviewee with long experience in running art workshops in social work said: "it is possible to address tensions and talk about them in a gentle way by saying for example: do you notice how you often do this?" In her experience, people are less offended when topics are brought up in the middle of an artistic activity than if they would be surfaced in a developmental discussion. The different setting softens the encountering of difficult matters. In other words, knitting and handicraft methods can help create a safe space to talk about difficult issues and generate research material about them.

## A Way to Create Material for Aesthetic Analysis

Aesthetic analysis entails the use of sense perception when analysing objects, artefacts or activities. It pays attention to feeling, judgement, sense, proportion, balance and appropriateness. Aesthetics can also be considered a specific mode of knowing distinct from intellectual and rational knowledge (Strati 1999). Contemporary aestheticians stress the role of sensory experience and sensory knowledge (Schusterman 2000). This approach emphasizes a special form of human knowledge that is generated by the perceptive faculties of hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste and the capacity for aesthetic judgment based on this sensuous information.

In regard to knitting, a researcher may find touch and tactility as interesting subjects of study. Touch has a way of creating knowledge is a very under-researched topic in organization studies. The researcher could study the knitted products and analyse the use of colours and their combinations, the form and function and the effect of knitting on a particular space, such as an office interior or urban space (Hahner and Varda 2014).

Guerrilla knitting is an excellent example of how the use of an art-based method can produce intriguing products which change the environment, be it the museum entrance or a business school interior like in Biehl and Reynolds' (2018) study. This changed environment can be observed and analysed in itself, or it can be used to generate discussion about this change. The knitted products can form a material subject to aesthetic analysis, or the discussions about this material can become material for aesthetic analysis.

Biehl and Reynolds (2018: 2) make an intriguing point about how critical management scholars should instead of criticizing the increasing pressure on performativity, became performative themselves. From the perspective of art-based methods, this performativity could include using artistic methods in class room teaching, decorating interiors with drawings, paintings, sculpture or other works of art and encouraging a "do it yourself" culture. In addition to being interesting activities as such, they could also be considered research material for aesthetic analysis.

One possible way to collect material for aesthetic analysis is the use of photographs or videos. Researchers can record either the making process or the end results of handicraft workshops for the purposes of aesthetic analysis. Photos or videos can be considered as field notes in the field inquiry. They can also be subjected to a more systematic visual analysis, a practice that has been established in organization studies in the last decade (Warren 2008; Pink 2007; Parker 2009; Shortt and Warren 2017).

Research material collected by action research and interviews in the reflective space are typically textual materials that are most often analysed by qualitative methods, such as content analysis, thematic analysis, discourse analysis or narrative analysis. All these approaches involve a rather similar process of coding relevant themes, grouping them together and finally interpreting the findings.

With the help of our coding scheme from the guerrilla knitting study, we show how the analysis proceeded. Our task was to explore how the guerrilla knitting activity influenced organizational processes in the museum organization. The initial coding of the research material (observations and field notes) resulted in ten themes. These themes were further grouped into three levels of influence. Table 2 illustrates the analysis process.

**Table 2** Themes for analysis

| Initial coding | Levels of influence |
|---|---|
| Art making<br>Audience response<br>Experiencing<br>Discussing and storytelling<br>Joining as a result of an aesthetic choice<br>Reasoning<br>Resistance<br>Sharing<br>Structuring and enabling<br>Task | Individual level<br>1. Art making<br>2. Experiencing<br>3. Reasoning<br>4. Resistance<br>Organisational level<br>1. Discussing and storytelling<br>2. Sharing<br>3. Structuring and enabling<br>4. Resistance<br>Public domain<br>1. Audience response<br>2. Joining as a result of an aesthetic choice<br>3. Task |

Where aesthetic analysis is concerned, a similar textual analysis can be conducted if the researcher has collected interviews or written accounts. Even if photos have been used to initiate discussion about the research topic (see Soronen and Koivunen 2018, for dialogic photo interview), the reflective discussion is then audio-recorded and transcribed for ordinary textual analysis.

In addition to using photographic material for opening up discussion, there are alternative ways to analyse photo material, as explained by Shortt and Warren (2017: 6–7). They suggest that photographic field study material could be collected into larger sets according to themes and their collective content is then analysed. They call theme-based photo contents “image-sets”. Shortt and Warren then explain in detail how such Grounded Visual Pattern Analysis (GVPA) can be conducted. We experimented with the idea of image-sets by collecting together some photos from the mixed-material workshop which portray “making things with hands” (see Fig. 9).

**Fig. 9** Ways of the hand: Handicraft work in action

## Conclusions

In this chapter we have explored the potential of knitting and handicraft methods as ways of conducting research. We draw on our experiences of the guerrilla knitting study, the shoe-painting workshop and the mixed-material workshop and combine that experience with our reading of literature on similar topics. We discovered that materiality, process of making, space and creative tensions are important themes in knitting and handicraft methods. The choice of materials influences the process in a number of ways and the researcher can make various decisions to guide and steer the making process. Space is a relevant topic, particularly when knitting is concerned, since the location of knitting was traditionally a private space and the introduction of guerrilla knitting into urban space and the proliferation of knitting groups in other public spaces have completely changed the nature and ethos of knitting. These shifts tend to generate creative tensions, fruitful topics of study as such, which may further surface other paradoxes.

Knitting as a research method has some obvious limitations. Since knitting is a dominantly female endeavour, it is quite difficult to generate research material that would be gender neutral. Knitting and handicraft methods have also other limitations in organizational inquiry, as do all art-based research methods: many organization members struggle to see the relevance of these methods in studying organizational life and fail to make the analogical connection between the art-based method and their own work activity. This is the challenge researchers need to grapple with when planning research that involves art-based methods.

"The aesthetic dimensions opens up for experiencing, exploring and knowing the world in a different way than logical thinking does" (Darsø 2016: 32). When planned carefully and run with experience and enthusiasm, art-based methods, such as knitting and handicraft methods can generate interesting, meaningful and rich research accounts about organizational life. These approaches can also shed light on the more invisible, yet significant, aspects of daily life in organizations. Therefore, we propose that knitting and handicraft methods could be used in the form of intervention in action research, as a way of generating reflective space or aesthetic analysis. By doing this, we might learn more about the "the ways of the hand" as contrast to the massive amount of knowledge about "the ways of the head"—the rational outlook on organizational life.

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# Letter Writing: Life in Letters—A Method of Qualitative Inquiry

Chris Stamper

## Introduction

In the digital age, letter writing is a dying social practice (Stanley 2015). This chapter explores the ways in which this dying art has and can be used as a method of research, particularly useful in engaging hard to reach groups. Drawing together a disparate literature from English literature (Chandler 1995), criminology (Knight 2012), geography (Milligan 2005) and health care (Letherby and Zdrodowski 1995), I present an overview of the handwritten letter methods legacy; offer vignettes from my own research practice involving the experiences of criminal record holders within the labour market; provide a how-to guide for those interested in using this method to explore their own research objectives; and finally present a critical reflection that attends to the core methodological issues including analysis, ethics and data presentation.

C. Stamper (✉)
University of Leicester, Leicester, UK
e-mail: cps14@le.ac.uk

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## Letter Writing as Research Practice

According to Stanely (2015), letter writing is a dying social practice. The time, dedication and resource involved in writing letters has given way to email, Tweets, Instagram posts, Facebook and other digital social media platforms that offer instantaneous communication at virtually no cost. In the digital age, few of us write letters. Why, then, might we consider letter writing as a method of research?

Much of the development of the method has taken place within health-related studies, exploring delicate and personal issues with participants. In what follows, I present an overview of a number of research projects that use letter writing to explore how and why letter writing is a fruitful method of qualitative inquiry. Anonymity, time, reflection and distance are all cited as valuable qualities of letter writing as a method for eliciting emotional and self-reflective participant responses.

Letherby and Zdrodowski (1995) provide a detailed account of how they used letter writing to explore women's experiences of body image, and the impact of infertility and voluntary childlessness from a feminist perspective. Letherby and Zdrodowski (1995) found the geographical distance between their participants problematic—participants living relatively close by were interviewed, those far away were engaged in a series of written letters. Recruiting research participants through a range of newspapers, journals and magazines, Letherby and Zdrodowski (1995: 577) selected the correspondence method on the grounds of geographical accessibility and 'self-selection and self-definition through experience'. Committed to 'participatory research' (Reinharz 1983), the methodological priority for Letherby and Zdrodowski (1995) was for research participants to respond to their recruitment advertisement because they not only felt strongly about the research topic, but also because they self-identified with the sampling criteria presented. The sample was selected by the participants, rather than the researchers. Over the two separate participant requests, 228 letters were received. The letters were in narrative form, and the researchers wrote back to participants to further explore participants' thoughts and feelings. Letherby and Zdrodowski (1995: 585) suggest that in comparison to face-to-face interviews, letter writing 'allows a greater degree of confidentiality; research subjects may feel less exposed, as people, if they write, rather than speak'. This '*distanced rapport*' (ibid.: 585) was seen as the most significant difference between letter writing and face-to-face interviews, allowing researchers to explore issues and interact with participants that may otherwise be difficult to reach.

Similarly, Kralik et al. (2000) used the correspondence method to explore the impact of chronic illness on the lives of 'mid-life' women. The primary justification for this methodological decision, however, was based on geographical access and extended data collection over time. Kralik et al. (2000) aimed to access participants across a wide geographical location, and continue to collect data over a 12-month period. Using a range of magazines and newsletters, 80 participants were recruited. Of the 80 initial replies, 16 participants continued to be involved in the correspondence, through a mixture of handwritten letters and email. With a similar methodological priority of geographical spread, Milligan's (2005) study of carers' experiences in New Zealand also served to open geographical boundaries. Corresponding with 20 informal carers, Milligan (2005: 2015) found the correspondence method a useful method of eliciting 'meaningful insights into the experiences of health and impairment amongst vulnerable groups' across New Zealand. By reaching informal care-givers through written letters, Milligan (2005) was able to transcend the geographical boundaries produced by the sparse landscape of New Zealand. Similar to Letherby and Zrodowski (1995), Milligan (2005) highlighted the anonymity involved with written letters. In comparison to face-to-face interviews, the 'distanced rapport' (Letherby and Zdrodowski 1995) and anonymity provided by written letters 'offers opportunities for respondents to reveal thoughts and feelings that they may find difficult to express in face-to-face research encounters' (Milligan 2005: 222). These benefits are argued to be particularly useful when exploring the experiences of vulnerable groups.

Both Milligan (2005) and Harris (2002) argue that the correspondence method facilitates access to vulnerable groups such as informal care-givers and people who engage in self-harm. Similarly, letter writing seems particularly useful for exploring sensitive issues such as infertility (Kralik et al. 2000), self-harm (Harris 2002) and child cancer (Grinyer 2004). Each of these studies demonstrates letter writing as offering a space in which participants feel able to open up, reflect and share difficult experiences and feelings in a way that feels comfortable and safe. Indeed, Milligan (2005: 215) argues how letter writing as a method of qualitative inquiry '[places] decisions around the form of participation, the extent of the data given and the ownership of the data, more firmly in the hands of the researched' (ibid.: 215). Writing in the absence of the researcher (Grinyer 2004) is perhaps an empowering experience, as it allows participants to remain in control of the process (Milligan 2005). The letter writing method allows participants to decide when and where they feel most able and willing to explore their experiences, to reflect on what it is they want to share and how they want to express those feelings. Letter writing provides an emotional safety zone (Kralik et al. 2000: 915), wherein participants can be reassured that they will never have to meet the person they are disclosing their intimate thoughts and feelings too. Knowing this gives participants a sense of control to the point at which the process can even become cathartic (Meth 2003).

Letter writing is a form of dialogic communication, however, and it is important to consider not only the effect the process has on the research participant but also on the researcher and therefore the research process. The correspondence method often continues for a number of months, and a rapport can be built between researcher and participant. As Kralik et al. (2000) report, the relationship between the researcher and the participants turned into one of 'pen pals'. Over time and with each response, it is possible that the participant will become increasingly comfortable. With increased comfort, often comes more strongly guarded disclosures and emotions, a particularly useful consequence for those exploring sensitive issues and the lived experience of participants.

Whilst participants may feel a greater degree of control over the research process and form a relationship with the researcher over time which in turn has been argued to lead to richer, more reflective and more emotional accounts (Grinyer 2004; Harris 2002; Milligan 2005), it is also important to consider this experience from the researcher's perspective. In Harris' (2002) study of self-harm using a letter writing method, she reported receiving extremely detailed letters, disclosing detailed accounts of self-harm practices that would have been 'harrowing' (ibid.: 3) in a face-to-face conversation. Harris (2002) is largely critical of this degree of 'invisibility' involved with sending and receiving letters as a researcher. A lack of face-to-face interaction she argues creates a frustrating 'one step removed' dimension to data collection, making the reading of emotions, and the researcher's expression of concern, empathy and consideration 'impossible' (ibid.: 6). Rautio (2009), however, attributes Harris' (2002) success in gaining rich, detailed data to the heightened degree of anonymity provided by letters. What is interesting here, then, is that letter writing simultaneously works to empower the participant but also protects the participant and the researcher in relation to researcher reactions. It can be very difficult to control micro-reactions, subconscious thoughts and facial expressions at the moment, however, the time, distance and space provided by letter writing provides the researcher with the opportunity to craft a more empathetic and supportive response without the fear of offending the participant.

Letter writing methods have not solely been used for researching sensitive issues with vulnerable groups, however. Indeed, Rautio (2009) adopted a correspondence method to explore individual's aesthetic engagement with their surroundings. Rautio (2009) recruited four participants from a Lappish village to correspond with. Whilst many other studies utilising the correspondence method have used third party publications and organisations to recruit participants, Rautio (2009) actually went to the Lappish village and 'asked around' to find her research sample. Further deviating from the examples previously presented, Rautio (2009) asked each participant to correspond not only with herself, but with the other participants too. If correspondence between a researcher and a participant can be considered an alternative to the face-to-face interview, Rautio's (2009) approach might be best considered as an alternative to conventional focus groups. This 'collective writing' approach was argued to be the most enjoyable aspect of the participants' research experience, even though 'the letters could almost be read without realising they had been written to everyone' (ibid.: 20). What Rautio's variation on the letter writing method presents is the flexibility of alternative methods of qualitative inquiry. Whilst the lack of procedural norms and instruction can often be posed as a criticism to arts-based methods of research it can also be constructed as an opportunity for creative engagement and methodological improvisation. This is particularly true of letter writing methods, wherein a number of variations have been practised including digital variants (email) (McCoyd and Kerson 2006; Parris 2008; Cook 2012; Brewis 2014) and one-off approach (Knight 2012).

Described as a method of 'computer mediated communication', McCoyd and Kerson (2006: 396) argue that despite concerns about the lack of face-to-face interaction, the email correspondence they received from participants was 'genuine, thoughtful and insightful, whilst still conveying emotion'. McCoyd and Kerson (2006) recruited 30 participants to engage in a series of emails to explore the decision-making and bereavement processes of women who terminated desired pregnancies after diagnosis of a foetal anomaly. Email correspondence was chosen because potential participants 'spontaneously requested email interviews' (ibid.: 30). McCoyd and Kerson (2006) suggest that in comparison to the face-to-face and telephone interviews that produced the rest of their research data, email seemed to generate particularly thoughtful and detailed insights. Similarly, Brewis (2014) explored experiences of and attitudes towards sexual relationships, motherhood and life–work balance through email correspondence with six participants. Whilst both Brewis (2014) and McCoyd and Kerson (2006) suggest that using email correspondence to collect qualitative data was a successful strategy, there are a number of critiques to be raised. Computer-based writing allows for modification at the click of a button. The relative ease of editing likely results in a more polished and rehearsed response. Additionally, it is often the subtleties of handwritten letters that provide a more personal feel. Spelling mistakes, crossing-out, doodles, underlining and highlighting provide a materiality akin to artwork. As a researcher, sympathetic to the value of arts-based methods, a handwritten letter provides a wealth of rich data that could not be produced through email.

By far the most common form of correspondence method, including email variants, have each adopted an approach that involved a number of exchanges between the researcher and participants over a number of months. On that basis, despite their obvious differences, these studies could be collated as 'on-going correspondence' approaches. There are, however, existing studies that make use of a 'one-off' approach to the correspondence method. Knight (2012) utilised this approach to gain insight into prisoners' experiences of in-cell television. An advertisement was placed in a prisoner newspaper, asking inmates to write in with their perspectives and experiences of television in prison and what it means to them. Differing to a postal survey, the participants had the freedom to present their ideas however they pleased, and the researcher received narratives, poems and drawings from over 100 individuals. Further studies that have utilised the 'one-off' correspondence method include Milligan (2005), Grinyer (2002) and Thomas (1998, 1999). Adopting a 'one-off' approach, however, potentially reduces some of the advantages of the correspondence method. As Letherby and Zdrodowski (1995) argue, the distanced rapport built during on-going correspondence potentially produces a level of trust and disclosure that may not be possible with a one-off correspondence. Kralik et al.'s (2000) likening of the correspondence method to the relationship of 'penpals' perhaps supports this argument. Over time and repeated correspondence, the relationship between participant and researcher is likely to evolve from that of 'strangers' to one of the distanced acquaintances. Whilst the 'one-off' approach may have the advantage of gaining a relatively quick 'snap-shot' of the phenomena under investigation, the level of depth is compromised. To achieve a depth akin to face-to-face interviewing, to produce rich, qualitative data, a number of letters to and from both researcher and participant is arguably required.

Letter writing methods offer an interesting and rich opportunity to engage with particular participant groups. However, there has been limited engagement with the method in the business, management and humanities fields. Given the 'emotional' or 'affective turn' (Ward and McMurray 2016) seen in organisational research and the social sciences more generally (Cromby et al. 2010), the correspondence method offers an alternative method of inquiry that allows researchers to get close to participants and explore their thoughts and feelings. The difficulty, perhaps, is knowing where to start. With such a limited number of existing studies for reference, the 'how to' section below provides a detailed guide for those considering letter writing as a method of qualitative inquiry.

# How to Use the Correspondence Method in Your Research

The correspondence method is a relatively rare data collection method that has been utilised in two distinct ways—'one-off' and 'on-going' correspondence. Whilst Thomas (1998, 1999), Grinyer (2002), Milligan (2005), and Knight (2012) have adopted the 'one-off' approach, this how-to guide will focus solely on on-going correspondence.

Based on my own experience of using the on-going correspondence method to research criminal record holders' experiences of disclosing their criminal record within the labour market, this guide offers practical and contextual advice and guidance for those considering letter writing as a method of qualitative inquiry.

## Disclosure and Desistance: Criminal Record Holders' Experiences of Gaining and Maintaining Employment

Extant literature identifies significant structural barriers to 'ex-offender' employment such as employer discrimination, a lack of education and a criminal record. These structural barriers impact criminal record holders through the act of disclosure (Soloman 2012; Harris and Keller 2005). However, my research focus is not on the structural barriers themselves but the subjective experience of the act of disclosure for criminal record holders.

The participants I wanted to involve in the study were those with experiences of the labour market who had at least one serious criminal conviction. In order to gain a holistic picture of the subjective experience of criminal record holders it was important for me to understand the act of disclosure from the perspective of those who are (1) on probation (2) post-probation and (3) reconvicted and sentenced to incarceration.

For Groups 1 and 2—probation services and ex-offender charities were helpful in finding suitable participants who were interviewed face-to-face. Those serving prison sentences, however, are much harder to reach group. Gaining access to prisoners can be a lengthy and challenging process. Finding willing gatekeepers and participants, arranging interviews and travelling to any number of prisons posed significant challenges to the project. However, imprisoned re-offender experiences of the labour market and the act of disclosure are vital in understanding how disclosure impacts labour market experiences.

To further complicate the matter, my additional sampling criteria made my participant sample increasingly niche. I sought prisoners who had previously been released from prison, and then reconvicted. Furthermore, I sought individuals with either level 3 qualifications (or above) or a stable history of employment. I was therefore faced with three distinct problems—access, geographical accessibility and sample selection. The correspondence method offered access to a hard to reach group (Harris 2002), across a wide geographical area (Milligan 2005), in which suitable participants 'self-selected' (Letherby and Zdrodowski 1995). I turned to letter writing as a potential method of accessing incarcerated prisoner experiences.

To begin, I set up a freepostNAME service with the Royal Mail. This would allow prisoners to write to me for free, simply by writing freepost EMPLOYMENT PROJECT on the front of any envelope. Once set up, I arranged to place an advert in the freely distributed prison newspaper 'Inside Time'. The advert was published in the newspaper in January, informing the audience of the research I was conducting, and asking them to write in to express their interest. To help focus the sample group, potential participants were also asked to provide a brief overview of their educational and working background. The advert was quite specific about the employment/qualification history I was looking for in my participant sample. I stipulated a cut-off date, mid-February, to allow enough time for potential participants to reply, but also to manage the expectations of both the participants and my research.

By the cut-off date, I received 30 replies, with most of the participants indicating that they fitted the participant brief. Specifying the participant brief in the original advertisement helped to keep the potential sample relevant and focused, although participant selection remained a challenging task. It would have been useful to have a rigid selection criterion for participants, however due to the novel nature of the correspondence method and lack of existing studies utilising it, the selection process became a long and complicated task. Eventually, I used the information provided by the potential participants to reduce the sample down to 15 individuals (see Step 3 in the next section for more details). The intended number of participants was 10, therefore pursuing 15 individuals left room for discontinued correspondence.

Having overcome the task of selecting 15 participants, detailed project briefs were sent out, along with a personal, handwritten introduction and participant consent forms. As expected, a number of consent forms were never returned, bringing the sample down to 12. The correspondence then began in March with handwritten letters exchanged in an intermittent fashion. It would have been beneficial to set out some expectations on the frequency and timing of the letters, perhaps one exchange per month.

Over the following 6 months, a significant number of letters were exchanged with 10 participants. The letters received ranged from 3 to 12 pages of A4, and participants wrote between 4 and 9 times each. The data was direct and relevant, and by the end of the data collection period I had a large and rich data set.

Participants were keen to write about their experiences, thoughts and feelings, and over time the relationships developed and became increasingly friendly. Rapport was built; however, it was during the later stages of the correspondence that I began to be uncomfortable with the thought of ending the exchange. Thankfully, I had stipulated in the participant brief that the data collection period would last for 6 months—I had actively managed expectations. Although I would have liked to continue writing to the participants, I knew that as a researcher I had a duty to analyse and disseminate the data that my participants had provided. I ended the correspondence by sincerely thanking each participant, wishing them well for the future. I then went on to transcribe and analyse the data, making the best possible use of the unique and rich data set I had been presented with.

The correspondence method, therefore, proved to be a 'valuable and productive means of gathering data in an otherwise intractable field' (Harris 2002: 4). The following step-by-step guide will provide some useful and practical tips on how the correspondence method could be utilised, addressing considerations of sampling, recruitment, selection, correspondence, storage, transcription and analysis.

## Step 1—Sampling

The first thing to consider when using the correspondence method is the participant sample. You must ask yourself whether the method aligns with your research question i.e. will it be useful for exploring this issue, and whether the participant sample is first accessible by this method and secondly, whether they will be receptive to it. Considerations of disability, lifestyle, age, literacy levels and the geographical location of your participant sample are all useful points of reflection when deciding if a letter writing method is suitable for exploring your research questions. Below are some useful questions and issues that you might find helpful to consider.

- Accessible—the use of written correspondence is not universally accessible. Those with visual or physical impairment, enhanced learning and/or development needs may find the writing of letters challenging or impossible. The same is true for those who speak a different language to the researcher or for those participants too young to engage fluently in writing. Furthermore, individuals possessing certain mental health problems may find the correspondence method difficult or distressing. You must think carefully about the basic principles of the correspondence method—who are you automatically excluding by requiring research data to be in a written format? How important are those groups to your particular study? Simultaneously, be prepared to make reasonable adjustments. One of my participants expressed concern at his severe dyslexia—requesting correspondence be typed in a particular font and left-justified.
- Receptive—letter writing is time consuming and requires a degree of commitment on the part of the participant. You need to think about how receptive particular groups might be to this process. For example, teenagers, busy professionals, international participants may feel that the time commitment is too burdensome and engagement with the method may breakdown. On the other hand, individuals serving time in prisons, or those who are unemployed at home may be more receptive to the method. There are significant differences in the lifestyles of different participant groups, and you must consider the context of your research. In addition to the participant groups' anticipated lifestyle, you must

also consider the value of your topic and research from the participants perspective.
- Interest and enjoyment are key elements of the correspondence method—if the participant does not take enjoyment and/or see importance in the topic, they are unlikely to engage. As can be seen from the examples in this chapter—TV use in prison (Knight 2012), beauty in the participants' home town (Rautio 2009), finding employment with convictions, self-harm (Harris 2002)—although varied and not all pleasant, all topics are close to the heart and likely of great importance to the participant. The correspondence method requires commitment, time and effort over and above that of face-to-face interviews, therefore the topic needs to be interesting or important enough to both the participant and the researcher to be worthwhile.

This list of considerations is not exhaustive; however, it does provide an idea of the level of consideration you must give to your participant sample. The key point to take away is that each research problem and participant sample is different—context is everything. For some participant samples, the correspondence method may be a perfect methodological choice. For others, it may not work at all—think carefully about who you wish to correspond with and whether or not it will be viable. Once you have determined that your participant sample is appropriate for the correspondence method, it is time to start thinking about the recruitment of the sample.

## Step 2—Recruitment

Recruiting a participant sample to engage in the correspondence method can be approached in a number of ways. In much the same way as face-to-face interviews, potential research participants can be invited to engage via some form of advertisement.

*Newspapers and Magazines*

Printed newspapers and magazines provide a useful and targeted recruitment avenue for the correspondence method, and have been utilised by Knight and Stamper (2016), Letherby and Zrodowski (1995), and Kralik et al. (2000). When advertising in printed newspapers and magazines, you can be confident to some extent, that your potential participants appreciate the aesthetics of printed media. With virtually all publications now available in some digital format, those purchasing printed versions are perhaps less reliant on the internet and email, potentially making the concept of reading and writing letters a little more comfortable. Secondly, printed newspapers and magazines are often specialist, or incorporate specialist sections. On that basis, if the publication relates to your research topic, it is more likely to be received by your desired participant sample. My research into prisoners' experiences of disclosure used prisoner newspaper *Inside Time* to advertise for participants. This was no coincidence—a prisoner newspaper, written for and delivered to prisoners, about prison and prisoners' lives… it was the perfect placement for the advertisement. Think in terms of the publications target market—are they also your target sample group?

*Online Publications, Websites and Social Media*

Whilst the readers of printed publications may be assumed to appreciate the aesthetics of 'paper' to some extent, online publications and websites should not be overlooked as a valuable participant recruitment possibility. Today's internet has multiple websites for almost every thinkable topic, interest or problem. This can be used to your advantage when recruiting participants. Speak to website owners, about both their website and their mailing list. Contact administrators of Facebook groups closely related to your area of interest. Present your research in a positive light, help them to see that your research is of interest and value to them as an organisation, and at the same time you may raise awareness of your research in the process. In many cases, your research will be valuable to these organisations—present the advertisement as a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Remember that for both printed publications and online recruitment avenues, when using the correspondence method, the organisations you use to host your advertisements are not gatekeepers to your research participants—they are gatekeepers to the advertisement. Many of the organisations that may be useful for participant recruitment survive on advertising revenue. On that basis, some organisations may insist on payment for their services, and whether or not this is reasonable depends both on the organisation and your own institutional circumstances. Beyond the 'advertisement gatekeeper', however, your sample will be self-selecting, therefore a great deal of thought needs to be applied to the writing of the advertisement.

### *Advertisement*

Much in the same way that an advertisement for goods or services needs to attract customers, your advertisement needs to attract your target participant sample. Placing your advertisement for research participants in front of an audience is not much use if it does not attract attention or relay the necessary information. You inevitably want your potential participants to respond, and there are a few key points that make this outcome more likely. Take a look at the advertisement in Fig. 1.

This is the advertisement published for my prisoner correspondence project. Notice the following key factors that have been included.

- Title—the first thing any reader will see is the title. To continue reading, the reader needs to find some interest or relevance in the title. It also needs to be clear and simple enough not to put people off. Imagine if the title to this advertisement read 'A phenomenological, interpretive study of prisoners' subjective experience of disclosing their criminal record within the UK labour market'. It describes the same research, but it does not give the impression of an easy read. You want your title to be accessible and relevant.
- Introduction—try to introduce yourself and your institution early on. This example very quickly introduces the advertiser as 'researchers', and the institution.

# The Hub

**Prisoners' experiences of finding and keeping a job**

***Off the back of their study into the value of letter writing in prison, researchers at De Montfort University are looking to use letters as a way of hearing about prisoners' experiences of the labour/job/employment market***

We would like to invite you to share your experiences of gaining and retaining employment after release. We are interested in hearing about your experiences of finding, doing and keeping a job whilst holding a criminal record. Whilst we will also be speaking with ex-prisoners, we want to get the input of those of you that have gone on to re-offend.

We are interested in your experiences of work because we want to learn more about what life is like on the outside for those with a criminal record. The government is currently calling for prison reforms to make prisoners more 'employable' on release. Whilst education and training within prison is undoubtedly valuable and needed, we are interested in exploring the assumption that underpins this government strategy. Will more training and more courses really help you get a job on the out? Is your level of education, qualifications and certificates really the thing that prevents you getting a job, keeping a job or being able to do a job? Rather than assuming that this is the case, we want to hear your experiences first hand.

For this first stage of research, we ask that readers register their interest by writing to the address below with a name, correspondence address, and a brief summary of your work experience, level of education and sentence/s lengths. We do not need specifics at this point – for example, simply stating some of the job roles you have previously occupied, the level of your achieved qualifications and overall sentence lengths are all that is needed.

All letters received by 7th February 2017 will be considered by the research team, and we will be sending a letter to some of you which describes the project in more detail. This will also include a questionnaire. Please understand that we simply do not have the resources to conduct in-depth research with everybody – we will therefore select individuals that represent the broadest range of backgrounds and experiences.

If you are interested in taking part in this study, please write to us with your brief introduction using the exact following address:

Freepost EMPLOYMENT PROJECT

De Montfort University

This is all that needs to be written on your envelope, please copy it exactly. Your details will be kept securely, and any information given by you during the research will be kept anonymous. Thank you for reading this and we look forward to receiving your letters.

**Fig. 1** Advertisement published for prisoner correspondence project

- Project brief—the project brief should make up the main body of the advertisement. Be clear and concise, yet detailed and accessible. Avoid jargon, and have friends or colleagues critique your drafts. This will be similar to a conventional participant brief usually provided prior to face-to-face interviews—yet considerably shorter. You want to provide enough information that the potential participant knows a reasonable amount about the project, what it is about, why it is being conducted and what are their rights.
- What is required—you should be very clear at this point about what you require from potential participants. Without doing so, you may get such a vast variety of content that the project becomes unmanageable.
- Set a deadline—it is very important to set a deadline or a cut-off date. Doing so will not only aid your project time-line planning, but also actively manage the expectations of the participants. The deadline for this example was the 7th February—it was clear that letters after this date may not be considered by the research team, creating urgency whilst managing expectations. Without a deadline, readers may have been writing in for some time, even though the research had progressed significantly. On the other hand, be considerate that you allow enough time for individuals to reply—a one-week deadline for a monthly publication is not going to produce the best possible response rate.
- Provide an address—perhaps the most obvious thing, you will need to provide is a correspondence address. It is not advisable to use your home address—always use your institutional address. Participant letters have more chance of being accessed by people other than the researcher if a home address is used. Furthermore, as a researcher it is often best to keep work and personal life separate. You will notice that the example in Fig. 1 makes use of a freepost address. There are a number of reasons a freepost address was used for this particular project. Firstly, it allowed for a set, private address within the university—letters were only delivered to the researchers. Secondly, there were ethical issues to consider. The cost of participating in research activity should almost always be covered by the researcher/their institution (Silverman 2013). Rarely is it seen as ethical to expect the participant to pay for their own research-related costs. Stamps and stationery add up, and can be particularly limiting to groups such as those serving prison sentences. On that basis, a freepost service

is a practical solution to reduce both the cost and time commitment of your participants (it takes time to buy postage stamps!). The major postal service in the UK is provided by the Royal Mail, and whilst your institution may have a freepost licence that you can use, many will not. There are a number of different services on offer from the Royal Mail, and each will have its own advantages and disadvantages.

When calculating estimated costs, remember that it is important to consider the volume of letters you expect to receive. Previous projects have received between 30 and 200 initial replies from participants. Be sure to factor estimates of on-going correspondence and/or acknowledgement replies into your budget. In addition to postage charges, there are stationary costs to consider, such as envelopes and paper. Dependant on your participant sample group, you may want to supply paper and envelopes to them—be sure to calculate the cost. Research staff and students often have access to limited departmental/university-wide research assistance funds—these funds can be a great place to start as previous experience suggests that in comparison to travel expenses for face-to-face interviews, the correspondence method allows for a larger, wider and more geographically spread participant group. With careful planning, the correspondence method provides a relatively low-cost solution to qualitative inquiry, however, the practicality of using this innovative method must be considered.

## Step 3—Selection

So, you have identified your participant sample, drafted your advertisement and placed it in a targeted recruitment space. Hopefully, you will receive interest from your target participant sample group. Of course, this may not be the case. If you find yourself with a lack of potential participants, carefully consider why. Is the target participant sample suitable for the correspondence method? Was your advertisement placed in the most appropriate place? Discussion with peers and fellow researchers can be very beneficial in these circumstances. Assuming, however, that you have a suitable participant pool to choose from, there are now any number of participant selection choices (provided you do not intend to correspond with all potential participants that respond to your advert), and it is advisable to have a robust participant selection model to aid this process.

Your participant selection model will almost always be based on your sampling criteria. Knowing how and why you will select certain participants and reject others is a critical process, particularly if you receive more interest than originally expected. The ideal participant sample consists of the individuals best suited to answer your research questions. Logically, this will often be individuals with characteristics highlighted by your sampling criteria. Table 1 shows a selection model used for my prisoner correspondence project.

Table 1 is a very simple participant selection model used to ensure participants chosen for on-going correspondence meet the required sampling criteria. If a participant's characteristics fit into the 'yes' box for each criterion, they are more suitable as a research participant than those who do not meet all criteria. The participant selection process becomes more complex, however, when the number of potential participants that perfectly fit the sampling criteria is greater than the number of individuals that you wish to correspond with. For example, if you intend to correspond with 15 people, yet have 30 participants to choose from, it may be useful to develop a points-based selection model, as shown in Table 2.

In Table 2 the ideal participants are those with multiple convictions, who are actively seeking to gain/retain employment, and who's educational and/or working background defies that of the stereotyped offender. On that basis, the participants who score the highest amount of points are likely to be the closest to the 'perfect' participant sample. Whilst these examples provide a useful tool when selecting a participant sample, be wary of using simple tables in isolation.

**Table 1** Selection model for prisoner correspondence project

| Sampling criteria | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Participant has 2 or more convictions? | | |
| Participant has experience of gaining/retaining employment with a criminal record? | | |
| Participant has a high level of education and/or a long history of employment? | | |
| Participant is located in the UK? | | |

**Table 2** Points-based selection model for prisoner correspondence project

| | 1 (Lowest) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 (Highest) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To what extent does the participant have multiple convictions? | | | | | | | | | | |
| How active has the participant been within the labour market with a criminal record? | | | | | | | | | | |
| To what extent does the educational/working background of the participant contradict stereotypical notions of offenders? | | | | | | | | | | |

As a qualitative researcher, interpreting and evaluating your participants and data is crucial. In addition to the objective sampling criteria you may impose on your participant sample, also consider each potential participant on a case-by-case basis. Do your participants provide a wide range of backgrounds and experiences? Do some individuals indicate a particular passion for the topic? Are there gender/ethnicity implications that you had not previously considered? Issues such as these would be very difficult to explore in a simple table. Qualitative researchers interpret and evaluate their participant sample, and combined with the objective tools detailed in Table 2, you should be able to justify each participant that you select for correspondence. Having selected your participant sample, the next section will provide guidance on the practical aspects of writing letters.

### *Learn from My Mistakes…*

I would like to stress the importance of the selection stage. For me, participant selection was far more challenging than recruitment. The example tables shown in Tables 1 and 2 were the result of a long and complex process of participant selection, and in future projects I would aim to have something similar constructed prior to advertisement.

On placing my advertisement in '*Inside Time*' magazine, I did not expect such a quick and large response. Inexperience left me under the impression that I would have a number of weeks to construct a selection strategy before responses were received. In reality, letters started to be delivered to me within a few days, and I soon found myself overwhelmed with the volume of participants to choose from.

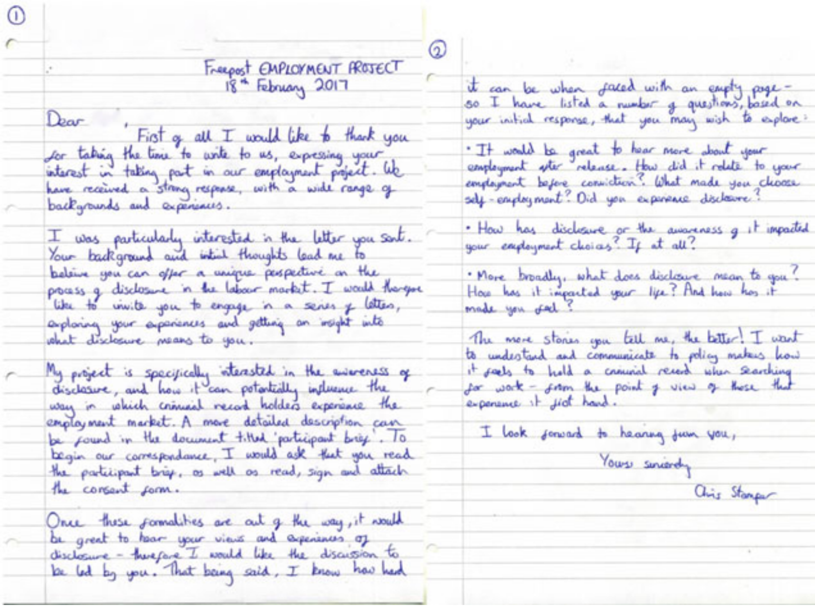
I attempted to select participants on a 'letter-by-letter' basis. By the time the deadline had passed, I had narrowed my sample from 30 potential participants to 23. I was, however, aiming for 15—yet with no clear means of comparison I found it challenging to decide which participants were most suitable. At this stage, I constructed the tables shown in Tables 1 and 2. Although a relatively basic way of displaying data, the tables really helped me to see 'what and who' I had to choose from, and from them I was able to narrow down my participant sample. I would certainly recommend that anyone considering the correspondence method devises a selection strategy prior to advertisement and receiving letters.

## Step 4—Correspondence

The correspondence method involves multiple letter exchanges between the researcher and the participant. On that basis, the emphasis of the recruitment advertisement for a correspondence approach should be on clarifying the participant sampling criteria. Ensure that potential participants' initial replies contain the information required to select a suitable sample with which to extend the correspondence. Once participants have been chosen, good ethical practice dictates that participants be given an extended project brief, outlining the key aspects of the research and what it means for them. Most universities have project brief templates that can be easily edited and printed. Additionally, upon reading the project brief, a participant consent form can be included for participant authorisation.

Along with the project brief and consent form, the researcher's first correspondence with chosen participants should include a personalised letter. One of the aims of the correspondence method is to build rapport with participants—a generic, typed letter is unlikely to provide the maximum possible rapport. The personalised letter should introduce the researcher, and provide some guidance for the participants' first reply. The example shown in Fig. 2 was sent to a chosen participant, during my research project exploring the impact of disclosing a criminal record to employers.

There are many pointers to be taken from this example. Notice first, how the letter begins by offering thanks to the participant for their time spent replying. The second paragraph speaks to the researcher's interest in the participant's response—making it clear that the participant has an interesting story to tell and inviting them to share it. Next, a little more information was given about the project, and specific details about the project brief and consent form attached. The letter then moves on to explain that the researcher wants the correspondence to be led by the participant, however, a few questions are presented to make the task less daunting. Finally, the letter concludes by reassuring the participant that the more stories they can tell of their experiences, the more useful the data



① 

Freepost EMPLOYMENT PROJECT
18th February 2017

Dear ,

First of all I would like to thank you for taking the time to write to us, expressing your interest in taking part in our employment project. We have received a strong response, with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

I was particularly interested in the letter you sent. Your background and initial thoughts lead me to believe you can offer a unique perspective on the process of disclosure in the labour market. I would therefore like to invite you to engage in a series of letters, exploring your experiences and getting an insight into what disclosure means to you.

My project is specifically interested in the awareness of disclosure, and how it can potentially influence the way in which criminal record holders experience the employment market. A more detailed description can be found in the document titled 'participant brief'. To begin our correspondance, I would ask that you read the participant brief, as well as read, sign and attach the consent form.

Once these formalities are out of the way, it would be great to hear your views and experiences of disclosure – therefore I would like the discussion to be led by you. That being said, I know how hard

②

it can be when faced with an empty page – so I have listed a number of questions, based on your initial response, that you may wish to explore:

• It would be great to hear more about your employment after release. How did it relate to your employment before conviction? What made you choose self-employment? Did you experience disclosure?

• How has disclosure or the awareness of it impacted your employment choices? If at all?

• More broadly, what does disclosure mean to you? How has it impacted your life? And how has it made you feel?

The more stories you tell me, the better! I want to understand and communicate to policy makers how it feels to hold a criminal record when searching for work – from the point of view of those that experience it first hand.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely

Chris Stamper

Fig. 2 Researcher's response to a letter from a prisoner participant

collection will be. There is a final point that hints to the motivation of the research, and although this was covered in the project brief, the letter potentially provides some additional motivation for participation.

It is important to consider at this stage, the way in which the letters are written. The example in Fig. 2 was purposely handwritten for two reasons. First, the participant sample group were serving prisoners. Only a small proportion of serving prisoners have access to word processers or printers, therefore there was an element of ethical responsibility to handwrite the researcher letters. Secondly, there is a distinct difference between handwritten and typed letters. Many of the participants of this project commented on how the handwritten nature of researcher letters made the correspondence feel personal (more on this in the analysis section below). If you are handwriting your letters, however, ensure you take digital copies! For analysis, you will require both sides of the correspondence, and once a letter is sent, you cannot get it back easily. Figure 3 shows part of the handwritten response to the researcher's letter in Fig. 2.

Chris Stamper, Tuesday 28th February.
EMPLOYMENT PROJECT,
DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY,
LEICESTER.

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your hand-written letter, the personal touch is very welcome. I am both flattered and honoured to contribute to your studies. As you have no doubt noticed from my original letter, I have the good fortune to have received a good education and in fact, facing an empty page holds no terrors. Indeed, I am currently engaged in a distance learning course titled 'Creative Writing' through The Writers Bureau. My problem is more likely to be literary diarrhoea.

Let me strike whilst the iron is hot! I believe that my initial letter disclosed the nature of my offenses. If this is not the fact and in view of the statements in the Participant Brief on non-disclosure, I will set the record straight; I am a child abuser. Now this fact places a very different slant on the elements of my story. The very nature of these offences must alter the way an offender feels and behaves. You must of course be aware of the way the public views and indeed treats those convicted of this kind of offence. In prison, and I'm writing about twenty-five plus years ago, we were called 'nonce', we were looked down upon and we were segregated into separate units. I do not imply any hardship but one's view of ones standing in society become very low. One of the tenets of the S.O.T.P. (Sex offender treatment programme), is that of disclosure on release to people who would be in positions of authority such as doctors, relatives, the local police . . . and of course, employers. The intention being to create a protective fence around the offender.

Can you imagine a released convict applying for a job and

(1) P.T.O.

**Fig. 3** Participant response 1

Notice how the first sentence of the participant's letter thanks the researcher specifically for handwriting their response. The participant speaks of a 'very welcome personal touch', potentially indicating that trust and rapport has been built simply by handwriting the letter. Trust and rapport are arguably demonstrated in the second paragraph, where the participant describes, in quite graphic detail, the nature of their offences—a very stigmatised and socially hostile act. Whilst the participant may have disclosed such information through other forms of qualitative inquiry, the personal touch and 'pen pal' feel (Kralik et al. 2000) of the correspondence method arguably contributed to the openness of the participant to discuss their past. This rapport building was particularly noticeable during this specific correspondence project; early letters were signed 'yours sincerely', whilst later letters from the same participants were signed in a more personal way, as can be seen in Fig. 4.

This significant shift in the way the participant addresses the researcher potentially indicates that the relationship has developed to one of friendship, moving beyond the researcher/participant association to one of trust and openness. Whilst this developed relationship aids in providing rich, emotionally charged data, it makes ending the correspondence a difficult task that requires sensitivity and compassion. In most cases, qualitative data collection can only continue for a limited period of time. That time may be two months, or two years, yet eventually budgetary and time constraints require the researcher to 'move on', from data collection to data analysis and dissemination. Whilst in some circumstances, the researcher

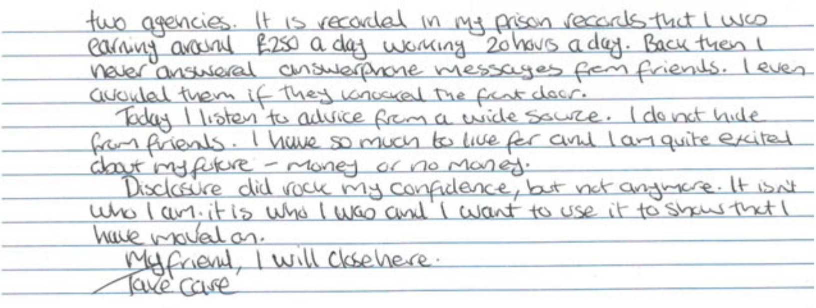

two agencies. It is recorded in my prison records that I was
earning around £250 a day working 20hours a day. Back then I
never answered answerphone messages from friends. I even
avoided them if they knocked the front door.
Today I listen to advice from a wide source. I do not hide
from friends. I have so much to live for and I am quite excited
about my future – money or no money.
Disclosure did rock my confidence, but not anymore. It isn't
who I am. it is who I was and I want to use it to show that I
have moved on.
My friend, I will close here.
Take care

**Fig. 4** Participant response 2

could happily continue corresponding for a prolonged period of time, there is a responsibility to the participant, the institution and the researcher themselves to complete and disseminate the findings. What use is a huge, rich data set that never gets analysed or presented? On that basis, there must be an 'end' to the on-going correspondence method.

Ending the correspondence, however, can be challenging for both the participant and the researcher. During my prisoner letter project, I experienced feelings of guilt; I had formed a distanced rapport with my participants and felt that I had become a safe outlet to whom they were able to disclose some of their most guarded thoughts and feelings. Subsequently, it is highly advisable to ensure you manage expectations from the beginning. As suggested earlier, you should clearly indicate a time-scale of the on-going correspondence at the point of recruitment. By informing participants of the time-scale of the correspondence, and how long it will go on for, you are actively managing participant expectations from the recruitment stage. If the participant knows from the beginning that the correspondence will be for a limited time, there are no surprises when the researcher ends the process. There are many ways to end the on-going correspondence method as a researcher, yet a sincere 'thank you' letter is arguably the most ethical and polite. By the end of the data collection period, your participants have likely invested a great deal of time and energy into providing data for the researchers' project. Whilst there may be therapeutic or cathartic participant advantages, the researcher will ultimately benefit most from the correspondence. On that basis, the researcher's final letter should not only thank the participant for their input, but also advise them on what will happen with their data, and where they can gain access to the completed research.

## Step 5—Storage

If the previous steps have been successful, you will hopefully have a plentiful and rich data set by the end of your data collection period. As with all qualitative data, letters from participants must be kept with confidentiality and anonymity. The paragraphs below provide some useful tips for securely storing the data you have collected and offer advice on ways to minimise the risk of losing any correspondence.

The original letters you receive from participants are not only textual—they are material, aesthetic artefacts and should be treated as such. The first consideration, therefore, is not anonymity or confidentiality, it is of respect and care. In many cases, your data may be handwritten—it is a form of art that your participants have taken the time and effort to create. On that basis, great care should be taken of the material aspect of your data. When you receive letters, open them carefully, read them delicately—do not fold, tear or spill coffee on them! Similarly, do not write notes on the original letters. To write on or highlight over a material artefact not only defaces the artwork that has been created for you, but it also shows a lack of respect for the time and effort spent in its creation. Treating letters in this careful way, however, does raise some ethical questions around confidentiality and anonymity, an issue overcome with the use of modern technology.

When presenting qualitative data, anonymity is often provided by using pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants, comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR 2018) and meet institutional ethics procedures. The principle of anonymity remains the same with the correspondence method—identifying names and characteristics are removed to ensure the participant remains anonymous—yet the process is more complex than simply changing the words typed during transcription. To ensure original letters are not damaged or defaced, it is advisable to take digital copies, preferably with a high-resolution scanner. Once digitally imported, software such as Adobe Photoshop or Apple iPhoto can be used to 'touch up' the images, removing all identifying information. Not only will taking digital copies allow the researcher to ensure anonymity, the process will also keep a digital back-up of the data. Whilst great care can be taken to ensure original letters are secure, accidents can and do happen—multiple copies of all data ensure no data is lost.

Original letters, edited letters and back-up copies must be kept securely and ensure confidentiality. For original letters and material copies, a secure, lockable filing cabinet, accessible only by the researcher is essential. Keep the cabinet locked at all times—there are names, addresses and disclosures in letters that need protecting as a priority. For digital copies, ensure that all files are kept in password-protected folders on encrypted devices. Taking steps to ensure your data can only be accessed by you is essential to maintain confidentiality and ethical practice.

## Step 6—Transcription and Analysis

Having collected, stored and anonymised your data, the next stage of the correspondence method is analysis. The letters you receive from participants will likely contain mostly text—and one approach to analysis could be to treat it as such. Whether handwritten or typed, letters received from participants can be transcribed in a similar fashion to face-to-face audio recordings. These transcriptions can then be analysed using common qualitative analysis approaches, such as content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005), discourse analysis (Gee 2004) and narrative analysis (Maruna 2001). Whilst this may be a practical and useful utilisation of the data set collected, many of these methods miss the aesthetic value of the correspondence method. The entire experience; opening the letters, feeling and smelling the paper, running your fingertips over the imprint left by the pen—all of these factors combine to produce a closeness over distance (Chandler 1995). Reading a handwritten letter *feels* as though you are reading the thoughts of the participant, rather than a polished, edited version; for example, read the excerpts in Fig. 5.

### Transcript of Figure 5

I will never be able to draw a line on my past, even though its nearly 20 years ago and I'm very clearly a different man now. I will consider myself very lucky if I'll be able to find and employer that can see past my history and offer me a position based on what I can being to them. I don't hold out much hope though as I'm not allowed to move on by law.

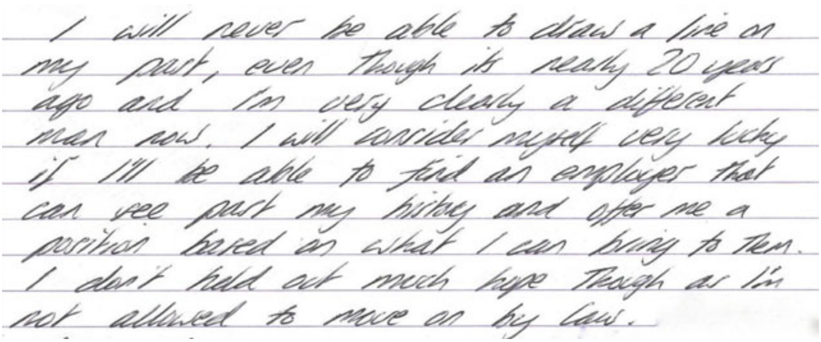

I will never be able to draw a line on my past, even though its nearly 20 years ago and I'm very clearly a different man now. I will consider myself very lucky if I'll be able to find an employer that can see past my history and offer me a position based on what I can bring to them. I don't hold out much hope though as I'm not allowed to move on by law.

**Fig. 5** Analysis example 1

The textual element of these statements is identical. Which version makes you feel closer to the author? Which one makes you picture the person writing the statement? There is something unique about a handwritten letter—the words arguably feel as though they contain more emotion, written first-hand rather than edited and replicated. The aesthetic impact of the letter is reduced simply by reproducing this letter in a textbook—you cannot feel or smell the paper when it is scanned and reprinted. This is one of the limitations of analysing correspondence in this way—only the researcher will ever experience the entire aesthetic value of the letters, and the sensory experience is very difficult to communicate to an audience. That being said, observe the expression of emotion in the example in Fig. 6.

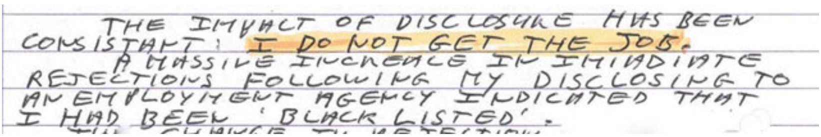

THE IMPACT OF DISCLOSURE HAS BEEN CONSISTANT: I DO NOT GET THE JOB. A MASSIVE INCREASE IN IMMEDIATE REJECTIONS FOLLOWING MY DISCLOSING TO AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY INDICATED THAT I HAD BEEN 'BLACK LISTED'.

**Fig. 6** Analysis example 2

### Transcript of Figure 6

> The impact of disclosure has been consistent: I do not get the job [highlighted]. A massive increase in immediate rejections following my disclosing to an employment agency indicated that I had been "black listed".

Which example of the same statement has more impact? Whilst textual transcription can describe to the reader how a statement has been said or written, it cannot duplicate the impact it has on the reader. Reading the handwritten statement, you can picture the author writing 'I do not get the job', feeling the emotional impact of what they have written and deciding that it needs highlighting. Just as emotion is difficult to present through a textual transcription of audio data, so too is emotion portrayed through the transcription of written letters. By analysing the aesthetic qualities, the material aspects of letters received through the correspondence method, the researcher and the audience that the research is disseminated to are able to appreciate the feelings and emotions of participant at the time of writing.

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the correspondence method of qualitative inquiry as a practical and innovative data collection method. Through multiple examples of existing studies, the correspondence method has been shown to be both practical and adaptable across a number of research topics and disciplines. Both the participants and the researcher have the time and flexibility to reflect on their responses—with the opportunity to create a rich, in-depth data set. Building a 'distanced rapport' (Letherby and Zrodowski 1995), researchers are able to transcend large geographical spaces to collect data from otherwise hard-to-reach groups. Stigmatised and isolated participants may respond well to the 'pen-pal' (Kralik et al. 2000) nature of the correspondence method, revealing intimate thoughts and feelings otherwise hidden away.

Due care and attention should be exercised, however, as a lack of face-to-face interaction means emotion can at times be difficult to interpret and empathy challenging to present. In day-to-day life we regularly see text messages and emails misinterpreted and in some instances offence or upset caused. The same potential for misinterpretation exists when using the correspondence method—participants can relatively easily misinterpret the researcher's questions and the lack of face-to-face immediacy makes clarification a slow and sometimes complex process. That being said, I found exchanging letters with my participants highly engaging and rewarding. The experiences of 'putting pen to paper' and receiving letters, each with their own smell, texture and artistic individuality, made the research process both practical and enjoyable and offered a new and exciting way of gathering a rich and emotionally charged data set.

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# A Poetic Approach to Researching Silence in Organisations

Andrew Armitage and Diane Ramsay

I dream of a house, a low house with high
Windows, three worn steps, smooth and green
A pure secret house, as in an old print,
That only lives in me, where sometime I return,
(To sit down and forget the grey day and the rain)
(Andre Lafon)

## Introduction

This chapter was inspired by a research project that explored how individuals perceive their organisational experiences. In order to uncover those silent encounters and stories that are otherwise left untold we turned to Grisoni and Collins' (2012) work on poem houses. Poem houses have the potential to uncover stories and emotional responses to workplace encounters that may not be captured by traditional qualitative research methods,

A. Armitage (✉) · D. Ramsay
Business and Law Faculty, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK
e-mail: Andrew.armitage@anglia.ac.uk

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such as interviews, focus groups and participant observation (Grisoni and Collins 2012: 18). Poem houses create opportunities for different forms of engagement and interpretation, provoking both intellectual and emotive responses. In this chapter, we share our insights into the issues, practices and processes involved in using poem houses as a method of research.

Research into sensitive and difficult topics is becoming a prevalent part of organisation studies. As such, we are expecting participants to share their experiences that might otherwise be difficult to relive or proscribed from the organisational discourse. Organisational silence, then, has become an emergent area of enquiry (Vakola and Bouradas 2005; Donaghey et al. 2011). Employee silence refers to situations in which employees intentionally or unintentionally (Tangirala and Ramanujam 2008) withhold information that might be useful (Milliken and Morrison 2003). Within organisations, people often have to make decisions about whether to speak up or remain silent—whether to share or withhold their ideas, opinions and concerns. Vokola and Bouradas (2005) explain how a climate of silence can manifest itself between managers and employees, and in conflicts between employees. Their findings suggest that it is senior leadership attitudes towards silence and a lack of communication opportunities that undermine employee voice. As Milliken et al. (2003: 1462) note “employees often do not feel comfortable speaking to their bosses about organisational problems or issues that concern them as they are afraid of the consequences of speaking up including the possibility that nothing will change”.

So how might the poetic voice help unearth some of these silent issues? Donaghey et al. (2011) offer a dialectical interpretation of employee silence that challenges the idea that organisational silence is a “communicative choice” of individual employees. Instead, they ask for more research that explores why employees may be reluctant to “break the silence”. Engaging with alternative methods, is we argue, a useful way to support silent employees to speak out.

## The Poetic Voice of the Organisation

"Poems, surrounded by space and weighted by silence, break through the noise to present an essence" (Leavy 2009: 63). Poems can help individuals to express their emotional experiences and inner voice (Richardson 1997). Within and through poetry and poetic practice individuals develop a sense of being, to comprehend and respond to their lived reality of ideas, feelings, perceptions and experiences. It is where they can share and exchange intimate and personal stories. As Faulkner (2005) argues, poetry engages and evokes emotions, promotes human connection and understanding, and is often politically charged. She goes on to say that poetry is used when prose is insufficient for an individual to communicate their message. This suggests that many researchers use poetic representation as a means of evoking emotional responses in readers and listeners in an effort to produce some shared experience. Poetry offers a mode of engagement for the imagination to play, and where the senses meet the external world—a place of a conscious aesthetic state of existence to express the inexpressible—to utter the unspoken. It is a place of aesthetic playfulness, where the silence of our inner conscious feelings can be broken.

Islam and Zyphur (2006: 44) in their exploration of Robert Frost's poetics of work, note how Frost's poetry addresses the unspoken and silent existential expression and significance of work for people in their organisational environments. They advocate "that the exploration of poetry gives theoretical and epistemic insights to organisational life" (Islam and Zyphur 2006: 534). As Rich (1995: 84) notes, "Every poem breaks the silence that had to be overcome". These sentiments are echoed by Leggo (2008: 167) who observes that "As a poet I grow more and more enamored with the echoes of wonder, mystery and silence that I hear when I attend to the words and world all around me".

Silence and voice are also important for Hiley (2006). At the heart of her work she reveals the links between managers developing their reflective practice and the emergence of poetic expression in their writing. Hiley describes how she ran a university programme helping business leaders, managers, professionals and consultants develop their abilities to lead and manage change projects. Hiley reflects over the twelve years of the programme and identifies a link between reflective practice and the emergence of poetry, where poetic expression for many, emerged on the margins of what can be said in words. Hiley (2006) posits the notion of "the great silencing of the voices of the poetic", where "every single participant has a wonderful 'voice' with which to speak of their thoughts, feelings personal and professional practice and the change initiative itself" (Hiley 2006: 566).

Cooper and Burrell (1988) have drawn upon Foucault's work of discursive formation within the context of organisational silence in order to create new perspectives and to show how individuals are "suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" (Geertz 1973: 5). It is argued that discursive formations can intensify the conditioning of the silent employee based on the power aspect of the discourse itself. When speaking, or writing, takes place in certain contexts, this can have an effect in terms of whether an employee remains silent or voices their opinions and concerns. Discourse is the product of the dominant power interests in organisations. These interests can perpetuate themselves based upon the ideology that is represented through them. However, it is only more recently, according to Edwards et al. (2009) that organisational silence has begun to attract the attention of several organisational scholars (see, for example, Pinder and Harlos 2001; Van Dyne et al. 2003; Detert and Edmondson 2006; Edwards and Gardner 2007; Milliken et al. 2003; and Premeaux and Bedian 2003). Whilst these studies foreground the fundamental decisions that people make in the workplace to express their ideas and concerns, or whether it is possible to even do so, they do not advance approaches and methods as to how individuals can break the status quo of organisational silence in order to challenge the dominant discourse.

## Poetry and Business

Poetry has been used as a way to help those who work in organisational settings to explore and tell their stories through consciousness-raising accounts, enabling individuals to make sense of their situations (Armitage 2014). Poetry does not rely upon the strictures and formal structures of conventional literary work and storytelling. Instead, they allow metaphors and memories to be explored so that individuals might come to terms with their situated reality. Poetry provides a mode for individuals to confront complex environments by reducing their complexity into understandable approaches. It helps to facilitate a sense of empathy and understanding of the world, to develop the self. In creating a space for individuals to express the unsayable, poetry offers an alternative voice to the dominant organisational discourse (Armitage 2014). As David and McIntosh (2005: 84) note "Poetry is too important to be left to poets. It would be much better if it belonged to everyone, producers and consumers alike. In work and in business, poetry could be a powerful tool for deepening reason and logic through the use of emotion and imagination".

Clare Morgan (2010), in her book *What Poetry Brings to Business*, explores the deep but unexpected connections between business and poetry. Morgan (2010) demonstrates how the creative energy, emotional power and the communicative complexity of poetry relate directly to the practical need for innovation and problem solving that confronts managers. She shows how poetry might unpack complexity and flexibility of thinking, to better understand the thoughts and feelings of others. She argues this not only aids the creative process but it can help facilitate the entrepreneurial culture of an organisation by developing imaginative solutions, and help better understand chaotic environments (Darmer and Grisoni 2011). Poetry, as an aesthetic conscious state of existence, provides a mode of engagement for the imagination to play where the senses meet the external world. It allows aesthetic playfulness where the silence of our inner conscious feelings can be broken.

Poets see things through sensuous experience, providing them a sense of freedom to express the inexpressible and to utter the unspoken founded from experiences encapsulated within the boundaries of organisational structures, rules and regulations (see, for example, David and McIntosh 2005). Leavy (2009: 63) reminds that poems are "Sensory scenes created with skilfully placed words and purposeful pauses; poems push feelings to the forefront capturing heightened moments of social reality as if under a magnifying glass". It has the ability to provide insights through metaphor and linguistic negotiation. As a literary text, poetry presents an individual's experiences through the self-referential use of language that creates new understandings (Hanauer 2010; Leggo 2008).

Whilst poem houses are a recent arrival within management development and leadership programmes (Grisoni and Collins 2012), their legacy can be found in assemblage. Assemblage is an artistic form or medium that consists of three-dimensional elements projecting out of or from a substrate. Whilst similar to collage, which is a two-dimensional medium, it is part of the visual arts that uses "found objects" to create the final artefact. The use of assemblages can be traced back to the Russian artist Vladimir Tatin's "counter-reliefs" in the second decade of the twentieth century. The use of assemblages has more recently been adopted by organisations and practitioners alike as an Arts Based Intervention (ABI) to explore the "inner workings" of organisational life. To explore the feelings and emotions of those who occupy these spaces, expressing them as they do through a visual poetic narrative. For example, Grisoni and Collins (2012) use poem houses as a form of leadership inquiry, which bring together poetry and assemblage, by means of a layered collage, juxtaposed with words and images.

As Grisoni and Collins (2012) note the creation of poem houses led to new insights into organisational experiences but also the process of making artefacts led to deep learning and a more holistic way of engaging with leadership and management issues. Poem houses offer a way of engaging with lived experience which, whilst similar to pictures and collages their three-dimensionality provides a more nuanced mode of representation, as can be seen in the examples detailed later in the chapter. Using poem houses thus brings poetry and art into dynamic combination in the process of their creation, prompting new ways to engage participants in breaking their silence. What follows are examples drawn from workshops that we have conducted for public and private sector managers. Within these workshops we explored with participants what work means in their organisations.

## Poem Houses as a Method of Enquiry

Poem houses can be likened to a narradrama intervention that borrows from psychology, sociology, anthropology, experimental theatre and other forms of expressive arts to help a person become aware of internalised narratives (Dunne 2006). Here the construction of a storied landscape provides the participant with the opportunity to produce narratives that explore their situatedness and to offer possibilities for change. As Dunne (2006: 26) notes poem houses exemplify "the inter-relationships among the arts and the ability of one art form to expand and enhance another" by working with the written word or with an image created from found objects. It can be a method of opening spaces for participants to experience deeper insight (Dunne 2006: 27). As such, the production of a poem house is the process of layering and juxtaposing images, objects and text. By assembling found objects and poetry into a box, a reflective space is created. Grisoni and Collins (2012: 35) note that "intermediality exists" in the assemblage of this art form. Here a coexistence and arrangement of mixed media in a single artefact evolves into a new art form. It is a way of understanding the relations between two media, for example, writing and images and the transgression of boundaries between them. This can open up spaces to question meaning and facilitate processes of reflection and sense-making.

Poem houses also intersect narrative research methods to represent new forms of story for meaning making. The three-dimensional assembly of objects and words can be likened to small black box theatre. It creates a space in which to explore relationships, time and place (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). In other words, a poem house begs the questions of its creator: What is my reality enclosed in this assemblage? What meaning can I encounter from the inside and outside of the poem house—my history, environment and time? The poem house, therefore, invites its creator to come to terms with and understand their personal experience which is at the foundation of narrative research. Such stories can be experienced and viewed in a poetic landscape through metaphor and symbolic imagery (Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Dewey 1934). Poem houses therefore offer participants new perspectives, allowing them to project feeling onto an object.

## Poem Houses: A How-to Guide

Here we will explain how we have used poem houses with a variety of participants from public and private sectors organisations. Drawing on a method of self-enquiry, often referred to as the "self-box" technique, used in art therapy projects (Waller 1993) participants were invited to create their own poem house to explore how they perceived their organisational reality.

## Context

The use of the poem house method needs to be carried out within a "culture of safety" and collaboration where individuals can exchange stories, experiences and perspectives within the safety of "culture circles" or what are sometimes termed as dialogue groups (Armitage 2014). Those conducting dialogue groups do not actually lead, but rather "interprets the communication of the group and the social matrix, remaining in the background as much as possible and helping the group take responsibility for itself" (Waller 1993: 43). However, those leading dialogue groups need to be what Waller (1993) terms the interpersonal leader, being a "facilitator of interpersonal transactions and as a fellow traveller in the journey of life; taking an increasingly background role, he attends to the language, both verbal and physical, that is used in the group and its meaning" (Waller 1993: 43). Zander and Zander (2002: 174) call these "environments for possibility" where "we come to trust that these places are dedicated to the notion that no one will be made wrong, people will not be talked about behind their backs, and there will be no division between us and them".

## Process

Participants were introduced to the task. They were asked to address the following question: How do you perceive your organisation? They were then presented with an array of art-based materials, for example, coloured tissue paper, paints, coloured crayons, coloured card and paper and a selection of boxes, some of which could be unfolded in order to allow their insides to be "decorated" as they saw fit. Participants are provided with a cardboard cube template that can be assembled into a box, or ready-made boxes. This allows the inside surfaces of the poem house to be decorated with material, painted, written on, and cut to insert openings, such as windows and doors.

They were given two hours to use art materials to describe and portray their organisation. They were also asked to write a 200–300-word poem to connect their assemblage to words. Figure 1 offers some useful guidelines for participants, especially those new to poetry who might be daunted by the prospect of writing a poem.

The only intervention made by the researchers was to periodically ask each of them what they were constructing or writing, and to take photographs of the process in action. The task was concluded though a group feedback session where participants discussed their artworks in an open and supportive culture.

***Understandability:*** Can the reader grasp the essence as to what is going on? Can those writing poetry convey their message in a clear and (hopefully) concise manner?

***Believability:*** How credible is the poem? What do we learn about the writer's situational experiences? Is it something we can empathise and sympathise with? Are these based on real life experiences? Are the poets autobiographical and biographical accounts based in a lived experience of working cultures?

***Situational knowledge:*** Is there a hidden truth contained within the poem? What does it say about work environments' values? Do the poems reveal credible accounts of work place relationships? Do they reveal the optimistic or pessimistic undertones of organisations work?

***Engagement:*** Can the poet convey a sense of engagement with their created verse — language, rhythm, and imaginability?

**Fig. 1** Guidelines for Participants

## Ethics

The ethical issues of using the poem house method are fundamentally not so different from other types of research. However, it is important to be sensitive to the multiplicity of considerations here including protecting anonymity of participants, protecting organisational confidentiality, ensuring that participants do not psychologically "self-harm" when producing and relaying back the stories contained in the production of their poem house. Whilst we have used group sharing of individuals' perceptions of their organisations, we also respect those who do not want to take part in these sessions.

As is the case for more traditional forms of qualitative inquiry we commence the workshops in which the poem house method will be employed by giving out Participant Consent Forms, and Participant Information Sheets. These specifically offer all participants the opportunity to opt-out even before the workshop commences, or indeed at any time during the poem house production process.

We are conscious that, as facilitators, we must be aware of participants opening up inner thoughts—putting emotional baggage out in the open is not a comfortable experience for some participants. They may be the victims of their perceived and lived experience of their organisation, and this may be a difficult issue to share with others. These eventualities need to be tackled even before they arise, and the use of a pre-workshop meeting can head off many, if not all, of these problematic situations; it enables those who are unsure to ask any questions and get a better sense of what they will be asked to undertake.

## Analysis and Findings

This can prompt several questions for the participatory dialogic process to consider, for example:

- Do the poems draw attention to common practice of organisational life?

- Can a poem help shed light upon emotional issues in organisations and how might we resolve these?
- Are there any common themes contained within the poems and if there are contradictions how can be explained these?
- To what extent do the poems address or contradict conventional theories or organisational culture or leadership?
- Does a poem tell us about the current climate of organisational life and how we might be able to address unfairness, ethical dilemmas, or suggest good practice?

Whilst we have given an insight into the use of poems houses as means of organisational inquiry, we argue their use as a research method is equally applicable. As we noted earlier in the introduction, we used poem houses for a research project we were both involved in to investigate how individuals feel and experience their lived reality. What we found was that the poem house method helped to uncover silent encounters and stories. As such poem houses can work on more than one level. As an inquiry data collection method, it can stimulate questions for further debate, as in the case of those individuals described in the vignettes. This being a dynamic process of coming to know and understand the world—a stance that is essential to the way knowledge is created. Inquiry is based on the understanding of people working and conversing together as they pose and solve problems, make and test discoveries. It provides a means of creating conceptual and theoretical frameworks to answer research questions. Furthermore, poem houses encapsulate the "movement" from research inquiry to research method in a Freirean dialogue in which data can be analysed and interpreted vocally using "standard" qualitative data coding and thematic development techniques. This approach facilitates a sensitivity to meaning, context and relations that would otherwise have remained hidden and silent in complex organisational ecologies.

Consequently, we argue that the poem house method, embedded in a Freirean participatory approach to research offers not just an insight into individual meaning making but also into the collective. Participants in the poem house method became part of a community of peers sharing their experiences with one another. When using the poem house method, we saw the potential for them contributing to organisational community—the sharing of data being articulated directly towards a common issue/set of issues in the public display of poem houses. Furthermore, it also facilitates deeper insights than perhaps traditional qualitative research methods can offer—the creative dimension going beyond rational ways of knowing as a means to help articulate concerns and experiences. In the post-making phase, the poem house method has enabled participants to engage in a peer review process—both in the research environment, and in their places of work. This enables participants, by being challenged by others, to gain a more insightful perspective of their organisational reality. However, the use of the poem house method does not end after the initial stage of the research process; it continues to prove of benefit when participants themselves gather data using this method. In other words, their research participants explore their organisations and share their (common) organisation experiences with each other, thus generating data for organisational researchers, such as those we have described in this chapter.

## Presentation of Findings

By "exhibiting" their poem houses, individuals can make their "installations" accessible to non-academic audiences by communicating their "voice" in organisational language that makes sense to them and their colleagues (see, for example, Mitchell et al. 2011; Foster 2012; Keleman and Hamiltion 2015; Coemans and Hannes 2017). Organisational communities can often be alienated from knowledge production because of the specialised academic language used by researchers (Diver 2014)—poem houses regain a "knowable narrative" through the spoken—dialogue groups, and the written word—the poem, through the medium of assemblage. Dialogue and the poetic form can allow wider organisational conversations by connecting emotions that may be lying dormant (Lawrence 2008).

Whilst the impact and resonance of the poem houses is best experienced in person to appreciate the multi-modality and three-dimensionality, the benefit of the process is in the meaning making and experience sharing. In many ways, this can be communicated effectively through text and images (as we have done in this chapter). With the growth of arts-based and visual methods, many journal publications are now sympathetic to the need to reproduce images as part of their publication strategy. More recently, we have also seen some journals producing podcasts of publications. This oral presentation offers real opportunities for poetic methods of research as they allow the research, or indeed, participants to recite their poetry in person.

**Vignette 8.1: The Treasure Chest**

The Treasure Chest (Fig. 2) was created by a participant who worked in the public sector, and wanted to explore how government funding had impacted their work environment. They wanted to explore what they termed a "golden age" of the organisation and to compare this with their contemporary situation, saying that:


**Fig. 2** Treasure Chest

My (black painted) box is painted like a treasure chest. The treasure inside contains golden tissue paper, hidden right at the bottom, is representative of the "golden age" of our organisation and the charity sector when we were better funded, and the organisational culture and staff morale were healthier. The glitter and silver balls inside are our staff and service users. The silver foil escaping out the sides is our staff who are leaving since we have changed their conditions, cut salaries and restructures, and our service users whose quality of support is decreasing. Both due to funding cuts. The treasure chest (our organisation) is on fire, inevitably due to recent changes, we have tried to plug the gaps in the organisation (holes in the treasure chest) with money, but there isn't enough. The man in blue is representative of our government who is standing away from our organisation with his back to us.

Inside the box the following poem was inscribed:

This organisation once a treasure chest,
Was top of the league – one of the best,
Now gone are those days of better funding,
All the staff are up and running,
Our treasure chest – once a place of glitter and silver,
Is the victim of cuts – but can we deliver,
The longing of days of a healthier culture,
Replaced by the circling government vulture.

(Participant A)

### Vignette 8.2: Loss of Vision

Another poem house, created by a participant who worked in a small medium enterprise, in the private sector, depicted a set of "swirly circles" on its top (Fig. 3). They stated that this represented chaos, disruption and a loss of vision by the organisation. The inside contained yellow paper sticks that signified that the organisation was 'a can of worms' once you dug beneath its outer layers.

The outside of the house (four sides and bottom) was covered in a poem that read as follows:

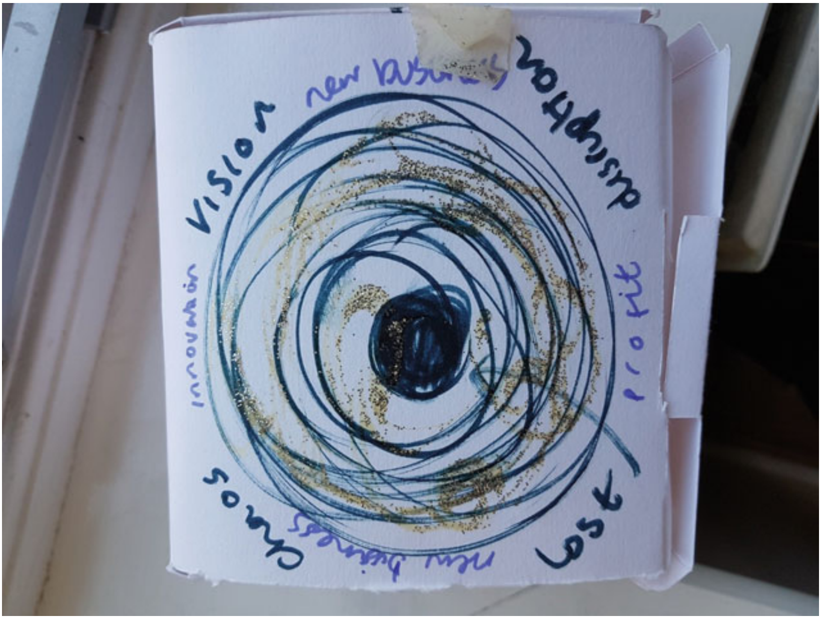


**Fig. 3** Loss of Vision

The wise old owl has a rainbow view,
In his glitter ball world, he knows what to do,
Let's pass it on down to my next in line,
He'll pass on my vision and it will be fine.

I love my boss he really is great,
Passed on some things I need to relate,
To my purpose and role,
But I'm not sure how,
So, I'll just chuck over the fence,
To my deputy owl.

I'm trying my best to perform as requested,
Without much guidance or direction provided,
I'm probably sure there's some rules or regulations to follow,
To increase profit and make savings,
I think HR's knowledge I'll borrow.

Another huge project has landed our way,
We guide and highlight risk,
And wander who's in charge today,
Whose bright idea was yet another restructure,
More change and disruption,
Whose help and buy in can one department muster.

We are the minions in this master plan,
Just pushed and pulled through the visions,
Of our glitter ball man.

### Vignette 8.3: Faceless

Another poem produced by a participant who worked in a large multi-national organisation, wanted to explore organisational isolation, and their poem house revealed some very (personal) feelings of organisational reality (Figs. 4 and 5). The poem house was covered in writing with comments on the outside and within.

The participant summed up their analysis of their organisation as follows:

> The directors are faceless, not see or known around the business. The company seems to change direction every year, but the problem being that the direction isn't known by the employees in the first place. We have an executive board of three, each with their own agenda nor knowing fully what their role entails, so they are unable to tell the business – this has lasted one year! Then it was changed back to one country manager – but still no direction given other than to cut costs. We have no vision – short, medium or long term – we don't know – so we have to guess. The only communication is to cut costs – but can we put a price on knowledge and experience? Growth has been through acquisition – sixty-four sites across the UK – completely disseminated, no harmonisation, and no uniformity. People that have been there for years are leaving because they don't like where and what the company is doing. There is a general feeling of who will be next or who will be next. The business is completely reactive – reaching to the market rather than reading ahead – no PESTEL or SWOT – these have never been done – no business plan.

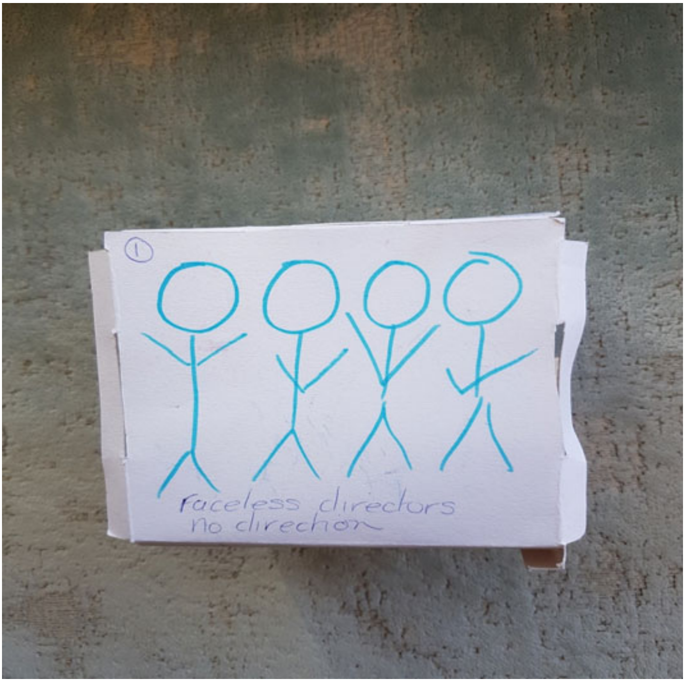


**Fig. 4** Faceless (exterior)

The following short poem also captured these sentiments as follows:

Reactive – who's next
What's next,
Just faceless directors,
No direction,
No connection,
What's the vision?
Just division,
Changing faces,
Changing places,
Different agenda's,
We can't remember,
The cost:
Knowledge, experience – priceless,
The loss of people – terminal crisis.


**Fig. 5** Faceless (interior)

### Vignette 8.4: Values

One respondent, who worked for small medium enterprise in the private sector “bucked the trend” of negativity expressed by other participants (Fig. 6). They wanted to research the “factors of success” in promoting what they termed, a “value driven organisation”. Their interpretation was shown through a covering of their poem house in smiley faces, the word “values”, and in bright red bricks. The inside was filled with red and black tissues paper.

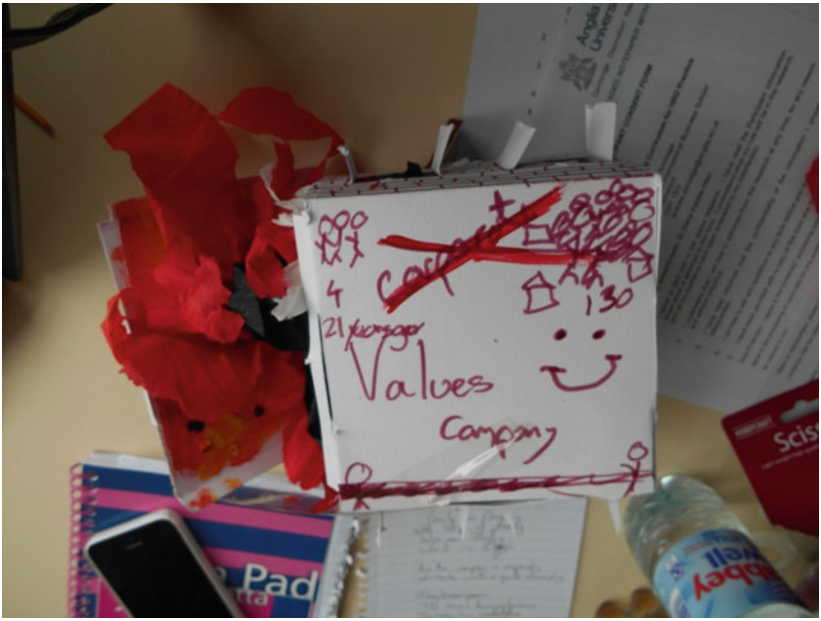


**Fig. 6** Values

Family run company,
With lots of money,
Helps out staff,
Work is a laugh,
As the company is expanding,
The work is quite demanding,
The owners know you by name,
The company has market fame,
Most people don't like change,
They think it's quite strange,
Overall, it's not bad,
Even though sometimes it makes you mad.

### Vignette 8.5: A Lack of Care

Figure 7 was created by a participant who worked for a private small medium enterprise in the health sector who wanted to explore what they called a dysfunctional culture of collaboration and a lack of care.

**Fig. 7** A Lack of Care

The outside of the box demonstrates the vision/values and the employer branding the organisation wants to promote – those of compassion, collaboration, and being a caring organisation. However, the reality is quite different – there is a lack of care. The box is packed with tissue paper to demonstrate chaos. The colours (orange and yellow) are bright to show stress level and pressure. Inside the box the (painted) lines show confusion. The pound signs demonstrate cost focus and pressure to reduce resources. There are a few yellow stars (on the underside of the lid) to demonstrate a number of staff are making a positive impact. The pictures of the monkeys (which were on one the side of the poem house) demonstrate some employed may be perceived to be out of their depth and have been appointed to the wrong roles within the organisation

The bosses say we value collaboration,
We are caring and full of compassion,
So, where have these flown amid the chaos,
Time and deadline pressure from my boss,
Some are trying to make an impact,
But the reality is different and that is a fact,
We are led by those who are just plain incompetent,
No compassion or care to be seen anywhere –
The need for profit - the company are hell bent.

## Challenges and Limitations to Be Aware of

As a form of participatory action research, we would argue tapping into the latent potential of employees can readily affect organisational initiatives more effectively as common issues are thrown squarely into the limelight. This form of research we suggest can help assess approaches that might contribute towards the reviewing of relationships with the organisation. We argue that arts-based research methods can facilitate a safe space for individuals to dialogue with others, for example, verbalising issues that may be difficult to broach (Coemans and Hannes 2017). In many ways the use of the Freirean participatory action research approach blurs the boundary between an individual self-learning experience, and the wider community of practitioners in which they work i.e. it is learning as research and research as learning. When handling data generated in the form of a poem, we are not advocating any "special techniques" for data analysis.

Another aspect that we have experienced in the post-making phase is the issue of trust. Whilst getting organisational buy-in to undertake poem houses as an investigatory method, is challenging, it is the outcomes from the "doing poem houses" process that can be problematic. As we have noted, sharing and dialogue are central to our approach and this requires trust. It means, because poems houses are a public artefact, participants must be reassured that any feedback and critique is to be taken in the spirit of organisational learning and is part of an informed research process. As Schiuma (2008: 245) notes "in order to guarantee the production of positive benefits for the organisation, artists and business people have to shape a mutual trustful relationship". This is a necessary condition to overcome employee diffidence and scepticism.

In our experience, participants embrace the opportunity to express often suppressed views through visually and poetic means. It has allowed individuals to express their inner creativity. This liberating pedagogy of self-discovery is at the heart of Paulo Freire's dialogical process and the individual's realisation of their lived reality as they attain a state of critical consciousness of their in-the-world experience (Freire 1970, 1972, 1974). However, for some, poem houses can be daunting. When confronting the reluctant participant, it has to be emphasised that producing a poem house is not about doing "good art", nor is it a competition with other colleagues to produce "good art". Rather, it is concerned with the meaning for the individual in the creation of the poem house itself. Common issues and problems we have encountered are typically: "I am not artistic"; "I never have never liked art—I don't understand it"; "I don't have a clue how I should begin to connect stuff going on in my workplace and producing a poem house". In response to these objections, we have suggested the following topics/themes to participants that might help to breakdown the task at hand and to offer some potential sites of focus:

**The work space:** Work spaces can be territorial, oppressive, precious, individualistic, personal and beautiful. What about the physical size, smells, how light reflects across it or perhaps the "fixtures and fittings" that exist there. How do you interact with your work space? Is there beauty in your work space?

**Vision and values:** Do you have an organisational vision or value statement? What are the points it tries to get across to those who work in the organisation? Does it ring true in practice, or is it a fantasy? If you have access to your vision or mission statement can you re-write this a poem? If you don't have access to it can you write your organisation's vision or values statement as you perceive it being practised in everyday organisational life?

**The presentation:** Have you given a presentation in your organisation—maybe to your peers, management, or visitors? Could you write a poem as a PowerPoint presentation of a meeting that you have presented or attended? Can you re-write one of your slides as a poem?

**Organisational power:** This is often determined by positional authority; the higher in the hierarchy the more power and authority people have. What are the reporting structures? Is a bureaucracy or a collegium? How does information flow in the organisation: top down or in all directions? Write a poem about the hierarchy of our organisation or one you have experienced.

**Organisational culture:** Can you define yours? Can you "feel" it? Do you live it? Do you reject it? How do you respond to it? Has it changed over time—for better or worse? What organisational cultural obstacles have you encountered in your organisation?

**The working day:** What motivates you to go to work? Money? Camaraderie? Friendship? Because you just love your job? Do you feel engaged? Do you feel alienated? Is there beauty in your work? Write a poem that expresses your working day/life.

**Giving a speech:** This can be daunting. If you have given a speech what did you feel? Excited? Trepidatious? Nauseated? Exhilarated? Nervous? Laid back? Write a speech that tells of how you felt and coped with the occasion. If you have given a speech do you have the text you wrote and read from? If you have, could you re-write this in poetic form? Do you have a favourite speech given by a business leader, or a political or cultural leader? Could you re-write this as a poem?

**Organisational crisis:** Organisations often face and go through crisis. Have you experienced crisis in your organisation or one that you have worked for? How did you cope? How did you and/or your colleagues feel? What caused it? How did the organisation respond to it? Who took the flack?

**The dream job:** Have you ever had a dream job—perhaps one you dreamt of as a child? How did it turn out? Did it live up to your expectations? If it did in what way? If it did not what went wrong? What was good? What was bad?

**Organisational conflict:** Dealing with organisational conflict can be an unwanted distraction. It can take place out of sight behind the closed doors of the boardroom, but its consequences invariably impact those who work within the organisation. It can take place more visibly in "the office" and the consequences of those involved and caught up in these conflicts can live long in the corporate memory. Have you been party to organisational conflict? Were you the victim? The instigator? Bystander? How was it relived? Was it resolved? What caused it? What emotions were expressed in the conflict: fear? Anger?

**Being let go:** Have you ever lost your job? How did you feel? React? Fight back? What did you learn about yourself? Did it affect your personal relationships and friendships? How did it affect your identity? Has the experience effected how you view work—do you work to live or do you live to work?

**The digital age:** Technology and social media is now part of our working lives. How has it affected how your workplace runs? Do you use social media or twitter in the workplace? Is it for the good or the bad? If you have access to your organisation's Facebook or twitter account, can you create a poem to describe or re-write the messages posted or re-tweeted? Can you do the same for e-mails?

**Retirement:** This was once seen as the "finishing line" for a career or job. Today retirement does not necessarily mean the end of working life. The changing economic situation and demographic trends mean that many will have to work longer. How do you feel about this? Has a colleague actually retired; were you happy, sad, envious, or relieved? Can you imagine a time in the future when you might retire? How do you feel about this? Do you see this as a day of dread or one of opportunity?

## Reflections

Using assemblage helps give confidence to "non-poets" to explore feelings via the poetic art form. The use of poem houses also gave us, as researchers, the opportunity to explore the boundaries beyond the traditional norms of qualitative social research—for example, the use of participatory dialogue groups to unpack what might be mundane aspects of organisational life. For us, poetry as an arts-based method of research offers a re-making of the social and political. As Lather and St. Pierre (2013: 635) note post-qualitative research is about "imagining and accomplishing an inquiry that might produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently".

The production of new knowledge using poem houses, whilst like all qualitative research is an emergent process, is not guided by the dictates of prescribed methods. Rather, it is a creative endeavour fuelled by and guided by self-expression through the hapticity of making, interpretation and the sharing of experience through dialogue. As Pelias (2004) advocates, the use of dialogues, short stories and poems can be used to capture the human experience—they can give us insights that stay in our memories and part of a collective unconsciousness. By using assemblage alongside poetry, we unearth hidden truths and underlying stories that matter to an individual through a creative process. The writing element of a poem house can be daunting to "non-poets", however we emphasise that (and advocate) poetry is for everyone not those who are, or are regarded as poetically gifted.

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Check for updates

# Photography: Using Instagram in Participant-Led Field Studies

Harriet Shortt and Samantha Warren

## Introduction—Advances in Visual Methods

The ideas in this chapter have their heritage in the tradition of 'visual organisation studies', a field we have been involved in developing over the past fifteen years. In particular we have been working with participant-led photography as a way of gathering data in numerous participatory field studies located in a variety of organisational contexts, including hairdressing (Shortt 2010, 2015; Shortt and Warren 2012), office work (Warren 2002, 2008, 2014; Shortt 2018), hospitals, university buildings (Shortt 2019) and accountancy (Warren and Parker 2009; Parker and Warren 2017). We understand the term participant-led photographic field studies

H. Shortt (✉)
University of the West of England, Bristol, UK
e-mail: Harriet.shortt@uwe.ac.uk

S. Warren
University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, UK
e-mail: Samantha.warren@port.ac.uk

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to describe a methodology where research participants generate image-based data that connect with an empirical investigation of some aspect of their lives (e.g. see Vince and Warren 2012; Shortt and Warren 2019). These images might be part of a participants 'pre-existing' personal collection or have been made expressly for the needs of the study, but a central feature of the approach is that the photographer should be the participant. As well as producing images, the participant is also asked to attribute meaning and/or an explanation of their image to the researcher either during a research interview, or by supplying a captioning sentence.

This approach to generating data is rooted in visual sociology and social anthropology (Bateson and Mead 1942; Harper 1998; Collier and Collier 1986; Knowles and Sweetman 2004), and is where the use of photography in social research has brought a different perspective to the texture of people's lives, homes, communities and working practices. The past twenty years have seen significant contributions in this field and a growth in the debates in favour of visual representation rather than a reliance on purely textual accounts (Banks 2001; Pink 2001), as well as arguments for the value of more participatory methods. Placing the camera in the hands of the participants, the 'researched', allows for 'native image making' (Wagner 1979) and raises the voices of those that traditionally may not get heard and addresses the power balance between the researcher and the researched (Warren 2005). These advances in visual studies have also been propelled by the visual literacy present in our contemporary culture (Knowles and Sweetman 2004) where both visual representations of everyday and organisational life have become prevalent, as well as how we practically connect with, capture and share visual data through devices and online platforms.

Indeed, over this time, we have seen a fundamental shift in the way qualitative researchers have approached the use of visual methods, with technological advances being a major driving force for innovation. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, visual methods in business and management research were really just emerging as technology with cultural shifts enabling their spread and development. Over the last decade or so we have witnessed a growing interest among more mainstream management communities in harnessing the power of the visual to better understand organisational contexts (e.g. Meyer et al. 2013). In 2007 the

ESRC funded International Network for Visual Studies in Organization (*in*Visio) was founded, at the same time as the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management series of conferences on 'Imagining Business' (2008, 2011), followed by the 2010 Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism themed 'Vision'. Management journals have published special issues on the visual including, the *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal* (2009), *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* (2012) and *Culture and Organization* (2012), and two edited collections have been commissioned by the international publisher Routledge; Quattrone et al.'s (2011) *Imagining Organziations,* and Bell et al.'s (2014) handbook, *The Routledge Companion to Visual Organization.* Recognising this groundswell of interest, the ESRC further funded *in*Visio through a researcher development initiative (2010–2012) tasked with building capacity in visual methodologies among business and management researchers (www.moodle.in-visio.org).

Certainly, the popularity of visual methodologies is likely to grow in the future, particularly since the visual culture we live and work within has seen such exponential growth over the same period with the digital revolution, most notably the emergence and rapid rise of social media. 71% of North Americans have a social media profile and the worldwide number of social media users is expected to reach 3.02 billion by 2021, a threefold rise in just 10 years (Statista 2019a). The global number of Instagram users is now 1 billion (Statista 2019b). These statistics demonstrate how widespread these new communication tools are in the lives of global populations. Importantly for this chapter, we are also seeing a shift towards circulating and sharing images as well as text-based content (such as status updates and 'tweets')—3.8 trillion photographs are estimated to have been taken from the invention of the camera until 2011, yet 1 trillion were taken in 2015 alone (Kane and Pear 2016). This image-explosion is in large part due to advances in Internet bandwidth, mobile data networks, smartphone storage and cloud computing. However, as we have argued at length elsewhere, (e.g. see contributors to Bell et al. 2014; Warren 2009, 2018), the visual has been a powerful communicative medium taking up a variety of technological forms throughout its history (Manghani et al. 2006) and so these developments should be seen in that light.

Our specific interest here is the role visual social media now plays in everyday life offering a wealth of opportunities to researchers who wish to explore the activities, behaviours, views and experiences of their participants. Specifically, our aim in this chapter is to contribute to a 'new wave' of visual studies in a pragmatic and useful way, as well as a step-by-step guide on 'how to…' set up, design and manage a research project that incorporates such platforms. We aim to help researchers make well-informed decisions when considering how visual social media might be used in organisational field studies. This is important for the development of visual organisation studies as a methodological field,—not least to assist with gaining ethical approval from institutional committees and review boards.

## Why Use Social Media/Instagram in Organisational Field Studies?

The past five years have seen a growing body of research examining social media and its opportunities, challenges and risks for researchers. There are now a considerable number of studies of social media in relation to a range of organisation and management research questions. From questions of 'free labour' in the production of marketing content for brands on Facebook (Beverengen et al. 2015), to analyses of individuals' visual identity in Facebook (Uimonen 2013), through to the use of 'selfies' in constructing consumer identities (Iqani and Schroeder 2016; Kedzior et al. 2016), including how brands are destabilised by user-generated content (Rokka and Canniford 2016). Of the top 100 brands, 90% have an Instagram account, and a reported 60% of users have found new products through Instagram (Brandwatch 2019) which shows the potential Instagram may have for this kind of study. If we widen the scope of social media to include company websites, there is a broad range of research taking into account how organisations portray, construct and seek to control their images in a digital age. Interesting examples include BP's 'greenwashing' through images on its website (Kassinis and Panayiotou 2017), the marketing strategy for MBAs delivered by leading business schools (Elliot and

Robinson 2011), and analyses of anti-capitalist 'viral' videos (Bell and McArthur 2014).

However, there is a very little methodological commentary on the potential of user-generated visual social media content in organisational research. This is perhaps surprising given the everyday character of social media image-sharing and the extent to which users routinely use the app to communicate the goings-on of their day to one another. 60% of Instagram users log in daily, putting it second only to Facebook in terms of user engagement (Brandwatch 2019), and in 2016, users posted some 3.5 billion photos every *day* (ibid.). Methodological advice is now beginning to appear in relation to using social media in social research (e.g. Sloan and Quan-Haase 2017). Instructional texts on how to conduct ethnographic research using the internet are also now quite mature, with some entering their 2nd editions, e.g. Kozinets (2009) landmark text on 'netnography' which is now titled *Netnography: Redefined*, (Kozinets 2015) such is the speed at which social media and Internet technologies are changing. But save for Laestadius's (2017) chapter on 'Instagram' and Hand's (2017) chapter on 'Researching Social Media Images' in the *Sage Handbook of Social Media Research* (Sloan and Quan-Haase 2017) there is scant advice for a researcher who wishes to exploit these technologies for their field-study research, and understandably, few examples of researchers doing so. One exception to this is Sergi and Bonneau's (2017) work-in-progress, mining the hashtags that people give to their Instagram images of work. Although at an early stage of analysis, their findings show how assembling image-sets based on hashtags such as #officelife, #bankinglife, #workingonasunday, etc., reveal intimate, mundane and often backstage dimensions to everyday working lives that are not usually accessible to anyone but the participant. And in addition, McKeowan and Miller's recent article, *#tableforone: Exploring Representations of Dining Out Alone on Instagram* (2019 forthcoming), which also uses the visual data created by the image-set based on the hashtag #tableforone to explore individual's experiences of dining out alone and what more this can tell us about individual leisure practices in public spaces. Although such studies are vital in advancing our understanding of using Instagram as a resource in visual research, they nonetheless only focus on visual data *already produced* by participants, and not on images explicitly produced as part of a research project.

So, in line with our description of participant-led field studies above, we believe there are two main ways in which we see Instagram as a useful data generation tool for participant-led field studies. Firstly, the images on participants' existing Instagram accounts can be seen a personal archive that can be analysed in order to generate data about their lifeworlds and habits. The two studies we mention above (Sergi and Bonneau 2017; McKeowan and Miller 2019) are most closely associated with this approach, their strength being that the participant's time commitment is minimised (as the images already exist). Indeed, it may not be necessary for the participant to physically meet the researcher at all, because providing the Instagram feed is set to 'public' or access is granted to the researcher, the images will be accessible on any internet-enabled device capable of displaying graphics. Furthermore, since the images were generated from a 'natural' setting this might appeal to researchers striving to minimise their influence on the data collection. There is also an inherently historical and/or longitudinal aspect to Instagram feeds which could prove very useful to researchers interested in research questions with a temporal character, for example socialisation into a new profession, experiences of pregnancy or serious illness at work, or management of home-work identities. Particularly relevant to the last of these examples is the additional affordance of Instagram in that you can only upload photographs on a mobile device, meaning that images are emplaced (Laestadius 2017). Gomez Cruz (2016: 337) suggests this offers exciting possibilities for ethnographers to capture participants 'trajectories' for example by providing an emotional and sensorial way of virtually retracing steps. During research interviews, these images could act as powerful aide memoires for past happenings, given the iconic nature of photographs and their intimate fluting with memory and emotion (see Edwards and Hart 2004). Finally, for certain populations, the fact that Instagram may already be embedded in their visual/sociocultural practices offers the opportunity to probe those practices in ways that are already familiar to the participant, for example, asking why did you take that photo, like that, or use *that* filter and so on.

The second way we see potential in Instagram for participant-led field studies forms the rest of this chapter, through our worked example below. In short, this positions Instagram as a convenient repository and sharing tool for photographs made by participants expressly for the needs of the study, as a kind of diarying or storying technique.

## The Case of #myUWEBBSview: A Participant-Led, Visually Led Study of a Business School

In order to better explain the key things to do and consider when using Instagram as tool to generate and share data for the needs of a project, we present a case study drawn from our own research, called 'My UWE BSS View'—a visually led post-occupancy evaluation of a new Business School building at a UK University. At the time of writing this chapter, the project is ongoing.

### The Business School: A Visual Approach to Post-occupancy Evaluation

In April 2017 the Faculty of Business and Law moved into a new £55 million building on the Frenchay Campus of the University of the West of England (UWE), in Bristol in the UK. Bristol Business School, as the building is named, is now home to over 300 staff and 6000 students, and the building represents part of the wider University's 'Masterplan' project (UWE 2019) that aims to see the university develop one, consolidated campus and to create buildings and facilities that provide the latest facilities and learning environments for all users.

The architects of Bristol Business School, Stride Treglown, and the construction company, ISG Construction, approached Harriet and other members of the research team to suggest a collaborative research project examining the post-occupancy experiences of users in the new building could provide a unique and timely opportunity to investigate everyday life in this new space. Specifically, our industry funders were keen to design a post-occupancy evaluation (POE) that extends beyond current approaches to POE that are predominantly quantitative in nature and often provide only statistical information that focuses on the mechanics and practical functioning of a new building (see, for example, Capita 2017; HEFCE 2006; Williams 2001). In addition, Stride Treglown and ISG, who frequently specialise in designing and building Higher Education spaces, wanted this research to provide them with in-depth, rich data with which they may translate into further learnings for future buildings.

With this brief in mind, we decided to experiment with using Instagram to gather data about the building users 'on the spot', everyday encounters with their surroundings. Our rationale for doing so was that the majority of our potential research participants would be in possession of a smartphone with camera, enabling instant upload of images (and captions) throughout the course of their normal day; the Instagram app is free to download and use and is widely known; it has the capacity to include hashtag identifiers[1] that would make identification of the project data straightforward; and it includes functionality to caption images at the time of upload, something of importance to the method as we discuss further below. What we had not anticipated was the resistance to using Instagram that we would encounter on account of its deeply embedded social function as an identity-work device. But we will return to those issues later in the chapter.

## Research Design

Using social media, promotional postcards[2] (see Figs. 1 and 2), a project website (see Fig. 3) and other modes of communication, we recruited participants by asking them to take pictures of their spatial experiences in the building that addressed two simple questions that directed them to their sensory and 'emplaced' (Pink 2009) experiences:

1. How do you feel about the building?
2. How are you using the building?

[1]A hashtag is an identifying label that a social media user can append to their post in order to associate it with a particular topic, concept or social movement. It is then possible for other users (and curious researchers!) to call up all the posts that have been labelled with a particular hashtag in order to see them as a collection (see Laestadius 2017).

[2]To encourage people to pick them up and engage, the postcards were designed to be coloured in, as shown in Fig. 1.

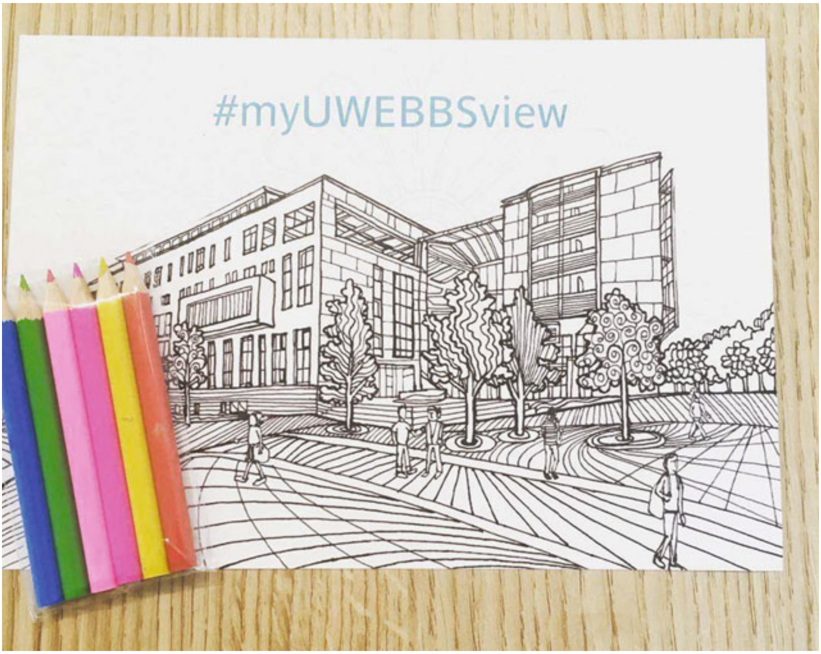


**Fig. 1** One of the promotional postcards used for the research project

We also asked participants to add a short caption explaining their reasons for taking the photograph, then post their images to Instagram using a dedicated project hashtag: #myuwebbsview. The importance of captions in participant-generated visual research will be discussed in more depth below, but briefly here, it is needed to enable appropriate analysis, ensuring the image can be coded according to the meaning it has for the participant (see also Shortt and Warren 2019: 543).

There was a great deal of discussion among the project team and the industry funders around what would be a suitable hashtag, given it has to be simple and memorable but equally not something so common that it could be used by another group, thereby contaminating our feed with pictures from other online discussions, debates and groups (Laestidius 2017: 576), and given #myuwe and #myuwebristol were hashtags already in use through the UWE Marketing team and followed and used by students, it made sense that our own project hashtag included this. In addition, the


**Fig. 2** Participant information on the back of our promotional postcards

abbreviation 'BBS' for 'Bristol Business School' was part of a common language internally and externally.

Overwhelmingly, one of the most complex parts of this project was seeking ethical approval, particularly given the use of Instagram and the public nature of the platform, as well as the potential for such a large sample size—all users of the building were being invited to take part and this included all visitors, staff, students and services. It is fair to say that ethical practices, guidelines and decisions made by university ethics committees are not keeping pace with the changing nature of visual methods especially with regards to social media and 'best practices', since these

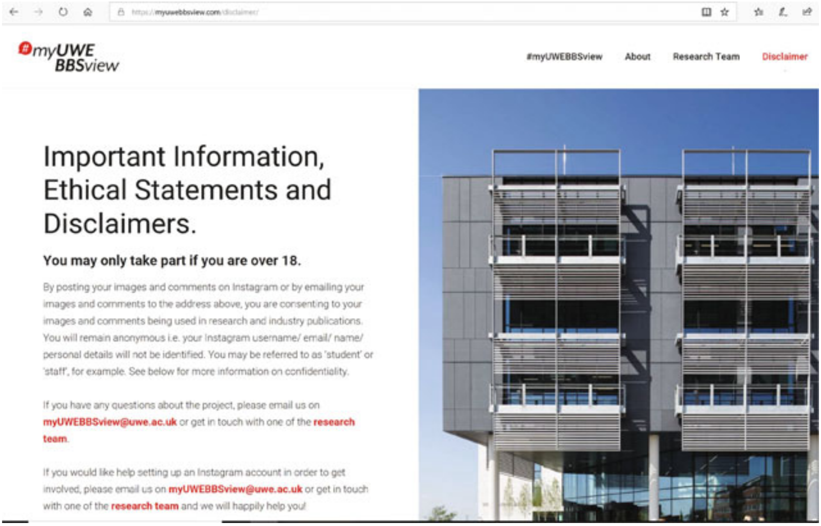


**Fig. 3** A snapshot from the ethics pages of our project website

guidelines themselves are still in their infancy. In our own practice, we have used guidelines set out by, for example, the International Visual Sociological Association (Papademas and The International Visual Sociology Association 2009) in order to ensure all project stakeholders were treated with appropriate respect and protection, particularly with regards to participant-led photography (Vince and Warren 2012). The main concern with such a project is how to maintain anonymity and privacy, and we worked closely with the university ethics committee to develop the final guidance. For example, we gave advice on how to blur faces in images that contained people, if prior permission to capture that person had not been granted, or if it was not possible to seek that permission. So, we included the following statement in our participant information online:

Taking care taking pictures:

> If possible, ask people for permission if they are the subjects of your photographs. Do not take photographs of confidential material and take care not to photograph anything which invades another person's privacy or contravenes your organizations' confidentiality policy (for example, visible

> contents of documents or computer screens). We will ensure all information is confidential and privacy remains protected. Any private information about the individual will not be made public with personal identifiers. All sources will remain anonymous and we will ensure any public use of visual data will adhere to consent agreements made with participants. During the lifetime of the project – January 2018 to December 2018 – a selection of images posted on Instagram will be re-published on the pages of our dedicated website. These images will be selected and moderated and agreed by all Parties (UWE, ISG and Stride Treglown) before publishing, including anonymising any obviously identifiable individuals.

We also gave guidance reminding participants to adhere to the social media terms of use for both the organisations (UWE) and Instagram itself, and the issues surrounding anonymity. A such, we also included the following paragraphs in our participant information online:

> *You may only take part if you are over 18.*
> By posting your images and comments on Instagram or by emailing your images and comments to the address above, you are consenting to your images and comments being used in research and industry publications. You will remain anonymous i.e. your Instagram username/email/name/personal details will not be identified. You may be referred to as 'student' or 'staff', for example. See below for more information on confidentiality. If you have any questions about the project, please email us on myUWEBBSview@uwe.ac.uk or get in touch with one of the research team.
>
> If you would like help setting up an Instagram account in order to get involved, please email us on myUWEBBSview@uwe.ac.uk or get in touch with one of the research team and we will happily help you!
>
> *The Instagram feed:*
> #myUWEBBSview will be viewed publicly and will be used as a tool for discussion in a number of research-based focus groups and interviews with members of e.g. the student body, academic staff, alumni, the Executive team, and external business partners.
>
> Please adhere to UWE Social Media regulations and take particular care not to capture personal identity information in your photographs
>
> Please adhere to Instagram.

> You are free to withdraw from the study without needing to justify your decision and without prejudice. The fixed and final date for withdrawal is the 31st December 2018. Should you wish to withdraw for any reason, any data you have contributed will be excluded from the research.

In addition, and given that our participant group was potentially so large, we had to consider how best to communicate this participant information and our ethical guidelines and permissions. We used the promotional postcards (see Figs. 1 and 2) and the project website (see Fig. 3) to do this and gave detailed notes to this effect in our ethics application.

## Encouraging Participation: The Social Character of Instagram

Participant take-up and use of Instagram to contribute to the project was initially encouraging and overall, the project did generate some 267 useable posts for analysis (although this is in addition to over 500 images received via the private project email account!). However, it soon became noticeable that *student* users of the building were reluctant to engage with Instagram (but they *were* sending images and comments to the project email account). We also found staff and visitors to the building seemed more willing to send their images and accompanying captions/commentaries to the dedicated email address than they did to post to Instagram. Whilst this was also part of a wider issue of student non-engagement with the project more broadly,[3] investigation revealed some observations that are pertinent to our discussion of visual social media research here. Some of these we did anticipate, but others were quite unexpected, quite possibly overlooked in our enthusiasm for this experiment.

When we spoke to students about why they were not using Instagram to share their experiences and feelings towards the building (and seemingly preferring to do this privately through email), they said the following:

[3]The detail of this is largely beyond the scope of this chapter, but to summarise here there was an element of 'survey fatigue' apparent—staff in particular had been repeatedly canvassed on their views of the space and were tired of providing more thoughts and feelings. Secondly, organizational politics were at play in people's (mistaken!) assumptions that they could only post positive views of the space, and so they appeared to post nothing at all.

> *…but Instagram is for the presentation of the best self*
>
> *Why would we contaminate our feeds with pictures of work?*
>
> *…students now are too cool for school. They aren't going to do anything if no one else is doing it. It's like, why would we do something out of the ordinary or different to what everyone else is doing*
>
> *Well it would be weird – you are creating this online identity and then, well, I wouldn't post a random picture of some chairs or something…*

Instagram, therefore, is a site for the construction of a very particular type of identity. It is seen by these students as a place for presenting an aspirational and/or polished identity and the work that is put into this—through considered images, staged and posed posts, filters and so on creates a particular narrative. The notion that one would post something 'alien' and misplaced in relation to this narrative—like pictures of a building and their place of work/study—was defined as 'contaminating' ones carefully constructed social identity. Having to explain 'odd' posts to family, friends and followers was not something that was welcomed by these students.

We find these comments and insights from student fascinating. So, rather than see the reluctance from our 'millennial generation' participants to engage with using Instagram as a problem for visual social media research of the future, we prefer to think how we can turn it to our advantage as researchers. In the #myUWEBBSview study we are discussing in this chapter, we saw Instagram very much as a data '*collection*' tool, albeit one that seemed particularly suited to generating data about people's sensory experiences in space and time, and therefore fitting for a project evaluating experiences of a building. However, when seen from the position of the *social* role Instagram already plays in young people's lives beyond its technological capacities as a tool for generating, recording, storing and sharing visual data, we can see Instagram offering very important possibilities for projects where self and identity are of particular interest. Asking people to create Instagram posts potentially surfaces the very processes you are investigating and is ripe for future development as a method.

## Managing Data During the Project

There are several practical steps to consider in the management of project data posted to Instagram for a research project, not least in this case because the study had the potential to generate a large data set on account of considerable numbers of posts to the hashtag. We have already discussed decisions around appropriate hashtags, and subsequent steps included:

- *Curating the feed to the project website*

Information and interaction with participants were managed through a central project website www.myuwebbsview.co.uk which housed information, as we note above, about the project rationale, data use, confidentiality and anonymity and consent. Here it is useful to note that having one focal point for the project simplified recruitment literature since we were able to keep project advertisements relatively uncluttered, instead directing participants to in-depth information elsewhere.

The architects, Stride Treglown, wanted to work with us on developing this site and suggested that we link the front page of the website to Instagram in order that we create a 'live feed' directly from Instagram to the website for the project (see Fig. 4). However, following discussions with our university ethics committee, it was felt great care had to be taken if we were to 'repost' Instagram data onto our university-and industry-endorsed website. This showed us that the live Instagram feed is not something a researcher can have direct control over—the content posted, is, by the very fact that it is a public platform, not controllable. But we were able to ensure the posts on our website were deemed appropriate and acceptable by all project stakeholders, as well as adhere to UWE social media terms of use. This did not mean we couldn't have anything 'negative' or 'bad' posted about the building, simply that we needed to ensure we were not seen to be endorsing any content that represented anything illegal, explicit or inappropriate. We therefore installed a filter on the website in order that members of the research team could then log on and 'approve' (or not) the images that were posted using the hashtag. During the twelve months of the project data collection, this approval activity was done every 1–2 weeks.

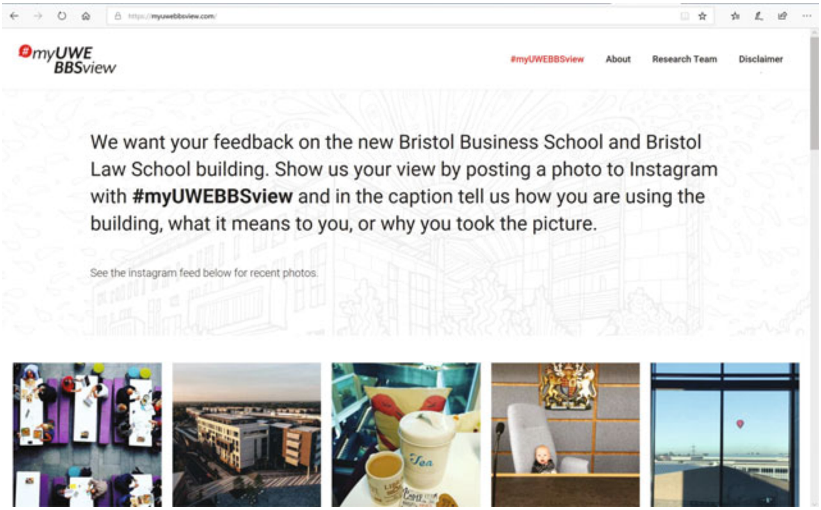


**Fig. 4** The project website with the approved and filtered Instagram feed

- *Data cleansing*

Before we could begin to analyse the posts to the Instagram feed, we had to make decisions about what would count as appropriate data. One of the downsides to having a public Instagram feed, advertised extensively around a university campus, was the number of images that were hashtagged to the project without really being connected to the project's aims, or following the instructions we have given. Firstly, we excluded all images posted without captions since there was no way we could undertake the first stage of analysis without some attribution of meaning by the photographer.

Secondly, the hashtag was taken up by the university marketing and PR departments, who used it indiscriminately to tag generic images used to communicate general Faculty announcements and events, and so all those posts were disregarded. Thirdly, we decided not to use images which, although posts from building users, were not actually about the building. Examples of this category included photographs of a social gathering for International Women's Day where the photographer was only referring to a feeling of pride in the delegates. This last 'cleansing' decision was taken on account of the clear brief we were working to: to gather users' felt, and emplaced experiences of using the building in their day-to-day working and studying lives.

- *A mechanism for converting the Instagram posts into an offline form amenable to analysis*

Instagram feeds and images are non-downloadable from the website, and any app or software that claims to be able to download Instagram images are no longer permitted by Instagram's terms and conditions of use. Similarly, the only sharing of images from Instagram that is possible is using the platform's own sharing tool. To circumvent this issue, we displayed each image and its attendant comments full screen on a laptop and created a screenshot of each. We then printed these in full colour, on A4 sheets to facilitate the manual coding and Grounded Visual Pattern Analysis (GVPA) image-sets that we describe in more depth below (Shortt and Warren 2019).

## Analysis and Making Sense of Instagram Posts

Throughout photographic studies, how researchers have made sense of their data has varied. For example, content analysis lays down a set of guidelines on how to categorise and draw inferences from the detail of people and objects depicted in the image (Rose 2013). Semiotics and iconography (including social semiotics) equip researchers with a framework to 'read' the grammar of images by interpreting the content of the image as signs which signify and produce social meanings (van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001). Finally, critical visual analysis subjects the image to an interrogation of its composition, but also takes account of the context of its production and the effects it produces as it is circulated and 'consumed' (Schroeder 2002). Other analyses have interpreted visual materials in a more holistic manner, regarding the 'aesthetic' produced by images as irreducible to its constituent parts (Hancock 2005). Most of these studies privilege the researcher's reading of the images rather than the audience for which the image was intended, although see Cho et al.'s (2009) study of viewer responses to online corporate social responsibility disclosures for a notable exception. In the #myUWEBBSview project we are describing here, we needed an analytical method that would allow us to take into account the intentions of the photographers as well as consider the subject and style of the photographs themselves.

With this in mind, we used an analytical framework that we have recently developed called (GVPA—Shortt and Warren 2019). This approach was created as part of our ongoing search for a robust and systematic analytical method for photographs generated during field study research. GVPA provides visual researchers with a means of analysis that mines both the attributed meanings given by the participants *and* the visual content of photographs themselves. This is a difficult tension in this kind of visual research since it is important to retain as much information about why the photographer took the pictures (since that is the point of asking the participants to take the photos in the first place)—what Meyer et al. (2013: 513) call 'dialogical' visual research, whilst recognising that there may be additional interesting information to be gleaned from studying the content of the photo independently—what Meyer et al. (2013) call the 'archaeological' approach. This is because there are always cultural precedents and aesthetic considerations that come into play when we take a photograph, and often we are not aware of their operation. For example, why do we centre our subjects when we take pictures? Indeed, to *off* centre them is seen as 'arty'. However—and herein lies the rub—these cultural traces and subconscious image practices only make sense when viewed as part of the context within which they were produced. We explain further through a walkthrough of our process in the #myuwebbsview project. Although much of what follows is not unique to research using Instagram and/or other visual social media, this section is an important 'how to' commentary on an aspect of visual research which is often overlooked. For that reason, we have dwelled at some length on how to analyse participant-led visual field study data as a practical complement to our introductory paper on GVPA that appears in the journal *Organizational Research Methods* (Shortt and Warren 2019).

## Stage 1: Dialogic Analysis

Working with the 'cleansed' data set printed from the main Instagram feed, the first stage of GVPA is to allocate a code that sums up the meaning the image seemed to have for the participant—hence the 'grounded' element of the approach. The aim of dialogic analysis (Meyer et al. 2013) is to identify a set of themes that describe why people took their photographs as they recounted them to us through the caption, they had added to accompany their image. Without the captions to 'ground' the images their value as signifiers about the participant's lifeworld—in this case their experiences of being in a building—would be lost.

We discussed and coded each image in turn by adding a post-it note to each printout and collating on a summary spreadsheet. Figure 5 opposite is an example of an Instagram post to the project #myuwebbsview from @curiousview. This process proved harder than anticipated, because we are both used to interviewing people at length about the photographs they produce for our projects (e.g. see Warren 2008; Shortt and Warren 2012). Consequently, we kept finding ourselves longing for more context, or explanation, and generally felt uncomfortable that we may have been misconstruing people's intentions. This was something we had not anticipated and is a feature of any social media format where lengthy commentaries on images are difficult to add to the platform.

However—and this is something that we have yet to mention—working with a large data set always necessitates a trade-off between richness (small *n* studies) and breadth (larger *n* studies) and visual research is no different. Therefore, we accepted that our data could never be as detailed as that produced from smaller samples, but we were realising a different set of benefits. These included generating *a lot* of pictures, over the course of a year, that were 'snapped' in situ by people whom we didn't need to meet and who only needed to take a few moments out of their day to take part in the research (as opposed to a formal interview).

Working together helped our coding decisions significantly since we were able to sense check each other and discuss the various merits of focusing on different interpretations of what the participants had said in their captions. We tried to be as literal as possible as we show through the


**Fig. 5** Example of Instagram post with caption/attributed meaning

example of the sofa image—Fig. 6 shows how we coded each image with its caption.

As we progressed through the images, we accumulated piles for each code. In line with traditional qualitative thematic and/or coding methods such as template analysis (King and Brooks 2017), codes that were too niche or similar to one another were clustered together, and more densely

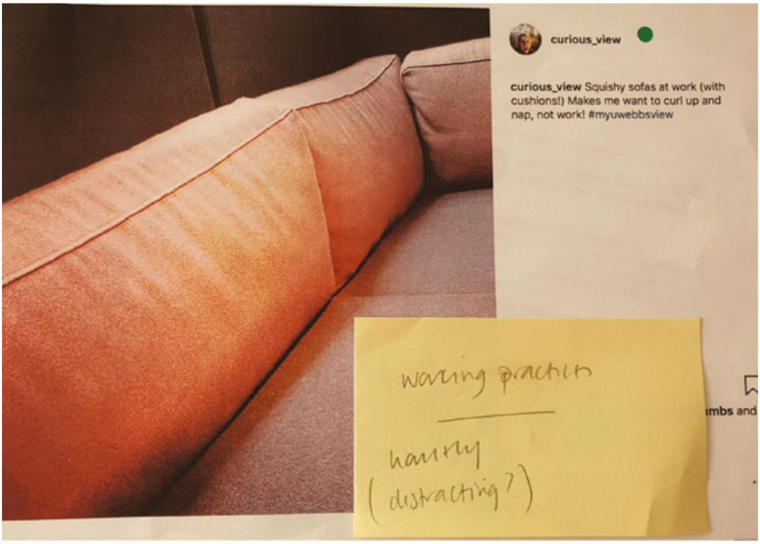


**Fig. 6** Coding each image with its caption

populated codes were expanded into more fine-grained classifications (King and Brooks 2018: 225; Saldaña 2009). Finally, after every image had been coded (a total of 746 useable images across both Instagram posts and emailed images and captions—see Fig. 7), we took the X most significant themes that resulted (e.g. quite literally, the biggest piles!) to take forward to Stage 2 of GVPA, pattern analysis.

## Stage 2: Visual Pattern Analysis

In Stage 1, the 'grounded' part of GVPA takes place through dialogical analysis. Once the most noteworthy themes are identified, as we have explained above, we can then turn attention to the images themselves—e.g. what they are 'of' and how they have been 'taken'—in order to see if field-level visual patterns can be recognised across the themes. This proved to be a more exciting and energising process than Stage 1, as it is here that the analytical skill of the *visual* researcher really comes into play. The first step is to lay the images out next to one another so that all the photographs

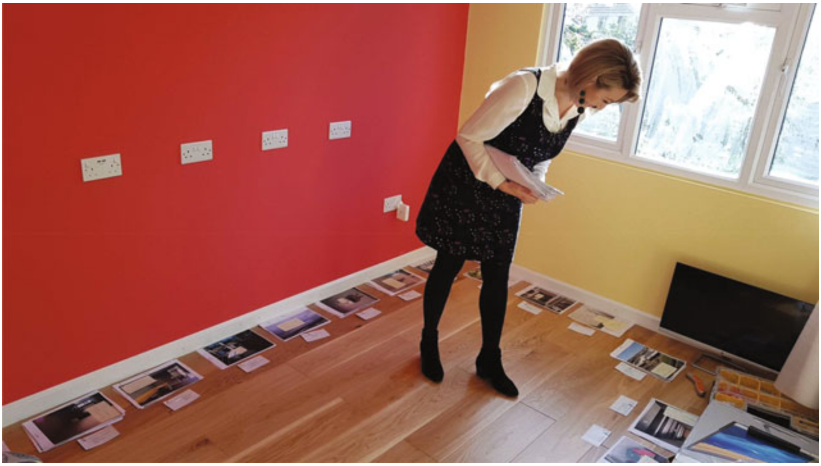

**Fig. 7** Coding all images and captions and creating themes

in each theme can be seen as an 'image-set' (Shortt and Warren 2019). The example we are using from the #myUWEBBSview project is the theme of 'visibility' and the image-set can be seen in Fig. 8.

A large flat space is required because it is the collective impression of the set as a whole that is the level of analysis here (Collier 2001; Shortt and Warren 2019). It is also important to ensure your image-set is logically cohesive, for example we made sure that all the photographs by students were grouped together, as were those taken by staff since we considered these were significant grounded details for this project (part of our brief was to explicitly investigate these two building user groups). However, we still retained both groups in the same image-set since all are building users and interesting patterns or divergences between the two might be missed if they were separated into two distinct sets.

As with Stage 1, recording of the impressions and patterns was joint, between the two of us in conversation. It involved getting into a 'zone' where we tried to suspend our habitual desire to look 'through' the images as representative scenes. Instead we tried to look at what was 'actually

**Fig. 8** Image-set for the theme of 'visibility'

there'[4] using techniques like turning images upside down, reordering them, looking at the set from different sides of the table and in a large mirror, and even asking Harriet's 4-year-old daughter what patterns she saw!

We recorded the patterns in two columns—one for symbolism (the objects, subjects, places, events depicted) and one for composition (camera angle, lighting, aesthetic effects, point-of-view and so on.) We used a list of prompts to ensure we were thorough and systematic. It is important to bear in mind the technical affordances of the photographic medium and/or social media platform used in the project when considering aspects of composition, lighting and effects. For instance, Instagram includes a range of automatic filter templates that can be quickly applied to an image to change its look and feel, and it is also possible to manipulate the image further by changing presets such as brightness, saturation, sharpness, contrast, blurring and so on. However, these tools are not available to the user when using Facebook or Twitter. Furthermore, the cameras on smartphones can vary considerably, along with the skill and technical acuity (and desire!) of the user, so when recording compositional observations about your image-set, it is the general impressions and larger-scale impacts that are most useful since these are most likely to show field-level patterns across the sample. Table 1 sets out our Stage 2 observations for the image-set from the theme of 'visibility'. The columns are mutually exclusive lists in the sense that the items in the same row do not necessarily bear any relationship to one another. Our *actual* work-in-progress notes were written on flip-chart paper and a photograph of this can be seen in Fig. 9.

## Stage 3: Theorising

As we noted down our symbolic and compositional observations, we added a third column to our record sheet to aid Stage 3 'theorising' (see Table 2).

[4] Here we are not suggesting there is a truth or 'reality' to images independent of the viewer, but merely that we try to 'unsee' as much of the aesthetic convention of our visual culture as possible—surely an impossible task but one akin to the psychodynamic technique of 'association' rather than sense-making (Warren 2012).

**Table 1** Stage 2 symbolic and compositional viewing record

| Theme: Visibility | |
|---|---|
| Symbolic viewing | Compositional viewing |
| People sitting<br>People sitting in groups<br>Casual-looking meetings<br>Almost all are communal spaces<br>Walkways<br>Glass/reflections<br>Windows, but all internal ones<br>Linearity—lots of bisecting lines<br>Monochrome/muted—only colour is from the furniture<br>Bland, empty walls<br>All doors depicted are shut<br>No faces (not even blurred)<br>Computers/laptops<br>Pigeons are the only organic/natural thing depicted | No highly staged photos, everyday settings<br>Instagram photos ($n$ = 6) *are* more composed and considered though<br>All long shots (no close-ups)<br>Point and shoot style, no obvious filters/effects or cropping<br>Photographer(s) are high up, at a distance<br>Photographers(s) are standing on walkways, positioned as spectators<br>General aesthetic dark, muted, shady. Nothing bright/welcoming— no sun.<br>Very internal focused |

In this space we wrote our analytical reflections on what the observed patterns might mean in terms of answering our research questions—but also beyond these to allow us to develop bottom-up theory about space, behaviour and identity in a business education setting. Thus Stage 3 ran (in part) concurrently with Stage 2, with interpretive notes and links to research questions and wider theory recorded alongside the patterns.

The unique contribution of GVPA is that theory is built from more than what research participants *say* about their experiences. It is also developed from what Meyer et al. (2013) called 'sedimented social meaning' apparent in the photographs. Rather like archaeologists developing theories about long-dead civilisations from the fragments of pottery and buried architectural traces, looking for visual patterns in image-sets involves interpreting multisensory, emplaced, spatial aesthetics as clues about how our research participants are working and studying in their space. At times this feels like 'clutching at straws' but this is a normal part of sense-making and we quickly learned to trust our impressions and think analytically about how and why our observations were significant.

Our analysis is still nascent at the time of writing, but some of our early thoughts about what the GVPA means for the theme 'visibility'

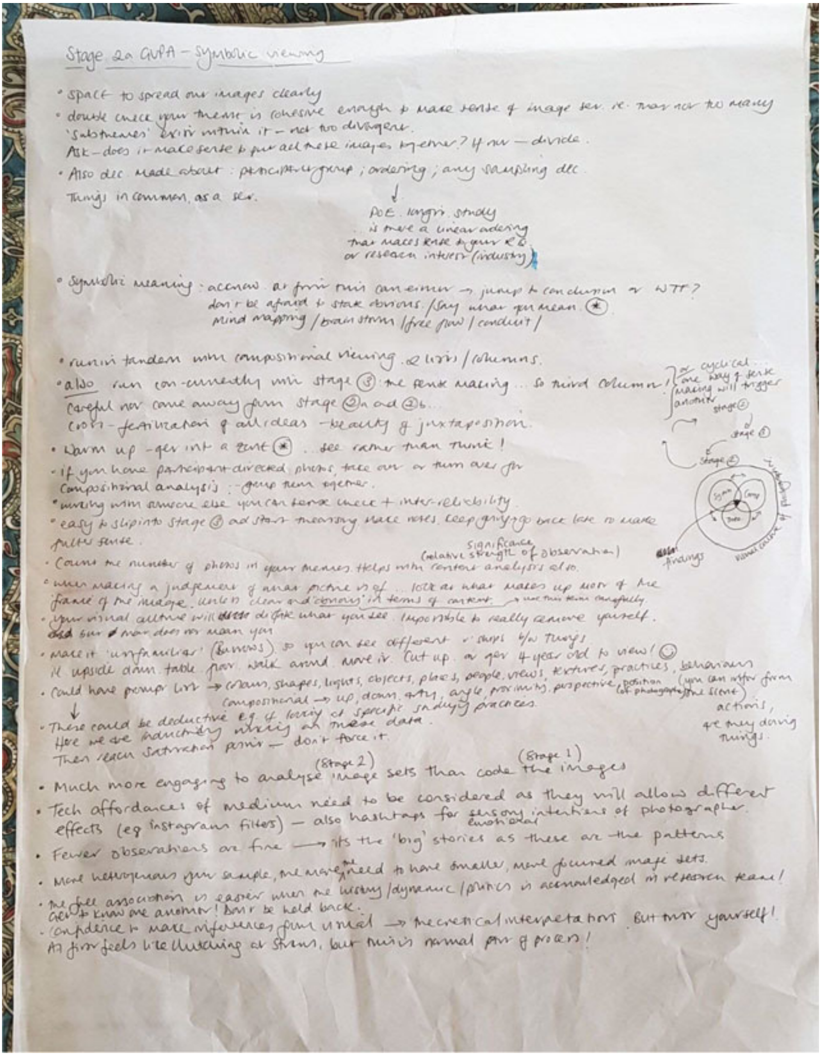


**Fig. 9** An example of our work-in-progress notes, written on flip-chart paper

are noted below (we have highlighted elements from our symbolic and compositional viewing in bold):

**Table 2** Visibility theme with Stage 3 column added

| Theme: Visibility | | |
|---|---|---|
| Symbolic viewing | Compositional viewing | Stage 3: Theorising—reflections for theory building |
| People sitting<br>People sitting in groups<br>Casual-looking meetings<br>Almost all are communal spaces<br>Walkways<br>Glass/reflections<br>Windows, but all internal ones<br>Linearity—lots of bisecting lines<br>Monochrome/muted—only colour is from the furniture<br>Bland, empty walls<br>All doors depicted are shut<br>No faces (not even blurred)<br>Computers/laptops<br>Pigeons are the only organic/natural thing depicted | No highly staged photos, everyday settings<br>Instagram photos ($n$ = 6) *are* more composed and considered though<br>All long shots (no close ups)<br>Point and shoot style, no obvious filters/effects or cropping<br>Photographer(s) are high up, at a distance<br>Photographers(s) are standing on walkways, positioned as spectators e.g. looking into internal offices/teaching rooms<br>General aesthetic dark, muted, shady. Nothing bright/welcoming—no sun.<br>Very internal focused | Considering the theme of visibility, we can see traces of the voyeur/flaneur here<br>The distant/long-shot aesthetic connects to issues of panopticon, power, 'overviews', 'helicopter views' of high strategy (also masculine)<br>The theme is visibility but what has been chosen to represent what is seen is dehumanised, empty, sterile, anonymous<br>The formality of the setting is in contrast to the casualness of the social activity we can see<br>The 'snapshot' style of the images position us a glancing/sneaking a look, and the location on gantries and walkways gives the feel of going about everyday business<br>The hard, straight lines and lack of colour and softness in the image-set connote masculinity—the feminine is absent |

- The visual patterns in Stage 2 show a **dark, muted and bland aesthetic** across the image-set, with an obvious **lack of people** captured in the images. This poses an interesting juxtaposition when we consider the ethos of the building design—*a flagship space to attract international and* *home students, facilitate links with businesses, and provide collaborative spaces for everyone to work together.* There is a sort of 'mis-match' here between the planned social identity of the building—one that encompasses community, versus the lived aesthetic identity of the building—one that, as the image-set suggests, lacks people and a sense of vibrancy.

- In relation to the point above, the image-set also depicts materials and spaces that connote 'visibility'—**glass, windows, walkways, communal spaces**. Our participants (users of the building) have therefore captured the materials used for transparency and visibility to capture their feelings associated with this very experience. So, we could argue that the design of the building has achieved its aim—to be *as transparent as possible, where activities are made visible and the blurring of boundaries between staff, students and visitors is created.* However, from these data, we see people's experiences of this are ambiguous, and at times, paradoxical; for example, spaces are used for both casual social activity (**people sitting in groups/casual-looking meetings**), yet at the same time we see patterns across the images that suggest the building is bland and anonymous (**no faces, muted colours, empty walls**). Thus, our experiences of visibility and transparency are complex and not as homogenous as building designers and planners may hope.
- The visual patterns in Stage 2 also show **long shots, no close-ups, and images where photographers are at a distance from the subject and/or are standing on walkways, positioned as spectators**. There is a sense that people are broadly surveying their internal landscape. There is a sense of surveillance, watching and having an 'overview' of the goings-on in the building. For us, this raises questions about 'seeing' and 'being seen'/the 'observers' and the 'observed'. Another paradox can be noted here as we see spectators and voyeurs watching daily activities of others (**standing on walkways as spectators, looking into internal offices/teaching rooms**), yet at the same time we see some of those behind the glass or in offices (often captured as the subject of the voyeurs' image), seeking privacy and concealment (**doors are shut, and paper is cello taped to glass windows from the inside**). This encourages us to question the tensions that exist between almost exhibiting

and showcasing work as a 'performance' to be seen by multiple audiences (**working in a glass walled teaching room**), whilst at the same time understanding the professional work that is done in a business school—teaching, learning, writing, deep thinking, reading, marking, and whether or not it is always appropriate for such activities to have an audience. This in turn, raises further questions about how we signal 'do not disturb'? Being visible to others suggests we are therefore available to others, and if we are made available through the use of the fixed and permanent materials used in a building, then how do we temporarily change them when moments of solitude are needed or chosen?

## Conclusions

In this chapter we have discussed how Instagram can be used as a tool in a visually-based, participant-led field study. We have set out an approach that researchers could use in order to gather visual data generated by participants and how such data sets, be they small or large, can be analysed using GVPA (Shortt and Warren 2019). In particular, we have argued that visually-led tools such as Instagram work well for those research studies that wish to investigate the socio-material, aesthetic, sensory parts of everyday working life and as such, broaden the scope of how and where data may be gathered; online platforms like this allow us as researchers 'access' to those participant groups we may not otherwise be able to reach.

We have also mapped out some key elements to consider when designing research that uses social media, such as ethical considerations, managing online data and how to engage participants. We have reflected on some of the challenges we have faced during our own Instagram project and the unexpected reluctance from particular user groups. This exercise has helped us question some of the assumptions we can make about the visual culture and social media practices of those we research.

At this juncture it is worth noting however that this form of research is constantly changing. Social media platforms and our own devices are adapting and their functions, features and settings are frequently subject to updates and improvements. Even since the design of our own research project discussed here, the use of Instagram Stories has dramatically risen amongst users (since this feature launched in August 2016) and, retrospectively, this could have offered an alternative mode of gathering visual data from our participants, or perhaps enhanced the approach we were already using. Indeed, Instagram is now working on a new 'green screen' filter, which may be called 'Background', that allows users to 'select an image from your camera roll that you can then use as the background for the Stories camera. After you've selected a photo, your actual surroundings are replaced by the image' (Social Media Daily 2019). Such developments pose new questions, considerations and challenges for researchers wishing to engage with social media platforms in terms of planning and designing research studies as well as viewing, analysing and making sense of their data sets.

We hope this chapter has helped those who wish to use social media as a methodological tool in their visual research, but also those who are already established users of visual methods—we hope our reflections enable you to think about how visual methods, and photographic methods in particular, are expanding, what alternative methods are available, and what exciting new opportunities for methodological advancement are possible.

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