

EDITED BY
Moshoula Capous-Desyllas
Karen Morgaine

Creating Social Change Through Creativity

Anti-Oppressive Arts-Based
Research Methodologies



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Moshoula Capous-Desyllas · Karen Morgaine
Editors

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Dedicated to all research participants past, present, and future who give their time, energy, stories, art, and commitment to engage in collaborative, arts-based, social justice research.



To all researchers who prioritize communities and research participants and who are willing to innovate, transgress, and disrupt “research as usual” with creativity, vision, and a desire to engage in social change work.

PREFACE

WHAT BROUGHT US HERE?

Moshoula

Love...Inspiration...Passion...Power...Possibility...These are the words that come to my mind when I think about what brings me to engage in the arts as a form of research and social change. My journey with the arts began prior to my entrance into higher education; through my own practices of art-making (as a creator and consumer of art). However, as a working-class woman of color, I was most drawn to lowbrow art and other DIY practices that were rooted in marginalized and underground communities. My positionality informed my criticism of mainstream art; its lack of accessibility and the power of who determined what was considered legitimate art.

My engagement with the visual arts developed and flourished in childhood. As a bicultural woman, art seemed to transcend ethnic identities and spatial boundaries, connecting my two worlds in a way that language could not. Art served as a source of knowledge and as a form of expression for the feelings and experiences that I could not articulate as a first-generation immigrant in the U.S. From a very young age, engaging with art and producing my own art was a source of inspiration. My self-expression has taken shape in multiple forms and through various media; such as painting, drawing, ceramics, collage, jewelry making, sewing, and photography. It wasn't until college that my personal art entered the public realm. In the early stages of my youth, my art-making didn't have

a distinct purpose, other than self-expression. As I entered adulthood, I set art-making aside for a few years to pursue social work.

After years of working in various social service organizations with diverse marginalized populations, it wasn't until I entered academia that I began to revisit art-making and see art as a tool for individual and collective empowerment and social change. My relationship *to* and *with* the arts moved from a place for self-expression to a space of responding to social conditions and social relations. As I merged my intersecting identities of educator-researcher-artist-activist, I began to envision the endless opportunities of the arts for decolonizing knowledge, for challenging the construction and representation of knowledge, and for engaging individuals, groups and communities beyond academia.

My personal creativity and commitment to the artistic process are also inspired by the artistic images and creativity of others. It is my love for the arts and my identity as a visual artist that fuels my passion for incorporating artistic inquiry into my research *with* participants. This intricate and reciprocal practice of co-creating art, knowledge, and meaning with others in order to engage in social change served to inspire the conceptualization of this anthology.

Having known Karen for many years and having had the privilege of collaborating with her on other scholarly projects, I invited her to participate as a co-author of this edited collection. As my kindred spirit, Karen shares the same passion and dedication to making visible the various ways in which arts-based research practices have the potential for revitalizing social justice work. Coming together in solidarity, we wanted to collect the diverse voices of people who are taking up art as a form of anti-oppressive research practice in an effort to enable personal and community expression, to generate empathy and unity, to disrupt dominant ways of seeing and knowing, to make art and art-making practices more accessible, and to examine and challenge privilege, power, and oppression at the individual, social, and structural level. We are motivated by a conviction that the arts make a unique contribution to the process of change, both personal and societal.

Karen

My immediate family is full of dabblers. My childhood “art memories” all revolve around my mother. My mother was a stay-at-home mom but, oddly enough, I don't really think of her in that light—she's never been the apron-wearing, cookie-baking sort I guess. When I was young

I thought of her as an artist. I remember her sculptures and drawings—the drapery burlap person, the metal bird, the drawing of the face with glasses. I remember that she drove 45 mins to figure drawing class for what seems like many years of my life. I remember her jewelry-making materials in a reclaimed cardboard box with vivid 1970s pop-art designs on the front—possibly of a hot-air balloon. I remember a ring she made and wonder as I write this if she still has it and hope she does so I can ask for it...

My father, while a photographer for many years, seems to be more solidly immortalized in my art memories once he began to work with pottery when I was in my early 20s. I still have one of his early, tiny, mugs with its characteristic white speckled denim blue glaze that he developed. He dove into pottery and stayed there for a good 20 or so years, having a fondness for creating glazes, throwing pots, making tile wall hangings, and hand-building large sculptural pieces that dot their yard. Since he stopped doing pottery, he has returned to photography with gusto. His photos generally gravitate towards the natural world of color, texture, and detail—deep colors, dragonfly wings, rain-dappled leaves...

My older sister was supposed to be “the artist.” She drew throughout her youth though I can really only recall her Bob Newhart comic with much clarity—and even that has grown fuzzy in my mind. Somehow it seemed a given that she would go on to art school, which she did for a time, enrolling in Rochester Institute of Technology as an art major and completing 3 years there. Detailed printmaking creations are what I can see in my mind’s eye. I recall that they took a long time to create and I often wondered about the level of patience they required to execute. After a time she chose to leave RIT as she found that turning art into her work took the pleasure out of it for her. Over the years she has dabbled in fiber arts—dyeing and spinning—and has moved more into working with her hands through soap-making and gardening endeavors.

I was never “the artist” and I don’t really recall aspiring to be such. I did often harbor a wish that I could sing but never did anything about that. I considered taking up an instrument when I was in elementary school. I still remember submitting my top three choices of instruments for band in junior high school. I remember that flute, clarinet, and saxophone were on the list and I was given the opportunity to play flute or clarinet—I can’t recall which one. I declined, but I don’t know why. Because I love saxophone, I romanticize that I really wanted to play saxophone and was disappointed that I was given the more “feminine”

instrument as a choice but, to be honest, I may have created this narrative based on foggy memory rather than actual events. I worked in the theater production crew for a couple of years in junior high, preferring the backstage to the front stage given my shy demeanor. And I always wished I could draw. For some reason that was a marker of being “good at art.” I can assure you—I cannot draw.

Though I created things over the years, I must admit, I never saw any of it as art. Craftiness I guess. The non-artist’s art.¹ I made tie-dye and did beadwork which may have been more reflective of a need to fund Grateful Dead concerts and my deep-seated disappointment that I had not been born earlier and come of age in the 1960s. I painted walls with sponges and some sort of freehand designs, which I can’t recall. I sewed a lot, but almost always from patterns since I am completely unable to move from 2- to 3-dimensional forms. I made dolls for my daughter—lovingly hand sewn wool and cotton dolls following the Waldorf



Fig. P.1 What came before

traditions. I took jewelry-making classes, tried my hand at pottery under my father's tutelage, and made handmade gifts.

I think of qualitative research as art, though I daresay my self-critique places my own earlier research endeavors solidly in a more mainstream, traditional iteration of qualitative research and less "art." I pushed beyond constraints and moved more into art only in the ways that I wove autoethnography into a traditional format in my dissertation and wrote an autoethnographic piece reflecting on researcher positionality (Morgaine 2014), which taps into my more creative impulses. Up until my current research project (see Chap. 13), my research has been limited, as I devoted time to teaching and writing on anti-oppressive social work practice. Some of these limits have been self-imposed as I continue to struggle with my "place" in research as a cis-gendered, white, queer, female who is most deeply moved to do racial justice work and to simply "resist." This is where I work to come full circle; and then around again, perhaps with a new relationship to research and the possibilities.

ABR as Emerging Practice

Arts-based research (ABR) and other forms of arts-based inquiry have developed over the past few decades alongside the calls for researchers to engage in reflexivity (Lather 1991), become reflexive activists (Denzin 1999, 2000), and to decolonize knowledge and the process by which we acquire knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Elliot Eisner in 1991 distinguished Presidential Address to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) called for an expansion of research methodologies to include literature, poetry, visual arts, dance, and music noting using arts-based research methodologies "give us insights that inform us in the special ways that only artistically rendered forms make possible...we won't have long to wait until they are called to center stage" (as cited in Cole and Knowles 2008, p. 58). Situated in the "new paradigm" of qualitative research, Eisner described alternative definitions of research as "virtually any careful, reflective, systematic study of phenomena undertaken to advance human understanding can count as a form of research" (1997, p. 262). In Denzin's challenge to researchers in this new paradigm, he encouraged qualitative researchers to embrace a "radical, ethical aesthetic," (2000, p. 26) and to focus on the process, rather than simply the end product, which ABR can serve as natural "catalyst" for (Finley 2003, p. 287). This decolonization of research can be supported by artist-researchers who create and

inhabit “open spaces and multiple entrances to their work” (Finley 2003, p. 288) that can allow for multiple readings, entry points, and possibilities for participation. Yvonna Lincoln also initiated a dialogue in 1995 about the new paradigm and the need for scholars within this paradigm to commit:

First, to deep participant and researcher interactions and involvements; second, to professional, personal, and political actions that might improve participants’ lives; and third, to future-oriented work that is based in a visionary perspective that encompasses social justice, community, diversity, civic discourse, and caring. (Finley 2003, p. 282)

The emergence of ABR and related methodologies, such as arts-based inquiry, image-based research, and visual sociology, (Cole and Knowles 2008) took place during a particularly fertile period in social science research. Dialogue from practitioners seeking to engage in more critical, participatory, politically relevant, and decolonizing research and backlash from positivist and post-positivist practitioners who observed more traditional qualitative research gaining traction provided a vibrant jumping off point for ABR. As to be expected, there were points of convergence and divergence particularly regarding questions of quality/skillfulness, evaluation/standards, and goals/strengths of ABR.

Dialogue and Debate

The question of who can or “should” use arts-based research methodologies continues to circulate and prompts a variety of responses. For example, some proponents of ABR stress that it is necessary for researchers to develop requisite skills and techniques in the chosen art form so as not to appear amateurish in their endeavors. One way to address varied skill sets, according to Eisner (2008) is to create collaborative teams of researchers working with artists who are trained in the necessary techniques and possess artistic talents. Others suggest that arts-based researchers should remain open to a more expansive understanding of what qualifies as “art” and to create space for vernacular, folk, popular culture, and outsider art (Denzin 2000; Finley 2003). Seeing the dynamic and social/historical contexts in which we define, create, and consume “art,” Finley questions what art truly is, if we “know it when we see it?” (p. 291) and whether good art is also good research and/or is good research good art (Finley 2003, p. 285)?

Often the dialogue about what makes “good” arts-based research implicitly presumes that the art is the end product yet art can often be part of the process and a conduit through which a researcher accesses data. A “natural” outcome of these conversations is the debate about how ABR should be evaluated and whether there should be standards akin to traditional qualitative research criteria.

From Eisner’s perspective, arts-based inquiries are not “science,” and thus, cannot be compared to other forms of scientific inquiry (Finley 2003). Somewhat akin to this perspective, Leavy (2014) suggests that ABR goals differ from traditional qualitative research and, as such, needs to be “assessed on its own terms” (p. 257), using the concept of vigor, rather than rigor. Others propose that the quality of an ABR project can be assessed by its “ability to “promote dialogic creativity and its performative qualities” (Finley 2008, p. 78). One important aspect of this form of assessment is to shift the focus of assessment from the structural form of the art to prioritizing “diversity, inclusivity, dialogic creativity and openness to the participation of an ephemeral, dynamic community of participants” (Finley 2008, p. 78).

Advocating for a transdisciplinary model that will move away from the specificity of assessing a particular artistic medium, Lafreniere and Cox (2012) propose a framework that will include “normative, substantive, and performative criteria” (p. 323). This framework poses three questions:

- (1) Does the artistic piece derive from data collected, interpreted and analyzed through rigorous and ethical qualitative or other research practices?
- (2) Is the research work created and produced according to the technical and artistic properties of its genre(s)?
- (3) Does the artistic work have an effect on the audience that enhances appreciation for the experiences of research participants and/or the overall study findings? (P. 323).

While there remain divergent views about how to evaluate ABR and what impact “standardization” could have on the field, there are general points of convergence regarding the goals and strengths of ABR.

Convergence

The use of the arts as a medium through which researchers examine and represent the social world is seen as an accessible way to connect to emotions and support empathic responses (Eisner 2008). Leavy notes

that arts-based research has the “capacity to evoke emotions, promote reflection, and transform the way people think” (2014, p. 255). In addition to promoting a new way of knowing, seeing, and experiencing social issues, centering the “audience” for the research and the accessibility of art as a medium to tell a research story is woven throughout the history of ABR (Cole and Knowles 2008; Eisner 2008; Finley 2008; Jones and Leavy 2014; Leavy 2015). In a recent conversation between Kip Jones and Patricia Leavy (2014), Leavy stated:

Finally, and perhaps what has ultimately been the most important for my work is that I think about issues of “audience” much more seriously. Like you, I believe in public scholarship and making our work accessible to broad audiences. I believe there is an ethical and practical mandate for getting our work beyond the academy. And frankly from a personal point of view I think about the overall impact of my work and the further we disseminate our work the higher the impact. Now no matter what I am working on I think seriously about issues of audience.” (P. 3).

From the initial emergence of ABR to the present moment, there has been a consistent focus on the emancipatory, participatory, and social justice possibilities of the method. As arts-based methodologies have expanded the ideas about what constitutes research and knowledge production, particularly in the academy, proponents of ABR have pressed to bring social science research out of the elitist institutions of both academies and museums (Finley 2008; Leavy 2015). Hand-in-hand with this potential and call for research to promote social change is the call for research to engage anti-oppressive principles and practices—being truly transgressive both within the institutions and for ourselves as researchers. This charge asks researchers to center power relations in the research process so they can be problematized and dismantled (Brown and Strega 2005).

WHY IS IT CRITICAL AND IMPORTANT TO MERGE AOP/ABR?

At a time of growing inequality, we are witnessing various forms of oppression that are present from the local level to the global realm. In a context where the challenges we face as a people and communities are becoming more layered and complex, our means of responding to need incorporate creative and decolonizing approaches that challenge

relations of domination and subordination and the relatively new relations of neoliberal globalization. This anthology merges arts-based and anti-oppressive research practices with the vision that the intersections of these approaches have the potential to revitalize social (justice) work and to affirm creative responses to challenging and changing social contexts.

Anti-oppressive practice challenges oppression in its multiple, intersecting forms (Adams, Dominelli and Payne 2009; Mullaly 2002) and attempts to analyze how power works to marginalize people, as well as how power can be used to liberate and empower people across a wide range of social settings, relations, environments, and systems (Baines 2011). Arts-based research makes use of the diverse ways of knowing and experiencing the world (Finley 2008). Three main goals of arts-based research are: (1) social activism by giving voice to those with less power in society (Barone 2000; Finley and Finley 1999); (2) making connections between research and lived experience (Garioian 1999); and (3) making meaning through multiple senses and medium (Norris 2000). What distinguishes arts-based research are the multiple creative ways of representing experiences and the different representational forms (medium) of expression that can effectively enhance the understanding of the human condition and experience. Merging ABR/AOP provides new ways to look at the complexities of oppressions operating within neoliberal, post-colonial societies and serves to mobilize peoples' imaginations and resources for social change.

While most research exists in a complicated web of power, neoliberalism, patriarchy, Western linear thinking, and elitism (Steinberg 2012), the arts offer alternate ways of thinking, doing, and rendering interpretations and understandings (Barone and Eisner 2011; Leavy 2009) that challenge power, privilege, and dominant forms of creating, representing and disseminating knowledge. It is in its willingness to expose vulnerability and embrace ambiguity and the messiness of lived experience that the intersections of arts-based and anti-oppressive research practices hold power to make positive changes in people's lives. Artistic transformation is driven by "uncertainty and mystery rather than reliability and predictability" (McNiff 1998, p. 43).

We believe in the possibilities inspired by the power of arts as a catalyst for both personal and social transformation in a local and global context. The arts invite new ways of seeing, of being *with*, attuning us to the

fissures present in our current ways of being (Walsh, Bickel and Leggo 2014), while anti-oppressive practices sensitize us to power, voice, privilege, and oppression. Their emergence lends to the use of art as a way to explore the range of interconnected societal structures that impact individuals, groups, and communities. Art engages us in ways that are emotional, sensory, and embodied, as well as intellectually and cognitively. Art seems to have a unique capacity to generate complex, nuanced, and empathic understandings that are, potentially linked to social solidarity (Sinding and Barnes 2015). It has the potential to interrupt our habits of seeing and to challenge and alter what and how we know, thus undoing dominant and oppressive ways of knowing and instigating acts of resistance.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND

This edited volume includes an eclectic mix of arts-based research, pedagogy, and practice that are attentive to diverse knowledges and intersecting identities, attuned to various forms of personal and collective expression, and conscious of the social, economic, and political conditions that perpetuate inequality and oppression. This diverse collection of research studies across disciplinary boundaries is united by the use of arts practices as sites for social change-oriented research.

We have grouped the chapters thematically according to what is understood as various parts/aspects of the research process. These clusters of chapters do not represent mutually exclusive research practices, but rather, are offered as encounters with anti-oppressive and arts-based approaches to research, operating across the blurred and overlapping boundaries of the research process. These chapters in this anthology reflect the myriad of ways in which the arts can be used to open up new ways of envisioning, representing, and living out our commitments to social justice. These chapters draw on various arts-based methods, including literary, visual, and performing arts and include storytelling, poetry, photography, digital technology, collage, short film-making, and performance. The contributors of this anthology highlight the need for anti-oppressive and arts-based research practice to engage in creative art forms in order to make connections between personal lived experiences and wider social relations.

The research projects featured in this anthology cross-disciplinary boundaries and feature a variety of different fields in the arts, humanities, social sciences, social work, health, and medicine. We hope that this edited volume inspires readers—academics, practitioners, activists, artists, students, and professionals—to develop their own meaningful anti-oppressive arts-based research practice that is creative, radical, and politically grounded in social justice. Art scholarship is another way to communicate research results, with the potential to engage more varied audiences than traditional forms of research dissemination might, in ways that are emotional, empathetic, and embodied, as well as intellectual. It is our vision that this collection of voices and works of art inspire critical conversations and motivate ideas for engaging in social justice-oriented research.

Northridge, USA

Moshoula Capous-Desyllas
Karen Morgaine

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NOTE

1. This was how I reflected on my own abilities—it is not meant to generalize to all forms of craft/art.

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Karen Morgaine, Ph.D. is a queer, white, academic with a penchant for critical theory and feminist/post-colonial perspectives. After working in DV and community mental health for ten years, she completed her Ph.D. in Social Work and Social Research at Portland State University. She currently is Associate Professor of Sociology at CSU Northridge where she teaches a variety of courses including community organizing, anti-oppressive social work practice, and LGBTQQIP communities. Her research leans towards social movement framing and power and privilege within social movements.

Contributors

Anti-Eviction Mapping Project Collective is a multi-media storytelling collective documenting the dispossession of San Francisco Bay Area residents in the wake of the Tech Boom 2.0. Through an ever-expanding collection of mediums, such as maps, murals, zines, oral histories and community events, the collective makes the often obscured mechanisms of material, cultural, and affective displacement palpable.

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Co-construction of Knowledge & Positionality

Anti-oppressive research is grounded in attention to the various ways that power circulates within and around the researchers and the research process itself. Navigating complex identities of both the researchers and the community members who are participating in the research can pose challenges and opportunities. While both anti-oppressive research and arts-based research have the potential to disrupt entrenched power relations, actualizing this potential requires critical self-reflection, self-awareness, and a willingness to deeply examine how and why we do the research that we do. In this Part, the authors examine how their intersecting identities influence how they approach research through a decolonizing lens, a framework of solidarity, and lessons learned.

In *“To Speak in Our Own Ways About the World, Without Shame”*: *Reflections on Indigenous Resurgence in Anti-Oppressive Research*, Jeffrey Ansloos focuses on how Indigenous perspectives shape anti-oppressive research, specifically through reflections on identity, voice, decolonization, and indigenous resurgence. Situated within a sociopolitical struggle for decolonization, the author explores how arts-based anti-oppressive research promotes Indigenous resurgence and highlights how Indigenous resurgence as a co-constructive voice can promote the active healing of Indigenous peoples and embody anti-colonial resistance. Ansloos reflects upon the possibilities of Indigenous resurgence in anti-oppressive research through the use of a layered approach to auto-ethnography, drawing on memories, reflections, and stories. Notions of Indigenous resurgence and active anti-hegemonic resistance are

highlighted, and Ansloos models the use of an arts-based method as a means of Indigenous knowledge production.

In *Listening Through Performance: Identity, Embodiment, and Arts-Based Research*, Hilary Cooperman addresses identity construction from the perspective of a researcher from the global North studying participants of the global South. The author draws attention to the inherent difficulties of listening to subalterns while rethinking one's own positionality and deeply held memories and meanings. Cooperman leads us through three examples of performance ethnography in which her own identity was called into question through embodied and participatory research among Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank. She demonstrates the way her Jewish-American identity, at first an obstacle, later became a guidepost to understanding the way dominant epistemologies continue to oppress and occlude Palestinian voices.

Owen Karcher and Christine Caldwell's chapter, *The Role of Oppression in Arts-Based Research: A Case Study of a Cisgender and Transgender Research Team* discusses the importance of examining how identity, power, and privilege show up in research relationships. Metaphors and images are explored to illuminate how aspects of power and privilege impacted the relationship and work of the authors. Conflicts and learning are discussed to illuminate how power played out in the relationship and how the authors built trust and worked toward healing the harm that became part of the research process. The authors conclude with suggestions for intentional transparency with the aim of causing less harm, as well as actively practicing equity when engaging in social justice research.

“To Speak in Our Own Ways About the World, Without Shame”: Reflections on Indigenous Resurgence in Anti-Oppressive Research

Jeffrey Paul Ansloos

INTRODUCTION

Researchers in the social sciences are increasingly acknowledging diverse ways of knowing that lay beyond the hegemony of Western epistemologies. Recognition of arts-based methodologies is increasing, along with a critical discussion of the role of research in the work of social justice. The genealogy of this movement of scholarship has been shaped, in part, by Indigenous contributions to contemporary research. While traditionally the social sciences have marginalized and oppressed the voices of Indigenous communities (Smith, 2012), Indigenous scholarship has been on the forefront of the development of anti-oppressive approaches. Indigenous approaches to research are creative and concerned with

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struggling with questions of identity, voice, and decolonial processes that lead to justice for Indigenous peoples.

In the following chapter, I engage the discussion of how Indigenous perspectives might shape anti-oppressive research, specifically through exploring issues of (a) identity, (b) voice, (c) decolonization, and (d) Indigenous resurgence. Through an examination of Indigenous identity and voice in a context of sociopolitical oppression, specifically that of colonialism, I explore how research can promote the decolonial process of Indigenous resurgence that actively heals Indigenous peoples and resists colonial oppression. I highlight how Indigenous identity and voice can be situated, affirmed, and explored through cultural revitalization. I utilize the arts-based method of narrative autoethnography to help explore these issues in a layered approach (Orbe, 2014), with memories, reflections, and stories. Drawing on my own lived experience as an Indigenous scholar and activist, I use an autoethnographic method to model an approach to arts-based research, as well as to reflect on the notions of Indigenous resurgence and active anti-hegemonic resistance.

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE RESEARCH AND INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

Reflection 1: Experiencing Oppression

Early in my university education, I remember sitting in a class where the professor announced that the focus of discussion was the mental health of Aboriginal people. Immediately, I felt on guard. “What were people going to say about me or about my people?” The space was not neutral. In my teens, I looked forward to university as a place where I could meet people who could see beyond and deeper than the stereotypes of Indigenous life frequently reinforced by popular media. The two most familiar stereotypes were (a) natives were invisible or extinct relicts of a past civilization, or (b) all natives were drunk. Sure enough, my fears were realized when throughout the 30-minute lecture the supposed expert presented research that stated that the majority of Natives were genetically pre-dispositioned for alcoholism, we lacked good parenting skills, were largely unemployable, resistant to integrate into a multicultural society, and generally non-compliant with treatments intended for soaring rates of depression, anxiety, and trauma. I remember feeling betrayed and angry, as if academia was supposed to know better. Why didn’t these researchers think about colonialism? How could

they only inquire about disembodied and abstracted suffering and not see the beauty, vitality, and resiliency that I know of in my people? That was the moment when I realized research, and the knowledge it produced, had power. This was an important moment for me on my red road in research, that is, the indigenization of my scholarship. It inspired a desire to do better by my people, to shed light on our way of life that reflected the contextual complexity of colonialism and our resistance to be colonized. It caused me to think deeper about the ways that our lives, our bodies, and our land were oppressed, as well as the ways, our culture, our identity, and our unique voice offered us deep wells of resiliency, thriving, and renewed spirit. In many ways, it was this moment that set me on a path to honor my traditions, songs, stories, and the dances of my people not only as something important to behold, but as legitimate means of knowledge production and translation that are emancipatory and decolonial.

Universities, and the scholars in them, are not socially or politically neutral. They are active proponents of culturally situated epistemologies and the sociopolitical ideologies implicit in them. In the reflection above, the ideological commitments of the professor are those which function to create systems of knowledge that are primarily concerned with the pathologizing of a particular sociocultural other (i.e., Indigenous people), as well as reinforcing stereotypes consistent with the broader commitments of a colonial agenda (i.e., racist representations of Indigenous people). This illustrates that the means by which knowledge is produced has the power to actively subjugate a sociocultural other.

Anti-oppressive research is fundamentally interested in how the process of knowledge production and translation can be constructed to elevate those identities so often forced into the periphery by Western scholarship. A commitment is necessary in order to accomplish anti-oppressive research. It means critically engaging the ways that many systems of knowledge are structured to perpetuate various forms of oppression (i.e., colonialism, imperialism, sexism, homophobia). Chilisa (2012) highlights that “the community of social science researchers is experiencing a struggle as it comes to terms with social justice issues that arise from the research process itself, as well from the findings that are produced in their efforts” (p. xv). The sociopolitical power implicit in systems of knowledge production and translation must be interrogated, deconstructed, and our identities must be implicated in this process. All anti-oppressive research must be concerned with the task of exploring the ways in which our theory and practice contribute toward or complicate issues of social justice. As Chilisa (2012) highlights, “The

research you do will have the power to label, name, condemn, describe, or prescribe solutions to challenges in former colonized, Indigenous peoples and historically oppressed groups. You are encouraged to conduct research without perpetuating self-serving Western research paradigms that construct Western ways of knowing as superior to the Other's ways of knowing" (p. 7).

Anti-oppressive research must also move beyond the deconstructive critical task toward a decentering constructive task concerned with the liberation of oppressed individuals and communities. The importance of an indigenizing process in my own research was the beginning of my shift toward a decentering constructive task. By centering my research practice within the paradigms of Indigenous culture, I was legitimating that which colonial powers seek to ensure remains in the periphery. Chilisa explains this as a critical decolonial task for Indigenous people that "involves the restoration and the development of cultural practices, thinking patterns, beliefs, and values that were suppressed but are still relevant and necessary to the survival and birth of new ideas, thinking, techniques, and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of the historically oppressed and former colonized non-Western societies" (2012, p. 14). Indigenous experience provides the social sciences with a decentering constructive praxis, one which is rooted in an agenda of resurgent sociocultural identity which actively resists colonial domination. Put another way, how we understand *being* Indigenous matters in our liberation.

IDENTITY AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION IN ANTI-OPPRESSIVE RESEARCH

Reflection 2: Listening with Wonder

I am the son of Sherry and Paul Ansloos. I am a Nehiyaw (Cree) from Ojibewi-Sipi (Fisher River Cree Nation), and grew up in Treaty 1 territory near the fork of the Assiniboine and Red River in Winnipeg, a place my ancestors called, the muddy waters. These muddy waters are the traditional territory of many nations including the Anashanaabe, Cree, Dakota, Metis, and Oji-Cree people. Through colonization by the French and English, and the ongoing occupation of land by Canadian society, the muddy waters have become home to many settlers from around the world. My father was a British-Catholic settler to Canada. My mother, a Nehiyaw

Iskwew (Cree woman), was adopted into a settler Anglo-Protestant Christian community in southern Manitoba, a place named after the Oji-Cree word for spirit, Manitou. I write this reflection while living and working on the unceded lands of the Kwsepsum, Lekwungen, Scia'new, and T'Sou-ke families of the Coast Salish area, in what Canadians prefer to call Victoria, B.C.. In Cree, we have the word, mamaskasitawew, which means “to listen with wonder.” Can we understand the role of identity in research by listening with wonder to our ancestors, to the stories of our spirited land, and to the complex questions of what it means to live in it today? As I try to listen to the land of muddy waters, at the fork of the Assiniboine and Red River, I am reminded that Indigenous people have been living at the intersections of exclusion, inclusion, and belonging for a long time. The muddy waters remind me that that the journey to justice is rarely a clear path, rather it is one which often feels chaotic, like churning red currents railing against the soil. When I listen to the soil, it reminds me that the earth is not something we should oppress or seek to own. Instead, like our ancestors, we should seek to live in harmony with it. When the river and ground freeze in the winter, I remember that even though things seem cold and lifeless, deep underneath the ice, the muddy waters are still churning, like us, still forging a path for justice. In the spring, when the waters flood the banks, I remember that even in the discomfort of flooding, it brings new life to the land. When I listen with wonder to my ancestors, I am reminded that we once lived in a way, like ceremony, where through creative vision and an appreciation for the sacredness of all creation, we found ways to live with one another.

Identity is a foundation to anti-oppressive research because it gives contour to a researcher's way of being in the world. How we understand *who we are* often shapes *how we are* in our research. How I have come to understand *being Indigenous* has a significant impact on how I make sense of the sources of knowledge production and my responsibilities as a researcher. Throughout the Western world, identity discourses have frequently been co-opted by the values of an individualistic and capitalist society. In such a context, identity comes to be understood primarily through the language of a consuming self (Cushman, 1995).

In contrast, much of Indigenous identity is rooted in the idea of relationality. Wilson (2008) writes that “rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we are the relationships that we hold and are a part of” (p. 80). In terms of human relations, Wilson (2008) points out that “it is the forming of healthy and strong relationships that lead us to being healthy and strong

researchers...the research process may also build or strengthen a sense of community. Through maintaining accountability to the relationships that have been built, an increased sense of sharing common interests can be established” (p. 86). In voicing my relational embodiment as one of multiple peoples and communities (i.e., First Nations, immigrants, settlers), I implicate myself in intersectional obligations in those communities. Identity, in this sense, is so much more than a demographic identifier, it carries with it obligations. As Chilisa (2012) highlights “the researcher becomes part of circles of relations that are connected to one another and to which the researcher is accountable” (p. 113). These notions of accountability and obligation are deeply dissonant from the dominant Western notion of identity insofar as they compel the researcher toward a deeper commitment and ethical practice of community-based research.

I also highlight that in my Indigenous experience, dynamic ecologies shape how I have come to understand Indigeneity in the following ways: (a) that nature is a relation that teaches, (b) that it connects temporal experiences of struggle with that of relational ontology, and (c) makes sacred all relations. Wilson (2008) points out that dynamic ecologies impact Indigenous experience in how knowledge is produced and translated, how we understand our spirituality, and the ethics that ought to shape our relational engagement. Regarding epistemology, Wilson writes: “knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us” (p. 87). Indigenous experience provides anti-oppressive researchers with a different way to listen and learn by becoming those who appreciate the way environments teach and are in relationship with us.

In regards to spirituality, Wilson (2008) suggests that the linking of ecological spaces with people reflects a commitment to a spiritual belief that in “reducing the space between things, we are strengthening the relationships that they share” (p. 87). In this perspective, all ecologies are treated as sacred from an Indigenous worldview, which in the context of anti-oppressive research, means that human liberation is inextricably tied to the liberation of places. Wilson calls this a “grounded” sense of identity. Indigenous experience beckons us to reflect on identity in a different way, one that is primarily concerned with the ways our people and places in the world might guide us and teach us, and obligate us in profoundly relational ways to research in a way that liberates *all* of our relations.

FIRST NATIONS IN FIRST PERSON: ON VOICE IN ANTI- OPPRESSIVE RESEARCH

Reflection 3: Learning Our Stories

My mother took me and some of her friends to a special banquet in our community where Chief Phil Fontaine was speaking. He talked about how he and so many other First Nations children were forcibly removed from their homes, stolen and relocated to residential schools run by churches across the country, and how many of them had experienced abuse. He said this happened all over Canada. Abuse. I sat in shock. Phil shared when people are abused, those who hurt them often tell them to be silent or they will be in trouble. This causes people incredible shame as if speaking the truth will somehow make them even less worthy of love. Phil talked about how these men and women would hurt children if they spoke their Indigenous languages. How he and other children were given new names, English names, and they were punished harshly for using their Indigenous names. How children died in the care of these church residential schools. He talked about how hungry they were. About how sad they were. About how much they had lost. He talked about how much he missed his family. About what it was like to forget your language. He shared that many children, when they would go to visit their family, were not able to communicate, or fit in. I remember thinking, how brave he was to speak out about these experiences of violation. I remember many older native men and women going up to him while singers and drummers offered a closing song, with tears, gratitude, and renewed strength. After the banquet with Chief Fontaine, my mom talked to me about residential schools. I couldn't believe what I had heard. I asked her how this could happen. She was sad. She told me that her mother had gone to residential school. I was surprised. I didn't know that my Grandma Shirley had gone to residential school. My mother clarified that she didn't mean my Grandma Shirley, but she meant my kokum, her biological mother. This was a new and strange distinction. My mom shared with me the story of her adoption. She shared how she, like thousands of native children born in the 1960s and 1970s, were disproportionately "scooped" out of Indigenous communities and placed into the Aboriginal child welfare system and adopted out of native communities. She explained this is why she didn't know how to speak Cree. She said this is why we both looked different than the rest of her family. She knew little of her biological mother except that she had

been young when she was pregnant and had attended a residential school. I would later learn of the complexities of the 1960s and 70s scoop, how the Government of Canada engineered child welfare policies to further the colonial assimilation of Indigenous people into settler realities and how through severing of integral kinship ties, the government was attempting to renege on various federal treaties which guaranteed economic rights to Indigenous people. I remember slowly coming to terms with how Phil's stories were not something so distant or alien. I realized that his story was my own family's story. I began to discern the reasons for my already emerging internal sense of difference. I began to grapple with questions of how my voice and my families' stories, were part of a much larger story. A story of intergenerational oppression and resistance. Years later, when our family was reunited, I remember sitting with my mother and Selena, my kokum, feeling connected and set on a path towards learning how to speak of our struggles and to speak in our own ways about the world, without shame.

Discussions of voice in anti-oppressive research in Indigenous communities illuminate complexities. Various forms of violence have been manifested in colonial structures (i.e., residential schools, child welfare systems, criminal justice) with the aim of suppressing the expression of identity in the voice of Indigenous people. For Indigenous people, this has literally meant that colonialism purposefully interrupted the transmission of Indigenous languages in the education system and attempted to dismantle the oral traditions that give contour to Indigenous connections to people and place. Quite literally, people were abused for using their voice. Anti-oppressive research must contend with this history and delegitimize the hegemony of Western academia which is structured to similarly diminish voices of the 'supposed periphery.' In a context where Indigenous people have been told to be silent and feel shame for their way of being in the world, voicing that struggle is one step toward liberation. However, voicing suffering alone cannot be the limit of one's voice, nor should it be the expectation.

Drawing on the dynamic inquiry of Gayatri Spivak's (1988) "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Tuck and Yang (2014) point out that in the context of decolonizing research, if Indigenous people are able to escape the silence of subalterity, it is only in the invitation to share one's pain and suffering. In this sense, it is as crucial to ensure that anti-oppressive research doesn't fetishize or tokenize Indigenous suffering, subverting the decolonial process. Rather, anti-oppressive research must have flexibility that creates sanctuary for voices of suffering, while also,

respecting the refusal of expression as a liberatory act (p. 237). Anti-oppressive research must wade into the subversive waters of creative resistance by which stories of resiliency can also emerge. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) suggests:

Research exists within a system of power. What this means for Indigenous researchers as well as Indigenous activists and their communities is that Indigenous work has to 'talk back to' or 'talk up to' power. There are no neutral spaces for the kind of work required to ensure that traditional Indigenous knowledge flourishings. (p. 226)

I am reminded that someone using their voice, without shame, had power to heal and to change things for our people. For example, in May 2006, Phil Fontaine championed the legal case that resulted in the Canadian federal government settlement with First Nations over residential school. Our voices in oppression, perilous and tedious as it may be to find the words, are the catalyst of liberation.

DECOLONIZATION AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANTI-OPPRESSIVE RESEARCH

Reflection 4: Injustice in Prison

I was 12 years old the first time I went to a prison in Winnipeg. It was a prison for youth. I went with my mother. We were there by choice. My mother was sharing her story of adoption in the 1960s scoop, her journey with identity, being a teenage mother, overcoming her own struggles, and finding her spirituality. I remember feeling afraid of going into this building, crossing through the caged doors and reinforced concrete walls. I imagined a room full of hardened people incapable of joy or empathy. I was wrong. My mom was determined that this place was exactly where we needed to be. She was fearless. The room was full of young native men and women. I noticed their brown bodies. Where were the white criminals? But there we were with these resilient and compassionate young people. For the next few hours I sat in the middle of this group of young men and women, like a little brother, as we all listened to my mother share her stories. After my mother spoke, a few of these young people began to share their own stories. They talked to me, my mother, and their 'co-inmates' about the role violence had played in their lives, or the challenges of growing up in foster care. They talked about how their

parents, grandparents, and great grandparents had suffered in residential schools. They talked about the extreme hunger many of them faced at home, day-to-day, wondering if they would find food. They talked about how people in their lives were murdered or would just disappear. They talked about how their mothers and kokums would ask the police for help but no one would listen. They talked about how the police or social workers only showed up when they were taking someone away. These were the stories of their suffering. They cried as they shared. They talked about finding a good way, a good path with the creator. They talked about how they hoped to get out of prison and build good lives, get their own children out of foster care and take care of their futures. I learned that day it is more likely for an Indigenous child in Canada to go to prison than to graduate high school. I remember the young man who told us, with tears in his eyes, that he was afraid and felt alone. We left that prison and my mother told me that “these youth are our brothers and sisters.” She said, “they are there not solely because they did something wrong, but because people and institutions have failed to protect them.” She continued, “whatever you do with your life, remember these people. Don’t forget them.” I remember saying that it seemed wrong. They should be free. That night my mother said she had “dreams that felt like prayers.” In the dreams she was giving birth to something. Little could she have known that one day, I would work as a therapist in that same prison and in other juvenile diversion programs, or that I would go on to research the colonial origins of First Nations youth incarceration. My mother’s prayers gave birth to something deep within me. Today, my brothers and sisters cannot be forgotten in cages, with more native people incarcerated in prisons and in foster care than ever before in Canadian history, research must work not only for their emancipation, but a new order whereby Indigenous young people are not forgotten when systems fail them.

Critical social science frequently employs the language of decolonization as a central methodology to bring about social liberation. Tuck and Yang (2012) point out that decolonization is a “distinct project from other civil and human rights-based social justice projects” (p. 2). This distinction is grounded in the ways that decolonization emerges as a revolutionary practice for Indigenous people. Quite simply, the revolution that post-colonialists call for is not the same as liberal visions of social justice. It is rooted in a deep conviction of self-determinism. It is a process whereby colonial subjectivities reject colonial psychological oppression and physical occupation through decolonial conflict, and assert a new order. Tuck and Yang (2012) remind scholars that decolonization

offers an “unsettling” perspective on justice, and “decolonization is not an ‘and.’ It is an elsewhere” (p. 36). I highlight what is ultimately insufficient in the current state of affairs of research for Indigenous young people—despite significant research that focuses on mass incarceration, research fails to unsettle the hegemony of the system, and therefore is not decolonial.

What is needed is a deeper conviction and consciousness-raising regarding the extent of colonial hegemonies. Anti-oppressive research ought to unsettle the system so the system itself is no longer viable and a new order is envisioned. Anti-oppressive research can be invested in a decolonial conceptual framework by promoting what in Indigenous experience is referred to as Indigenous resurgence, or more broadly within post-colonial scholarship, as Indigenization. Indigenous resurgence realized is the political practice of Indigenous identity which functions as a form of sociopolitical resistance. Anti-oppressive research can occur when these processes are stimulated in oppressed communities. With a critical understanding of hegemonies, as well as dynamic commitment to sociopolitical processes that revolutionize them, liberation is possible.

INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE

Reflection 5: Practicing Our Culture

Healing is hard work. There are many moments I can point to in the last decade where I have experienced the humbling power of practicing the traditions of my people. There was nothing mystical or magical about that power though. It felt like I was a clumsy child awkwardly trying to understand how to use a pencil. It is through the ongoing work of learning my history, language, and stitching together fragments of what remained of community in the wake of residential schools and the 1960s scoop. It has been a forging, an intentional awakening, and a re-centering of indigeneity—sitting with discomfort, unfamiliarity and my own ignorance. Some years ago, I sat with a community leader with whom I confide. I said that sometimes I feared that the impact of the colonial violence has created too great a wound, that my people could never fully recover what was lost. I feared that colonialism had succeeded in disconnecting us from the depths of our traditions and our way of being in the world. He listened patiently and said, “the Creator hasn’t lost the spirit of our people. Instead, the Creator

has hidden them like medicine deep within you. When you walk a good path, you will find that medicine, and it will heal you, and it will heal us.” His words were like medicine, yet, I barely could grasp their meaning. But in the following years, when studying our language or listening to the stories Indigenous people, or as I began to learn our songs and ceremonies, I realized this was the medicine my friend spoke of. My path had to move beyond deconstructing colonialism, towards actively reclaiming and contextualizing our traditions in my lived experience. This happened most powerfully when I began to practice our spiritual ceremonies, our dances, our songs, and our prayers—that is our medicine. It reconnected me to an indigeneity that goes beyond my own experience and gave me hope for our peoples’ future. For me, that is the work of Indigenous resurgence; a good path, practicing our culture, and giving hope to our people.

The decolonial process of indigenization is foremost about healing. When an individual and/or community begins to revitalize, dignify, give voice to, and explore aspects of identity that have been oppressed, shamed, or denigrated, it has real consequences. The consequences of that process within my own life, and more specifically within my research, were reorienting. As I struggled with learning my Indigenous language or practicing Indigenous traditions, both of which were made illegal at various points in Canadian history and are presently suppressed by and large, my life was relationally restructured. As Wilson (2008) suggests, this is research as ceremony. He writes:

many things in our modern world try to force us to be separated, isolated individuals. We separate the secular from spiritual, research and academia from everyday life... We need to recognize the inherent spirituality, as well as the everyday applicability in our research. Indigenous research needs to reconnect these relationships. (p. 137)

Indigenous resurgence is a commitment to heal the relational fractures produced through colonial oppression (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). A commitment to healing is not simply one of apolitical visions of multicultural expression. Healing serves a transformative political purpose to bring about a different way of being of the world. As Wilson (2008) suggests “the purpose of any ceremony is to build together stronger ... [t]he research we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world” (p. 137). Anti-oppressive research must be concerned with promoting resurgences of

oppressed peoples with a commitment to a principled understanding of the vitality of relational healing for sociopolitical imagination. If we can imagine a different way of being in the world, perhaps we can walk toward that future.

RESURGENCE IN SOCIOPOLITICAL ACTION

Reflection 6: A Pathway of Resurgence

In the year 2012, Canada experienced an awakening through Indigenous activism referred to as #IdleNoMore. Through digital storytelling and organized actions throughout the country, First Nations began protesting in public spaces through the expression of traditional songs and dances. Massive round dances shut down primarily trade and transport routes throughout the country. At the height of holiday shopping season, shopping malls were contexts of Indigenous songs raising awareness about Indigenous poverty. In December 2012, Chief Teresa Spence of Attawapiskat declared a hunger strike on the steps of Canadian parliament, demanding a meeting with the Queen to discuss the violation of treaty rights, the profound poverty, food shortages, and violence facing Indigenous communities across Northern Canada. She fasted, practiced ceremonies, and lived off of a traditional survival diet of lemon water, teas, and fish broth (Simpson, 2013). I happened to be in Ottawa at the time and I visited her encampment at Parliament. Approaching the camp, I was surprised to see so much police activity surrounded a group of primarily older adult women who were singing and dancing. I was shocked to hear that evening on the national news of Canadians fears of "Indigenous terrorism." It is peculiar to me that in news coverage of #IdleNoMore activism, the expression of Indigenous cultural traditions was represented as "aggressive" and "out of control," ultimately something to be repressed by the hegemony. Think about that... the bodies of First Nations people, simply singing and dancing, praying and fasting, on Indigenous territories occupied by settlers, is powerful enough to suggest that Parliament is burning down. Sitting with many grandmothers, survivors, and singers and dancers at Teresa Spence's camp made me realize that practicing my culture was not just healing on the personal or psychological level, but socio-politically, the practice of cultural expression, dignity, humility, and nourishment, that awakened resurgent Indigenous identity. This had the power to unsettle and resist the hegemony of settler supremacy and bring about an emancipatory force against colonial oppression.

In addition to the ways in which Indigenous resurgence heals Indigenous people bringing about a renewed sense of relationship, that healing occurs within a deeply oppressive and historically situated political context. In these contexts of “colonial oppression and de-legitimization of Indigenous culture, Indigenization stands as an active methodology of resistance through cultural revitalization” (Ansloos, 2014, p. 947). It is through actions of awakened, pride-filled, healed/healing, and shame-resistant Indigenous identity (i.e., singing, dancing, fasting, storytelling) in the context of colonial oppression (i.e., Canadian politics, capitalism, urban dispossession) that leads to the beginning of decolonial unsettling of colonial dominance (i.e., the fears of the Canadian public).

In anti-oppressive research, the researcher must constantly explore how to support activism and movements of social resistance which are committed to the unsettling of forms of dominance. This can be accomplished on a methodological level by situating research within historically relevant spaces for academic expression, and well as through widening the parameters of valued academic expression through arts-based methods. More importantly, however, is that research invested in opposition to oppression must be necessarily implicated in the political actions of resisting oppression. This compels the identity of a researcher toward that of researcher-activist.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has suggested that Indigenous experiences and perspectives in research are dialogically critical partners to the theoretical foundation of arts-based anti-oppressive research, due, in part, to the unique contribution of Indigenous individuals and communities. While Indigenous researchers and their methods arguably constitute a unique field of scholarship, the mutual concern of resisting oppressions, like colonization, in anti-oppressive research provides a context of rich conversation on critical issues of identity, voice, decolonization, and methods of resistance. Through the arts-based method of auto-ethnography, I have attempted to highlight the dynamic ways my own Indigenous perspective and that of my community could strengthen the theoretical foundations of anti-oppressive research. Regarding identity, it has been suggested that anti-oppressive research needs to be rooted in profoundly relational terms, threaded to intersectional relations and dynamic ecologies. Anti-oppressive research must subvert power structures that seek to suppress

people's languages and voice. In aligning anti-oppressive research with decolonial conceptual frameworks, I argue that such a process is an investment in an unsettling practice of resistance which calls for a new way of being in the world. Decolonization is an embodied process of transformation which is rooted in nurturing an increased consciousness of historically and contextually situated oppressions, as well as the processes of self-determined cultural revitalization—that is resurgence. The experience of Indigenous resurgence highlights the centrality of relational healing and historical situated strategic action as critical to the resistance of oppression. Creating social change is a critical function of Indigenous resurgence, however, most fundamental to Indigenous research is the thriving and flourishing of all of life. Perhaps this might serve the agenda of anti-oppressive research well, to be fundamentally dedicated to resurgences that lead to the flourishing of all lives, all of our relations.

AFTERWORD

As I review my journey in anti-oppressive research, I am reminded of a few things: first, I recognize that my entire process of formation as an Indigenous researcher-educator-activist has been shaped and nurtured by a community. To be involved in anti-oppressive work, our lives need to be grounded in relationships which can nurture, challenge, and deepen our commitments. Second, I am reminded that liberation is a complex struggle. It is not something that happens overnight, nor with absolute clarity. For me it is a constant process of learning and failing forward. To be anti-oppressive we must nurture boldness and humility. Finally, the awareness of Indigenous suffering does not alone motivate my work, but also love for my people. Anti-oppressive activist-scholarship is not sustained by deficits and marginalization, but rather, by a loving vision of what could be. For me, that is the heart of being an Indigenous scholar, being guided by decolonial hope, a love that yearns for the flourishing of all of my relations

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Listening Through Performance: Identity, Embodiment, and Arts-Based Research

Hilary Cooperman

It is night-time. I am walking home from Qalandia checkpoint near Ramallah and attempting to hail a taxi. I am not nervous walking back at night. Having been here a couple of months, a feeling of safety is pervasive. Usually, the lights from convenience stores pour out of doorways and the sound of children's voices fill the streets as they return to their homes after a full day of play. But I have never walked through this particular area after dark. Shops appear to be closing for the night and maybe it is later than I imagined. All of a sudden, out of the corner of my eye, I see a teenager, pointedly looking at me from across the street. He raises his arm and hurls a small rock. He is far enough away that I see it coming. I raise my hand to block it. I feel a slight sting. He continues to stare at me as I continue walking. I stare back, not in anger, but inquisitively. I want to ask him "*lesb?*" Not as in, why, how could you do this? But as in, why *me?* I want to understand the target of his act. How does he see me? What do I represent to him? Is it America? Does he read me as Jewish or Israeli? Is it because I am a woman walking at night alone?

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As I silently go through the litany of questions in my head, I realize the oddity of the fact that I am not upset but almost relieved. At last, someone is fighting back against his severely repressive existence in the West Bank. I am surprised of course, because as the target of his anger, and the one who feels its force, I realize I am empathizing with and trying to understand someone who physically tried to hurt me. At this moment, I become conscious of the disparity between my outward representation as either American or Jewish or female or all of these, and my swiftly shifting identity as a Jewish-American scholar/activist who seeks to bring attention to the injustices suffered by Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

In conjunction with Gayatri Spivak's well-known essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), which addresses the failure of postcolonial scholars to represent postcolonial subjects through discourse without reproducing colonial power structures, I pose a correlative question: "Can the oppressor listen?"¹ As a scholar from the global North studying an oppressed group of the global South, my identity is intimately bound up with imperial, colonial, and neoliberal modalities. Much of my work focuses on social justice issues and attempts to communicate and make visible the webs of power that work to marginalize and subjugate those of the global South. Oftentimes my research is based on listening to those who experience the violence of these systems of power. Yet, because my identity is, in many ways, constructed by these systems, the act of listening can pose significant challenges. What if listening requires the reconstruction of hegemonic systems of knowledge and the breaking apart of codified discourse in order to allow openings with which to investigate and ask questions of its logic? What if listening requires us to re-examine, and in some cases, to reconstruct the memories and meanings of our own personal histories and systems of belief? How can we do this? How is this possible?

This chapter proposes that arts-based projects not only allow us, as scholars who are part of systems of oppression, to peel back the layers of epistemology, but oftentimes require us to do so when working to understand the ways subalterns are oppressed through the systems which shape our identities and presumed interests. Typically, arts-based research is embodied and participatory; the researcher must take part in some aspect of the artistic project being studied and engage research participants face to face. This may involve directing a theater project

or creating some type of artwork alongside interlocutors.² Because the research is creative and generative, the researcher oftentimes becomes part of the research and may play a significant role. The risk, of course, is replicating systems of power and privilege at the expense of those with whom we work. Therefore, it becomes critical to investigate and bring awareness to our own interests and investments in arts-based projects. Self-reflexivity becomes an important and ongoing part of the research as it unfolds.

In this chapter, I look at three different arts-based projects and the way my Jewish-American identity shifted in relation to my study of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. I argue that the conception of one's identity in relation to a project in and among marginalized groups must be a careful, critical, and reflexive process that is more akin to an ongoing "directionality" than a "positionality" stated at the beginning of a research project (see Kim qtd. in Farrell, 1995).³ Directionality allows for a more fluid way of situating one's knowledge in relation to an arts-based project with oppressed people. The conceptual motility of the term allows for a transformative space to think about the researcher as a subject in progress, moving toward and away from subject positions, as never fully formed and realized, but constantly in dialogue and emergence. Further, this term speaks to the importance of space and movement in our ability to have a conversation. We can speak about others from a safe position, but can we truly listen from one? What does moving into new and oftentimes uncomfortable spaces do to alter what we hear, if we allow it to?

In framing the discussion of identity in relation to conceptualizing a methodology for arts-based research in areas of conflict or among oppressed groups, I look to performance studies theorist, Dwight Conquergood's work. I draw upon his term "dialogical performance" as a central concept guiding the construction and development of identity through the research project. Conquergood writes:

Dialogical performance is a way of having intimate conversation with other people and cultures. Instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them. The sensuous immediacy and empathic leap demanded by performance is an occasion for orchestrating two voices, for bringing together two sensibilities. At the same time, the conspicuous artifice of performance is a vivid reminder that each voice has its own integrity. (1985, p. 10)

In order to have an intimate conversation, one must share space with someone else. We must move our bodies close enough to our interlocutors to actually hear what they are saying. In doing so, our bodies become implicated as part of the dialogical performance, and we are made aware that listening is an embodied act. Arts-based research supports the creation of knowledge as a multiplicity of presence. We think, act, and create together in order to understand each other and the worlds and spaces to which we are intimately connected, as well as how we may reach out across those spaces to create new ones, or re-think the old ones.

Traditional research methodologies do not always support this point of view. Too often, research participants become objects of study where they are expected as “informants” to offer their experiences or perspective as “raw data” from their subject position. The researcher then takes that information and offers insights and reflections about it, from his or her vantage point. The messiness of the subject positions or the movement between them, the various registers of experience and reflection, are typically omitted from the written representation of the research, or do not occur at all. Further, scholars are discouraged from presenting the research process as unstable or their subject positions as not fully developed or defined. Ultimately, both researchers and subjects are represented as stable and static identities that encounter and leave one another intact.

In contrast, arts-based research is a research of the flesh where our source material originates from the closeness and collaboration of the bodies and voices of one another. Within this configuration, our own subject position may be opened up, challenged, or contested. Feminist theorist Athena Athanasiou suggests:

... being present to one another takes place at the limits of one's own self-sufficiency and self-knowability, in the wake of the endless finitude of the human. In order to be present to one another (but also to be absent to, or missed by, another), we are called to take over, and occasionally to give away, the norms through which we are established as selves and others. (2013, pp. 17–18)

In arts-based research, something of who we are is exposed, made visible and representational for others to touch, construct, negotiate, imbibe, or ignore. The dialogical performance moves us toward dispossession—a corporeal leakage—where our identity is an unstable part of the research

process. We choose to risk that identity as part of undoing the systems of power which so neatly construct and produce who and what we are. In fact, we expect and depend upon the unsettling of identity as a felt barometer to make visible those webs of power in order to name and unravel them.

Herein, I think about identity construction and deconstruction as a dialogical performance with others—as a dynamic ongoing project from the very inception of a project throughout the research process until the final expression through written or creative representation—that serves as an intense site of knowledge. I also think about identity as an “embodied self” where the self is not separate from the body. As feminist theorist Anirban Das argues, there is a difference between the consciousness that is located inside the vessel of the body and a conscious body locating power and knowledge in and through the body (2010, p. 3). For me, identity shifted through the close proximity of my body to others engaged in a creative process. As Gloria Anzaldúa expresses, “... only through the body, through the pulling of flesh, can the human soul be transformed” (1987, p. 75). This statement is a testament to the linkages between our notions of self, body, and the power structures that work to regulate and form our bodily practices and our interactions with others. Opening our minds to new ways of thinking often requires that we place our bodies in new and uncomfortable spaces that challenge the prescribed meanings of the ones that have become all too familiar.

It is not possible to fully understand the way one’s own identity is caught up in hegemonic systems and discourses. Yet, I hope to show that one way to begin to problematize the interwoven systems of dominance and their relationship to the construction of self is through arts-based projects. I hope to demonstrate through three examples presented herein, the way my own identity and its embeddedness in cultural and political projects is brought to the forefront in relation to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Though these moments occurred years apart, they do represent a kind of chronological continuum of learning how to be present, how to listen, and how to dispossess, to some degree, myself, in order to enter into and fully engage dialogical performance.

MOMENTS OF RUPTURE

In 2012, I conducted an ethnographic study of the somatic effects of occupation on Palestinian lives. The methodology was formulated around a drama workshop with students of Al-Harah Theater in Beit Jala, West

Bank. Before conducting this research, however, I spent a good deal of time in the region. In 1996, I spent five months living on a *kibbutz* in the Upper Galilee and one month living with a Palestinian-Israeli family in the Old City of Akko/Acca.⁴ My next visit to Israel occurred ten years later to pursue a master's degree in Middle East Studies at Ben-Gurion University in Beer-Sheva from 2006 to 2008. Then, during the summer of 2009, I conducted ethnographic research with Palestinian activists and human rights workers in Ramallah, West Bank.

Throughout these periods of study and research, my identity as an American Jew was challenged. I could classify it as a slow stripping away of cultural meanings and associations that no longer held together for me. From the time I first visited Israel as a volunteer on a *kibbutz*, I became aware of the incongruence between what I thought I knew about Israel and what I experienced. I was taught to believe in Israel as a Jewish homeland, promised to Jews by God as a place that sought to uphold a higher morality through inspired governance. I quickly understood that Israel's Zionist ideals greatly conflict with democratic ones and favoritism toward Jews was not only inherent in its formation, but a prime directive of the Zionist state. Yet, what was difficult and took a long time to unravel and perhaps let go of was the deeply ingrained notion of the State of Israel as part of my identity as a Jew and my claim to its history and destiny. Also, it was difficult to overcome fear, not of Palestinians necessarily (although there were more than a few times my biased upbringing and the animosity I initially believed Palestinians must feel toward Jews, did unnerve me), but fear of listening to them. If they were right, if Israelis were trying to expunge Palestinians from their land, then I would need to believe them and would consequently be accused of naïveté and betrayal by my family and friends. I might need to do something to denounce Israel's actions, which would also be seen as denouncing Judaism and turning against "my people" and my community.

In 1996, when I first encountered the blatant contradictions in the narrative I had come to know about Israel, I turned to ethnographic performance to work through the inconsistencies for myself as well as to express what I witnessed, to Israelis. Performance studies scholar Olorisa Omi Osun Olomo (Joni L. Jones) writes, "Performance ethnography rests on the idea that bodies harbor knowledge about culture, and that performance allows for the exchange of that knowledge across bodies" (2006, p. 339). Ethnographic performance allowed me to put multiple, and oftentimes conflicting, bodies and voices into conversation. I could

then step into various experiences and subject positions and reflect upon the “knowledge across bodies” not only for myself but also with others in a public forum.

In Joan Scott’s well-known essay, “The Evidence of Experience” (1991), she astutely points out that experience is, for the most part, produced through discourse that precedes our experiences. For this reason, experience is teleological and will only lead us to understand meanings within socially produced norms (pp. 776–779). She suggests, rather than looking to experience as authoritative, we should closely consider its literary dimension; the way experience is imagined and articulated with all its contradictions and juxtapositions. According to Scott, it is the slipping back and forth between frames, the movement from one body, one experience, to the other, that helps us look for new ways of articulating the gaps in the interwoven but imperfect narratives between the social and the personal. She writes, “The meanings of the categories of identity change and with them the possibilities for thinking the self” (p. 795). It is with this perspective, I reflect upon my experiences in Israel.

CONFRONTING THE CRITICAL QUESTION

While volunteering on the *kibbutz*, I washed dishes, took care of children in an after-school program, and maintained the flower beds that covered the expansive and breathtaking landscape of the communal property, primarily owned by a group of over 600 Zionists with roots in Great Britain. Some weekends we were taken on tours of Israel, which typically included Zionist history lessons and affirmations of biblical connections to the land. Other weekends, we were allowed to venture beyond the *kibbutz* and travel to Israeli cities and villages. During one of these free weekends, some friends and I traveled to the northern coastal city of Akko/Acca. There, we met mostly young men our own age, who took an avid interest in showing us their city. Later, we met their families and friends and we returned each weekend to grill fish on the beach, dance at the local discotheque, and smoke *nargile* at the coffee shops in the evenings.

Our newfound friends spoke many languages, the result of growing up amidst a myriad of international tourists. Yet, they were, for the most part, impoverished. They lived day by day, fishing in the Mediterranean Sea and working on *kibbutzim* nearby. They had few opportunities outside Akko/Acca, and when they did venture beyond the walls of the city, they were treated as outsiders by Jewish Israelis. For example, one

night, someone borrowed their cousin's car and we decided to drive to a nightclub in Tel Aviv. When we approached the entrance, an Israeli guard would not allow our Palestinian-Israeli friends into the establishment. When I inquired as to the reason for this, the guard responded by saying they had not served in the army. When I asked the reason I was allowed entrance and had not served in the army, he told me "you're a girl," which did not make sense since women are expected to serve in the Israeli military as well as men. Another time, I invited some friends from Akko/Acca to see the *kibbutz*. When they arrived, they were refused entrance because they were a "security risk." What astounded me was that our friends from Akko/Acca were citizens of Israel. They paid taxes, they spoke Hebrew impeccably, and many of them worked on other *kibbutzim*. Yet, they were considered a security risk because they were Arab.

In Judith Butler's essay entitled "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue" (2002), she describes the reason one begins to ask questions that break open discourse and normative meaning. She writes:

One asks about the limits of ways of knowing because one has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives ... And it is from this condition, the tear in the fabric of our epistemological web, that the practice of critique emerges, with the awareness that no discourse is adequate here or that our reigning discourses have produced an impasse. (p. 215)

For me, this "tear in the fabric" began while moving between the exclusive space of the *kibbutz* and the more open, inclusive space of Akko/Acca. In order to begin to make sense of this crisis of epistemology, I turned to an embodied form of representation—one that would allow multiple experiences, narratives, and voices to be put in conversation with one another. I was hoping the refraction of experience would allow critique to emerge and shed light on new understandings.

With some of the other volunteers on the *kibbutz*, I created a devised theater piece called, "Standing on a Wire: Personal Reflections of Two Realities," recalling the name of a book by David Grossman, *Sleeping on a Wire* (1993/2003), in which a Palestinian-Israeli doctor and his children are refused entrance to a swimming pool by a Jewish-Israeli Holocaust survivor.⁵ Using excerpts from Grossman's text, nursery rhymes and games, diary entries reflecting life on the *kibbutz*, and my

experiences in Akko/Acca, I interwove deeply felt personal and collective narratives and meanings. The refrain, “You tell me what to say to them[!]” (2003, p. 176), took on a double meaning through the performance. In the original Grossman text, the Palestinian-Israeli doctor makes this demand of the pool owner who refuses his children entrance to the pool. In the performance, it functioned as my own direct address to the Israeli *kibbutzniks* to demand to know what I should tell my friends from Akko/Acca who were refused entrance at the gates of the *kibbutz*. As I stood in front of the *kibbutz* community, there was no mistaking my stance as both insider and outsider, agitator and activist on the part of Palestinian Israelis. If it was not clear where I stood in relation to my identity as a Jewish American, it became clear through the parallel narratives performed through the dramatization.

These experiences changed my perspective about who I was, what I felt, what I knew, and what I believed. But it was the performance of them that registered this transformation in and through a public proclamation among others. By placing my body alongside my host Palestinian-Israeli family and our friends discursively and through enactment of their words, I was now in some way allied with them and their community. Yet, the *kibbutzniks* knew I was Jewish. Therefore, I demonstrated to them, and to myself, that Judaism was not one fixed set of beliefs. It was fluid enough to incorporate love and appreciation of others, even those who many Jews considered to be an enemy. This more fluid view of Jewish identity laid out a path, albeit a faint outline of one, of what a Jewish identity could entail. This was an identity that could be inclusive rather than exclusive—stretching across bodies and across bodies of knowledge—offering compassion and respect, instead of fear and negation.

THE WAR IN GAZA

When Israel ordered airstrikes on Gaza in late December of 2008, I was mortified. At the end of the war, 1,391 Gazans were reported killed, including countless women and children; nine Israelis were reported killed (B'tselem, 2009).⁶ The controversial scholar, Norman Finkelstein, characterized the war in Gaza as a “moral turning point” (2009). For me, it was a kind of psychological unscrewing that throws reality asunder. To watch Israelis bomb Gazan civilians for weeks relatively unchallenged, called to question central belief structures regarding Judaism, Israel as a Jewish state, my identity as a Jew, and Israel’s relationship to the United States and American Jews.

During this time, a colleague's condemnation of Israel's leadership on Facebook drew my attention. I noticed the efficacy of his posts in drawing conversation and criticism, rallying people around his call for protest. I wanted to follow his example. However, I lacked the courage to use Facebook as a political forum and site of activism. As a somewhat novice user, I had just begun to amass a substantial pool of friends. Many of these "friends" were Jewish Americans, with whom I had not spoken since middle school. Other contacts included a number of friends from Israel, graduate school, work, traveling, high school, ex-boyfriends, and relatives. Most of them knew I was Jewish but did not know I was critical of Israel's government. Because Jewish identity and Israel are so intertwined, protesting Israel's actions is oftentimes equated with anti-Semitism. Ultimately, if I spoke out against Israel on Facebook amidst a large Israeli and American Jewish virtual community, I risked losing friends and damaging relationships with family members. Yet, as innocent Gazans were killed, it became impossible not to take action.

As I began posting opinions and news articles, many conversations emerged. I found myself in the middle of an intense dialectical exchange. Most of my Jewish friends were furious about my posts. Yet, their anger was also coupled with curiosity about the reasons for my harsh criticism of Israel. As much as I was able to respond in an informed or impactful way, I also felt an immense failure in my response. Through the Facebook forum, a central conflict emerged: knowing how and what to protest. I was very much against Israel's actions, but how far was I willing to go in denouncing Israel and what it stood for as a sovereign Jewish state?

One morning in early January, I posted a request for suggestions of a poem to read at a Muslim Students Association candlelight vigil for the victims of Gaza. The colleague, mentioned earlier, posted a poem called "Those Who Pass Between Fleeting Words," (Darwish, 1988). I am sure he did not mean it as a challenge, but after reading and re-reading the poem, I decided I could not read it at the vigil. My inability to read the poem, to speak the words in a public forum before an audience of Muslim students, signaled the inherent difficulty I faced in researching and protesting the Israeli government's actions against Palestinians, as an American Jew. Why were the words, "Carry your names, and be gone," impossible for me to speak? If I said, "So leave our country/ Our land, our sea/Our wheat, our salt, our wounds," would I be rallying for Israelis to pack up and leave? For the vigil, I chose to read a different poem by Darwish with a more reconciliatory tone. But the

fact that I could not utter the words from “Those Who Pass” haunted me. What were my beliefs? If “not to be governed *like that*” (Foucault qtd. in Butler, 2002, p. 218), then how to govern?⁷ What was I working toward? What was I representing?

Once again, performance became a mode of inquiry as well as a pathway to embodied listening as I began to adapt my Facebook pages into a performance for an audience at Northwestern University in Illinois and then again at Saint Cloud State University in Minnesota. In order to adapt the Facebook forums, I compiled a narrative map of voices, thoughts, and events that began to form the stuff of drama. Yet, I still did not have a dramatic structure. I looked back at the collection of narratives and the memories that lay between them. I realized that the way to tell the story was to show my struggle moving from arrested action to action, as influenced by the Facebook dialectic. This overarching conflict was exemplified by my inability to speak the words of the Darwish poem. What were the obstacles I faced in doing so? This became the central question of the performance.

In order to confront this question, I began reciting the poem in rehearsals. Time and again, I wrestled with the lines that told Israelis to leave. Then, after many days, as I was speaking the words of the poem yet again, I began to hear it differently. Perhaps it was not about Israelis leaving or not leaving. Perhaps that is what the poem said to a Jew. It was written by an exiled Palestinian about Palestinians. It was about existing without having every aspect of one’s life including memories and meanings molested, destroyed, or even worse, erased through theft and appropriation. As I continued to speak the poem, I began to comprehend the reason I hesitated initially, in speaking out against Israeli violence. I began to see that I viewed Palestinian claims and rights as contingent upon Israeli losses, and feared that outcome. This was something I had not considered as an inherent bias in my work.

The poem continued to enact meaning through performance. The following is an excerpt from the performance when I recount for the audience my reading of Darwish’s “safer” poem for the candlelight vigil. Only this time, as I recollect the event, I also change it to reflect my newfound understanding and courage.

Standing at the top of the platform, I look out onto the audience. I think that the distance and height might erase their faces. But I can see everyone, each person sitting there. I begin with the poem, which by now has etched itself in my mind. But it is not the poem I brought with me.

It is another poem from deep in my memory as I remember those words, “never again,” and how they weren’t just meant for one group of people.⁸

I had decided to represent the move from inaction to action by beginning the piece constrained and wrapped in muslin. Over the course of the performance, the muslin is shed, piece by piece until the white cloth strewn on the stage appears as variously sized bundles, representing dead bodies. At that moment, standing amidst the white cloth strewn about the floor, I felt the presence of ghosts: those who were murdered in the Gaza war. Yet, in parallel, I felt the presence of those who died in the Holocaust as I said the words: “Pile your illusions in a deserted pit” (Darwish, 1988). Images drawn from the memory of photographs of thousands of skeletons thrown into mass graves arose and awakened comparisons between what was real in front of me and the collapsed time of the event and the collective memory of Jews. I felt I was speaking for my ancestors, that I was appropriating their memory, conjuring their spirits for a purpose.

Perhaps another reason a Holocaust memory was conjured, was because I chose to play *Avinu Malkeinu*—an ancient and sacred Jewish prayer traditionally sung on Yom Kippur, the day of atonement—softly in the space. I wanted *Avinu Malkeinu* to operate as a reminder of the nature of Judaism as a doctrine of belief that strictly forbids killing innocent people. I wanted to put the acts in Gaza in conversation with a collective Jewish conscience to speak to those Jewish Americans who view Israel as essential to their Jewish belief system as a land promised by God to the Jews. *Avinu Malkeinu* evokes the spiritual and moral tenets of Judaism and it was a personal way of asking forgiveness for remaining silent so long.

When I performed the piece at Saint Cloud State University, a religious studies professor approached me after the performance. He knew the meaning of *Avinu Malkeinu* and expressed a profound sense of appreciation that I had addressed the war in Gaza from the perspective of Jewish theology, condemning Israel’s actions, as a Jew. I was not only representing Palestinians’ views of the wrongs that had been done, but I was understanding and condemning Israel’s actions from my own ethical, moral, and religious obligations as well.

I believe this is what Conquergood intended when he wrote, as voices come together through dialogical performance, “the conspicuous artifice of performance is a vivid reminder that *each voice has its own integrity* [emphasis mine]” (1985, p. 10). I did not attempt to become the other, to subsume my identity into a Palestinian one. I was not

attempting to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar as the old adage goes. When I spoke Darwish's poem, I was representing his words, but through my embodied voice. I was representing my identity as an American Jew responsible in part for the atrocities committed against Palestinians. Ultimately, through the performance, I gained a deeper understanding of the knowledge across bodies and how that knowledge is complementary and collective. It also revealed the false logic, inherent in the construction of a contemporary Jewish identity, that the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is a zero-sum game where the existence of one, negates the existence of the other. By listening through performance, to Darwish's voice as well as the voices of my Facebook interlocutors, I was able to move from inaction to action: to protest, without fear, the atrocities committed against Palestinians.

ARTS-BASED RESEARCH WITH PALESTINIANS IN BEIT JALA

In 2012, I conducted an eight-week, arts-based workshop with Palestinians in Beit Jala, West Bank. Participants primarily used movement, improvisations, and storytelling to express their experiences of occupation. In conceptualizing the research, I planned to work with both Palestinians and Israelis, using the mode of performance to allow each group to express the way they experienced occupation, while simultaneously providing a forum for exchange and reciprocity. However, the ethnographic research I conducted during the summer of 2009, as well as the research I conducted earlier in 2012, caused me to question this project design.

In proposing a joint project to Palestinian theater artists, I met a great deal of resistance and outright objection to the idea. They believed working with Israelis would contribute to "normalization," creating the illusion that Israelis and Palestinians are able to work together on equal footing. The Palestinians with whom I spoke, felt they could not engage in any project, artistic or otherwise, with Israelis on equal terms unless the political situation allowed them equal rights. Then and only then, could they engage in a project with Israelis. My initial reaction was one of disbelief and frustration. How would Palestinians ever get their point across to Israelis if they refused to meet with them or have a dialogue with them? Days later, I recalled Conquergood's instructive reading of Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855/1969):

Douglass recommended placing oneself quietly, respectfully, humbly, in the space of others so that one could be surrounded and “impressed” by the expressive meanings of their music. It is subtle but significant that he instructed the outsider to listen “in silence.” I interpret this admonition as an acknowledgement and subversion of the soundscapes of power within which the ruling classes typically are listened to while the subordinate classes listen in silence. (2002, p. 149)

Adhering to Conquergood’s words, I ignored the sound of my own voice for a moment and attempted to listen to Palestinians’ reasons for refusing to perform with Israelis, in silence. I had done as Conquergood instructed by placing myself in the space of others, but I had only listened to my own voice. I thought about Conquergood’s mention of silence and the soundscapes of power. I noticed that when I became silent, I also became more aware of the sensorial, affective response, of what I heard through my body. I was no longer afforded the luxury of speaking and theorizing without feeling. I reflected upon the way I felt when I suggested the joint project. I remembered the immediate emotional response to rejection. I was immediately disregarded as someone who was no longer seen as an ally or supportive of Palestinian rights but as someone acting in my own self-interest.

I thought about others who propose joint projects. For the most part, scholars and peace activists of the global North use “conflict resolution” or “peacebuilding” as a discursive frame when constructing projects and research with Palestinians. These frameworks oftentimes reify the dominant political discourse of two sides, Israeli and Palestinian, as equal stakeholders in an age-old conflict. Through this frame, it logically follows that both groups need to come to the table and work things out. But, as mentioned above, the two populations and experiences of oppression are far from equal.

Taking what I learned from my Palestinian interlocutors, I decided before entering into any kind of dialogue with Israel, Palestinian voices and struggles needed to be communicated and understood on their own terms, on their own soil, among friends. The construction of the false paradigm presenting two equal sides in conflict continuously refutes the Palestinians’ ability to speak. For this reason, I decided that my research would focus only on Palestinians and their experience without Israeli intervention, oversight, and domination under the pretense of peacebuilding or presenting a “balanced” view.

CONCLUSION

Each segment of performance research mentioned above led me through a process of inquiry bringing me closer to understanding the way my embodied identity interfered with, and even occluded my understanding of Palestinians' oppression under Israeli military occupation. The fears and obstacles became visceral through embodied representation and the work could not continue without addressing them. I learned to see these moments of rupture, the chasms between meanings, as guideposts. Through a reflexive inquiry into the way my identity as an American Jew was constructed and the political attachments invested as a part of that identity, I began to understand the ways in which Palestinians are oppressed, not only through Israelis' actions, but through my own genealogies of cultural production.

As I moved closer into Palestinian spaces and relationships where I aligned myself with Palestinians, as in the first example performing on the *kibbutz*, or when I spoke the words of Mahmoud Darwish through the integrity of my own body conjuring a collective memory of the Holocaust, and finally when I lived in the West Bank amongst Palestinians, I learned that listening is a bodily act. By allowing myself to acknowledge and feel spaces of conflict, confusion, and discomfort, and trying to register what I was told through the embodied process of a dialogical performance, I moved and was moved to gradually alter my subject position in order to more fully understand the systems of oppression, of which I am a part.

In thinking about the broader implications of this and other arts-based research, I believe the notion of proximity and creative knowledge production alongside those with whom we seek to understand, is one I would like to highlight. Not all scholars are interested in or able to adopt arts-based research methods. However, by ascribing to the notion that conversations cannot happen from a distance, because embodied listening can only occur in the performance of bodies coming together to inhabit and share space, is one way our research and its politics may be improved. In order to do this, however, our identities must be allowed the space to move to and away from subject positions. We should not only aim to see transformation in ourselves as we conduct research, but we should expect it. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, "I am the dialogue between my Self and *el espíritu del mundo*. I change myself, I change the world" (1987, p. 70). As scholars who are invested in contesting power structures that oppress others, we must challenge ourselves to listen to who and what we are as embodiments of those structures, and then work to change them.

NOTES

1. Daniel Jack Lyons and Theo Sandfort also ask this question in their online photo essay, *Subaltern Speak* (2014). <http://www.danieljacklyons.com/new-blog-1/2014/9/24/subaltern-speak>.
2. I use this term rather than the often used terms “informant” or “research subject” to emphasize a relationship with those one encounters in the field or who become research participants, as one based on egalitarianism, respect, and reciprocity. The other terms carry problematic histories, particularly within the discipline of anthropology, where people were studied in ways that reinforced imperial power over colonized subjects or which benefited the researcher and exploited research participants.
3. I borrowed and recontextualized the comparison between “positioning” and “directioning” from Peter Kim’s usage in the field of brand strategy. I first encountered these terms while working for Kim in the late nineties.
4. These are the Hebrew and Arabic names for the city known in English as Acre.
5. Grossman uses the term “Israeli Arab” rather than “Palestinian Israeli” to describe the doctor’s national identity.
6. These figures were reported at the end of the war on 18 January 2009. They do not reflect deaths resulting from war-related injuries, which occurred days or months later.
7. Judith Butler discusses this quotation from Foucault’s “What is Critique?” (1997), as pointing to the origins of a critical stance, where one begins to question the delimitation of the terms which define power and the formation of the Self.
8. The last part of this sentence is a paraphrase of a remark spoken by Simona Sharoni at a solidarity workshop at DePaul University, Chicago, 2009.

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The Role of Privilege and Oppression in Arts-Based Research: A Case Study of a Cisgender and Transgender Research Team

Owen Paul Karcher and Christine Caldwell

INTRODUCTION

Research that seeks to understand and advocate for and with marginalized peoples has been developing in recent decades, in two broad and parallel lines. The first line works to centralize the voices of exploited groups, and the second seeks to shift traditional methods of inquiry so that abusive systems of power and privilege are not replicated, and socially just research activities can be promoted. This chapter uses several research projects engaged in by the authors as a way to examine our challenges and learnings. The initial topic of inquiry explored transgender experiences, using creative arts processes as a means of generating and analyzing

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data, and sharing findings directly with various communities. We are both creative arts therapists as well as researchers who both identify as white. One of us identifies as cisgender and one of us identifies as transgender. Our belief is that arts-based research can advance social justice, yet as we engaged in our work, we realized some of our goals were also recapitulating the oppressive dynamics we were seeking to transform. By confronting our work afterwards, and by examining our processes and products, we hope to share what we have learned, and suggest ways in which future research can be more effective.

In recent decades, qualitative research has sought to understand the lived experience of individuals in ways that allow marginalized voices to be centralized (Van Manen, 1990). Qualitative methodologies that have evolved to address social justice include participatory action, institutional ethnography, indigenious, community-based, feminist standpoint, and embodied inquiry, among others.

In community-based research Born (2012) mentions that when community members are asked questions, they will inherently begin to build expectations that action will be taken as a result of their responses. In the traditional model of research, the researcher enters the community, asks questions, then leaves to publish the results in journals, books, or presentations for colleagues (Stoecker, 2005). Often, the community members' work and culture is appropriated and they are not given an opportunity to benefit from the project. When working on issues of marginalization and oppression, this dynamic has been repeated over time and communities have been used and abused by researchers without consideration of the well being of the people involved as research participants. The need to end this direct harming of communities has led to innovations that involve the participation of community members, from determining research questions to methods of dissemination.

Another important force has emerged is arts-based research. In the mid-1980s, Shaun McNiff, an art therapist, posited that the long-term interests of the creative arts therapies would be well served by developing creative, process-based research methods (1986). Arts-based inquiry has blossomed, is being used for data collection, analysis, and representation, and is seen as both disrupting and extending qualitative research (Hervey, 2000; Leavy, 2009). In arts-based research, the assumption is that the creative process itself, as well as the created image, is a powerful carrier of meaning. For the purposes of this chapter, "image" is used

for the metaphor created through movement, composition, shapes, and relationships of objects or subjects, as well as two and three-dimensional art pieces.

While arts-based research can contribute to anti-oppressive inquiry, these methods also struggle to change practices that cause further harm to the people being researched (Caldwell & Johnson, 2012). While these critiques are an important step, it is clear that the assumptions of qualitative research need examination as well.

Sadly, qualitative research... serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power, and for truth. The metaphor works this way. Research, quantitative and qualitative, is scientific. Research provides the foundation for reports about and representations of “the Other.” In the colonial context, research becomes an objective way of representing the dark-skinned “Other” to the white world. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 1)

Colonial practices involve exploitation of labor, land, bodies, ideas, and work to strengthen the power, location, and resources of the privileged. This is done through emotional, physical, and sexual violence, as well as appropriation of knowledge, objects, bodies, rituals, and practices. When considering the reverberations of such violence, it is crucial to acknowledge the wariness of oppressed groups when asked to participate in institutions that have caused them harm. A nuanced intentionality and accountability process is called for in which researchers, representing colonial systems by their locations of privilege, should consider the potential impact their actions and intentions cause before even engaging communities in processes of inquiry. Throughout the process should be opportunities for reflection and action, or praxis (Freire, 1993), and dialogue amongst participants to mitigate harm.

POWER, DIFFERENCE, AND THE RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP

Howarth (2002) explores the importance of investigating all research relationships in depth. During a community-based research project, she was challenged by young men of color from an under-resourced neighborhood to examine her intentions and the negative impact she was having on the group, especially as it related to race. As a white, educated female from an affluent part of town, she had not considered her collusion with racism. She began to question “what impact do the identities

of researchers have on the researched as well as the material produced in research?” (2002, p. 21–22). Noting the complexities of examining relationships across power differences, she writes:

Highlighting these differences meant recognizing the inequalities within the research context and the researcher’s potential for exploiting and otherizing the research participants...This analysis demonstrates the researcher’s power to construct the identities of the researched, the destructive nature of the gaze of the other and the consequences of difference. (p.31)

Russell Bishop, a Maori professor writing on indigenous research projects of the Maori people, has weighed in on the issue of researchers abandoning their attitudes of distance to somatically participate in their projects:

To be involved somatically means to be involved bodily—that is, physically, ethically, morally, and spiritually, not just in one’s capacity as a “researcher” concerned with methodology...Although it appears that “personal investment” is essential, this personal investment is not on terms determined by the ‘investor.’ Instead, the investment is on terms mutually understandable and controllable by all participants, so that the investment is reciprocal and could not be otherwise. (2008, p. 173)

Feminist scholar Judith Butler (1999) posited that in oppressive systems, some bodies “matter,” and some bodies do not. The bodies of those in power literally are represented materially—solid and present, while disempowered peoples are “dematerialized.” This dematerialization takes place along lines of ability, race, gender, and class. As Gatens pointed out, “gender itself may be understood...as the way in which power takes hold of and constructs bodies in particular ways” (1999, p. 230). Since 2012, the Black Lives Matter movement has been calling for the “rematerialization” of black bodies and advocating for an intersectional analysis that centers queer, disabled, trans, and feminine black experiences, by literally declaring that these lives “matter” (Garza, Tometi, & Cullors, 2015).

It is within these sociopolitical contexts that our research activities occurred, which paralleled, and enacted the aspirations and shortcomings of qualitative research, social justice, and personal vulnerabilities and biases. The following sections will situate the research in the landscape of

transgender theory, introduce the trajectory of the research, and reflect on the lessons that emerged.

TRANSGENDER OPPRESSION AND THE BODY

For transgender people, bodily autonomy and safety are challenged by misrepresentation throughout public discourse and the creation of harmful symbols, images, and assumptions about what it means to be transgender. The reality of legislative, physical, and psychological attacks being launched towards transgender communities builds from a history of LGBTQ identities being seen as pathological, with only recent movement away from labeling these identities as mental disorders. There is inadequate representation of resiliency, beauty, and strength, and insufficient focus on oppression that causes negative health outcomes (Johnson & Guzman, 2012). This context is the necessary focus for social change, rather than attempting to change or assimilate the identities and expressions embodied by LGBTQ individuals.

Unfortunately some of the more accepted methods of challenging these biased definitions of health came from ideas of assimilation and whiteness rather than the liberatory and revolutionary tactics and embodiments celebrated in some communities with multiple oppressions (Hunter, 2015a, 2015b). The public emphasis on assimilation and love as a tactic for de-pathologization has led to the erasure of and increased violence towards gender nonconforming individuals, transgender people with disabilities, and transgender people of color. It has also led to the systemic violence that results in suicides due to a lack of diverse representation of expressions and accurate portrayal of the system as pathological rather than individual bodies and identities.

When cisgender researchers ask questions of transgender individuals about their identities and experiences, there is a risk that the historical pathologization and current hostile climate can influence what is reported. The research participant may under or over report, or may censor their experiences in order to be understood or represented in a way that may not tell the whole story (Howarth, 2002). This is not an act of deception, but one of survival. The systemic bias against certain bodies is pervasive and people who experience oppression have developed ways to navigate these systems to stay safe, which include protecting their personal narratives and attempting to limit vulnerability.

Transgender individuals have historically coached each other about what will work when speaking with healthcare practitioners who lack experience working with transgender clients (Ophelian, 2009). While this was needed to access care, this has reinforced simplistic narratives and resulted in limited widespread understanding of the complexity of gender, as well as inadequate understanding from service providers. In fact, 50% of transgender respondents to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey reported needing to educate their providers in how to care for them (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, & Keisling, 2011).

Transgender people face oppression from multiple sources: within families, in intimate relationships, with teachers and healthcare providers. They face targeting by police and politicians, employers, and encounter it daily as they are misgendered and ridiculed (Grant, et al., 2011). This context needs to be taken into consideration when beginning a process of research or relationship-building when one is in a position of power. Too often, transgender people go to receive services or support, and are rejected, discriminated against, or met with violence. The stress of anticipating these responses, even when approached by a seemingly friendly individual, all impact the relationship of researchers and participants. Researchers need to be sensitive to this and anticipate the need for disclosure of their rationale, personal investment and motivation for the line of inquiry, and explicitly define the use of the research so the person's anxiety and expectations for oppression can be eased. Trust building is crucial at every point of this process (James, Rivera, Jenkins, & Herman, 2016).

In the following section, we examine how our relationship created a microcosm of this dynamic, demonstrating the challenges facing transgender people and the challenges of reworking research methods. This was done in the midst of the vulnerabilities of creative processing, performance venues, conference presentations, and published articles.

THE EVOLVING PROJECT

An examination of the relationship between us as researchers, and the performance created, can provide a telling metaphor about the process of research. Christine invited Owen to be a "co-researcher," but the power differential between Christine as "the researcher," and Owen, as "the researched," remained unchanged in key areas of the relationship,

as evidenced by the metaphor of the performance. The following paragraphs, written in each author's voice, detail our experiences, as we reflect upon them with three years of hindsight.

Christine: The relationship between Owen and myself began in 2012, as a component of a research project myself and a colleague were doing to study the somatic effects of oppression. This ongoing project began in 2010 when Rae Johnson, then at the Santa Barbara Graduate Institute, and myself, at Naropa University, began qualitative interviews with people from socially-subordinated groups. While there is accumulating evidence that oppression has long-term effects on physical and psychological health (Szymanski & Kashubeck, 2008), we hypothesized that oppression transmits psychosomatic effects as well, that dominance and othering are routinely enacted via nonverbal (body to body) communication (Goffman, 1959; Henley, 1977), and that this body oppression is a form of ongoing trauma (Mol, et al. 2005; Scott & Stradling, 1994). We wanted to listen to and center people's narratives about the effects of oppression on their embodiment—their moving, breathing, and sensing—in a world that often de-materializes their bodily existence.

Owen: I volunteered to be an interview participant and then, with Christine, co-choreographed a performance of the data to build on my personal process of artistic inquiry into gender identity. As an art therapy student with little experience in performing arts, I saw the opportunity to publicly disseminate the data as a challenge to further explore my identity and provide an opportunity for public education around transgender experiences.

Christine and Owen: The multimedia performance was done as part of the annual Somatic Arts Concert at Naropa University. Two dance/movement therapy students, Etalia Thomas and Sorin Richards, aided in the choreography and acted as movers/dancers in the piece on different nights of the concert. The performance involved intimate aspects of Owen's process of recognizing his identity as a trans person and attempting to heal from internalized oppression. Owen and Etalia or Sorin depicted the scene where he realized he no longer identified with the sex he was assigned at birth and demonstrated the somatic impact of anti-transgender language. They supported each other in an effort to remove the blows of this language and used art to externalize and heal from them.

After the performances, we started to think about other venues to present the data, and wrote an article in *The Arts in Psychotherapy* journal

(Karcher & Caldwell, 2014), and presented at several national conferences.

Owen: Over a period of several months, we choreographed the piece, shifting course several times. At first, we wanted to educate the audience, challenge the Gender Identity Disorder diagnosis, and explain the term “transgender.” The role of educator is familiar to both of us, and felt like an important intellectual message. This focus shifted away from the primary research question and its emphasis on the body, however, and we returned to the transcripts and mined the interviews for more visceral experiences that spoke more intimately to my process.

At one point, I invited Christine to share her experience of the interviews and her learning, as she mentioned repeatedly that she was learning and being challenged throughout the process, not having examined her cisgender identity or cisgender privilege before. I also saw Christine as part of the choreography and research process, and felt my experience should not be the only one displayed in the piece, since Christine was using the language of co-researchers. Christine declined this invitation and decided she was best placed as an observer onstage for the performance, except for the end, when she walked to center stage, stood next to me, and engaged the audience by talking directly to them about bodily oppression. In contrast, the other performers and I remained nonverbal throughout the piece. This decision on Christine’s part proved to be a pivotal re-enactment of power locations, unexamined intentions, and habituated privilege.

Christine: Tellingly, I don’t remember the details of these invitations, only a broad sense that Owen was offering to “share the stage.” I had a strong sense that this was Owen’s stage, not mine, that the performance was about his transgender experience, and that a cisgender female researcher who carried a lot of privilege should not overshadow Owen’s struggles. I do remember that I felt Owen was being polite to extend this offer, rather than pointing to the need for transparency and vulnerability on the part of the researcher.

Owen and Christine: When we step back to look at this process metaphorically, some relationship dynamics become clearer, and can demonstrate how research partnerships can become tricky, especially because power differences are involved. The act of declining the invitation to engage in self-reflection and disclosure of the researcher’s personal process, from Owen’s perspective, reinforced the power differential. Owen was sharing deeply intimate experiences of oppression, displaying and



Fig. 3.1 Owen & Christine

enacting how those experiences felt in his body, and engaging in the creation of personal images as part of the performance. He was doing this in front of hundreds of people as Christine's location as the observer and consumer of imagery was metaphorically maintained and she did not step into the vulnerable process of movement or self-disclosure (Fig. 1).

Christine: When Owen first brought up the issue of my staying uninvolved as a performer (two years after the performance), I was shocked and upset that this dynamic had played out, and began to question myself. While on the surface I remember constructing the rationale that it would be better that Owen took center stage, I began to realize that I had deeper issues going on, ones that emerged clearly when I began to question how I could have been so insensitive to Owen's locations and feelings. I realize now that I carried another deeply buried identity, that I never shared with Owen, having to do with my size and age. Though we are the same height, I carry almost 85 more pounds of weight than Owen, and am roughly 35 years older than him. It never occurred to me that size and age can be marginalized locations *for me*. In this case, they influenced my decision to not be a more central and equitable part of the

performance—to sit on the side so that my fat and creaky body would not be so exposed. It has become clearer that it was partly my unexamined internalized oppression that enabled me to engineer an avoidance of being vulnerable and transparent, and then, in turn, cause painful reenactments of exploitation. What made matters worse was the fact that I did not tell Owen about my feelings, as I was used to keeping them to myself.

From the location of my privileged identities, my stance as a well-meaning, social justice researcher also needed deeper excavation. Underneath the feeling of well-being that came with my sense that I was “living my values,” I can now see that unexamined privilege was at play. By identifying myself as one of the good people, I took a pass at noticing how my behavior might impact Owen. From a psychological perspective, my privilege allowed me to not challenge my defenses against self-examination. I suspect that this dynamic is all too common—that by taking refuge in good intentions, people with privilege can fail to take the next step, which is to question their habitual ways of acting that still transmit oppression.

Owen: I have learned that, as a queer and trans person, I unconsciously put a lot of effort into taking care of straight and cisgender people. As I write and present about LGBTQ lives and experiences, I try to shut off the parts of myself that are hurting, or that might cause discomfort. As I looked to this metaphor of relationship, and reexamined the process of creating the performance, I was reflecting on this tendency I have to care take, and the ways marginalized people are often expected to do this. I wanted to spell out for the audience what it is to be trans, to lay out my vulnerable experiences of harm, hurt, and internalizing violence and negativity. In asking Christine to participate, I was asking her to have some part of the vulnerability. I was asking her to reflect on her own privilege and ways her heart connected to my experiences. She did not do this. I found myself then working really hard to take care of Christine when she felt challenged. When writing about the times she caused me harm and held this power unconsciously, I was careful to only challenge her a little at a time. I reflected on where I could have caused her harm and took accountability for my places of privilege when she responded to my feedback with her own experiences of internalized oppression based in age and body size. The focus then landed on how Christine was feeling and she was provided space to process and reflect. I appreciated that she did that reflection mostly outside of our

relationship, but felt like she did not return with a heightened awareness about how she holds cisgender privilege and how that played a part in our relationship dynamic.

Owen and Christine: Owen felt the relationship continued to keep him in a place of less power than Christine. However, he felt too vulnerable to challenge them further until the writing of this chapter. We continued to work together and during presentations the topics were split up; Christine explained the theories behind the research while Owen disclosed his personal art and identities, taking the place of educating the audiences about his experiences while Christine was able to maintain her position of power by refraining from self-disclosure. This dynamic reinforced Christine as “the expert” and Owen as the emotional laborer, which are common locations—the marginalized person is often asked to explain their feelings and experiences in order to “make real” their pain at the request of the person with more privilege. Discussions about ownership of material, imagery, and process, and which pieces of Owen’s story should be shared and by whom took place after several months of Owen wondering about what he had consented to, what parts of his story would be shared by Christine, and how she was benefiting from his emotional labor.

Owen: Prior to talking about my concerns, I felt vulnerable and worried about the potential for exploitation, which I commonly experience and witness in marginalized communities. When I initiated this discussion when we wrote our first article, it allowed us to name our motivations. This included the fact that Christine felt she was not benefitting professionally, but felt personally invested in supporting my emerging career. Boundaries were drawn around what was okay to share from my personal process outside of the research and how credit was assigned to the various projects. However, the naming of power and privilege within the relationship and the underlying causes for concern, vulnerability, and pain were not discussed until later.

It was not until the invitation to write this chapter that we began to more explicitly discuss the power differential. Just before this project got started, Christine asked me to engage in more emotional labor by contributing to a video project she was doing on transgender issues. I had limited energy, was experiencing trauma in my community, and was able to draw a boundary around the toll of this work by challenging Christine to examine her own identities and locations instead of continuing to only share mine. Even though I had drawn that boundary, Christine used

my story and images and placed herself next to me in her video project, which was confusing, painful, and felt like a violation of trust. Her video seemed to trivialize my experiences, and I was upset she did not respect the limits I placed on how she could share my story and questioned in what other areas she was sharing my personal narrative to benefit herself. I felt angry and frustrated that she had not thought about the impact of her video, and again assumed we were standing on equal ground, without regard to her cisgender privilege. In our next conversation, I spoke up about how it felt to watch her video and how it mirrored other aspects of our relationship.

Christine: This was a potent turning point in our relationship, as it was the first time I was able to look at my actions from a different vantage point. I initially experienced the classic white, cisgender, liberal reaction of “I’m just trying to do a good thing here!” Stepping back from that narrative was very painful, and continues to reverberate in uncomfortable ways. For me, there were two types of pain happening—the horror I felt when I realized I caused Owen harm, and the crumbling of my comfortable assumptions about what I was doing in the world. One reason I was able to work on the pain and not degenerate into an irreversible rift was the years of Owen and I relating to each other that we both fell back on. I also managed to hold my discomfort and pain and did not expect or ask Owen to take care of me. This “holding” is crucial, as it involved exerting a brake on my typical, more defended responses and assessing their potential impact before replying. It also required that I open up more deeply to Owen, letting his words and the look on his face really sink in. I realized that to better understand my impact, I needed to be emotionally impacted by Owen’s upset with me. This was a very visceral experience; I was shaking, tearing up, and slightly nauseous. By taking responsibility for that state, by working to manage it on my own, I believe that the somatic effects of oppression were located *in me*. Or, more tellingly, the somatic effects of *privilege* were in me. It was my responsibility to work on them directly, in my own body. We spent time on several Skype calls talking through the conflict, not trying to resolve it too quickly, or minimize any of our communications. I had to resist using apology as a panacea, and navigate showing my feelings without using them to manipulate. I destroyed the video.

Owen: A central question that was missing from Christine’s video project was why she was doing it. She had wanted to create something that benefitted transgender communities, but misinterpreted my

feedback about how she could reflect on her own experiences. When initially discussing her project, I told Christine I had never heard a cisgender person say how they learned about their privilege and its impact on trans people. Had she thought more intentionally about the reasons behind her project and the impact it would have, it could have been a great demonstration of how to be an ally. Instead, I felt she disregarded my needs and then I had to educate her.

Christine: From my original standpoint, my research relationship with Owen began with an assumption of breaking down traditional ways of working with participants and creating a partnership that would model inclusion and work across difference towards a common goal of equity and justice. As Owen confronted my assumptions, this idealized and self-serving notion began to crumble. At its core, this “nice” narrative could keep operating because of my inability to look underneath the glossy surfaces and examine my own multi-layered identities, vulnerabilities, and locations.

The first layer down involved my assumption that I should “stay out of it.” The narrative sounded so lofty! It went something like: “I am the privileged person here, and my white, cisgender voice has been taking up all the space for centuries. It’s time to shut up and let other voices be heard.” Only on the surface can this be seen as a selfless act. Underneath, it enabled me to “take a pass” from the intense work of examination that marginalized people *must* do on a daily basis to survive. This narrative also echoes old, internalized norms in quantitative research, ones that admonish researchers from being “in” the project, as this will create bias.

The second assumption went like this: “I am already a full professor; I don’t need or want more accolades. I can do this work on my own time, and let Owen take more of the credit (such as first authorship).” Even on the surface, this is patronizing to Owen, and shows how I was enacting my internalized patriarchy, which involves tracking accomplishments, and “letting” junior researchers do things.

The surface layers of my privileged narratives involved rationalizations that kept power where it has always been located and kept inquiry from going deeper. The next layer of examination looks more closely at identities themselves. I was born in 1952, to a white, lower middle class, Irish Catholic family, where everyone was straight and cisgender. This meant that obedience, piety, sacrificial service, and a subservient female role were normed. It was convenient to think I had left those roles behind and that they wouldn’t implicitly influence my present locations. Part of

the horror that I faced as I began to admit the harm I had done to Owen was that I had partly invoked Joan of Arc as an implicit model for how to do social justice work. In this case, questioning the lasting effects of sexism, misogyny, historical ethnic discrimination, and religious patriarchy had taken a back seat to the seemingly more important concerns of helping. The impulse to “help,” when unquestioned, inherently strengthens a binary stratification of society into the categories of “those that help” and “those that need help.” It could be named as a form of 21st century colonization; involving assumptions by the person in power that intention trumps impact.

Owen and Christine: Our examination of our work together continues, and four organizing themes emerge that may be relevant in research:

1. In all research, but especially research that brings together people across power locations, **include *process* as well as *product* as one of the central lines of inquiry, one of the validating research questions.** Validity should include whether or not a transparent examination of the process was undertaken and whether or not the events and relationships within extended the values and assumptions of the topics of inquiry. How will the act of doing this project illuminate, enact, and speak to the issues we are dealing with? In classic qualitative methodology, the researcher enhances validity by engaging in reflexive journaling to examine possible areas of bias and to question one’s reactions, intentions, and motivations during the project (Stoecker, 2005). These writings, however, rarely make it into the light of day. Self-monitoring is a privilege invoked by those in power. The challenge is for all parties to expose themselves to the research questions in a revealing and personally disruptive way.
2. **Assume there will be shadows.** We took on this research question for several reasons; some were clear and visible to us, and some were living in the shadows. The process of engaging in the project provided an opportunity to enlighten those shadows, and reveal what psychotherapists often call “parallel processing”—the way in which a relational process is enacted unconsciously within oneself or by others in the system. In Christine’s case, she realized she possessed an “Inner Ivory Tower,” internalized assumptions about who she was as a researcher and academic, that simply duplicated much of the abuse of power she was attempting to

study. For Owen, he had internalized oppression in the form of caretaking. Another unexamined area for both of us was the parallel process of studying the somatic effects of oppression through using somatically-based research methods, and not adequately processing how it felt in our bodies to be in relationship to each other throughout the project.

3. **The project is not operating with social justice principles if it requires the marginalized person to be harmed and to educate those with power.** In order for this team to come together, we both needed to engage in self-inquiry about our interpersonal dynamics and locations of privilege. In the case of our research project, Owen needed to challenge Christine in her privileged actions in order to disrupt the harm he was feeling. Owen also needed to hear where Christine had unconsciously acted out of internalized oppression for her to feel validated in her experiences. There are ways people holding power in relationships can be proactive in anticipating the impact of their actions on those experiencing marginalization. Additionally, interpersonal trust building and honest communication is essential to mitigating harm in research.
4. **The project is not transparent and valid until it disrupts comfortable locations.** Being able to look at uncomfortable feelings through the lens of the research question and the systems of power and privilege it was attempting to examine, rather than seeing the feelings as solely interpersonal, contributed greatly to our understanding of the projects we were developing. This inner-to-outer parallel process became creative and fruitful when we realized that change would not be just “out there” in the community, but “in here,” in our bodies and our relationship. These locations of change were interdependent.

CONCLUSIONS

It is illuminating to see, in hindsight, what happens when social justice researchers unwittingly recreate many of the oppressive and implicit norms that they seek to challenge. The reality is that the integration of learning from conflicts is ongoing and the examination of our privileges will continue. We invite other researchers to engage in deep, critical, self-reflection along all steps of the research process, *before* engaging

with marginalized communities *and through* the process. This involves accountability to research participants and communities, willingness to incorporate feedback, on-going trust-building and communication, transparency, and equitable sharing of benefits received from the project.

Social justice researchers may also include embodied, artistic, and experiential components into their methodologies. In many ways, the authors' ability to access their training in the arts and embodiment enabled them to work through many challenges and wounds that were uncovered. Similar to the work of Boal and Freire (1993), by embedding creative, experiential processing during research activities, re-enactments of privilege and marginalization can be caught early and unraveled in a meaningful way. In this way, process and product can both become transformative actions.

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Reflexivity and Listening

While we may approach our research with positive intent and clarity, we are often presented with questions about who owns the process and how might we genuinely “let go?” Using photovoice, oral history, storytelling, and autoethnography, the authors in this Part examine their attempts to control the research and the subsequent “failures,” their need for shared power, and their critical reflections. Through these reflections and the process of placing the research in the hands of community members, the authors share moments of discomfort, the power of story, and the value of deep listening.

Chapter 4, *Struggling to See through the Eyes of Youth: On Failure and (Un)Certainty in a Photovoice Project* by Jennifer Sandlin, Selene Szkupinski-Qiroga, and Andrew Hammerand problematizes the notion that photovoice methodology is always an empowering experience for participants who find their “voice.” They argue that while it may be an effective tool of anti-oppressive methodologies, photovoice’s liberatory potential is far from inherent. This chapter highlights that researchers committed to anti-oppressive research must live with/in the uncomfortable spaces generated by the irreconcilability and impossibilities that critical reflections raise. Taking up feminist explications of “failure,” this chapter addresses how the authors struggled in their attempts to enact a critical, participatory project, as they adopt a reflexivity of discomfort.

In *Listen: The Defeat of Oppression by Expression*, Angela Zusman offers insight into the relationship between systemic bias and the control and dissemination of false narratives. The author articulates the impact

of narrative change and provides a guide for an innovative arts-based research methodology that uses oral history, visual arts, and storytelling to uplift and amplify authentic community voices. Case studies elucidate how this process promotes social justice and community transformation by creating a space for healing and perception change while also providing nuanced, community-driven qualitative and quantitative data that informs policy and systems change.

Amanda Barusch, in *Conversations with Suzanna: Exploring Gender, Motherhood, and Research Practice*, tells a story of two mothers who met through a narrative research project about young adults' gender transitions from their parents' perspectives. Focusing on one mother's experiences with her daughter's transition, this chapter traces the course of the researcher-respondent relationship through interview transcripts, field notes, memos, and recollections. Over the course of five years, tears were shed, fundamental truths were questioned, and a friendship was forged. This chapter closes with reflections on research practice, touching on the challenge of authentically representing another person's narrative, the role of subjectivity, and the merits of prolonged engagement.

Struggling to see Through the Eyes of Youth: On Failure and (Un)Certainty in a Photovoice Project

*Jennifer A. Sandlin, Seline Szkupinski Quiroga and Andrew
Hammerand*

In Spring 2009, as part of Arizona's efforts to decrease obesity in South Phoenix, we—an educator (Jenny), a medical anthropologist (Seline), and a photographic artist (Andrew)—created an arts-based critical action research project to understand how low-income Latino youth in South Phoenix, who are so often the targets of neoliberal dominant health discourses, understood and articulated the health environment of their

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community. Seeking to confront and understand the issues inherent in feminist and other critical research methodologies that strive to problematize power relationships, we looked to photovoice to attempt to work with these youth in *more* rather than *less* empowering ways (Wang, Yi, Tao, & Carovano 1998). We sought to use an adapted form of photovoice as an arts-based methodology with the potential to contribute new understandings and to dismantling oppressive constructions (Finley 2008). We established the South Phoenix PhotoVoice¹ Project (SPPVP), through which we created and piloted a curriculum using photography to capture youth perspectives on health, body image, and the food and physical activity environments in their community.

Photovoice is a research method that is increasingly used by researchers to conduct participatory action research projects in which participants learn to use photography to document and share their perspectives on their communities (Wang et al. 1998). Drawing from feminist theory, documentary photography, and Freirian philosophies of empowerment, photovoice positions members of traditionally oppressed groups as experts from whom educators, researchers, and community leaders can best learn about community issues (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh 2004). Photovoice aims to empower participants, assess community needs and assets, and facilitate participants to take community action, all goals that are complementary with an anti-oppressive orientation.

In this chapter, we problematize the seemingly taken-for-granted notion among many scholars that photovoice methodology is always empowering for participants who find their “voice” (see, for example, see, for example, Hernandez, Shabazian, & McGrath 2014, p. 1947). We argue that while it may potentially be an effective tool of anti-oppressive methodologies, photovoice’s liberatory potential is far from inherent (Higgins 2014). Janes (2016) points out that the claim of “giving voice” assumes a voiceless subject while reinscribing academic epistemic privilege. The experience of participating in research billed as “participatory” may, in itself, be oppressive to participants when the parameters are controlled by academic others and the “knowledge” produced may reinforce stereotypical views of their lives and “problems” (Wilson & Beresford 2000).

Researchers who deploy photovoice with the aims of engaging in anti-oppressive research must constantly reflect on their own positionalities and privilege and how they affect inquiry at every level (Brown & Strega 2005). Furthermore, they must be explicit in how photovoice can support decolonial goals while realizing that attempts to work

against oppression are located within oppressive structures. We contend that researchers committed to anti-oppressive research must learn to live with/in the uncomfortable spaces generated by the irreconcilability and impossibilities these reflections raise. Toward this end, we reflect on our work with/in a case study of an arts-centered photovoice project conducted with Mexican American tweens, and specifically examine issues of power that arose in this research project. We first describe the South Phoenix PhotoVoice Project (SPVPP) and then, taking up feminist explications and reclaimings of “failure” (Halberstam 2011; Lather 2001; Spivak 1987; Visweswaran 1994), we address some of the ways in which we struggled to enact a critical, participatory project. However, we do not explicate our ethical failures in order to simply provide tools for others to do this work “better” or “unproblematically.” Rather, following Pillow (2003), we sit in a kind of reflexivity of discomfort, where the best we can hope for is to question our own power and authority without becoming paralyzed.

CASE STUDY

When Jenny and Seline started the SPVPP, we envisioned it as an innovative community-based participatory research project that would combine data collection, community needs assessment, artistic production, and youth empowerment. South Phoenix, squeezed between downtown Phoenix, major freeways, and South Mountain Park, has been a settling point for immigrants for decades, and remains a rich mix of established families and new arrivals (Szkupinski Quiroga 2013). It is comprised of very low to lower middle-income neighborhoods with many African American and Latino residents and is characterized by extremely high rates of childhood obesity (Arizona HealthQuery 2008). Seline, a child of immigrants from a working-class background, has a strong commitment to community-based research and has worked with/in this community on issues of health and wellness since shortly after her arrival to Arizona. Jenny grew up in a white, middle-class home in the southern US, and her work has explored issues of race, class, and gender. Andrew is from a working-class family outside of Chicago and at the time of the project had recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree in fine art photography. We all jumped at the chance to create something beyond a standard health education project when a modest funding opportunity appeared; Andrew particularly was excited to facilitate curriculum that

incorporated a documentary photo approach as a way to encourage students to develop social and ethical consciousness through art-making.

We were attracted by the idea of using photovoice because of its reputation as an equitable way of working with a community and because of the potential to explore more deeply the creative capacity of youth beyond simply handing them cameras. Young people are often assumed to be socially incompetent, intellectually inferior, and in need of direction and guidance (Woodson 1999). Photovoice has the potential to be an anti-oppressive research methodology that allows youth to express their own views, draw upon their own life experiences, and use their art to speak freely (Woodson 2007). However, in order to tap into the creative potential of photovoice, Jenny and Seline had to view it as more than a method to elicit data; we also needed to place equal weight on artistic production, but did not feel capable of doing this alone. To this end, we invited Andrew to join the research team to help design the curriculum and teach youth the rudiments of photographic techniques and the implications of using photography in a critical fashion to address important individual and social issues. This was quite innovative, as we found few mentions in the photovoice literature of explicitly teaching participants to think like photographers and artists. Also, rather than provide them with the disposable cameras used by most photovoice projects, we invested in inexpensive digital point and shoot cameras. The cameras were portable and easy to incorporate within participants' daily activities, which encouraged them to reflect on their everyday practices through photography.

We framed the project as a photography class where youth would learn a skill, have an opportunity to express their creativity, and tell us about their worlds. In addition to being an empowerment tool, we envisioned using photography as a community-based arts practice that could deliver individual youth skill development and facilitate capacity-building (Purcell 2009). The stated goals of SPPVP were to encourage South Phoenix youth to use photographic images they created to document and reflect on the needs and assets of their community; to promote dialogue about community issues through group discussion about their photographs; and to promote community change by communicating points of concern and pride to policymakers and community members, through a culminating photography exhibit. We set out to build a project that would provide a unique opportunity for educators, health care professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders to view the food and physical activity environment,

health, and body image through the “eyes” of youth. These topics were mandated by the agencies that funded the project.

In partnership with a local community youth center that serves (in their words) “low-income, at-risk youth,” we established a 12-week photography class that would be the core of SPPVP. In the initial weeks of the program, the youth were involved in orientation and training activities, including an introduction to our view of the photovoice ethos and process, a discussion of ethics, a field trip to a photography exhibit, and a series of lessons on photography techniques. True to our orientation of photovoice being more than just a method of data elicitation, the youth received training from Andrew, who worked with the youth for 1–2 hours in three sessions focusing on the basics of photography and the dynamics of using photography to communicate. Following the training, the youth went on two 1-hour group outings called photowalks to take photographs in their community. These exercises provided them with practice using their cameras and initiated the documentation of their health environment.

By this time, a core group of six Latino youth, aged 10–11, were attending classes regularly and were participating enthusiastically. We gave these youth the cameras to take home, along with weekly photography assignments that focused on specific subjects identified by us and the funding agency as relevant to health and wellness: body image, nutrition environment, concepts of health, and physical activity. We added an assignment to explore social relationships through photographs, as we discovered that the youth took photos of their friends and family every week, regardless of the assigned subject. These assignments provided a structure for the youth while encouraging them, we believed, to be free to explore and discover how they see the world. By entrusting the cameras to young people to enable them to act as documentarians, we hoped they would directly relate their own reality, informing the community around them about what the health environment looks like from their own perspectives. Giving the youth digital instead of disposable cameras suggested a long-term impact and demonstrated that they were provided with real tools and skills to accomplish real goals by participating in the project (Walsh, Hewson, Shier, & Morales 2008).

On a weekly basis, the youth discussed, in a focus group format (facilitated with the assistance of anthropology graduate student April Bojorquez), the photographs they had taken as a means of capturing the purpose and photographic intent of each photo. Their photographs

were downloaded onto a computer and we reviewed the photographs together. Andrew also gave the youth feedback on the formal and technical aspects of the photos, including composition, aesthetics, conceptual aspects, and intertextuality. Each week, the youth chose the photograph they wanted to discuss (usually their favorite) and we chose one photo whose subject matter, aesthetic value, or conceptual aspects intrigued us. We asked each participant to reflect on the following questions related to their photographs, using the mnemonic of PHOTO (Pies & Parthasarathy 2008): Describe your PHOTO; What is HAPPENING in your picture?; Why did you take a picture OF this?; What does this picture TELL us about life in your community?; and How does this picture provide OPPORTUNITIES for us to improve life in your community?

One memorable discussion was about a photograph of a car that the student, contrary to our initial assumption, claimed represented a healthy factor in her neighborhood. She began by explaining that a car was healthy because you could use it to go to the store to buy healthy food, and the air conditioning would keep you cool when the Arizona sun was too hot. As she continued to speak, the deeper reason she considered a car to be healthy came to the surface: if you were in a car, you were less likely to be hit by a stray bullet, a too common occurrence judging by the number of photographs depicting coffins and gravestones of peers and family members that students took. However, most often, these discussions did not generate new insights or critical analyses of structural issues determining health. Oftentimes, students parroted what they had been taught in school regarding, for example, recycling and keeping the earth clean. In an effort to understand what participants were thinking about when taking photos, we provided journals for them to capture their ideas, and instructed them to write down thoughts about a photograph they wanted to take, or had taken, or about how health issues impacted them and others.

Nearly 1000 photographs were taken by youth during the project. Youth participants and SPPVP staff (including curatorial specialist Claire Warden) chose over 100 photographs to be exhibited and used for various projects and presentations. At the same time, the youth explicitly indicated which of their photographs they did not want to be made public. Each student artist wrote descriptive captions for their photos, which were dictated to a SPPVP staff member, or they were excerpted from focus group discussions pertinent to the photograph. At the end of the 12-week

funded period, a gallery-style presentation of 43 selected photographs with accompanying captions was held at the community center for parents and family of the participants, community members, university researchers, artists, and staff of local clinics, schools, non-profit, and governmental social service agencies. Photographs were chosen based on the criteria that they represented themes discussed by youth in the project, visually articulated youth concerns to a general audience, contained artistic and aesthetic value, and ensured representation of all youth participants.

The youth were excited about the outcome of SPPVP, as the images they captured proved to be powerful. At the exhibit, each participant was acknowledged and gifted with the camera they had learned to use and with which they had created those evocative images. The youth and the culminating exhibit *South Phoenix Through The Eyes of Youth* were subsequently invited to show at the University Anthropology Museum. Select images from the exhibit were also displayed at the University Art Museum, a local church, and a Health Department public policy forum. SPPVP was even featured in a local PBS community issues show. On the surface, then, SPPVP appears to have been a successful project that used photovoice to engage community youth as partners, highlight their creative spirit, and empower them to bring their concerns about their community to the attention of policymakers. However, we are uneasy that in our quest to enact an anti-oppressive, participatory project, we failed to account for and adequately negotiate multiple ethical dilemmas centered around power dynamics; this failure often led us to too frequently default to positions of “certainty,” through which we missed opportunities to more deeply engage with and truly hear the voices of the youth in the project.

ON IMPOSSIBLE DILEMMAS AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF FAILURE

Research projects attempting to enact emancipatory, feminist, anti-oppressive, and participatory goals—such as those we set out to accomplish in the SPPVP—inevitably create ethical dilemmas for critical researchers (Olesen 2005; Patai 1991; Reinharz 1992; Wolf 1996). One of the main issues that creates a gap between the ideals of feminist, anti-oppressive, and critical research and the way it is often enacted is *power*, which creates hierarchies of control that are created and re-created before, during, and after fieldwork (Wolf 1996). Within this overarching

framework of power, researchers have identified dilemmas specific to visual participatory methodologies such as photovoice, including the researcher assuming that a community is homogeneous and harmonious, thus ignoring tensions revealed through photographs; researcher influence on the thematic content of photographs, and subsequent selection, analysis, and dissemination of the photographs; and the audience not honoring the photographic interpretation of the participants and substituting their own, potentially damaging, interpretations of the photographs (Evans-Agnew, Sanon, & Boutain 2014). These issues are magnified when the community “partners” are children and youth who may not be able to give truly informed consent when confronted with the novelty and excitement of being a photographer/photographic subject, and who may have unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved (Joanou 2009). Even the intent of empowering photovoice participants through providing a photographic platform to voice concerns is troubled as often it is unclear who initiates these projects, who directs the agenda, whose voice is privileged, and whether participants can speak without the authoritative interference of the researcher (Allen 2012).

There are no *easy* answers to these dilemmas, and possibly *no* answers at all. Rather than being paralyzed by the ethical risks of anti-oppressive research, Lather (2001) proposes that reflexive researchers help to charter the complicated territory of doing research with others without proposing a solution or way of researching that is guaranteed to be ethical and risk free. Rather than intending to solve problems or tensions inherent in anti-oppressive research, we should highlight and explore our own ethical “failures.” Feminist and queer scholars have theorized failure as a practice that is pivotal for understanding the difficulties of doing critical methodological, epistemological, and pedagogical work. For Visweswaran (1994), acknowledging failure does not solve ethical or epistemological problems, but can lead to new possibilities, as it helps situate us in a kind of tenuous, in-between place where we must suspend the belief that we as researchers can ever fully come to know or speak for those with whom we work. That is, acknowledging failure means realizing that participatory processes such as photovoice may assist in producing new knowledges rather than revealing local “reality.” In the case of the SPPVP, this means that we must problematize how we enacted colonial models of speaking for the youth who participated, which echoed the deep ambivalence that Woodson (2007) states is a key but troubling feature of North America’s

stance on youth, seen particularly in public policy, educational systems, and social problems that might claim to want to empower youth but that often seek to domesticate and train them instead.

Halberstam (2011), too, sees productive possibilities in failure, and attempts to reclaim failure as something not to be feared or avoided, but rather as something that provides opportunities for different ways of being in the world. Halberstam explains that “failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (pp. 2–3). Failure, through this perspective, becomes a way to circumvent and navigate through and around both academia’s disciplinary strictures and broader society’s modes of disciplining, ordering, and normalizing behavior. A comparison could be drawn with the sometimes messy, non-linear process of artistic inspiration which leads one to question, reconstruct, and deconstruct what is (Butler-Kisber & Poldma 2010). What might productive failing entail? In what follows we take up three theses that Halberstam offers to those who might value productive failure over traditional academic success; Halberstam urges researchers to “resist mastery” (p. 11), “privilege the naïve or nonsensical (stupidity)” (p. 12), and “suspect memorialization” (p. 15). In exploring these theses, we explicate the ethical missteps that we enacted and encountered in our project, which point to how we failed to enact the task of critical anti-oppressive research and to realize the potential of an arts-based practice, while simultaneously failing to fail productively.

RESIST MASTERY

Productive failure involves resisting *mastery*, by which Halberstam (2011) means the kinds of disciplinary dictates that determine goals, practices, and legitimate forms and enactments of knowledge. Throughout the SPPVP, we struggled with negotiating a variety of competing demands. The funder dictated a focus on health, specifically nutrition and physical activity. Seline and Jenny, as social science researchers who sought to collect data for eventual writing and publication aligned themselves with that mandate, yet also desired to foster critical perspectives among the youth beyond the funders’ narrow definitions of health. Andrew, as a photographic artist, desired to help participants learn to see and enact photography as an art form. And finally, the youth in the

project sought the freedom to explore what they wanted. We stumbled as we navigated this terrain, as repeatedly we tended to exercise our power by defaulting to mastery. Jenny and Seline often led conversations back to health, while seeking to make students more “critical” by scaffolding discussions in those directions when feeling disappointed in students’ less-than-critical approaches. Andrew struggled with wanting students to view photography as a documentary tool and agent for social change, while also steering them toward making photographs with both traditional and non-traditional aesthetic value.

For example, when we began, youth participants seemed to fully embrace individualistic, neoliberal, medical models of health that circulate as dominant discourses. In group discussions, they often framed “health” in terms of individual behaviors and choices, equating “being healthy” to eating fruits and vegetables and exercising, getting fresh air, and not doing drugs or drinking. These constructions of health integrate neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility for health, which sometimes manifested in discussions with the youth voicing the idea that unhealthy people “lack motivation” and have lazy lifestyles. Participants’ discussions of health also often reflected a mechanistic concept of the body, as they tended to argue that avoiding obesity is simply a question of caloric intake (eating right) and output (being physically active). Participants were very aware of health messages coming from school and community programs, as they were able to easily repeat messages linking health to behaviors such as physical activity, not smoking, and recycling. While participating in these conversations, Jenny and Seline often became frustrated, because as critical researchers seeking to embrace an anti-oppressive stance toward neoliberal discourses of health, we wanted to encourage students to engage in critical dialogues about the kinds of structural and environmental racism and classism that we saw directly tied to issues of health. We also wanted to help students see past these dominant discourses and to cultivate more complex, contextualized, and structural perspectives on health as well as obtain “good” data to show how photovoice helped us enact a critical pedagogy of health with youth. During discussions, we found ourselves asking probing questions to push students toward different, more critical emphases. We also realize in retrospect that we were imposing an agenda and trying to force outcomes that were possibly at odds with what the youth themselves wanted to explore.

Andrew was most interested in providing the technical skills and conceptual understanding to allow the students to treat photography as



Fig. 4.1 Photograph by Berenice

an art form, while simultaneously valuing student-made photographs that exhibited non-traditional aesthetics. For example, a photograph of a single tree being propped up against a wooden pole—with a dead-center subject and lack of focus—might not be considered a traditionally “correct” photograph within the canon of modernist photography (see Fig. 4.1). The lack of formal qualities could prevent this from being a choice of a photograph to be exhibited, but my (Andrew’s) ties to contemporary art that gives value to photographs that kill the modernist father made me advocate for this image to be included in the final exhibit. However, even this valuing of non-standard aesthetics—because it is at least partly a reaction against modern aesthetics—keeps me tied to a particular arena of mastery.

Thus, our respective disciplinary standards of evidence and artistic value were unconsciously used as an instrument of power that again tipped the balance in favor of expert knowledge (Freeman et al. 2007). While mostly consciously unaware of it at the time, in following the

dictates of our funders as well as the rules of “good” social scientists, artists, and anti-oppressive researchers, we rendered ourselves unable to see and hear other data, and missed out on seeing what else might have arisen in the project. Here, our disciplines got in the way, because they offered “maps of thought where intuition and blind fumbling might yield better results” (Halberstam p. 6). Even while positioning ourselves as constructing a more empowering and less traditional project, by focusing so much on collecting the “right” data and valuing the “right” aesthetic, we belied our commitments to “what is already known according to approved methods of knowing” that “do not allow for visionary insights or flights of fancy” (Halberstam 2011, p. 6). We thus stayed in “well-lit territories” and knew “exactly which way to go” before starting our journey (p. 6). What might this project have been if we had not tried to lead the way, not known our outcome ahead of time? If our goal had been to lose our way—to resist mastery?

PRIVILEGE THE NONSENSICAL

Second, Halberstam posits that productive failure involves privileging the “naïve or nonsensical (stupidity)” (p. 12), which refers “not simply to a lack of knowledge but to the limits of certain forms of knowing and certain ways of inhabiting structures of knowing” (pp. 11–12). Furthermore, this concept values the nonsensical/nonsensible over sense-making knowledges grounded in taken-for-granted, normative ways of being and doing. Beholden as we were to disciplinary structures, we only gave lip service to the anti-oppressive stance of acknowledging epistemological diversities and multiple ways of knowing (Moosa-Mitha 2005). Rather than co-creating an intersubjective and dialogical knowledge with the SPPVP youth, we asserted our epistemic privilege as adults and as academics. Additionally, we did not sufficiently grapple with issues of race and class, and the power differentials therein. Jenny engaged in what Pillow (2003) calls “reflexivity as transcendence,” acknowledging her positionality as a white middle-class academic who was working with working-class Latino students, but naively operating under the assumptions that through this acceptance, and because she constructed herself as a “critical” scholar, she could somehow transcend or bridge the differences between herself and the students. Seline, positioning herself as an insider due to her identification with the youth in terms of ethnicity (Latino), class background (working-class), and experience (immigrant),

did not critically consider the important power-laden differences of age and education (Zavella 1993). Andrew acknowledged that at the time he did not spend much time reflecting on issues of subjectivity, positionality, and power, perhaps naively taking for granted that his enthusiasm for the project was enough to help him connect with the youth and transcend any power differentials he might embody or encounter.

Closely related to the issue of relying on disciplinary mastery, we struggled with tensions between seeing photographs as “data” or as “art.” The youth were often more interested in making photographs of whatever they wanted to—often seemingly (and, to Jenny and Seline, frustratingly) ignoring our weekly directives. At the same time, Andrew gave priority to helping develop participants as artists, which often meant encouraging them to not only pay attention to the weekly directives but also to follow their intuition while making photographs. As project “leaders,” Jenny and Seline generally steered the project to the default position of collecting “data” to meet the funders’ goals as well as research goals. We thus privileged “sensical” data over “nonsensical” art, which undermined our stated commitment to bring artistic perspectives to photo-voice. Being true to our original intention of having an arts-based praxis could have given us “a fresh perspective so that our old habits of mind do not dominate our reactions with stock responses” (Eisner 2008, p. 11).

Additionally, we tended to make sense of student perspectives through our own (limiting) lenses of critical pedagogy. For example, as the project progressed, students, while sometimes echoing dominant health discourses, often veered from photographing individual aspects of health and began photographing pictures of subjects deemed (by us) as health issues: broken glass on the streets, littered playgrounds, and graffiti (see Fig. 4.2, *Left*). We wanted desperately to interpret these images as examples that students were developing more critical dispositions, and perhaps they were, but more likely is that our youth “partners” were providing us with images of what they thought we wanted to see rather than what they wanted to show us. We now look at the photograph of the graffitied wall and the staged thumbs-down gesture provided by a participant and see evidence of their wanting to do what was expected of them, rather than a free expression.

Our desires to make sense of their photographs as “data” through the lenses of “criticality” prevented us from letting the creative process unfold without controlling the pathway, the outcomes, or the learnings (Wehbi 2015). We led youth participants closely down a known path



Fig. 4.2 Photograph by Joseph (L) & Roucelin (R)

with known interpretations, thus subtly communicating a system of superior and inferior knowledges and their place within it (Halberstam 2011).

Yet, the youth continued photographing what they deemed important and pertinent to their own concepts of health. Participants resisted negative stereotypes of low-income neighborhoods through offering portraits highlighting happy loved children and adults engaged in family events, activities, and creative work (see Fig. 4.2, *Right*). This photograph was chosen as a favorite by the youth who took it and was included in the final exhibit selection because of Andrew's insistence on its artistic qualities. We (Jenny and Seline) missed the shining eyes of the boy and instead saw the sugary empty-calorie cake being celebrated in a neighborhood with skyrocketing obesity rates. Andrew did better in appreciating the nonsensical, at least in terms of aesthetics, as he chose the photograph because of the contrast between the happy occasion and the heavy shadows, which usually elicit darker associations. However, Andrew also missed why the participant took this photograph—to capture a treasured moment of family unity.

SUSPECT MEMORIALIZATION

Finally, Halberstam (2011) argues that productive failure requires us to “suspect memorialization,” or, to work against it (p. 15). Being wary or suspect of memorialization is important, to Halberstam, because historically memorialization tends to “tidy up” messy and problematic histories, including histories of genocide, slavery, war, and other atrocities.



Fig. 4.3 South Phoenix Art Exhibit Postcard

As Halberstam argues, memory serves disciplinary functions—it is a kind of power ritual that “selects for what is important (the histories of triumph), it reads a continuous narrative into one full of ruptures and contradictions, and it sets precedents for other “memorializations”” (p. 15). We constructed just this kind of memorialization, in both the final exhibit and in the final reports we constructed for the funding agencies. The final exhibit is impressive, full of beautiful photographs and interesting, and provocative captions highlighting the voices of the youth photographers discussing their photographs (see Fig. 4.3).

However, this depiction of the neatly packaged and wrapped up photography exhibit conceals the difficulties we experienced and the power dynamics involved in selecting the photographs and putting the exhibit together. Often, Jenny and Seline were more focused on choosing photographs that more closely reflected the theme of health and demonstrated participants’ engagement with critical ideas regarding discourses of health. Andrew, however, sought out photographs that were artistic and wanted to curate an exhibit that prioritized the photographs as art rather than data, and typically cared less about how they fit with the theme of health.

One example of this conflict between seeing “data” versus “art” involved an image showing a pair of hands holding green apple taffy. Andrew loved this image for its aesthetic and artistic qualities, while Seline and Jenny had reservations about highlighting candy in an exhibit that was supposed to be about health, which, they feared, might reveal that the youth had not become as critical as we had hoped. Furthermore, and critically, while the youth participants were able to choose the photographs they discussed each week and had a large role in creating the captions for the various photos they chose throughout the project, none of them were part of the process of narrowing down the photos for the final exhibit.

Reflecting on this process, we cannot help but wonder what kind of learning might have happened—for us, for the youth participants, and for the public viewing the exhibit, if we had attempted to resist memorialization—that is, if we had been able to expose rather than conceal the difficulties we experienced creating the exhibit? Including the difficult, messy, dialogic process might have productively disrupted what appeared as a coherent narrative both in the exhibit and the report we created for our funders. We might have refused, instead, to provide a singular perspective; we might have left our too neatly tied up conclusions “remain complicated and uncertain” (Simon 2011, p. 433). The final exhibit and report deny the process of the project, which often included anxiety and frustration. However, what learning might have happened if we could have let that discomfort remain instead of smoothing it over? We might have created an exhibit that unsettled and provoked; an exhibit that might have disturbed the stories we told ourselves about SPPVP being a coherent, knowable, representable project and process. Instead, we sought to avoid that difficulty altogether. As Rayner (2012) argues, meaning-making often relies on avoiding messy knowledges. Working against memorialization, however, requires researchers to ask what is left out when we avoid difficulty and messiness.

(IN)CONCLUSION: UNCERTAINTY AND A REFLEXIVITY OF DISCOMFORT

Against privileging mastery, the sensical, and memorialization—all of which are centered in fictions of certainty—feminist, critical, arts-based, and anti-oppressive scholars encourage researchers and educators to, instead, embrace uncertainty (Sandlin 2010). One aspect of embracing uncertainty is recognizing that the narratives researchers and

participants generate can only ever be partial, unfinished, and in process (Ellsworth 1989). An educator rejecting certainty “revels in the detours, twists, and turns through knowing and confusion”—that is, she chooses “getting lost” over following a path (Halberstam 2011, p. 15). Anti-oppressive researchers Jazeel and McFarlane (2010), for example, advocate for enactments of anti-oppressive knowledge production that remain both uncertain and emplaced, as they trouble the taken-for-granted notion that knowledge travels unproblematically across borders and bodies. Moosa-Mitha (2005) argues that the very epistemological assumptions underpinning anti-oppressive research are characterized by their acknowledgement of the socially constructed and tentative nature of knowing, stating, for example, that researchers working within anti-oppressive research frameworks acknowledge and embrace multiple ways of knowing, conceive of knowledge as situated and subjugated, recognize that not everything is knowable, conceive of knowledge as tied to action and thus consider it neither neutral nor abstract, and position knowledge as intersubjective and dialogical. These assumptions are also reflected in Ellsworth’s (1989) assertion that people do not experience critical learning in neat, straightforward, linear, or orderly ways—but rather it depends on experiences that are left “opened and unfinished” (p. 123). It is this very openness, indeed, this moving away from cohesion and unity, that actually constitutes critical learning (Ellsworth 2005).

We have to find ways to take up these disquieting and discomforting spaces of uncertainty in our research practices (Burdick & Sandlin 2010). This chapter constitutes, for us, a reflexivity of discomfort (Pillow 2003), through which we do not offer neatly tied up answers, but, rather, sit in a kind of uncertainty and discomfort, leaving “what is unfamiliar, unfamiliar” (Pillow 2003, p. 177). We do not dismiss the importance of examining issues of power and ethics but recognize that reflexivity is inextricably linked to power and privilege that cannot be easily or comfortably erased. Writing this has not been easy; it has forced us to confront some uncomfortable truths, acknowledge the tensions that arose among the team due to holding fast to our own disciplinary perspectives, and examine how imposing our own agendas has ethical implications.

NOTES

1. Contrary to conventional usage, we capitalized the “v” in Photovoice to highlight the voice of youth participants.

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Listen: The Defeat of Oppression by Expression

Angela Zusman

“I want to be an assassin.”

So proclaimed a young man I’ll call Oscar. It’s an unusually warm Friday afternoon in April, and he is sitting on a windowsill, the coolest place in this un-air-conditioned room. He is the last of the 26 youth gathered for the first session of the African American Oral History Project to share his name and dreams. Other responses have garnered silence, chuckles, nods of appreciation. Oscar’s words are met with an audible gasp. Even these young men from all corners of Oakland—who have seen too much, who know so much—are shocked.

As the weeks go by, the young men learn the basics of videography and oral history, preparing them to conduct interviews with their peers. They practice interviewing each other, and slowly their own stories emerge. To our surprise, Oscar is one of the young men who returns every Friday. He doesn’t talk much, and still sets himself apart from the others. He doesn’t want to be interviewed. He keeps one earphone in his ear at all times. He’s happier behind the camera, tucked into the safe, masking shell of technology. But every Friday, he shows up on time.

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Fig. 5.1 Youth conducting interviews

Then we shift into interview mode. Suddenly Oscar is thrust onto street corners where he must approach strangers and ask them to share their stories. He is in schools, showing the youngsters how to use a video camera (Fig. 5.1).

Finally, at the project's finale, hundreds of people gather to hear about this work, and Oscar takes center stage. A natural public speaker, he is charismatic, wise, humble and confident. As he speaks, people of all ages, shapes and colors nod their heads, wipe away tears—not of sadness, but of hope and inspiration. When he says, “You feel me?” we all say, Yes!

The sharing of stories, the passing of wisdom through storytelling, has been practiced by humans for as long as we have been humans, long before the advent of written language. In recent decades, studies have shown that our brains actually think in narratives. Stories increase memory retention, engagement, and problem solving. Research correlates the sharing of stories with multiple health benefits, including improved blood pressure, hypertension, and breathing. On a social-emotional level, the sharing of stories improves self-esteem, confidence, feelings of depression and isolation, healing from trauma, and

decision-making. At a community level, stories increase feelings of connection and empathy (Zak 2013). If we want people to take action, especially the sustained action required for systemic change, they must *care*. Stories connect us to the unifying power of our humanity. Stories are both the means and the goal.

NARRATIVE CHANGE: STORIES THAT CHANGE PERCEPTIONS

For better or worse, I tend not to believe anything until I have experienced it for myself. Throughout my education, I often found myself questioning the presumption of Truth inherent in today's pedagogy. I didn't believe things just because they were printed in a book. So after graduating college, I embarked on my real education: a decade working my way around the world. All along the way, I collected stories. Sometimes the stories would pour forth organically; other times I sought out particular people and interviewed them formally so that I could begin to understand what their world, and humanity, is all about. I am not a journalist, I said. I am a student, trying to understand our world. I acknowledged my privilege in being there, able to travel, learn and speak freely, and the value of what they were offering in their stories and wisdom. Sometimes I was invited to share my own stories, but most often I just listened. Many narrators told me that being listened to was extremely empowering. Through their speaking and my listening, we both grew in each other's eyes. I began to see listening as a revolutionary way to move beyond prejudices and connect as humans. I felt a shift within myself. After a time, the story collecting wasn't just about curiosity anymore. Once I heard a person's story, not only did I feel more connected to that person personally, I also felt connected to the issue they were speaking about and how it related to my beliefs and actions as a white American.

One evening, I shared stories with a refugee from Burma. I had met him at a street food stall and asked if he would allow me to interview him. He agreed to meet me after his food stall closed. After all these years, I don't recall what city this happened in or even what year it was. What I do remember is sitting across from this man in a hot, dark room, my tape recorder on a flimsy table, listening so intently to his broken, poetic English that my ears must have grown. There was silence when he finished speaking. I thanked him quietly, too choked up to speak. He bowed

and slipped out the door. I never saw him again. Yet after hearing his story, I was compelled to conduct more research. I learned that the ruling military junta controlled all industry, including tourism, and that tourist dollars were used to fund their oppressive regime. Seeing myself in the context of this larger story, I chose not to travel there. Twenty-plus years later, I can still see his kind, dark, shining eyes. I still feel the silent forceful energy in that room. I still feel his pain, and share his hopes. I continue to follow the events in Myanmar with great interest. Their victories and setbacks have personal significance to me. All this from one man's story.

This experience, and many others, showed me that the power of story is transformative both for the teller and the listener. Oppression necessitates silencing the voices of the oppressed so that the dominant narrative becomes the only narrative, thereby justifying ongoing oppression. Not only must the stories of our communities be told—they must also be listened to. They must then be acted upon.

Oscar, the young man described in the beginning, participated in a pilot project called the African American Oral History Project. This project was facilitated by the non-profit I founded, Story For All, to harness the healing power of story as a means for systems change. We learned a great deal in this pilot, and from the many projects conducted since. The power of story is greater than I could have imagined, especially when channelled towards policy change. Our story-sharing process has evolved into a community transformation and narrative change model based on 5 P's: Partnerships, Process, Presentation, Policy, and Participatory Research. Regardless of the size or scope of the community we partner with, the process stays the same: A coalition of stakeholders unites to improve outcomes for a specific community; community members are supported in recording the stories and wisdom of their own communities; high-quality learning tools are created to amplify their wisdom and data, resulting in innovative and community-driven policies and practices. The process is embedded within the community, creating a feedback loop that informs, assesses and celebrates the efforts toward eliminating systemic oppression. Story by story, we work to create a more just and humane world.

PARTNERSHIPS

No single program, person, politician, agency, or policy can obliterate systemic inequities. If we are to move beyond the photo opps and positive press of one-off projects and really affect systemic change, we need a strong coalition of committed partners. A well-meaning civic leader can

be undercut by the media; a superintendent by teachers; a developer by the Transportation Board. It takes an ecosystem to create lasting, sustainable change.

This partnership step includes identifying and building a coalition of local stakeholders. In our work with youth of color, this ecosystem can include youth, schools, civic leaders, youth-serving organizations, libraries, businesses, museums, research and policy organizations, law enforcement, health organizations, faith-based organizations, and others who have a responsibility and/or vested interest in improving outcomes for the identified community. The coalition defines project goals and objectives, roles and responsibilities, budget, fundraising and communications strategies, performance metrics, target locations and themes. Partners sign a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU, which outlines agreements and timelines. Ongoing meetings allow partners to stay connected, offer input, and integrate the process into their existing systems and calendars so this process moves the collective and individual missions forward.

Coalition building often begins with identifying an “anchor” partner who knows the community, has a solid network, and can play the convening and connecting role. Partners are drawn to the table for different reasons, yet emerge with a unified goal. The trick is identifying and attracting the right partners, and keeping them engaged. This takes time and resources, which should be accounted for in the project budget and roles.

Partners play a key role when stories, data and policy recommendations are shared. Partners ensure that the right people are in the room for presentations, and that the content is curated in ways that address the needs and interests of each stakeholder group. Together with the story collectors, the partners are the best ambassadors. They are the ones who move the stories into action, ensuring that community recommendations are implemented. They continue to support the community members after the project is complete, and they network with other project teams around the country. Unified by a common goal and process, they share lessons learned, best practices, and allow for local transformation to spread into regional and national change.

PROCESS

The heart and soul of this process is training community members to uplift, preserve, and represent the voices of their own communities. Their training includes storytelling, oral history, research, videography, writing, history, critical analysis, advocacy, public speaking, and

leadership skills. Local staff receive training to support the community interview team in recording interviews with specified narrators; assimilating their learning; and promoting interview content in an ongoing story-share campaign.

Critics of this approach raise a few key objections: the risk of amateur interviewers conducting sub-par interviews, and the time and expense of training and managing a community team. Isn't it better, they say, to let trained professionals do the data collection? In some cases—yes. In many other cases, though, this only exacerbates the real or perceived oppression. For example, as a white woman, I may not be trusted when I show up with a recording device. In some instances, the fancier the credentials, the deeper the mistrust. “What do you want with my story?” I’ve been asked. “Are you making money from my story? How do I know you won’t use it against me?” I understand their wariness. In my traveling years, I learned to accept the labels “white devil” and “ignorant American.” The same is true in my own country, where I am often seen as the enemy, or at best, naïve. In response, I acknowledge my white privilege and the reality that the theft and misappropriation of community narratives is a very effective tool of oppression wielded by the dominant party that I represent. I ensure that there is extreme clarity about how their content will and will not be used, and make it very easy for people to self-select how they participate. I accept that I must earn people’s trust, and that there are many forums in which I am not welcome. I have to consider how white privilege impacts everything that I do, and learn when to speak, when to listen, when to follow and when to lead. It is an ongoing education and I am grateful for the patience and compassion of my partners and colleagues.

This process is not just about collecting information—it’s about healing, giving people the safe space to reveal what is true for them and see beyond their challenges. Even a well-meaning researcher can cause great harm if their primary objective is obtaining the story without creating a respectful space. Furthermore, people often reveal very different information, details, and truths when they are speaking to someone they trust, especially someone who looks like them and comes from their own community. The bond of a shared cultural background can automatically create a foundation of connection and trust, not to mention shared language and history, allowing speakers to reveal their authentic voices and nuances that may be lost or misunderstood by an outsider. It can also be very powerful to bring together people from different cultural

backgrounds, especially if a project goal is to challenge stereotypes. In all scenarios, our interview teams understand that their role is to *listen with respect*. When the interviewers hold this intention, a bridge of connection is created that can transcend race, culture, age, class or other perceived differences.

The goals of each project stipulate who the interview team should include. For example, one recent project focused on the experiences of undocumented community members. We had recruited bilingual interviewers, but a community partner recommended that we also include monolingual Spanish speakers. She insisted that community members would feel safer and more connected to monolingual speakers, a nuance we hadn't considered. (This is another reason for the coalition building. Community members themselves are the best experts!)

The interview process also creates a level playing field. As a young woman exclaimed to me after interviewing the Vice Mayor of her city, "I can't believe I was in the same room as the Vice Mayor. And not just that—but we were equals! He wasn't talking down to me. We were at the same level." As she described, the well-prepared interviewer sees herself at the same level as the narrator. And the narrator experiences the wisdom, power and intellect of the interviewer. Too many times to count, adults and leaders have come to me after their interview, sometimes scratching their heads in surprise, to say what a great job the interviewer did—how "well-prepared, intelligent, and articulate" they were. Notwithstanding the implicit bias in these statements, it demonstrates how the interview is a golden opportunity for community members to be seen as equals. By creating this level playing field, there is room for learning and the removal of biases that can otherwise obscure or make connection impossible.

On another level, data collection processes involves the removal of information from the community, which can be disempowering. With this methodology, interviewers not only hear but *hold* the stories and wisdom of their own communities. Legacy is not handed to an outsider. Since ancient times, wisdom and traditions have been passed down orally, from one generation to the next. It is this act of listening—the transferring of wisdom from one human to the next—that underpins the transformation and healing that interviewers experience. The authenticity of the information, the legacy created by keeping the stories within the community, the cultural humility and perception change afforded to the narrators, and the transformation and leadership emerging from the



Fig. 5.2 Griots of Oakland exhibit, African American Museum and Library at Oakland, 2013

interviewers, make it worth the resources. The means is again the goal (Fig. 5.2).

PRESENTATION

Once community stories have been collected, archived and collated, the resulting qualitative content—stories, quotes, images, creative expressions—is combined with quantitative data to engage users’ intellect, emotions and motivation. We want them not just to learn, but to *care* and *take action*. The content is presented in books, media campaigns, videos, digital content, exhibits, trainings, events, murals, and other art forms representative of the community. These learning tools, and process of creating them, serve multiple purposes.

First, community interviewers represent what they’ve learned from the interviews through creative expression, allowing them to assimilate their experience, respond to what they’ve heard, and articulate what it means to them. Artistic expression often exposes participants to new

ideas or ways of consolidating complicated and painful information. The art makes it easier and safer to express bold and sometimes very emotional statements. One high school student never wanted to speak about his own personal experiences, but drew a comic strip about corruption in the education system. By using humor, and shifting the story one step away from himself, he was able to share a very powerful and personal message.

Secondly, the learning tools reflect back to the community: This is what we heard you say. Their high quality conveys respect to the community. At one of our exhibits, a young African American man in tattered clothes stood for a long time before a portrait of another young African American man. After a while, a colleague asked him what he thought about the exhibit. “I feel hope,” he said. “I have never seen someone who looks like me represented in this way.” Community members—and often the media—imbibe the affirmative images and stories. All of this contributes to narrative change, empowering communities to amplify their own true story.

The high-quality learning tools and art also catch the attention of other stakeholders. Their beauty motivates people to stop, read the messages, take it in. As a sociology professor said, “Art lowers people’s resistance. Looking at the art is safe. No one is accusing you of anything. The defenses go down and you can see your own thoughts, your own bias.” To this end, we use the books, exhibits, videos, and other story-sharing tools to engage a broad audience with less exposure to issues regarding race, bias, and the experiences of marginalized communities.

This was true for a graduate student from Korea who visited one of our exhibits at an Oakland museum. She was drawn in by the images, quotes, and artwork, then returned several times to watch the forty-plus hours of recorded oral history interviews on display. The experience inspired her to write a research paper about the connection between art and perception, in which she concluded: “I felt that I have had a distorted view about the African Americans... I was very impressed with the young men having hope and positive thinking on their identity and community. On the contrary, I assumed that they are depressed, hate each other, and have no hope. I could change the view of point [sic] about them and expect the bright future in African Americans.” (B. Huh p. 3, 2014.)

The tools are also used as the foundation for trainings and dialogues. In a storytelling training for school district leaders, participants received a copy of one of our books and spent time at its accompanying exhibit.

The dialogue that followed was honest, heartfelt, and, for many, a revelation. Calling it a storytelling training was key. As one participant noted, “Usually when we have to go to a ‘cultural competency training,’ everyone is very defensive. They sit there with their arms crossed, insist they are not biased, and count the minutes until it’s time to leave. But in this case, listening to these young people’s stories and sharing our own stories, it hit home in a different way. I could see what they really need and what I can do to provide that for them. We actually want the same things. It makes me inspired to do something when before I thought it was someone else’s problem.”

Finally—tools can travel. One of our books, *The Griots of Oakland*, which shares the voices of African American boys in Oakland, is in schools and libraries around the world. Recently, a teacher from another city described what happened when she placed that book on a table during an after-school program. “One of our young men saw the cover and immediately picked up the book and took it into the corner. He sat there for over twenty minutes and hardly moved. I have never seen this boy read a book before. He was holding onto that book as if his life depended on it.”

POLICY

A primary goal of this methodology is to inform and inspire policy and systems change. Two of the most common reasons for policy failure are the tendency for policy makers to focus on issues that are not a concern for their constituents and the lack of community participation in policy design and implementation (Syme and Ritterman 2009). This methodology ameliorates both of these issues by creating a system for community inclusion before, during and after policy reform. Community members speak to their concerns and priorities and suggest solutions. Presentations by community members engage leaders and compel them to take action. The same community members keep their communities informed about the policy reform and report back about how the policies are impacting their communities. As this feedback loop is systematized, trust grows. Leaders and their constituents accept shared responsibility for their community’s revitalization.

We recently conducted a project that brought youth and police officers together to build connections and co-create policy recommendations. After a few hours of sharing stories, all the youth and officers reported

a shift in perception whereby they now saw each other as humans—not enemies—with the common goal of creating a safe community. In the following sessions, they worked together to document issue areas, presented their recommendations to the student body of the participating school, then revised their recommendations based on the received input. Because of this grass roots process, the Police Review Board took interest and added these policy recommendations to their agenda. The policies, which include outreach to youth as part of ongoing police training, are now under official review.

In Mississippi, this same process is helping to dismantle the school to prison pipeline. Local youth are supporting a coalition of leaders by informing and documenting the implementation of a new school discipline plan. The community-informed, youth-led narrative change process is being embedded within the larger process of policy reform.

In another location, the process is helping local youth inform education policy to ensure all students are receiving access to high-quality arts education. After conducting interviews at schools across the district, youth are presenting their findings to a team of leaders who will craft a district plan. The youth will then help to present the plan to leaders, students and other stakeholders to build momentum and support implementation.

This process not only provides vital information and buy-in; it shifts perceptions so that community members and their ideas are seen as assets and leaders are seen as allies, with a shared goal of community well-being. Whether within a classroom, neighborhood, organization or city, the methodology allows constituents and leaders to work together to craft and promote policies that are relevant, equitable, and mutually beneficial.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The prevailing negative narratives about marginalized communities infect not only the media, but also research itself. This includes research practices as well as the data derived from them. Community participatory research practices validate and empower community members by including them in the research process. According to the Mayor’s Commission on African American Males (2015), in addition to gaining academic, career and life skills, when participating in their own community’s revitalization, community members are valued as “sources of expertise.”

Additionally, collecting and presenting authentic, asset-based data opens the door for promising new research, practices, and policies that address community needs and build upon what works. Deficit-based data, which focuses on problems and weaknesses, can obscure the positive qualities and potential of a person or community. Relative to African American males, “scholars are increasingly debunking deficit-oriented representations of black males and studying factors that promote success” (Shah & Sato 2014). By asking affirmative questions, uplifting affirmative stories, and presenting an affirming vision of black males, we collect and make available authentic data that can inform solutions and generate the momentum needed for transformation. John E. Walker, director of the Northeast Assets Leadership Project, confirms: “Once people’s eyes are opened to community assets, a positive energy for change takes over” (2006, p. 25).

When applied together, the 5 P’s of this story-sharing methodology unify and energize an ecosystem of affirmation, increasing individuals’ empowerment; academic, career and life skills; social-emotional health; and civic engagement. Expression is the antidote to oppression.

IMPACT

The word “oppression” comes from the Latin word *oppressus*, which means to squeeze, suffocate, weigh down, crush. The act of oppression is thus both physical and psychological. One very effective form of oppression is robbing a community of its voice. This tactic has been used with great effect in the United States against communities of color, their diverse and nuanced narratives subsumed into disempowering caricatures. Research by the W.T. Grant Foundation confirms, “The idea of the ‘dangerous black male’ was carefully nurtured and supported throughout slavery and Jim Crow segregation, and continues to shape our attitudes and behavior” (Skiba, R 2015). To this day, men of color are for the most part negatively represented in the media, ignored in textbooks, and subjected to deficit-based research in academic circles. These negative stereotypes insinuate themselves into policy and systems, with systemic bias infecting everything from school discipline to transportation, from healthcare to food access.

Equally troubling is the conclusion documented in the Kirwan Report (2008), that consistent exposure to negative perceptions, and the

oppressive systems that result, causes individuals to internalize these perceptions, often leading to self-destructive choices and problematic behavioral outcomes. Or, as one young man said to me, “That’s what they expect me to do, so that’s what I’m gonna do.” When historically marginalized communities can instead be exposed to their own affirmative histories, successes, and pathways to success, especially in a face-to-face context with a peer, or “someone who looks like me,” this tunnel vision can be expanded dynamically.

In the same way that exposure to authentic, affirmative stories can increase positive self-perception, so too can exposure to new ideas and practices. For this reason, the integration of storytelling is especially impactful for historically oppressed groups whose own cultural practices are underappreciated or who have limited access to quality education and other forms of innovation and creativity. In his research on community empowerment, Williams (2004) argues that individuals and communities may adopt more empowered subject positions through exposure to discourses and participation in new social practices, which in turn constitute identity, expression, and ways of being. Story-based methodologies connect individuals to their own value, wisdom and cultural practices. When these voices, and the data that can be derived from them, are further incorporated into community development, community members are exposed to a familiar yet radically new practice that broadens their horizons while underscoring their inherent value. By establishing *griots*, we empower communities to create and disseminate their own narratives, and therefore their own legacy.

Which is vitally important, as is having a place to sleep.

“You may have the greatest program in the whole world. But if I don’t know where I’m going to lay my head tonight, that’s all I will be thinking about.”

So said an “Opportunity Youth,” one of the 5.5 million young people in this country who are out of school and unemployed. Many young people I’ve worked with are apathetic about school. But every single one of them wants a job.

For many people, art is seen as an unaffordable luxury. Worse, it can be a symbol of gentrification and further displacement. A gentleman who runs a health center in Vallejo, CA, told me: “In this community we are wary of artists, to say the least. The word on the street is, when the artists move in, it’s about ten years until we all get kicked out.” This statement is so telling. As well-meaning artists and art organizations swoop

into a community, the way they speak about art must be considered from a place of heightened consciousness around the intersections of race, class and culture. As this gentleman acknowledged, art is a powerful and necessary tool for self expression and can be a great hook to attract and engage people, especially if the art methodology can also help them survive. He didn't want art to stop; he just wanted the locals to benefit from it.

This story-sharing process inculcates a number of skill sets, including digital literacy, soft skills, and public speaking. At a deeper level, story-sharing helps participants see themselves as contributors and professionals, worthy of opportunities. Too many programs seek to deliver skills without a foundation for these skills to take root. Without belief, without hope, without confidence, even the most skilled amongst us cannot fully thrive.

Traditionally, oppressed communities have few avenues for sharing their voices. These arenas include Town Halls and protests—venues where the loudest voice wins, where time is limited, where there is a sense of opposition. While useful, these venues do not allow for the power of expression to fully flourish. In order for a voice to be most powerful, and for a story to be most healing, it must be listened to.

I learned this lesson in a powerful way when I was working with a very different oppressed community—elders. I was teaching a life story-telling workshop at a typical senior care facility that smelled like overcooked food and locked its doors at night. I invited participants to share a story about their life. One woman raised her shaking hand and very haltingly began to speak, which was obviously grueling for her. Seconds passed between each word. Yet we met her efforts with respectful silence. The room was still. It felt as though we were all urging her forward with our attention. Finally, she finished her story. And then she said: “Six months ago I had a stroke. I thought I would never speak again.” She paused to fight back her tears. “This is the first time I have spoken in six months.” She looked around at us all and smiled, then closed her eyes. “You have given me back my voice.”

Two things struck me about this testimonial. First—the power of story to create connection and a safe space for people to reveal their truth and vulnerabilities. Second, and even more telling—the power of listening to create the safety for that vulnerability to be revealed, and in some way, healed. The speaker was not the only one moved that day. We, listeners, were too.

As Oscar explained to me at the conclusion of the African American Oral history Project, “Angela, black boys are selfish. We have to be. It takes everything we got just to make it through the day. But, hearing all these stories, listening to all these people, it makes me want to do more than just take care of my own. It makes me see myself as a leader, and now I want to be there for my community.”

This process of empowerment, bolstered by the sharing of stories, can generate the great engine of revival: hope. Hope can pacify fear. Hope can eradicate apathy. Hope can fuel the long hard road to freedom.

CHALLENGES

Nobody said this would be easy. This methodology, enacted in full, requires resources and time. The process and products, however transformative, cannot affect systems change by themselves. The trainings can only touch so many people. The galvanized community member, freshly empowered and emboldened, must still (for the moment) exist within a broken system. For systemic change to occur, and be sustained, it requires the commitment and resources of multiple partners, some of whom may not be interested in empowering marginalized communities. Indeed, elements within the dominating power structures depend on the continued oppression of certain communities.

Knowing this, one must be strategic and practical, meeting each community where it is at, pacing the process accordingly, ensuring that project participants are safe, not offering promises we cannot keep. This may be the most heartbreaking lesson I have learned. Last year, we were invited to present to a group of students at an alternative school in Alabama. After the presentation, a few young men approached me and shared their ideas for moving the project forward. They called me to talk about next steps. They spoke to the local leaders who had arranged for the presentation. Just as we were ready to begin implementation—the money was withdrawn. No reasons were given. Calls and emails were not returned. I had no way of contacting the young men directly, no way of assuring them that I was thinking about them—that I was not just another adult who didn’t care, didn’t listen, didn’t believe in them, didn’t follow through. Travis and Ja’Terrious, I am sorry! This experience haunts me to this day.

Many people, too many people, simply are not ready to listen to the voices of our marginalized communities. When bias takes root, such

people are perceived as enemies, inferior, responsible for their own misfortune. In our highly individualized society, there is no shared responsibility for community well-being. As with any conflict mediation, there are often many steps that must precede people coming to sit at the same table, let alone listen to one another.

Even those who want to see a more just and humane world may need a compelling incident to pull back the veil of privilege and pay attention to issues of oppression. “Why should I care about the Muslim refugees?” “That’s his parents’ job, not mine.” “If they only worked harder, like my family did, they wouldn’t be in this situation.” In a recent diversity event, I witnessed this avoidance tendency amongst well-meaning people who had experienced oppression themselves. Perched within safe neighborhoods, refrigerators and bank accounts stocked, goodhearted people can reflexively say, “I am colorblind. I don’t see any differences between people. We are all the same at our core. We all deserve the same opportunities,” and then change the subject, their perceived lack of bias reason enough to dismiss the difficult conversation. I know. I was like this myself, before Oscar and his peers enlightened me.

It is for these reasons that the sharing of stories is not just useful, but critical. We must not only understand one another. In order to change our behaviors, and our systems, we must *care*. We must feel connected to our neighbors far and near, see what they see, feel what they feel. Listening humbly, the pain transmutes into compassion. Humanity is revealed, and revered. It’s this, or war.

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Conversations with Suzanna: Exploring Gender, Motherhood, and Research Practice

Amanda Barusch

BEGINNINGS

Notions of linearity, causality, and agency help to impose order on the swirling masses of facts, but I am hard-pressed to locate the beginning of this narrative. Its origin stretches to the dawn of our species. Or, it dates to 1968, when a psychologist from Johns Hopkins persuaded two parents to change their 22-month-old boy into a girl (see Walker 2010); or to 2011, when I received IRB approval for a study of parenting.

THE RESEARCH

Struggling to parent my own young-adult children, I began a narrative study in 2011. First, I conducted focus groups with college students who belonged to various organizations, including LGBTQ support groups. Meeting with young adults who identified as queer, I was struck by the troubled relationships trans students reported with their parents. Several

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described deep alienation, rejection, and estrangement. One, who was transitioning from male to female, went so far as to declare that she had no parents.

That summer, I decided to focus on the parents themselves. I distributed flyers and put the word out that I wanted to interview parents of young adults who identified as trans. The response was sparse; partly, I think, because I was an outsider. Though always an ally and the mother of two children who identified as queer, I had never been very active in the LGBTQ community. So I was thrilled when Suzanna called to volunteer for an interview. She wanted to tell her story. She thought it might help others.

SUZANNA'S STORY

Suzanna was born in 1960, to a military family.¹ *I'm the oldest of ten*, she said, *Sometimes they forgot my name*. When she met the man she now refers to as *the ex* she thought he would give her *family and stability and sort of a community you could be part of*. The ex was from a Mormon family—*very homophobic*, she explains. Suzanna converted to the church, and felt loved and accepted. Eventually, she would hold her mother-in-law in her arms while the woman was dying.

Suzanna married young and had her first child when she was 16. She explains that she had: *one in the 70s, one in the 80s, and one in the 90s*. It was the middle one, she explains, who threw her for a loop. *My oldest son was 6'2" and grew very fast, but my second son was behind socially, very behind emotionally, very behind physically ... as he began to reach puberty, things weren't happening*. Her middle son was unhappy, at times suicidal. She found this hard to understand. *Robert had a perfect life, a loving mom and dad, enough money ... his own horses ... his own swimming pool, and we lived very well. Rob had everything*.

But there were unsettling incidents. Rob wanted to dance. She agreed to enroll him for lessons, *but there wasn't anywhere that had boys, so oh well, you'll dance with the girls*. When he was five, Rob's dance group won a contest. But when it was time to collect their trophy she found him crying in a corner.

And Rob said, "Mom, I don't look like them, I can't go get the trophy because I don't look like them. They're wearing dresses." And I said, "Honey, boys wear pants, and girls wear dresses. You're not supposed to look like them." Amanda, we had to put sweaters on everyone to get Rob out of the corner. And it was very difficult for me to understand why Rob kept

crying. You won! I could never associate what could be wrong, and I only cry right now because of the emotional turmoil these kids go through, and the clueless parents.

AB: *It doesn't sound like you were clueless*

S: *I was. Absolutely clueless*

AB: *But you were attentive to his emotional needs*

S: *Yeah, so we put sweaters on everyone. And I said, if I put a sweater on you, and a sweater on them—and we have pictures of the whole dance team, with sweaters on*

AB: *Did it work?*

S: *As long as she—as long as he looked like everyone else, he would come out onstage*

[Notice the hint of pronoun struggle. Pronoun mistakes became highly charged after Rob transitioned. Notice too, how I try to make Suzanna feel better in a classic rescue response. She was in tears, and I was uncomfortable. She judged herself harshly, and I wanted to prove I would not judge her. Perhaps it worked. We did seem to have a good rapport. Tears gushed, and words flowed.]

I had a play house room in my home ... the kids could go in and dress up, and Rob always wanted to be the mom, and would bribe the other kids to be the dad, as long as she could be the mom. My oldest went down one day and had a long talk with Rob (crying); it's just so hard because we were really mean to Rob. My oldest son had a long talk about being a man, and your job is to be the dad, you're going to grow up to be a dad, so you need to be the dad, take off the dress and don't wear that apron... Yes. My teenager sat down and said, "Look, look bro, you don't do this." And that was very detrimental, I found out later on this was very detrimental to Rosemary's well-being.

Suzanna's self-criticism continued, as did her tears. *My husband at the time, we were a very homophobic family. He is LDS, and while I'm not, I still supported all their beliefs, which lesbian, transgendered² people are not a part of. At the time, we didn't know the word transgender. Suzanna thought Rob might be gay. Rob is favoring pink, Rob likes to dance, Rob sits like this. Uh-oh, that one's gay. She and her husband had whispered "What if?" conversations that led Suzanna to anticipate her eventual*

divorce: *My ex was so homophobic. He'd literally say things like—he's a very prejudiced person—he would say things like "I don't care if you bring home a black person or a Mexican, I don't care if they're Mormon or Catholic, but they day you bring home another guy, you're written off my list."*

Searching for answers and help, Suzanna took Rob to many doctors, including psychology, psychiatry, *what would you call it? A therapist is what our family called it... They labeled Rob as bipolar, manic depressed, many things. They had Rob on Depecote, Lithium, Trazadone, Lunesta, Paxil, so many things—so many drugs to fix Rob.*

Meanwhile, Rob tried to please his father. He joined the high school ROTC and *small as he was, he did everything he could to make his dad proud—military haircut, very masculine, in uniform most of the time. I raised a son for 20 years ... after graduation, [he] took off his cap and gown, said "to hell with all of you," and took off to California.* [Notice the repetition of "took off" here to describe shedding old habits and escaping.]

Suzanna supported Rob's decision. But then, *I noticed one day he sent a class picture home of his graduating class [in mechanics school] ... and I couldn't find Rob in the photo. And my friend said to me, "I think that's him..." And Rob had this long beautiful hair, very small, and ... here's my little, petite Rob. So I called him up, and said, "Are you okay? What's going on?" It was a very difficult conversation. Rob was very confused, very emotionally disturbed... I said, "On a scale of 1–10, 10 being the very worst, where are you in life?" And Rob said, "Mom, I'm an 11. I'm done."*

She urged him to come home. When he did, she discovered that Rob's thighs and arms were covered with partially healed wounds and scars. He was cutting himself. With Rob's return, Suzanna entered into a vortex. Time swelled and compressed. Her story became disordered, hard to follow—the kind of "marred" or "disrupted" narrative often associated with psychological trauma and complicated grief (Homos-Webb, Sunwolf, & Shapiro, 2004; Mollon 2002)

She learned about "Klinefelter Syndrome," and was persuaded that Rob had all the symptoms. At the same time, Rob was in therapy with a social worker who, she said, *was able to help Rob identify as female, but I didn't know that. I thought the very worst that could happen is that they would pull Rob through it, whatever it is, and I would be told that my son was gay.* Suzanna was prepared to deal with that. It would be "very hard," but she could deal with it.

She wasn't so sure about her husband, *who inevitably divorced me*. [I wish I had asked, "Why inevitably?"] In the midst of the divorce, Rob's therapist called to say, "We've got something to tell you." So she went in for a session. *Rob did a lot of crying that day in J's office. J talked to me about Rob being socially and emotionally handicapped, if you will, very difficult time in life. But female was not brought up; transgendered was not brought up that day. Rob put it in a letter, and said, "I need to tell you that I'm a girl. I'm just a simple girl."* I read the letter, and I reread the letter, and I fell apart...

What does a mother do if their son is their daughter? How do I nurture that one? I started going to a therapist. I was a mess. Going through a divorce with my husband who couldn't accept gay, how do I tell my husband, "We don't have to worry about that, it's a girl!" [With wry humor Suzanna mimics a birth announcement.]

Suzanna turned to the local GLBT support center, where she received counseling that was tremendously helpful. As a cosmetologist, she was in a great position to teach Rosemary how to do her hair and makeup, and when she said, "Mom I just can't wear pants anymore," the two went shopping for clothes. When I observed, "It sounds like in a way, you taught Rob how to be a girl." *I was able to help*, Suzanna explained, *But Rob taught herself*. [Again, pronoun slippage. Rob was a "he."]

Then life threw in a twist. Suzanna received a call from the hospital. A urologist wondered if she would come pick up Rob. *And I said, "Why am I picking Rob up from the hospital?" Dr. Williams said to me, "You didn't know about the mass?" As if everything else wasn't hard enough, I said, "What mass?" The doctor said, "I believe it's a tumor."* Rob had a mass in his penis, and the doctor planned to do an organectomy. *And I said, "Wow; you didn't know this person was transgendered?" And the doctor said, "I don't know anything about this, but Rob has to go through this surgery." And I said, "No, let me get another opinion here, because we're dealing with a transgendered person, can you do transgendered surgery?" "Absolutely not."*

Suzanna felt it was urgent that Rob receives gender reassignment surgery rather than undergo the amputation of his penis. She explained, *as long as they're in there removing, it would help to not leave my son an "it."* But she was swimming upstream. Even doctors who do perform gender reassignment surgeries are often reluctant to work with someone as young as Rob. *It is very important that we get this done, but my dilemma in the United States is that they won't do this surgery on a child. And now I know why. Psychologically this is a very, very difficult thing.* She finally

located a physician in a nearby state. *So Dr. Bernstein said, "I will work with you, even though this is a young adult ... I will still work with you."* [Notice how Suzanna alternated between describing her nearly 20-year-old son as a "child" and a "young adult."]

For \$30,000 cash up front, Bernstein agreed to perform the surgery. Suzanna sold her home and her business. *So we came home and we packed, paid her, paid the hospital; insurances would not even talk with me.* Suzanna painted a vivid image of the long drive with Rob. Her ex was furious, and called over and over to discourage her. Among other things, he threatened to withhold financial support. *So I was pretty much on my own, and it was scary.*

When the surgery was over, Dr. Bernstein congratulated Suzanna, *"You have a healthy daughter."* *I cried. I didn't know if I was happy or sad, because I was burying my son. This person I raised, and had so much hope for, was gone.* Rosemary woke up crying with pain. Suzanna's first words to her daughter were, "Happy Birthday." Rosemary smiled, *and she said, "Mom, if I die, will you bury me in a dress?"* The pain was intense, but Dr. Bernstein told Suzanna "She's going to be up and running around in no time. Go home and have fun."

On the way home, Rosemary enthused about her new life as a girl. She told her mom she was straight, because she liked guys. Some months after they got home, the mass came back, and Rosemary had a life-threatening infection. Hospital personnel in her hometown had never encountered a situation like hers. Attempts to reach Dr. Bernstein were unsuccessful. Rosemary was referred to a local cancer center, but *they didn't know what to do either. They were blaming it on the surgery... I was told by a very kind doctor... that they needed to undo the surgery and cut away all of the infected flesh and chances are she wouldn't live. So I called her dad, and said "Remember when you said you would rather have a dead child?" "Yeah, what about it?" Then I said, "Come and tell her good bye." So he came... and he sobbed... and he apologized.*

At one point a doctor said, *"You should have thought of things like this before you did this to your son."* Suzanna would encounter this attitude frequently in the coming months as she was in and out of emergency rooms and clinics. She went back to the urologist who originally diagnosed the mass, and he said, *"I can't help you... not after what you did." They don't understand... They don't know Rosemary, and they don't want to know Rosemary. They're not ready. So I sat in the hospital alone. Well,*

not entirely alone. Young people from the local LGBT support center visited Rosemary. *They would whisper in Rosemary's ear, "You can make it." "You can do this." "We love you."* [One way Suzanna copes with pronouns is by using names instead. Hence the repetition of Rosemary's name in this passage.]

THE DEFENDED RESEARCHER

A year after Rosemary's surgery, Suzanna and I met for our first interview. I described her in my field notes as: "lovely, petite, with long shapely hair, in a revealing dress, full of energy, full of tears." Trying to make sense of inconsistencies in the interview, I described her as a "defended subject" (Hollway and Jefferson 2012). I thought she withheld information and adjusted her story to deflect judgments. I was struck by her attachment to the gender binary (Butler 2004). I focused on her resistance around intersex issues (not wanting her child to be an "it") and her use of labels ("straight," "transgendered").

I felt lumbering and dowdy next to Suzanna. Generally, my fascination with her story and my eagerness to support and encourage her held this in check. But in moments of insecurity my "professionalism" came to the fore. I jumped in with advice that was at least partly about restoring my own sense of competence and (perhaps) superiority. When she told me she was having trouble with her health insurance company—one doctor recorded a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, and subsequent medical bills were not covered—I said, *So, you haven't talked to a lawyer about it?* [Notice the judgment hiding behind negative phrasing, almost as if I was asking, "Why haven't you talked to a lawyer?"]

She responded, *Thanks for reminding me ... the law clinic has some wonderful people who help the LGBT center... We can go in and talk with them*, reminding me that she did know what she was doing, but acknowledging the idea wasn't totally off base. With that encouragement, I pressed:

AB: It seems like a—just consulting a little bit.

S: Right, she said, to cut me off. She then described her extensive conversations with the insurance company, concluding... *for a single mom it's a big deal.*

AB: For anybody it would be a big deal. [My direct intent was to assure Suzanna she was not alone, but I later worried that she heard this as assertion that I knew more.] I hope you'll talk to them.

S: The insurance company?

AB: The law clinic.

Our first interview ended with this exchange.

After our meeting, I felt overwhelmed by Susannah's suffering and troubled by gaps and inconsistencies in her narrative. I wondered whether I could trust her; whether she could trust me. I was conscious of the differences that separated us: differences in education, career, family background, marital status, and our performance of gender. I wanted to write about her experiences, but was reluctant.

I shared her narrative with a colleague who identified as trans. We puzzled over the intersex possibilities, and agreed that Suzanna's support for her daughter's reassignment surgery reflected a widespread, but misguided, allegiance to the gender binary. The brave new gender-free world we anticipated had no room for such reactionary attitudes. Our conversations were intellectual, far-reaching, and deeply engaging. But at times, I felt disloyal, as if I was gossiping out of turn. I decided to invite Suzanna for another interview in hope that a second pass might clarify narrative inconsistencies and relieve my own ambivalence.

MEETING AGAIN

A long, painful year had passed since our first interview. Rosemary's health stabilized, but she still struggled with the daily ritual of dilation. As Suzanna explained, *They don't want the vaginal cavity to close as a wound, and it will. So a transgendered person has to keep dilating. And this is all new to us We've had to lay there, play soft music and psyche ourselves into this ritual that has to take place. And I would imagine that has to happen for a very long time, if I take my earrings out, will my hole close back up? Yeah, it kind of has. So I would imagine that these people have to do this for a while...* Suzanna urged Rosemary to continue, even if she had to drop back to a smaller dilator. Dilation, for Suzanna, was part of the cost Rosemary paid to remain a woman. [Note "these people." A bit of distancing?]

Rosemary also experienced what her mother came to see as “phantom pain.” *As a parent to another parent, please consider this is life-changing. This is body altering. There is phantom pain that no one explained to me ... Phantom pain is a huge chapter that no one prepared me for.* The pain had no apparent physical cause, so someone in the hospital concluded that Rosemary was drug seeking, and cut her off pain medication. Suzanna, too, found it hard to believe the pain was real: *When she’s up and running around, then grabs herself and doubles up in pain, I’m not buying into that.*

AB: *It reminds me of menstrual cramps*

S: *They think they are. They think they’re having menstrual cramps. That’s how Rosemary defines it. I’ve asked her, “does it hurt even in the area, genitalia area?” “Yeah it does.” “And in as much as you’re bleeding?” “Yeah.” “Really? Hm. Okay, I’ll buy you another box of pads if it helps you feel better.” So these are things I was not prepared for*

AB: *I keep thinking it’s part—we were taught—it’s part of becoming a woman, you know, menstruating. So I just wonder if*

S: *If there is really pain, it’s got to be a phantom pain, because she’s healed. I’ve called the doctor in who did the surgery, and she said “Suzanna, she has nothing to cry about. She’s healed up, she’s fine.” Dr. Bernstein says this is all pretty normal. So, I’ll play along with Rosemary, if she wants me to buy pads, I’ll buy them*

[Notice how Suzanna reaches out “as parent to another parent.” Then we talk across each other a bit. I was interested in Rosemary’s process of becoming a woman. But Suzanna focused on how she coped with her daughter’s phantom pain: seeking reassurance from the physician who did the reassignment surgery and deciding that if Rosemary wanted pads she would “play along.”]

During this first post-surgery year Suzanna spent most of her time either working or caring for her daughter. Rosemary was very clingy, *won’t be more than ten feet away from me. They have to learn to pee, and everything. Brand new. And so for a young adult, it’s very hard on hormones. The transgendered youth are on hormones. I got very frustrated with her at one point, I’m tired of her kicking and screaming and emotional roller coaster. And he [who?] said, “What you don’t understand is you have a 22-year old, going on 15.”*

So Suzanna taught her new daughter how to shop for clothes and do her make up. When Rosemary worried about her voice being too low, Suzanna arranged for a vocal coach. Later, she paid for a tracheal shave to shrink Rosemary's Adam's apple. She managed her daughter's medical care and, when the bills became overwhelming, helped Rosemary negotiate medical bankruptcy.

S: and now I'm having to explain to my daughter what sex is like, and that's really hard to do

AB: So can she have sex safely?

J: Yeah. As long as her partner, you know. I've had to talk to her about safe sex. Well duh, mom... She apparently, for the first time in the last few months, has had a boyfriend. She has spent the night, I'm not sure what has happened, but she says she's really happy with him. I asked her if she's still dilating, she says she is. "But I can't go up to a certain size that Dr. Bernstein has suggested." "Ok sweetie, not everybody does. Just be patient, and don't feel like you have to jump through all these hoops." This is a long conversation for moms that nobody taught me how. I wasn't prepared for the phantom pain, and the crying all night. I wasn't prepared for the dilation and her being back in a hospital that didn't accept it

At the same time, Suzanna was grieving the loss of her son. In this second meeting, she described an incident that was emblematic. One day, she came home to find her daughter sitting on the floor in the hall, family photo albums scattered around her. Rosemary was in a rage, and insisted that her mother destroy every picture of Robert as a child. Suzanna sat down on the floor and, with her new daughter looming over her, paged through six volumes of memories. She tore out every photo of her son and destroyed it.

Suzanna was optimistic about the future. She looked forward to the time when Rosemary would be more independent and she (Suzanna) could have an apartment of her own; maybe even a partner.

One of Suzanna's favorite phrases is, "You're amazing!" In our first interview, she used it when I said I would transcribe her interview myself. Rereading the transcript of our second meeting, I still find her stamina and commitment... amazing. Actively grieving her son, she supported her daughter through tears and tantrums, dilation and bankruptcy; her only complaint that she "wasn't prepared." This hints

at Suzanna's awareness that the work she and Rosemary are doing is groundbreaking, an insight that came to the fore a year later when we met for the next interview.

FINAL INTERVIEW

At our third and final interview, Suzanna explained that Rosemary still suffered from abscesses. She had one on her pelvis at the time. But Suzanna seemed to have moved from coping with to understanding her daughter's pain.

S: I understand her emotional roller coaster... I have to look at it as an opportunity for education Education... When she goes in, I don't mind talking to the nurse, [explaining] that she once was male. Sometimes she's in so much pain she can't talk, it's that bad... And I'm hoping there will be a day when she can freely say "I am a transgendered person." without emotion.

AB: Do you think she's embarrassed about it?

S: I think she doesn't want anybody to see him [Rob]. She doesn't want him to be known.

AB: That's part of her that she has this relationship with.

S: We destroyed that. That was trauma for mom.

AB: She doesn't see Rob as a part of her. Is he an enemy? An embarrassment?

S: I would say an enemy, an embarrassment, a wrong thing. This was wasted time... There was something seriously wrong. And he doesn't want to reflect on that time, and he doesn't want to be reminded of the punishment for acting female at all. [Suzanna's pronouns slip, as she refers to Rosemary using "he."]

To some extent, Suzanna accepted my suggestion that Rose was embarrassed by Rob, but she saw a more distant, combative relationship between her daughter's present and past selves.]

Two years after Rosemary's surgery, our conversation widened to other family members. When her youngest daughter came out as lesbian, Suzanna said, *It was hard on me, and I don't know why... I sort of felt like I had failed as a parent, and I don't know why because I've been*

through all these courses with Rosemary. I think part of it is social pressure. She spoke of encountering blame from extended family and other people in the community, and expressed resentment: I'm doing what's healthy for our child. The family was really hard on me.

Rosemary continued to have health problems, but Suzanna now had a name for them: “reoccurring benign tumors.” Rosemary still worried about her presentation: “*Am I passing as female? Did my voice drop? Mom, is my hair okay?*” Nonetheless, she was making progress in school. Her mother said, *I think she's looking really good and I think she's doing really good.*

But as she moved out into the world, Rosemary faced a trauma that is tragically common for trans individuals: she was assaulted.³ Or, as her mother put it, *She was abducted and beat up.* Suzanna didn't know the details. She understood that, in the school parking lot two men pushed Rosemary into her car while she was trying to unlock it. When other students saw the struggle one of the men took off, and by the time a teacher came the other one had gone, as well. *The teacher came out and she had been hurt and they took her to the hospital...* She went to a friend's house and texted her mom to say she was *in a really dark place*, but she was safe. Suzanna didn't see her for a week.

Then Rosemary and her boyfriend broke up. They had been spending the night together, but in the end *he really just broke her heart... he found a girlfriend and went that route and... Rosemary was—she just wanted to be—a straight girl, and was looking for boyfriends and maybe because of her pain or what, I'm not sure. She's navigating now to girls.*

Suzanna was seeing a man she liked very much, but he didn't want to commit and had recently renewed his connection with a former lover. The two were texting a lot, and this made Suzanna uncomfortable.

AB: *I can see why*

S: *Thank you. He seems to think, “Well you're being weird on me...”*

AB: *And he won't accept boundaries on that friendship...*

S: *No boundaries... We're not having sex is his reply. I'm sorry, but just an emotional buddy is something different*

AB: *That could be... Are her texts romantic?*

S: *Yes, sometimes... she borrows money from him. They broke up five years ago, but when she found out about me she started stepping back in*

AB: *I'll be darned... have you ever met her?*

S: *No. I've told him, if she's nothing let's all go out. Let's just all go do something together. I could tell he was very uncomfortable...*

AB: *I see why that feels awkward.*

S: *I appreciate him... As far as my kids go, he's been very accepting and that just means so much to me. But, I'm, I don't know that I'll stick in a situation that –*

AB: *He doesn't sound like a good bet.*

S: *Yeah, not a good situation. And the kids really like him, so I suppose it's possible to find someone out there that says, "Oh your kids are gay-Gay, my kids are gay, that's cool." Maybe that will happen.*

[Notice how casual this exchange sounds. Even as it transgressed the bounds of research, this marked the beginning of our friendship.]

I noticed a shift in Suzanna's understanding during this interview. She said, *We're kind of making history for future generations. I think future generations will let their children choose their gender. [Boy] children won't be punished for the Barbie shoes... teenagers will come together discussing their gender openly, and comfortably.* I asked her whether some might choose to live outside the gender binary. *Yeah, we know some now, that don't want surgery, but dress female most of the time and every once in a while male... and maybe just get away from the pronouns.*

Though we no longer meet for interviews, Suzanna and I stay in touch through emails and phone calls. We share stories over lunch and locate the parallels in our lives. We're both firstborn children. We've had difficult marriages and nonconforming children. We love books. When my daughter was diagnosed with an auto-immune disorder, Suzanna supported me through her crises and surgeries, always reassuring me, *You're an amazing mother.*

Suzanna is single and thinks that at 55 she's too old for romance. I gave her my book on the subject. She says, *Yeah. I tell people, I have a friend who's published a book!* And I can't resist saying, *I've published seven books,* to which she replies, *You are amazing!* We talk about writing a book together. *Maybe it would help people.* We both take notes during our conversations. Sometimes we tell each other what to do. When I get too scruffy she threatens to cut my hair. She reminds me to tell my children I love them every day. Sometimes we feel like we're reinventing motherhood, even as our children challenge and are challenged by the gender binary.

REFLECTING ON RESEARCH PRACTICE (LESSONS LEARNED)

It took years for me to overcome my reluctance to write about Suzanna's experiences. Concerned about appropriating her narrative, I invited her to join me as a coauthor. She declined, *Honestly, I don't have the time!* Perhaps she's deferring to me as the book expert, but I think she's saving up to write her own book. As you can see, I eventually managed to write this chapter by framing it as the story of our relationship, a narrative I could legitimately "own."

In qualitative research, reflexivity helps us locate subjectivity in the research process (Gough 2003). Often, the reflexive impulse stops with identity, as when researchers give a nod to some aspect of their resumes that might have influenced research decisions.

But reflexivity can also manifest more deeply. Bracketing is an inherently reflexive process. Some suggest that it enables the researcher to control bias, almost as if our beliefs and attitudes could be constrained by punctuation (Tufford 2012). But I use bracketing to interrogate my research practice and, as Constance Fischer put it, for "looking backward and inward in a self-aware manner" (2009, p. 584). This helped me locate the slow shifts in perspective that Suzanna and I experienced during our five-year engagement. It also illuminated subtle power dynamics of our interviews. Finally, I think bracketing invites readers to enter into the analytic process, and form their own interpretations.

In a postmodern ontology, identities are multiple and fluid. This isn't captured in a single encounter between "researcher and subject," yet single interviews make up the lion's share of qualitative social work research. Over the long engagement described in this chapter, Suzanna and I explored the mutability of gender and sexual orientation, as well as the shifting sands of motherhood while our circumstances and perspectives evolved.

Finally, we stepped outside of our research roles to call each other *friend*. My professional indoctrination led me to see this as a transgression; but the friendship survives, enabling us to learn from and support each other in productive and satisfying ways. These days, when she tells me I'm amazing, I reply, "We're both amazing!"

NOTES

1. All names but mine are pseudonyms.
2. According to the Human Rights Campaign, trans women face a disproportionately high risk of violence. In 2015, at least 21 trans women were killed. Further, the HRC estimates half of all trans people will be sexually assaulted at some point in their lives. (Human Rights Campaign 2016).
3. The language of gender identity language is often contested. Suzanna used the unpopular term “transgendered” frequently in our early meetings, and I have chosen to retain it here to maintain the integrity of her quotes.

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Methodological Processes

Woven through these chapters are examples of arts-based methodology in practice, with data collection and data analysis processes taking center stage. Through the use of participants' art, poetry, new media work, and theater, the authors all center participation and collaboration, and by doing so, integrate anti-oppressive research practices into arts-based research methodologies.

In Evan Bissell's chapter, *Insistent Humanness in Data Collection and Analysis: What Cannot Be Taken Away—The Families and Prisons Project* the author offers the idea of *insistent humanness* as a concept critical to challenging the narrative authority of dehumanizing institutions. Evan demonstrates how arts-based participatory research methods of data collection and analysis lead to nuanced and incomplete narratives of experience that reflect an insistent humanness. With critical implications for the field of public health and community-based participatory research, Bissell argues that this shift in narrative authority is essential to challenging who can drive the production of knowledge, what types of knowledge are valued, and in what form knowledge is made actionable.

Chapter 8, *Hearing Embodied Narrative: Use of The Listening Guide With Juvenile Justice Involved LGBTQ Young People* by Sarah Mountz explores "I Poems" created via analysis of Life History Interviews with gay/trans/queer/same-sex practicing young adults who were previously incarcerated in girls' juvenile justice facilities. Interviews were analyzed using Carol Gilligan's Listening Guide that takes into consideration the multiplicity of voice when analyzing and interpreting qualitative

interview data. Grounded in psychoanalytic theory, the Listening Guide consists of steps that are intended to systematically interpret the many layers contained within a person's expressed experience. The focus of this chapter is the "second listening," in which the researcher constructs poems from the interview data.

Mapping Social and Gender Inequalities: An Analysis of Art and New Media Work Created by Adolescent Girls in a Juvenile Arbitration Program by Olga Ivashkevich, DeAnne K. Hilfinger Messias, Suzan N. Soltani, and Ebru Cayir describes the collaborative analysis of artwork created by first-time female offenders participating in a juvenile justice program. Using a feminist intersectional framework, the authors identify sociocultural obstacles and inequalities represented in the girls' art and digital media work and generate a conceptual rhizomatic map of overlapping and interconnected themes. Through their art, participants addressed diverse issues ranging from partner violence, peer pressure, family conflicts, sexualized social norms, bullying, and media influence to alternative concept of beauty, physical health, empowerment, emotional release, and hope for the future.

Smoking Cessation in Mental Health Communities: A Living Newspaper Applied Theatre Project by Lauren Jerke, Monica Prendergast, and Warwick Dobson uses the Living Newspaper theater form to examine tobacco addiction. In this research project, the authors and outpatients at a psychiatric hospital created and performed an applied theater play for fellow patients and healthcare professionals about the connections between mental health and tobacco addiction. Using Brown and Strega's central tenets of anti-oppressive research, the authors describe how this form cultivated their anti-oppressive arts-based data collection.

Insistent Humanness in Data Collection and Analysis: What Cannot be Taken Away—The Families and Prisons Project

Evan Bissell

BACKGROUND

Watched through a one-way mirror in the blank confines of an off-white cement room, four fathers, and I break open oranges that match the synthetic colors of their worn sweat suits. The smell of the oranges fills the room and gets under our fingernails as we listen to four voices projected from a digital recorder. The voices are of four young people, aged 16–19, discussing the stresses of being separated from their fathers who, like the men listening, are also in prison or jail. Their discussion is matter-of-fact and honest, not judgmental, but the questions they ask bring tears to the eyes of the men in the room. *I never thought about that, how it would make them feel that way*, says one of the men. He is halting, reflective in his comments. We finish listening and I press record, the men begin to speak and respond, adding their own conversations to the growing archive. In a few days, I will take this recording to the four people, aged 16–19 whose fathers are incarcerated and we will mirror

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the same process; *That's exactly what my dad would have said*, the second group reflects.

The recordings were one aspect of a longer dialogic, arts-based research project that took place between 2009 and 2010. The project, *What Cannot Be Taken Away: Families and Prisons Project (WCBTA)*, investigated the impact of incarceration on families through a multi-month dialogue between nonrelated incarcerated fathers and people with incarcerated parents.¹ The weekly dialogic process produced the materials or data. We then analyzed this data and organized it into large-scale portraits that narrated chosen aspects of their experiences with incarceration. When exhibited, the portraits are shown together or in some combination with additional materials that include audio recordings, writings, documentation of the process, and historical context on the growth of the prison system.²

INTRO

This chapter explores a set of dialogic art activities that were used as research methods to elaborate understandings and articulations of experience with the prison system.

The project was initiated out of a set of personal observations made while working as a teaching artist in a historically disinvested public school. First, I was struck by the nested discipline systems of school (suspension, expulsion) and neighborhood (incarceration). As a white educator in a school that was almost entirely students of color (the majority of teachers were white), I was further struck by the lack of curricular focus, awareness or complex analysis of incarceration and its impacts. This project began as a way to address this lack and to use my access as an educator—especially as a white, college-educated man with no incarcerated family members—to make connections across guarded spaces. Through this, my hope was that our creative research and shared learning would challenge those institutional forms and reflect nuanced negotiations of incarceration by people directly impacted. After reaching out to a number of organizations, I connected with the nonprofit Community Works West, a group that works with men in jail through the program Resolve to Stop the Violence and children of incarcerated people (Project WHAT!).

I use “art” as an umbrella term for collective and individual inquiry processes that include reflection, conversation, development of symbols

and metaphor, and the construction of visual and written narratives. I refer to “data” as the materials that come out of that artistic process, whether spoken, written, or visual. I explore how the arts-based nature of this dialogue led to nuanced and incomplete narratives of experiences with the prison system that reflect an *insistent humanness* in the context of a dehumanizing institution. This insistent humanness is understood as a complex, imperfect, and entangled representation of experience that includes social, physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of being. Grant Kester (2011) notes the particular, “... ability of aesthetic experience to transform our perceptions of difference and to open space for forms of knowledge that challenge cognitive, social, or political conventions” (p. 11). Following this, the visual and aesthetic forms of data collection and analysis that we employed—abstraction, symbol, and metaphor—created opportunities to address topics that were otherwise unapproachable and acknowledged multiple ways of knowing that could have escaped, or been buried by, the dominance of spoken or written reflections.

The final portraits are, to follow Donna Haraway (1988), visual representations of situated knowledges, or objectivities that are partial in their sight as informed by positionality and experience. The dialogic process and exhibitions of the final portraits do not attempt to create a complete picture of incarceration, but a prismatic view of the way that a broad social system impacts eight individuals in shared, and yet distinct, ways. Through this process, I argue that relationships to narrative authority were shifted, creating new validations of expertise and opening multiple possibilities for action. I also briefly discuss how those possibilities were not fully seized or supported in order to strengthen future efforts.

Art and Participation in Public Health Research

I turn to the field of public health in order to develop three related arguments. A strong body of work explores the contributions of community-based participatory research (CBPR) to social justice and health equity efforts (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Minkler, Vásquez, Tajik, & Petersen, 2008; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). The inclusion of art in participatory research, including, but not limited to, examples like photovoice (Wang, Yi, Tao, & Carovano, 1998), have been shown to enrich the production of knowledge and its accessibility (Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, Allemang, & Stasiulis, 2012; Fraser & Sayah, 2011). This chapter builds on this work and introduces the framework of

insistent humanness in arts-based participatory data collection, analysis, and representation.

First, the presence of an arts-based participatory action research approach challenges what expertise is valued and made actionable in public health efforts. Public health, like many disciplinary fields, practices what Jason Corburn (2005) calls disciplinary “boundary-keeping”—a policing of *who* can produce knowledge, *what* knowledge is valued, *how* it is valued, and *what* is made actionable in the pursuit of health outcomes. Central to a participatory action research orientation is a redistribution of the production and application of knowledge as a form of power (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011). A participatory action research approach, when done critically and with accountability, can shift whose knowledge is valued and how it is created. Creative and artistic processes value knowledge that is historically marginalized from public health but holds rich analytic and descriptive power for understanding and developing strategies to address health inequity. As Shannon Jackson argues, this cross-sector art trespassing “exposes and complicates our awareness of the systems and processes that coordinate and sustain social life” (Thompson, 2012, p. 93).

Second, as acceptable forms of expertise are expanded, new streams of critique and analysis become available. As Balazs and Morello-Frosch (2013) contend, CBPR can extend not only the relevance and reach of research, but also its rigor. I argue that an arts-based strategy expands this further. Many of our conversations during the project focused on the embodied impacts of the prison system: stress, physical health, addiction, and mental health. Generally, these health concerns, aggravated by prison and the interlocking social systems of which prison is part, are subsumed by the narrative that prison and criminal laws are necessary elements of a healthy society. This notion builds from the idea that crime is a “disease” and an element of a “few bad apples,” and that prison, as a “surgical” intervention can address this. Indeed, Ruth Gilmore (2007) characterizes the logic of the era of mass incarceration as one of “incapacitation,” or the removal of a person without any attempt to change the conditions, which led to their incarceration.

The portraits and surrounding materials developed in this project present a more complex understanding of health that implicates the prison system as a public health concern. These ideas are increasingly gaining traction with some pointing out the role prison plays in driving health disparities (Cloud, 2014; The Editorial Board, 2014) and

others revealing the residual health impacts of incarceration on families and communities (Hoffmann, 2015; Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hamilton, Uddin, & Galea, 2015). This work is in dialogue with social movements and organizing work that makes public the impacts of the prison system on black, Latino, Native, and poor communities of all races and ethnicities. Within this project, the findings were reached through dialogic arts activities, allowing us to avoid reproducing the dominant idea of criminality as disease that can, and does, circulate among those most impacted by the prison system and prison supporters alike. In this way, the often organic and abstract data collection process extended the rigor of a possible public health analysis of the prison system by expanding the scope of analysis.

Third, a dialogic arts-based participatory research process connects individual experiences to each other, and to the social and historical construction of those experiences. Following the call of Leung, Yen, and Minkler (2004), among others, this pushes public health past an overemphasis on individual level risk. The dialogic form of the project connected individual experience and emphasized shared experience. Following a community-based participatory research orientation, it built off the understanding that “knowledge is constructed socially and therefore...research approaches...allow for social, group, or collective analysis of life experiences of power and knowledge” (as cited in Leung, Yen, & Minkler, 2004, p. 2). The dialogic aspects were essential to the development of situated knowledges and the production of narratives that prison is never limited to individual impacts. As one of the project members, Liz reflected:

Having people who have been through what you've been through, you'll want to listen to them more and be able to relate. And when you can relate to someone, that's like the biggest thing you can do to help someone heal, empathizing, just being like, 'I know what you've been through, man I've been through it I know its hard, but there's another way there's another road.' I feel like it's our duty to reach out to another person who's going through the same thing. Its about accountability and building community.

In this way, the shared process emphasizes a social or collective response to the multiple and varied impacts of mass incarceration.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In the following section, I describe two methods of data collection and the process of data analysis. The descriptions provide insight into processes we used while exploring how visibility and dialogue contributed to findings. The first method develops and connects personal, social, and historical stories of self-understanding. The second addresses the limits of description and the role of dialogue and visibility in revealing those. The third section explores the process of analysis.

The Orange Meditation

In 2005, I began working with the artist Brett Cook.³ In workshops and collaborative projects, Cook frequently includes a mindfulness exercise inspired by the writings of Thich Nhat Hanh (Hanh and Lama, 1992). Participants are asked to put out their hand and close their eyes. Cook places a raisin, or sometimes an orange, in each person's hand and the group describes the texture and detail of the fruit with their eyes closed. They are then asked to chew the raisin slowly. As a group, they then describe the complete life cycle of the raisin—from Cook's bringing it to the group, to the raisin's purchase in the store and the worker who placed it there, its journey from the processing plant to its drying process in the sun, its earlier life as a grape and before that as a flower and the nutrients it derived from the soil, water, and sun.

This exercise opens up questions about where one draws the boundaries of their origin story and self-definition. When eating the raisin or orange, when does it cease to become a fruit and become you? Is it possible that you become slightly more raisin?

In *What Cannot Be Taken Away* (WCBTA) we expanded this and involved artistic elements. I decided to use oranges as a visual parallel to the orange prisoner uniforms mandated by the Sheriff. We began by describing the oranges only using our sense of touch and smell and then, including sight, the outside skin of the orange. We then drew our oranges using blind contour technique, where the drawer only looks at the object they are drawing and does not lift their pencil from the paper. The emphasis was on trying to describe the orange with as much accuracy as possible, rather than creating a predetermined image of the fruit.

Next, we silently peeled the oranges and paid particular attention to the smells, texture of the peel on the inside and out, the presence of the pores in the skin and their “sweating.” We arranged the peels alongside the orange and drew them using a contour technique, where the drawer can look at their paper but can’t lift their pencil. The idea is to capture the exact contour, or outline of the peel and fruit in relation to each other.

The third stage involved breaking up the fruit segments and closely examining one wedge, holding it up to the light, smelling it, counting the wedges, and identifying colors that we saw. This final drawing was a longer drawing of any part of the orange with no restrictions on the process of rendering. We compared the different styles of drawing and which aspects created challenges or supports.

At this point, we silently ate our first orange slice and then constructed the history of the orange, from fruit to seed and the nutrients that made it grow. Next, I gave each person a piece of reflective mylar paper. On the paper, they were asked to write a letter to an ancestor—real or imagined—that constructed a story of self similar to the one we had created for the oranges. We then shared the letters as a group. I later took the letters from the fathers to the young people and vice versa. The following week, we grounded these stories within a historical context of the growth of the prison system in California by examining key events and trends on a timeline. Each person then placed their story and experiences with incarceration within that timeline.

Antonio Gramsci wrote, “The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is “knowing thyself” as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory...therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory” (as cited in Said, 1994, p. 33).

In WCBTA, this exercise became an initial contribution to the “inventory.” Each group member had to make decisions about which “trace” to pick up and include in their inventory. Together, we contemplated which details were included, which weren’t? What were the imperfections of our descriptive and analytic powers? Could we still recognize the orange in our drawings? What aspects made one orange different from another? In the limits of the different drawing styles and the finite space of the letter, we were left with an awareness of the partial nature of representation.

The process also expanded the boundaries of self-representation. While an institutional narrative of the group members' experience draws a line around the moment of a legally defined act, this process invited a broader field of analysis. As C. Greig Crysler (2016) notes, "...the arbitrary bounding of a given problem only serves to disable the analyst's ability to understand the complex intersection of forces at work in a given situation" (p. 21). The letters to ancestors drew connections to history and experience that extended beyond the prescribed boundaries of criminality. Multiple letters addressed conditions in one's neighborhood as a way to connect contemporary issues with those experienced by ancestors impacted by slavery or segregation. In their writing and sharing, the letters destabilized, in part, the authority and weight of institutional narratives of individualized criminality.

Paper Sculptures

The childhood game of finding animals in the shapes of clouds is a simple illustration of the way that our perceptions of phenomena are subjective. Through discussion and description of the clouds with other people we share what we see and can see the same thing in a new way. Visual forms that approach descriptions of a phenomenon, but don't precisely describe it, present the opportunity for dialogue about perception. An isolated perception of a cloud falls closer to a positivist framework of knowledge that relies on direct observation. A cloud described with friends comes closer to a constructivist framework that relies on cocreated knowledge (Leung, Yen, & Minkler, 2004).

Building off this childhood game, each member created a sculpture with a blank piece of white paper that represented their relationship to their parents. The limitations of the form meant that the sculptures were sketches of ideas, not precise visual representations. Further, the sculptures employed symbolism, metaphor, or abstraction, allowing for multiple interpretations. In order to convey a more precise meaning, the sculptures required narration and discussion. We also discussed the way that sculptures next to each other changed their meaning. For example, Joe crumpled up his paper as a representation of garbage, while Ben carefully constructed a "flying heart." The first garbage sculpture was not fully crumpled though, which raised questions of why not. Did this signal hope, possibility or something else? The seemingly opposite representations—the heart and garbage—prompted



Fig. 7.1 Garbage paper sculpture by Joe

conversation about the different relationship to mothers and fathers, and sons and daughters (Fig. 7.1).

The goal was not to create complete understandings through a single object, but to spark group dialogue about relationships and their intersection with the prison system. The sculptures created a shared language of symbols and metaphors to begin from, and as the conversation progressed, these ideas were pushed and applied in different ways. The

visual, intentionally nonprecise “data” allowed for reinterpretation and coconstructed meanings that were applied in the development of the final portraits.

A Continuing Inventory

As the weeks progressed, we collected data in multiple ways. We developed more visual and written exercises like those previously described. We looked at historical and contemporary context of the prison system. I carried audio recordings between the two groups as a more “direct” conversation. We practiced painting techniques through large-scale paintings of each member’s eyes, a symbol decided on by the group as both unifying and individualized.

All of our notes and materials were collected in shared sketchbooks, which in the sense that Gramsci (as cited in Said, 1994) describes, were uncatalogued archives of the infinity of traces that the prison system had on their lives. Larger materials—the eyes, the timeline, and other workshop materials—were hung on the walls each week as the bare space of our meeting room in the jail was transformed by the growing archive. In a literal way, the exercises sought to make visible the traces of their experience.

THE FINAL PORTRAITS

Learnings from Analysis

Our next step was to make sense of the data we had created. As we combed through the materials, three ideas became apparent. The first was that the limitations of the visual form—the composition of a formal portrait, a form that we decided on as a group—limited the amount of material that could be included. This meant that “making sense” of the data in an analytic form (the portrait) also meant acknowledging the partial nature of its descriptive power.

Second, reviewing the archive and identifying the narrative scope of the portraits revealed gaps. This prompted an iterative process of analysis and investigation. For example, in reviewing his materials, Vontek recognized the need for a deeper exploration of a childhood moment. The catalog of the data allowed us to return to this moment and expand upon it as a central component of his portrait.



Fig. 7.2 Cheyanne

Finally, it became apparent that much of our data was a result of the group dialogue. These elements would not have surfaced without the exchange of ideas, materials, and words. For example, a comment by one member became a quote that appeared in Chey's portrait because it so closely resonated with her relationship to her father. It stood in for her father's presence within the process and allowed her to respond to the comment within the group space. She then used the quote to anchor the narrative of her portrait. Similarly, a comment by a member prompted the focus of one of the father's portraits, which centered on themes of forgiveness and his own relationship with his father (Fig. 7.2).

Analysis as Implicit Critique?

Our process sought to balance social context and personal history. The members also brought an active analysis and lived awareness of the ways that the prison system targets nonwhite people and poor people. The final portraits tended to focus on a nuanced subjectivity rather than explicit political analysis of this context. The portraits, as narrative acts, contained, "occasions when racialized subjects not only step into the recognitions given to them by others but provide intuitions of a future in which relations of subjugation will (could) be transformed" (Carby as cited in Browne, 2015, p. 69).

Each portrait held the possibility of this transformation, symbolized through the removal of a mask, the presence of keys, changing weather, wings, theater curtains, and active escape. The transformation of relations pictured within the portraits are transcendent and metaphorical rather than practical, yet they retain an implicit critique of the objective designations of criminality that undergirds the logic of the prison system. To follow Simone Browne (2015), the portraits then, while not making formal or targeted claims to specific rights of the imprisoned or their families, function as decommodification narrative acts. They act against racialized public narratives of criminality that deny humanness, particularly of black youth, through characterizations like "super-predators" (Dilulio, 1995) and "demons" (Thomas, 2014). This decommodification is an insistent claim to humanness. It contradicts the narratives produced by a prison system that creates what Lewis Gordon calls a, "denied subjectivity," which functions as a, "structured violence where 'all is permitted'" (as cited in Browne, 2015, p. 110). The multifaceted dialogue

led to a wide-range of data that could be drawn from to compile insistently human portraits.

DATA COLLECTION, REPRESENTATION, AND PUBLIC HEALTH—INSISTENT HUMANNESS

The data that this project surfaced, in its slow and iterative process of discovery, its reliance on abstraction, metaphor, visuality, and dialogue, would be difficult to capture in a randomized controlled trial, the gold standard of public health research. Further, if we had pursued traditional public health data representations, we would likely lose our data's insistently humanness. This project focuses on a highly asymmetrical power system and the retention of an insistently humanness in data representation is crucial for expressing multiple ways of knowing that disrupt objective narratives of criminality. As Michael de Certeau wrote, "the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more" (as cited in Sirmans, & Budney, 2008, p. 39). The critical incorporation of art and dialogue within a public health framework reminds us that the knowledge we collect, document, and make actionable is never *just a viewpoint and nothing more*. Rather, insistently humanness is the texture and embodiment of people's lived experience and the relations (social, historical, and interpersonal) that shape them. The following section explores the importance of insistently humanness in research as a political action, its potential value for rigor in public health research and the role of dialogue.

Data Representation as a Political Act

Separating or controlling for aspects of lived experience in ways that elide the interaction of multiple forces, experiences, history, and identities narrows both representations and resulting action. In her qualitative study of epidemiological and lay definitions of race, Janet Shim shows how epidemiologists concern with, "statistical confounding between class and race," in cardiovascular disease research tended to contrast with the analysis presented by those living with CVD who emphasize, "that race and class *intersect and interact with each other*" (Shim, 2005, p. 411) (original emphasis). In the previous methods descriptions, I intended to show how WCBTA moves toward an insistently humanness and away from reproducing singular categories. In WCBTA we did this through

complex and reflexive partial representations of lived experience through the expanded boundaries of analysis that art and dialogue allows for.

Disentangled, categorical, dehumanized representations through data can dangerously reproduce narratives that are ahistorical and focus on decontextualized risk factors. This facilitates, what George Lipsitz (2015) calls the “aestheticizing of political immobility,” which normalizes hierarchies and distributions of power, thereby reinscribing risk through a denied subjectivity. Similarly, Megan Boler’s (1997) critique of “passive empathy” within multiculturalism illustrates the danger of representations that allow for a consumption of another’s experience without action. Narratives that produce sympathy often place the reader/viewer/listener in a place of expertise about someone else’s experience. As a result, action is often taken *on behalf of*, rather than *by* or *with* those most directly affected by an issue.

The challenge of data representation is familiar within public health, which largely employs a positivist framework of counting morbidity and mortality. Public health must move past sympathetic representations, which means expanding what forms of data and methods of collection

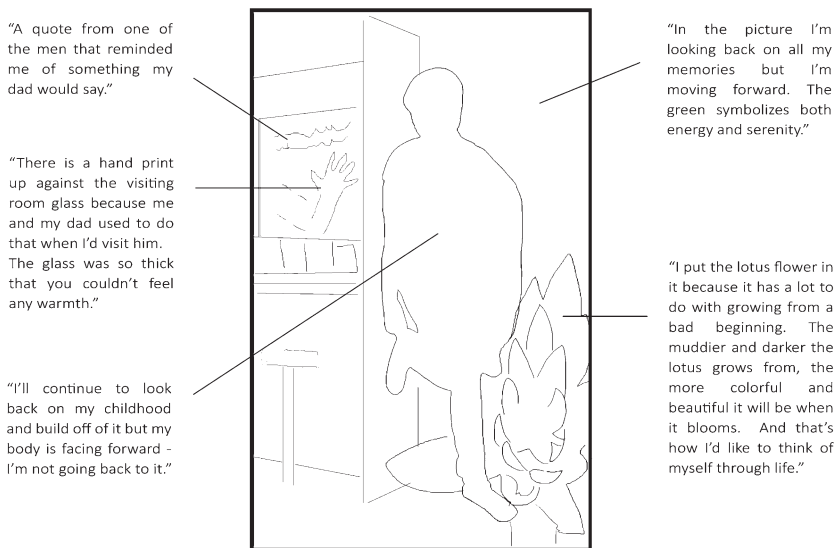


Fig. 7.3 Cheyenne legend

are valued, how they are represented, and who is involved in this process. An arts-based participatory research framework can support this through complex, intersectional analyses and representations. Can these representations also be reflexive and invite a more sustained engagement on the part of the viewer? In WCBTA, this was attempted by showing the portraits alongside annotations created by the group members (see Fig. 7.3), presentation of the data/materials from the process, historical context, and interactive activities for viewers.

Expanding Rigor

Broadening what counts as data and how it is represented in public health research can also expand rigor. For example, toxic stress, or the continual exposure to negative experiences that one cannot control, is increasingly viewed within public health as a major source of health disparities (Shonkoff et al. 2012; Francis, Diorio, Liu, & Meaney, 1999; Geronimus, Hicken, Keene, & Bound, 2006). Reoccurring conversations during WCBTA about stress revealed how incarceration intersects with other social determinants of health to contribute to toxic stress.

Sadie investigated this theme through a composition that placed her portrait on a stage with a spotlight, representing the idea that she was an actor in someone else's play and that the role she was cast in as the daughter of an incarcerated man destined her to end up in prison. Above her head is a cartoon thought bubble filled with small drawings that complicate this projected image. Melvin designed his portrait so that he appears to balance on a tightrope. On one side are gravestones filling the street where he grew up, representing the trauma of losing so many close friends and the potential for his own early death. Demons tempt him to make money by selling drugs due to higher returns and social status, another demon represents harassment by the police, and another represents the "mask" he wears to conceal his "authentic" self. On the other side, he clears away clouds and reveals his daughter walking on the beach (Fig. 7.4).

While the portraits do not offer a statistical analysis of cortisol levels (e.g., how stress levels are being measured in lab experiments with rats), they represent nuanced manifestations of stress caused by incarceration and its related social forces. This expands analysis of the ways that the prison system contributes to stress and the limits of its rehabilitative potential.



Fig. 7.4 Sadie and Melvin

The Role of Dialogue

Finally, the process connected individual experiences to each other. As I've stated earlier, and in-line with theorizing on participatory research, much of the data generated comes through the project's relational aspects. Questions posed by one member prompted personal reflections of another, symbols created by one were picked up and transformed by another. Many of the members shared how the group aspect of the project sparked new reflections on their own experience and that their experience wasn't isolated or exceptional. The portraits borrow themes and symbols from each other and frequently reference the relations created through the research.

As facilitator, I supported the dialogue as a connector, through my institutional access to the jail and my ability to carry materials and ideas back and forth—and as a reflector—ensuring that all aspects of our data

collection were available for analysis in the evolving conversation and that our research and final paintings were contextualized and representative.

LIMITATIONS

While the dialogic process was essential, it fell short of supporting continued action for social justice. This is a major unanswered possibility of this project; how can, or should, the relationships continue, and how could the project more directly support action to transform the material conditions of incarceration? Could the process and outcomes also have been leveraged for report backs to larger groups within the jail or with families impacted by incarceration, targeted media advocacy, or a more concerted analysis of the portraits to develop policy memos, organizing strategies, or contributions to public health research on incarceration? Multiple installations of the project in a diverse set of locations, including Alcatraz Island, a law school, a college department of education, juvenile hall, galleries, and more, meant that the work did reach a varied audience of people connected to these issues. However, efforts to aggregate these connections, learnings, and potential actions were not realized. These elements would have required a more protracted process and ongoing support, which the project did not have at the time. This chapter is one effort outside of the participatory process to capture some of the learnings in order to share them forward. In future iterations of this or similar projects, it is essential to forefront and discuss these opportunities.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have shown how to select methods of data collection in *What Cannot Be Taken Away* used dialogue and art to produce intergroup subjectivity and public narratives of prison that destabilize dominant narratives of criminality. Valuing individual objective experiences in the data collection generated situated knowledges—objectivities that are partial in their sight as informed by positionality and experience (Haraway, 1988). Haraway (1988) refers to this process as a, “doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing” (p. 178). Following Gramsci’s (as cited in Said, 1994) notion of cataloging the “infinity of traces” as a process of critical consciousness, the final portraits were

inventories. The portraits, when displayed publicly, are further supplemented through accompanying materials that lay out a broader socio-political and historical context. Taken as a whole, the WCBTA project offers insistently human, provocatively incomplete, and powerfully subjective analyses and representations of the historical, relational, community, and personal impacts and experiences of incarceration.

This process holds rich potential within public health and is relevant in other traditionally positivist fields. Public health is an evidence-based field and the data that drives its decision-making and action remains dominated by random controlled trials with an emphasis on individual level interventions (McGuire, 2005; Mackenzie, & Grossman 2005). While funding for participatory research in public health has increased in the last twenty years, it remains a small portion of available funds (Minkler, Blackwell, Thompson, & Tamir, 2003), with likely a much smaller portion incorporating art as a core research method. Funding structures maintain boundaries of knowledge production—limiting who can drive the production of knowledge, what types of knowledge are valued and in what form it is counted as actionable knowledge, but so too do our imaginations as professionals. Can public health, or other empirical fields, sit with the uncertainty of a song or portrait as data? Arts-based participatory research forms like those developed in WCBTA hold the potential for rich descriptive power that strengthens analytical rigor and supports an insistent humanness that does not contribute to categories of predetermined vulnerability. These strategies are essential to public health practices that seek to act from a place of solidarity.

NOTES

1. The project can be seen at evanbissell.com.
2. In this chapter I use only first names as was originally agreed upon in the group. I use “we” when the entire group engaged in activities. The eight portraits were cocreated with Chey, Liz, Sadie, Darren, Ben, Melvin, Vontea and Joe. Thanks to Dee Morizano-Myers who co-facilitated workshops in the jail and to Community Works for their logistical and programmatic support.
3. For two decades, Cook has facilitated large-scale, collaborative art projects that, in their participatory development, draw heavily on contemplative practices and Freirean pedagogy.

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Hearing Embodied Narrative: Use of the Listening Guide with Juvenile Justice Involved LGBTQ Young People

Sarah Mountz

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores “I Poems” created via analysis of *Life History Interviews* with a community-based sample of queer and transgender young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 who have had experiences of incarceration in girls’ juvenile justice facilities. Interview data was analyzed using the *Listening Guide*. Conceptualized through Carol Gilligan’s early work on identity and moral development, the *Listening Guide* is a relational method that takes into consideration the multiplicity of voice when analyzing and interpreting qualitative interview data. Grounded in psychoanalytic theory, the *Listening Guide* “draws on voice, resonance, and relationship as ports of entry into the human psyche,” and consists of a series of steps that are intended to systematically interpret the many layers of voice contained within a person’s expressed experience (Gilligan et al. 2003, p. 157). The focus of this chapter will be the second listening, in which the researcher hones in on the voice of the

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“I” in the narration by creating an “I Poem,” intended to both introduce the researcher to the distinctive cadences and rhythms of the narrator’s first person voice and to hear how this person speaks about her or himself. My hope is that exploring the use of “I poems” as a method of data analysis will open up possibilities for conceptualizing poetry as a research tool and process that can render an understanding of research participants’ experiences that is more multidimensional than traditional methods of analysis; one which makes a space for embodied storytelling and for emotion. I understand poetry as a mechanism for *excavating deeper subjective truths* and, thus, a means of challenging notions of objectivity in research. First, I will provide an overview of uses of poetry in qualitative research. Then, I will present data collection and analytical methods. Finally, I will present some of the participants’ “I poems” and discuss their impact and relationship to Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) with young queer and transgender communities.

POETRY IN RESEARCH

Situated within what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have termed the fifth movement in qualitative research, arts-based approaches are part of a larger methodological trajectory toward experimental and expressive techniques intended to reimagine notions of power, authority, and authorship within research processes. Recent decades have shown a proliferation of use of poetry in various stages of the research process. Some noteworthy examples include, Gee’s (1991) stanza construction of qualitative data within the field of narrative studies, and Poindexter (2002), Langer and Furman’s (2004), and Richardson’s (1993) research-based poetry with a variety of communities, including single mothers and HIV positive older caregivers. In her work with youth of color in the “killer corridor” in East Oakland, an area undergoing rapid change and high rates of neighborhood violence, Dill (2015) adapted Langer and Furman’s (2004) research and interpretive poetry methodology to engage youth participants as co-researchers in issues pertaining to their own neighborhoods. Dill initially created poems based upon interview transcripts, as a means to engage youth and solicit feedback for the findings of the research via a community forum. This event was so successful, and the youth so enraptured by the poetry, that what initially began as a single event member check evolved into a 6 week writing workshop in which Dill called upon her own writing background and training to guide youth through creation of original poems around the themes

generated through the initial interviews, thus shifting authorship, representation, and authority back to the youth. The youth formed a standing group, the MiC research collective, published an anthology, and have performed their work at a range of venues. Thus, her approach was both poetic and participatory.

Through the example of Dill's work, we see how poetry can help to democratize the research process by making findings more accessible to a range of audiences because of its familiar format. This is one of the ways that the use of poetry in research to solicit, generate, and/or represent knowledge holds a wealth of possibilities for challenging notions of objectivity, hierarchy, and dualisms born of the Cartesian split and its stronghold on Western scientific research processes. For example, poetry challenges the bifurcation of "oral" versus "written" texts, and of "head" versus "heart." The experience of poetry—writing it, reading it, hearing it—is necessarily embodied and emotionally evocative, and herein lies its promise. Through its combined strategic construction of words and parsimonious use of language, poetry can distil expressions of experiences down to their essence: a diamond cutting exercise. Poetry can also make a space for that which is unsayable, but conveyed, through intimate exchange, a particularly salient quality for research with communities and individuals that have experienced trauma (Rogers, 2006). As Richardson has noted, "Poetry 'can touch us where we live, in our bodies, and invite us to 'vicariously experience the self-reflexive and transformational processes of self-creation...'" (1992, p. 26). Poetic representation could thus make visible...both *context* and *labor* (1993, p. 696)."

Because of its capacity to hold and explicitly convey emotion, poetry lends visibility to the emotional labor intrinsic to the qualitative research process, an oft overlooked and undervalued facet of the work. Emotion is also a helpful tool in research for its capacity to "make people feel things," thus lending itself well to social justice research aimed toward advocacy and systemic change. Because it challenges its receiver to engage emotionally with the material, poetry may counter the distance that often exists, for example, between policymakers and communities, thus commanding a greater level of accountability.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

This research, conducted for my social work dissertation, sought to enhance our collective understanding of the reasons for the disproportionate representation of LGBTQ youth within girl's detention facilities

in the juvenile justice system in New York, and their experiences while incarcerated. I drew upon critical ethnographic and CBPR methods, appropriate for their utility in exploratory research that aims to capture community-based knowledge regarding experiences of injustice. The research was embedded in a framework of critical, postcolonial, and feminist theories.

Prior to initiating this research I had been a social worker in the child welfare system in New York City in a program with congregate care foster homes for LGBTQ youth. Witnessing systemic abuse against LGBTQ youth as a social worker informed my desire to capture some of the youth's narratives through research and to amplify their voices for advocacy purposes. I also brought my experiences of activism within the community. I am insider-outsider to this research as a gender normative queer white adult woman. I was myself a queer youth and—though never having been systems involved—had to be mindful of not imposing my own experiences and ideas about being young and queer upon research participants' narratives. I aimed to be reflexive about this as well as the role that I felt my race, class, educational background, gender identity, and sexual orientation played in the interviews. At the beginning of every interview, I identified myself as a queer cisgender woman. I also explained my history as a caseworker in the foster care system. Whiteness continues to be centered in queer and trans communities, and I was particularly aware of my symbolic presence as a white researcher interviewing participants who identified predominantly as people of color (Cohen, 1997; Kumashiro, 2001). Given the often problematic history of academic research within communities of color, I tried early on in the interviews to name the historical legacies and contemporary context in which our relationship and conversation were taking place, and the ways in which all of my and the participant's social identities might inform our interpersonal dynamics.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

A Community Advisory Board (CAB) was assembled for the research with the clear intention that their role was strongly collaborative (Israel et al., 1998 as cited in Pinto, Spector, & Valera, 2011). In his work, Rogerio Pinto (2011) has documented the history of Community Advisory Boards, whose origins are in LGBTQ community activism and whose use arose from queer activists' response to the HIV/AIDS

epidemic, as groups like ACT UP mobilized community to demand the allocation of resources for research to understand the nature and course of the epidemic. In this research study, the community advisory board was composed of legal advocates, social service practitioners, another researcher, a community-based activist, and two previously systems involved young queer or transgender identified adults. The CAB informed study design and materials, facilitated participant recruitment, assisted in the application and dissemination of findings, and occasionally aided with interpretation of interview data.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

I engaged in *Life History Interviews* with a community-based sample of gay/trans/queer/same-sex practicing young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 who have had experiences of incarceration in girls' juvenile justice facilities. An interview guide was created to elicit participants' perspectives regarding life pathways prior to and following their involvement with the juvenile justice system, life choices, systemic barriers, experiences of violence and harassment in detention and elsewhere, and childhood and family history and events. Moreover, participants were asked questions regarding how they negotiate their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and race in relation to various contexts, relationships, and systems, over time.

In their effort to discover innovative and effective methodologies for addressing what's been termed "the missing discourse of desire," among research with adolescent girls, McClelland and Fine (2008) note the critical necessity of generating methodological "release points" for the articulation of experiences that have been "wrapped in a kind of collective discursive cellophane" by anxieties surrounding and grand narratives superimposed on young women's sexualities. Specifically, they note the importance of dissolving larger sociocultural narratives in which young women's desire is read alternately as vulnerable (especially for elite young white women), confused (lesbian, bi, or queer young women), or dangerous (young women of color). Arguing that young women's sexuality is hypersurveilled, and therefore difficult to excavate the nature of, they note:

we see layers of cellophane being produced by: a market economy that rushes to commodify young female bodies; sociopolitical, moral and

heteronormative panics that obsess over young women's sexualities; racist imagery and institutional practices that vilify the sexualities of women of color, and by schools increasingly kidnapped by the politics of teaching abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula in place of serious sexuality education. (p. 233)

In noting the embodied nature of both storytelling and story receiving, Janesick (2010) likens the work of researchers who employ oral history to that of choreographers arranging a dance piece in that both are creative acts that require use of the critical elements *order, design, tension, balance, composition, and harmony* to tell a story. She notes:

The researcher is the research instrument in oral history as in qualitative research approaches in general. Just as the dancer stretches to sharpen technique, the oral historian sharpens and stretches the research instrument, too. Sharpening listening skills to hear the data is one part of the equation. Then sharpening the eyes to observe and really see the context of the narrator/interviewee is another. Practicing narrative writing and sharpening and exercising the fingers as one writes in coordination with the brain is yet another. When one is aware that the body is the research instrument in this type of work, the eventual narrative product is more focused, sharper, and nuanced. (p. 6)

In the hopes of approaching the data with an embodied method, interview transcripts were analyzed using the *Listening Guide* (Gilligan et al., 2003). I found this to be a particularly appropriate method for use in this project which sought to explore identity processes and multiple facets of self within different contexts. The *Listening Guide* is designed to create intimacy, through a series of sequential listenings, between the researcher and various aspects of the narrator's voice and by situating the narration of experience within a particular relational context. None of the three interdependent steps, or listenings are intended to stand alone; the rationale for a series of listenings is the assumption that the voice, like the psyche, is contrapuntal. In other words, many voices are occurring simultaneously and it is the work of the researcher to weave them into synchronicity, making meaning of the experiences being narrated. The first listening is comprised of two parts: (a) listening for the plots and (b) the listener's response to the interview. Reading through the interview text, the researcher identifies what stories are being told

and the contexts in which they are embedded, paying attention to recurrent images and metaphors as well as to exclusions, or what is not being said. During this plot listening, the researcher brings their own subjectivity into the interpretive process by noting the relationship of their own social identities in relation to those of the narrator, as well as the emotional responses to the listening by “identifying, exploring, and making explicit our own thoughts and feelings about, and associations with, the narrative being analyzed” to facilitate the exploration the various connections, resonances, and interpretations one brings to the analytical process (Gilligan et al., 2003, pp. 160). During the second listening, the researcher hones in on the voice of the “I” in the narration by creating an “I Poem.” The objective of this second stage is to both introduce the researcher to the distinctive cadences and rhythms of the narrator’s first person voice and to hear how this person speaks about themselves. As with the other two stages, the intention is to bring the researcher into a relationship with the narrator, in this case, to facilitate the researcher’s knowledge of how the narrator knows themselves as rendered through the poetic free fall of association. In the third listening, the analysis is brought back into relationship with the research questions as the researcher listens for contrapuntal voices. Derived from the musical form counterpoint, or the combination of two or more melodic lines, the arcs, and bends of separate storylines converge and are explored in relation to one another, as with the melodic lines of music played simultaneously, moving in relation to one another. In this final listening, the researcher identifies voices that are distinct from the “I” voice and color-codes them within the interview transcript in order to create a visual display of these voices movement in relation to one another amidst the landscape of the fuller story. As with musical counterpoint, these voices may move in harmony or dissonance with one another; regardless, the relationship generated in the movement between the voices is the focus of analysis. Theorizing and understanding the voices contained within the interview transcript is an iterative process in which the voices are analogous to the themes generated through axial coding in more traditional practices of coding qualitative data, such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the fourth and final listening, an analysis of the narrator in relation to the research question is composed based upon the previous listenings and a written narrative of woven voices is constructed.

RESEARCHER FIELD NOTES, REFLEXIVITY,
AND SOMATIC PROCESSES

To the extent that it was possible, following each interview, I took time to write down thoughts and questions that emerged for me during the interview process. Self-observation and reflection included highlighting places of connection and disconnection from participants based on identity and experience. Because of the highly visceral and sometimes emotionally difficult nature of taking testimony involving physical, sexual, and emotional violence, I also tried to be diligent in noting my own physical and emotional responses to interviews by journaling. For example, after one particularly long interview involving a participant's story of repeated and chronic exposure to multiple forms of homophobic, sexual, and physical violence, I woke up the following day and felt physically nearly unable to move. In her text *Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape*, Rebecca Campbell (2002) explores the impact of qualitative interviewing of rape survivors upon her team of graduate student researchers. Her analysis of researcher testimony reveals that, contrary to most social science training and dominant educational paradigms, repeatedly hearing survivors' testimonies of traumatic events fundamentally alters the emotional landscape and worldview of the listener in powerful ways, both positive and negative. She further asserts that, rather than dismissing this emotional byproduct, or claiming that it is the result of "bad science," it can and should be used as one more lens through which to understand survivors' experiences. My training as a clinician and as an activist have both honed my attention to the interpretive potential of both emotional and embodied responses to supplement verbal narration, as well as to the features and characteristics of vicarious traumatization, all of which I endeavored to put to use as interpretive tools. Participants sometimes noted their own physical responses to interviews. Most commonly they described their response as a "release," a phenomenon that I found striking in light of McClelland and Fine's (2008) call for the creation of "methodological release points." At other times, however, recalling physically and emotionally traumatic events caused participants to have flashbacks both within and between the interviews. In addition to the community resource guide that each participant received, I extended myself for check-ins as needed for more difficult interviews. Some participants did want to check in between or

after interviews and others did not. I integrated any documented material about participants' and my own emotional and somatic processes into the final write up of the interview(s) for each participant consistent with the steps of the Listening Guide. All interviewees were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts after the interview to ensure that they were comfortable with what was communicated and that they felt that their perspectives had been communicated in a way that adequately represented their story in the way that they wanted it shared.

THREE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR "I POEMS"

Nashan's "I Poem"

I believe I'm two-spirited (there's times where)
 I feel like I'm not a woman (and there's times where)
 I feel like I am a man
 I tend to use any one supporting that particular situation
 I'm in a particular area
 I know
 I feel an energy or something that seems like it's homophobic
 I'll use female pronouns
 I won't even say
 I'm open: he, she, them or they
 I'll come out
 I present myself
 I tend to be open with that, except for a homophobic situation
 I'm female in that
 I do use both bathrooms
 I am
 I'm feeling today
 I'm feeling like I woke up a man today
 I'm using the men's bathroom
 I would sit here and say that I'm separate
 I sit here and don't compile it together, it's for another person
 I do compile it together, it's because it's me
 I know I'm both
 I think I'm the epitome of man and female
 I'm in the middle
 I understand it for exactly what it is
 I know I love women

I know
 I will never, ever deal with a man
 I was in the gender spectrum for a few years
 I got comfortable with two-spirited
 I think I came out like a year or two ago maybe with that terminology
 I was like
 I can understand who I am now
 I met other two-spirited people

 I generalized that this is me and it's okay to accept

Nashan identifies as two spirit and was 23 years old at the time of the interview. Raised by an adoptive mother from the age of 5 months, Nashan describes being “outed” by hir brothers at the age of 14, and the physical and emotional abuse that ensued prior to hir mother filing a PINS petition that resulted in hir placement in foster care. Nashan, now a dedicated community organizer and activist, experienced an enormous number of residential movements throughout hir life and institutional abuse in some of these settings related to both hir sexual orientation and gender identity and to the fact that ze suffers from epilepsy. This excerpt of hir “I Poem” addresses hir identity processes and hard earned arrival at a proud and comfortable identity.

Justice's “I Poem”

I did have to, you know, keep it a secret. You know, from my grand-
 mother.
 I don't know how she would react
 I had very, very long hair.
 I cut all my hair off
 I would never tell her
 I really used to sag my pants and she hated it
 I would never tell her because she was real old school
 I didn't know how she would react
 I didn't want to disappoint her or anything
 I was three months old when my grandmother got me
 I was what you call a crack baby
 I wasn't able to leave the hospital until I was about three months
 old.
 I had to go through recovery or detox or whatever.
 I don't know. This is the story from my grandmother.

I used to come with my girlfriend.
 I'm like "Grandma, forget about it. It's not happening."
 I told her without telling her.
 I am
 I really never had nobody or help from anybody.
 I didn't care what anybody said
 I didn't have anyone
 I didn't care what anyone else thought.
 I have two sisters from my mother's side.
 I'm very close to my older sister.
 I need her.
 I was raised by my father's mother.
 I lover her to death, but that household is not safe at all
 I lived in a household
 I wouldn't call him my uncle, my aunt's husband
 I got out because I'm not staying there if somebody's fondling with
 me
 I'm telling you all and you're not believing me.
 I was the only light-skinned one in the house. So they used to throw
 me mad shade.
 I was only 13.
 I didn't know.
 I didn't know everything and all the steps to go about, you know,
 getting
 something to be done.
 I left.
 I slept on trains, slept in cars.
 I would stay anywhere.
 I just used to tell her
 I don't want to be here no more
 I'm like, "Grams, it's not you. I just don't want to be here."
 I'm getting a little emotional when I think about it.
 I started smoking drugs.
 I'm good.
 I talk about my grandmother
 I put her through a lot
 I just wish we had a better open relationship
 I could've come and told her about certain things.

Justice, 23 years old at the time of the interview, identifies as a butch lesbian. She was placed in kinship care with her maternal grandmother

at birth because of parental drug addiction. Her cousins, aunt, and her aunt's husband lived in her grandmother's house as well. After being sexually abused by her aunt's husband, and disclosing the abuse to her aunt, who was unwilling to acknowledge that the abuse was happening, Justice elected to leave the house. Justice acquired her first charges for robbery and assault, with a group of other youth from the group home, shortly after being placed in the child welfare system. She spent the next 5 years cycling in and out of group homes and detention centers. A few years after initially leaving her home, Justice's grandmother was hospitalized with terminal illness; Justice described pain around all of the things that she was not able to discuss with her grandma, including her sexual orientation.

Jasmine's "I Poem"

I identify as a lesbian
 I guess on the femme-aggressive spectrum
 I'm not super feminine, but
 I'm not super masculine
 I feel like I'm somewhere in the middle of the two, being really girly
 and being masculine
 (Sometimes) I want to be more masculine and
 (sometimes) I want to be more feminine
 I'm black-caucasian
 I guess you could call my parents working class or middle class
 I believe in god
 I was raised Christian
 I don't go to church every Sunday but
 I would call myself Christian
 I mean, some of them kind of clash
 I guess the Bible says a man and a woman
 I'm not like super Christian
 I feel like if I were to out myself to the church community, they
 really would have a problem
 I feel you can identify as more than one thing, but sometimes they
 will clash
 I just say mixed or black because if somebody looks at me, they're
 not going to think I'm white, but it depends on what those forms
 say
 I'll check that off
 I'll check that off

I am, I just say black and white
 I was a femme, I guess, when I was in 6th grade and my parents
 would still dress me
 I started to acquire my own clothes
 I started to mix it up and dress a little bit more masculine
 I just decided to dress feminine, just still like mixing it up
 I mean—it's just being—it's like in the middle of the spectrum, not
 too girly, not too feminine
 I just kind of do my own thing
 I have other friends who are femme-aggressive
 I need an aggressive to be more feminine but still be aggressive in
 the bedroom
 (or if)
 I want to be in a relationship with a femme to be more aggressive
 and still be aggressive in the bedroom and just
 (you know what) I mean?

Jasmine, a 20-year-old biracial, femme aggressive lesbian identified woman, was raised by her birthparents and had no child welfare involvement, but was in detention on multiple occasions for repeatedly shoplifting. At the time of the interview, she had not disclosed her sexual orientation to her parents, with whom she was living. Her "I Poem" was constructed from an excerpt of her interview in which she discusses the nuances and intersections of her identities, how they relate to her Christian faith. Jasmine also addresses the ways in which she gets read by the world based on her identities and the nature and direction of her desire and attraction and speaks to the negotiation of identities and sexual and relationship expectations among young queer women in urban settings.

DISCUSSION

An unintended byproduct of the "I Poems" was their allowance for a collective public performance at a Community Forum hosted by the Hetrick-Martin institute where research findings were presented. The community forum was attended by LGBTQ young people (both participants and nonparticipants, as well as practitioners, advocates, and others who work with LGBTQ young people). In presenting the findings, I asked audience members to read portions of the poems out loud.

Audience members spontaneously began clapping after each reading without direction, allowing for a collective expression of grief and joy and a public embracing of participants' and their community's truths that I hadn't anticipated. In an effort to create a space for the methodological release points McClelland and Fine (2008) have called for, following the presentation, the LGBTQ young people were engaged in an artistic "head, heart, and hand" activity to synthesize the information they had heard, their relationships to it, and their feelings about it as whole, embodied people.

D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera (2006) note that through performance and performativity human beings "fundamentally make culture, affect power, and reinvent their ways of being in the world, especially those who have limited or no access to state power." It is my hope that the use of poetic and participatory methods in research with young queer and transgender people opened up, in that space and that moment, the possibility for a placemaking encounter that might fundamentally affect power and reinvent ways of being; to me, this is the highest aspiration for any social justice researcher.

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Mapping Social and Gender Inequalities:
An Analysis of Art and New Media Work
Created by Adolescent Girls in a Juvenile
Arbitration Program

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Over the past decades, incarceration of adolescent girls charged with juvenile offenses (i.e., drug use, physical assault, shoplifting, prostitution) has risen dramatically (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). School-based zero tolerance policies criminalizing minor offenses contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Casella, 2003; Krezmien et al., 2010; Stevens, Morash, & Chesney-Lind, 2011). Diversion programs aim to stem youth incarceration and reduce individual and societal costs of the school-to-prison pipeline, reflecting a shift from an individual, punitive model to empowerment, community-engaged, and gender-specific approaches (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). This chapter presents an overview of a collaborative, arts-based initiative for first-time female juvenile offenders, and our collective analyses and interpretations of the representations of social and gender inequalities in the art and new media work produced by girls enrolled in the local Juvenile Arbitration Program.

Each collaborator brought her distinct social, cultural, and disciplinary positionality and expertise to this feminist analysis. Born and raised in the Soviet Union where sexual harassment and discrimination of girls and women were common occurrences, Olga Ivashkevich contributed expertise in girlhood studies, feminist pedagogies, and activist art and digital media to this work. DeAnne K. Hilfinger Messias has overseen the collaboration between the Women's Well-Being Initiative and the Juvenile Arbitration Program since its inception in 2005. A bilingual nurse educator and researcher, DeAnne worked with community-engaged women's and children's health initiatives in Brazil for 25 years. She employs community-engaged participatory research methods and feminist narrative analysis in her scholarship on immigrant women's work and health. Graduate students Suzan Neda Soltani, an Iranian-born social worker and Ebru Cayir, a public health doctoral student from Turkey, conducted the arts-based workshops and engaged in the data analysis and interpretation. Empowered by others the fight for women's rights, Suzan aspired to make a difference in girls' lives through this project. Ebru's investment was rooted in personal experiences of violence, displacement, and survival as an ethnic minority in Turkey and her scholarly interest in women's resistance to oppression.

CONTEXT: A CAMPUS-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The Juvenile Arbitration Program is a diversion initiative offering first-time adolescent offenders who complete assigned sanctions (i.e., community service, restitution, educational programs) the opportunity to avoid having a criminal court record. Since 2005, University of South Carolina

Women's and Gender Studies faculty, students, and staff have offered Art and New Media Workshops as a sanction option for first-time, non-violent female offenders enrolled in the 11th Circuit Juvenile Arbitration Program. The aims are to (1) enhance girls' personal awareness of issues affecting their lives (e.g., family and relationship violence, gender stereotypes, substance abuse, peer pressure, body image); (2) engage participants with these issues through a variety of expressive new media and creative art forms (i.e., videos, stop-motion animation films, poetry, collages, murals); and (3) foster productive relationships with community partners (e.g., schools, families, neighborhoods, law enforcement agencies).

Each workshop consists of four classes, 3-hour each, held on consecutive Saturday mornings in a community setting (i.e., library, church, community center). Cohorts are 6–12 adolescent girls ages 12–17 enrolled in the Juvenile Arbitration Program. Facilitators are Women's and Gender Studies faculty, students, and staff. Each four-session workshop follows a basic curriculum template, which is adapted to meet the needs of each specific group of girls. Specific topics emerge from group discussions with the girls about the challenging situations, obstacles, and limitations they face within their school, social, and family experiences. Through individual and group engagement in the creative processes with various media (i.e., journaling, writing poetry, creating collages, taking photographs, and producing videos), the workshops provide opportunities for these at-risk girls to reflect on and respond to broad societal issues, including relationship violence, bullying, drug abuse, and body image, and other obstacles they confront in their everyday lives (Hardee & Reyelt, 2009; Ivashkevich, 2013; Ivashkevich & Wolfgang, 2015; Smith, 2015; Wolfgang & Ivashkevich, 2014). Between 2006 and 2015, a total of 229 White, African-American, and Hispanic girls have participated in 30 workshop iterations.

FRAMEWORK: FEMINIST INTERSECTIONALITY

We grounded the development and implementation of the Art and New Media Workshop model and this specific analysis of participants' art and media work in a feminist intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2002; Weber, 2009). The feminist intersectional approach contributed to our understanding of the complex interplay of sociocultural and institutional forces in girls' daily lives that resulted in their referral to the Juvenile Arbitration Program. Intersectional analysis requires ongoing, critical, and comprehensive interrogation of the interactions of

gender, class, ethnicity, age, and other sociocultural dimensions of difference, situated within specific cultural, social, and institutional contexts, which generate particular discourses, policies, beliefs, and attitudes. Feminist intersectionality focuses on how multiple “interlocking inequalities” (Zinn and Dill, 1996, p. 326) shape human experience through complex power relationships and interconnected systems of oppression.

Feminist criminal justice scholars argue that increased policing and criminalization of girls’ behavior reflect shifting societal images of girlhood and femininity and that implementation of the punitive school-based and community practices (e.g., zero tolerance policies) is not a result of actual changes in girls’ behaviors (Chesney-Lind, 2010; Chesney-Lind and Irvine, 2008). Despite the steady decline in violent crimes over recent decades, the number of arrests for simple physical assault has increased by nearly 200%, with more than a third of juvenile arrests involving females (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). Images of *girls gone wild*—self-centered, mean, physically aggressive, sexually promiscuous, and prone to illegal activities ranging from running away to drug use—are firmly instilled in contemporary media and public discourses. Examples include bestselling books such as *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher, 2005) and *Odd Girl Out* (Simmons, 2011), popular movies *Mean Girls* (2004) and *Thirteen* (2003), and television shows involving queen bees, underage prostitutes, and *gangsta* girls. These popular media representations reflect broader fears of challenges to the patriarchal order and societal values of domestic, compliant, and caring femininity (Chesney-Lind and Irvine, 2008; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013).

Heightened attention to girls’ behaviors that transgress normative feminine demeanor is evidenced in revisions to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, including gender-specific intervention strategies for status (e.g., noncriminal) and criminal offenses (Sharp and Simon, 2004). Yet the fundamental goal of preventing girls’ involvement in crime is overshadowed by the implementation of increasingly punitive regulations. Girls are systematically “reclassified from ‘status’ offenders ‘in need of protection and supervision’ into criminals deserving strict control and harsh punishment” (Chesney-Lind and Irvine, 2008, p. 180).

Intersectional feminist criminal justice scholars suggest that the increased policing and criminalization of girls reflects both a pervasive gender bias and an underlying desire for male control of femininity (Chesney-Lind, 2010; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). Notably, girls tend to be judged more strictly on behaviors such as physical aggression,

which are more tolerated in boys. Zero-tolerance policies have contributed to a significant increase in youth punishment for noncriminal (or status) offenses and to a disproportionate rise in the number of girl offenders (Chesney-Lind and Irvine, 2008). The largest increases in girls' arrests are related to nonviolent status offenses, including drug abuse, liquor law violations, and simple assault (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013).

This rising criminalization of girls reflects gender, race, class, and ethnic biases. Girls of color, often from low-income households, constitute the majority of the female detainee population (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). Carrying a weapon and physical assault are both violent offenses; however, in the context of crime-ridden, low-income neighborhoods, they may be survival and self-protection strategies. The goal of increased law enforcement presence in at-risk, low-income areas is to punish and criminalize minor offenses such as drug possession or carrying a weapon (Chesney-Lind and Irwin, 2008). Similarly, one result of school-based *zero tolerance policies* is that African-American girls are referred to law enforcement for minor classroom misconduct and status offenses at much higher rates than White girls (Chesney-Lind and Jones, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002). The Art and New Media Workshops for first-time adolescent girl offenders utilize expressive arts and new media as self-reflexive tools of critical awareness and creative responses to the oppressive forces and limitations in girls' daily lives and experiences. In the following section, we describe the methods and present the results of our collective analysis of the artwork produced by girls enrolled in eight Art and New Media Workshops between 2009 and 2014.

FEMINIST INTERSECTIONAL COLLABORATIVE ANALYSIS OF GIRLS' ART AND NEW MEDIA WORK

We employed a feminist intersectional approach, focusing our attention on the complexities of girls' lives and the sociocultural contexts that foreground their criminalization—including socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, family dynamics, neighborhood, school context, peer and intimate relationships, and other experiential and social factors. This approach illuminates the need for the gender-specific community-based intervention programs that could disrupt girls' path to imprisonment and provide them with the tools to work through their obstacles and challenges and find productive ways to overcome them (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013).

The specific aim was to explore and untangle the explicit and implicit individual and social messages embedded in girls' creative productions. The collected artwork for this analysis included poems, t-shirt logos, sculptures, mixed media collages, stop-motion animations, and videos. Faculty members brought expertise in a variety of qualitative methods (i.e., qualitative description, narrative feminist analysis, grounded theory, and visual ethnography) and all members of the team contributed multi and interdisciplinary perspectives (i.e., women's and gender studies, art education, nursing, social work, and public health). The ensuing analytic process was dialogic, iterative, and collaborative, involving concurrent processes of individual open coding, group discussions and reflections, and theme mapping.

The initial step involved three student analysts including Suzan and Ebru who independently performed an open coding of the selected examples of art and new media (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2015). In their examination of girls' artwork, each analyst inevitably drew from her past experiences as workshop facilitators and from their classroom interactions with female participants. The underlying framework of feminist intersectionality and the feminist epistemological approach of researcher reflexivity (Pillow, 2003) were both critical to the analysis of the art images in and of themselves, and to each analysts' interpretation of the complex matrices of relationships connecting the art, the girls' daily lives, and the broader sociocultural contexts shaping their lived experiences. Ebru and Suzan who had facilitated some of the Art and New Media Workshops recognized the influence of their personal engagement on the process and described how they approached the analysis:

I was a facilitator during some of the workshops...Being familiar with the context in which the artwork was produced shaped my decisions about which words to use while coding, and how to conceptualize the messages girls wanted to convey through their work. I remembered how hard it was for them to expose their vulnerability to others and then incorporate it in the artwork.

I viewed each artwork separately and allowed for the sub-themes to emerge from spending more time viewing and considering the potential meanings of each piece. I also viewed each artwork in segments. For example, if the artwork was a collage, I would view the collage as a whole and then divide the collage into sections that allowed for a closer view of each

element of the artwork. If the artwork was a video, I would view the video in separate clips, sometimes reviewing sections that were as short as a few seconds.

Following the independent coding, the faculty and student analysts met to discuss their coding and interpretations of the artwork. Although each analyst had approached the artwork from a distinct vantage point, we readily identified convergent themes. To visualize this collective, collaborative process, the team generated an initial “messy” conceptual map that reflected our interpretations of the complex entanglements and interconnections of the visual and descriptive representations (Fig. 9.1, top image). From this initial map, we created multiple subsequent rhizomatic maps as we further explored the interconnections across and between the various themes, working collaboratively to unpack, untangle, and understand the multiple dimensions of obstacles and inequalities in girls’ lives and social affiliations. This visual mapping process enhanced our ability to grasp the complex entanglements of the diverse codes; refine our analysis; and come to a consensus around three broad, cross-cutting, and overlapping themes: *Relationships*, *Body Image*, and *Agency*.

In the second round of more focused coding, we revisited the data to discuss the interconnected recurring themes and threads within and across the three broader themes. Examples were partner violence, love, peer pressure/bullying, substance abuse, family conflict/loss, safe space, media influence, alternative concept of beauty, sexualized social norms, physical health, empowerment, emotional release, and future (Fig. 9.1, bottom image). In the following sections, we provide examples of the representations and interpretations of each of the major themes and their intersections and entanglements with the multiple threads.

Relationships

Relationships with family members, intimate partners, and peers often served as a starting point of the topics and themes that girls explored within their artwork. They expressed the need to be seen, accepted, and loved for who they are by their significant others. In one workshop, entitled *Occupying Anonymity*, we invited the girls to write poems about the roadblocks and obstacles in their lives and then perform their poetry on camera, dressed as fictional characters to maintain their anonymity (an ethical requirement of the juvenile arbitration program to protect the girls’ identities).

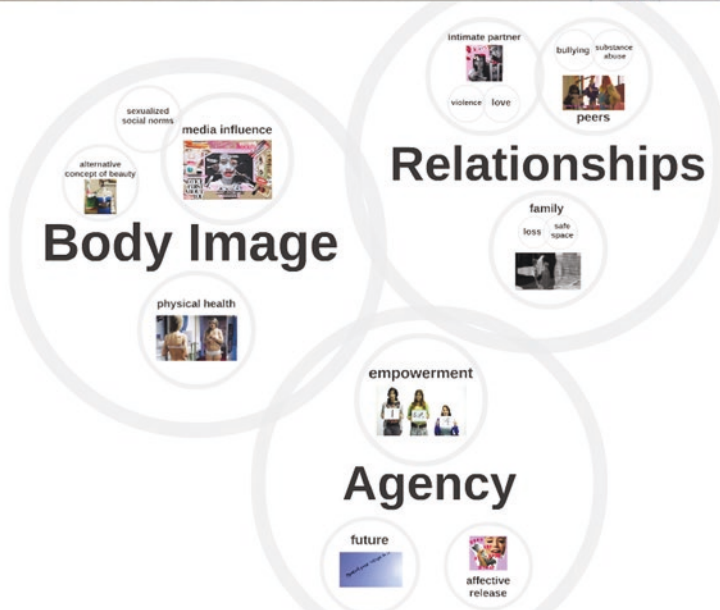
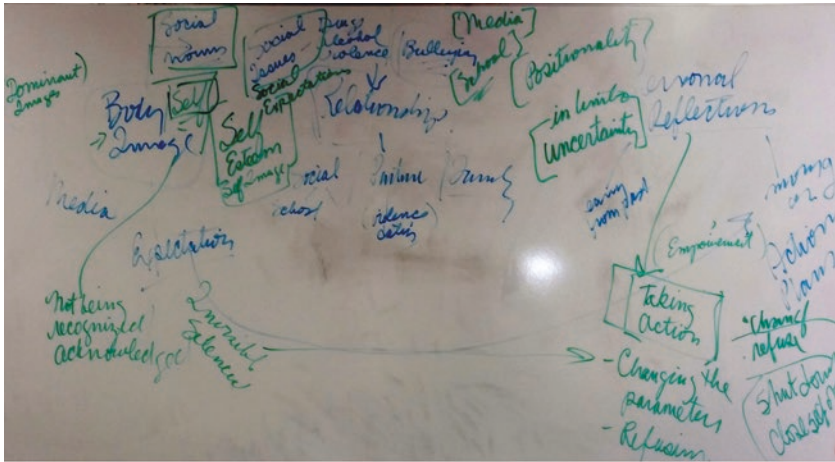


Fig. 9.1 Collaborative Maps

Within the art and media creations, we identified conflict or loss of emotional connection with family members and friends as a barrier to girls’ developing a sense of belonging. In her video entitled “*Life:*

Depression/Dad/Drama/Love/Loss” (Fig. 9.2, top image), one girl recited a poem in which expressed the pain of having lost a connection with her father and how this loss contributed to the actions that resulted in being in Juvenile Arbitration:

*Why does Daddy ignore me?
Does he even want me?
Daddy treats me different from his other children.
Why don't Daddy say I love you?
Has he lost faith in me because of my past mistakes?*

She acknowledged her own actions as “*mistakes*” and expressed hope in being able to leave these transgressions in the past and reestablish an emotional connection with her father.

Several girls had experienced the death of a parent or close friend. In another *Occupying Anonymous* video, a girl read her poem while writing these lines on a note and looking at her mother’s picture: “*Even though my house is full, my mom is gone, she’s never coming back.*” Another participant was deeply impacted by a close friend’s suicide; recalling the time she learned about it, she continued to grapple with how to make sense of her friend’s actions:

*I feel something, but I don't know what it is.
I'm scared, I'm terrified. I kind of feel pain.
We go to my friend's house.
She's gone, that's all I hear, she's gone.
No one to talk to, no one to speak to. Gone.
Four years passed by but I still ask, why?*

Relationships with intimate partners constituted a dominant theme in girls’ artwork and often focused on physical and psychological relationships. One t-shirt logo included overlapping images of three visibly distraught women, one holding a gun in self-defense and another behind bars, with the bold caption, “*He hit me, but I'm the one in jail*” (Fig. 9.2, middle image). This artist clearly acknowledged and



Fig. 9.2 Video, T-shirt Logo, & Animation

questioned a female's victimized position within an intimate relationship. Others went further in their critiques of abusive relationships, simultaneously giving voice to their personal agency, as in this video performance message:

Was it too much pain for you to look yourself in the mirror?

Was it because he hit you? You wanted to stay because you thought you were in love.

Pain flowed through your eyes and out touching your skin as it reaches your lips.

The happiness you once knew taken away from you as if you were nothing but a shell.

You are more than your legs and mouth, what they can do for you.

You are more than dirt waiting for something to make of it.

You are a strong woman willing to live without that pain.

This girl both challenged the abusive relationship and recognized her personal sense of self-worth and strength to escape it. Of note, despite the recurring theme of challenging and oppressive intimate relationships there were also references to nurturing relationships which involved a sense of unconditional love and acceptance by their current partners.

Although participants came from varying socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds, we did not note any specific intersectional issues. However, there was a clear gender perspective in the artwork that addressed issues of intimate partner relationships. Regardless of ethnicity or class, girls portrayed themselves as victims and under a tremendous pressure to conform to societal norms of physical attractiveness.

Peer pressure, bullying, and physical and verbal aggression, often associated with physical appearance and body image, was another dominant theme. In a stop-motion animation entitled *Mean Girls*, Barbie dolls enacted the challenges of adolescent social conflict, in which a group of "popular" school girls verbally abuse a newcomer for her cheap and old-fashioned clothing, and disparaging her for the fact that she "doesn't even have a TV at home." A *(re)Mixed Media* project involved remixing existing Internet videos with self-produced short video scenes. This dialogue was enacted by two Black girls passing each other on the street.

Get out of my way ugly.

What are you wearing?

What do you have on?

You're so ugly!

Get out of here!

Participants depicted peer bullying as inextricably linked to gendered pressures of girls' appearances, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Also associated with peer relationships was the issue of substance and drug abuse. The stop-motion animation *Chug* depicts a girl drinking alcohol with friends. She gets into a physical fight with another girl over her boyfriend. In the end, her boyfriend breaks up with her and she becomes estranged from her friend. The final message on the screen is "*If you booze you lose*" (Fig. 9.2, bottom image). Further complicating this gender narrative is the fact that the main female character is portrayed by a Hispanic Bratz doll and characters are White Barbie and Ken dolls. The portrayal of the girl of color as unruly and deserving harsh punishment highlights intersections of gender and racial biases. Yet within the animation script, the troubled Hispanic Bratz character evokes strong empathy, both challenging her stereotypical position as the "*bad girl*" and engaging the audience in a reassessment of racial stereotypes and bias.

Body Image

A theme identified across various art forms was girls' pervasive preoccupation with physical appearance, particularly with their perceptions of socially mandated standards of conformity to a set of body norms, enforced by the popular media as well as their peers and intimate partners. Body image surfaced in two instances of peer bullying in the animation *Mean Girls* (discussed above), when the school newcomer is ridiculed and physically attacked for her outdated outfit; and as verbal abuse and derogatory comments on clothing and "*ugly*" appearance that a girl endured from a peer in a video remix project. This theme was also evident in girls' relationships with intimate partners who demanded them to look a certain way, exemplified in a video performance of a poem on escaping a painful relationship. Challenging existing societal gender norms, these representations tapped into the intersections of gender and socioeconomic background and provided examples of how they play out in girls' lives.

The artwork also revealed the profound influence of media and popular culture on female body image norms. In a mixed media collage (Fig. 9.3, top image), a female face is portrayed as a continuous work in progress surrounded by makeup brushes, lipsticks, and other beauty products and phrases cut out from popular magazines (i.e., *Our Obsession*, *American Beauty*, *Exposed*, *Makeup Forever*, and *Notice First about You*). This collage presents a powerful commentary on the ways in which the advertising by commercial beauty industries imposes appearance standards in order to sell their products.

Across the various pieces and forms of art, girls critiqued the portrayals of hypersexualized female bodies in popular media aimed at confirming to the male gaze and desire. For example, one mixed media collage juxtaposed two magazine images of a happy heterosexual couple and a blonde female's face covered in makeup with words and phrases, both handwritten and magazine cut-outs—including “sex,” “naughty,” “make his dirty dreams come true,” “hot,” “sexy or fake, you tell me,” and “why does sex sell?” This collage is a visual commentary on the relationship between popular culture, marketing, and heterosexual gender norms that objectify girls and women.

We identified a similar response in a video from the *(re)Mixed Media* project, that showcased a montage of the video clips and still images found on the Internet. It begins with the quote “*This business of womanhood is a heavy burden,*” followed by images of women partaking in their daily beauty regimen (e.g., lifting weights in a gym, applying makeup, flipping through beauty magazines, and shaving their legs). From this depiction of a seemingly typical beauty routine, the focus changes to a series of grotesque images of cocaine and emaciated female faces and anorexic bodies, an underlying commentary on women's willingness to engage in unsafe dieting practices and even consume illicit drugs to maintain a certain body shape. The message conveyed through these images is that societal obsession with idealized (and unrealistic) standards of beauty contribute to unhealthy, even irreversible damage to women's bodies.

Girls' artwork focusing on self-hatred and eating disorders also explored the theme of societal beauty standards and the impact on women's physical and emotional health. In a video project entitled *Speak Up, Girl!* Workshop participants created, enacted, and filmed an advocacy infomercial depicting two girlfriends flipping through beauty magazines and conversing about the models' thinness and beauty. The White, relatively thin girl repeatedly measures her waist with the measuring tape,



Fig. 9.3 Collage, Sculpture, & T-shirt Logo

exclaiming, “*We need to be a size 2. Zero would be preferable.*” She then goes to the bathroom to self-induce vomiting, proclaiming “*We need to be skinny to be beautiful.*” In contrast, her Black friend who has a larger body performs an act of active defiance. After measuring her waist, she tears apart the magazine image of a skinny White model and walks away while reciting her poem:

*I'm big cuz' I'm me, never be a size two
So get over it and do what you do
I love myself to the point where I'm happy
We all can't look like J Lo*

The girls' artwork both evokes intersections of gender and racial norms and challenges media and popular culture representations that glamorize an excessively thin White female body. It also foregrounds alternative concepts of beauty, which are more diverse, inclusive, and fluid, a theme repeated across several other works of art.

Participants in several different Art and New Media Workshops created *Sheros*. For this project, each group of girls starts with basic wire mannequin form, which they subsequently transform into a three-dimensional image of a positive, powerful female figure. The *Shero* depicted in Fig. 9.3 (middle image) is dressed in a blue gown with rainbow-colored cape, embellished with words and phrases—*Natural; Be You, Be Fabulous for Less; Fun and Fearless; Dare; Goodness; Love and Peace*. Through these creative constructions, the girls actively defied existing beauty and gender stereotypes, explored different manifestations of femininity, and challenged traditional patriarchal norms.

Agency

Agency was clearly evident across the various art forms and was closely interwoven with other themes. Manifested as making individual and collective choices in positive and empowering ways, girls depicted agency as the strong desire to expose, challenge, and overcome existing obstacles and inequalities within their lives. A sense of empowerment permeated the artwork that challenged abusive intimate relationships, critiqued societal beauty standards and their impact on physical health, explored alternative concepts of beauty, and *talked back* to substance/drug abuse and bullying.

Even in artwork that focused on very challenging and unforgiving life situations and obstacles, there was evidence of self and collective empowerment. For example, the *Mean Girls* animation depicts not only the blatant example of peer bullying of a “new girl” in school because of her appearance, but the response by another girl who actually comes to the new girl’s defense and stands up to the bullies. Of note, the girl who defends a newcomer is portrayed by a dark-skinned Barbie, whereas all the other characters (including the bullies) are White. In these social critiques, we noted how participants purposefully challenged stereotypical media representations of girls of color, reflecting their act of agency in the creative process.

Another video from the *(re)Mixed Media* project presents a similar story of a girl who is verbally abused on the street. The script focuses on exclusion related to appearances: “*Get out of my way, ugly. What are you wearing? What do you have on? You’re so ugly! Get out of here.*” In contrast, subsequently there is a showcase of images of diverse body types and faces, including girls and women of color, with the popular song *Perfect* by Pink playing in the background: “*Pretty, pretty, please if you ever, ever feel like you are nothing, you are perfect to me.*” Similarly, when representing their troubled relationships with intimate partners, girls’ feelings of pain and intimidation often transform into an empowering call for dignity and self-worth through poetry:

If he says he loves you, it should be for who you are.

Why does he change you, abuse you, hurt you?

You’re perfect the way you want to be.

Live how you want to, dress how you want to.

Be yourself, and be free.

Through the artwork, some participants clearly expressed personal anger and frustration with their current situation, including the fact that they were part of the Juvenile Arbitration Program because of having gotten “*in trouble*” with the law. The project for one Art and New Media Workshop session focused on designing and producing t-shirt logos. For example, one girl was distraught by having been charged with trespassing through private property. She had been part of a group of girls, but the others, who were older, were charged with a fine and

had not been required to go through the arbitration program or appear in court. Her t-shirt had an image of a crying young woman holding a set of sharp nails, accompanied by the text: “*Don’t let it affect you!*” (Fig. 9.3, bottom image).

Girls’ reimagining their future lives and selves as different and more empowered was another thread woven throughout the various arts and new media works. Examples include the *Shero* sculpture project that explored alternative concepts of beauty (discussed above) and a video from the project *Selfie Interrupted*, which pieced together girls’ imaginative and futuristic digital self-portraits modified beyond recognition with various iPad filters. The video concluded with the following statement flowing slowly across the screen: “*Spread your wings & fly.*” This artwork showcases yet another dimension of girls’ agency that includes their venturing into the uncharted territories of open possibilities, yearnings, and dreams. It is an opportunity to break away, even if only through one’s imagination, from the social conditions and situations that pose significant barriers and limitations and obstruct their path toward a productive and fulfilling life. Participants in these Juvenile Arbitration Art and New Media Workshops frequently were dealing with very real social, emotional, and physical life challenges. We posit that creative image making is an agentive process and the affective release involved may help girls negotiate the institutional forces in their lives (i.e., presence of law enforcement in lower income neighborhoods, criminal laws, and regulations for juvenile offenders) that are often out of their control.

SITUATING FEMINIST INTERSECTIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARTWORK ANALYSIS WITHIN THE ANTI-OPPRESSIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

These girls’ art and new media productions provided our interdisciplinary team with a rich, multi-layered data set for interpretation and analysis. Via complex and nonlinear interactions of visual images and text, our analysis identified the entanglements of obstacles and inequalities in girls’ daily lives including family conflict, peer pressure and bullying, challenging intimate relationships, negative media and popular culture influences on body image and health, as well as pervasive gender, race, and class

biases embedded within and across these social contexts and affiliations. Furthermore, the girls' artwork went beyond mere acknowledgment of these obstacles and inequalities as it offered an articulate social commentary and critique, and also served as a vehicle for the participants' individual and collective empowerment, affective release, and exploration of future possibilities.

The multifaceted nature of artwork and a collaborative intersectional approach to our analysis resulted in a rhizomatic conceptual, descriptive, and visual mapping of emerging themes, which allowed us to keep our data analysis dialogic and open to multiple interpretations and viewpoints at all stages of the process. Although the mapping approach we used was very productive in capturing and representing the complex entanglements of emerging themes, the last map we created (Fig. 9.1, bottom image) only partially illustrates the interconnectivity and relationships between and the broader themes and the multiple interwoven threads, which we described in the previous section. Throughout this collective analytic process, we identified multiple layers of themes and meanings, and sought to unravel the multiple, polyphonic threads running through the rich combination of images (moving or still), text, and their juxtapositions and interrelations within the overall artwork structure. Furthermore, our feminist intersectional lenses led us to consider the multitude of oppressive factors and inequalities embedded in girls' lived experiences and how their artwork communicated, challenged, and talked back to these obstacles.

Within qualitative research, the aim of anti-oppressive methodologies is to seek, uncover, disrupt, and resist various injustices and inequalities in economic and social structures, institutions, communities, and the lived experiences of variously situated individuals and groups (Brown and Strega, 2005). In our research process, the anti-oppressive approach we pursued was twofold. On one hand, the Art and New Media Workshops for adolescent female offenders functioned as a forum for social resistance and change where the participants engaged in a self-reflexive, issues-based art making to articulate and talk back to various injustices in their lives. On the other hand, our feminist intersectional collaborative analysis of girls' artwork resisted the conventional process of data interpretation and coding where the emerging themes are normally viewed as separate entities that have a clear (and often hierarchical) structure. Our rhizomatic thematic map, as well as our collaborative and dialogic data interpretations, aspired to represent the nonlinear and complex entanglements

and dynamic interrelationships of the sociocultural factors, obstacles, and inequalities in girls' creative work and their embodied daily experiences.

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Smoking Cessation in Mental Health Communities: A Living Newspaper Applied Theatre Project

Lauren Jerke, Monica Prendergast and Warwick Dobson

Chorus: It's fun to be mad
So happy, so glad
We can smoke cigarettes
Without any regret
Cuz we can't get cancer
I was told this by a dancer

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Up on the fifth floor
 Who knew the old bore
 Who did the study
 For the Big Tobacco Company
 It's everywhere now
 We're so free and how!

Alice: (*To the audience*) Did you hear that?

Anti-oppressive research challenges the dominant, positivist approach to knowledge creation by first recognizing that “knowledge” itself is a product of the socially constructed reality it is housed in. At its core, anti-oppressive research broadens the exclusive, positivist approach to knowledge production by interrogating who knowledge producers are, who owns the knowledge that is generated, and who should have access to that knowledge (Brown & Strega, 2005). According to Potts and Brown (2015) the central tenets of anti-oppressive research are:

1. Anti-oppressive research is social justice in its processes and its outcomes.
2. Anti-oppressive research contends that all knowledge is socially constructed, all knowledge is political, and currently shaped by the neoliberal context.
3. Anti-oppressive research foregrounds relationships (pp. 19–21).

In this chapter, we relate the Living Newspaper—the documentary applied theatre form we used to devise a play with our participants—to Potts and Brown’s tenets.

THE LIVING NEWSPAPER THEATRE FORM

The Living Newspaper, one of the first forms of documentary theatre created (Browder, 2004; Reinelt, 2009), was uniquely community based. Invented by the Blue Blouse Theatre troupe in the Soviet Union in 1923, the first troupe, led by a journalist named Boris Yuzhanin, began performing Living Newspapers in Moscow (Drain, 1995).

Originally, due to a high illiteracy rate, this theatre form was used “to raise consciousness” among fellow workers about current events and issues that were pertinent to them (Stourac & McCreery, 1986, p. 4). Therefore, in its original form, it was essential that the Living Newspaper was presented “from the point of view of the class ideology of the proletariat” (p. 3). Not only was the Living Newspaper appropriate for addressing the current concerns of marginalized demographics of people because it was created and performed by and for working-class people, but it was also made accessible to working-class people, as it was performed for no charge in open areas, worker’s clubs and factories (Drain, 1995).

The list below describes each scene of the Living Newspaper, adapted from Stourac and McCreery’s (1986) detailed account of the Living Newspaper from their book, *Theatre as a Weapon*:

- ***Parade entrée (Headlines)***: This scene functioned to establish a communicative environment between the actors and the spectators. Actors would enter singing, announce scene titles and then exit to a march.
- ***Oratorio***: This scene contained choral music or speaking (often alternated) and was in the form of a report. The oratorio was “serious” and “of historical significance”.
- ***International Survey***: Characters represented countries (additions like hats, scarves and leggings would be added to the basic costumes to change characters) and discussed the issue at an international level.
- ***Feuilleton***: This scene discussed the issue at the personal level and was set in the location where the spectators lived.
- ***Lubok (Living Poster)***: Three or four performers acted through painted posters with holes for their arms, heads and legs.
- ***Dialogue-Duet***: A two-person dialogue, which usually dealt with an issue of international importance.
- ***Rayok***: A quick-fire speech, tongue twister or story, mostly rhymed and full of puns. Informal language and common phrases were used.
- ***Chastushki***: Traditional limerick-style folk verse. This scene was topical, humorous, satirical and sung in a lively manner. If possible, the *chastushki* was accompanied by a harmonica and balalaika. Each verse had four lines and the chorus followed an ABAB rhyme scheme.
- ***Local Theme***: This scene contained a strong emphasis on everyday life. It could take the form of an *oratorio*, *rayok*, or *chastuski*.

- *Finale March*: The last scene summarized the issues and was self-congratulatory in nature (pp. 30–39).

The Living Newspaper from the Soviet Union was part of the origin of agitation propaganda (a.k.a. agit-prop) theatre (Jackson, 2007). Associations with the meaning of propaganda have changed significantly in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries since Fascist regimes in Germany, Italy and the Stalinist regime in the USSR used propaganda to convince large populations to side with their party (Jackson, 2007). Before that, when the Blue Blouse existed in the 1920s, the term propaganda “was a means of spreading the word that the world could be different and that revolutionary ideologies offered hope to those who were at the mercy of capitalist exploitation” (p. 69). According to the *Sinyaya Bluza* (qtd. in Stourac & McCreery, 1986), the Blue Blouse troupe newsletter, they functioned to:

- Help the worker to become fully conscious of his own position, his aims and the tasks of his class;
- To fill him with proletarian solidarity and comradeship; and
- To draw him into social struggle for the interests of the working class (p. 42).

Within 5 years, over five thousand Soviet amateur theatre companies were creating and performing Living Newspapers. Despite its instantaneous success (and, possibly because of it) the government cut the funding to the *Blue Blouse* at the height of their success (Stourac and McCreery, 1986). Professional theatre companies in Germany, Britain and the United States subsequently adopted the title of “Living Newspaper” for other plays about current events, but the form as described above, and the tradition whereby the community performed their own devised work in local settings (albeit for overt political purposes) was lost. It was this idea of community-based groups gathering to make theatre to address social issues for mutually educative purposes that piqued our interest in this theatre form.

PROJECT CONTEXT

In December 2009, a registered nurse (RN) who led a smoking cessation/reduction group for people living with mental illness, named the Tobacco Fighters' and Survivors' Club (TFSC), contacted the Theatre department at the University of Victoria. One of the club members had written a play about quitting smoking and he wanted dramaturgical help to develop it.

As we worked on this play, *Symptomatic*, with the RN's guidance, we found resources that proved tobacco companies directly targeted people living with mental illnesses to smoke cigarettes. A recent lawsuit against the American tobacco companies resulted in the public release of nearly 40 million pages of internal documents. Using these documents, scholars have conducted systematic literature reviews of American tobacco company internal communications (Prochaska, Hall & Bero, 2007; Appollonio & Malone, 2005). These studies prove the tobacco industry has used a number of tactics to target people with mental illness (specifically schizophrenia) to smoke cigarettes. For example, the tobacco industry supported researchers who could guarantee findings that supported their agenda, and as a result, many papers were published in medical journals that claimed people with schizophrenia were less likely to develop lung cancer (Prochaska, Hall & Bero, 2007). Prochaska et al. (2007) posit that the tactics used by tobacco companies to target people with mental illnesses to smoke have perpetuated the myth that tobacco addiction is a form of self-medication for people with mental illnesses:

[d]espite a lack of compelling scientific support, beliefs prevail that individuals with schizophrenia need to smoke as a form of self-medication; that quitting smoking will worsen their psychiatric symptoms; that they cannot and do not want to quit their tobacco use; and that they may hold some special immunity from tobacco-related diseases (p. 555).

In addition to funding research, the tobacco industry has also provided free cigarettes to psychiatric wards and aggressively lobbied against hospitals when they attempted to ban smoking on the premises (Appollonio & Malone 2005; Prochaska et al. 2007).

The myth of self-medication actually limits cessation support for people with mental illness and tobacco addictions. Not surprisingly, people with mental health issues smoke more cigarettes than the average population in the United States (Johnson, MacDonald, Reist, Bahadori, 2006;

Lasser et al., 2000). Lasser et al. report that people with a mental illness had a smoking rate twice as high as people without mental health issues. Another study reported that as many as 80% of people with schizophrenia smoke cigarettes (Prochaska et al. 2007). Given the American tobacco companies' stronghold on international markets, the far-reaching span of the research they supported, and the anecdotal evidence we heard from employees and clients, it is reasonable to conclude that the tobacco companies have also greatly influenced a large number of people with mental health issues in Canada.

After successfully producing *Symptomatic*, and having learned about the tobacco company influences on people with mental health issues, the actors felt that healthcare professionals and clients living with mental illness needed to know the wider socio-politico-economic contexts of the issue in order to gain a solid understanding of the effects of smoking among those who have mental illnesses, and eventually provide adequate cessation support. We planned our next project, *Mixed Messages*, to explore the political and economic aspects of tobacco addiction and mental health in more depth.

Mixed Messages: Our "Modern" Living Newspaper

Research participants who devised, performed and produced the play were clients from the psychiatric day hospital. Audiences, who also participated in our study, were clients from the psychiatric hospital and healthcare professionals (namely nurses, occupational therapists and psychiatrists). In addition to the actors who created and acted in the play (Iris, Joseph and Adam) who had already worked with Lauren for 6 months producing *Symptomatic*, producing our play attracted ten new client participants as performers, greeters, props masters, sound and lights technicians, and backstage crew. In both the actors and backstage crew, almost equal numbers of male and females participated, and participants ranged from age 20–60. Most of the participants lived with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major clinical depression; however, diagnoses of the participants were not immediately shared with us, the researchers from the University. Given the continued, close support from the RN and the fact that rehearsals and the performance took place in the psychiatric hospital, the disclosure of diagnosis was only shared with us by the participants themselves, if and when they were ready.

Our Living Newspaper mostly followed the original structure outlined above. It informed our content, our treatment of the issue (i.e. serious or humorous tones) and the theatrical conventions (such as alternating speech, use of a living poster, rhymes and quick-fire speech) used in each scene. Local content in our scenes was inspired by the actors' personal experiences, and if a scene called for national or international information, we drew from tobacco industry documents and research studies.

The deviations from the original form functioned to integrate technological elements and to cater to our actors' abilities and to our topic. For each scene, we showed projections on the back stage wall of tobacco industry documents and reports to support and/or juxtapose the action on stage. Instead of a narrator announcing each scene as the Blue Blouse troupes had done, we opted for voice recordings. In addition, we did not include live music and singing, as our actors felt they were not musically inclined. We also added in several additional local theme scenes than the original form required to demonstrate the repetitive nature of tobacco addiction. Our final Living Newspaper play, *Mixed Messages*, was performed six times. Monica led all post-show conversations between the actors and the audience, and the RN who led the TFSC at the day hospital provided cessation support and information to audience members who were interested in quitting or reducing their tobacco addiction.

Similar to Norris' data collection technique (2009), our data consisted of recorded rehearsals, the actual scenes created, a recorded post-show conversation between actors and audience, and a post-performance focus group with the actors. Post-show conversations and the focus group after the performances were transcribed for further analysis. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the actors' identities.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

For Lauren, this research fulfilled the requirements of her MA degree, and it helped her to better understand the socio-politico-economic connections between smoking and vulnerable populations. Lauren started began smoking cigarettes at a very young age (and has since quit!), and always wondered whether she influenced other friends and family members to try it—several who still smoke. The collaborative, group analysis (through their drama work) and support that took place over the course of 5 months examined the socio-political influences of the tobacco industry, and she re-examined her own personal feelings of guilt for having encouraged others to smoke.

The collaborative, democratic approach to our research challenged Lauren to move beyond the clinical mental health diagnoses which separated the group from her, to a new point of connection. Other than having worked in mental health contexts as an applied theatre practitioner, Lauren did not have any personal relationships with anyone who had mental health issues such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. Despite her own attempts to “think her way out” of stereotyping, or to simply deny any existence of “othering” in her mind, it was not until Lauren and the participants truly dug deeper and divulged their own significant life experiences with smoking that she felt these previously “invisible” barriers between herself and “them” were disrupted.

Lauren, Monica and Warwick had previously worked together on another arts-based inquiry in a health context (see Prendergast, 2010) but even so, our research team came together slowly and organically. Lauren began the project and established an initial connection with the RN and participants in the TFSC, while Warwick provided gentle guidance and expertise throughout the research process to Lauren as her graduate supervisor. Monica provided support as a faculty mentor by facilitating the post-show conversations, an area of her research and practice expertise. In our positions as researchers from the University, we acknowledged our societal roles as knowledge keepers and creators. In an effort to dismantle this hegemonic perspective, our research design aimed to subvert the colonial democratization of culture and replace it with values of cultural democracy (see Dobson & Goode, 2002). We co-created a project *with* the community. Ethics approval was obtained from both the University of Victoria and the local Health Authority where our project took place.

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE ART-BASED DATA COLLECTION

The Living Newspaper form achieved social justice in both its process (devising) and product (performance) by including participants as full artistic collaborators, by highly valuing their personal experience, and by encouraging both clients and healthcare professionals to question common societal stereotypes and unexamined assumptions.

The theatre form itself was appropriate for new devisers, and as a result, we successfully included our participants as full artistic collaborators and valued co-researchers. Marina, an actor with no prior theatrical experience said that she liked the structure that the Living Newspaper

provided. Adam, the most experienced actor who had also not devised collectively, felt that the form “[was] a good start” and “[gave] them something to work from”. To Iris, the idea of participating in data collection and remounting the Living Newspaper in performance brought importance to the project. Even though Marina felt too nervous to perform, it did not impact her ability to participate fully in all stages of devising and data collection. The others actors were very supportive of her decision and Lauren took her place in the performance. Because of the support the group had offered, Marina attended the play as an audience member, and relished in watching the audience’s reaction to her lines. She also attended our final reflective focus group and fully participated in the conversation.

The positive impact of the Living Newspaper’s value for personal experience was apparent in several instances. During a post-show conversation, Joseph, Adam and Iris felt they had attained greater self-confidence by participating in this project. As they put it, their participation in the play made them feel more “confident”, “focused” and that “it lifted [their] spirit[s]”. Drawing on personal experience elevated the actors to experts—Adam reflected on this feeling of expertise in a focus group when he mentioned that once he received the final script, he already felt like he had the knowledge and background on what the script was seeking to achieve because it drew from his own experiences, and he had been involved in the entire process of researching, improvising and writing. The personal content made the play relevant to the community for whom it was performed; as mentioned earlier, nearly half of all tobacco products in North America are purchased by people living with mental illness (Lasser et al. 2000). The entire TFSC group attended the play, giving the actors a standing ovation during curtain call, and many other spectators’ comments in the post-show conversations drew parallels between what they saw in the play and their own past experiences.

While personal experience made the content relevant to the clients who participated and attended the play, the documentary form was well suited to the healthcare professionals in the audience. For example, one occupational therapist from the psychiatric day hospital commented on the highly factual aspects of the play: “I was very moved by the statistics and the research that the group did about smoking and tobacco companies funding research”. Healthcare professionals found that the citations projected on the screen at the back of the stage throughout the play added validity and significance to the play: “...for me it was feeling

like, well they've actually done their research, they're not just repeating some rumour they heard on the internet. They're saying real things and have some references, so I found it powerful".

Collaboratively devising our play fostered the creation and maintenance of a support group for people living with mental illnesses and addictions. We had an informal check in once a week. Actors wrote about their progress and goals in a journal, and the RN who led the TFSC read and responded to them. Near the end of the project, our smoking cessation check-ins became more personal and each group member usually provided a more contextual description of their smoking, relating it to other addictions or life choices. In the devising phase, the actors realized how important quitting might be to the other clients in the audience—not to mention the hard journey that would be in store for them.

Our data collection process enacted social justice by using fiction to ethically represent our participants and generate complex analysis, which disrupted existing discriminatory stereotypes. Representation of "the oppressed" in research remains a significant issue that anti-oppressive research continues to address (Brown & Strega, 2005). Similarly, stigmatization of people living with mental illness is a topic that has been addressed in applied theatre (Twardzicki, 2008; Johnston, 2004). Fictionalization offered protection for our participants. Personal stories informed characters and scenes, but the scenes themselves were fictionalized to give the participants emotional distance. As Dobson, Goode and Boyd (2000) explain, fictionalization allows for "...potentially hazardous social situations [to] be approached and explored in a safe, 'no penalty' context" (p. 192). For example, in one scene, the actors depicted two clients from an in-patient ward in the psychiatric hospital. The character had cut her wrists the night before and was still wrapped in bandages. Joining her on stage were two chorus members, reciting a poem. Taking on the role of the patient was undoubtedly difficult because of the serious subject matter, but because the actor was not recounting her own experience, and we supplemented the scenes with choral speech, she devoted herself to the role. The ability to fictionalize our content allowed us to reach a point of dramatic truth by showing multiple perspectives. Similarly, anti-oppressive research reacts against the existence of one absolute "truth" and advocates for multiple perspectives (Potts and Brown, 2015).

To avoid presenting stereotypes of people living with mental health illnesses in our play, the actors observed and evaluated each other

throughout our devising process to ensure that characters' symptoms of mental illness were not exaggerated or overly positive. A client of the hospital who attended the play passionately described a moment of strong emotional connection while watching *Mixed Messages*, verifying that it accurately depicted his own experience with hallucinations.

The actors and crew members' highly reflective, critical perspectives on their own addictions shone a new light on healthcare professionals' preconceived notions of people living with mental health issues. For example, a RN explained that the presence of clients onstage helped her to deconstruct the clear delineation that is drawn between healthcare workers and clients, and "break down those barriers that we've set up... between the us and the them". Another audience member, a psychiatrist, was impressed by the actors' visible self-awareness and confidence, pointing out that the actors were "talking openly about [their] hallucinations". In the focus group after the performances, actors recounted that they felt listened to and taken seriously by their peers and care providers in higher status positions, namely psychiatrists, other doctors and nurses. This, in turn, opened up space for increased civility and dialogue in the day-to-day relationships among healthcare practitioners and clients in the psychiatric hospital. Iris noticed that both healthcare professionals and patients that she did not know approached her in the hospital months after her performance to congratulate her on her involvement in the play.

As a result of participating in this research project, the participants, researchers and healthcare professionals built a stronger community of support. A sense of camaraderie was generated among all participants, and a strong bond between the psychiatric hospital and the theatre department was built. Since the play, the TFSC has received a noticeable increase in referrals from psychiatrists and doctors, as well as inquiries from patients.

Brown and Strega's (2005) second stipulation for anti-oppressive research; that knowledge is socially constructed, political and currently shaped by the neoliberal context, is incorporated in the Living Newspaper because of its requirement for a discussion of the issue at the local, national and international levels. In rehearsal, we discovered that the actors were very familiar with the repercussions of tobacco industry targeting: they had received free cigarettes themselves at the hospital, their psychiatrists had encouraged them to smoke, and they actually heard their fellow patients perpetuate rumours like, 'schizophrenics can't get lung cancer'! The actors had engaged with the local consequences of

the tobacco industry on a day-to-day basis. With a deeper understanding of their own actions, a few began to actively confront their habits. During the last month of the devising stage, Iris quit using several other addictive substances (in addition to tobacco which she had quit 5 months prior). Through devising and performance Joseph engaged in a detailed process of reflection and inquiry into the reasons why he smoked. Adam explained in the focus group that he felt less anxious now that he does not smoke.

Our theatre work built and fostered relationships, as Brown and Strega (2005) identify as a requirement in their third tenet of anti-oppressive research. Because the Living Newspaper required us to all understand the issue at a personal level—the community members' and researchers' experiences had to be shared, respected and valued. Relationships that were formed during this project in 2010–2011 have continued into 2017. The actors went on to perform *Symptomatic* in the local Fringe Festival in 2012, and produced an autobiographical play called *That's 'AP' Folks* in 2013. In addition, the researchers and participants co-founded a drop-in drama club (which the all of the Living Newspaper participants still regularly attend) at the psychiatric day hospital. Adam and Iris, who met while working on the previous play, *Symptomatic* in 2009, were married in July 2016.

A LIMITATION OF THE FORM

We presented the play to an integral audience: our audience was comprised of the participants' fellow community members and stakeholders. These stakeholders hold higher status through their positions as professionals and make decisions that deeply affect the actors' and crew members' lives. Therefore, it was crucial to correctly represent and demonstrate the in-depth analysis we reached in our devising phase. However, as a result of the Living Newspaper form itself, this level of depth was not fully translated to our final performance.

During rehearsals, we identified one main contradiction that exemplified the conflict surrounding the issue of smoking and mental illness. In the larger context of mental illness and health care, we found that cigarettes are connected to contradictory messages of medication, companionship and maturity. In actuality, the actors identified smoking as a death wish, or an “unconscious urge to die”. The contradiction we identified was that in both familial and public healthcare contexts, economic

interests greatly influenced health care. In rehearsal, we named this contradiction *mixed messages*. Drama offered great potential to *show* how this contradiction, *mixed messages*, is perpetuated. Conversely, the Living Newspaper form *tells* audiences about the chosen issue by maintaining clear separation between the content at a local level and broader analysis of the issue on a global level. Almost all “local issues” are embedded in a much larger national and international web. To maintain the separation of the local, national and international context is to risk a simplification of the issue in each scene. It was as if we had to take a step back from the in-depth interpretation we generated in rehearsal and instead move to creating scenes that contained a superficial presentation of the issue for performance. The Living Newspaper *presents* an issue—it doesn’t seek to explore the main conflicts within that issue. As a company, we chose to remain true to the form and our experience serves as a good example of how the form, uncritically adopted, can become a tyranny (and a serious limitation).

One scene did combine socio-politico-economic issues and lived experience to *show* the *mixed messages* contradiction and it was most the most remembered and referenced in our post-show conversations. The scene took place on a street bench outside a psychiatric ward. Two clients sat beside each other, conversing while smoking. Together they questioned the irony that they could not remain on hospital grounds to smoke, even though they had been encouraged to smoke by their doctors to calm their schizophrenic conditions. Behind them, their ghosts recited the eerie poem written by Joseph that introduces this chapter. Audience comments showed that they understood the contradictory nature of smoking—that it is physically harmful but commonly used as support among friends and healthcare practitioners, and audiences referenced similar experiences from their own lives. We did not consciously intend to embed the irony into the characters and action onstage. Instead, this scene evolved from one of the actor’s own experiences, and luckily it fit the Living Newspaper format as a “local theme”. It was rather chance that allowed for the inclusion of all of these elements within the limitations of the Living Newspaper form. It is in the disconnect between the deep analysis that was present in our rehearsal room and our simplified final play that we found the Living Newspaper form produced what Michael Etherton (2006) calls a “message-laden play”, in which the content is so “unequivocal” that it could just be shown on a poster or in a brochure (p. 106).

Despite the fact that *Mixed Messages* did not accurately show the actors' depth of understandings in regard to the issue, the juxtaposition of scenes that presented wider socio-politico-economic contexts with scenes that shared personal experiences, and the use of presentational theatrical conventions resulted in critical thinking among some audience members. This thinking is comparable to Brecht's ideal spectator within his theory of epic theatre. An occupational therapist remarked that, "This is the first time where I've felt like the tobacco industry thing has become personal for me. [...] I really value the scientific method and understanding how the world works by using this kind of method and this is the first time that I've felt really angry that, you know, they're kind of messing me up".

A family member of a person who lives with mental illness, "appreciated how the play showed just so much complexity and just how it went from scene to scene and just turned the issue around to different angles". In the post-show conversation, she also indicated that the play had challenged her own beliefs about smoking and mental illness. She said that next time her brother expressed a desire to quit smoking, she would support his efforts instead of convincing him that smoking was "not what he needs to be worrying about". Another client at the hospital described the play as a "more complete way to look at [the issue of smoking and mental illness]". He went on to explain that the play "opened up reasoning" for him to re-think his assumption that smoking is self-medicating for his mental illness, and maybe even re-examine his tobacco addiction. Even though the additional socio-politico-economic context was influential for many audience members to re-examine their own perspectives on smoking and mental illness, had we created a play that used every scene to carefully show how personal reality is directly combined with political and economic interests, we may have been able to more fully explore and demonstrate the contradiction of *Mixed Messages*.

CONCLUSION

The use of the Living Newspaper form supported our research to enact social justice in both its process and product. It highlighted the socio-politico-economic influences on knowledge creation, holding and sharing. It fostered relationships. And, it did manage to somewhat subvert the colonial democratization of culture because the play was created and performed *with* the community. That said, in order for the Living

Newspaper to truly do justice to the community it emerged from, our proposal is to add a meticulous investigation of contradictions between personal realities and political and economic interests into the scenes of the form itself. An adapted form of Living Newspaper could more effectively demonstrate and represent participants' deep analysis via their own lived experiences of the issues being investigated. These changes could potentially make Living Newspaper a method of applied theatre that facilitates effective and affective anti-oppressive arts-based research.

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Politics of Methodology and Data Representation

The authors in the following chapters challenge taken for granted arts-based methods and explore alternative forms of data representation. While participatory visual methods, particularly photovoice, have been consistently held up as an example of collaborative arts-based research, it is important to also critically examine our methodological practices rather than turning a blind eye to challenges and tensions inherent in research practices. Additionally, the use of collage and installation art to analyze and represent data is explored as an opportunity to challenge more traditional approaches.

In *What's in an Image?: Towards a Critical and Interdisciplinary Reading of Participatory Visual Methods*, Sarah Switzer sketches out what a critical and interdisciplinary reading of participatory visual methods (PVMs) might look like for researchers and practitioners. Grounding her analysis in the use of photovoice and photo-elicitation, she invites researchers and practitioners to challenge our assumptions about the inherent potential of PVMs, by intervening in common appeals to PVM's ability to empower, transform, or re-distribute power relations. Simplistic accounts of PVMs as fun, empowering, and transformative may serve to obfuscate power relations, and restrict our ability to engage with the nuances, ethical tensions, and specific opportunities that working with specific visual art forms provide. Switzer examines three theoretical areas: photography and the 'truth effect'; photography, power and representation; and the rhetoric of participation.

Chapter 12, *From Visual Maps to Installation Art: Visualizing Client Pathways to Social Services in Los Angeles* by Aleksey Reshetnikov, Elizabeth Bogumil, Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, and Patricia Lara describe their process of creating a three-dimensional art installation to represent research findings from a visual mapping project. After collaborating with undergraduate student interns who interviewed clients at various nonprofit organizations and used visual mapping methodology to represent their clients' pathways to services, they represent their findings through installation art. They highlight the power of installation art as a multi-sensual experience that allows for new ways of seeing and experiencing. They conclude with the significance of providing opportunities for meaningful audience engagement beyond academia by creating new understandings of pathways, barriers, and access to services.

In *Fragments/Layers/Juxtaposition: Collage as a Data analysis Practice* Karen Morgaine explores the process of using collage as a data analysis method in a project about newly emerging nonbinary sexualities. Focusing on the creative process as it organically unfolds, the chapter situates each step in the process in arts-based and anti-oppressive research practices. Morgaine examines the symbolic and methodological suitability of collage as a disruptive and multifaceted arts-based research tool that can advance anti-oppressive research practice through audience reach and visibility of marginalized groups.

What's in an Image?: Towards a Critical and Interdisciplinary Reading of Participatory Visual Methods

Sarah Switzer

INTRODUCTION

Participatory visual methods (PVMs) have recently proliferated in health (Fraser & al Sayah, 2011), the social sciences (Gubrium & Harper, 2013) and education (Mitchell, 2011). However, while much is written about the form and legitimacy of these methods, substantive questions and theoretical issues are often neglected, leading to what Fraser and al Sayah (2011) describe as a lack of “theoretical clarity”, and an over-reliance on a description of methods versus the methodology. While descriptive accounts of the “how” and “what” of a method can be useful (particularly for researchers new to using visuals in research), the connection between theoretical, methodological and technological fields of study and practice are paramount for understanding and working with particular visual art forms. Literature on PVMs has also tended to be over-celebratory (Low, Rose, Salvio, & Palacios, 2012; Milne, Mitchell,

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& De Lange, 2012) and has eluded discussion of the methods' limitations or tensions (For exceptions, see: Joanou, 2009; Prins, 2010).

At the recent *International Visual Methods* conference, leading visual methods scholar, Gillian Rose (2015) called for visual methods researchers to take seriously the way images get read, circulated and interpreted *outside* research contexts with respect to contemporary visual culture. Drawing on theory from sociology, anthropology, education, cultural studies, contemporary art and health, this chapter sketches out what a critical and interdisciplinary reading of PVMs might look like for researchers and practitioners. I write this chapter as someone who has worked with PVMs in the context of community-based participatory research and community development projects for the past ten years, largely although not exclusively, in the field of HIV, sexual health and harm reduction. In my many roles (graduate student, facilitator, community artist, project coordinator, front-line worker and researcher), I have learned as much about what *not* to do when working with the visual from the communities I've worked with, as what I ought to do. It has been through these interactions, and the generosity of participants, fellow artists and facilitators, that I have learned about the myriad of ways in which systems of oppression, institutional power and structural forms of violence impact the way in which visual methods get applied, understood, adapted and transformed in different contexts.

In this chapter, I look across a wide breadth of literature to tease out some of the opportunities and limitations of PVMs, both discursively and methodologically. I provide a brief overview of PVMs, with a focus on how/why researchers and practitioners might use these methods. Grounding my analysis in photovoice and photo-elicitation, I invite researchers and practitioners to challenge our assumptions about the inherent potential of PVMs, by intervening in common appeals to PVM's ability to empower, transform or re-distribute power relations in and of themselves, or what Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) refers to as the "rhetoric of effects". In contrast to often-cited narratives of participant empowerment, I look to the way photography (as well as other visual forms) has been implicated in securing and maintaining systemic and institutional power relations. Such simplistic accounts of PVMs as fun, empowering and transformative in-and-of-themselves may actually serve to obfuscate power relations, and restrict our ability to engage with the nuances, ethical tensions and specific opportunities that working with specific visual art forms provide. To demonstrate this, I look to three

theoretical areas as a starting point for conversation: photography and the ‘truth effect’; photography, representation and visual literacies; and the rhetoric of participation. I conclude by reflecting on the implication of these critiques for PVM practice and arts-based research more broadly, so that we can engage in a more nuanced discussion about the opportunities *and* tensions of this work.

PARTICIPATORY VISUAL METHODS: AN OVERVIEW

Gubrium and Harper (2013) define participatory visual methodologies as “methodologies, approaches or techniques that afford the ‘subject’, ‘community member’ and/or ‘field site’ greater narrative latitude when it comes to ethnographic knowledge production and a larger role in determining why and how research outcomes are produced and received” by multiple audiences (p. 16). Although projects working with PVMs vary significantly in scope and breath (Chafden, 2011), they often reflexively combine the visual as a mode of inquiry, representation and engagement (Gubrium & Harper 2013; Mitchell, 2011). Common PVMs include (but are not limited to): photovoice—a participatory method in which participants are provided cameras to identify or represent issues and solutions in their community as well as engage in collective analysis (Wang & Burris, 1997); photo production stories or photo-novellas (Barndt, 2001); digital storytelling (Gubrium & Harper, 2013); and other forms of participatory video (Milne et al., 2012). While not explicitly participatory, photo-elicitation, where participants respond to participant or researcher-produced photographs (Harper, 2002; Lapenta, 2011), can be modified into a more collaborative and participatory method (Drew, Duncan, and Sawyer, 2010).

The turn towards *participatory* visual methods can be attributed to a number of factors, with nuanced particularities depending on the field. The participatory turn in the social sciences is indebted to feminist, postcolonial and postmodern critiques of positivist conceptions of objectivity as well as deconstructing the privileging of researcher as expert (Gubrium & Harper, 2013). Within health, an increased interest in expanding knowledge production and translation opportunities to diverse stakeholders has played a key role in researchers and practitioners’ interest in these methods (Fraser & al Sayah, 2011). Meanwhile, within contemporary arts, many artists turned towards participation (the “social” turn), in response to critiques about singular authorship,

limitations of the gallery space and the way that conversations about aesthetics cloaked larger power relations around gender, race, class and nation-building (Bishop, 2012).

PARTICIPATORY PHOTO-BASED METHODS: A CASE FOR LOOKING

While many of the critiques throughout this chapter can be applied to PVMs and other arts-based methods more broadly, I look across the literature to unpack the specific opportunities and challenges of participatory *photo-based* methods (henceforth, PVMs). I focus on photo-based methods as a case study of sorts, and as a way to avoid falling into the problematics of generalization that can be characteristic of some of the literature on arts-based research. After all, it is only by engaging with specificities of a form (i.e. photography) that we may be able to fully appreciate the possibilities of working with it in a particular context.

PVMs have been cited for being well suited for exploring how participants “see” their experience (Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Wagner, 2011) and understand their identities (Packard, 2008). In fact, photography used to be viewed as a way of accessing what Walter Benjamin called the “optical unconscious” (Wells, 2003). While the theory that a photograph can reveal some hidden, psychical truth has since been disputed, the potential of photography to explore beyond what the eye can see, whether through intentional or unintentional framing practices, has profound opportunities for research, activism and pedagogical practice. For example, the framed and distanced way of looking enabled by the *act* of taking a photograph may assist participants in reflecting on everyday issues (Mannay, 2010; Radley & Taylor, 2003), or for breaching sensitive or stigmatized topics (Switzer et al., 2015). PVMs may also engage the larger public or key stakeholders emotionally and intellectually (Weber, 2008), potentially increasing the uptake and/or accessibility of findings for action or policy change. Furthermore, as a research method, images can be useful for exploring issues of absence and the process of looking in and of itself (Mitchell, 2011). As E. H. Brown and Phu (2014) write, “Photography provides a productive interface—as a site where haptic and optic coincide and where a confluence of feelings, not to mention fields of inquiry, collide—for investigating the implications of the convergence of sensation and perception” (p. 21).

PVMs are often credited for their potential to “empower” participants, and break down (but not eliminate) power differentials between researcher and participant (Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Prins, 2010). However, researchers are wise to remember that PVMs only hold a *potential* for participatory knowledge production and the breaking down of power dynamics (Low, Rose, Salvio, & Palacios, 2012; Packard, 2008; Prins, 2010). While it is argued that PVMs may allow participants to control what photographs to take, when and how to take them and which photographs to describe in an interview or focus group (Frith & Harcourt, 2007; Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007; Radley & Taylor, 2003), the role of the facilitator or researcher and research context cannot be discounted. Hence, it is not the use of photography that creates a more level playing field, but rather, the open-ended dialogue and discussion, the skill of the facilitator or researcher, and other research design considerations (i.e. multiple workshops, the privileging of participant knowledge, etc.) that may contribute to this re-distribution of power (Gubrium & Harper, 2013).

In fact, the use of these methods introduces new ethical dilemmas such as issues of confidentiality and anonymity; ownership; copyright; and authorship (Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Wiles, Clark, & Prosser, 2011). For communities who experience marginalization, there are additional ethical considerations including issues of representation (Holtby, Klein, Cook, & Travers, 2015); disclosure (Teti, Murray, Johnson, & Binson, 2012); trauma (Boydell et al., 2012); and the further stigmatization of communities (Joanou, 2009). For example, the pixilating of faces in images (when consent has not been secured) may be associated with criminalized activity (Nutbrown, 2011) and may unintentionally increase stigma around issues such as drug use (Switzer et al., 2015). Given these challenges, the decision to use PVMs ought to be regarded as an ethical decision in and of itself (Gubrium & Harper, 2013).

TROUBLING THE FIELD: PHOTOGRAPHY, POWER AND THE “RHETORIC OF EFFECTS”

Gaztambide-Fernández’s (2013) work on the discourses of arts education may assist us in contextualizing the way PVMs are often taken up in over-celebratory ways. Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) argues, rather controversially, “why the arts don’t do anything”, referring to discourses that describe the arts as being able to transform, inspire, empower

or heal in and of themselves as the “rhetoric of effects” (p. 214). He explains that these discourses

tend to obscure both the complexities and the possibilities that lurk within the experiences with the arts in education. The rhetoric of effects requires that we curtail such complexity, demanding instead a flattened perspective that ignores the larger social and cultural context within which those practices and processes traditionally associated with the concept of the arts take place. (p. 214)

What “rhetoric of effects” are used within the field of PVMs? Such “rhetoric of effects” might help us to understand why the field seldom asks critical questions such as by whom and for whom (Barndt, 2004), or why and to what ends (Low et al., 2012)? As practitioners and researchers, we are often in a position of having to defend the use of the visual in our work. However, in doing so, what claims are we making in the name of PVMs that might otherwise “curtail such complexity”?

After all, participatory art forms (visual or not) have no intrinsic political affiliation and are influenced by a wide range of political ideologies (Bishop, 2012; Hutcheson, 2014). Some of the earliest examples of visual methods served (and still serve) very oppressive ends. Within education, the drawing of European vases was used as a systematic way to assimilate First Nations children into the residential school system (Chalmers, 1999), while photography and video have been central to the colonizing role of research and the formation of social difference. As González (2006) reminds us, visual recording devices such as photography and video have never been racially neutral: “Racial hegemony informs the design and the use of these technologies and in turn, racial discourse is articulated and defined by them” (p. 345). For example, the construction of white balance¹ in photography owes its cultural and technological lineage to the automatic balancing of colour based on white skin (González, 2006). Kodak singularly used what was called a Shirley card, picturing a white woman model to calibrate skin tones for *all* photography prints up until the late 1970s, and it was not until recently that digital camera companies have worked to expand their colour range (Roth, 2009).

The role of power and photographic technologies is not to be relegated to the history books. Drawing on work about cyber-colonialism by Tawil-Souri and Aouragh (2014) and the poor image by

Steyerl (2012), Kamil (2015) provides an illustrative example of how the *resolution* of digital images influences how we read the occupation of Palestinian territories through a politics of (in)visibility. In the context of reduced internet infrastructure in Gaza, images need to be compressed in order to travel outside of the borders of the occupied territories; in their compression, vital data is lost, testifying to the conditions of the images' production (i.e. Israeli cyber-colonialism) . Here, the poor (i.e. low resolution) image “is not a lack, *but an additional layer of information, which is not about content but form*” (italics original, Steyerl, 2012, p. 156).

These works remind us of the importance of thinking through both content *and* form when advocating for visual methods. We are wise to remember that the image is never innocent (Rose, 2012). Furthermore, it is not the methods themselves that do anything, but rather, the way in which PVMs are conceptualized, worked with, and adapted by individuals and communities as well as their contemporary and historic uses that determine their impact. Below, I turn to a more detailed exploration of the intersection between photography, power, participation and visual culture, and the methodological significance for designing our projects.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE “TRUTH EFFECT”

Vision itself is a culturally and historically constructed category, related to enlightenment thinking and colonial perspective in landscape or ‘God’s eye view’ (Pink, 2013; van Leeuwen, 2011). As Tagg (1999) explains, photography’s relationship with concepts of truth, evidence and surveillance is rooted in the origin of photographic development, which evolved concurrently with the expansion of the police force, prisons and hospitals in the modern era. While photographs are mediated by the technology that produces them, the context in which they are produced, and the relationships that inform their production/circulation, they are still often understood as a register of “truth”, even in the digital era. As González (2006) reminds us:

a photograph is not only anything that *looks* like a photograph but anything that *acts* like a photograph insofar as it produces a photographic *effect*. Of course, as both historians and practitioners know, the truth effect of photography has real consequences—even when the image lies. (p. 339)

These consequences can be far reaching. The circulation of images has been instrumental in shaping signifying practices around race and representation (Hall, 1997) and the construction of gender, sexuality and ability (Evans and Hall, 1999), as well as justifying imperialism and war on the body of the Other (Puar, 2007). Photography as a technology is not neutral, and the very *act* of photography itself can enact violence and inequity (Puar, 2007; Simon, 2014).

The relationship between photography, surveillance and the “truth effect” is illustrative in some photovoice projects where picture-taking practices create unintended consequences or may not be welcomed within communities. For example, in Prins (2010) photovoice project with an El Salvadoran adult literacy programme, participants expressed initial excitement in documenting their life; however, once the project began, issues arose within the larger community in response to participants’ increased photographic activities. Within the political and historical context of El Salvador, family members and friends of participants grew concerned that they were constantly being watched as participants took photos of daily life activities that were subsequently passed onto researchers. Alternatively, in a photovoice project with young people living on the street in Peru, Joanou (2009) describes how the participants’ act of taking and sharing their photos with her, allowed her, as a researcher, more access into their lives than the participants were comfortable with. These feelings were unanticipated (by both parties); participants experienced significant shame and distress when sharing photos that they realized inadvertently disclosed drug use practices they had not planned on disclosing. While the photography project was developed in direct response to critiques from participants about their lack of power when being photographed by tourists, journalists and artists, Joanou (2009) was also concerned that many of the photographs taken by participants drew on stereotypes and mimicked dominant representations of life on the street. While participants were intentional in their representational choices, taken out of context of the research project, she was concerned that the photographs might further stigmatize communities.

As Prins (2010) argues, by challenging what has historically counted as knowledge and providing a platform to “subvert the inspecting gaze that has historically defined how [communities] are represented”, PVMs can be a means to democratize knowledge production (Foucault, qtd. on p. 429), however, at the same time, photography cannot be divorced from its socio-political function as a tool of surveillance. In my own work,

I have had to carefully reflect on the way photographs (or videos) may unintentionally stigmatize people who use drugs in particular ways (when taken out of context) and must always be considered in relation to socio-political issues such as criminalization and stigma (Switzer et al., 2015). I am reminded of what J. K. Brown (2014) refers to as “the violent participatory gaze”, when she speaks to the way the global north has read and fixed the “pain of the Other” through photographic practice—in particular, through photos affectively depicting famine, war and disaster (p. 183). What happens when our images travel outside of a research context and reinforce stereotypes? How might our projects enact this gaze, even if unintentionally? In contrast, *who* decides what counts as a ‘stereotypical’ image? Are we making decisions on behalf of participants or *with* them when deciding how images travel within and outside of research contexts? How do we ensure that participants have agency in their representational choices, while also making sure we are doing no harm? These questions raise additional ethical issues, and may point to more levels of power than PVM researchers and practitioners may wish to admit. This brings me to my second argument: photography, representation and visual literacies.

PHOTOGRAPHY, REPRESENTATION AND VISUAL LITERACIES

Within the field of PVMs, it is often suggested that as a research method, photography allows us to “see” something through the eyes of another. However, like any other cultural practice, photography is constituted through complex relationship with power—such as institutional and state power (as discussed above)—as well as social location (i.e. race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.). As Bourdieu (1990) writes:

The most trivial photograph expresses the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group. The norms which organize the photographic valuation of the world in terms of the opposition between that which is photographed and that which is not are indissociable from the implicit system of values maintained by class, profession or artistic coterie. (p. 6)

Participants come to projects with their own visual literacies, and are already negotiating complex issues of power and representation, especially in the era of cell phones and social media. For example, in a photovoice project with LGTBQ youth, participants played an active role in educating

the research team about issues of representation and visibility, and the ways that photovoice put undue pressure on participants who already had to wrestle with these issues on a daily basis (Holtby et al., 2015). I have held similar discussions in some of my PVM work with LGTBQ youth; for young people whose sexual or gender identities are in the process of changing (or have changed), the issue of representation can often be fraught. In these cases, I have learned the importance of raising issues around representation early on, while also taking the lead from participants who *already* navigate similar issues in their daily life such as on social media.

Nonetheless, even in the digital era proficiency with a digital camera can still act as a barrier to participation. With the rise of visual technologies, I have found that individuals are often more reluctant to disclose needing technological assistance, as they do not want to appear as inexperienced with equipment that is culturally branded as ‘easy to use’—especially if they are already experiencing marginalization, as a result of poverty. Even when participants disclose that they have a high-level of photographic experience, I may still receive blurry or dark photos, or photos with thumbs over the lens; these photos can frustrate or embarrass participants who are not able to convey what they had intended. My experience resonates with the accounts described by Packard (2008), when he critiques simplistic ideas of capacity-building within photovoice literature, and the assumption that simply putting cameras in the hands of participants will level power dynamics. In his study with homeless men, participants took a series of photographs that when developed, were difficult for both Packard and the participants to read. However, when Packard offered technical camera operation assistance to participants, many participants declined, instead presenting themselves as already knowledgeable. Upon reflection and discussion with participants, Packard realized that participants’ reluctance to ask questions about the photo-taking process was deeply connected to classed issues of identity and representation: participants’ very survival on the streets was reliant on being perceived by their peers as knowledgeable. Here, the rhetoric of capacity-building actually served to *disempower* participants.

THE RHETORIC OF PARTICIPATION

The term participation in PVMs should also not be a given. The romanticization of participation has been critiqued across many fields from contemporary art (Bishop, 2012) to international development (Cooke

& Kothari, 2001) to community-based participatory research (Guta, Flicker, & Roche, 2013). Participation has been widely recognized as a contested concept, operating as a floating signifier that shifts and morphs across different discursive contexts (Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013). However, despite the ubiquity of the concept, participation is seldom critiqued and largely under-theorized within PVM literature, notwithstanding that within projects employing PVMs, there is a wide continuum of participation levels (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Gubrium & Harper, 2013). This omission can be problematic. Not defining or positioning participation within a project can curtail the very complexity of a project's methodological decisions and the micro-politics of a project in the same way that appeals to photography as empowering or transformative may. Reminiscent of the faith-like incantations to participation within the development sector (Henkel, Stirrat, Cooke, & Kothari, 2001), within the field of PVMs, participation as unequivocally "good" or an ethical ideal is yet another claim within the "rhetoric of effects" described earlier.

After all, participation can often be coerced, forced or tokenistic (Switzer et al., 2016). For example, participation has been critiqued as yet another neoliberal strategy within youth social justice organizations, particularly with young people of colour (Kwon, 2013). Cloaked in the colourful disguise of capacity-building, young people are encouraged to govern themselves through voluntary participation, and individual and community 'betterment'. Participatory art projects (including those that rely on the visual) are often funded to address "social problems" in low-income neighbourhoods, thus functioning as another foil for gentrification or "revitalization" (Hutcheson, 2014), or what Ford-Smith (2001) describes as a "a brightly packaged form of welfare" used as a means for justifying traditional narratives of the nation state (p. 13). Participatory initiatives can often put the burden of responsibility back onto individuals and communities and take attention away from the importance of larger state responses to inequity.

Boydell et al. (2012) identify key ethical issues that arise when using photography and other arts-based research methods in health research. Because arts-based projects often involve increased participation levels (and rely on the evocative potential of the arts as a key strength), participants may be more likely to experience difficult emotions, especially those linked to past or present experiences of trauma. Hence, choosing *participatory* visual research (and defining participation) must be part of a larger ethical conversation (Gubrium & Harper, 2013). Increased

participation does not always yield better research, and there are many cases when less participation may be desired by participants themselves (Strike, Guta, de Prinse, Switzer, & Chan Carusone, 2015; Switzer et al., 2015). While we should not disregard structural project factors (i.e. relationships with community, research design, etc.), simplistic accounts of participation may fail to engage with the many reasons people withdraw from projects, and can actually strip participants of their agency by painting them as lazy, or having overwhelming and chaotic lives when they chose *not* to participate (Milne, 2012). As Low et al., (2012) argue, in addition to equating subjects' participation with his/her/their agency, discourses of participation can imply that the primary goal of marginalized communities is to make themselves more intelligible to those in power. Participants should be able to negotiate the grounds for participation, with nonparticipation acknowledged as an active and sometimes desired form of involvement (Milne, 2012). As many of the young people I work with have taught me, the "right to pass" is an integral part of any participatory project (Switzer et al., 2016)—especially one which involves visual methods. Of course, it is important to note that I am not advocating *against* participation per se. As a community-based participatory researcher, I have witnessed many cases where the inclusion of communities in all stages of a research project can lead to improved, and more relevant research and artistic or cultural productions. However, we must be cautious when we construct participation as an ethical or moral ideal. Returning to questions asked earlier: participation by whom? For whom? And, to what ends?

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

As participatory visual methods continue to proliferate in research projects, socially engaged art processes and community-based organizations, we must remember that any method (photo-based or not) is just the means to, not the ends of collaborative relationships, or social change. Although PVMs may provide many opportunities, they may not always be the best choice for a project. After all, there is no guarantee that the use of PVMs will yield any specific outcomes. The introduction of PVMs will not override the influence or structures of power in a space; in my case, as a settler on this land, and as a white, queer, cisgendered woman who has recently transitioned from front-line worker to tentative academic-in-training. PVMs are not a short-cut to patiently-built

relationships, nor will these methods single-handedly undue the legacy of damaging research done on the backs of communities.

And yet, while most qualitative researchers would acknowledge that photography is not a neutral medium (and that research is also not a neutral practice) generalist claims that participatory photography projects empower, heal, transform, or “give voice” are still rarely questioned. As Luttrell and Chalfen (2010) ask:

There is a ubiquitous invocation that participatory visual research is valued for its ability to ‘give voice’ to marginalized less powerful people. The tacit assumption is that putting cameras into the hands of participants is a resource for having a ‘say’ in public discourse and decision-making. Yet, how is ‘voice’ being conceptualized, produced and analyzed through these different collaborations? With what certainty can we attribute whose voice is whose? (p. 198)

And, with what certainty can we assume that PVMs will do what we expect them to?² Such discourses can lead us to ignore the larger social and cultural contexts and visual processes that are traditionally associated with photography, leading researchers and practitioners to take up PVMs simply because they are perceived as being ‘fun’, ‘low barrier’ or ‘transformative’. After all, issues of representation influence all aspects of our projects from the photographs participants take to curatorial choices at community exhibits. These issues are not just aesthetic: they are ethical and political.

I conclude this chapter with a series of questions for consideration. In this digital era, how are participants *already* navigating complex issues of visibility and representation in their lives? How might participants teach us and others in our projects about the opportunities and tensions of working with visuals in different contexts (social networking, photo apps, etc.)? How do we take into account image quality in projects, especially as files are transferred and shared? How do ideas of what constitutes a ‘good’ photo (as mediated by class, race, gender, sexuality, etc.) inform participants’ photo-taking strategies and visual literacies? How do discourses of participation (as an ethical standard) shape research design processes? How might the “truth effect” of photography fix communities in particular ways—particularly those who are already under the surveillance of the state? How might these same processes influence our analytic processes, or how our images get read as they move and circulate within and outside of our projects?

While critiques of participation and accounts interrogating the innocence of the visual are vast, it is surprising (and perhaps telling) that such critiques rarely make their way into our conversations about PVMs. Given the claims made in the name of PVMS, we must remain cognizant of how larger understandings of the visual may shape our projects. As Steyerl (2012) reminds us, “not even the digital image is outside of history. It bears the bruises of its crashes with politics and violence” (p. 27). What would it mean, as PVM practitioners, “to participate in an image” (Steyerl, 2012, p. 27) and the histories or conditions which inform its circulation? Including the conditions for resistance? While this chapter presents some critiques, I do not want to detract from the multitude of ways individuals and communities are using the visual to counter and intervene in narratives of domination. I am encouraged by Rose’s (2013) call for researchers and practitioners to consider how our projects might not only consider “contemporary visualities on the process of making and interpreting visual methods” (p. 31) but also how we might also contribute to understandings of the visual. How might our projects, albeit small, contribute to larger understandings of the visual as co-produced? As an available site for inquiry and resistance to systems of oppression? As requiring constant ongoing consent and negotiation between all parties?

CONCLUSION

Drawing on theory from a range of disciplines, this chapter invites us to examine the field of PVMS from an interdisciplinary and critical lens, with a particular focus on issues of representation, power and participation. While I focused on photo-based participatory visual methods, similar arguments could be applied to the way other arts-based methods get taken up, discussed and applied more broadly. After all, all art forms are bound up with complex relationships with institutional and systemic power, as well as colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and the state. Issues of participation, representation and ethics extend far beyond the visual (albeit in different ways) to forms such as dance, theatre and narrative. In fact, many of these forms cannot be separated from one another. Working with images is not a solely visual process (Pink, 2011), the

visual may also be read as performative (Taylor, 2003), and it is common to use narrative writing in photovoice projects.

Despite the critiques raised throughout this chapter, I do not suggest that we abandon the use of PVMs. When it comes to thinking about the opportunities and limitations of these methods, both the opportunities *and* tensions can exist simultaneously. As hooks (1995) advocates, it is important to balance the potential for photography to “create an oppositional subculture within the framework of domination” while at the same time “recogniz[ing] that the field of representation (how we see ourselves, how others see us) is a site of ongoing struggle” (p. 57).³ How might we work with the tensions and constraints of PVMs to build more rigorous, equitable ways of engaging with communities? How might we cultivate a willingness amongst researchers and practitioners “to acknowledge complexity—profundity—multilayered possibility” of photographic practice (hooks, 1995, p. 26)? As we move forward with participatory visual methods, I invite us to imagine how might we move *beyond* the “over-celebratory” so that we can engage in both the tensions and multilayered possibility of this work.

NOTES

1. White balance is a photographic term for how colour is calibrated in film, or in a digital camera.
2. I am indebted here to the work of Tuck and Yang (2011) who have taught me to question teleological assumptions about resistance; resistance (like PVMs) does not also do what we expect it to.
3. In this particular essay, hooks is writing about the connection between photography and Black life.

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From Visual Maps to Installation Art: Visualizing Client Pathways to Social Services in Los Angeles

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INTRODUCTION

“Wow... what an awful situation”

“Yeah, so do you know of any resources, whatsoever, that might be helpful?”

“Hhhmmm, and you said that this college student is completely homeless? Living in his car?”

“Unfortunately so...and the resources he’s been referred to haven’t worked out so far. He isn’t able to access them for various reasons, like due to eligibility criteria.”

“That’s not good...I can’t imagine what that would be like. And to know that he is still attending classes...he must be incredibly resilient. You could refer a few other social service agencies to him, and if those don’t work, perhaps the social workers there can guide him in the right direction...”

This initial dialogue between two members of the research team served to initiate our collective approach to seek a deeper understanding of pathways and barriers to accessing social services. As a group of researchers with a love for the arts and for using the arts as a means of co-creating knowledge, we explored ways that we could creatively capture marginalized people’s pathways to services. Inspired by the resilience and hardship of the aforementioned student, who was attending our university while living out of his car, we were interested in learning more about potential social service resources. In our efforts to find his social services, we continued to encounter eligibility barriers and issues identifying organizations to assist the student. To understand how we could engage in research that would highlight access and barriers to client services in Los Angeles, California, we turned to visual mapping.

Visual mapping methodology, also known as concept mapping, or mind mapping, entails the documentation of data in a visual manner, through art, in ways that words or other visual forms are incapable of doing (Butler-Kisber & Poldma 2010). Through this creative methodological practice, concepts, ideas, and data are juxtaposed in an artistic manner that connects knowledge, lived experience, and stories. Visual mapping is an innovative strategy that allows the researchers to make sense and keep track of data interpretations as they first begin to emerge. It is particularly useful for documenting the relational aspects of data interpretations through artistic means. Visual maps help formulate analytic ideas

as they are being conceptualized and they utilize the power of artistic representation to visually illuminate research data (Maxwell 1996).

Inspired by the visual maps that were created from this project (which served as research data), we chose to represent our research findings through installation art. By definition, “installation art is art made for a specific space exploiting certain qualities of that space” (Delahunt 2007; Cole & McIntryre 2008). Installation art involves using everyday objects and spaces in unusual ways to gain attention and encourage interaction (Robinson et al. 2008). Such art constructs an environment for active engagement within the academic setting and beyond. The interactive nature of the work also renders it responsive and dynamic (Cole & McIntryre 2008). Our research project consisted of collaborating with undergraduate students who created visual maps from individual interviews with clients at various social service organizations. Our research team used this visual mapping data to create one cohesive visual map in the form of installation art.

LOCATING OURSELVES

Collectively, we are a diverse group of researchers with respect to gender, race, social class, sexuality, and access to power. At the same time, we share many commonalities such as being able-bodied, having cisgender privilege, citizenship status, and relatively convenient access to resources. I (Moshoula) came to this research project as a bicultural, able-bodied, cisgender woman, with access to power as a university professor and over 6 years of social work practice working in various nonprofit organizations. I also have over 8 years of experience in engaging in arts-based research as a way to merge my identities as academic-artist-activist. Also identifying as a cisgender woman who is able-bodied, I (Elizabeth) came to this research project with experience working with nonprofits and knowledge accumulated while earning Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. While this knowledge is a form of power, as a student, I related to the undergraduate students process and challenges with creating the visual maps representing another’s journey. As a Mexican-American cisgendered and able-bodied woman, I (Patricia) became involved in this research project possessing a background in the arts, a familiarity with conducting scholastic inquiries, and a passion to further understand the administration of nonprofit organizations. I (Aleksey) entered this research project as an immigrant, able-bodied, white, cisgender male

with relatively little experience with nonprofit agencies. My interest in social inequality/stratification, and arts-based research instigated my participation in this project.

As a group, we value the importance of relationships, empathize with marginalized and oppressed people, and strive to engage in research that highlights voice, stories, and creativity. We also believe in the importance of arts-based pedagogy for the purpose of igniting the senses and pushing the boundaries of knowledge representation. Because it has the ability to enhance human understanding in an evocative and compelling manner, we intentionally chose visual mapping methodology to capture the voices of people's stories, their pathways to service, and barriers they encountered. We also wanted to provide students and ourselves with the space to engage with data in an unconventional, embodied, and creative way.

STUDENT VISUAL MAPS AS DATA

As a tenure track professor (Moshoula) in the Sociology department at my university, my area of focus is social welfare and social justice. Every academic year, I teach a year-long course where students intern at different social service organizations within Los Angeles County, where they gain valuable skills working within social welfare systems.¹ Influenced by the story of the homeless² student who experienced significant barriers to accessing services, our research team devised an assignment that would require students to interview a client at their organizations and gather that client's stories and lived experiences in both a written and artistic manner. We were interested in understanding clients' pathways to accessing services and any barriers they encountered along the way. Simultaneously, we were attempting to engage students in anti-oppressive research practices.

Students enrolled in the year-long internship course were instructed to interview and document their client's story. Then, students were invited to use visual mapping methodology to creatively represent the oral and written data from the in-depth interview with their client. Once the assignment was explained in class, the rest of the research team (Patricia, Elizabeth, and Aleksey) visited the class to share examples of visual maps and answer students' questions and concerns related to the process. We also explained the purpose of the visual mapping approach—for clients to have the power to share their journey and for students to have the power to represent that journey in a way that would empower

and respect the clients' individual journeys. We emphasized that students would not be graded on the quality of their art, but rather, on their ability to use creative means to represent their client's lived experiences. This perspective aligned with the critical statement and question: It is not a matter of whether it is good art, but rather, what good is the art for?

On the last day of class (when the assignment was due), as a way for students to further engage with the visual maps they created, an exhibition was organized. Students shared their visual maps with each other and the broader community to bring attention to the unique pathways people travel to access social services. Students, department faculty and staff, agency supervisors, and clients were all invited to this exhibition. The culminating event allowed students to share their visual maps, highlight their client's pathways to service, and discuss the meanings embedded within their maps. By showcasing the visual maps in a public forum, difficult subject matter was presented in creative ways that unmasked and brought to light clients' experiences that often go ignored.

As a research team, we were amazed with the diverse ways in which students chose to represent and engage with their client's story; ranging from multi-modal representations, to abstract artwork, to computer-generated images. For example, one student created a board game representing her client's pathways to services as a homeless woman. The various barriers that this client experienced brought the viewer to the start of the game, showing how difficult accessing services can be when one does not meet agency eligibility requirements or when one has other events in their life that prevent them from immediately seeking services. Another student used documentary photography to visually map her client's experience of domestic violence and the organizations that her client turned to for help. This project highlighted the client's barrier of accessing services due to her undocumented legal status. There was a student who incorporated diorama³ techniques to represent the agencies involved in service provision. Her visual map was three-dimensional with little buildings that represented child welfare services, Department of Health and Human Services, and juvenile justice agencies. One of the more abstract visual maps was in the form of a puzzle that connected the clients' pathways to services. The client represented in the puzzle experienced abuse at the individual and systemic level. The wide-ranging student visual maps set the stage for our collective analysis.

In addition to these visual maps, students wrote a reflection paper on their experience of engaging in this arts-based project and a structural

analysis of the nonprofit organization that the student and client were affiliated with. An additional assignment required students to explain their visual maps in detail. These papers served as data and were used as a guide in our analysis process. It was especially useful for those projects that were more abstract and where the visual map needed a deeper explanation of what was represented or depicted.

PREPARING AND ANALYZING THE VISUAL MAPPINGS

After acquiring the 27 visual maps from the students, we began to negotiate the most suitable method to organize and analyze the visual maps and ancillary materials. Due to the volume and quantity of the visual maps, we determined that the best approach would be to photograph all the two- and three-dimensional visual maps. Although we encouraged students to adopt any creative form for their project, such as poetry, songs, creative writing, audio, or film, of the 27 submissions, there were only two digital representations. Many of the projects were the size of tri-fold poster boards and some were three-dimensional representations. Given the large space the maps took up, we concluded that it would be best to capture photo representations of each of the maps.

Duplicating photographs of the visual maps was a simpler and more efficient alternative to continuously transporting and re-inspecting the larger projects. The photographs were printed and placed into individualized folder ascribed to each student. While taking the photos, we observed how some of the student's creative projects were quite abstract and, although we spoke with many of the students about the meaning behind their project, we felt the need for a reminder of that discussion. We invited students to provide a descriptive essay to explain their project and how it represented a client's pathway to service. This helped us to further explore the barriers and pathways represented in the corresponding visual maps, as a few of the projects also lacked vital information, such as the name of the agency that the client was affiliated with. The agency name and location was crucial information, especially since we wanted to use an image of the physical map of Los Angeles to understand the agencies and their locations in relation to one another.

In addition to the photos of the visual map and the descriptive essay of their visual map, each student wrote an agency power analysis paper containing details pertaining to the agency's typical clientele and their pathways to services. All of this information was included in each visual

map's portfolio, which in turn, allowed us to easily access all pertinent information relating to a given visual map. On the folder, we indicated the social service category each agency fell into and organized the folders according to agency categories: child/family services, homelessness, domestic violence, LGBTQIA, education/schools, gerontology, and services for low-income families. Once all the preparations were made, we were ready to begin the analysis process.

While exploring the themes relating to the client's barriers and pathways to service, we triangulated the themes amongst each other and across agency categories. This process was unique in that the research team approached this project with varied methodological backgrounds and theoretical perspectives, yet we were each able to uniquely contribute to the thematic exploration while maintaining the integrity of the student's visual map and client's lived experience. It was at this point in the project that we really began to consider how we would represent the student's visual maps in an aggregate installation art piece. Since the clients' stories were recorded and constructed through visual maps, we wanted to find ways to capture the collective story of intersecting pathways both visually and spatially with a visual map.

REPRESENTING THE ANALYSIS: FROM VISUAL MAPS TO INSTALLATION ART

When deciding how to represent the themes that emerged from the visual mapping data, we wanted to expand our reach beyond the ivory tower of academia to people in the community, through artistic means. It was important for us to represent the overarching barriers and pathways to service while opening the discussion to the broader community members and those individuals that are directly affected. We were determined to create a representation that was three dimensional and large, which would allow for audience interaction, engagement, and in-depth understanding of barriers and pathways to service faced by nonprofit clients. Paintings, collages, and a film were all tossed around as potential methods of creative representation but none of these were three-dimensional or encouraged the same level of audience interaction. Eventually, we concluded that a large-scale temporary art installation would be the best way to facilitate audience engagement. This form of artistic representation was a perfect fit as one of the key intentions of installation art-as-research is to make

research more accessible to diverse audiences, including extending the results beyond the academy (Cole & McIntryre 2008).

This desire to engage the public presented a number of logistical challenges for our team to negotiate. We began by exploring potential locations for a visual installation of our data, including the possibility of presenting this art piece at one of the nonprofit organizations we studied extensively. After examining our list of possible local, social service agencies, we concluded that it was impractical to present our work at any of those locations. The majority of these organizations lacked sufficient space, were closed to the general public, or could not adequately showcase the art installation. Serendipitously, an interdisciplinary conference was being held at our university (California State University, Northridge) which provided us with an opportunity to present our work to the attendees who were multidisciplinary academics, nonprofit representatives, students, and the broader Los Angeles community. Furthermore, our familiarity with the location made it easy to physically construct and deconstruct the art installation.

With the physical location set, the task of creating the visual piece was placed on our shoulders. First, we determined that we wanted a three-dimensional piece that could be viewed from multiple angles, which would invite interaction, thus, soliciting engagement. Exploring art from multiple perspectives allows for new configurations and formations of knowledge (O'Donoghue 2008). In line with well-known contemporary artist Martha Rosler's approach to installation art, we wanted to communicate and engage our audience on an important social topic (Cole & McIntrye 2008). Our goal was to present this data in a way that would demonstrate the complexity of the issues that these organizations faced. We desired our art to be "a continuous and on-going practice, a conversation in which images, text, and fragments all take part" (Cole & McIntrye 2008).

In order to accomplish this, we utilized clear fishbowls to represent a type of agency that students interned (i.e., LGBTQIA youth-oriented agencies, child welfare organizations, homeless shelters). The inside of the fishbowls consisted of objects that represented an organization type. We were intentional with the type of objects that we placed in the clear bowls, as we wanted them to correspond to aspects of the different social service agencies and represent the clients those agencies serve. While each clear bowl was labeled in order to identify what agency category it represented, the bowls were unique enough to overtly represent these categories. With this in mind, we decorated the insides of the bowls with

objects that, when interpreted together, could tell a hypothetical story of a client who encountered a specific agency. For example, to represent domestic violence organizations, we placed objects such as mini-handcuffs, a police badge, a gun, alcohol bottles, and a bouquet of roses that depicted one of the client's stories of physical abuse, restraining orders, police intervention, and her inability to escape the cycle of violence.

We also paid attention to the juxtaposition of the objects placed inside the bowls such as placing a house in the fishbowl representing homelessness to portray what success would look like for those clients utilizing the agency. Metaphorically, these clear bowls were meant to demonstrate the simultaneous pathways (access to visually see into it) and barriers (still stuck behind glass walls) that clients experienced on their journeys to service. We placed each of the clear bowls on top of tubular wire cages that we intentionally built as a platform. Each cage was strung with a web of string in a color corresponding to string color used to connect each themed agency bowl to the map. As artists, we had to bend the sharp wire into place, creating the tubular cages. The tubular cages were then strung with string representing the challenges clients can still encounter even once they have reached an agency that can help them. (Figs. 12.1, 12.2)

These agencies were then physically linked, with string, to their location in geographic space on a Los Angeles map. We selected different colors of string for each agency type to connect their map locations to the bowls because, when all the pathways were connected, the strings displayed the geographic diversity of each agency types' location. Within each agency, the different string represented the pathways participants' traveled to access their social service. Each string was affixed with tags that were indicative of the barriers we noted in our exploration of the themes. The tags were two sided; on one side of each tag, we created miniature collages⁴ to metaphorically symbolize the diversity of barriers that participants encountered and on the other side of each tag we wrote down the literal phrase that illustrated the different barriers to services. The tags represented the barriers that clients faced, with each agency showcasing different issues faced by clients. The only way to understand any agency was to actively view that string and to understand the barriers and pathways to a particular agency, the observer was forced to dedicate all of their visual attention to that individual agency.

We believe that this method of construction encouraged the viewer of the art to consider the complex and multi-layered issues within each

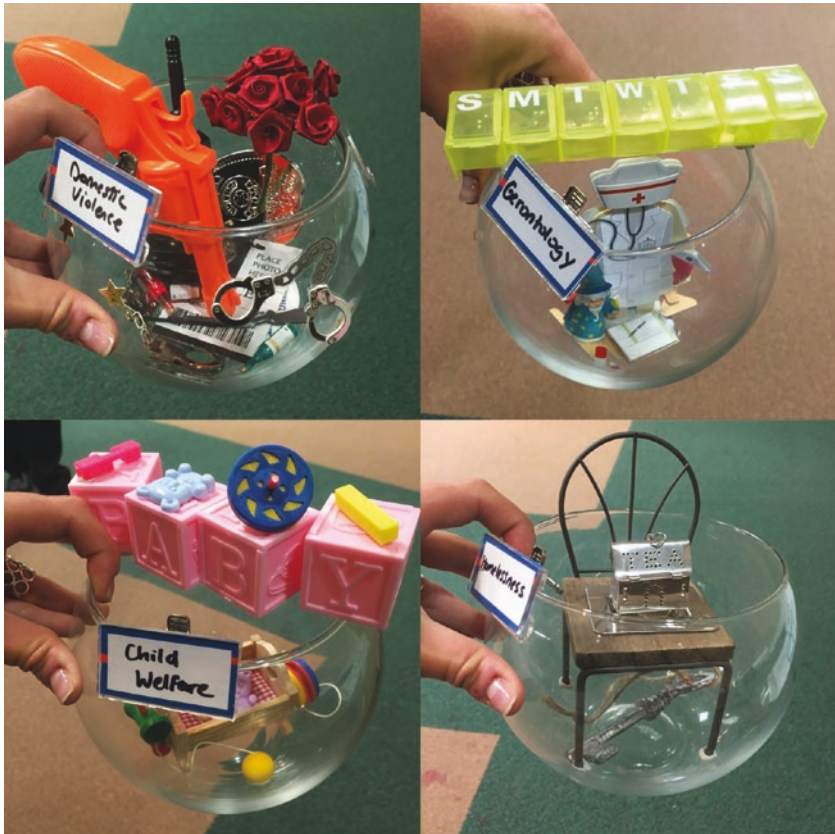


Fig. 12.1 Fishbowls representing different fields of practice

type of agency. This process promoted effortful and intentional observation. It became apparent to our team, through analysis, that the barriers to access that clients' faced were not always generalizable beyond agency types. That is, there is no single solution for the issues that non-profits face in an attempt to serve clients. Instead, each agency needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis in order to understand how to best reach their intended clientele. More importantly, our visualization suggested that the best way to establish links between barriers to service and agencies was a discourse between both clients and service providers.

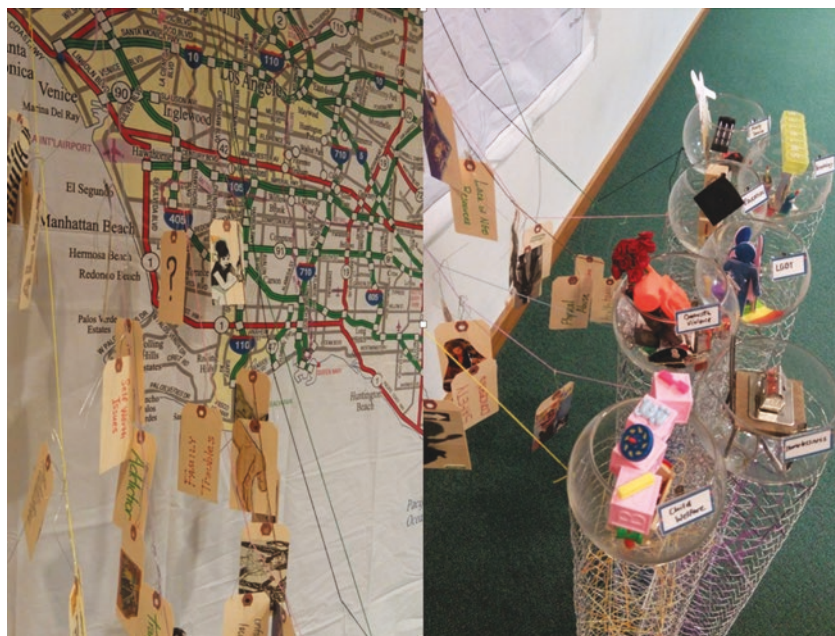


Fig. 12.2 Toe Tags representing barriers to service and fishbowls representing fields of practice

FROM PROCESS TO PRODUCT: EMBODIED WAYS OF KNOWING

Art installations widen the boundaries of possibilities through the embodied experience of the art. Our efforts to create a large, three-dimensional installation piece of art were also informed by our desires to experience art-making through our various senses. We wanted to participate in creating art and making meaning through art as a physical and visual sensory experience that required a reading of the visual mapping data that extended beyond the mind and body. Installation art requires viewers to engage in a dynamic process of meaning-making that is contingent upon searching for and making connections between what is represented, what is suggested, and what is imagined (O'Donoghue 2008). Our production of the art installation using our hands, minds, and bodies provided us with an opportunity to inquire further into the student visual mapping data that we had previously collected. Experiencing the

data as it surrounded us in a newly generated format and juxtaposed to represent interconnections, enabled our research team to ask new and different questions that were not possible to ask when these representations were encountered during the initial stages of research. Being surrounded by our installation art, in an immersive space, provided us with the opportunity to encounter new ways of looking at and understanding the data.

When discussing installation art, O'Donoghue states, "the work exists in every encounter with it. It is in the encounter that the work comes into being" (2008, p. 645). In other words, it is in our interactions with the installation art that meaning is produced within a certain space and specific place through the representational complex web of agency interconnections. The ways in which we constructed our installation art connected different forms of knowing beyond the logical mind, such as kinesthetic, sensory, affective, and experiential. Our embodied work operates as a way of creating conditions for bringing together different clients' histories and memories of barriers and pathways to services in order to generate new meaning. It models how individual stories can be told using multiple modalities to represent one cohesive, multi-layered story of the intersections of social service organizations in Los Angeles.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AS ANTI-OPPRESSIVE RESEARCH PRACTICE

The installation, which combined visual, textual, and thematic data from the research study, disseminated the outcomes of the study to a wider and more diverse audience. Our installation artwork invited our viewers to engage, touch, and contemplate the issues at hand. Through our creative body of work, audience members were invited to make connections between what they saw, knew, and experienced. This medium of representing research data allowed for pauses and reflections. The magnitude of the visual map of Los Angeles created the space for envisioning the interconnections between social service organizations. It provided opportunities for relationship understanding, and served a further role in the inquiry process by creating new configurations of image, color, text, and texture in an enclosed space while generating new questions about the topic under investigation (O'Donoghue 2008). The installation art also disrupted hegemonic linear texts, formulating a series of partial

truths and stories woven together. As a body of artwork, it extended and reinterpreted the narratives it depicted (Bourriaud 2005). Through our art, we were intentional setting the conditions to provide the viewers with an experience that generates curiosity and empathic understanding. We facilitated connections through the installation art as the narrative to tell the story of the clients' experiences through a larger story of the pathways to services that exist in Los Angeles.

When thinking about how our installation art piece served to progress knowledge of barriers and access to services in Los Angeles, we were left with more questions rather than answers. We wondered how many people actually engaged in the installation art and in what ways? What was their response to it, the range of their conversations sparked by the presence of this piece of artwork? How did the audience members make sense of the space and place of the art piece? How did meaning unfold and become enfolded in other meanings? Did our public art inspire social change by bringing awareness to pathways and barriers to service? Did it create empathic understandings among viewers, which in turn, heightened audience members' consciousness? As a research team, we created the conditions where the audience members were likely to experience the installation artwork in particular ways. However, we can never fully control how the work is taken up by the viewer and the myriad of ways in which people reacted to or thought about the installation (Percy-Smith & Carney 2011; O'Donoghue 2008), or how they may have changed their thinking and ideas about pathways of social services in Los Angeles, or their own capacity for critical reflexivity in engaging with the art.

Graeme Sullivan (2005) describes visual art exhibitions as sites of inquiry and learning where "meaning can be seen to take place through enactment and action...The learning space disrupts distinctions among artist-objects, viewer-audience, and time-space, such that the encounter is direct and engaging...this reflexive encounter is a form of performative interpretation" (p. 210) At the conference where our art installation was displayed, the area that the artwork took up transitioned from meaningless space into a place filled with inquiry and learning. The space the installation took up forced the viewer-audience to navigate differently around it, to lose track of time examining the multiplicity of viewpoints, and actively engage with the data just as the research team and students did and just as the clients do through their lived experiences. Our visual art representation served the purpose of not only allowing the researcher

to develop a deeper insight into the experiences of the clients being studied, but it conveyed the client's external realities to a larger public.

The artistic installation lured individuals to engage in the visual piece, make observations, build an understanding of client's experiences, and potentially respond to the work of art. It provided opportunities for generating new insights that are not easily available through verbal modes. Installed in a corner of the large conference presentation room, ways of engaging with the exhibition as research text were different from how academics normally engage with them. In this type of work, meaning is generated through interaction and negotiation with the work (O'Donoghue 2008, p. 207). As art installations transform physical space, a different context is presented—a "creative action space," explained by (Percy-Smith & Carney 2011, p. 33) as an alternative experience that can activate a creative process in the onlooker as they start to imagine different possibilities. Doing something radical with space, in the form of installation artwork, gives the viewers permission to see and think differently. They are given the license to enter the unknown and the borderless possibilities that can emerge through creative engagement rather than being restricted by limitations of what can be. Simultaneously, through the act of being engaged, conversations can begin about important issues and a heightened consciousness can emerge that will inspire action for social change.(Figs. 12.3, 12.4)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When we first introduced this project to undergraduate students, some students felt challenged using creative means to represent the data that they gathered about their clients. Our research team challenged them to consider not whether their art is good, but rather, what good is the art for? The students rose to the challenge and created imaginative, moving artistic representations of their client's stories that impacted art show attendees. Upon completion of this project, we found our research team facing the same challenges—how do we adequately represent the aggregate of the student represented client experiences in accessing social services in Los Angeles with a cohesive visual map, without focusing so much on whether it was good art, but rather, what good was this art for?

Just like the students, we rose to the occasion only after we realized the aesthetics of our visual map were only secondary to its ability



Fig. 12.3 Connecting barriers and pathways to resources with various fields of practice

to initiate a collective, embodied, and deeper understanding of pathways and barriers to accessing social services. Through orienting these pathways and barriers to service relationally, in a three-dimensional manner, our creative piece took hold. It was only with visual mapping that we felt able to connect the clients' cumulative lived experiences and their stories. We pushed the boundaries of knowledge representation by physically



Fig. 12.4 Final installation

representing pathways and barriers while simultaneously using symbolic representation and capturing place through an artistic occupation of space. As a result, from an aesthetic perspective, we achieved a three-dimensional visual map sculpture with multifaceted literal and symbolic meanings. However, the more important outcome of our visual map was that it actively answered “what is this art good for” through its physical, embodied, and symbolic meanings, its accessibility to diverse audiences and its role of placing the power of interpretation and construction of meaning in the hands of the viewer, thus democratizing knowledge creation. In the end, our students, participants, research team, and audience who engaged and interacted with the visual map, not only gained a more complete, multi-layered, and nuanced understanding of clients’ barriers and pathways to service at Los Angeles nonprofits, but also advanced their understanding of some of the challenges faced by those like the homeless student mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

NOTES

1. Students serve as interns at selected social service organizations for a total of 240 hours over the course of 1 year.
2. We understand that term “unhoused” is preferable to the term “homeless”, since the term “unhoused” is less stigmatizing, and the social and personal implications that are attached to the term “homeless” often inaccurately represent the complexity of those who live “unhoused”. However, throughout this chapter we use the term “homeless” in order to maintain consistency, since this term was used by the undergraduate students, the clients who were interviewed, and the organizations where the interviews took place.
3. A diorama is defined as a three-dimensional, full-size replica or scale model of a landscape or multiple objects and how they interact, typically showing historical events, nature scenes or cityscapes, for purposes of education or entertainment.
4. The artistic process of collage entails collecting, piecing together, and juxtaposing images and quotes from multiple sources in order to create connections, express thoughts, and emotions (Vaughan 2005).

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Fragments/Layers/Juxtaposition: Collage as a Data-Analysis Practice

Karen Morgaine

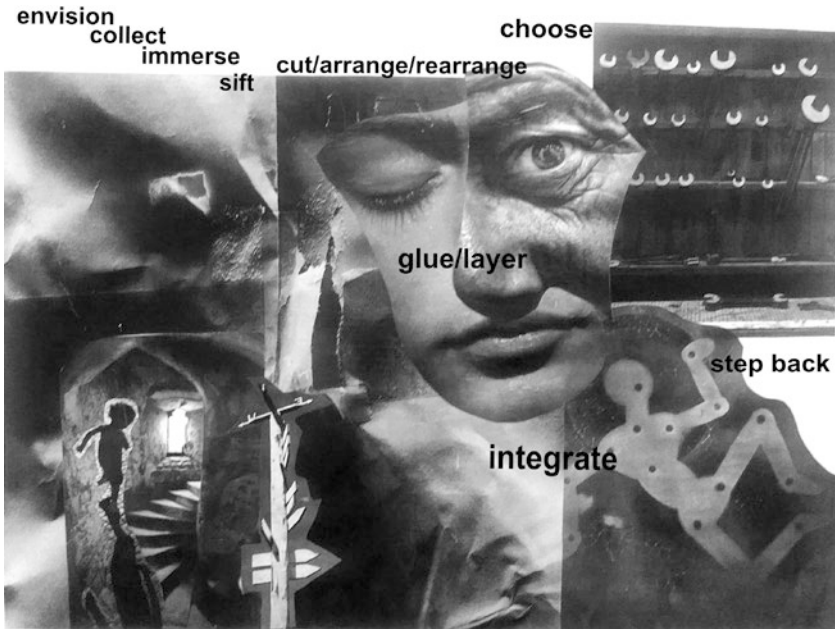


Fig. 13.1 Process

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ENVISION

Initially, I envisioned that my current research project on pan/polysexuality would be based on participants' stories and creative representations/artwork. The research focuses on participants' experiences of their own sexuality, both on a personal, micro, level, and on a macro level—within the context of the amorphous community of LGBTQQIAP+ folks. In previous research, my data collection methods have been primarily interviews and I wanted to move beyond words to incorporate a creative component through which participants could reveal aspects of their experience outside of the standard interviewer-participant dialogue. From the inception of my project, I included this data collection strategy in my application for IRB approval and in my study synopsis, which I used for outreach/sampling. Early in the process, it seemed that this plan may be somewhat waylaid; I received a series of lukewarm responses to my requests for a creative representation of the participants' experiences. I did receive a photo of my first participant's project, which they did explicitly for the purposes of the research study, and who was the only participant I was able to secure this from. In four subsequent interviews, participants shared previous journal entries, stories, a photo of a t-shirt, and a current photo of themselves. Another participant indicated that they completed a painting and months after when I followed up with interview transcripts, they indicated that they would share a picture of it with me, yet it has not materialized. In some cases, complex lives likely took precedence and perhaps lack of confidence in creative/artistic capabilities crept in. I was left with 1 out of 10 participants sharing a new-for-the-research-piece and 4 out of 10 sharing a previous creative endeavor (with and without explicit commentary about relevance and meaning).

When I stepped back to muse on this I thought that perhaps my desire to incorporate an additional arts-based element into my project was just that—my desire—not necessarily that of my participants. They were very giving with their time; completing 2–5 interviews each, for a total of 2.5–7 hours per participant. Based on this, I did not feel it was respectful to push for more time by stressing the addition of a creative piece. I decided that if I wanted to include a visual representation of my participants' stories then I could take that on myself, instead of expecting that they do so, and I determined that collage would be the most

viable route for me to take. In all honesty, I may have decided to analyze the data using collage before I ever untangled the origins of that decision. Nonetheless, it was a natural fit for three reasons: (1) as other arts-based researchers have noted, collage is a viable option for researchers (and participants) who are not necessarily trained in the arts (Butler-Kisber, 2008, 2010a, b; Davis, 2008); (2) once I began to investigate, I saw that there was limited information written about using collage explicitly to analyze participant data which made it more appealing to me (Butler-Kisber, 2008, 2010a, b; Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999; Holbrook & Pourchier, 2014); and (3) I wanted to find a tool to begin transcript analysis that would disrupt the more “traditional” process of coding but would still bring me to the data and allow me to find a way to tell participants’ stories.

As a visual art form collage has early foundations in folk art dating back at least 1000 years. In the 1700s, Mary Delany was a folk artist who created collage work, although more contemporarily, the origins of collage have typically been attributed to men, including Picasso, Braque, and Schwitters. It is most commonly linked to Cubism in which artists challenged dominant art forms as depicting one singular “truth,” and sought to represent multiplicity and that of ordinary life (Butler-Kisber, 2008, 2010a, b; Davis, 2008), which seemed an applicable medium for my purposes. Collage challenges methodological constraints, which have long been confronted by qualitative research and continue to be disrupted by arts-based researchers (Eisner, 2008; Leavy, 2015).

The metaphorical suitability includes not only the history of collage as disruptive and challenging “truth,” but also the actual meaning and processes by which collage is created. Collage, as an art form that is “derivative” using found materials, clearly seems apropos when, as a researcher, my analysis is derived from the stories of my participants. While it may be stretching the metaphor a bit, since I assiduously sought out most of my data, I daresay my plans to round out my project by using internet Tumblr posts (and to create accompanying collage/s) may encompass the idea of “found data.” Collage is also described as “appropriation” which presents a more challenging side of the metaphor. Certainly the history of researchers, and more specifically anti-oppressive researchers, grappling with how research appropriates stories, knowledge, and experiences comes into play here. While the use of collage as an analytical tool can be viewed from one angle as a viable anti-oppressive methodology

that can situate itself outside of more traditionally acceptable data analysis methods, the metaphor of appropriation remains an ongoing struggle for those of us who strive to approach research with an anti-oppressive stance.

The symbolism of collage also rests on perhaps the obvious, but maybe the most appealing metaphor—that collage itself is often metaphorical in its use of imagery. The juxtaposition of imagery and fragments of images can be revealing and symbolic unto themselves and pulling together fragments into a whole picture, albeit just one picture of many possible pictures, is one function of research. Collage can evoke multiple interpretations (Butler-Kisber, 2008) and for some researchers is a way to take fragments of data and make them more whole (Gerstenblatt, 2013). I would argue this “wholeness” is not seamless, but has multiple seams and fissures. These seams are indicative of our inability as researchers—and human beings—to ever represent or understand the whole story.

As a methodological tool, collage can be used in a variety of ways with the most common being memoing/reflecting on the research process and reexamining it in new ways; conceptualizing a response to a research question or to elaborating on text; and/or as elicitation in which participants use collage to express their experiences and tell their stories (Butler-Kisber, 2008, 2010a, b; Capous-Desyllas, 2014; Davis, 2008; Gerstenblatt, 2013; Leavy, 2015). When the researcher creates collage, it has predominantly been used in a reflexive fashion as a way to analyze their own experiences with the research process as they examine their position as researchers, the questions posed, and their place as interlopers into the worlds of their participants (Butler-Kisber 2008, 2010a, b; Capous-Desyllas, 2014; Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999). Some researchers have also incorporated collage as a “self-study” or autoethnographic tool (Davis, 2008), while some have used collage as a data analysis technique with the collage itself emerging from the participants’ interviews (Gerstanblatt, 2013).

COLLECT

The act of collecting imagery and supplies can be relatively simple or more time-consuming depending on personal choice and aesthetics. While I do not consider myself to be particularly artistic, I do have some level of creativity and a certain aesthetic that surfaced in the collection

process. I was generally not happy with magazine pictures and gravitated more toward photos from books and so the collection process became a bit of a treasure hunt for “good” images. This process did take on a life of its own as there were stretches of time when I had gathered so many books and had to then disassemble them, cut them, and file them all into their appropriate categories. In about a 6-month period of time I had amassed approximately 75 files of pictures, likely numbering in the thousands, in addition to more books laying in wait that I simply can’t bring myself to start cutting up. In a truly fitting description of this process, Holbrook and Pourchier describe this collection process as “hoarding.” They note,

We hang on to bits—paper scraps, glass shards, whole books, broken objects—anything that appeals to us visually, tactually, intellectually. We shove objects into closets, basements, hard drives and watch our piles grow. As we recognize inquiry as ongoing, we do not censor our collecting; a Starbucks cup sleeve’s ridged underside or a book’s scribbled marginalia may serve a future purpose. We proceed aware that time rolls out differently for living inquiries. Throughout the years that make up these inquiries, we hoard materials that we cannot give up. (2014, p. 758)

The appropriation of published images for use in collage brings up more challenges than definitive answers regarding use and copyright. Butler-Kisber (2010a, b) mentions that, for research purposes, there has been limited guidance regarding best practices with a range of responses from supporting use of any image to use of only “public” images, to use only with legal permission. In an online review of the issue related to collage more generally rather than in its use for research purposes, it seems that the same varied opinions surface. There have been a number of highly publicized cases in recent years in the art world, most notably *Prince v. Cariou* in which the judge, on appeal, sided with the collage artist in his use of published photographic work based on fair use law and the argument that the collage work suitably transformed the image. Fear, based in what some term a “permissions culture,” has the potential to restrict the creative use of images in collage work and also may influence researchers who seek to use this methodology for fear that the collages produced either by themselves or their participants may not be accepted by the publisher without permissions (Aufderheide, Jaszi, Bello, & Milosevic, 2014). Additional concerns surrounding not only the legal

aspects of the use of imagery for derivative art, but also the moral and ethical aspects of appropriation are not without merit.

In terms of my own project I used images liberally with no formal permission but I did tend to both transform the images and use only pieces of an image. Additionally, the purpose of my collage work is significantly different from that of the original image being used and will not grant me financial gain, particularly in the same markets in which the original photos or paintings were meant for. Yet it is important to note that when I embarked on this particular data analysis portion of my research, none of these issues were at the forefront of my mind. Admittedly this choice had an element of haphazardness to it as I dove in and began to fully embrace the process without considering whether the collages I created would remain completely hidden from view and would only be used in the solo act of data analysis due to legal barriers or whether they could be integrated into the stories I was hoping to share about the participants. When I began to consider legal ramifications and the “safe” advice to cull images from only clipart and public picture banks (Butler-Kisber, 2010a, b) I balked at the idea—this coming from the tensions between art-based methodology as a tool for research and art for art’s sake. While engaging in the process of data analysis via collage was approached as a research endeavor, I struggled with my need to also have the collages “look good” and sought out compelling imagery to assist in the process.

IMMERSE

While the collection of images has been ongoing, taking pause only due to restraint and a lack of space, I began the process of going back to the data to begin analysis. I started with individual participants and read all the transcripts from one participant’s interviews. Directly after the reading, I moved to the files of pictures since I wanted to keep the material fresh in my mind. I deliberately did not take any notes while I was reading in an attempt to move away from marginal notes or traditional coding in qualitative data analysis software so that I could approach the collage first. This is not to say that themes/feelings/ideas were not present in my mind when I began to think about the collage, but I wanted to minimize solidifying themes before I created the collage to allow for a more emergent process to take place.

The project also incorporates data from a survey of 241 participants about the meanings of their newly emergent non-binary sexualities,

focusing on pan/polysexuality. The survey included 11 categorical/demographic questions (i.e. “How do you currently identify your non-binary sexuality?”) and 10 “short answer” questions that tended to range between 15–125 words. When creating a collage based on survey data, I followed the same process, first choosing one question, such as “describe what your current sexual identity means to you,” and then reading all responses in one category, such as pansexual, moving from the reading to the files of pictures.

SIFT

This process was alternatively interesting and mundane, primarily based on the sheer number of images I had. Once I read through the interviews, I began to look through most of my files of pictures, sometimes skipping a file or two if I did not believe that I would use a certain sort of picture (such as an animal). When I approached the pictures I maintained a focus on what I had just read in the interviews—stories, themes, flow, and the tone of the interviews. As I found pictures that seemed to represent aspects of the stories, I put them aside to consider more fully. After I sifted through hundreds or thousands of images, I was typically left with various piles of pictures—typically 20–60 images (Fig. 13.2). The next step was to continue to winnow down to a smaller number and it was at this time that more of a visual and thematic image began to take



Fig. 13.2 Images under consideration

shape. It is also at this point that I needed to balance my own aesthetic impulses with the data. This is reflected within the dialogue in the arena of arts-based research that the methodology does not skew too far in the direction of “art for art’s sake” so that it is representative of the narrative and the research itself (Gerstenblatt, 2013). Alternatively, Leavy (2015) suggests that the art produced in ABR needs to “stand on its own as a piece of art while simultaneously communicating information” (p. 265).

CHOOSE

Choosing the “finalists” tended to be a very quick process as I surveyed the initial images. Typically I would group them into categories and a sense of what I wanted to communicate and the feelings that images evoked came through almost effortlessly. Most often within minutes of sorting through thousands of pictures and choosing the contenders, I was able to settle on a handful of images to use, which tended to stay relatively static at this point.

With the individual participants, this choosing primarily reflected my overall experience of how they related to their own sexuality and gender at the time of the interviews. A couple of the participants’ consistently exuded immersion, joy, and lightness, which influenced the images I chose and is reflected in the final collage. Others appeared to disclose greater moments of uncertainty, stigma, and heaviness that seemed to come across in the images chosen for these collages. While I often had a few ideas of what I wanted to reflect with the imagery, the colors and feelings I gravitated toward were more structured around my overall impressions rather than isolated stories.

Since I had much more distance from the survey participants, choosing those images tended to be based more on the variety of themes that the participants’ touched on in the descriptive answers that they gave. With these collages, I typically incorporated a few more images in an attempt to capture the number of voices present in contrast to the overall feeling and experience of my relationship with the individual participants I spoke with for a number of hours.

Choosing a method, whether ABR or another research method, should fit the research objectives that the researcher seeks. This suitability of methods and design should “click” (Leavy, 2015, p. 258) such that there is harmony between the questions, design, and final representation. While arts-based approaches can form the totality of a project, they can

also be one aspect of a multi-method project. An arts-based component can work together with a “traditional” component (such as interviews) such that they inform one another and illuminate certain aspects of the research independently or work in concert with one another. While there are a variety of tools available for researchers, arts-based methods can be particularly appealing to researchers who seek to expand the traditional boundaries of qualitative research. From an anti-oppressive perspective, ABR has the potential to be emancipatory and consciousness-raising (Leavy, 2015) and so can be a methodological tool that “clicks” with an anti-oppressive lens.

CUT/ARRANGE/REARRANGE

The process became meditative at this point, alternating between cutting and arranging and cutting and rearranging, until the elements fit. Juxtaposition and mood took priority—are the separate pieces meant to be a focal point or to fade into the background? Are they foundational to what I heard in the participants’ stories or are they peripheral? Do they need to speak to one another or be silent and still? As a whole does it resonate with the text and is the tone accurate?

My suggestion is to use the right tools for the job—you may start with standard household scissors yet is it likely that soon enough it will be evident that sometimes you are trying to open a bottle with an ice skate and you need to refine the process. How much detail do you want to highlight and maintain? Honoring the process of bearing witness to minute details in the lives of the participants who shared with me is like honing into the detail of an image with the right tool. Reminiscent of building trust so a participant experiences a level of comfort to be able to tell their stories, I need to be gentle with the images—the symbols of their stories.

Cutting and rearranging was an iterative process, akin to qualitative data analysis, which frequently invites the researcher(s) to refine themes as they revisit the data and work to capture the essence of participants’ narratives. As I engaged in this process I found it to be the most enjoyable part of the collage making. It was both focused/quiet and playful as I fashioned each image into the components I wanted to use individually and then identified how they would work together as a whole. I found myself engrossed in the process of finding lines that would complement one another and ways in which the

individual images would play off one another. Small details that fit together “perfectly” such as the way the image of the wooden Figures engaged in sex on the table with the pig nose and mouth on each side and their toes on the edge of the napkin were rather amusing to me (Fig. 13.3). This process became more refined after I had created a number of collages; with my first few feeling more disparate (Fig. 13.4, L) than later collages (Fig. 13.4, R). This also seems reflective of the process of qualitative data analysis, which can seem clumsy at the start and becomes more comfortable over time.



Fig. 13.3 Collage #11 Detail



Fig. 13.4 Collage #2 (L) and Collage #11 (R)

GLUE/LAYER

There is finality to this part of the process and, for me, a need to trust that it will come together in the way I envisioned that it would. This process also implies a certainty as the glue fixes the image on the board, which raises the question of representation and my own “certainty” that what I created is reflective of the participants’ stories. At the same time, the collages are not “stand alone” and are but one part of the story that will be woven together with participants’ words, and, for some, with their own visual representation.

Throughout the process I have also sent material to participants so they have a chance to comment, change, add, and so on. Regarding the collages, I heard back from 7 out of 10 of my individual participants who overwhelmingly remarked that the collages were “cool” and they liked them, although beyond asking me to explain to them (2 participants), this was the only response. It is important to note that while the collage has a level of finality once the gluing takes place, the writing/weaving is not complete so there is still room for more analysis/conversation. I am also considering the addition of some of the participants’ words as an overlay on the collages, which would add another layer, yet I am uncertain if the shift in the image enhances it or muddies it.

According to Weber’s “ten good reasons” to use visual images in research, one reason is that “images can be used to communicate more holistically, incorporating multiple layers, and evoking stories or questions” (2008, p. 45). Not only does each collage incorporate multiple layers, it is but one part of the story and needs to be woven into participants’ individual narratives, my own interpretations, and into the larger picture created by multiple voices and experiences.

STEP BACK

Practitioners of traditional qualitative methods have resisted pressures that have asserted that they bow down to positivist-based evaluative measures. Similarly, arts-based researchers are seeking their own methods to assess trustworthiness/authenticity/validity and are looking toward measures that are applicable to these innovative methodological practices. Leavy (2015) suggests focusing evaluative standards on vigor rather than rigor and also challenges arts-based researchers that being overly cautious can lead to sterile and “muddied” (p. 257) truths. What determines the “intensity of the effect” (Vigor, n.d.) may be up for grabs and unique to each individual, yet I noticed that I found myself responding positively to the effect of the collages when it was time to step back and allow them to each settle in.

Unless something distracted me from doing so, I went directly to my notebook to write down my thoughts regarding the completed collage, most notably the meaning of specific images that I had chosen. I didn’t want the thoughts to fade over time and so I was generally consistent with this practice. This took the form of noting what each image meant to me and how I saw it fit into the story my participant told me (or the story that emerged from the qualitative survey results). For example:

This one was just fun—I felt like it should be playful. There was a little shifting and uncertainty (re—cis female to gender queer) and historic issues of religion plus discussion of ‘cranky bisexuals’ but those elements didn’t go into the collage.

The female character is happy and playful—the balloons are the ‘privilege bubble’ she is in. The phallic image and trademark and gears speak to how her sexuality and work intertwine. The Matisse image speaks to the importance of polyamory in her life also. The men’s shirt is the addition of a little exploration into genderqueer identities. (See Fig. 13.5)



Fig. 13.5 Kit

I also surrounded myself with my completed collages for weeks... bleeding into months... as other work pressed on my time and kept me away from resuming work on the project. To date, I have finished one collage for every individual participant (10), one self-reflective collage regarding the project and some challenges I faced, and six collages based on short qualitative answers from my survey. I have plans to revisit the survey to determine if I want to do any additional collages in addition to creating at least one based on analysis of social media dialogue related to pan/polysexuality.

Once I finished the individual collages I decided it was time to go back to the text—both by reading and listening—I have begun to create transcript poems as the next step in my progression from immersing myself in the data to synthesis into a finished “product.” This step will form another layer and will serve as a bridge between the visual representation and the final narrative.

INTEGRATE

Visual imagery has the potential to evoke a multiplicity of emotions and interpretations, which, at times, is found to a lesser degree in a more traditional thematic analysis of participant interviews. Additionally, as Leavy notes, visual art may “challenge, dislodge, and transform outdated beliefs and stereotypes” (2015, p. 216). Not only does visual art hold this potential, it also can be used to represent groups of people who are typically not represented and can serve to both provide the space for marginalized to be “seen” and can transform dominant paradigms (hooks, 1995; Leavy, 2015). It is my hope that my research on newly emerging non-binary sexualities can do just that for individuals who identify as such.

Additionally the aesthetics of ABR can have a broader appeal to audiences of the research that can serve to move research out of the confines of academia (Finley, 2008; Leavy, 2015; Weber, 2008). Research that is accessible can serve anti-oppressive research goals. A common thread for many of my individual participants was deepening their own understanding of non-binary sexualities and genders through higher education. Perhaps speaking in varied ways can open those channels for more people and move conversations forward rather than reserving them for privileged spaces in academia.

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Community Sharing for Social Change

This Part highlights the power of sharing research findings to audiences outside of academia to support social change efforts. The authors share the ways in which they use diverse modalities, from theater performances to visual art to zine-making, for reaching diverse audiences that do not typically have access to research, thus democratizing knowledge. What is unique about these contributions are the ways in which each research project engages in the co-construction of knowledge through art and visions for social justice.

In their chapter, *This is Not a Lab Coat: Claiming Knowledge Production as Power*, Maddy Fox and Una Osato focus on a performance piece from an arts-based research project to explore the potential contributions of participatory artistic embodied research for science and social justice. The Polling for Justice (PFJ) study was a multigenerational participatory action research project on the daily experiences of youth at the intersections of education, criminal justice, policing, and public health. Fox and Osato focus on the ways the majority youth research team creatively used a scientist's "lab coat" as a theatrical prop/provocation in various settings to re-imagine adolescence and to make claims on knowledge production as power.

Elsa Oliveira and Jo Veary present and discuss three linked research projects conducted in partnership with Sisonke: the national sex worker movement in South Africa in their chapter titled, *Making Research and Building Knowledge with Communities: Examining Three Participatory Visual and Narrative Projects with Migrants Who Sell Sex in South Africa*.

These projects, initiated in 2010, experimented with different ways of co-producing and sharing knowledge through participatory arts-based and narrative methods. They describe the evolution of these projects and discuss how the research methods developed to include public engagement approaches that offered both opportunities and risks to participants and knowledge production processes.

Challenging the ways in which knowledge is created and shared, the Anti-Eviction Mapping Collective presents their social justice work in the format of a handbook. Their *Anti-Eviction Mapping Project* is a multimedia storytelling collective documenting the dispossession of San Francisco Bay Area residents in the wake of the Tech Boom 2.0. Through an ever-expanding collection of mediums, such as maps, murals, zines, oral histories, and community events, the collective makes the often invisible mechanisms of material, cultural, and affective displacement visible. The Handbook is a dynamic document that educates about past efforts while providing a field guide for future activism. Captured in this chapter, the Handbook becomes a static testament to the ongoing work of the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project as of February 2016.

This is not a Lab Coat: Claiming Knowledge Production as Power

Madeline Fox and Una Aya Osato

Hello. My name is Dr. Researchy, and I am going to be presenting a paper to you on “The Urban Teen” and a theory I developed that is a framework for looking at one of the major problems that growing urban U.S. city centers have been faced with—namely the adolescent

The Polling for Justice (PFJ) research performance opens with a lone bespectacled academic-looking person standing on stage in a white lab-coat and fumbling through a sheaf of papers, mumbling.

The *Dr. Researchy* character reads his paper on “The Urban Teen” in a monotonous ramble. Before long, young people begin discussing Dr. Researchy’s talk from their seats in the audience:

“This is boring.”

“What is he saying?”

M. Fox (✉)
Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, USA

U.A. Osato
Public Science Project, New York, USA

“I think he just said something about the “urban teen.””

“Ohhh he’s talking about you!”

“No I think he’s talking about you!”

“I got no idea what he’s talking about, all I know is this is boring.”

“No one understands him but himself!”

“You know what, I’m going to go up there and say something”

One by one, PFJ youth researchers walk up on stage, interrupting Dr. Researchy by taking the microphone and insisting that Dr. Researchy sit down and listen to the results of their youth research on youth experiences in New York City. In the last moment as Dr. Researchy is being escorted off stage, one of the youth researchers, Darius Francis, admires Dr. R’s lab coat and takes it for his own, wearing it for the rest of the data-performance. (Fox & Fine 2012, p. 153) (to see a video version of this sketch, see www.publicscienceproject.org)

The quote above is a small excerpt from a scripted version of the Pollingfor Justice data performance on young peoples’ experiences of public policy betrayal and resistance in New York City. In this paper, we tell the story and significance of the performance piece. Polling for Justice was a youth-centered, multi-generational participatory action research project that took place between 2008 and 2011. The Polling for Justice (PFJ) research collective came together to study young people’s lived experiences at the intersections of education, criminal justice, and public health in New York City. The project centered on a city-wide survey and a series of data-driven focus groups (Fine, Stoudt, Fox & Santos 2010; Stoudt, Fine & Fox 2012). The PFJ research collective used participatory artistic embodied methodologies to analyze, and later script a performance of the mostly quantitative data (Fox & Fine 2012). We explore how the PFJ research collective’s turn to artful improvisational embodiments of data was a liberatory way to produce scholarship and an activism by young people of color.

We have written elsewhere about the turn to artistic embodied methodologies in order to document how PFJ considered data analysis an artistic process (Fox 2015; Salas 1990), and how PFJ considered moments of dissemination as participatory data labs designed to engage/incite our (often academic) audiences (Fox & Fine 2012).

The PFJ research team collectively disseminated findings on how young people bear the brunt of inadequate public policies, the neoliberal shrinking of access to resources, and aggressive policing practices (Stoudt, Fine, & Fox 2011/2012). We've written about the ways our participatory, embodied approach to data analysis and dissemination brought us to understand the ways that negative experiences and consequences across policy sectors accumulate especially for males, Black and Brown young people, and young people identified as LGBTQ, as compared to youth who identified as female, other racial-ethnic identities, and heterosexual/straight (Fine, Stoudt, Fox, & Santos 2010; Stoudt, Fine, & Fox 2011/2012).

In this chapter essay, we explore how the theater of our research became a space to theorize *on* and *with* our feet (Gallagher 2007). That is we explore how dramatic interpretations lead us to generate theory and how the enactments we created were activism both in and outside of the research “lab” and on and off the “street”. Our core assumption is that knowledge production is power. With the title “This is not a lab coat” we are inviting (priming) your mind to conjure up all that is culturally represented with a doctor’s white lab coat, the stereotypical costume of expertise and a reflection of institutional forms of knowledge production. We tell how a multi-generational group of researchers donned that lab coat and transformed it into a cloak of collective power and, like Magritte’s “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*,” a provocation (Foucault 1983). Through the telling, we show how lab coats can hold multiple meanings, how theatre props can be theoretically informed activism, and how science might claim art. We consider how conventional claims on knowledge production must be challenged and changed.

The “PFJ lab coat” grew from a drawing exercise in response to the prompt “draw a researcher” and, over time, became a participatory, embodied, dramatic performance piece used to introduce our findings and our research team to a wide range of audiences. We begin with basic background on the PFJ project and then tell the life-story of the “draw a researcher” group exercise. In examining this exercise, we detail the role of play, building across difference, and the development of collective artistic language in producing scholarship that reimagined adolescence as liberatory.

NEED TO KNOW INFORMATION: BACKGROUND ON POLLING FOR JUSTICE

In 2008, the PFJ study was launched out of a collective desire to investigate current conditions for NYC's youth from youth-centered community organizations, including the Urban Youth Collaborative and Michelle Fine and the Public Science Project at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. In line with the work of Public Science Project, PFJ was profoundly committed to the idea that those most impacted by the research questions should be the leaders of inquiry. From the outset, the PFJ research team conceived of the project as multi-generational and youth-centered. Often participatory action research projects with young people are referred to as "youth participatory action research" or "YPAR." However, this practice risks communicating (even if unintentionally) that the research is less-than presumably "adult," research (Talbert & Lesko 2014). Further, to describe the work as "Youth Participatory Action Research" obscures the reality that the research was carried out by a collective of people across a wide age span, each bringing different expertise and skills (Fox & Fine 2015). In order to work across difference, including age, we contended with issues of power in our research group. And, because the research questions focused on youth lived-experiences, the expertise of young people growing up in New York City was privileged.

The PFJ project included over 40 young people from across NYC, along with academics, community organizers, public health officials, and community lawyers who collectively drafted a city-wide survey for youth on experiences with education, public health and criminal justice. There were various moments in the timeline of the project when some researchers left the project to move on to other things and others joined. After the first few months of participatory survey design, the large research team that included over 40 young people distilled down to a working group of eight to ten core researchers.¹ Maddy was involved from the outset of the project and Una joined the research team for the analysis phase.

The PFJ study focused on youth experiences at the intersections of policing, schooling, and public health. The survey included a wide range of questions, including feelings about teachers, access to health care, how youth reported coping with stress, details about daily interactions with police, and young people's activism and resistance. The PFJ research

collective spent three years conducting the study: six months of design, one year of data collection, and a year and a half of analysis and dissemination, including participatory data performances that took place from New York to Denver to Halifax (Fig. 14.1).

In PFJ, in 2009, one year after we began, the seven young people and three adults that made up the core PFJ research team, were faced with making sense of a large data-set from over 1000 survey respondents from across New York City. In order to be able to analyze this data collectively and for our analysis to be of use to our own communities (Fine & Barreras 2001), we devised participatory artistic embodied methodological approaches for collective analysis and dissemination (Fox & Fine 2012; Fox 2015). The following sections describe our theoretical commitments, outline key study results, and detail the development of our participatory artistic embodied approaches.

“WE ARE ALL BOUND UP TOGETHER”—
FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER

Our epistemological commitments (to participatory research across generations) and methodology (using art, drama, and collectivity) were born of our theoretical commitments. Maxine Greene’s theorizing on freedom grounded our orientation towards justice and critical consciousness. Her work also steered our praxis towards art. Greene writes about freedom as being situated in the history, the conditions, the oppressions of our every day lives. She writes that freedom can be understood as a praxis of moving towards what is possible, knowing that the process is infinite (Greene 1988, p. g). This understanding of freedom grounded our social justice goals, and left room for multiple ways of knowing, thinking, and communicating, including the use of art.

We took, as fundamental to our work, ideas of interdependence, solidarity, and mutual responsibility. These ideas informed our conception of the research collective as an ensemble, rooted in interdisciplinarity. In part, these commitments grew because we were contending with some problematic histories of our own disciplines—including in particular the racist, patriarchal history of the construction of adolescence (Lesko 2001; Bakan 1971; Hall 1904), and the positivist, all-too-often limiting and damage-centered legacy of psychology² (Teo 2010; Tuck 2009; Fox 2015). Katherine McKittrick (2013) claims, interdisciplinarity holds

possibilities that are hopeful, resistant, and creates spaces where new ideas, questions, and ways of knowing can exist. In order to live our commitments to interdependence, interdisciplinarity, and multi-generationality, we functioned as a collective, or in improvisational theater terms: an ensemble.

In PFJ, participatory knowledge production was a radical act and an activism, achieved via centering historically excluded youth, through artistic embodiment and engaging in complex, reciprocal relationships. In order to be able to explore these dynamics, it is important to have a sense of the research we conducted and the findings we put forth into the world.

SOME KEY STUDY RESULTS

The PFJ findings highlighted the particular ways that public policies have profound social and institutional consequences for young people. In our survey findings we found that youth of color, those living in poverty, youth who identify as LGBTQ, and youth who are immigrants experienced the highest levels of policy betrayals across education policy, health care, policing, and surveillance (Fine, Stoudt, Fox, & Santos, 2010; Fine & Ruglis, 2009).

In the PFJ survey, most survey respondents reported having high educational aspirations, feeling hopeful about the future, and caring about working with other young people to improve their communities. In various ways, young people reported feeling good about their educational experiences, and on these measures, there were basically no racial/ethnic, gender or geographic differences. However, young people also registered their dissatisfaction with their schooling experiences, including feeling bored in school, feeling that too much class time was spent getting ready to pass high-stakes standardized tests, reporting overcrowded classrooms, and feeling pushed to leave school for one reason or another.

We also uncovered some disturbing trends. For instance, in response to youth-generated survey items about everyday interactions with police (prompts like, *“In the last six months: I was helped by a police officer; I was given a summons/ticket; I was arrested; I was touched inappropriately by police.”*), young people reported high levels of negative interactions with the police. Nearly half of the survey respondents (48.1%) reported negative contact with police in the previous six months. Looking further, we noted that many young people reported repeated negative encounters with police. Of the 481 youth who reported at least one negative

interaction with police in the last six months, 64.2% reported two or more, 43.0% reported three or more, 30.9% reported four or more, and 22.2% reported five or more negative interactions with police.

The PFJ youth researchers and PFJ survey respondents were growing up with intimate, everyday experiences with police because of key policy changes in New York City in the years prior to the survey. In 1998, New York City implemented a policy putting the police department in charge of security in all the public schools (Mukherjee 2007). Meanwhile, due to a separate policy that allows students to apply to schools other than their zoned school, students in NYC often travel to schools in other neighborhoods or boroughs, increasing the amount of time young people spend on the city streets. Particular areas of NYC, like Central Brooklyn and the South Bronx are identified as ‘impact areas’ by the NYPD and as a result young people experience especially high levels of aggressive policing inside schools and on the streets/in public spaces (Stoudt et al. 2012). Indeed, in the PFJ survey, youth from Central Brooklyn and the South Bronx reported the highest levels of interactions with police. Youth identifying as LGBTQ, males, and Black and Brown youth reported higher rates of negative interaction with police than their peers. (For more on these findings see: Fine, Stoudt, Fox, & Santos 2010; Stoudt 2011/2012; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine 2011)

These were the numbers. And, in order to deeply understand collectively across generation, we used artful, dramatic embodiments of the quantitative data to analyze and theorize together (Fox 2015; Fox & Fine 2012; Fox 2016).

DEVisING DR. RESEARCHY

In one of our first research sessions as a small group, we conducted an exercise to re-consider the conceptions of “research” and “researcher.” We each took blank paper, a handful of colored markers and independently drew a researcher. The “Draw a Researcher” activity, developed by María Elena Torre, has now become a standard activity near the beginning of participatory action research projects. The purpose of the activity is to expand traditional conceptions of research, challenge historically constricted ideas about ‘who holds the expertise,’ and draw out the idea that there are countless ways to embody the role of “researcher.” Popular conceptions of *researcher* are still quite narrow. A Google image search produces pictures of people in lab coats, many of whom are

white men. In our group, on that day we had a range of interpretations of “researcher”: PFJ researcher Candace Greene drew a little guy with a magnifying glass—in discussion she elaborated that he was white, PFJ researcher Darius Francis drew a head surrounded by many books, and Maybelline Santos (at that point a PFJ researcher for a year and a half), crowded her page with young people of all shapes and sizes. In the discussion of this activity, we laughed at our drawings and began to articulate some implications of broadening the definitions of who gets to take on the role of expert, of knowledge producer, and of “researcher.”

Several months later, while working through analysis of the survey data, we found ourselves facing the fast-approaching deadline of the first performance of our findings. We surrounded ourselves with the materials we’d produced in our research meetings so far—flip chart paper with meeting agendas, brainstormed lists of responses to the data, stacks of statistical output, data graphs and the researcher drawings. I, Una, proposed the idea that we develop a performance piece from the “Draw a Researcher” activity we’d done months before. Then, through collaborative creative discovery using the artistic language we’d developed so far as a collective, we came up with our lines through the *doing* of putting drawings of a researcher “up on its feet” in real time.

It looked like this: We devised a “researcher” character (we named him Dr. Researchy Research) based on the most stereotypical ideas of research. This character was white, male and costumed in white lab coat, glasses, notebook, and pocket protector. He stood behind a podium before the audience, expounding on his positivist study on urban youth as urban blight. One-by-one, each PFJ researcher came to the stage interrupting Dr. Researchy, explaining PAR and PFJ and meanwhile taking a piece of “researcher” costume for her or himself: PFJ researcher Maybelline Santos took Dr. Researchy’s lecture notes, Niara Calliste took Dr. Researchy’s glasses, Candace Greene his pocket protector, Jessica Wise took Dr. Researchy’s podium, Jaquana Pearson his magnifying glass, and Darius Francis asked for Dr. Researchy’s lab coat. By the end of the piece, each person on stage, including Dr. Researchy (he was able to keep his pointer) had a symbolic researcher’s “tool.” In this way, our collaboratively devised performance piece communicated to audiences the participatory stance of our research project. By the end of the sketch we were all “researchers,” our expertise legitimated by the re-distribution of Dr. Researchy’s “tools”. The opening of this chapter consists of an excerpt of the scripted version of this sketch.

SCRIPTING DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE

We performed the Dr. Researchy piece as an introduction to our embodied findings from the PFJ study the following week for the first time to a class of graduate students at New York University. Over the next year we were invited to perform in more classrooms and at activist and academic conferences around New York City and beyond. The data-performances changed with each performance as our analyses evolved and audiences differed, however, it always began and ended with the Dr. Researchy sketch.

The show launched as Dr. Researchy gave up his lab coat, and by the end, the researcher's lab coat was a well-worn part of the youth researchers' costume. Dr. Researchy returned to stage in the final moments of the data-performances, but as part of the research collective and without his/her lab coat. As a result, the PFJ research collective repeated the "script" of this sketch again and again. Again and again the PFJ young people literally and performatively inserted themselves onto academic stages, insisting that historical/dominant knowledge-producers sit down and listen, and claimed that scientist's lab coat as their own, by right (Appadurai 2006).

ON HOW PARTICIPATORY ARTISTIC EMBODIMENT WORKED

Our process of artistic embodiment evolved and shifted somewhat over the year that we worked with embodied methodologies, but the skeleton remained the same. After using theater games and exercises as warm-ups to awaken our expressive, artistic awareness and to connect as a group, we engaged PFJ data in the following ways: In collaboration with the critical statistical expertise of Brett Stoudt, we projected statistical output, graphs, or charts on the wall and ensured we all understood the outcomes. Using a stats-in-action process (see Stoudt 2010) we would work our way through the data iteratively based on questions that arose within the group. We might move from looking at overall frequencies of youth reports of interactions with police, and then ask in a participatory process: What if we break this down by gender? What if by geography? By race? How can we make sense of these statistics we're generating?

After establishing comprehension of the quantitative data, we'd use various theatre exercises to embody the data. Sometimes we'd sit by ourselves to write a scene or monologue, sometimes in small groups

we'd take turns sculpting our co-researchers into frozen scenes of how we understood one aspect of the data (see Boal 2002), sometimes we'd improvise human sculptures with no one directing the action, sometimes we'd tell the data like a story and then turn those stories into improvised enactments. With each approach, we'd pause and discuss different interpretations of what we were seeing.

THEORIZING COLLECTIVELY VIA DEVELOPING AN ARTISTIC LANGUAGE

We turned to dramatic embodiments of the survey data as a strategy to think deeply as a collective across a diverse and multi-generational research team. But, it didn't come automatically. Just like learning how to read and interpret statistical output, we needed to learn how to express ourselves artistically and collectively. Nine members of the PFJ research team including the authors, Jessica Wise, Darius Francis, Isabel Vierira, Jaquana Pearson, Maybelline Santos, Candace Greene, and Niara Calliste were trained in Playback Theatre methods at the School of Playback Theatre in the summer of 2009. Over a 5-day workshop, we developed a new language for thinking as a collective and a way of communicating as a group that was both embodied and improvised.

Playback Theatre is a form of improvisational theater in which actors enact in real time the true stories of audience members. We came to use Playback Theatre in part because of our background with it—the founders of Playback, Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas, are Maddy's parents and Una is a Playback Theatre practitioner. There is an explicit commitment in Playback Theatre that a story always belongs to its teller (Fox 1994; Salas 2013). This was important for our methodological purposes because it provided a dramatic, artistic approach to working with the PFJ data that was in line with our participatory research commitments: we could “play” with the data, but for the purpose of understanding and interpreting the meanings intended by our respondents and each other. Beyond the Playback Theatre workshop, we worked with invited guest artists who specialized in a variety of artist approaches; Evan Bissell, Denisse Andrade, and Ben Snyder helped us develop skills and think artistically in multiple ways—to summon our imagination, our creativity, and tap into knowledge in various forms.

After experimenting with multiple ways of presenting data, we came to the following insights: (1) Presenting the data as a traditional presentation with slides and written remarks felt inadequate and would fail to communicate the urgency and complexity of our findings, as well as the depth of expertise across our research team; (2) We needed a way to share findings from the survey alongside the intimate, individual experiences of the research team because we came to understand them as fundamentally interwoven and important to reconcile; (3) The groups who were inviting us to present at their conferences and events were attracting audiences made up of majority white academics and/or educators. In response, we wanted our data to speak directly to them and their experiences; (4) We were committed to sustaining our participatory ethic through the dissemination moment, even and especially across differences in power and positionality.

THE DATA PERFORMANCE LAB

These insights pushed us to re-conceptualize the data-presentation moment as a *data performance lab*. The lab presented a way to share complex findings from the expert voices of a group of young people, leaving open the possibility for collaboration—and even solidarity—between audience and performer. We conceived of our findings and of dissemination both as dynamic processes rather than finite moments.

There were loosely two sections to the *data performance lab* experience: an embodied performance of the data followed by interactive audience engagement with the data. We began by performing findings from the PFJ data in the form of a Day-in-the-Life of one young person, via multiple perspectives. Though we came to use a Day-in-the-Life story as a theatrical device to communicate analyses, the PFJ data performance lab “script” was never finalized—we would edit it, revise it, and make changes before and after each performance.

The Day-in-the-Life story began with a young person getting ready for his school day. Running late for school due to familial obligations, he gets caught jumping a subway turnstyle and taken to the truancy office, making him even later for school. Once he finally arrives, hours later, his teacher won’t let him in the classroom for being late, and so on. Using data and incorporating moments of resistance, support, and agency, the story communicates a lived experience of public policy betrayal and

resistance for young people in NYC. Throughout the story, PFJ study data was projected and narrated behind and through the performance. Like a musical chord, our data-story was performed for the audience via various “notes” or modes played all at once. Each beat of the Day-in-the-Life included a data graph, a human sculpture, and narrated analysis of the data. In this way, we were able to simultaneously communicate the polyvocality, multiple perspectives, contradicting ideas, personal story, and aggregated survey data that make up the PFJ findings. In less time than it took you to read that sentence, the PFJ audiences would drink in a complex set of truths and interpretations.

We designed this telling of our data for the particular audiences who were inviting us to tell it—that is adult, majority white, educators and academics. We were happy to share the data with them because according to our theory of change, we needed these audiences to join with us in further research and organizing efforts in order to impact the problematic policies impacting NYC youth. So, it was our design to tell the story in a way that emphasized the every-day-ness (in terms of both frequency and normalized nature) of the findings and at the same time highlight the outrageousness of policy betrayals that young people experience. Even as we were performing evidence of policy betrayal, oppression, and resistance, the performance afforded us an opportunity to highlight liberatory moments, joy, and hope that came through as a result of our collective artistic process.

In the second part of the data performance labs, we’d invite audiences to respond to the data individually and collectively. We improvised this part—always using a Playback Theatre approach, often further inviting audiences to embody analyses with us via Theatre of the Oppressed techniques (Boal 2002). The work was never polished, but it was our hope that through the experience, designed as an encounter, we might not only communicate our findings, but also communicate a sense of mutual responsibility.

ON PLAY

The PFJ research team analyzed data on youth experiences of policy betrayal and critical resistance through devising embodiments that grew out of silliness, wild expressions of sound and movement, risk-taking of all sorts—and importantly—spontaneity. Jonathan Fox (1994) writes, “Spontaneity means more than a quickness of action. It means a choice

of action. It is connected to our capacity for play, but calls upon our highest intelligence” (pp. x). Adopting a culture of play/spontaneity allowed our group of majority youth of color from low-income neighborhoods to begin to analyze the data without being limited by worries about if we were smart enough or schooled enough in the “expected” ways. It also provided a methodology for us to tap into knowledge stored deeply in our bodies, life stories, and sharp brains that went beyond overwhelmingly reductive social representations of teenagers so readily found in media and academic literature.

PFJ research meetings included much laughter. They always began with a physical warm-up, a game, and individual updates before we dove into the data. While we analyzed data, we always made sure to activate our bodies. For instance, PFJ researcher Jessica Wise might lead us in a ridiculous stretching warm-up, getting the research team to drape themselves over chairs. Or, I, Una, might lead us in a boisterous exercise shaking-out limbs faster and faster until we were all out of breath. When we walked into the research space, we all knew we’d be making sounds and moving bodies as part of our work understanding youth experiences of public policy in NYC.

The levity and action we describe was born from the depth of relationships we built with one another along with a deep commitment we shared to contributing to science, to our communities, and to social justice. The PFJ data told a heavy-story of structural oppression and policy betrayal. We were faced with data, in part, on how youth of color from low-income areas of New York City were over-tested and over-crowded in schools, over-policed, too likely not to finish high school, not able to access health care, and feeling sad, worried, and stressed. Meanwhile, the PFJ youth researchers knew themselves and their communities to be mighty, astute, capable, and wise. The work in PFJ of being goofy and laughing with/at/despite the data was a form of resistance. But the playfulness was also a methodology for building a collective where any member felt confident to contribute, disagree, create, and/or interpret. Our playfulness was a methodology for creating conditions of collaboration. In PFJ, we practiced a playful group-centered leadership style as a methodology in line with our theoretical commitments (Cohen 2010; Cohen, Jackson, & London 2014; Ransby 2003).

Public presentations also provided a productive pressure and gave further shape and importance to play. This pressure meant that during most research sessions our embodied play served to explore ways to

communicate our findings to particular audiences. As a result, we were more likely to create, voice and negotiate disagreements, and nuances in interpretation because they were simultaneously situated within a playful container of exploration, humor and spontaneity and had a tangible outcome of public presentations in formal settings (Fox 2016).

ON BUILDING A COLLECTIVE ACROSS GENERATION AND DIFFERENCE

At the beginning of each phase of our research project we asked each other: “What do we need from each other to do this work?” We agreed: “we need to show up” “expect to disagree at times” “give each other the benefit of the doubt” “ask if we don’t understand” and “remember we all bring different knowledge/experiences.” Creating a group agreement was one of a constellation of exercises that we used to craft a radically alternative accountability structure within our research team, one that leaned away from the familiar top-down/adult–youth/teacher–student models we were all familiar with.

Roger Hart and co-authors (1997) suggest that researchers engaged in participatory projects should frame themselves as researcher/facilitators. Caitlin (2005) makes a similar claim, writing that her dual role as both facilitator and collaborator in the Fed Up Honey’s participatory action research project generated a particular set of responsibilities, including a commitment to transparency and reflexivity in the research process. María Elena Torre (2010) claims that participatory action research collectives that are made up of diverse groups are particularly rich with potential for generating knowledge across and through those differences, in what she calls *participatory contact zones* (Torre 2010, 2005).

In PFJ, following the work of prior Public Science Project research studies, we took great care to establish our research space as different from traditional classrooms and research labs. Our aim was to create a culture of reflexivity/knowledge-of-self-and-context through a critical lens (Harding 1995). As facilitator/organizers, our approach to doing this was to show up with our whole selves, and thus build meaningful and complex reciprocal relationships (Lather 1986) over time with our co-researchers. In addition, in order to re-imagine adolescence, in order to be able to analyze data on youth experiences of public policy,

we needed to re-imagine the adult–youth relationships we formed with one another. Maintaining the conditions for collaboration and facilitation are key methodological moments within a critical participatory action research collective.

At the time, I, Maddy, was a doctoral student and my role in Polling for Justice was Project Director, organizer, and co-researcher. I, Una, was a performance artist and activist and the Artistic Director of PFJ. The PFJ youth researchers were mostly Black and Latinx young people with a wide range of experiences growing up in New York City. As we researched youth experiences in NYC and worked to craft reciprocal relationships with each of our co-researchers, we were active in our own personal process of reflexivity in awareness of privilege, racism, and history. Maddy’s participation as a white graduate student researcher and Una’s participation as a person of color who had grown up in New York City meant that we brought outsider/insider perspectives into the research. We felt accountable to the ways social justice research exists in resistance to—but also inside—research that has historically been used as a tool of oppression (Smith 2012; Fanon 2004). Our negotiation and navigation of this tension was constant.

IN CONCLUSION: LAB COAT AS THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION AND POLITICAL PROVOCATION

The process of bringing to life the two-dimensional drawings of researchers through embodied performance deepened our research collective’s theoretical understandings of expertise and power. Through the process of playfully and artfully embodying the “What is a Researcher?” activity we went beyond abstract discussions of expertise and made particular connections and provocations in relation to our area of inquiry and field of youth studies. Through dramatizing the drawing exercise, we devised a pointed critique about who traditionally studies adolescence, how they do it, and who gets studied on. At the same time, we contributed to scholarship on the lived experiences of policy betrayal and resistance in New York City.

The artistic embodiment pushed us to articulate our theoretical stance in relation to our audiences—and in particular the conceptions of circuits, solidarities, and interdependence. The depiction of Dr. Researchy was designed to critique and provoke. As a caricature of the

“objective” researcher who studies *on* rather than *with* youth, pushed audiences to rethink assumptions about where expertise lives. In their initial disruption, interrupting Dr. Researchy from the audience, the PFJ researcher-performers raised compelling questions about critical research, participation, social representations of youth and social justice. As they spoke out from the audience, they encouraged other audience members to engage actively in the production. And, through re-distribution of Dr. Researchy’s “research tools,” they made a certain kind of interdependence visible, modeling what solidarity might look like.

Because of the Dr. Researchy Sketch, the lab coat itself became the symbolic artifact of the PFJ Project. Our artistic-embodied response to the question “Who holds expertise?” and in particular the PFJ research collectives’ sense of ownership over Dr. Researchy’s lab coat, provided a prop through which our participatory and justice commitments could travel even outside research and/or academic spaces and into the world. As mentioned above (see Fig. 14.2), Darius liked to wear the lab coat to and from PFJ events and meetings. In a nation where 1 in 3 Black men will experience incarceration (Lyons & Pettit 2011) and in a city where aggressive policing practices are widely known to discriminatorily target young Black and brown skinned men LaPlante, Dunn, & Carnic (2013), it was no small thing for Darius to don a lab coat over his own clothes and walk down public streets. His action was a data-driven everyday protest. At the end of the project, in recognition of the importance of our embodied take-over of the Doctor’s uniform and tools, each PFJ



Fig. 14.1 Timeline

researcher got their own lab coat with their own names (“Dr. Jessica” “Dr. Maybelline” “Dr. Darius”, etc.) embroidered on the lapel to bring with them out into the world and into their lives.

This is one way our use of art in PFJ was a social justice move. Through acting out issues, moments, dilemmas, and data we can know differently (Smith 1995, p. 80) and make meaningful contributions to knowledge production. Our art moved us towards reimagining an adolescence that liberated rather than oppressed (Fox & Fine 2013). We laughed and played around with our “lab coat,” but ultimately recognized that the act of wearing that lab coat—including in public spaces—was a visual provocation in response to all the young people of color targeted for “fitting the description,” a theoretically informed embodiment of our analysis of the PFJ data, an active protest to harmful stereotypes of young people with violent consequences, and a subtle insertion of what could be (Fig. 14.2).



Fig. 14.2 Polling for Justice researcher Darius Francis wearing the lab coat on the way to a data performance

NOTES

1. The Polling for Justice core research team was made up of Niara Calliste, Michelle Fine, Madeline Fox, Darius Francis, Candace Greene, Una Osato, Jaquana Pearson, Maybelline Santos, Jessica Wise, and Brett Stoudt and also included Erik McKenzie, Dominique Ramsey, Alisha Vierira, and Paige Taylor. The Polling for Justice project was made possible thanks to the Surdna Foundation, Overbrook Foundation, Hazen Foundation, Glass Foundation, Schott Foundation, the ADCO Foundation, Urban Youth Collaborative, the Public Science Project, and the Youth Studies Research Fund at the CUNY Graduate Center.
2. Psychology, as a discipline, has had particular influence and power in the social construction of adolescence.

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Making Research and Building Knowledge with Communities: Examining Three Participatory Visual and Narrative Projects with Migrants Who Sell Sex in South Africa

Elsa Oliveira and Jo Vearey

SETTING THE SCENE: MIGRATION AND SEX WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

Globally, migration is often associated with the search for improved livelihood opportunities. In South Africa, a scarcity of formal employment options and increasingly restrictive immigration policies has resulted in many migrants, especially those with an irregular (illegal) documentation status, entering various informal, unregulated labor markets including street vending, domestic work, and sex work (see Scheibe, Richter, & Vearey, 2016). Although sex work¹ is increasingly recognized as an important livelihood strategy (see UNAIDS, 2012), somewhere between 132,000 and 182,000 individuals are estimated to sell sex in South Africa (Konstant, Rangasami, Stacey, Stewart, & Nogoduka, 2015),

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sex work remains illegal within the country (SAFLII, 2010). Evidence clearly links the criminalization of sex work to experiences of stigma, discrimination, violence, and poor health (Gould & Fick, 2008; Oliveira, 2016a). Heteronormative religious and moral ideologies, neoliberal anti-trafficking campaigners, and abolitionist feminists who claim sex work as the antithesis to women's liberation, collectively (albeit from different philosophical and political positions) drive anti-sex work discourses and pose significant barriers to the decriminalization of sex work (see Bernstein, 2010).

The global HIV pandemic and associated pressures from international agencies to focus on 'high risk' groups influence much of the contemporary research on sex work and migration. This results in a dominance of public health-driven research initiatives that rely heavily on the use of traditional methodological approaches (see Richter, Luchters, Ndlovu, Temmerman, & Cherisch, 2012). While this type of research plays an integral role in highlighting the health impacts of criminalization and stigma, and in addressing the structural factors that negatively impact the lives of migrants and of sex workers, there is a need for alternative research approaches that examine the diverse lived experiences of migrants who sell sex. Much of this existing research is under-taken *on* rather than *with* migrants who sell sex and the result, according to some sex workers, sex worker allies, and pro-sex work researchers, is the (re)-production of often superficial, sometimes inaccurate, and potentially unethical, portrayals of the lives of migrants who sell sex. Migrants who sell sex are often excluded from direct engagement in setting research agendas, implementing research projects, and from participating in policy discussions and public debates on the issues that are directly impacting their lives.

RE-THINKING RESEARCH: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACHES

Participatory research (PR) approaches attempt to address and reformulate the power dynamics inherent in conventional research processes, striving to gain knowledge using a 'bottom-up' approach that "focuses on a process of sequential reflection and action carried out with and by local people rather than on them" (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1667). PR approaches aim to generate knowledge in ways that will contribute

towards positive social change, often guided by a strong social justice agenda. The decision to apply a PR approach stems from “a choice, which is both personal and inherently political” (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1667). Visual and narrative methods may be included in PR projects in order to support the “politics of feeling,” an approach that Maggie O’Neil (2002) refers to as “ethno-mimesis” (p. 21); a concept pinned on critical feminist standpoint(s).

The mimetic re-telling of life stories in a visual form can validate the experiences of participants, and the artifacts produced (such as photographs, exhibitions, and narratives) can inform, educate, remind, challenge, and empower all involved, including future public audiences (Leavy, 2009).

The application of visual and narrative tools (such as, photographs, memory books, journals, and film) in PR is often incorporated into mixed-method research projects, and can transgress conventional or traditional ways of interpreting data by challenging stereotypes, and encouraging reflection by those participating in the visual experience: researchers, research participants, and the audience alike (Oliveira, 2016b).

While the aspirations and intentions of a PR approach to disrupting the power relationships associated with knowledge production processes are welcomed, we are aware from our own experiences and existing literature that they are not without their own challenges. Research agendas, even when influenced by PR principles, are ultimately driven by external forces, including, the (self-)interests of funding agencies, community-based and civil society organizations, participants, and the research team. Power and power relationships within the research space are often conceptualized as unidirectional and static, but in actuality, they shift throughout the research process. It is often assumed that power sits with the research team/researcher when, in reality, power is (albeit unevenly and forever changing) distributed across all involved, including researchers, participants, and funders. For example, it is often overlooked that the participants themselves are the experts in their own lived experiences and central to the production and sharing of this knowledge. Uncritical approaches to PR can limit knowledge production processes by overlooking the agency and capacity of participants, and poorly managed, and ultimately unethical, PR approaches can be dangerous to participants and their communities.

While including a visual component to research has been heralded by researchers across disciplines for its potential to evoke emphatic understandings of the ways in which people experience their worlds, the risks associated with making contested lives visible are important to consider when applying a visual component to research studies with marginalized groups of people (Oliveira & Vearey, 2015). These challenges require careful consideration to ensure that the potential benefits of PR approaches are achieved, without placing participants and their communities at risk.

METHOD: VISUAL: EXPLORE: EXPLORING WAYS OF DOING RESEARCH DIFFERENTLY

In attempting to engage with some of the challenges outlined above, researchers at the African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS) have, since 2006, been investigating different ways of conceptualizing, undertaking, and disseminating research that explores the lived experiences of migrants, including migrants who sell sex. Premised on the belief that research should be driven by a social justice agenda (Cacari-Stone, Wallerstein, Garcia, & Minkler, 2014) and with a commitment to developing ways to co-produce and share knowledge through public engagement, the MoVE (method:visual:explore) project was established to explore ways of doing research differently.²

We established MoVE as a result of our collective commitment to exploring and developing a research practice that engages with and recognizes our personal histories: an Angolan-born refugee, first-generation migrant queer woman who grew up and worked in the USA before moving to South Africa in 2010 to under-take an MA (EO), and a British-born—now permanent South African resident—who initially travelled to Johannesburg for six weeks in 2003, but has remained in Johannesburg ever since (JV). We both found our way to Johannesburg through unanticipated academic journeys (migratory experiences in their own right) that resulted in us both under-taking doctoral studies in South Africa. Our own lived experiences, migration histories, and feelings of (not) belonging play profound roles within our academic endeavors, in our intellectual projects, and in how we position ourselves within “the Academy”; a space considered by many to be elitist and exclusive, and one that is often experienced as such, even by those of us who are supposed “members” by virtue of our work. Neither of us anticipated

research careers based within “the Academy” but we have carved out spaces that allow for us to explore ways of doing (or at least trying to do) things differently that are aligned with our commitment to addressing issues of social justice. The entanglement of our individual migratory, academic, and research trajectories represent ongoing journeys across challenging terrain: into and within academia, and between and across academic, government, civil society, and public spaces.

While our disciplinary backgrounds and respective personal and professional experiences differ (as do those of all involved in facilitating and running MoVE projects), the multiple synergies present allow us to work together, and with others, to collaboratively develop and test approaches to research that strive to examine, and address, the complex systems of power and privilege across multiple platforms, including within scholarly, political, and public spaces. We are committed to exploring the ways in which research processes can be conceptualized and utilized as spaces for social justice engagement, involving ourselves as participants within the process. Doing so, however, requires that we continuously acknowledge and critically reflect on our position(s) in the world: in our own complexity of what it means to have a human experience; what it means to have power and privilege in some spaces, while navigating liminality and marginalization in others. The processes of production that typify the MoVE approach to research attempt to engage with these concerns.

While recognizing the critiques and limitations of assumed “participatory” research approaches, the MoVE project aims to: (1) involve migrant groups that are excluded, under-represented, or misrepresented in research, policy and public debates; (2) explore the ways that knowledge can be co-produced between researcher(s) and participant(s); and (3) share outputs/artifacts that are produced during the research process (Oliveira & Vearey, 2016). Critical here are reflections on the research process itself (for example, see Kavanagh, Daly, & Jolley, 2002). Our ongoing engagement with these methodological approaches has influenced the evolution of projects within MoVE, and the development of strategies designed to reduce risks to participants (Oliveira, 2016b).

THE THREE PROJECTS

All projects received clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Research Ethics Committee (REC) and were conducted in partnership with Sisonke, the South African National Sex Worker movement.

Working the City

Taking place in August 2010, and involving collaboration between the ACMS, Sisonke, and the Market Photo Workshop (MPW), this project comprised a participatory photo workshop and culminated in a month-long public exhibition entitled, *Working the City (WTC): Experiences of Migrant Women in Inner-City Johannesburg*.³ This project drew on the lessons learned from a previous community-based photography project undertaken in partnership with the MPW in inner-city Johannesburg (Vearey, 2010) and from the extensive experience of the MPW in conducting public engagement photography projects. The project involved an adapted photo-voice approach. First advanced by Wang and Burris (2016), photo-voice is an approach based on the practice of producing knowledge and has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialog and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers.

Eleven migrant women, cross-border and internal migrants who lived and sold sex in inner-city Johannesburg, participated in the 11-day workshop where they received training in basic photography, visual literacy, and editing. An established photographer with previous experience in conducting community-based photography workshops in South Africa facilitated the workshop. Participants, who were paired with a current photography student from the MPW (to provide mentorship), were lent digital cameras, given journals, and asked to document the lived experiences that they wished to explore through visual images and narrative documentation. An initial workshop session was facilitated to brainstorm the key issues that participants wished to document. During the final two days of the workshop, participants selected photo stories to be shared in a public exhibition comprised of 10 images, including a self-portrait, accompanying captions written by the participant, and a narrative story (Fig. 15.1).

The participant-generated photo stories in the *WTC* exhibition offered the wider public a set of representations that challenged and contested prevailing assumptions about people who are migrants and who sell sex. The project gained much visibility, due in part to the timing of the project. It took place alongside the 2010 Soccer World Cup that was being held in Johannesburg and spoke to the associated discourses relating to moral panics surrounding trafficking and global sporting events.

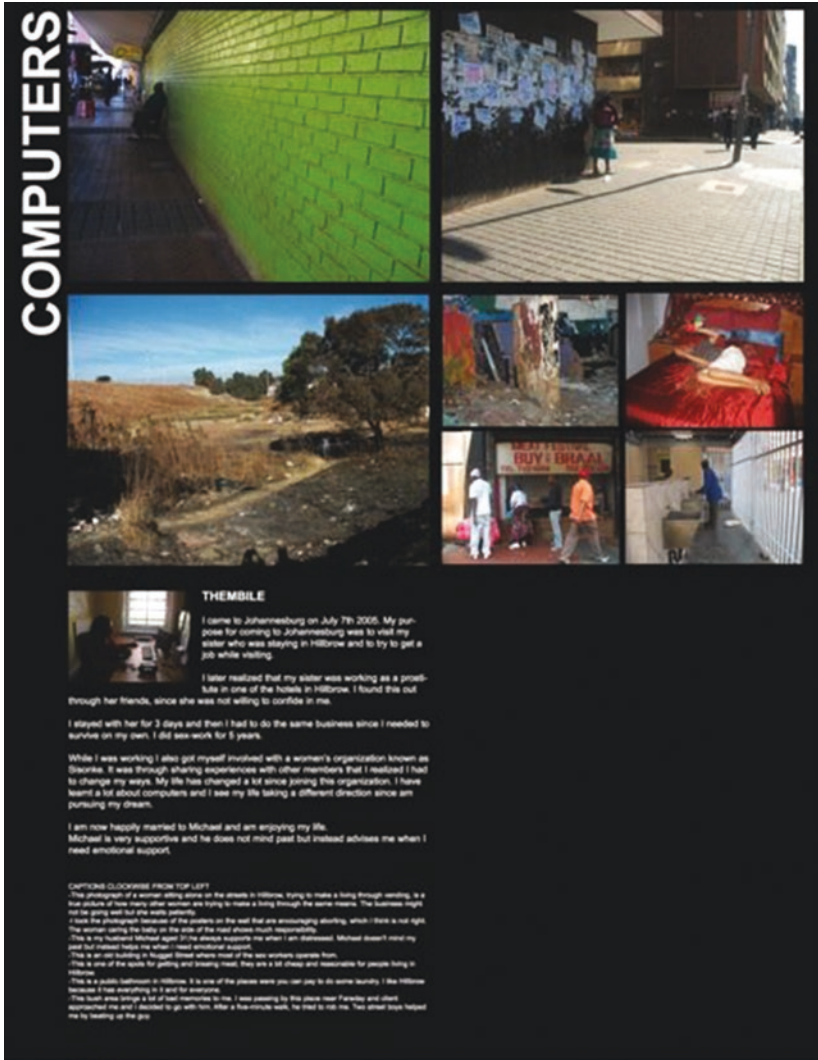


Fig. 15.1 Thembile, WTC 2010

Through its success in engaging with the public, *WTC* not only provided the collaborating partners with the encouragement to pursue this approach further but also provoked the research team to address a range of emerging ethical concerns relating to the public use of images produced, that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

The public exhibition contained images generated and selected by participants, some of which identified workplaces, themselves, and people in their communities. In a context such as South Africa, where the selling and buying of sex is a crime and where violence towards sex workers is a common occurrence, these concerns made the project vulnerable to criticisms of photography as a tool of voyeurism, surveillance, and exploitation (for example, see Lomax, 2012, Kihato, 2013). Further insights regarding participant anonymity and notions of public/private spaces were also made evident after the *WTC* exhibition launch. Although participants were informed daily that the images that they selected for the final exhibition would be made publicly available (and had given informed consent to this end), many shared reservations about displaying the exhibition in their own communities. The final exhibition was displayed in a different area of town and all participants attended the launch. Several months after the launch, a local clinic in Hillbrow (the suburb where the project took place) expressed interest in exhibiting the work. Since the clinic was a space that many of the participants regularly visited, we sought the opinion of participants. Those who were consulted unanimously expressed concern about their work being shown in a space where their private and public lives could be negatively impacted. One participant, Iketlang,⁴ from rural South Africa expressed:

You can show the work in spaces outside of Hillbrow. Here too many people know us. We are at risk. But, you can show it over there because these people will never go there so it's fine. But here in Hillbrow, no—eish, it could be a problem.

While this research approach facilitated important insights into migration histories, trajectories into sex work, health strategies, and tactics used to survive and thrive, many participants were frustrated with the photographic medium. Some wanted to create photo stories that included images of violence as a way to highlight the human rights abuses that sex workers face. Although participants were offered creative strategies that could be used to convey messages too dangerous to photograph (for

example, including descriptions and information in their written narratives and/or captions), many expressed dissatisfaction with not being able to produce what they envisioned and desired.

Volume 44

Based on the success of *WTC* and the need for further research generated by sex workers, additional funding was sought. Steps to address the lessons learned from *WTC*, particularly relating to reducing risk to participants and the need for additional visual tools that could support the production of sex work narratives, were incorporated into the second project: *Volume 44*. Funded by the Open Society Foundation (New York), *Volume 44* took place in 2013. The one-year project involved 19 migrant men, women, and transgender people who sell sex in the Gauteng and Limpopo provinces of South Africa. Although photography remained the principal visual tool, *Volume 44* incorporated a broader range of visual and narrative approaches, including mapping, storyboards, and journaling (Figs. 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, and 15.5).

The workshops took place in inner-city Johannesburg and Musina, a rural town that shares a border with Zimbabwe. Each workshop consisted of three separate phases that took place over a course of six weeks, with each phase lasting an average of five days. During the ‘break sessions’ between phases, participants continued to engage in the production of their individual visual and narrative stories.

Similar to *WTC*, each participant selected 10 images, along with accompanying captions and a narrative, for a public exhibition. However, in addition to selecting material for public consumption, participants were also encouraged to produce a ‘private exhibition’ if they so wished. The idea of a ‘private exhibition’ arose for two reasons: (1) during *WTC*, many of the visual and narrative stories that were selected by participants for the public exhibition differed, in varying degrees, from the stories that participants had shared in ‘private’ (with the group); and (2) learning from *WTC*, the research team had agreed that the public exhibition for *Volume 44* would not include images that could identify people and places of work, even if participants had selected such images to be shared publicly.

On the final day of the workshop, the ‘private exhibitions’ were displayed and celebrated with participants and the research team. Although some of the themes and stories that participants created for the ‘private



Fig. 15.2 Reviewing Images

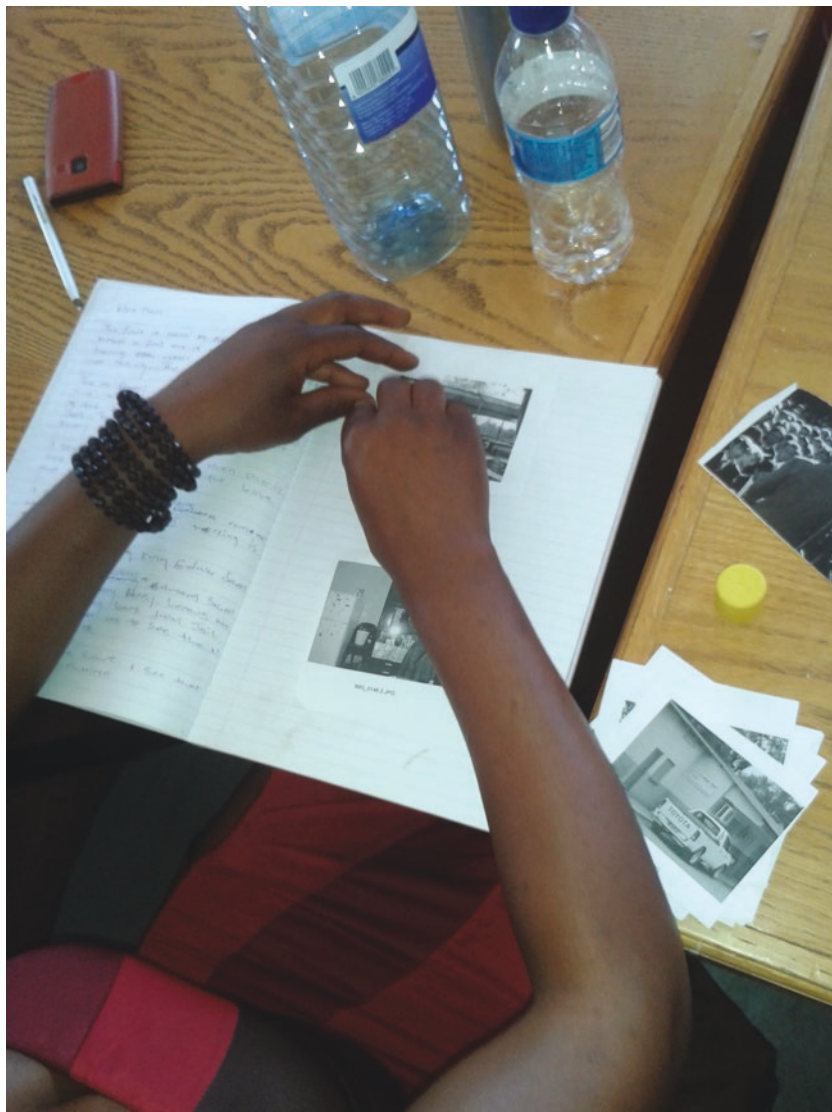


Fig. 15.3 Narrative plus Images



Fig. 15.4 Sandira story board

worked as a sex worker in Musina, is now a project coordinator for peer educators working with sex workers in a nearby town said,

It's too good for me to be able to think about my life. I never think that someone want to hear my story. I mean—who am I to tell my story? But you come and now you want to know and I get to think about my story and my life and all of the things that I live to tell about. I want everyone to hear my story because I am not the only one who has these experiences. I am a person like everyone else and even though I face too many challenges because of the police harassment and violence and because I am not a South African, I am strong and I am alive and I think that this project has helped me learn more about who I am. I think about story so different now.

The *Volume 44* project culminated in a month-long public exhibition held at the MPW gallery in Johannesburg in May 2014 (Fig. 15.6).

All of the participants attended the exhibition opening and all described the experience as positive (Oliveira, 2016b). The exhibition material and public images from *WTC* and *Volume 44* continue to be



Fig. 15.6 Volume 44 Exhibition

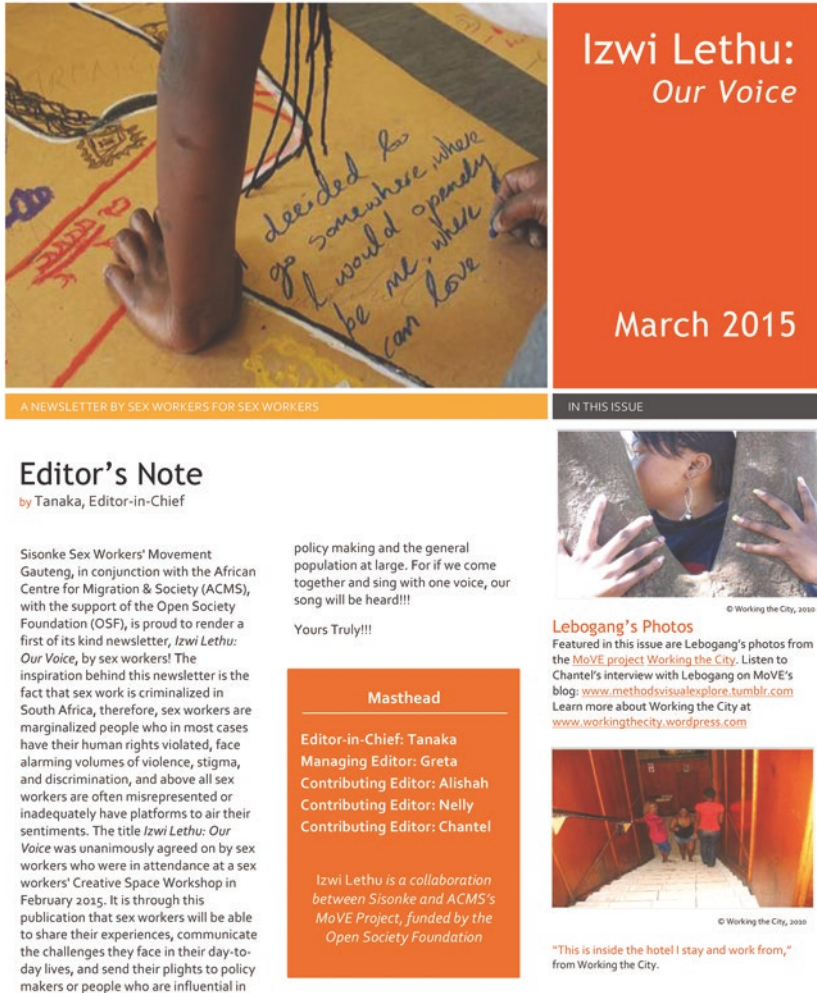
used in a wide range of forums. They have been displayed in local and international spaces, including at conferences and art festivals, in civil society offices, and in outdoor public spaces in Johannesburg. Images have also been used in a range of popular media magazines and in research articles (Oliveira & Vearey, 2015). While both of the projects offer audiences a unique opportunity to engage in material produced by a group of people who are rarely afforded a public platform, use of the exhibitions by Sisonke for their own initiatives has been limited. The size of the exhibitions requires adequate space and the costs required to print them have been prohibitive for regular use by Sisonke. The *WTC* exhibition consists of 12 A1 size posters: one for each participant along with a poster that explains the project and partnership; and, *Volume 44* is even larger: 39 A2 size posters, two for each participant as well as a poster that explains the project and partnership.

Since one of the central outcomes of the projects was to support the production of work that could be used by Sisonke for advocacy initiatives, this limitation was important for the project team to take into account when designing future projects. Drawing on these insights, a new project was conceptualized that aimed to be more affordable for distribution and reproduction, and more accessible and relevant to the sex work community itself. This process of reflection and interrogation, and the partners' trust and commitment to work that brings researchers and activists together, gave rise to current *Izwi Lethu: Our Voices* newsletter project.

IZWI LETHU: OUR VOICES: A NEWSLETTER FOR SEX WORKERS BY SEX WORKERS

Izwi Lethu is Zulu for Our Voice. The title was selected by a group of sex workers during a Sisonke monthly meeting in Johannesburg. Originally funded by the Open Society Foundation South Africa (OSF-SA) in 2015, the project is now supported by funding from Sisonke and the Wellcome Trust. Since the initial newsletter launch in March 2015, over 35 Sisonke members have contributed and participated in the project (Schuler & Oliveira, 2016). To date (September 2016) 11 issues of *Izwi Lethu* have been produced (Fig. 15.7).

While the ACMS is responsible for the newsletter design and layout, the editorial team is made up of Sisonke staff and members. Greta



Editor's Note

by Tanaka, Editor-in-Chief

Sisonke Sex Workers' Movement Gauteng, in conjunction with the African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS), with the support of the Open Society Foundation (OSF), is proud to render a first of its kind newsletter, *Izwi Lethu: Our Voice*, by sex workers! The inspiration behind this newsletter is the fact that sex work is criminalized in South Africa, therefore, sex workers are marginalized people who in most cases have their human rights violated, face alarming volumes of violence, stigma, and discrimination, and above all sex workers are often misrepresented or inadequately have platforms to air their sentiments. The title *Izwi Lethu: Our Voice* was unanimously agreed on by sex workers who were in attendance at a sex workers' Creative Space Workshop in February 2015. It is through this publication that sex workers will be able to share their experiences, communicate the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives, and send their plights to policy makers or people who are influential

policy making and the general population at large. For if we come together and sing with one voice, our song will be heard!!!

Yours Truly!!!

Masthead

Editor-in-Chief: Tanaka
 Managing Editor: Greta
 Contributing Editor: Alishah
 Contributing Editor: Nelly
 Contributing Editor: Chantel

Izwi Lethu is a collaboration between Sisonke and ACMS's MoVE Project, funded by the Open Society Foundation



© Working the City, 2010

Lebogang's Photos

Featured in this issue are Lebogang's photos from the [MoVE project Working the City](#). Listen to Chantel's interview with Lebogang on MoVE's blog: [www.methodsvisualexplore.tumblr.com](#) Learn more about Working the City at [www.workingthecity.wordpress.com](#)



© Working the City, 2010

"This is inside the hotel I stay and work from," from Working the City.

Fig. 15.7 Izwi Lethu: Our Voices newsletter front page

Schuler, an ACMS researcher and PhD candidate who has designed and facilitated creative writing workshops since 2012, leads the workshop facilitation with the support of Munya Masunga, the Sisonke Gauteng

Provincial Coordinator. During the first year of the project, *Izwi Lethu* newsletters were produced monthly; each included at least three feature stories, an Editor's note, an advice column, and a guest column (the only piece not written by a sex worker).

Although the workshops typically begin with a guided discussion about the newsletter, including sample stories as a way to present different writing techniques and styles, the emphasis is to learn through the process of writing and revising (Schuler & Oliveira, 2016). Through the facilitator's mentorship and guidance, participants decide on the topic for their feature stories, and collectively, they share, discuss, critique, revise, and edit one another's stories from conception to completion. While some complete their stories while at the workshop, many use the free days allotted during each workshop period to conduct interviews and/or borrow a camera to take images to complement their stories. On the last day of the workshop, participants type their stories on laptops. For many, this is the first time using a computer.

To date, the stories highlight issues of migration, gender, sexuality, health, and xenophobia (Schuler, Schuler, Oliveira, & Vearey 2016). While some stories include broad reflections, many include personal accounts of triumph. Including, testimonies of pride in being able to build family homes and send their children to private school from their sex work earnings (Oliveira & Vearey 2016). In addition to making an important contribution to research on migration and sex work, the *Izwi Lethu* project design has offered increased public engagement opportunities, including with a wider diversity of sex workers and multiple audiences, than previous projects. According to Katlego Rasebitse, Sisonke Advocacy and Media Liaison for the Gauteng Province and regular contributor to the newsletter,

Izwi Lethu is an advocacy tool that we take with us everywhere. [...] it is important that our voices are shared that there is a space where if people want to learn more about our lives and the ways that we feel about certain topics that they can read our newsletter: something that is written by sex workers not people who are not sex workers. Nothing about us without us! (2016, p. 45).

Sex work activists, researchers, and representatives from a range of civil society organizations, working on issues specific to sex work, use the newsletter as an advocacy tool in various ways and for varying reasons.

For Sisonke, distribution is often focused on building solidarity with sex workers in South Africa, and beyond. Distribution of the newsletter by sex workers during monthly Sisonke meetings and during outreach campaigns provides those engaged in the sex industry with important information including, the sex work helpline number. The newsletter is used as a facilitation tool during meetings with stakeholders reticent to supporting pro-sex work developments. Agendas, such as sharing stories written by sex workers, can challenge the single narratives that are often associated with uninformed stakeholders (Massawe, 2016). In addition to sex work-generated stories, the guest columns provide unique entry points during sensitization trainings with stakeholders, including religious and traditional leaders. A pastor, who wrote on his views of religion and the reasons why he supports sex workers, and pro-sex work reform, wrote the guest column for the first issue. This article has been shared with other religious leaders and communities to evoke discussions amongst a mostly patriarchal and conservative group (Massawe, 2016).

Currently, the ACMS plays an integral role in the production of *Izwi Lethu* newsletters. Over time, the aim is that (with support from ACMS) the project will become a Sisonke-led initiative. Implementing strategies to support this transition has led to slight changes in the second year of the project. Originally, *Izwi Lethu* newsletters included three different feature writers in each monthly issue. While this offered a greater number of sex workers the opportunity to engage in the project, this approach limited the ACMS's ability to tangibly support increased and ongoing capacity training with Sisonke. The second year of this project will focus on the production of stories by a core group of six Sisonke staff and members.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

Increasingly, collaboration between academics and civil society is set as a condition by research funders, positioned as a desirable, yet often undefined, byproduct of a successful academic project (Vearey, 2016). This is particularly so for social research projects that aim to better understand the experiences of marginalized groups, including migrants who sell sex, in order to generate evidence to inform improved policy and programmatic responses. A clear indication of why such a collaboration is required and what it should involve (for example, how should it be initiated, by whom, and for what purpose) is often lacking. Without such guidance,

“collaboration” can all too easily be translated into a list of action points to be under-taken in order to satisfy the funder (Vearey, 2016).

The MoVE project has been exploring ways of collaborating with and involving civil society stakeholders, including migrants who sell sex, in the production and use of knowledge. The aim has been to investigate different approaches to collaboration in order to determine what is needed to promote the best chance of success. In this case, success relates to the generation and use of evidence in order to improve the lived experiences of marginalized migrant groups, through policy and programmatic responses, for example. This has led to a series of projects, including those described in this chapter, that have involved collaboration with civil society partners in order to define the research agenda, research process, and ways of using the data generated.

A key lesson learned is that different partners enter into such projects with clearly defined and differing, albeit complementary, reasons; including, (but not limited to) participation in order to generate research, to develop advocacy materials, to test a methodology, to raise funds, to use and share the stories created, or to produce works of art. These differences require careful navigation as collaboration can only be achieved if all involved feel that they have an equal stake throughout the research process. This involves careful negotiation and time for discussion with all partners at different stages of the project.

While power and control of the research process shifts between partners over the life cycle of the project, our experience suggests that jointly developing and implementing social research projects between different project partners in a collaborative manner takes time, requiring all partners to learn and respect “different ways of doing,” but it is, ultimately, worth it. Almost all of the individuals who participated in the projects are members of Sisonke. As part of their membership, they are expected to align with the call for the decriminalization of sex work in South Africa. However, while some participants shared sex work reform as paramount, many prioritized issues relating to gender discrimination, lack of access to proper documentation, desire for educational opportunities that could lead to formal employment options, and the need for affordable housing. In some cases, participants shared feelings of doubt and distrust in political systems and processes, concerns that pro-sex work reform could increase police surveillance, and the fear that reform could lead to making their involvement in sex work visible. Employing a participatory visual and narrative approach offered participants an important

opportunity to represent themselves in ways that traditional methods alone do not offer.

Through reflections, stories, and images, the participants in these projects not only challenge stereotypes and normative depictions of sex work and migration, they provide us with a new set of representations that widen and deepen our understanding of the diverse experiences of people who are migrants and who sell sex in South Africa (Oliveira & Vearey, 2016); representations that “seep far beyond the popular discourses which label them as victims and which demonstrate that experiences of sex work can embody risk, hope, fear, enjoyment, violence, and fulfilment” (Walker & Oliveira, 2015, p. 129). The participant-generated artifacts continue to offer researchers, participants, activists, and the public alike with a unique opportunity to reflect and consider the reasons, messages, and depictions created by a group of people who are rarely offered a public platform and whose lives are feverously debated in private and public spheres.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, sex work refers to the consensual sale of sex between adults.
2. (see Vearey 2010, 2011; Walker & Clacherty 2015; Oliveira & Vearey 2015; Oliveira 2016b; Schuler 2016; Schuler, Oliveira, & Vearey 2016; Oliveira, Meyers, & Vearey 2016).
3. For a detailed description of the ‘Working the City’ project please see Oliveira & Vearey 2015.
4. Not her real name; pseudonyms are used throughout.

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AEMP Handbook by The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP)

Anti-Eviction Mapping Project

WHO WE ARE

The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP) is a data visualization, data analysis, and oral history collective documenting the dispossession and resistance of San Francisco Bay Area residents facing gentrifying landscapes. Utilizing digital cartography and narrative platforms, the project provides an online geographic interface which the public can navigate through visual and audio forms, learning more about the Bay Area's ecosystem of displacement.

Beginning in 2011, the Bay Area began experiencing a dramatic increase in Eviction eviction rates, rental prices, and outward migration coinciding with the birth of the Tech Boom 2.0. Neighborhoods have become more expensive and longtime residents are being pushed out for real estate speculators to profit off of new wealth. This project studies the displacement of people but also of complex social worlds as certain spaces become desirable to such entanglements. Maintaining antiracist and feminist analyses, as well as decolonial methodology, the project creates tools and disseminates data that contributes to collective resistance and movement building.

Anti-Eviction Mapping Project
San Francisco, USA

The AEMP emerged as a data visualization and map-making project in 2013 to study relations between speculation, new technology corporations, property flipping, racial profiling, and luxury development. But the more that we produced maps, the more we became concerned with the dangers of reducing complex social and political worlds to simple dots—such data can never fully describe the personal and neighborhood displacements through gentrification.

We thus began an oral history project, collecting numerous stories from those evicted by networks of shell companies, to those who have experienced increased racial profiling, to those who have fought their evictions through direct action and won.

All of our maps and narratives exist on our website, <http://www.antievictionmap.com>, which is also the most complete archive of our work, both digital and analog. In addition to regularly hosting our own events, the project has also been featured in local galleries, panels, and workshops. Please connect with us online via our website or social media to stay updated or get involved.

A TIMELINE OF THE PROJECT

See Fig. 16.1

THE WORK WE DO

The AEMP is a fluid collective, re-imagined and injected with fresh inspiration as it welcomes a diverse array of activists, organizers, artists, and researchers into its fold. As such, the AEMP is as much a platform for regional activists to collaborate and learn from each other, as it is a content-generating research effort. Although project membership is fluid, its core mission and critical voice remain constant.

The AEMP organization is horizontally structured, and decisions are made by consensus. Therefore, the AEMP's oeuvre reflects both its fluid membership and horizontal organization. Each member adds their own skills, energy, and perspective to build on the project's work, often contributing in entirely new ways.

From a foundation of data visualization and mapping, the AEMP has gone on to launch an oral history project, publish its own zine, and paint a mural in the San Francisco Mission District's Clarion Alley. Although the collective began by mapping San Francisco data, it is now working



Fig. 16.1 Visual history of the AEMP

across the region, partnering with groups from Oakland to Santa Cruz. Project members also regularly host panels, design exhibitions of the project’s work, and participate in/organize direct actions .

The project makes all of its work publicly accessible and available online through its website, restricting none of its various maps, reports, or oral histories behind a paywall. As many of the project's maps are interactive, the best way to engage the project's map-making work is through its digital interface.

The open-access nature of the AEMP is in-line with the project's vision of being both an educational, awareness-raising resource, and an advocacy-oriented counternarrative of the displacing forces currently operating in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The pages that follow highlight some of the AEMP's past work. They serve as both a primer on what the project has accomplished thus far, and inspiration for what is to come.

RADICAL MAPPING IN ACTION: OUR PLEDGE MAP

Our Pledge Map, <http://www.anti eviction mapping project.net/pledge/>, provides a tool to prospective tenants to determine if a San Francisco housing unit has had a no-fault eviction history in the past. Based on SF rent control data that we analyzed, triangulated with the SF Planning Department, and then researched for speculative links and trends, this map offers prospective tenants and even buyers an option to boycott speculators (Fig. 16.2).

As we came to find out, the word "boycott" is derived from nineteenth-century Ireland, from when a group of tenants enacted a rent-strike against British land agent and slumlord in the colony. We invoke its history, calling for a boycott of real estate speculators displacing San Francisco tenants. This map is an excellent example of what the AEMP does: interactive, educational, and mobilizing. As we have recently acquired eviction data for Alameda County, we hope to create a similar tool for folks across the Bay.

ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: OUR CLARION ALLEY MURAL

Artists with the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project have teamed up with the Clarion Alley Mural Project to paint a 20-foot mural in Clarion Alley at Valencia Street. The mural depicts a rendering of the online map of no-fault evictions since 1997 and highlights the portraits of eight San Franciscans fighting their evictions. Viewers can call a phone number, 415-319-6865, to hear stories of the people whose portraits are depicted on the mural.

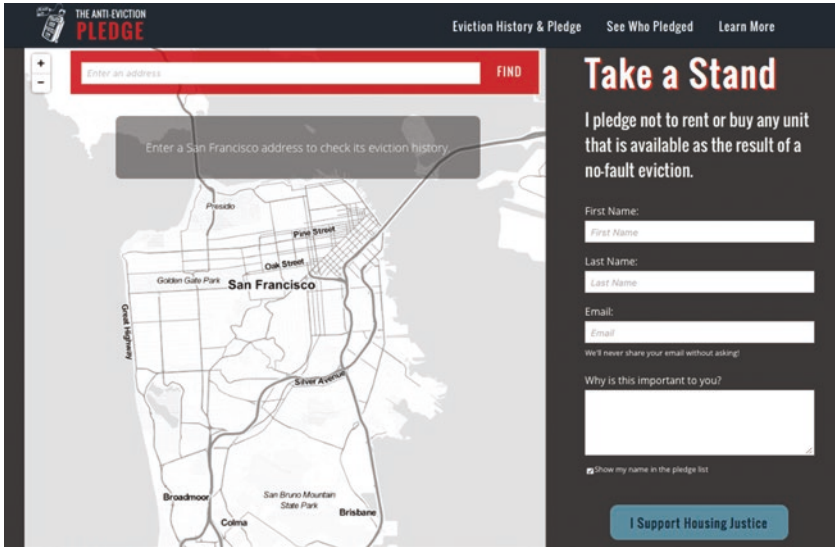


Fig. 16.2 Online Pledge Map

The mural includes a portrait of Alex Nieto, killed by SFPD in 2014 on Bernal Hill, to make the connection between gentrification and the criminalization of people of color. The left panel of the mural, facing Valencia Street, “welcomes” visitors to the alley with a remixed design of a poster developed by the SF Print Collective and pasted around the Mission in the 1990s in response to the Dot Com Boom (Fig. 16.3).

ORAL HISTORY MAP: NARRATIVES OF DISPLACEMENT AND RESISTANCE

The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project’s “Narratives of Displacement: Oral History Project” aims to document the recent changes in San Francisco by foregrounding the stories of people who have been, or who were being, displaced. By collecting oral histories, the project creates a living archive of people and places, documenting deep and detailed neighborhood and personal histories. In doing so, the project creates a counter-narrative to more dominant archives that elide detail and attention to legacy, culture, and loss in the city. By combining oral history and map



Fig. 16.3 Narratives of Displacement Mural

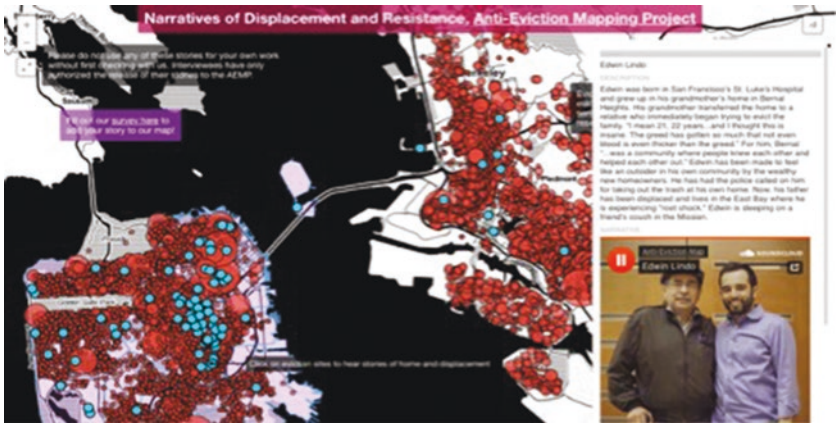


Fig. 16.4 Narratives of Displacement and Resistance Map

making, we also counter the abstracting, anonymizing forces inherent in visualizing complex experiences of dispossession as discrete data points in cartographic space (Fig. 16.4).

Our map lives online to be interacted with by the public: blue circles representing oral history narratives overlay red circles representing

evictions. Visitors navigate the map by hovering over and selecting narratives to listen to and explore. While we are interested in stories of dispossession, we are not interested in reducing people to their evictions. We recognize that displacement transpires in kaleidoscopic forms, and that loss is corporeal, cultural, haunting, and real. What we aim to do is to amplify the voices of those facing displacement, and put them in conversation with one another and with the larger displacing forces acting on the Bay Area today.

THE ANTI-EVICTION MAPPING PROJECT'S ZINE

We Are Here

The zine *We Are Here* is a collection of interviews, essays, poetry, and photos from SF's most recent housing wars. Its 105 pages contain the stories of San Franciscans who love and fight for home and community, of direct action victories, and of very real heartbreak and loss. It was lovingly made with scissors and glue by many hands in 2015. This zine transforms some of the project's majority digital work into an analog format, making the project accessible to a broader range of residents, citizens, and activists. The zine is available at AEMP outreach events (Figs. 16.5 and 16.6).

MAPPING, RESEARCH, AND DIRECT ACTION!

Fighting the Iantorno Ellis Act Evictions

The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project has become a vital part of the direct action anti-displacement movement in San Francisco. Any landlord or speculator evicting tenants who are targeted for direct action needs to be researched, to find out what other properties they own, if they run other businesses, who are their lawyers, the banks they use, their finance companies, and who else is in on the deal (Fig. 16.7).

There are many examples to highlight how the research of the AEMP helped enormously in a direct action victory and the tenants got to keep their homes. One big direct action victory in 2015 was the campaign to stop six Ellis Act evictions by the notorious real estate speculators, Paolo and Sergio Iantorno. The Iantornos are long-time real estate speculators in S.F who currently own over 70 properties. You can learn more about



Fig. 16.5 Zine Photo

the Iantornos and other speculators on the AEMP website, under the Gentrification Tab in the Evictors section.

The AEMP worked together with Eviction Free S.F. (a direct action mutual aid group) and some of the tenants threatened with eviction by the Iantornos to organize a campaign of disruptive and creative direct actions. The type of direct actions used to stop the evictions consisted of call-in campaigns to the Iantorno's businesses and homes asking them to stop the evictions, three occupations of Paolo Iantorno's shoe stores in S.F. and posting on the Yelp page of the shoe stores with stories of evictions, and harassment carried out by the Iantornos. All of the occupations of the shoe stores were video documented and videos put up on the AEMP website.

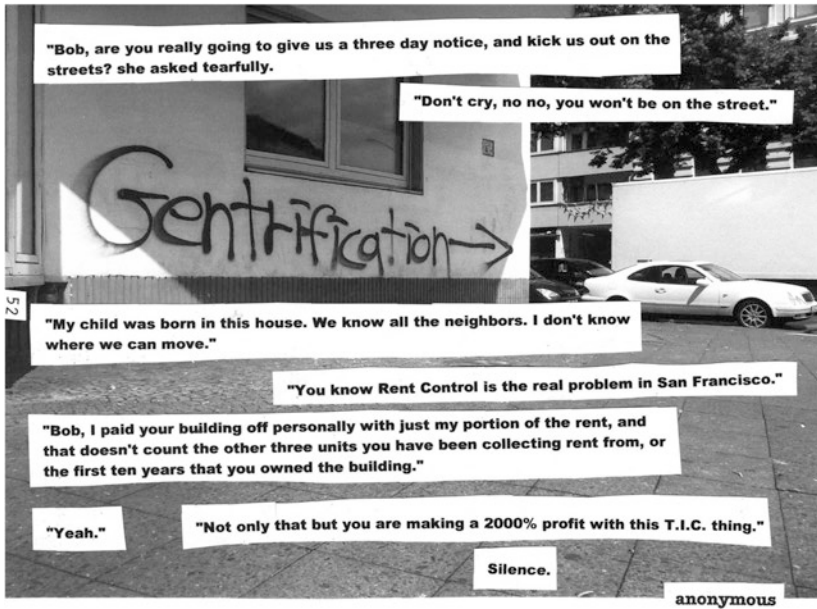


Fig. 16.6 Zine Excerpt

During a pause in the direct action campaign, the tenants worked with the S.F Community Land Trust and MEDA (Mission Economic Development Agency) who negotiated to buy five of the six buildings from the Iantornos to be land-trusted and kept “affordable”!

The sale of the buildings was a peace offering from the Iantornos as they were feeling the public pressure generated by the direct actions. Part of the sale negotiations revolved around taking down one of the videos where Paolo Iantorno is seen pushing seniors out of his store and grabbing the belongings of others, as well as taking down the AEMP profile page from the website. This major victory was covered by local press: a *SF Examiner* article published on 11 February 2016 highlighting the land trust deal and the negative impact Ellis Act evictions have on San Francisco residents.

Up the direct action victories!



Fig. 16.7 Occupying a real estate speculator's shoe store

RADICAL MAPPING

Maps are never neutral. They assert boundaries, place names, presences, and absences. We recognize the representational power of maps and strive to create ones that reveal a counter-history taking place at this moment.

While real estate companies may distribute their maps depicting renamed and whitewashed neighborhoods, our maps hold the stories of long-time residents who hold decades of memory, including all of the old names. While big tech advertises their private shuttle routes throughout the Bay Area, we can overlay those bus stops with the rise of market-driven evictions and displacement.

These maps not only counter the stories that justify the Bay Area's elite, but they work to affirm the experiences of those whom gentrification was never meant to benefit.

With these maps, we can make visible the invisible. We can say, we are still here.

WHY AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT?

During a Project meeting, we tried to capture some of the reasons we're interested in oral history. We weren't trying to create a single definition or answer by consensus, but instead wanted to provide some inspiration for our own thinking.

Collectively, these were some of our reasons:

I was drawn to this project because...

- it's not driven by gentrifier guilt
- I was witnessing community change
- of its potential to grow
- because its connection to data visualization is powerful
- its framing is unlike academia
- it's not encumbered by the nonprofit status quo
- of its solidarity with other social justice initiatives
- the interview process is a part of just action: a way of mobilizing residents.
- it's exposing wounds in the visceral body of the city
- it sees resistance as home
- stories are powerful and connect us to time, neighborhood and home

Oral history is...

- collaborative knowledge making
- nonhierarchical
- mutually beneficial
- malleable
- unlike formal interviews
- willing to slow down
- finding space for emotional history
- an empowering process of telling your own story

FIELD GUIDE TO ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWING

*When we, at the AEMP, collect an oral history, we are not just recording another data point for a map. Oral history is a powerful tool because it resists abstraction. By collecting stories that enlighten the spatial experience and emotions tied to place, space, and memories, we can both apprehend how displacements creates individual trauma and uprooting and analyze displacement through a better understanding of the wider context that produces it. Furthermore, by allowing the displaced to speak with their own voice in their own register, the project simultaneously amplifies the lived experiences of displacement and resistance while reaffirming the dignity of those experiencing displacement—*displacement as a process of erasure*—by privileging their voices over those of the displacers. In addition to a five-minute clip, all of our oral histories can be streamed in full from our website, providing an unadulterated platform from which our interviewees can be heard.*

All of our oral histories are collected by trained volunteers. Below you will find excerpts from one of our training documents. These excerpts were chosen to illustrate our approach to oral history, and thereby attempt to close the loop between theory and practice.

The Interview

The Biographical/Storytelling Approach

Oral history traditionally uses a biographical approach in order to understand how people make meaning and stories out of their experiences. This often means that oral history interviews start by asking people about their childhood and early life experiences in order to contextualize their stories.

For this project, this would mean not starting directly with someone's eviction but perhaps asking them where they grew up and how they ended up in San Francisco in order to contextualize their "narrative of displacement."

Questions could include:

- Tell me a little bit about where you spent your childhood.
- Describe to me where you grew up.
- Tell me a story about the place where you spent your early life.

This question could then lead to a question such as:

- Tell me the story of how you moved to San Francisco.
- How did you make the decision to move to San Francisco?

You could then ask the interviewee to describe to you what San Francisco felt like when they moved here, why they stayed, how it became home, what sort of community they found here, etc.

- Helpful here is to think of yourself as the helper in this person telling their story of San Francisco and then being displaced from San Francisco. You are creating the space for them to tell you this. You don't know what details/particulars of this story there are but you are trying to give them room to narrate what important stories and details to you.
- Remember that the kinds of sensory details that make a good piece of writing also make for a good interview. Ask about sensory details and try to fill in missing information by asking questions.

Follow-up Questions

- Follow-up questions are the heart of an oral history interview. We listen and ask follow-up questions with an idea of where we want the interview to go but also with flexibility about how we get there. Even a question that changes the subject can be a follow-up question.
- Follow-up questions show you're listening. They help the interviewee to trust you, and they should help to make the interview a coherent whole within which meaning is built up as the interview continues, rather than a series of unconnected anecdotes or facts.

Closed Questions

These are questions that can be answered in one word. Closed questions are atypical in an oral history context. However, they are useful to elicit specific details that will give you more a more precise historical context and can help to jog the interviewee's memory. Some examples:

- How old were you at the time?
- What was the teacher's name?

General Tips

Asking people about important or specific days can be useful for having them narrate specific stories. Examples include:

- What was a typical day like when you lived in xyz place?
- Tell me the story of the day you got your eviction notice.
- Tell me the story of the day you moved.

It is also good to ask about what kinds of **choices** people thought they had at different points in their life and how they made their decisions or how the decisions seemed to be made for them. *This often works as a way to get at the interviewee's worldview, assumptions, and thought processes.* For example:

- When you were finishing high school what options did you consider for where to go from there?
- How did you decide to go to college/to go to a specific college/to get a job/to travel?
- What influenced your decision?
- What factors did you take into consideration?

This works for choosing a career, changing jobs, moving, having kids...

Also, “**Why?**” “**Tell me more.**” “**And then what happened?**” or a simple **open silence** often work to draw the person out. One big difference between an oral history interview and other kinds of interviews is the **pacing**. An oral history interview proceeds at a leisurely pace and has time in it for reflective silence. In normal conversations, we rarely allow silences longer than a few seconds, and it will likely feel awkward to allow silences, but they can be important opportunities for the interviewee to think during the interview, to engage in the process of active meaning-making that we value in an oral history interview.

Themes We Might Want to Touch on in These Interviews

(this is not an exhaustive list at all, just a brainstorm)

- How/why they came to San Francisco/their particular neighborhood or city
- How long they have lived here

- What sort of community they had
- What their life was like in San Francisco/their particular neighborhood or city
- What sort of meaning the city holds for them—how has this meaning changed?
- How has the city changed? (but make sure that this is based not just on their observations but maybe grounded in a particular story of a place or experience that singled to them that the city changed)
- How did they make the decision to fight their eviction? Or not?
- What is their life like now? What has changed?
- What is different? What have they learned?
- Reflections on the place they have moved to

Emotions, Talking About Loss, Being “With” Your Narrator

As Nancy Raquel Mirabel writes about conducting oral histories of the Mission as it changed during the late 1990s and 2000s: “At times the project took its toll... by conducting oral histories of displacement we recorded endings...” (Mirabel, 2009). In these interviews, we are asking people to narrate difficult and often traumatizing experiences. To interview them about these experiences you must be *with them* in the interview. That is, being able to take their emotions and your emotions seriously. This is part of what this process is about. As we try to counter the erasure that happens during evictions and displacements with people’s stories we are also re-inscribing emotions into the process, and so these interviews will be emotional. Be prepared for this. Do what you need to do to be respectful as people have emotions. Some ideas are:

- Asking them if they would to take a break and potentially turning the recorder off for a few minutes
- Don’t be afraid to have emotions with them and to express your emotions, your condolences, your upset-ness
- To share your own stories and experiences

In addition, remember that these stories will have an effect on you as well. Take time to process them emotionally and be kind to yourself.

APPENDIX OF TERMS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Displacement Removal that refers to the physical presence of the person, but also to the cultural, linguistic, relational presence that exists outside of communities of people. It is a movement that results from a lack of economic and social power.

Costa-Hawkins Act Costa-Hawkins mandates that rent control may not be applied to units constructed after 1995, single family homes or condos. Furthermore, it prohibits “vacancy control.” Vacancy control occurs when rental units voluntarily vacated by their previous tenants are restricted to the previous rent-controlled rate instead of allowed to rise to market rate.

Ellis Act The Ellis Act is a state law which says that landlords have the right to evict tenants in order to “go out of business.” All units in the building must be cleared of all tenants—no one can be singled out. Most often it is used to convert to condos or group-owned tenancy-in-common flats. Once a building becomes a condo, it is exempt from Rent Control regardless of the age of the building and even if a unit owner subsequently rents to a long-term tenant. As we found, nearly 80 percent of Ellis Act evictions filed between 2011 and 2014 were conducted within five years of property ownership, revealing the speculative nature of this eviction type.

Eviction Process If a landlord is going to evict tenants, and that eviction is permissible by law (even if we believe it is unjust), the landlord must follow a series of legal procedures in order for the eviction to be a valid and legal eviction. It is highly common for landlords to evict or attempt to evict tenants in illegal ways—such as excessive rent increases or refusing to make repairs—and if tenants are unaware of their rights and of this process, it can result in tenants being forced out of their homes under illegal conditions.

In order for an eviction to be legal, a landlord must serve a proper written notice, in paper, either by mail or on the door of the tenant’s home. A landlord serves a notice to “cure or quit” when they believe the tenant has violated a specific provision of the rental agreement or lease. This is most often a three-day notice to “cure or quit” OR a 30–60-day

notice terminating tenancy. Even if tenants are covered under Just Cause law, a landlord may evict tenants for a reason of “no-fault” to the tenant, such as Owner-Move-In or Ellis Act evictions.

If a valid three-day notice is served, the tenant must respond in three calendar days to their landlord to “cure”—as in fix—whatever violation of the lease agreement the landlord raised to justify a “just cause” eviction, including nonpayment of rent. If the tenant believes the notice is invalid (insofar as they have not breached their contract as they are being accused of), they can also send a letter to the landlord, certified mail, responding to the eviction notice to contest it within three days (e.g. they *have* paid rent but the landlord has not accepted their rent checks). If the tenant does not respond within three days or “cure” the issue within three days, this does NOT mean the tenant must leave on the fourth day.

At this point, the landlord must file a Summons and Complaint for Unlawful Detainer with the court. Some landlords do not file the UD right away, some landlords do. Once the tenant receives the summons for UD, the tenant has five calendar days to file their response to the lawsuit in court.

- If a tenant *does not* respond, they lose as part of a default judgment. At this point, they will receive a Sheriff’s Notice, letting them know the date they must vacate the property. In San Francisco, courts may grant a one-week (sometimes longer, but rarely) *stay of eviction* which allows the tenant a bit more time to secure another form of housing.
- If they *do* respond within the five days, they will then be assigned a date for a settlement conference between their attorney and their landlord’s attorney. If their case does not settle at this conference, their case will then go to trial. If they win their trial, they will stay in possession of the property and will recover the cost of the lawsuit. At this point, the tenant is expected to pay all back rent, unless the jury decides that they can pay a decreased amount due to the landlord needing to making repairs or improve habitability of the unit.

Alternatively, a landlord can also serve a 30- or 60-day notice terminating tenancy to legally evict a tenant after a breach of contract. If the tenant does not terminate their tenancy, the landlord will file a Summons and Complaint for Unlawful Detainer. The same process follows as described above.

If you receive an eviction notice, or are threatened with eviction in any way and are not sure how to respond, seek counsel with your local tenants union or tenants rights clinic! You can fight your eviction! See our resources for more info.

Foreclosure When housing is bought on credit via a mortgage, foreclosure occurs when the property owner cannot meet their debt obligations to their lender and thereby forfeits their right to the property. Foreclosure is a lengthy process, and they take at least three months to complete after the lending bank first files a notice of default to begin the process. Foreclosures often occur when large life events—such as illness or death or sudden changes in employment—make it difficult to make mortgage payments on time. Real estate speculation during the 2007 housing bubble and subprime mortgages also drove many buyers into overpriced houses whose mortgage payments became unaffordable as their mortgages matured and house prices went underwater when the bubble burst.

Gentrification *Causa Justa::Just Cause*, a grassroots community-based organization that organizes around housing, immigrant rights, and building black and brown leadership in our movements, defines gentrification as “a profit driven race and class remake of urban, working class communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment. This process is driven by private developers, landlords, businesses, and corporations and supported by the state, through both policies that facilitate the process and funding in the form of public subsidies. Gentrification happens in areas where commercial and residential land is cheap, relative to other areas in the city and region, and where the potential to turn a profit, either through re-purposing existing structures or building new ones is great.”

Mutual Aid Peers coming together in a spirit of cooperation and equity to build a mutual network of support—the opposite of charity—to be self-managed, self-organized, self-determined, and self-governed in a humane, person-to-person way with dignity and respect. In all of its partnerships and collaborations, the AEMP operates on a principle of mutual aid.

No-Fault Eviction Some Bay Area cities have “Just Cause” eviction ordinances on their books which restrict when evictions can legally occur.

Just cause for eviction can either be by the fault of the tenant (e.g. breach of contract), or be by “no-fault” of the tenant. No-fault causes for eviction in San Francisco include Ellis Act evictions, owner move-in, demolition, capital improvements, or sale of unit converted to a condo. Without Just Cause eviction ordinances, there are no barriers to landlords evicting rent-controlled tenants at will to raise the rent to market rate for the next tenant.

Fault Eviction A term created by the legal arm of the real estate industry to create a false distinction between those who can afford to pay rent (“good renters”) and those who can’t (“bad renters”). Many of us are one paycheck or health emergency from a “fault eviction.”

We know: No-Fault Evictions increased 42% between 2011 and 2012 and increased another 57% between 2012 and 2013.

Oral History The AEMP uses Oral History methodologies when interviewing folks for the project. We choose to conduct oral history interviews, rather than more journalistic interviews, because we want to create a space for folks to share the stories of their whole lives, how they make meaning of their life, their community, and the forces that have impacted them, not just a specific story about their eviction, for instance. Oral history interviews are guided by the person being interviewed and aim to get a sense of the “life story” of that individual, as they want to tell it. Oral history interviewing has the potential to break down the power dynamics of more journalistic interviewing processes, as the interviewee is in control of the interview, and there are several consent processes built into ensure that interviewees are comfortable and willing to share their interview and whatever other media it becomes a part of.

Relocation Payment Tenants subject to no-fault evictions in some cities with Just Cause Eviction Ordinances are entitled to a relocation payment to defray moving costs and ease the transition into a new dwelling. In San Francisco, these relocation payments are approximately ~ \$5,500 per tenant up to ~ \$15,000 per unit. Tenants asked to temporarily relocate during substantial capital improvements are also entitled to relocation payments of ~ \$300 for up to 20 days.

Rent Control/Stabilization Rent control/stabilization ordinances limit the amount that rents are allowed to increase each year. Rent increase

limits are usually based either on a fixed percentage maximum increase or tied to inflation. When rents are not controlled or stabilized, they are at the discretion of the landlord and often allowed to float at “market rate,” whatever price they can command on the housing market. Without rent control, there is no reason landlords cannot illegally evict tenants through informal means, such as excessive rent increases, that would lead to a breach of contract on the tenant’s part and formal, legal eviction proceedings. In San Francisco, rent control only applies to multifamily properties built after 1979 and is tied to inflation. In California, Costa-Hawkins put further restrictions on which units are eligible for rent control.

We know: In light of the new wave of economic displacement currently facing the San Francisco Bay Area, cities across the region are being pushed to adopt new rent control ordinances (e.g. Richmond, the City of Alameda) or strengthen existing ones (e.g. San Jose).

Tech Bus Private double-decker luxury commuter buses, more commonly known as “Google Buses” that take highly paid tech workers from S.F and Oakland to their workplaces in Silicon Valley. The private shuttle program has created a two-tier system of commuting using public bus stops and creating higher rates of displacement near to shuttle stops. They have effectively made S.F a bedroom community for Silicon Valley.

We know: The AEMP found that between 2011 and 2013, no-fault evictions increased 69% within four blocks of private shuttle stops, as real estate becomes more valuable when advertised in proximity to these stops.

Community Building and Engagement

The research projects featured in this section highlight the efforts of interdisciplinary scholars to engage in participatory approaches to research that have the potential to build community among participants, audience members, and researchers alike. A key feature of arts-based research involves using art to engage individuals and communities in order to share academic knowledge with audiences beyond academia. Individual and collective interaction with art holds the power to make a lasting impression, foster meaningful relationships, and ignite action for social change.

In her piece, *From the Inside Out: Using Arts-Based Research to Make Prison Art Public*, Laura Pecenco discusses the importance of using arts-based research in the dissemination of research findings, using the case study of Project PAINT, a visual arts program that she founded and runs at a California state prison. Pecenco explores how employing participatory action research in designing exhibitions of participant-created art allows for participants themselves to communicate and provide their own analyses with the outside world. Displaying their art can promote dialogue directly between participants, researchers, and the general public, allowing the findings to be shared with a much broader audience.

Ellen Plumb, Brandon Knettel, Melissa Fogg, Ellen Owens, Shira Walinsky, Rickie Brawer, and James Plumb use photovoice methodology with refugees while engaging in research as an interdisciplinary team. Their chapter, *Envisioning Home: The Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Photovoice Project as a Story of Effective Relationship Building*,

describes a community engagement program that used photovoice methodology to engage and empower refugee families around the issue of mental health during resettlement. Through the eyes of the program's key collaborators, we learn how photographs and accompanying narratives were used to develop thriving partnerships and arts-based mental health programming focused on themes of resilience, cultural inheritance, community building, and environmental transformation. The research was conducted by members of the Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Collaborative, a group of organizations working to promote refugee community engagement and build an effective, wellness-based model for refugee mental health in the city of Philadelphia.

From the Inside Out: Using Arts-Based Research to Make Prison Art Public

Laura Pecenco

IMPLEMENTING PROJECT PAINT

When I decided to study prison arts programs for my dissertation, I knew that I wanted to get a first-hand account by working inside a prison, conducting an ethnography. California previously had a thriving Arts-in-Corrections program in all of its state prisons. Unfortunately, this was cut in 2003 and entirely de-funded by 2010. However, I saw this as a challenge that I was willing to accept. I had already worked in prisons in the past and was motivated to enact a true critical, public sociology research project. I decided to start an arts program at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility (RJDCF), a men's medium/maximum security prison located in San Diego, one and a half miles from the border with Mexico. To gain access to the prison as a research site, I first volunteered in another prison program to make the necessary contacts (as well as to obtain the approval of three separate agencies overseeing human subjects research) before approaching the prison administration to create a visual arts program.

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In 2013, I founded Project PAINT: The Prison Arts INiTiative, beginning with a project requested by the Warden—a collaborative mobile mural project that involved 20 incarcerated artists creating landscape scenes that are now hung in the prison’s visiting rooms. That initial project soon expanded to include myself, Lead Instructor Kathleen Mitchell, two additional professional teaching artists, and 48 inmates who participated in two concurrent 32-week “Drawing, Painting, and Sculpting” courses that took place weekly in the gymnasium of one of RJDCF’s yards. From there, we expanded to six paid staff and six volunteers and over 100 incarcerated participants, offering four courses to prisoners, including a 40-week Arts Immersion class, a 24-week Drawing and Painting course, a 16-week Pattern and Material Drawing class, and a 12-week Storytelling and Bookmaking course.

I had intended to study the performance of gender in art creation in prison, and indeed found interesting results. Previous studies have documented the effectiveness of Arts-in-Corrections in reducing institutional violence and recidivism (Brewster, 1983, 2010; California Department of Corrections [CDC], 1987). I explained these benefits through understandings of masculinity. In public spaces in the prison, such as the yard and the chow hall, the prisoners are put into a hierarchy based on hypermasculine traits, which tend to encourage violence and toughness. However, a very different set of criteria are used within arts creation. A “true” artist is often considered to be someone who is introspective; violence and toughness are not rewarded, and are even discouraged, as they could lead to the removal of the arts program. In addition to this set of findings, I noticed a number of other intriguing patterns. One of these was that the incarcerated people in my program consistently asked me about what people “outside” thought of them. As one of my respondents, Adam, described, “Time stops in here. Out there is the real world.” Adam’s point is that, for him, what really matters is the world outside of the prison walls. Adam, and many of the other participants in the program, regularly mentioned their desire to let the outside world know that prison inmates are not “all bad.” I later realized that curating an exhibition featuring works of art created by the prison artists became the most powerful way of explaining the research to the public, giving the artists the ability to express themselves beyond the prison walls and serving to challenge stereotypes and assumptions of prisoners.

The incarcerated artists' works have been shown through Project PAIN'T at a variety of museums and galleries. Program artists had their work displayed for nine weeks during the summer of 2015 at the Oceanside Museum of Art (OMA), a regional museum that attracts more than 25,000 visitors annually. Then we held an event exhibiting artwork at the Museum of Photographic Arts (MOPA), in San Diego's famous Balboa Park, which attracts over 120,000 visitors per year. From December 2015 to January 2016, the inmates had their work displayed at the Glashaus Mainspace Gallery in Barrio Logan, a working-class neighborhood in southern San Diego. This space was free and open to the public, allowing for an even wider audience than at OMA and MOPA. Additional exhibitions are in the works for the future. The Project PAIN'T website (<http://projectpaint.org>) also houses photographs of each exhibition, including photos from events related to exhibitions (such as opening receptions and panel discussions), as the inmates have been very interested in having access to a website showcasing their art to reach family members who have been unable to visit the museums and galleries in person.

Project PAIN'T has garnered attention from media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *Artnet*, Vice's *The Creators Project*, the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and more, often after discovering the program because of an exhibition. This has allowed the incarcerated participants to both directly and indirectly communicate with the public. In a direct sense, journalists have come into the prison themselves to observe Project PAIN'T in action, to interview the inmate participants, and to photograph them and their work. Indirectly, I have also been asked to represent the views of the inmates as a guest on television news such as San Diego's Channel 6 "The CW" and on the radio on NPR's "All Things Considered."

Ever since the Quaker ideal of the penitentiary, prison rehabilitation programs have encouraged inmates to look inwards and think about the things they have done and consider the "better person" they can become. Today, many correctional facilities and prison systems actively encourage citizens to volunteer in their prisons, doing everything from organizing traditional Bible study groups to working in programs as diverse and innovative as creative writing courses and yoga classes. Self-reflection continues to be central to these initiatives. What is often overlooked, however, is that inmates are not simply interested in learning about themselves, but also in teaching a wider audience something about who they are.

At the start of every new course as part of Project PAINT, I tell the new participants that, yes, indeed this class is about making finished products, and having them exhibited, but that it is just as much about the creative process, about getting to enjoy the journey along the way to completion. I feel the same way about my own research. Methodology has become a central cornerstone of my own work, from focusing on the importance of conducting intensive ethnography in environments often difficult to penetrate, to giving my subjects a voice and enjoying each moment.

This collaboration that focuses on the process of creation and on the messages that the finished products can send is an integral part of anti-oppressive arts-based research. Often researchers are focused on the process of data collection and what those results reveal in a scientific sense, but we must also recognize the power of the subjects in providing their own analysis to the public, to an audience wider than that often found for academic studies.

POTENTIAL OF ANTI-OPPRESSIVE ARTS-BASED RESEARCH

During one of our classes, a group of participants were sitting around a table chatting with one another about their upcoming project. One artist said, “I really want to make my piece about my experience here, but I’m worried it won’t get through [get censored by the prison staff].” A second participant responded, “But it’s your chance to tell your story man! You got the other piece through.” The previous piece his fellow classmate was referring to was a sculpture that referenced his early, violent days in prison and compared it to his transformation, in which he focused on creative writing, music, and visual arts; they had all previously been concerned he could get in trouble for it, as it did somewhat blatantly refer to illegal activities. However, he used it to create a stark contrast between contraband and poetry, both entities that can remove people from the prison walls in a figurative sense. It turned out to be one of the pieces that most resonated with viewers at one of our subsequent exhibitions.

This recognition of their ability to “tell their stories” is an essential component of anti-oppressive arts-based research: community engagement. Many of the men in the program are hyperaware that, not only are they disempowered within prison walls, but that many on the outside also actively work to suppress their voices.

The power of the arts comes through on many levels: the personal, the interpersonal, and the community. By having the creations of the prisoners displayed in public places and online, many individuals, far beyond the standard network of academics, are involved; this leads to multiplying agency and fostering collaboration among seemingly disparate entities.

Inductive Research

Project PAINT began along the traditional lines of using extracurricular activities in a correctional facility as a means of prisoner rehabilitation. In fact, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation allocated state money towards it, justified under the auspices that prison arts programs have been proven to improve inmates' self-esteem and self-control and, in turn, reduce disciplinary actions within prison and recidivism once inmates have been released. Many of the projects that participating inmates create often fall under this rehabilitative lens. For example, one prisoner utilized a shadow box to reconstruct a drunk driving accident that led to the death of his best friend and said in class that he "hopes this will bring me some closure." Another used his metaphorical self-portrait to reflect on his troubled childhood and strained relationship with his father. But what seems even more important to the students has been that others see their artwork and gain a new perspective on them. In short, rather than using art to hold up a mirror and reflect on troubled pasts, inmates are using the art to build a window so that the rest of the world can look in.

In fact, the first major project involved the inmate artists collaborating to create murals to be used for family photograph backdrops in the prison's visiting rooms. The inmate artists were more enthusiastic about *where* the murals were going to be than *what* it was that they were going to paint. The visiting rooms are the only spaces in the prison where inmates come face-to-face with the larger public—their family, friends, and other visitors living on the outside. To the inmates, even those who never received visitors, the murals were an opportunity to transform the space, leaving something of themselves beyond the walls for others to see. We then turned our attention to having their artworks displayed outside of the prison walls. Project PAINT also expanded its relationship with the outside by garnering attention from newspapers, television stations, and museums and galleries.



Fig. 17.1 Collaborative visiting room mural project

Figure 17.1: Collaborative mobile murals at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility. Photos by Peter Merts.

Many of the participants believe that having their work shown to people outside of the prison will have much more of an effect than only having it exhibited within the prison walls. Jose, a very talented portrait artist, was working on an image of a family. I asked him if it was a commission for someone (i.e., if he was hired to do a drawing) and how often he did them. He replied, “This is my first one.” I showed surprise,

as I reminded him that just a month before he had brought in another commissioned portrait. He smiled and said, “Oh, right, but this is my first *real* commission. That other one was for another inmate.” For Jose, having his work shown outside of the prison meant everything to him; it was a way for him to truly have his work legitimized and feel like people respected him as an artist.

Another sign of the participants’ desires for a dialogue with the public was during the preparations for the exhibition that Project PAINT held at the Oceanside Museum of Art. I asked the participants what kind of interactive element they would like to include for the opening night event; the number one request was for feedback from the members of the public who attended the exhibition. “Maybe we could have a comment box for people to write down what they think. I want to know if they like my work, if they think it’s actually art,” said Ted. Andrew said, “I want them to know it’s not all bad in here. There’s some light. We’re these denim wolves [referring to the blue clothing worn by prison inmates and his perception that the public thinks that inmates are predators], but we can be with the mice [the arts program staff].” Others developed their projects with explicit messages for the public. Steve, who painted a grey cell, and included bright colors only to highlight the books on a shelf, asked me, “Do you think they’ll get it? There is life in here, even if it seems like just a bleak place. We do good things; we read and learn.” Another participant created a shadowbox that he described as intentionally “ugly” on the outside but filled with a “beautiful” scene, depicting the contrast between how he believed the public saw him and how he saw himself. A third participant wanted to tell his life story in his shadowbox, filling it with images of things he had done or in fact still identified with—a fishing rod for his time spent as a fisherman, a race car for his dedication as a NASCAR fan, and tools for his occupation as a carpenter. He told me, “I want them to know—I’m a whole person.”

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Prisons

Prisoners are cut off from the outside world in numerous ways and face the struggle of expressing themselves to that world. The creation of the modern incarceration nation is particularly relevant because prisoners are

held in total institutions. Total institutions are those structural situations in which an institution dictates nearly all aspects of an individual's life. Goffman (1961) describes the total institution as destroying the individual identities of those within, imposing uniformity. Such social control can lead to an increased ability to manage, oversee, and manipulate the prisoner body.

Not only are the prisoners physically contained in institutions, these facilities are often located in rural locations (Gilmore, 2007). Visiting, therefore, becomes very difficult. Beyond this, phone calls can be extremely expensive and are only available at certain times of the day, thereby cutting off many individuals from their families and friends in the outside world.

This social control also extends well beyond the confines of the prison itself. Their master status becomes that of "prisoner," a label denoted with stigma. They are forever, first and foremost, identified by this negative label. Arts creation, however, allows the prisoner to undergo a process of "artistization," whereby they shed their primary "prisoner" identity and assume that of "artist." Artists express themselves in a public manner.

Prison Arts Programs

The research on prison arts programs rooted in sociology, criminology, and other disciplines is small. The majority of existing research on prison arts programs focuses on the products created (Bliss et al., 2009; Kornfeld, 1997; Meadows, 2010) and on inmate economies (Kalinich, 1980). There is also literature on the rehabilitative potential of prison arts programs to reduce institutional violence, lower recidivism, increase prison safety (Brewster, 1983, 2010; CDC, 1987), and provide therapeutic benefits (Gussak, 2016; Liebmann, 1994). While these works have been very important in explaining the efficacy of such programs, they have not examined how inmate artists interact to try to send a message to the outside world.

Although researchers, policymakers, and prison volunteers often focus on prison arts programs as rehabilitative because they promote self-reflection, these programs can also be used by inmates as a way to share information about themselves to the public and to change the public's understanding of inmates. Art thereby becomes a tool for public education and possibly prison reform.

Arts-Based Research

Arts-based research is empowering. Art can be used to encourage self-expression and to provide a voice to groups that have been traditionally oppressed. Prisons intentionally disconnect inmates from the outside world. Art, however, can be used by inmates as a tool to communicate with the larger society, thereby creating agency for the prisoners.

Historically, much research has been oppressive, with those in power deciding what knowledge is important and exploiting disempowered groups for their own ends. Their interpretations have also become “truth,” without allowing the subjects to speak for themselves (Finley, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Arts-based action research, however, allows for new opportunities in data collection and dissemination. It can be used to incorporate subjects in data collection (Capous-Desyllas, 2014; Whitmore, 1994), help students engage more deeply with their learning (Osei-Kofi, 2013), create more valid data (Reason, 2006; Whitmore, 1994), encourage collaborations between researchers and community members (Wang, 1999), and provide solutions for social inequities (Finley, 2008; Osei-Kofi, 2013).

However, little work so far has been concentrated on the prison environment, especially from the angle of examining the voices of prisoners themselves. Leavy (2009) highlights the potential of arts-based research to reach audiences beyond academia. The work that has been done on prisons and arts-based research has focused on areas other than the dissemination of research findings though. Koch et al. (2015) demonstrate the benefits of using movement- and drama-therapy to teach antiviolence principles, demonstrating that participants bond with one another, report higher levels of empathy, and are more socially competent, among other things. However, their study focuses on the within-prison benefits, rather than considering how such arts-based research can reach a larger audience. Li (2013) recognizes that prison arts have been used to educate the broader public, but does not focus on how the prisoner-artists themselves are part of the process. She focuses on how the professional artist instructors often become passionate activists after their experiences of working inside prisons.

Participatory Approach to Research

My study used the participatory approach in the dissemination of the research findings. It was very important to me that the participants had input in how their work was displayed. This is for two reasons: (1) I do

not have the same background and have not had the same experiences as they have, and (2) I did not wish to further disempower an already oppressed group. For the Project PAINT participants, their own arts practice was a way for them to express issues of social justice. Then, they could share their analyses through exhibitions. This process also provided me with the opportunity to encourage engagement between the public and the Project PAINT participants. Beginning in early 2013, I spent on average six or more hours per week working in the prison arts program, leading to a total of over 800 hours of participant observation.

Working with an Incarcerated Population

Prisoners, as a category of people, are oppressed in intersecting ways: not only are they incarcerated, but they are disproportionately marginalized. Many are indigent, lack extensive formal education, are people of color, are veterans, and/or identify as transgender (Alexander, 2012). This compounds the discrimination, whether unconscious, interpersonal, or institutional, that they have faced over their lifetimes (Crenshaw, 1991). This means that on a daily basis, their agency is reduced. For instance, they cannot decide to eat when they wish; even if commissary food is available, many cannot afford it. I did not want to compound any loss of agency with my research.

In fact, I wanted to provide the inmates with a heightened sense of agency, by giving them the option to choose whether to participate in the arts program, and then to choose how they wanted to express themselves. This happened through their decisions about how they created their pieces themselves, through the written and oral reflections we engaged in during and outside of class, and through the presentations of their work to the public. The participants had numerous opportunities to speak directly to news media and were involved very critically in the exhibitions that featured their works.

Evaluation is an important part of our work as well. The participants seemed to enjoy getting to speak their minds and providing suggestions for programming. We worked to co-create the courses, listening and incorporating feedback that we received from participants.

Using reflexivity, I needed to remember that I was an outsider coming into a world that they could not leave, and had no choice in being a part of. I was coming into their home and asking them details about their identities. Just as Whitmore (1994) noticed in her own study, in

her collaboration with low-income single mothers to study a welfare program, the subjects did some observation of me as well. In fact, one participant told me that he had his wife do a search on me on the Internet to check out my background. While it unnerved me at the time, I appreciated that they were cautious about who they divulge information to and that, ultimately, they deemed me credible. Thankfully, they did volunteer for the arts program itself, suggesting that the participants were able to demonstrate agency just by being there. Many of them reported enjoying talking about themselves and their art, something that they do not often get to do in the prison environment.

As a young woman, I was concerned that it might be difficult to interview men in prison, as there could have been a chance that I would not be taken seriously or even sexualized. However, I believe that being young and female (and, for much of the data collection process, a graduate student), in fact, assisted me—because I was not viewed as competition in any way. The inmates seemed to speak very candidly about their activities and thoughts (Sprague, 2005). I was perceived nonthreatening; in fact, one of the subjects told me multiple times that I was so “little” and that they just could not be intimidated by me.

However, being a highly formally educated, young, white, upper-middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual woman, as well as the director of the program, also sometimes created conflicts. Occasionally, a participant would bristle when I took an authoritative position in class; one man approached me after class to explain that some of the participants were not used to being told what to do by a young woman, that it made them feel unmasculine. Another time, an artist specifically mentioned to me he was working on two master’s degrees; a number of them were worried about being perceived as uneducated. The intersections of gender, age, and education became very salient in this environment.

Overall, they tended to view me in a positive light, since I was recognized as having brought in arts programming, which they were all generally very supportive of (even if they themselves were not participants of the program). As a member of the “free staff,” I had both an insider and outsider position. I was able to enter the prison and interact with the inmates, but was not a member of the custody staff, meaning that I was not a part of any punishment. Many of the participants shared that they felt much more comfortable speaking with me as a member of the free staff, without being in the presence of the custody staff. This contributed to engaging in quality, truthful research (Whitmore, 1994).

CURATING THE EXHIBITIONS

The program participants played a major role in how they chose to display their artwork and craft the message they wanted to send to viewers. This was done in an interactive way: through weekly written reflection assignments that asked the participants to offer up a name for the exhibitions, select which artworks to display, discuss how to arrange them, write a version of the didactic text [the text that provides an overview of what the exhibition is about], and even determine what food to provide at the opening reception. Each of these topics was then discussed as a group during class time, so that we could all come to a consensus about how to proceed. Then, the participants were asked to engage in the panel discussions, typically held at the museums and galleries where their work was exhibited, by pre-answering a list of questions that the panel moderator asked to all of the panelists (who often included the Warden, a program instructor, a formerly incarcerated arts program participant, and a family member of a person who was currently incarcerated). This was a cooperative inquiry in how to properly disseminate the findings of my research.

Photographs were also a very important way to involve our participants as well as their family and friends. I took photos of the exhibitions where their artwork was displayed, or I had a professional come in wherever possible, so that the experience could be documented for the participants who could not physically be there. While some inmates had friends and family in the local area who were able to attend the shows, often they were from other areas in the state or did not have reliable transportation. Therefore, having photos and posting them to our website was an integral part of connecting the participants with their art being displayed in the community and their social networks.

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK AT THE EXHIBITIONS

The men in my program had numerous opportunities to have their work viewed by the local, national, and international communities. The opening reception for our Project PAINT Oceanside Museum of Art exhibition had the largest turnout. Audience members explained that they instantly connected with the work, leading them to want to learn more, and even *do* more, about the operation of the criminal justice system in our society. Many of them recorded their thoughts in a “log book” that

we left in the exhibition (as part of the immersive experience, we opted to have museum visitors voluntarily “sign in” as Project PAINT staff members must do every time we enter the prison). Comments include the following:

“A very powerful and thought-provoking exhibition. A glimpse into a realm that many do not ever see or experience—not that one would voluntarily opt for. But it shows all of the beings have stories, compassion, make mistakes, and sometimes pay for in ways that perhaps might be pretty inhumane.”

“Gentlemen, thank you sincerely for sharing your visions, your talent, your creativity and—above all—your souls. Beautiful work.”

“Viviana, I loved your post card. I’m so excited to see work from another trans person in this show! You are amazing! < 3 Power to you!”

“Sharing your thoughts and talents thru art allows expression not seen elsewhere.”

“Beautifully done. This work reveals a great deal about our failure as a civil society, and how deeply we have normalized cruel and all too usual punishment.”

“Arts in Corrections is the most positive, therapeutic tool box inmates could ever be handed, full of creative, life-changing opportunities allowing them to repair and restore self-esteem and unleash the creativity that deeply demonstrates their true selves. It is curbing prison violence, reducing recidivism and saving lives.”

Ultimately, the incarcerated participants and the staff collaborated to create an immersive exhibition, which opened up an engaging conversation about the impacts of prison arts programs with an audience beyond academia.

Dialogue with Prisoners About Their Art

Many of the immersive elements utilized during the OMA exhibition, such as the log book, the “kite” [slang for thread that is used by inmates to send notes to one another across cells] string used to display

the postcard project, and the weights on the ends of the strings [combs are often used by the inmates to help accurately send their notes], came from the participants themselves. During class, one evening, one participant brought up sound: “You know, it would be cool if people could hear the clangs that go on all day, you know, ‘yard recall’ blasting in the background. It is never quiet in prison.” This led us to develop a sound component, in which we used sounds recorded in prisons, which played on a continuous loop while people walked through our exhibition.



Fig. 17.2 Oceanside Museum of Art exhibition

Figure 17.2: Oceanside Museum of Art exhibition. Top row and bottom right photos by Peter Merts; bottom left photo by Laura Pecenco).

The exhibition itself, especially in its immersive feel, was truly a co-construction of inmates and staff.

Art as a Form of Pedagogy

The inmates demonstrated their desire to engage with the outside world in other ways as well. When asked what kind of art project they would design if they were in charge, they submitted multiple proposals around social justice issues, such as increasing awareness of animal rights, supporting veterans, and donating money to a children's hospital. In fact, multiple participants asked me if I was going to teach a sociology class, and that they would really like to enroll. I told them that by thinking through these issues of social justice, we were in fact doing sociology during the art class. In fact, one evening while we were discussing a piece a participant had done about ideas regarding "evil," we discussed Milgram and Asch's famous experiments on obedience.

The "85/11" project. In what we dubbed the "85/11" project, we brought in research that had been conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, which indicates that 85% of people incarcerated have been affected by alcohol and other drugs, but that only 11% of them receive treatment while in prison (CASA, 2010). Multiple participants of our classes had some type of experience dealing with substance abuse issues. Some mentioned attending AA or NA classes or having cellmates who did. Others faced addiction while on the streets or while incarcerated, or had family members struggling with addictions. Some had never used drugs but recognized the issue it posed within the prison walls. Therefore, we wanted the men to be able to interpret this data in an artistic fashion (specifically by combining creative writing in the form of a haiku and pairing a watercolor painting with it), to enable the public to hear about an oft-overlooked issue; ultimately, our goal was to allow for the men's voices to be heard, but also to raise awareness about this larger social problem.

Figure 17.3: "85/11" watercolor paintings with haikus, displayed at the Glashaus Mainspace Gallery. Photos by Laura Pecenco.

The image in the upper left-hand corner reads:



Fig. 17.3 Project artwork

“I’m tired of using/
I’m the eighty-five percent/
Where the fuck’s my help?”

The one in the top right corner states,

“Statistics are gained/
But still lost in the shuffle/
Cries for help not heard.”

The artist of this piece recognizes the lack of impact that such statistics can have, but also has hope for the potential of his art for spreading the message and having their cries heard.

However, the participants realized that there might be some limitations in appealing to audiences both within and outside the walls regarding issues similar to this one. They often spoke about trying to get the correctional staff to see that inmates are human also, but that this was

not always successful. They were also worried that scholarly representations of data would not engage enough people in the outside world.

Messages in Art

Many of the participants of my study verbalized that there were things they could only express through art, which could not be conveyed through writing nor verbally described. Art provided them with the freedom to truly express themselves and allowed for knowledge production that was impossible through traditional methods. It was also a way for them to connect with an audience. Artwork can be instantly viewed and an emotional connection can be created, whereas writing or speaking can be problematic for inmates, given that many people already are biased against them. They realized that this was their chance to “be heard,” especially when letters to family members were thrown away, when writings were censored, and when op-eds were published saying that they should be locked up and have the key thrown away.

One evening, one of the participants said, “Honestly, I don’t always know where some of these things come from. But suddenly, here I am doing a print of unicorns or a painting about whale jail [his critique of Sea World]. It just happens.” It was interesting to see the personal get political with art.

Part of their resistance also comes through in the style of artwork that they create in and of itself. Many of the men admitted to not identifying as “artists” when they first began their time with the program, even when they had already been accomplished in the prison art scene. They explained to me that art seemed to be something “out there,” and therefore they felt dissociated from the artist moniker.

Constructing their messages. The inmates recognized that art has a way of speaking to a larger public, one who might not accept them otherwise (or approach them with stereotypes). In a reflection assignment, Kevin wrote,

I’ve always wondered how my artwork might effect [sic] people that see it. It’s one thing to draw something or paint something for a friend or family member, but when I read the feedback from the exhibit that I gratefully got to participate in, I was brought to tears. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to express myself. The ladies that run this class have seen me at my best, as well as my worst, and I credit this program and the support & love from our teachers in saving my life.

In a response to a question posed about what the artists would want to tell museum-goers, Jeffrey wrote, “This is the best part of my life. I look forward to this like nothing else. I hope you see your [sic] not that different than me.” They very much want to be viewed as legitimate artists, by both the audience inside the prison, and especially by the audience outside of the prison. Many of the men use their art to highlight their resistance within an environment that constantly strips them of their agency.

IMPACT ON PUBLIC

There has been an increasing interest in prison arts and the prison system because of the increase in audience attendance at our public Project PAINT exhibitions. People have reached out, wanting to find out more about what they can do. They have questioned the role of the criminal justice system and the prison–industrial complex, which we can now see operating at a national and international level. Not only did the artwork and the exhibitions give the participants control over how to express and represent themselves in the public, they often challenged the popular discourse and stereotypes prevalent in our society (Osei-Kofi, 2013; Wang, 1999). The exhibitions featuring the work of the prisoners have started an engaged dialogue and have also reached and influenced policymakers.

For example, Project PAINT has since garnered over a dozen people who have made long-term commitments as staff or volunteers with the program. Many others have expressed interest, either inquiring about participation or requesting more information about the program and its participants. I have also been contacted by numerous media outlets and a filmmaker wishing to do stories on Project PAINT exhibitions, program operation, and inmates to raise awareness and heighten consciousness about the population. Not only have the inmates been able to express themselves, now the outside world wants to come in and reach out to them on their own. The inmates sent out the invitation, and now the public has accepted.

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Envisioning Home: The Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Photovoice Project as a Story of Effective Relationship Building

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“They told us to follow [our] rituals.”
–Karna Kariki, Bhutanese refugee, Age 41

Entering the gallery rooms on a hot summer day, many voices fill the air with a tapestry of different languages, accents, and inflections. The scent of South Asian cuisine infuses the warm air. Ornate, handmade traditional weavings adorn the gift shop in the gallery entrance. On the brightly

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colored walls hang photographs, dozens of them, sizeable and impressive prints framed in black. The people gathered here are looking intently at these frozen moments and many of them are looking at their own faces, their own families. The photographs depict scenes from the lives of refugees from Burma, Bhutan, and Iraq, and include not just portraits, but also other icons of the refugees' transition to their new lives in Philadelphia.

A diverse crowd has gathered to celebrate these images: doctors from the nearby hospital still in their scrubs, Burmese women in patterned silks, smiling Bhutanese children, social workers and refugee case aids, Iraqi women in hijabs, curious local artists and art aficionados, and a generous smattering of passersby from the bustling city neighborhood.

This scene describes the opening reception of 'Envisioning Home: Perspectives from Philadelphia Refugees,' an installation at the community arts center known as Philadelphia's Magic Gardens. The crowd pauses from its collective interest in the photographs and moves into a mosaic courtyard where a handful of Burmese elders have begun a joyful music and dance performance to celebrate this exciting evening.

We, the partners responsible for the gathering, are there as well. We smile widely with pride and excitement. Despite the countless hours we have spent

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to bring this event to fruition, and the months and years leading up to it spent building connections with and serving these communities, today we are happy to fade into the background. Perhaps it is this sense of enjoyment at the empowerment and advancement of others that drew us to community health work in the first place. Today, the refugees are front and center, pointing and posing in front of their artwork, the lens through which they have so generously allowed us to look into their lives.

PROLOGUE

In the current chapter, we tell the story of the Philadelphia Refugee Photovoice Project (PRPP). The result of a research partnership between diverse community organizations aimed at improving the health and well-being of refugees, the PRPP brought together the skill sets and perspectives of physicians, mental health specialists, public health researchers, social workers, artists, and refugees. The goal of this project was to use photography to develop spaces for creative and emotional expression around the narrative of refugee acculturation. Although the PRPP involved engagement of specific refugee communities over the course of several months, the process of relationship building arose from long-standing partnerships among refugee communities and both academic and community-based partners. Ultimately, it was this expanded level of community engagement that enabled the PRMHC and partner agencies to make the photovoice research project a success. Most importantly, the project also led to the broader engagement of Philadelphia-area health, social service, and arts communities working with refugees, including a variety of arts-based mental health programs that continue to exist and thrive today (Fig 18.1).

SETTING THE STAGE: UNDERSTANDING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Understanding the story of the Philadelphia Refugee Photovoice Project (PRPP) starts by understanding the process of refugee resettlement. As refugee populations are displaced from their country of origin, they experience population-specific physical, psychological, and social challenges that impact mental health. The physical and emotional trauma often experienced by refugees before and during their migration can

Partner Organization	Acronym	Project Lead	Area of Expertise
Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Collaborative	PRMHC	Melissa Fogg	Social Work
		Brandon Knettel	Psychology
Center for Urban Health	CUH	Rickie Brawer	Public Health
		James Plumb	Public Health Physician
Center for Refugee Health	CRH	Ellen Plumb	Primary Care Physician
Mural Arts Program	MAP	Shira Walinsky	Muralist
Philadelphia Magic Gardens	PMG	Ellen Owens	Museums and Education

Fig. 18.1 Figure organization

be further complicated by a resettlement process in which refugees face uncertainty, loss of extended family and kinship networks, underemployment, a difficult process of language acquisition, discrimination, violence, and conflict associated with the intergenerational acculturation of individuals, families, and communities (Garrett, 2006).

Meanwhile, refugees experiencing distress are faced with a veritable wall of cultural barriers, including a mismatch in cultural understandings of disorders and help-seeking, limited access to competent providers, and frequent misunderstandings due to language and cultural distance (Garrett, 2006; Knettel et al., 2014). These barriers can result in a failure to identify, develop, and link refugee populations with much-needed mental health programming (Ryan, Dooley, & Benson, 2008).

Taken together, these challenges represent enormous hurdles that refugee families must overcome to thrive in a new setting, and yet many of them do thrive. They display remarkable resilience, drive, and perseverance through the long process of acculturation. Efforts have been made to harness the strengths of refugee communities, including specific inquiry into the social and cultural contexts of refugee mental health. Such efforts have pointed to an alternative approach to engagement in these communities, aimed not at *providing for* refugees, but rather *working with* them to highlight positive traits. Such a strengths-based approach uses cultural brokers, community engagement, and arts-based programs to develop effective, culturally responsive mental health programming in refugee populations (Kirmayer, Groleau, Gruzder, Blake, & Jarvis, 2003).

ACT 1: BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS OF PARTNERSHIP AND RESEARCH PLANNING

According to statistics from the Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program (2014), resettlement agencies in the state served 2696 newly arrived refugees in 2013, with almost 30 percent of these settling in the Philadelphia area. The largest numbers of refugees arriving in Philadelphia came from Iraq ($n = 245$), Bhutan ($n = 214$), and Myanmar/Burma ($n = 140$), with 176 coming from all other countries combined. Philadelphia has a long tradition of welcoming refugees, with resettlement communities reflecting the vibrancy and multiculturalism associated with generational waves of immigrants and refugees coming from different regions of the world.

Through the three resettlement agencies in Philadelphia, refugees are provided with a package of social services to help support the resettlement process, including access to health insurance for the first eight months post-resettlement. At the time that the story of the PRPP started, Thomas Jefferson University's Center for Refugee Health (CRH) had been the clinical partner for the largest refugee resettlement agency in the city for five years. Through the weekly resident clinic, a home visit program, and monthly student-run clinics, the CRH was training clinicians to provide comprehensive primary medical health care for more than 800 refugees.

The Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Collaborative (PRMHC) was established in 2011 to specifically address refugee mental health needs.

Part of a Philadelphia-wide initiative designed to establish “community collaboratives” to serve under resourced or high-risk communities under the city’s Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS), the PRMHC was funded to operate as a multidisciplinary coalition of stakeholders interested in refugee mental health with core program partners that included practitioners from medical, resettlement, mental health, and arts organizations. The goals of the PRMHC included (a) using culturally resonant methods to enhance adaptive strategies already present within refugee populations, (b) building ethnic community capacity, (c) developing and supporting group programming for new arrivals in nontraditional settings, and (d) increasing capacity among mainstream service providers working with refugee populations. To address these goals, staff began the difficult process of establishing trust in refugee communities by identifying community priorities and determining preferred modalities for enhancing mental health and emotional well-being.

The initial steps of relationship building were guided by informative evaluations aimed at developing community-driven programs or interventions. The PRMHC recognized that meaningful community involvement and collaboration was crucial to their formative assessment. The PRMHC approached the Center for Urban Health (CUH) at Thomas Jefferson University, who agreed to support the project. The center was well known for their expertise in community-based participatory research (CBPR) to engage vulnerable communities in Philadelphia and quickly became an invaluable resource.

With the support of the CUH, the PRMHC created opportunities for refugees to identify and communicate their needs via formal research interviews, “town hall”-type meetings in a variety of settings, and informal conversations among stakeholders. During these initial PRMHC stakeholder and community meetings, the following central questions emerged:

- *What do refugees think are the key determinants of mental health in their resettlement communities?*
- *What protective factors help mitigate the potential adverse effects of migration and refugee resettlement on mental health?*
- *What type of programs will encourage and enhance protective factors?*

In considering how best to answer these questions, the CUH and PRMHC were immediately drawn to the photovoice methodology.

Because of its cultural focus, photovoice was an ideal approach to establish the emerging priorities of the PRMHC, explore the sociocultural context of mental health in refugee communities, and create space for refugee expression in a nonthreatening, engaging, and empowering manner.

IDENTIFYING THE CHARACTERS

The central characters in the first act of the PRPP included a “*physician*,” “*social worker*,” and “*public health researcher*”—with each character bringing fundamentally different perspectives and motivations for involvement that were essential to the initiation and continuation of the research process.

Melissa Fogg, PRMHC (The Social Worker): *“In my previous experience, I often found the implementation of programs at the macro level to be impersonal and ineffective—developed from the top down by individuals distanced from the communities at hand. As my social work practice developed through work with local refugee communities during graduate school, I began to immediately see the value of cohesion achieved through small community groups organized in peoples’ homes. When fragmented communities were brought together—the differences in the moods and demeanors of individuals were palpable. These experiences inspired me to look at the behavioral health of communities beyond the clinical definition. Yes, each individual experienced multiple layers of trauma. However, when given a voice, a community, and purpose—symptoms fell away, and strengths were realized. Watching purported “victims” gain agency and an identity transformed my visions of social work and behavioral health practices to truly focus on individual and community strengths and resilience. Prior to the formal “Collaborative,” earlier iterations of the PRMHC were focused almost exclusively on clinical referrals and case management. Referrals and formally structured conversations about mental health were almost invariably met with polite resistance and it was evident that outreach and treatment methods needed restructuring. A key deficit of earlier PRMHC programming was lack of community buy-in. Without a broader net of support from within, outcomes and community engagement fell short. To establish priorities for the burgeoning PRMHC collaborative, a research methodology was needed that allowed refugee communities to express their desires and tell the stories of their struggles in a non-threatening, engaging, and empowering manner. Photography was an ideal medium, both for encouraging expression and for eliminating the pressures of communicating complicated concepts in English.*”

Ellen Plumb, CRH (The Physician): *I was a family medicine intern in a large, urban clinic that had a robust refugee health care program. Every day my schedule was peppered with refugee patients from Burma, Bhutan, and Iraq—all presenting with vague complaints of chronic pain, insomnia, headaches, and social service requests. Through a poor translation phone service, I found myself asking the same clinical questions over and over, never really arriving at diagnoses that made sense to me, never really feeling like I had connected with my patients. In those first few months as a new physician, I treated the pain with medication, the headaches and insomnia with referrals, and blindly completed forms for electricity and gas assistance or handicap placards. In other words, I was failing to treat these patients in a meaningful way and I was frustrated. Although my resident training program provided some didactic education around refugee care, there was an important lack of educational content focused on culture, mental health, and refugee resettlement. I felt an urgent need to get out of the clinical space and into refugee communities in order to gain clarity about the challenging processes of resettlement and acculturation.*

Rickie Brawer, CUH (The Public Health Researcher): *As the Associate Director of the Center for Urban Health at Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals, I oversee community outreach to address health disparities and the related social determinants of health. This includes understanding the needs and assets of our most vulnerable citizens and engaging them in developing strategies to alleviate concerns. While this understanding includes the use of available data, it also requires an appreciation of the aspirations and barriers to achieving 'health' as perceived by the population of interest. The Refugee Photovoice Project provided the structure to elicit this information and the opportunity to learn from others vested in improving the lives of those in resettlement. My role in the project was as the public health researcher most familiar with photovoice methodology, having conducted this type of qualitative research previously with multiple groups on a variety of topics. While photovoice gives voice to those who may not otherwise be able to have the power to raise their concerns and advocate for change, conducting this project in a group that did not speak English, had cultural beliefs that were not totally understood, and who had suffered inconceivable trauma, created challenges.*

ACT 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

In the early stages of the photovoice project, efforts at community engagement were led by the PRMHC. The goal was to mobilize the community to identify a total of 18 participants from the three largest resettlement

groups in Philadelphia (Burmese, Bhutanese, Iraqi), including refugees from three distinct and important periods of resettlement, including new arrivals, those settled for a six- to twelve-month period, and those in the country more than twelve months. Consistent with the CBPR approach, refugee community members were involved in the identification and recruitment of participant families. Given the degree of vulnerability of the refugee populations and concerns regarding stigma around mental health issues, researchers tried to maintain flexibility during the recruitment process. By framing the question of inquiry as, “What has made it more difficult or more easy to resettle in Philadelphia?” research staff hoped to encourage participants to engage in conversations about mental health that were organic and culturally defined.

While the PRMHC was actively engaging refugee communities, they were simultaneously building partnerships to support research efforts and expand mental health programming. At the time that the PRMHC received its initial funding, DBHIDS was also partnering with the City of Philadelphia’s Mural Arts Program (MAP) to do yearly public arts projects focused on issues of mental illness, addiction, homelessness, trauma, and community recovery. Founded in 1984 as an anti-graffiti program, MAP evolved into a community-based arts program that employed murals as a tool for social change. To date, the program has produced 3600 murals in the city of Philadelphia.

Under direction from DBHIDS, the PRMHC first partnered with MAP on a collaborative mural arts project in Philadelphia’s largest resettlement neighborhood for Burmese and Bhutanese refugees. MAP’s process for community-driven projects includes community engagement meetings and workshops for art, photography, and writing to facilitate community members’ development and design of the mural (Mohatt et al., 2013).

In an act of profound generosity, MAP donated the cameras that were needed to implement the PRPP and drove community engagement and recruitment efforts via their existing networks, allowing researchers to be part of the town hall meetings. MAP muralists also became a unique resource for contextualizing the resettlement experience and how it might best be presented to the public. Through this partnership, another essential individual character emerged in the research narrative—the “artist”.

Shira Walinsky, MAP (The Mural Artist): *I began as a painter who was interested in working outside of the studio in public space. I was drawn to*

murals because they involved making visible stories and communities often unseen in urban spaces. I have painted over thirty murals in Philadelphia and had an interest in working with immigrant communities. In December of 2011, I was asked to work on a project with new refugees from Burma and Bhutan. I immediately said “yes” and then realized how little I knew about Burma and Bhutan. The usual process for mural making entailed creating a series of community meetings to conceptualize a design based on conversations about what that community wants to say. I learned more about why families had come from Burma and Bhutan and why they were living in South Philadelphia through Melissa Fogg. I met some families with Melissa on a cold, rainy February day to take a walk around the neighborhood and learn more about the refugee communities in South Philadelphia. I listened in on a Photovoice session run by Ellen Plumb and Melissa. I was struck by the urgent needs of new families to learn English, to learn how to navigate the school system and medical system, learn about American culture. I was also struck by great talent, pride and resilience. Many Karen Burmese families took photos of Karen clothing and talked about the pride they felt in their cultural heritage. Karen not Burmese, Chin not Burmese! The photovoice project showed the power and accessibility of the photograph to tell these stories.

Because one of the main goals of the photovoice method is to use photographic narrative to advocate for awareness and change, the PRMHC actively sought a partner to support an exhibition of the participants’ work. During the initial planning phases of the PRPP, staff from the PRMHC were invited to visit a local arts organization, the Philadelphia Magic Gardens (PMG), to view an exhibit of large-scale dioramas created by Mexican immigrant children recently resettled in Philadelphia. PMG, whose mission was to actively promote visionary art that is often overlooked, was committed to welcoming marginalized populations into their space. Further, as a destination for thousands of Philadelphians and tourists annually, PMG’s public exposure was a desirable partner asset. As the PMG agreed to display the final work of the PRPP, the final character in the PRPP narrative emerged, the “curator”;

Ellen Owens, PMG (The Curator): *The exhibition (by Mexican immigrant children) was a partnership between PMG and a nearby nonprofit. Melissa Fogg, a long-time friend, attended the opening reception. Since the subject material was relevant to her work, this catalyzed her idea about how to apply the galleries of PMG to her refugee constituents. Melissa and*

I were very supportive of each other's work for years but had never worked together on a collaborative project. I was very motivated by the idea that a visual language—the photovoice project—could help these refugees advocate for themselves and their needs. Melissa introduced me to the key players in the collaboration during a kick-off meeting and I was struck by the different dynamics each partner brought into the conversation and how we spoke different “languages” ourselves. The social workers and doctors were using jargon about treatment, while I was steeped in interpretation, exhibition, and community arts. We were not only seeking to bridge the gap between the public and these displaced peoples, but also between working professionals on vastly different career paths. I remember wondering if everyone took PMG's whimsical environment seriously; if they understood how carefully we would proceed with the development of any exhibition on this topic. It turns out that they did. PMG's role was to host an exhibition of refugee photographs and translate the initial findings from the study for the general public through the curation of the exhibition and the adjoining interpretive materials. In both mission-based and foundational ways, Philadelphia's Magic Gardens was an ideal site to support the work of the refugee participants in the project. After an initial pass-through of the images, I identified the ones that held both the most visual power and the strongest meaning, based on the conversations that the doctors conducted with the refugees. I went to a large Photovoice group discussion with Melissa and the doctors one rainy Saturday and passed around the images that we liked the most to ensure we understood their meaning. This was a powerful moment for me. I listened, in person, as people spoke Burmese and a woman translated into English for us. Watching their reactions to my praise about the images and hearing their stories in person—this made the project so real and even more important than before.

Central to the narrative of the implementation of the PRPP was the way that the different characters approached and thought about the research process;

Melissa Fogg (The Social Worker): *In conversations about their photographs, participants began to tell genuine and heartfelt stories about their past and present experiences. Participants took pride in describing their images and relaying important events from their resettlement experience. Although not a pre-identified goal of the research, but central to the goals and vision of the PRMHC, group discussions became a mechanism for processing shared struggles and concerns about resettlement and life in the United States. In keeping with therapeutic process outcomes, participants*

were able to observe multiple perspectives on presented problems in a supportive and encouraging environment, with many themes and experiences that they shared in common. These interpersonal interactions strengthened group dynamics and helped deepen awareness of the way that participants interacted with their community and environment. During the process, the need for cultural humility emerged consistently. As we entered the homes and lives of new refugee families, we were required to reflect upon and self-critique our stance in relation to others' cultural identities. To help enforce the principles of CBPR as driven by the needs of the participants, meetings were truly driven by community concerns and we moderated them loosely. Meetings were also frequently held in the homes of refugee participants, which created feelings of trust and familiarity between researchers and participants, ultimately adding context to the project for researchers and allowing participants to feel more comfortable in disclosing information about their photographs.

Ellen Plumb (The Physician): *The major challenge that I experienced was that I was always on the “outside” of the community engagement process. The time constraints created by my medical training schedule made it impossible to keep up with the organic, evolving, dynamic community programming that was happening. The more the project evolved, the more I lost control of the original research design as the cameras found their way through the Iraqi, Bhutanese, and Burmese communities in unplanned but empowering ways. In this manner, the photovoice photographs quickly became part of a rapidly evolving tapestry of art—paintings, block prints, dramas, and mural design—that was emerging from the city’s refugee communities. Amidst the evolving partnership between the PRMHC and Mural Arts, it became clear that the research was secondary. Each of us played a different, fundamentally more important therapeutic role in the lives of the participants. As the programming of the PRMHC and MAP blossomed into an incredible Burmese and Bhutanese neighborhood community center, the refugee resettlement narrative continued to emerge through different forms of creative expression. From the perspective of a physician training in the narrow confines of a biomedical academic center, this developing narrative reflected the concept of community wellness in a revolutionary way. The researcher in me was appalled that we couldn’t document the process of community engagement that I was observing. I saw each explosive painting or weaving or drama as another piece of “data” and was increasingly frustrated that the process was not being captured in an objective way. At the same time, I was completely amazed by my social work and artist colleagues—they were producers,*

engagers, creators. They were doing the work that I felt was most important to the health of my patients.

As the narratives above show, the different approaches by the “characters” in the research process made it difficult to reconcile protocol with the goal of participant empowerment. The inability to control recruitment and participation created confusion around the protection of privacy in a collectivistic research environment. As partners faced these challenges, over time, it was understood that there needed to be balance between methodological rigor and the organic, therapeutic process of community engagement.

ACT 3: DATA ANALYSIS

The narrative of the project continued with the analysis phase of the PRPP, which highlights both the opportunities and tensions that arise when emphasizing a partnership approach alongside photovoice methodology. We completed three levels of analysis, with the first happening during small and large group sessions with research participants. Through this process, more than 100 photographs and narratives were examined, and 65 were selected for analysis, exhibition, and advocacy. By driving this selection process, refugee participants provided the foundation for the two subsequent levels of analysis.

During the second level of analysis, we sought to interpret the major thematic categories of the 65 selected images, with the specific goal of encouraging viewers to take on the perspectives and roles of resettled people. The four major themes that emerged at this level were Culture: Honoring Our Roots, Environment: Between Earth and Sky, Family Life: Where the Heart Is, and Opportunity: Building Futures. Each image was accompanied by the story the refugee artist told about it, explaining the image in the words of its maker. These themes provided exhibition anchors and connection points for the public, encouraging visitors to identify with the needs of the refugees and forming a basis for cross-cultural empathy, humility, and understanding.

The third, formal phase of the data analysis occurred several months after the exhibition. Analysis of the photographs, narratives, and small and large group discussion notes and transcripts was done using an

iterative, discovery-oriented exploratory approach (Mahrer & Boulet, 1999). Again, the different characters in the analysis phase of this research narrative had very different perspectives of the data analysis process;

Ellen Owens (The Curator): *I was inspired by both the impact and quality of the images that were produced. The refugees took these images to document their experiences and unpack them with their doctors and social workers. From a curatorial perspective, these images not only served these purposes, but many photographs were powerful, evocative works of art. Raw vision and instinct were the driving force to create the photographs, providing an unfiltered window into the life of another human being. PMG sorted through hundreds of images, balancing aesthetic value, the emerging themes of wellness, and the contributions of all the participants. We felt it was paramount to represent the refugees that participated in the project and to present these works as fine art in our galleries.*

Ellen Plumb (The Doctor): *The planning of the PMG photo exhibition began in parallel to the completion of the photovoice process. With the amazing opportunity for advocacy presented by PMG, we decided to delay the formal analysis and focus our collective efforts on the exhibition. The photographs were carefully and thoughtfully selected for exhibition and organized into thematic categories that made sense in the context of the space. Each beautifully curated photograph and narrative was a piece of art. However, revisiting the “data” months after the exhibit was quite difficult as formal data analysis was deemed secondary to the opportunity to rapidly disseminate findings and translate our research into action through exhibition.*

Rickie Brawer (The Researcher): *The coding experience with the members of the research team proved most beneficial as we shared our insights about the themes uncovered and the potential for creating future interventions and programs to support this vulnerable yet optimistic community in ways that support their culture. This experience gave me a deeper understanding of how to address the health and social needs of the refugee community, strengthened the relationships with others serving this community, and continues to provide a collaborative structure through which future research and interventions can be implemented.*

ACT 4: THE NARRATIVE OF OUTCOMES— FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

By the end of the analysis phase of the PRPP, researchers were left with incredibly rich visual and narrative data representing four perspectives: that of the refugees themselves, that which was curated for the public, that which emerged during formal data analysis, and that of the research partners. These four perspectives of the refugee resettlement experience helped crystallize cross-cultural understandings of mental health and catalyze the collaborative work of PRPP partners with far-reaching implications for clinical practice, community development, and arts-based wellness programming.

Ellen Plumb, (The Doctor): *For me, the refugee narrative that emerged told the stories of death, hope, isolation, fear, freedom and opportunity. The Iraqi photographs and narrative haunted me the most—they communicated the chaos of war and the weight of chronic stress and grief. I viewed them over and over again, the power of the narrative increasing with each viewing. The loss in the photographs was palpable, the death real. The narrative was one of a migration from one kind of violence to another. The Burmese narrative was practical and realistic, concerned with the details of the struggle of daily survival, enamored with modern conveniences. It was introspective and eloquent. Finally, the Bhutanese narrative was one of culture, stolen away and being reclaimed, the freedom of cultural and religious expression crumbling into the inevitable, complicated process of change. The photographs were colorful, expressive, creative, and insistent.*

The most direct outcome of the PRPP was the PMG exhibition, entitled *Envisioning Home: Perspectives from Philadelphia Refugees*. During a two-month period, the PRPP exhibit reached an audience of over 10,500 gallery visitors, attracted an incredibly diverse audience, and was covered by print, radio, and television media.

Reflective of and responsive to the importance of cultural expression as documented by photovoice participants, the opening night of the exhibit included programs focused on traditional foods, dress, dancing, and arts. The event was attended by over 400 refugees and other community members who were enabled, through art, to have cross-cultural conversations about the experience of refugee resettlement.

Melissa Fogg (The Social Worker) : *The PMG exhibit provided an extraordinary opportunity for a cross-cultural discussion of the resettlement experience. I remember watching several of the physicians as they moved from photograph to photograph, shoulder to shoulder with the patients they saw in clinic. Although not explicitly stated, I know that for many people, community engagement in the exhibit helped transform the way that they understood our refugee communities. It was experiential cultural sensitivity training unlike anything that could happen in a classroom or lecture hall.*

As part of the exhibition and opening night, PMG supported the sale of the photographs and traditional artworks, such as hand-woven garments and jewelry, with proceeds benefitting the refugees themselves. These sales introduced microfinance initiatives that were later developed by the PRMHC. In addition to providing an important forum for advocacy and empowerment for refugee communities, the exhibit also provided a platform for continued partnership and community building among mental health providers and agencies across the city of Philadelphia.

The PRPP also planted the seeds for the development of *Southeast by Southeast*, a storefront community arts center in the largest Burmese and Bhutanese resettlement neighborhood in Philadelphia. An initiative led by Mural Arts, PRMHC, and Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability, *Southeast by Southeast* provides a refugee community-centered space to support healthy acculturation. Programmatic activities focus on integrating cultural preservation programming and building the capacity of the new refugee communities at hand—by allowing immigrant artisans to offer workshops on traditional weaving, sewing, dancing, photography, and cooking, and also addressing the important theme of education that emerged from the PRPP, through daily learning and empowerment programs for adults, seniors, and children.

Shira Walinsky (The Mural Artist): *One of the great struggles I learned about through the refugee narratives was about recovering from the trauma associated with being forced to flee, living in a refugee camp, and resettling in a new country. I thought about the idea of a safe haven and what it would look like—a place where there could be an exchange of skills. The arts and social work teams proposed the concept of a storefront where we would hold classes; where we would offer life skills programs and members of the refugee community would teach classes on skills from their home country. We named the*

project Southeast by Southeast, honoring the communities from Southeast Asia living in Southeast Philadelphia.

We found an empty storefront in the neighborhood, moved in, and immediately started holding workshops and arts programs. The PRMHC gave keys to translators and case workers and, right away, there was a sense of ownership in the community.

Melissa Fogg (The Social Worker): *Being able to partner with Mural Arts in establishing Southeast by Southeast, was a thrilling process that was only possible because of our work with the PRPP. I had a sense that people missed intangible things from home—the cultural and social markers—but was without the resources or support to go deeper. The PRPP gave teeth to those instincts, and partnering with artists brought resources, skills, and ideas to the table to that not only made the process possible...but made it a success! As a testament to power of the partnership—within 6 months of opening its doors, Southeast by Southeast was reaching up to 60 people daily through educational, cultural, therapeutic, and artistic programs to meet the needs we identified during the PRPP.*

In essence, Southeast by Southeast has become the brick and mortar symbol of the progress the PRPP hoped to achieve, supporting projects that empower the community and keep the collaborative alive.

The photographs produced through the PRPP told stories of resettlement triumphs and setbacks, with themes of community, culture, and environmental factors emerging as key determinants of refugee resilience and mental health. Most notable in shaping the PRMHC's priorities was the lack of stories related to refugee trauma overseas. Instead, the most urgent concerns were the current daily challenges and worries related to cultural preservation—themes in keeping with models for strengths-based community health and humanitarian intervention. As a result, the PRMHC decided to adopt a wellness-focused philosophy as the backbone of their efforts. By focusing on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Dimensions of Wellness," the PRMHC was able to incorporate programming addressing the social, emotional, environmental, physical, financial, occupational, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a person's life. This perspective is distinct from a traditional clinical perspective as it emphasizes prevention through healthy lifestyle change rather than the treatment of problems.

This perspective also directly impacted the Jefferson CRH's process of mental health screening and referral.

Ellen Plumb, (The Doctor): *The refugee narratives that emerged provided a rich and powerful context for the clinical care that I provided on a daily basis. My participation in the project provided incredible insight into what health looks like and means in different refugee populations and communities. I changed the way that I asked my patients about mental health and incorporated an evaluation of community connectedness and expressions of cultural heritage into my assessments. Instead of just diagnosing someone with “adjustment disorder” in the first 6 months post-resettlement, I started to understand the process of adjustment and what that looked like for my refugee patients. Importantly, the narratives that emerged as a direct result of the research and our partnership building also helped me better understand how neighborhood transformation was impacting the health of my non-refugee patients living in refugee resettlement communities. Finally, Southeast by Southeast became an important referral site for refugee patients. Using the themes that emerged from the photovoice project, we continued to partner in the development of a series of training videos for medical residents focused on culture and trauma-informed care.*

THE FINAL ACT: THE WORK CONTINUES

The Philadelphia Refugee Photovoice Project was developed as a narrative vehicle to tell the story of refugee resettlement in the city of Philadelphia and to inform culturally specific mental health programming. Although the dynamic parallel program development of the PRMHC posed challenges for traditional collection, analysis, and dissemination of research data, the partnership approach used in the project enabled the PRMHC to achieve many of its identified goals. Perhaps foremost among these was the establishment of vital partnerships among organizations and members of the refugee communities. Through the involvement of these unique partners, the story of resettlement was amplified, echoed, and reflected through the lenses of medicine, community development, and creative arts. The story of the PRPP and the integral roles played by each partner/character contributed to outcomes that have improved, and continue to improve, the services available to refugee families in Philadelphia (Figs. 18.2, 18.3, 18.4, 18.5, 18.6, 18.7).

The Refugee PhotoVoice Project

The Photovoice Process

STEP 1
Learn about Photovoice and Train with a Camera

↓

STEP 2
Take Photographs

↓

STEP 3
Choose Photographs

↓

STEP 4
GROUP DISCUSSION

↓

STEP 5
Tell Your Story

↓

STEP 6
Share Your Story



PhotoVoice is a research method developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burns of the University of Michigan. It promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through the use of documentary photography, storytelling, and social action. PhotoVoice places cameras into the hands of people who have concerns about their community but lack access to decision makers that affect their lives, transforming them into visual anthropologists. PhotoVoice empowers people, particularly the impoverished, to become catalysts for change within their own personal situations and broader communities, regardless of language barriers. In addition, the artistic process of photography provides therapeutic avenues for self-expression and self-representation.

In 2011, Thomas Jefferson University partnered with the Philadelphia Refugee Mental Health Collaborative, supported by Lutheran Children and Family Services, to engage Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi families in an ongoing PhotoVoice project that focuses on refugee resettlement experiences. This PhotoVoice study seeks to better understand the resettlement process and how it affects mental health in these populations.

Refugee families from these three groups were given cameras and asked to take photographs of the people, places, and things that have impacted their experience with resettlement. The participating individuals and families were asked to discuss why they took the particular photograph(s). They received assistance to create brief descriptions of their images with translation provided by bilingual members of their respective communities. These photographs and stories are presented in the exhibition *Envisioning Home: Perspectives from Philadelphia Refugees*. Several themes have emerged from the PhotoVoice study, including the four themes explored in the *Envisioning Home* exhibition: culture, family life, environment, and opportunity.

The following are Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi refugees who participated in the PhotoVoice project.

 Bhutan <small>འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ།</small>	 Burma <small>မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ</small>	 Iraqi <small>العراق</small>
Aha Rig Subba	Biew Gay Wah	Abdulhadi Kadhem
Chandra Rai	Khin Khin Cho *	Aj Ashim Salem
Kama Kani	Paw Bo	Haneen Mohammed
Bhokta Gurung	Paw Eh	Shaimaa Younis
Bishu Karma *	Po Ni	Bathar Alwan *
Bhokta Karmar	Son San Tin *	
	Tun Tun Win	

*Refugees who provided translations.

Fig. 18.2 Refugee photovoice process. The refugee photo exhibition explained the photovoice process to the public



Fig. 18.3 Opening reception. Images from the opening reception of “Envisioning Home: Perspectives from Philadelphia Refugees”



Fig. 18.4 “Girl Sitting on Bed,” Bhutanese Refugee, 2012. My friend has seizures. No one knew what was wrong with her when we were in the camps. Here, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor and the doctors took care of her. Now she is better. We were so happy when we came to the United States. Doctors here take care of people

Fig. 18.5 “Cemetery,”
Iraqi Refugee, 2012.
The image explains the
differences in cemeteries
in the United States
versus those in Iraq.
“It is like a garden here.
We think this is a better
way to view death,” says
the refugee



Fig. 18.6 “Ceremonial Feast,” Bhutanese Refugee, 2012. When a new baby is born in our culture, we celebrate. After eleven days, we have a baby naming ceremony, Nuran. We invite friends and family for food. Here we are free to have these traditional ceremonies



Fig. 18.7 “Jungle Fingers,” Burmese Refugee, 2012. This represents my brother and me fleeing through the jungle from Burma to Malaysia. We followed an uncle from our village to the refugee camp. We were scared. The potted plant in my Geography class at school represents the jungle in Burma. I miss the beautiful landscapes of our homelands

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Pedagogical Approaches

This collection of chapters illustrates ways in which we can engage in arts-based pedagogical approaches to research in the classroom. Learning through the arts has the potential to help to create ethically and aesthetically rich environments for learning and knowing while challenging issues of inequality, oppression, and social justice. Incorporating arts in the classroom serves to challenge hegemonic ways of learning and knowing, with the potential for liberation. In addition, when students, teachers, and community members create art, there is the potential for reflective dialogue and meaningful participation for action for social change is enhanced.

In her chapter, *Spoken Word as Border Pedagogy with LGBTQ Youth*, Susan Arai recounts a moment of performance as border pedagogy. Critical pedagogy and performance ethnography merge in a spoken word workshop as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer youth and their allies created, performed, and collectively explored experiences of homophobia, intersectional identity, the role of gay-straight alliances in their schools, and their beliefs about community. Through audio recordings and mash-ups, participants felt the emotional weight of different tracks, heard complexity, and held tensions as multiple tracks played together representing the plurality of messages heard in community.

Kate Collins describes an arts-based action research study that involved collaboration between two disparate groups of young artists for a community engagement course designed to better understand the roles of dialogue and collaborative artmaking in the cultivation of engaged

citizen artists. In her chapter title, *Lessons in Dialogue, Ethics, and the Departure from Well-Laid Plans in the Cultivation of Citizen Artists*, Collins describes the progression of the community engagement course and the culminating project that resulted while exploring ethical implications. In sharing the opportunities and challenges of her findings, the author also asserts the value and necessity of departing from a well-laid plan in pursuit of authentic answers for an inquiry designed for pedagogical discovery.

Spoken Word as Border Pedagogy with LGBTQ Youth

Susan M. Arai

On a chilly October morning at a community recreation center in a small city in Ontario, Canada, a group of high school students sit on plastic gray chairs, around four square tables. Intense fluorescent lighting floods the room we occupy while two large windows reveal the overcast sky outside. The room is awash in tops and hoodies in every color of the rainbow, accented by blond, brown, black, pink, green, and blue hair. Rainbow bracelets dance on several wrists. Thirty-two students draw on paper, talk, laugh, and create. A table holding a mixing board, amplifier, microphones, and a mess of black electrical cables sits at room center. Six adults, including myself, scuttle about. I stop for a moment, taking in the scene around me noticing how quickly we transformed the energy of the space. I smile to myself as I remember this is why I was drawn to academia. Wanting to shift traditional classroom dynamics and things we do when we want to call the group to attention (i.e., yelling to overpower, hand raising as a sign of order), I told the group the story of a call and response my djembe drumming teacher uses when she wants us to come

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together as a group. I call everyone's attention by sing-yelling "Ago!" and a call of "Amay!" comes back across the room. In increasing volume of call and response, we repeat this two more times bringing simultaneously both silence and laughter to the room. I then ask for a group to volunteer to perform their spoken word piece. One group of eight raises their hands and a microphone is passed to their table. As they begin, the record button is pressed on the mixing board:

Nancy: *Community is a beautiful mingling of souls, community is*
 Gary: *Full of amazing friends, community is*
 Chantel: *Safe, community is*
 Erin: *Judgment free, community is*
 Jordan: *Support, community is*
 Gary: *Freedom, community is*
 Erika: *Acceptance, community is*
 Josh: *Trust, community is*
 Erin: *Loving, community is*
 Nancy: *Active, community is*
 Gary: *Full of love, community is*
 Chantel: *Respect, community is*
 Erin: *Understanding, community is*
 Jordan: *Belonging, community is*
 Gary: *Family, community is*
 Nancy: *The power to be free, community is*
 Josh: *Openness, community is*
 Erika: *A group of people, community is*
 All [with sound of triumph]: *Community allows us to be who we are!*

This poem was created by eight students participating in a spoken word workshop, *Sounds of Change*, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) youth and their allies. Pseudonyms are used in place of real names to ensure confidentiality. In this poem, we hear the reproduction of dominant and modernist narratives that portray community as supportive, freeing, and loving as often found in what Delanty (2003) critiques as idyllic and romantic accounts of community. In a more pointed critique, Čulík writes of the "kitsch" of community referring to "that beautiful lie" that hides the more challenging aspects of community life (cited in Blackshaw, 2010, p. 43). Critical theorists note that while modernity brought much advancement for society, it also created and obscured a *fear of the void* where "the void was the absence of

a universally binding, unambiguous and enforceable standard” (Bauman, 1991, p. 252). Bauman (1991) describes this as a “lasting intellectual and emotional scar left by the philosophical project and political practice of modernity” (p. 252). As a consequence, in community, we hear another set of narratives arise which position LGBTQ youth in a context of hatred, marginality, and exclusion, as they attempt to negotiate violently imposed, static, and traditional categories of gender, sexuality, and race. In this space of negotiation, they encounter fear, confusion, and isolation, as we hear in this next set of spoken word poems performed by a second group of youth participating in *Sounds of Change*. The group of nine divided into three smaller groups and these three poems were created from homophobic messages they received or heard in their communities. This required them to recreate those messages, reconstitute them in a collective poem, take the words into their bodies, and perform them for the other groups at the workshop:

Tom: *What up*
 Tom, Zack, Emily: *Faggots?*
 Tom: *Are you*
 Tom, Zack, Emily: *Retarded?*
 Tom, Zack, Emily: *Excluded.*
 Tom: *That’s*
 Tom, Zack, Emily: *Gay!*
 Tom: *Don’t hang out with me,*
 Tom, Zack, Emily: *I don’t want to catch it.*
 Tom: *Fags are like blacks,*
 Tom, Zack, Emily: *No one likes them.*
 Tom, Zack, Emily: *Faggot!*
 Mary [with dismissing tone]: *That’s gay!*
 Jenn [with derision]: *I don’t like him because he’s gay.*
 Nate [matter of factly]: *He looks gay.*
 Mary [with dismissing tone]: *Don’t be soooooo gay.*
 Jenn [with derision]: *Nice boots dyke!*
 Nate [matter of factly]: *She is so masculine, she must be a lesbian.*
 Mary [with a tone of sadness]: *Everyone assumes I am heterosexual*
 Nate [with derision]: *You will never be a guy, or a person, just a fag*
 Nate [with vengeance]: *Stupid fucking butch!*
 Megan [with disdain]: *I’m not wearing that, I’ll look gay.*
 Skye [quietly]: *I’m confused.*
 Sue [yelling]: *Hey! Going to the fag club?*

Megan [with disdain]: *If you hang out with him they'll think you're gay.*
 Sue [whispers]: *It's contagious?*
 Skye [quietly]: *I'm alone.*
 Megan [with disdain]: *Fagg!*
 Skye [quietly]: *But I'm afraid to tell everyone.*

As Giroux (1993) describes, “how subjects are constituted in language is no less important than how they are constructed as subjects within the relations of production” (p. 465). I wanted to create a workshop that would address these narratives of hate that permeate daily existence in high schools. These narratives of hate are not isolated to this group of youth. As Egale Canada reports from their nationwide survey of schools across Canada, 55–74% among LGBTQ students (compared to 26% non-LGBTQ) indicate experiences of verbal harassment (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Verbal harassment in schools not only originates from their peers, 10–25% of students report hearing negative gender, homophobic, and transphobic comments from teachers (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Further, rates of experiences of harassment are higher among nonwhite youth who, as Taylor & Peter (2011) describe, experience the “double whammy” of the intersectionality of LGBTQ and being of nonwhite race. Consequently, this harassment is set up in the power relations and language of not only their peer group but also in hierarchies of teacher–student dichotomies and race relations. Similar statistics are found in the USA. In 2009, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN, 2009) found that among the over 7200 LGBT high school students, roughly 85% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed; nearly 73% of respondents heard derogatory remarks such as “faggot” and “dyke” frequently or often at school.

However, modernist notions of community and fear of the void lead not only to the constitution of LGBTQ youth in language but also in the body. Consider how you felt in your body as you took in the text within these spoken word pieces. As I transcribed the poems about experiences of homophobia, my body stiffened when explosive words hit my skin, and my body felt heavy with sadness. I also felt nausea and a ripple of fear as my mind took in the hatred behind these words too often spoken in community. As evidence of this embodiment on a larger scale, 64% of LGBTQ students report feeling unsafe at school (Taylor & Peter, 2001). In contrast to their non-LGBTQ peers, they also report a higher rate of physical harassment (21–37% among LGBTQ students, 10% non-LGBTQ) and sexual harassment (33–49% among LGBTQ students, 26%

non-LGBTQ) (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Johnson, Singh and Gonzalez (2014) note the brutal murder of gender nonconforming adolescent, Lawrence King, by his 14-year-old classmate stating:

To say schools and other youth programs continue to be unsafe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) students is an understatement. LGBTQQ students often navigate extremely hostile environments when they attend schools or other youth serving agencies (Johnson & Dowdy, 2010; Johnson & Delgado-Romero, 2012), and there are very few school-based interventions designed to keep them safe. (Singh, Orpinas, & Horne, 2011) (p. 1)

In Canada, sexual minority youth are 1.5–7 times more likely to attempt suicide, and suicide is the number one cause of death for sexual minority youth (Taylor & Peter, 2001).

As these spoken word performances reveal, words of fear and hate resonate deeply in the body. As Butler (1993) describes, *performativity* is the “power of discourse to reproduce the phenomenon that it regulates and constrains” (p. 2); in this case, the power of discourse to marginalize and diminish queer space in community. Performativity refers to the idea that language performs identity (Schwandt, 2007). This sparked a movement for this critical theorist to seek out another way of engaging language, power, and the body in research and social action. It sparked a shift for me to explore performance as border pedagogy. As Pollock argues, performativity is “what happens when history/textuality sees itself in the mirror—and suddenly sees double; it is the disorienting, [the] disruptive” and it “derives its power and prerogative in the breaking and remaking of the very textual frameworks that give it meaning in the first place” (cited in Denzin, 2003, pp. 10–11). Performance and performativity then “intersect in a speaking subject” and “exist in tension with one another, in a tension between doing, or performing, and the done, the text, the performance” (Denzin, 2003, p. 10).

SOUNDS OF CHANGE: DETAILS OF THE WORKSHOP

Before proceeding, it is important to tell you a bit more about the *Sounds of Change* workshop created in 2012, and how these spoken word pieces were created. I was approached by Carrie Greig, a public educator and community activist with the OK2BME program, who provided support to gay–straight alliances (GSAs) across publicly funded high schools

in our Region. She was hosting a daylong conference *Sounds of Change: Sharing Stories* for students and teachers who were members of GSAs, and asked if I would run an hour-long workshop for students. We saw the potential to engage spoken word to create transgressive spaces, undoing the effects of homophobia and violence LGBTQ youth face in our community. This essay recounts this performance workshop as a moment of *border pedagogy*; critical pedagogy and performance ethnography were merged in a spoken word workshop with LGBTQ youth and their allies.

The workshop involved 37 of us. Thirty-two were LGBTQ students and allies from local public high schools, three were undergraduate students from my Department who helped to facilitate the workshop (2 females, 1 male; all identify as straight allies), one was a Ph.D. student (male; straight ally) acting as our sound and video technician, and myself, an Asian Canadian, queer-identified, female, Associate Professor.

With one hour to work with, 32 students were randomly divided into four groups as they entered the room. Each small group was assigned a different topic to inspire the creation of a spoken word piece. The four topics included “community is...,” “experiencing homophobia,” “my GSA is...,” and “I am...and I am also. ...” Given these partial phrases as a starting point, we asked students to independently complete the sentences from their experience, writing each completed phrase on a separate piece of paper. The group then collaboratively decided how to bring these pages together to create a spoken word piece. In a flurry of creativity, within 30 minutes each group created and performed their spoken word piece while the other three groups engaged as their audience. In the final 15 minutes of the workshop, we engaged in collective conversation about our experiences of the performances. As described later in this paper, reflections also engaged a mashup, a replaying of two or more tracks at the same time to hear what happens when disparate voices come together in community. Practices were videotaped, performances were also audio-recorded as separate tracks into a mixing board. Still photographs were taken throughout the workshop, and I kept a journal of field notes.

With the short time we had to work with, it is important to acknowledge this workshop was made possible by our attempts to create safe space within the workshop, and as much as possible lessen the distance between us and students by: (a) engaging undergraduate students as co-facilitators so the age difference between myself and the high school students was bridged, and (b) our choice of wardrobe which included T-shirts and jeans to gain connection and reduce visible signs of disconnection through class and position. What truly made this possible was

our connection to Carrie who had established relationships of trust and support with students and teachers through the OK2BME program and GSAs. Further, the workshop happened in the context of the GSA conference students had voluntarily chosen to attend. Morning activities at the conference established the day as one of celebration, acceptance, and safety for LGBTQ youth and their allies. In addition, in the workshop we emphasized “voice and choice” and encouraged both in students’ decision to contribute to written text and to engage in performance. To further shift power dynamics away from hierarchy, as a facilitator I never ask people to do something I am not willing to do as well; consequently, in this workshop I became facilitator–performer. By shifting the meaning of “participatory” and contributing to the creation and performance of the second spoken word piece (statements of homophobia), I engaged in the sharing of risk and vulnerability, and the blurring of boundaries as I was both audience and performer, object and subject, and throughout the workshop we all became *teacher–students*.

PERFORMANCE AS BORDER PEDAGOGY

Performance is necessarily engagement. It involves taking experience and words out of objective space; the mundane becomes heightened (Madison, 2005a). It demands engagement with body rather than taking field notes, or describing what our bodies are doing. It asks us to be in our bodies. Performance is used in juxtaposition to text (being able to take performance with us in our textually binded selves) making for a fuller and richer account of the experience. Performance theorists often describe performance as movement from mimesis, through poesis, to kinesis. *Mimesis* involves imitation. As Butler (1993) describes there are no original performances or identities. Thus, every performance is an imitation (Denzin, 2003). In our introduction, we shared with youth the queer history of spoken word from the beat poets of the 1960s to contemporary poets such as Alix Olsen, Andrea Gibson, Slanty-Eyed Mama, and Climbing Poetree. *Poesis* then is the making something out of the space. It is the construction of performance and in doing so, creating a space of liminality. *Kinesis* is the motion or movement required for remaking. Performance allows us to struggle, restructure, co-create and remake our relationships in the moment. This breaking and remaking is a sociopolitical act. As Denzin (2003) notes, “every performance becomes a form of kinesis, of motion, a decentering of human agency and person through movement, disruption, action, a way of questioning the status

quo” (p. 10). Together, Madison (2005b) writes, performance takes us into, “[t]he magic of our inspired oneness” (p. 542).

As *performers*, we were moved to put text in our bodies and experience the impact of performing homophobia, community, statements of identity (“I am... and I am also...”), and statements about GSAs. We experienced the anxiety of performance, and of hearing the playback of our own voices. As *audience*, we were asked to witness and hold people’s words in our bodies, including words of hate, hope, inspiration, confusion, and determination. As words came together in the workshop, we were also called to hold space for these disparate messages in the room, and in our bodies.

Border pedagogy then involves remaking self in the complexities of micropractices of power. In this spoken word workshop, in our roles as performer and audience, we collectively resisted or reclaimed labels, and addressed silence, invisibility, isolation, and stressors that limit self. In this endeavor, we unfolded what Denzin (2003) refers to “a performative, pedagogical politics of hope” (p. 5), creating possibilities for political and social change. This politics of hope attempts to move beyond traditional and hierarchical notions of research and teaching—beyond modernist notions of othering and reproduction of binaries separating us into researcher/researched, student/teacher, oppressor/oppressed, and performer/audience. Giroux (1993) calls us to further critique liberal and radical discourses and “step beyond the modernist celebration of the unified self, totalising notions of history, and universalistic models of reason” to “explore the limits of the absolutist character of their own narratives” (p. 457). He challenges us, “to engage contingency, particularity, partiality and community within a notion of difference free from binary oppositions, hierarchical relations, and narratives of mastery and control” (Giroux, 1993, p. 457). This involved shifts in how the research unfolded, my claims to power in the research space, and the beauty and magic of our collective engagement in the space. In postmodernist terms, it created space for localized, micropractices of power to unfold toward social change, engaging students in practices of unmaking and deconstructing modernists texts of community and messages of homophobia through the messiness, playfulness, irony, and pastiche of spoken word. Performances are fluid, ongoing events which “mark and bend identities, remake time and adorn and reshape the body, tell stories and allow people to play with behaviour that is restored, or ‘twice-behaved’” (Schechner cited in Denzin, 2003, p. 9). As a critical educator and researcher, I took up Giroux’s call that critical educators must “raise more questions with

respect to how the dominant self is always present in the construction of the margins” (Giroux, 1993, p. 460). Taking Giroux’s (1993) critique to heart, this work moved beyond, “otherness as site for objectification and marginalization” (p. 460).

DISRUPTING THE GRAND NARRATIVE

The third group rose to perform, eight young women, each with a set of cue cards in hand. They assembled themselves in a semi-circle placing the microphone and stand at the center of the group. They exchanged nervous smiles and inaudible comments led to ripples of laughter across the group as they settled into place. When they indicated they were ready, the record button was pressed:

Joan: *I am Catholic but my religion does not stop me from what I believe in and define who I am.*

Katie: *I am bisexual, but that doesn’t define me.*

Sarah: *I am me, never too afraid of taking chances and being different.*

Ginger: *I am lost but I am strong enough to find my way.*

Julie: *I am accepting and I am not afraid to express myself.*

Sam: *I am a lesbian and I am a leader.*

Lynn: *I am a leader, but I know how to follow.*

Karen: *I am in a Catholic school but I am not afraid to stand up to administration.*

Joan: *I am straight but not narrow.*

Katie: *I have been through everything, and I am here to help.*

Sarah: *I am bisexual and very open minded about others’ thoughts.*

Julie: *I am attracted to guys and I am attracted to girls.*

Sam: *I am a sister, and I am a listener.*

Lynn: *I am straight but I support everyone.*

Karen: *I am a straight ally, and I am ready to fight for what is right.*

Gina: *I am a planner and driven and never afraid to make any mistakes.*

All: *We are together.*

This was the spoken word piece performed by the “I am... and I am also” group. In this workshop, we attempted to confront and disrupt grand narratives of the romanticized and idyllic community which centers heterosexual relationship and places queer on the margins and contribute to the decline of legitimating power. As Giroux

(1993) describes, border pedagogy, “stresses the necessity for providing students with the opportunity to engage critically the strengths and limitations of the cultural and social codes that define their own histories and narratives” (p. 482)

As part of this critical engagement, the spoken word workshop provided space for the collective remaking of culture. Drawing from the work of Dwight Conquergood, Denzin (2003) notes we can view, “culture as a verb, not a noun; fieldwork as a collaborative process, a performance; and knowledge as performative, not informative” (p.28). Culture is not something out there to be discovered, it is co-created and co-performed. As Jones (2006) describes, “[p]erformance ethnography rests on the idea that bodies harbour knowledge about culture, and that performance allows for the exchange of that knowledge across bodies” (p. 339). We perform the culture of community, and put into motion a different energy than that of the grand narrative; in doing so, we move it and are moved by it, shifting center and margins and set in motion possibilities for change.

RECREATING SPACE IN GAY–STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

The fourth group was more subdued in energy. Eight youth, all female but one, sat around their table with cue cards in front of them. Perhaps, it was the topic they had been given, gay–straight alliances. It is possible they felt challenged to situate and make sense of GSAs amidst several tensions as their spoken word piece reveals. As performers, this may have contributed to a struggle with their own crisis of quality as they heard the power reflected in the performances of the other groups. With the microphone held in the middle of the table, we pressed the record button as they began:

- Rebecca: *My GSA is non-existent.*
 Lorelee: *My GSA is freeing.*
 Michael: *My GSA is my friends.*
 Beth: *My GSA is growing.*
 Melanie: *My GSA is accepting.*
 Louise: *My GSA is teaching.*
 Melissa: *My GSA is expansive.*
 Rebecca: *My GSA is protesting against the system.*

- Loralee: *My GSA is nerdy.*
 Michael: *My GSA is welcoming.*
 Beth: *My GSA is working for acceptance.*
 Melanie: *My GSA is ostracized.*
 Louise: *My GSA is unique.*
 Melissa: *My GSA is non-judgemental.*
 All: *Our GSA is needed.*

This spoken word piece reveals the complexities of performing GSAs and brings forward institutional politics of creating space for a queer politics of resistance in our public education system. Belonging to a GSA necessitates transgressive performances as performing bodies contest gendered and sexualized identities. Each line in this spoken word reveals constant movement and acts of negotiation and resistance as GSAs attempt to create space for LGBTQ students and their allies to come together. This performance describes GSAs as freeing, nerdy, welcoming, nonjudgmental, accepting, and a space of friendship. GSAs are also described in the broader institutional context as being unique, nonexistent, growing, ostracized, and protesting against the system.

FRAGMENTATION AND HYPERREALITY: LISTENING ACROSS SOUNDS IN COMMUNITY

After the four performances were recorded, we played back each track one by one. After playing back the poem of homophobia, we gave the performing group the beat poets' applause (snapping fingers). Gina commented how the words "*went right through you*" (as she brought parallel extended arms rapidly toward her abdomen). Skye commented "*Even if someone is just an ally, they can share in the pain other people feel.*" We then played back the "I am... and I am also" poem, Sarah noted, "*Even if people feel like they should be like dirt that audio showed you that you still have a voice, whether they make you feel like you don't, and your voice can trump them.*"

In remaking culture, *Sounds of Change* created space for us to begin to fray the grand narratives of idyllic community and the othering of LGBTQ through engagement in hyperreality and fragmentation. *Hyperreality* refers to obliterating the distinction between imaginary and real. In this hyperreality and theorizing of voice, we were able to create what Giroux (1993) refers to as a:

a historically specific cultural site from which one learns to create an oppositional consciousness and identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that which also opposes domination, but also enables and extends individual and social capacities and possibilities for making human connections and compassionate communities of resistance and liberation. (p. 470)

This postmodern space of fragmentation and hyperreality provides opportunity for remapping and rethinking the borders that define one's existence and place in the world. In the conversation that unfolded, Gary began to speak about challenges youth have negotiating religion:

Gary: *I think it really had some truth behind it, like people, the boundaries that people have to cross to get over who they are. You are who you are. You are not really going to be able to change that, right. Do you get what I mean?*

Sue: *You can be both-and?*

Gary: *You can both be Christian and you can be gay, you know just because the Bible, whatever, just because the Bible may say it is not right you can still be that right. If it is what you believe and what you feel.*

Fragmentation involves creating local stories and struggles, each with their own irreconcilable truths. After we played back poems about community and GSAs, students had the following comments.

Gina: *If you all combine together with your community, with your GSA, there are a lot of people out there like you, your voice can trump them [gesturing toward the table where the spoken word of homophobia had taken place].*

Amanda: *The two tracks are so kind of similar, you know like community and GSAs they just kind of go in together.*

Our group began to compare and contrast different performances. In this conversation, Gina contrasted voices of homophobia coming from outside of ourselves to the “I am...and I am also...” statements existing within our bodies:

Gina: *All that negativity over there* [gesturing toward the table where the spoken word of homophobia had taken place], *that your group did, very well I might say, it was very well done.* [group laughs] *Sometimes those voices, like you guys were yelling, sometimes they sound a lot louder than your personal inside voice, that everyone like, identities on the inside weren't as loud as the negativity on the outside, yet we will always feel that way [I am... I am also], we will always feel like this constant on the inside, but that [voices of homophobia] will go away. There are solutions, and sometimes maybe our own voices will be louder than those [of] negativity.*

Skye commented on the impact of homophobic comments, making reference to the recent suicide of Jamie Hubley, an Ontario youth who was identified as queer, and the importance of “I am...I am also...” statements:

Skye: *It just made me kind of think that boy Jamie died because of things like this* [points to voices of homophobia group], *but if there had been more people who said things like that group did* [points to I am... I am also group] *maybe he wouldn't have committed suicide.*

The energy in the room was weighted but with potential. In that moment, my mind recalled the news report I heard the week before recounting Jamie Hubley's suicide following a long period of harassment by his peers. I swallowed hard to choke back tears welling up in my chest and to bring myself back to this present moment. In the brilliance of this moment, students were tapping into their own wisdom of how to remake responses to homophobia and remap community. In this statement, Skye naturally brought the group to the final component of the Sounds of Change workshop—the mashup. Here was my response:

Sue: *You all are so brilliant! So what you are saying is that depending on the balance of voices, this group* [voices of homophobia] *versus this group* [I am... and I am also group], *whichever one is louder we experiences things differently. So if we could have had Jamie's voice come up* [pointing to I am... I am also group] *then maybe it would have been a different outcome. So let's hear what that would sound like.*

I then played back two tracks simultaneously with track 1 (homophobia) starting at maximum volume, and track 2 (“I am... and I am also...”) starting at minimum volume. As the tracks played, using the mixing board I gradually reversed the volume on each track so that at the end “I am... and I am also” statements ended up drowning out the sounds of homophobia.

MASHUP! POLYPHONIC LAYERS AS REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNITY

What up faggots?

Are you retarded?

Excluded.

That’s gay!

Don’t hang out with me, I don’t want to catch it.

Fags are like blacks, no one likes them.

Faggot!

That’s gay!

I don’t like him because he’s gay.

He looks gay.

Don’t be soooo gay!

Nice boots dyke!

She is so masculine, she must be a lesbian.

Everyone assumes I am heterosexual.

You will never be a guy, or a person, just a fag.

Stupid fucking bitch!

I am Catholic but my religion does not stop me from what I believe in and define who I am.

I am bisexual, but that doesn’t define me.

I am me, never too afraid of taking chances and being different.

I am lost but I am strong enough to find my way.

I am accepting and I am not afraid to express myself.

I am a lesbian and I am a leader.

I am a leader, but I know how to follow.

I am in a Catholic school but I am not afraid to stand up to administration.

I am straight but not narrow.

I have been through everything, and I am here to help.

I am bisexual and very open minded about others’ thoughts,

I am attracted to guys and I am attracted to girls.

I am a sister, and I am a listener.

I am straight but I support everyone.

I am a straight ally, and I am ready to fight for what is right.

I am planner and driven and never afraid to make any mistakes.

We are together.

At this point, our hour was at an end and youth in our group had to make their way to their next workshop. Over the years that passed I reflected on *Sounds of Change*. Working with sound, we were able to play in the remaking and remapping of community space; it provided opportunity for us to hear complexity. I remembered how Gary’s statement, “*we will never get rid of homophobia*” stopped me in my tracks. Even as I write this now, I can feel my heart break, again. In that moment, as *Sounds of Change* unfolded around me, I was called to release my own modernist idea that we could rid our communities of hate and homophobia leaving in its wake a loving and idyllic community space in which people flourish. Together, we explored the complexity of our collective experience. We brought multiple tracks representing disparate messages we hear into community space and held them together in one moment in time.

As a response to grand narratives which drown out other voices and keep us stuck in one way of knowing and feeling about an experience, playing back each track separately allowed us to engage in linear listening. This made it possible to feel the movement and emotional difference as we moved from one poem to the next. As we played two tracks in sequence, or together in a mashup, the performer–audience is asked

to hold the tension between tracks. This engages us in, what Gary and I spoke about as a moving from an *either-or* to holding *both-and*.

In this space of hyperreality, as Gina described we are able to hear the bridge in community. GSAs become the bridge to community and to change. We had the power to switch up the playback and play for change as we choose which tracks we played back together and adjusted the volume on different tracks in a mashup. As Skye commented, “*We may never get rid of these voices in my head but at least they become quieter when the other is turned up.*” As an outgrowth of this workshop, we refer to this as filling ourselves up with other tracks. As Skye questioned, “*what if Jamie had been able to hear these other tracks?*”

Rather than quick movements for resolve, the *Sounds of Change* enabled us to feel and hold complexity and conflict in space, in a moment of resistance. In pedagogical practices of performance, sites of oppression are visible and freedom is also possible. In this space of hyperreality and fragmentation, acts of resistance hold together what Giroux refers to as “militant utopianism and educated hope” (Denzin, 2003, p. 14). Drawing from Giroux, Denzin (2003) describes, “they affirm an oppositional politics that reasserts the value of self-determination and mutual solidarity. This pedagogy of hope rescues radical democracy from the conservative politics of neoliberalism” (p. 14). As such, it is an act of freedom. Drawing on Foucault’s notions of power, Flyvbjerg (2001) reminds us that “freedom is a practice, and its ideal is not a utopian absence of power. Resistance, struggle, and conflict, in contrast to consensus, are for Foucault the most solid bases for the practice of freedom” (p. 102). As Madison (2005b) writes, performances of possibility aim “to create and contribute to a discursive space where unjust systems and processes are identified and interrogated” and “for those who bear witness to their stories to interrogate actively and purposefully those processes that limit their health and freedom” (p. 538). Performance ethnography reflects a return to a speaking communicating body; it becomes an act of communicative interaction (Conquergood, 1991). We attempt to bring the body back into spaces and afford opportunities for our different experiences to coexist with the potential to *unveil* the social underpinnings and complexities of queer experiences in community and assist in a *collective reimagining* of the future. Through performance we *move* into dialog, bringing what we imagine into reality through a performance of possibilities.

REFLECTIONS ON QUALITY

Reflecting back on this account of border pedagogy, what criteria are we to use to assess quality? In performance, we can never truly know the impact of this workshop. Can we really ever know the mystery of experience? During the workshop, there was a magic, a sense of the unrepresentable—experiences I knew I would never be able to capture in words. When we think about quality, perhaps we can think about what it (border pedagogy) is, and what it does. This necessarily invokes a concern with you, the audience, and the extent to which the text engages you, unsettles and provokes you, makes you question, or leaves you feeling distant and unaffected.

When we think about quality in relation to what border pedagogy is, or how it unfolded, I find Christians' (2000) notions of interpretive sufficiency, representational adequacy, and concerns of whether the engagement is authentically adequate as a helpful starting place. *Interpretive sufficiency* deems the research engagement should possess the depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, and coherence that permits a critical consciousness, or what Paolo Freire (1993) terms *conscientization*, to be formed. Denzin (2003) adds that performance should be judged by the extent to which it “enables social criticism and engenders resistance” (p. 113). Did the textual representation of this performance provide enough depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, and coherence in the telling to stir reflection and movement? Does it leave you, the reader, moved?

According to Christians, *representational adequacy* means engagement should be free of racial, class, or gender stereotyping. But what do we do when the performative pieces themselves reveal that stereotyping? In the second groups' performance of statements of homophobia, we also hear the sounds of racism and ableism tied into the slurs. This *is* representational adequacy and reveals the overlapping boundaries of categories of hate in the performativity around sexuality in community.

An engagement is *authentically adequate* when it meets three conditions: (a) represents multiple voices, (b) enhances moral discernment, and (c) promotes social transformation. Multivoiced ethnographic texts should empower persons, leading them to discover moral truths about themselves while generating social criticism. These criticisms, in turn, should lead to efforts at social transformation. Combining considerations of ethics, politics, and power, engagement should engage cultural criticism and unsettle taken for granted assumptions. As cultural criticism,

does it sufficiently interrupt public life? As Denzin (2003) writes, it should, “attack the dominant cultural ideologies connected to race, class, family and gender... Expose ruptures in the ideological seams in these dominant cultural mythologies, both through political action and through their subject matter” (p. 11). In this text, I hoped to sufficiently disrupt idyllic notions of community and polarizing statements of hate, the first obscures oppression and the second obscures possibilities for hope. It is in these micropractices of power that resistance may occur to create movement and change through performance.

These issues of quality, and in particular, the idea of interpretive sufficiency must be tied to a *performance aesthetic* which acknowledges there is “no completion, no perfection, no complete realization” in performance (Schwandt, 2007, p. 223). This account is partial and incomplete. Each student and I engaged in our own experience of varied hermeneutic moments of interpretation and understanding of experience as performer and audience, subject and object, and knower and known. This essay remains as only one representation.

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Lessons in Dialogue, Ethics, and the Departure from Well-Laid Plans in the Cultivation of Citizen Artists

Kate Collins

What happens when young-artists learn to put dialogue and relationship-building at the center of artmaking practice? What happens when these artists step away from the traditional practice of self-expression and become facilitators of communication and catalysts of change in communities? As a university arts educator specializing in community-engaged arts, working with both adolescent and undergraduate artists, I find that questions like these pose a notable departure from what is typically asked or offered in the education of most young artists. Still, I believe such questions hold promise and reflect an arts educator's desire to understand better how to foster the skills and capacities of engaged citizen artists.¹ Dissatisfied with replicating the same methods for teaching young artists that have continued for decades, I pursued a doctorate in arts education to contemplate more broadly, new teaching possibilities. My commitment to educating socially engaged young artists, my identification as

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a social justice educator trained in intergroup dialogue, and my gravitation to the intersection of collaborative, interdisciplinary artmaking and community engagement all led to the creation of an anti-oppressive arts-based inquiry. This chapter essay foregrounds the ethical implications of asking and answering the questions with which I opened, through an analysis of a study (Collins 2014) undertaken by the researcher at The Ohio State University (OSU). The study invites these roles and questions by collectively engaging young artists in the intersecting practices of dialogue and artmaking in the pursuit of social change.

I designed a one-time-only undergraduate community engagement course, called “Citizen Artist Dine and Dialogue Initiative” (CADDI) at OSU which provided a dynamic platform for an arts-based action research study where I engaged a group of student artists in dialogic artmaking practices. The interaction and dialogue between the artist and the community in which the art is created characterize dialogic art. The design involved a partnership between two disparate groups of young artists from OSU and Transit Arts, a local community-arts program located in a settlement house that supports predominantly African American low-income families in Columbus. Enticed by the opportunity, 14 young artists,² from OSU and Transit Arts, chose to participate. Class time involved the two groups exploring the various ways artists promote change in communities through combining art and dialogue. We also planned and hosted Saturday morning dine and dialogue breakfasts with Columbus community members to learn firsthand about public concerns. Working collectively, we used these insights to create a participatory, site-specific art project to further involve the public in dialogue. As the course professor and project director, I began with these general plans in place. More specific elements were determined together as co-researchers and co-creators.

I begin with a description and examination of the theoretical framework informing the study, including Bakhtinian dialogism (1981), Freirian dialogic pedagogy (1993), and Kester’s dialogical aesthetic (Kester 2004). Afterward, I delve into the project details; describing and analyzing the culminating arts project created by the student participants called *Don’t Talk With Strangers* and conclude with my findings. Important and revealing here, are the ways in which the project and my work with my student collaborators adhered to and departed from notions of anti-oppressive practices inherent to the theoretical framework, methodology, and study design. Readers can expect to gain insight on my rationale for the study, the centrality of dialogue in fostering



Fig. 20.1 Group members engaged in theatre-based ensemble-building exercises nearly every week to foster a sense of community and cohesion within the group Photo by Ada Matusiewicz, 2013

civically engaged artists and how I navigated the ethical complexities woven throughout, especially when electing to veer away from the established plan.(Fig. 20.1)

DIALOGUE AS AN ANTI-OPPRESSIVE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) spoke of the value of dialogue framed in an aesthetic context as well as an ethical one. He viewed engagement with a work of art as a form of conversation (Kester 2004) and dialogue as an aesthetic act. He also asserted that dialogic engagement with the Other is an “interaction” leading “to the expansion of the authoring subject” (Kester 2004, p. 119). More recently, Bakhtin’s concepts have been employed beyond literature by social justice educators. Of particular interest to these educators is his notion of dialogism standing in opposition to monologism.

Monologism at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou). With a monologic approach (in its extreme pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness. (Bakhtin 1984, pp. 292–293 as cited in Ledwith & Springett 2010, p. 132)

Reflecting on the problems of monologism sheds light on why dialogic exchange is so commonly valued in social justice oriented practices, as monologue involves a “closing down or lack of interactivity [which] is both the cause and the consequence of social injustice” (Ledwith & Springett 2010, p. 132). Dialogic knowledge is relational, an inherently dynamic knowledge coming from trust and empathy (Ledwith & Springett 2010). Bakhtin’s overarching theoretical concept of dialogism asserts that consciousness always evolves in the context of Others (Romney 2005). Unlike a combative debate, individuals engaging in dialogue must collaborate and work toward common understanding, ultimately moving beyond mere tolerance of others and towards authentic understanding and relationship. Bakhtin’s dialogism, his assertion of dialogue as an aesthetic act and recognition of it as an opportunity to expand the self-through engagement with the other, and his belief that it is a reciprocal process where *all* can benefit from such exchanges, validated my commitment to prioritizing dialogue practices in cultivating ethically aware young artists.

For Brazilian activist/cultural-worker/teacher Paulo Freire (1921–1997), dialogic pedagogy formed the basis of social change and liberation (Bowers 2005). Freire’s assertions express an explicit understanding of dialogue as an anti-oppressive practice, reflecting an investment in educating critical citizenry in the ever-increasing multiracial and multicultural world of the twenty-first century (Freire & Macedo, 1995). A central tenet of Freirian beliefs involves “reject[ing] impositional ‘banking’ methods of information–depositing ‘facts’ in students’ heads—in favor of honest questioning, conscientization, and of liberating students from oppression” (Bowers 2005, p. 269). In the banking model, teachers are the possessors of knowledge and students are empty vessels into which teachers deposit knowledge. Through dialogue, Freire argues that we become teacher and learner all at once. This outlook was essential to my action research methodology, which viewed each participant as a valued co-creator of knowledge.

WHY DIALOGIC ARTMAKING?

As stated earlier, dialogic art most commonly involves interaction and dialogue between the artist and the community that creates the art project. With dialogic art, the role of the audience is drastically different from that of more traditional art forms because conversation becomes the artistic medium. Audience members become participants and co-authors as the artwork is being produced. As with Grant Kester's (2004) dialogical aesthetic, listening and empathy take on new meaning for artists, and their practices take on transformative and civic dimensions. If dialogic work is to create the possibility of democratic participation, in that it invites and requires an engaged citizenry (Ashford, Ewald, Felshin, & Phillips 2006), I assert that it invites the same effect for artists when integrated as an art-making process. Starkly different from artists focused on individual self-expression, dialogic artists "begin their work, not with the desire to express or articulate an already formed creative vision but rather, to listen" (Kester 2004, p. 118). Critical to understanding the premise of this study is recognizing that dialogic artists "define themselves as artists through their ability to catalyze understanding, to mediate exchange, and to sustain an ongoing process of empathetic identification and critical analysis" (Kester 2004, p.118). Furthermore, and particularly relevant to viewing these artists as change agents, Kester offers that "dialogical works can challenge dominant representations of a given community and create a more complex understanding of and empathy for, that community among a broader public" (p. 115). Dialogue and community engagement have long been identified as vital to civic learning, and dialogic art embraces all of the same values and principles of the two: listening, empathetic exchange, meaningful engagement with others, and ultimately, co-authorship where individuals come together to engage in collective meaning-making. These understandings further solidified my prioritization of dialogic art-making in fostering engaged citizen artists, though these values do not necessarily include addressing systemic oppression, power, or exclusion.

THE DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: TWO WOVEN STRANDS

The design of this qualitative action research study involved two interwoven strands. First, was a *collaborative art-based* inquiry driven by the student artists in the project-based community engagement course.

This strand was invested in generating localized knowledge specific to the interests of this group. For this, we engaged weekly as collaborators, planning and hosting the breakfast dialogue series for community members where students sought insight on issues concerning the Columbus community. Operating on a very small scale, the intent was for students to become responsive artists, using insights gained through dialogue with the community members attending our breakfast events, as well as identifying a salient issue (meaningful to both the students and the breakfast participants) and creating an arts event to provoke further dialogue, participation, and understanding. The small groups of community members who participated in our breakfast dialogues and informed the creation of our final project included Columbus residents who had participated in the previous dine and discussion events hosted by Transit Arts, supporters, staff of Transit, and other individuals from OSU or known to the group who expressed interest. Identifying diverse participants based on age, race/ethnicity, gender, and neighborhood was prioritized.

The second strand was my engagement in that process as a *participant observer*, driven by my questions and desire to understand the meaning-making that occurred for the students throughout the process of our artistic inquiry. Data collection involved field notes, culminating interviews with OSU and Transit Arts participants, and analysis of an array of written materials created by the students as part of the class. I describe this as an arts-based action research study where I actively engaged as the teacher, facilitator, and participant-observer.

ACTION RESEARCH AND ARTS-BASED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

We conducted our collective arts inquiry with an action research methodology, which is designed as a practice committed to democratic social transformation. “Action research democratizes the research process through the inclusion of the local stakeholders as coresearchers” (Greenwood & Levin 1998, p. 3). Following standard practices of action research, the student artists and I engaged in an inquiry process that was cyclical, dynamic, and collaborative where the participants addressed a social issue that affects their lives (Stringer 2007). As is the case for many educators, the methodology was chosen with a desire to improve

educational practice (Glesne 1999). My use of action research for this study pushed at the boundaries of its traditional purposes since I also sought to determine broader implications for the field of arts education. In this choice, I draw upon the traditions of arts-based educational research for which a relevant criterion is generalizability—“relevance to the phenomena outside of the research context” (Barone & Eisner 2006, p.102). Ultimately, I describe the methodology of this study as *arts-based action research*.

THE CONTACT ZONE AND THE CADDI PARTNERSHIP

I took inspiration from scholars who work with youth and view action research as a potent opportunity to operate in the contact zone. Here, researchers and participants “create a politically and intellectually charged space where very differently positioned youth and adults can experience and analyze power inequities, together” (Torre, Fine, et al. 2008, p. 24). This conception of the contact zone draws upon the work of Mary Louise Pratt (1991), who first coined the expression. Pratt’s conception of the contact zone involves researchers and participants creating a “messy social space where people ‘meet, clash, and grapple with each other’ (Pratt 1991) across their varying relationships with power” (p. 25). To some, that messiness is quite scary because it can lead to discomfort, but it also has a potential that appealed in designing this study. Discomfort stems from vulnerability, but vulnerability in a setting such as ours allowed us to continually share pieces of our creative selves, explore and acknowledge commonalities and differences, experiment, ask questions face failure, and make discoveries *together*, which led to trust and a deeper investment in one another and our common task.

Our group included eight white female (ages 17–22) OSU undergraduate students and six African American young artists from Transit Arts (both males and females, ages 16–21). As a university for which the student population was 83 percent white in 2013, it was fairly predictable that the OSU students who enrolled for CADDI would be predominantly white. Partnering with a predominantly African American organization like Transit Arts, known for hip-hop dance and visual arts, was a fitting choice for many reasons beyond my commitment to working across socio-cultural differences and fostering a productive contact zone. I had previously directed similar collaborative efforts with a predominantly African American arts high school in Toledo, so both the

artistic passions that African American youth possess and the societal challenges they frequently encounter were salient. As an arts educator, I continue to invest in becoming a more informed white ally and as a former dancer I was drawn to these versatile collaborators. Furthermore, knowing that not all young artists pursue college, this was an excellent group to include in an exploration of how we prepare engaged citizen artists. I also knew that Transit's dine and discussion program fell away years before due to lack of funding, but it maintained a commitment to dialogue across difference that attracted many diverse community members. Upon learning that these dialogues still held interest for previous participants, I was happy to build upon that energy and interest. CADDI had the chance to be a productive and mutually beneficial partnership in many ways. Our success with engaging in the contact zone however, was measured.

DON'T TALK WITH STRANGERS

Don't

Don't Talk With Strangers (DTWS) was the culminating project we created together in response to what we learned throughout the semester and in particular, through our breakfast dialogue events. Our Saturday morning events began with community guests and student artists collectively preparing breakfast and then transitioned to a shared meal and small group dialogues. This disarming icebreaker and the enjoyable meals that resulted were followed by thoughtful conversations guided by student-generated questions. In light of the students' apparent reluctance to ask pressing questions and their general lack of knowledge about public issues, no clear local issues were identified on which to center our attention. Instead, what both the students *and* community guests seemed most compelled by, were the breakfasts themselves. The sense of connection created through our communal preparation of breakfast and the welcoming of strangers from different walks of life to share in genuine conversation about our city, were consistent observations. Many thoughts and stories were shared, but ultimately, people were most struck by the profoundness of authentic listening and connection at the breakfasts that is often so absent in everyday life. Upon leaving the breakfast, adults from the community recounted how seldom

they get to sit and talk with young people and how lovely it was and the students offered much the same about their dialogue experiences.

The tangible sense of connection people experienced and commented on and the recognition of persistent alienation in our society led to the concept for DTWS. The pervasive fear of “others” may well be a significant barrier that first needs to be addressed in any community that wishes to engage a broad spectrum of its members in collective dialogue and problem-solving, but how? The action we took through DTWS seemed to us, to be the most authentic way as artists to respond to what we learned through our breakfast dialogues. Wanting to recreate the intimacy of those breakfast conversations, I offered the idea of an experiential engagement, a one-on-one walk amongst strangers at a nearby park. It was always planned that the culminating project would somehow involve dialogue, but practicing dialogic aesthetic where the dialogue IS the art, was never planned or anticipated. Still, the students embraced the idea.

We created a promotional YouTube video to make our unusual event enticing while also allowing us to circulate our invitation far and wide via social media. Our message invited any and all to join us for a one-time only participatory art-making and dialogue event, where participants could show up in downtown Columbus at Bicentennial Park on a Wednesday evening in April. Upon arrival, guests found a very festive setting with hundreds of balloons, not unlike a child’s birthday party. We wanted to make attending our event as inviting as possible to those who might not be familiar with contemporary art. The CADDI students acted as hosts, welcoming all, offering guests bags of free popcorn as they wandered up and then actively participating when it was time for everyone to find a partner, making sure no one felt out of place. Once gathered, I explained the CADDI course, its evolution, and the experiential design of our event, which invited everyone to go on a walk across the two bridges that spanned the Scioto River directly behind us. Furthermore, our task was to work against the stranger-danger so many of us were instilled with as children, and perhaps still retain as adults, by talking and deeply listening to each other. Pairs of strangers received a booklet of questions to guide their conversation along with colorful balloons to remind them of their purpose. Some questions were more personal than others. One asked about a beautiful spot in Columbus for which they had a distinct memory while another asked about an important topic they think people avoid discussing because it’s difficult.

Ultimately, partners created their own experience, using the booklet however they chose. Most pairs, wind-swept and moved by the moment, chose to walk a second and third lap (15 minutes for each lap) around the bridges. Afterward, we all reconvened. It was a simple premise that participants seemed to find quite moving.

DIALOGIC ART-MAKING AND LETTING GO OF THE CONVERSATION: ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT

It was a beautiful evening and creating DTWS felt authentic to what we had learned through our process. Yet, if we return to that central notion of the contact zone where researchers and participants look to “create a politically and intellectually charged space [...] to experience and analyze power inequities, together” (Torre, Fine, et al 2008, p. 24)—I had to question whether we had lived up to my original plan. My instinct was to say no, we never quite created that messy social space where participants could address issues of power. Our culminating project focused on deep listening across differences and relationship, and though it was responsive to our community guests, it was not what I initially anticipated. Still, it was I who first suggested the direction we took with DTWS. I felt I needed to let go of the plan I anticipated and the conversations I thought we would have to accept what was presented. Though disappointing in some ways, this choice allowed us to more accurately reflect what the students were learning and what I, in turn, could learn from them. More importantly, it reflected the group’s level of readiness as emerging citizen artists.

When it came to dialogue, I recognized a sense of struggle and resistance in the students early in the semester. Looking back on my notes, by week six we were coming up short in the kind of dialogue I anticipated. Even though openings for dialogue were there, and we regularly examined the works of artists who addressed issues such as race, gender, and sexuality, the group consistently expressed reluctance to name or discuss any difficult issues. This reluctance was most noticeable when students were uncomfortable with crafting or posing any dialogue questions that came across as critical, sensitive, political, or divisive. One Transit student offered that these questions would only invite complaining. These ongoing comments and avoidance were clues that the group was not ready for more difficult discussions, so I waited for signs that the group was ready.

This led me to second-guess myself and question whether that choice was too passive.

As an educator who has led cultural diversity dialogue groups and taught courses on diversity and social justice for 13 years with diverse student groups, this was not new territory for me. Still, one key distinction was how my methodological approach impacted the course. I had never engaged in this work as part of an action research study, so the decision-making was more collaborative than in the past. Our process was intended to be far more responsive and driven by the needs and interests of the group. Carving our path and generating a plan for a collaborative final project took longer than expected, but the student participants also had more ownership of the efforts. Interested in their new understandings, I wanted to move at their pace, not mine, and pursue the topics most meaningful to them and try not to sway the direction to suit my goals. This endeavor was in fact, different from any prior work that I had facilitated.

RELEVANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

A second challenge to engaging in more difficult dialogues came with the varying levels of confidence and maturity for these young artists. The disparity in socio-political awareness was significant and as a whole, the group did not seem ready for me to insert larger conversations about race, power, and oppression. While I wanted those conversations to happen, my intuition told me to wait. We eventually delved into more political topics, but those topics needed grounding in a relevant context when the group was ready. That point, came late in the semester, when I took the students through a values clarification dialogue activity (Rohd 1998). For this activity I offered a series of value-laden statements and students were asked to stand somewhere on a continuum that stretched across a large room to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement. The distinction from other dialogue activities is that without saying a word, each student could take a clear stance and then explain their perspective to the group only if they wished. While some students remained quiet, most spoke and shared stories, and all were attentive, engaged listeners. Class ran long that night because everyone lost track of time. Students left asking to revisit the activity a second time.

Looking back, I realize that this successful activity occurred when strong relationships of trust were established within the group. In their

reflections, students repeatedly commented on how meaningful and eye-opening this activity was. The consensus from student feedback seemed to be that the success and interest in this activity stemmed from having had the time to establish relationships within the group. Participants had the confidence that they would not be dismissed for expressing dissent and also a level of excitement for gaining different perspectives on important issues with the new people they had come to trust and admire. Finally, and importantly, the structure of the activity created space to explore topics in a manner that was relevant and meaningful. Participants were willing to share the context of their opinions with the confidence that others would care and listen.

CONTEXT, POWER, AND PRIVILEGE

The last point about relevance and context is especially pertinent to this conversation because it seemed to me that the Transit students were especially happy to speak about issues of power and privilege, race and stereotypes when they could talk about it on their terms and frame it in a way that had a relevant context to their lives and not just speak in the abstract. I was grateful for the students' engagement in those discussions, but in truth, this dialogue activity only happened for two nights near the end of the semester, each time lasting only an hour. It happened in a vacuum, in our little safe space and it did not go any further. Conversations around such complex social issues related to power and difference were not addressed at any other time. Given that, I would say our success in that particular area of personal change and creating a contact zone in the way the earlier mentioned action researchers had described it was limited. We did not explore power inequities, but if we look at engaging the contact zone as an act of transgressing boundaries that divide (Musil 2009) as other civic educators have, then I do believe the degree of success we achieved was noteworthy. If we had had more time, I have no doubt we could have moved deeper into these forms of dialogue. What *was* achieved was the laying of some necessary groundwork that could have easily led to larger discussions about power and privilege and eventually, more direct actions related to public issues.

Another important finding from this study is that the cultivation of citizen artists must happen over time, and radical or sustaining change cannot be expected as the result of a single course or semester. In this regard, I am reminded of a critical observation that Kester (2004) offers about dialogical projects. He suggests that "we need a way to understand

how identity might change over time” (p. 123) as is especially true for young people in educational settings. Change does “not [happen] through some instantaneous thunderclap of insight but through a more subtle, and no doubt imperfect, process of collectively generated and cumulatively experienced transformation passing through phases of coherence, vulnerability, dissolution, and re-coherence” (p. 123). I did not expect a thunderclap of change for the students. From years of teaching cultural diversity courses, I have always been aware of the ways that students come to understand and make meaning of new knowledge and experiences at different rates and CADDI was bound to be the same. Nonetheless, the ways in which the participants engaged in and reflected on that dialogue activity late in the semester were significant indicators, as was the creation of our culminating work,

Don't

Talk With Strangers, that these young artists were indeed moving through those transformative phases.

A well-laid plan is just that. A plan. A theoretical framework guides our choices and outlook and provides the lenses with which we conceptualize and analyze a study. Even so, in an arts-based action research inquiry such as this one, where the underpinnings and design are deeply connected to anti-oppressive theory and practices, one cannot push or stringently cling to a particular pathway without simultaneously compromising our chances for understanding. I recognize that some anti-oppressive researchers may criticize this study for its less visible actions of radical disruption and the absence of complex questions of power and oppression. Similarly, in the art world, a socially engaged work like DTWS may be dubbed “naively ameliorative ‘trafficking in ‘good times, affirmative feelings and positive outcomes’” (Spiers quoted in Kester 2015). As I have mentioned at other points, our project did not take the direction I would have anticipated. In fact, it largely strayed from anything political or ideological, focusing instead on the psychological and interpersonal—on vulnerability, listening, care, empathy, risk, and humanness. Still, it took the direction that most accurately reflected what the students were invested in, what they were ready for, and what they viewed as an authentic response to the needs of those with whom they engaged. The path we chose offered important answers to my questions.

Though they invested in being locally responsive, the theme we identified was grander in scale. When the student artists struggled with the

ambiguity of our generative process, it was my job as facilitator to listen deeply to what was said and to help the students build on what they were seeing and hearing. I had anticipated that we would tackle more hard-hitting political topics, but that would not have been authentic to the groups' progression. Ultimately, with my guidance, the group chose a human issue, rather than a local one. Our concept recognized that we are all struggling to co-exist in what many describe as an increasingly disconnected society. The corresponding participatory design of DTWS sought to combat those challenges in our own small way. Through this collaborative art-making experience, the participants' task was to openly share their stories and commit to being completely present for another human being for the short duration they would spend together. Through this process, the student artists learned how to produce a climate of mutual trust (Freire 1995), and that allowed for intimate connections between individuals that would challenge dominant representations (Kester 2004). This, in turn, provided all with an opportunity to look at themselves through the eyes of another (Bakhtin 1981) and transgress in small, but significant ways, the boundaries that divide (Musil 2009). These qualities, I argue, are all required in the beginnings of anti-oppressive work, so if we acknowledge that the cultivation of citizen artists cannot happen overnight or in the course of a semester, perhaps then we must also recognize that this is an important foundation that must be laid for young artists before they are ready to take on the larger issues of power, equity, and oppression.

OVERALL FINDINGS AND CLOSING THOUGHTS

Now having a better understanding of the time it takes to foster citizen artists, as well as the challenges and ethical quandaries one may encounter, I offer that I would do it all again *almost* the same way. I would still use arts-based action research for the creative inquiry, collaboration, and responsiveness it invites. In the future, if my young collaborators were not yet ready to tackle issues of power and oppression, I might choose to push a bit harder or perhaps invite guest speakers or slightly older peers to challenge them in different ways. Nonetheless, as with this project, I would again choose to decenter myself and relinquish my plans in order to be a responsive facilitator, knowing that developmental readiness and ownership are critical for young artists to value and continue the efforts. Also, like any new field, the more opportunities there are to support

socially engaged practice for young artists, the better. For student artists to thoroughly develop their creative problem-solving abilities and appreciate their potential as catalysts of change in communities, opportunities to gain knowledge and experience cannot stop with a single effort. Additionally, while well-laid plans and carefully conceived frameworks are important, sometimes we have to let go of them to make new discoveries, so long as we uphold the ethics that are at the core.

Finally, for scholars reading this chapter essay who may be interested in starting a collaborative arts project with an anti-oppressive focus and investment in dialogue, I would offer that their efforts would be much more sustainable if they first invested quality time on listening, trust, vulnerability, and collective risk-taking. Most arts programs across the U.S. that include socially engaged practices in their curriculum are graduate programs. As an arts educator invested in providing student artists with an expansive view of how to have a life in the arts, where they can be capable contributors of many sectors of society, I contend that graduate school is too late, especially given how many young artists do not pursue graduate school or undergrad at all. Projects and courses such as these provide a critical point of entry for young artists, and if developmentally, they are not yet confident in tackling issues of power and oppression, I believe a critical precursor for anti-oppressive arts-based engagement is the humanizing practices we discover through dialogic art-making. In the education of citizen artists, these humanizing efforts cannot be underestimated and should not be shortchanged.

NOTES

1. Citizen Artist—"Artists who actively employ their arts practices as a tool to serve meaningful social purposes, assigning great value to engaging communities in making art that reflects and is relevant to their lives" (Rabkin 2013). The concept is in no way related to one's legal status or national citizenship.
2. From this point onward, any mention of young artists or student artists should be assumed to include both the OSU AND Transit Arts students, unless otherwise indicated.

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