

The Taos Institute – Tilburg University PhD Program in Social Sciences: A Look at the Past Year of Activity

Below is a sampling of the current work of the Taos-Tilburg PhD students including students from: Canada, Nairobi, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Chile, USA

When we asked the students to describe their recent activities this past year most of the PhD students wrote briefly about their work on their dissertations. We hope you enjoy reading about the insightful, creative, thought-provoking research and dissertation work coming out of our Taos-Tilburg PhD program.

1. **Anne-Mette Korczynski** was moved to write a short dialogue between her dissertation and her.

Fifty-seven terrible seconds by Anne-Mette Korczynski

Dissertation. Dot. Done. Did it! Last dot and the feeling of emptiness; all knowledge relevant for the subject had been sucked out of my container leaving my skin fragile to my next movements – and I have to move, cannot remain tranquil! It is the never ending story of closures and openings. The last dot screams to me:

“Please, open me up. I’m bursting with possibilities, don’t leave me here, bring me into play, and unfold me!”

The war has begun.

“Leave me alone,” I shout, “You always want more and more, when do you give me a break! I gave you more than a thousand hours, my weekends and my summer holidays, leave, go away and never come back!”

The dot laughs: “Admit it Girl, you loved it! All the hours you spent and at the end you think you can get away by putting the last dot?? Are you foolish? I’m just the closure for new openings, hard work lies in front of you Girl and you might as well start right now by writing that article you have been thinking about for the last weeks.”

“What?! What article? How do you know? If you say one word more, I’ll kill you.”

Now the dot laughs wickedly: “Unlike you Girl, I’ll never die, so you better start right away or my dot-shadow will haunt you.”

2. **Margi Brown Ash:** 2010 I began visiting Egypt to explore the story of Isis, which is part of my PhD Performance piece "Home" (first creative development showing at Taos "Seminar at Sea", February, 2011). My area of interest is creative counselling/creative counsellor. In June I travelled to NYC to meet my supervisor Saliha Bava for the first time, then the Gergens in Pennsylvania followed by Summer Institute in Mexico. Feeling more informed about collaborative practices, I returned home to create a performance piece, the backbone of my practice-led research. 2011 will see me working creatively with psychologists and counselling students in QUT Family Therapy Clinic.
3. **Cara Weston:** After working as an administrator for a public college in B.C. Canada, focusing on international partnerships and programming for close to a decade, I accepted a Dean's role for a large private educational provider based in Singapore. While there, I had the opportunity to collaborate on program development with affiliate colleges in Beijing, Shanghai, Hanoi, Jakarta and other fascinating Asian locations. I'm now thoroughly enjoying living in vibrant Montreal, and have started my own international education consulting firm. I'm on the last leg of my dissertation journey!
4. **Lisa Sydow:** This year held challenges while at the same time presented invaluable offerings. In the spring I was privileged to be with both my parents and tend to their passing within two weeks of each other. With steady movement I am approaching the final act of my dissertation: Performing Careers: Generative Stories between Girls and Women.

5. **Ottar Ness:** I am finishing my dissertation this Christmas (2010), which is an action research project on developing and optimizing the therapeutic approach of Johnella Bird. The last year I also has got my first publication and I has been holding some conference presentation. Arranging a conference on research and family therapy with my research advisor, Professor Tom Strong as key note together with two other colleagues of mine, Dr. Anne Øfsti and Dr. Rolf Sundet was another highpoint in 2010! I also got a chance to work with students of family therapy and clinical mental health work at universities.
But the biggest highpoint of the last year was to get married with lovely Kjersti.
6. **Ginny Belden-Charles:** I have found that writing retreats is what I need to get my dissertation completed. This year I spent 5 weeks on writing retreats in interesting locations: a hermitage, my sailboat, a restored Carnegie Library in Burwell NE, and a cabin in the North Woods of Minnesota.
7. **Ross Van Horn:** "Continuing my work developing capacity for internal learning and development programs for a UN Agency in Nairobi and East Africa. Also continuing to deliver management training in the Middle East and Africa, which has taken me to two new cities in 2010; Riyadh and Luanda. Planning to launch research activities for T/T program in collaboration with two universities in Africa in 2011"
8. **Theresa Quintana Puschel:** As well as it has been a hard and intensive year, studying, working, trying to reflect and write as much as possible, I think, one important thing has been the development of a Master program at our university, in the Psychology Faculty. So I could say, the "first result" related to the PhD program is this project. On the other side, we have another clinical program, based on Social Constructionism. Harlene Anderson visited us also in August and we had a beautiful workshop. I think we are gradually integrating and practicing the best of "Contemporary Psychotherapies" here in Chile.
9. **Steve Lawler:** I am teaching 2 new courses Spring semester at Washington University in St Louis, "Systems Thinking and Business Analysis," and "Global Development and Sustainability." I have recently had an article in Spirituality and Health entitled "The Patter of Fulfillment" and most exciting of all is working with a writing coach at the University to end my tenure as the longest running student in the PhD program by having my dissertation done early in the Spring. (Thanks Ken for your enormous patience and continued encouragement!)"
10. **Carlos Cruz Marin:** This has been a very good year, even I am exhausted writing my Ph D. thesis!. Besides, I wrote a book on psychiatric emergencies, and I was a guess editor of an issue of a Chilean Mental Health Journal.
11. **Nick Dayton:** I am pleased to report that this past year has been filled with activity. I have taken a position with Baxter Healthcare as an internal consultant and senior manager for quality systems development and deployment. Baxter is under a Consent Decree with FDA and must (with urgency) develop and deploy more effective quality systems. My dissertation topic is merging problem focused business improvement methods with strengths-based methods and my work with Baxter has given me a large, dynamic and critical laboratory in which to apply some of my field work. Much to do, high criticality, little margin for error, and relatively little time to do it, plus it fits my background, interests and chosen research direction.
12. **Patricia Miller:** I have happily entered the PhD program at the Taos Institute. Life is full these days with teaching at Mount Royal University, clinical work with persons living with HIV and private practice at the Family Psychology Place as well as working on my PhD research.
13. **Kristin Bodiford:** 2010 was an exciting year! We received the second phase of federal demonstration funding for a project focusing on children's exposure to domestic violence to support our work in 2011 (www.familiesthrive.org <<http://www.familiesthrive.org>>). We also continued our work in supporting communities in their planning for an aging demographic with multiple workshops at the American Society on Aging and Positive Aging conferences focusing on aging-friendly communities, social capital in community development and lifespan resilience.

We also co-hosted a conference with the CDC Healthy Aging Research Network called Environmental and Policy Change for Healthy Aging (www.agingfriendly.org <<http://www.agingfriendly.org>>). I am loving my doctoral studies with Taos/Tilburg looking at the social construction of lifespan resilience in the community context. My family will be moving from San Francisco to Chicago in 2011 - bringing new challenges and exciting adventures and opportunities!

14. **Sherry Harsch-Porter:** I am in the writing process - dissertation working title "Education as Possibility: The Social Construction of Identity". I was invited to write a book chapter on social constructionism and coaching. The book, edited by Leni Wildflower and Diane Brennan, is titled "The Handbook of Knowledge-Based Coaching: From theory to practice" and will be published by John Wiley & Sons in June 2011
15. **Kon Madut:** I have been really busy with my research activities, work, family, conferences and writings. We had a new baby girl (Asham Madut) on August 15, 2010. I had an opportunity to take 3 month parental leave from work to care of our new born. As far as dissertation progress is concerned, I am happy with my progress to date. The last feedback received from my Advisor Professor Dan Wulff, was encouraging and motivational. I am hoping to submit my first draft by the beginning of next semester March 2011.
16. **Gita Baack:** I will be travelling from Ottawa to Tel Aviv to conduct on site group dialogues for my dissertation on Resilience in the Generation After the Holocaust. I have also obtained an invitation to conduct research as a visiting student at Hebrew University and will be speaking to organizations involved in relevant research on this population. It will be an interesting 2-month journey of exploration and discovery and of course, meeting great people. I haven't been to Israel since 1969; my apartment in the heart of Tel Aviv minutes from the beach promises to be an adventure in the cosmopolitan Manhattan-like lifestyle of Tel Aviv. Skyping with colleagues of Taos/Tilburg continues to be a great way to support and share learnings. Thanks to my learning partners!
17. **Allen Moore:** In the "pracademic" model I've spent this semester heavily weighted on the practice side. My research interest is complexity leadership, and I'm pleased that (by this name or another) many large, global organizations are starting to search for *something more* in their leadership programs. Beyond skills training, they need leaders who can cope with the complexities of sustainability, volatile markets, and the search for meaning especially heightened in the latest generation of workforce. High performance, in addition to delivering economic outcomes, is also recognized as embracing the constructivist concepts of distributed leadership: sensemaking, collaborating, relating, and generative adaptation.
18. **Erin Kreeger:** Right now I'm in Australia where Margi Brown Ash and I along with a couple of other colleagues co-created and co-facilitated a workshop for the 2010 Cultural Studies Association of Australasia's conference where we focused on restorying and living into more generative PhD ecologies. It was wonderful all around! I've also recently finished a certificate in Ayurvedic wellness coaching - an ancient and relationally oriented system of health and wellbeing and one that is part of and informs my work including my doctoral inquiry.
19. **Susanne Lucie Bauer:** I started with my PhD proposal in spring season 2010 with Taos Institute. Drawing on my professional background in the Middle East (M.A.1988, Bonn University, Germany), I intend to use my consultancy experience in International Development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to look at transformation as Western construction of modernity (<http://www.taosinstitute.net/susanne-bauer>).
20. **Stephen Shimshock:** I completed my project in May and I am now writing my dissertation, which I hope to have completed early in 2011. I am also still working to help students connect via the Taos-Tilburg ning site.
21. **Jody Jacobsen:** At the Gergen Social Construction Workshop I learned about "most practiced ways of being," and the potential for internal conflicts of multi-being. Those ideas have opened

new vistas in my dissertation research, and deepened my appreciation for the poignancy of my son, Aman's, decision to major in Popular Music at USC, when so many adults expected him to major in math/physics, because he's sooo talented in them. Ah, to have known what my passions were at 19, and to have had the wisdom and courage to follow them!

22. Chester Warzynski: While I haven't been active in communicating with the my colleagues in the Taos/Tilburg Ph.D. program this past semester, it has been productive time for me. I completed the first chapter of my dissertation on constructing a culture of leadership for innovation, did a poster session on it to get feedback at the International Leadership Association Annual Conference in Boston, co-authored an article focused on interest-based negotiation as a vehicle for social construction, and completed the second phase of a pilot study on leading innovation for the University System of Georgia. Finally, my chapter on creating macro actors for sustainable development was published in Thatchenkery, Cooperrider, and Avital's new edition on Advances in Appreciative Inquiry. volume 3. I plan to make a stronger effort to interact with my colleagues next semester.

23. Tricia Roy: The semester is drawing to a close, and I'm working on grading final papers. I've been slowly working on the dissertation -- much more slowly than I wanted, which frustrates me. I'm hoping to finish grades by midweek next week and then try to devote some time each day to writing, so that I have something to give you soon.
I have a new Saturday morning ritual, which is to take a short hike in the woods at Weir Hill in North Andover, not far from my home. I've enjoyed the invigoration of my walks as well as the changing scenery, and I feel as though my walking has become a part of my work. I'm sure these woods will be in my project somehow

24. Anne Sedler: My bit of news is that I was offered a job at the University of Passau (Bavaria) starting in 2011, so the last few months have been a little stressful for me as I have moved from Heidelberg to Passau. I now share an apartment with a friend in a small town about 12 miles from Passau. In Heidelberg, I had to clear out my apartment of 17 years - and that was a real task! I never would have believed I had accumulated so much "stuff" but I had!:-))

Anyway, I am slowly settling in and really am quite happy here - despite the snow and the cold weather we are having right now. I will also be teaching online courses (psychology and intercultural communication) for the University of Maryland as of 2011.

As I will not be as busy in the first part of the year, I plan to really concentrate on my dissertation which I hope to finish by Dec 2011.

25. Glenn Boyd: (Glenn is waiting for news on his completed dissertation). Glen and Chrys are meeting old friends with whom they share an interest in positive aging for a quiet Sunday morning in Galveston, Texas for breakfast and a few hours at Dickens on the Strand. Every first weekend in December, Galveston hosts an outdoors event on the Strand complete with people in 19th century costume. We like the music and the atmosphere; we try to avoid the funnel cake and other delicious, but dangerous temptations.

We are celebrating two graduations in December. Our middle son, Cory, completed the M.S. in Psychology at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, TX. Our youngest son, Andrew, graduates from the University of Texas in Austin. We're hoping that dad may be able to graduate from the Taos/Tilburg Ph.D. program in 2011.

Chrys teaches special education in a demanding, highly paperwork-oriented school district. My practice is busy in addition to which I continue to teach in the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M.S. in Psychology program.

26. Ulrich Gysel, Switzerland: Even though my general mood is a little bit depressed by the days that get shorter and shorter, I still appreciate the lighter and quieter white nights. Winter and especially winter nights give a completely new perspective, e.g. on what a tree is. In summer it disappears

behind a dominating mass of flowers, leaves, and fruits. In winter when there is snow on the branches one can just see a dark fat line for every branch. Trees appear to be drawings on a white sheet. An austere contrast to the opulence of the oil on canvas paintings that spring, summer and autumn deliver.

I have been struggling a lot with my PhD project, but I believe I see the light. I have now two great opportunities that seem to fit both my work and my research demands.

I have just spent two days with a group of Chinese and Swiss art teachers that want to establish a collaboration between a Chinese and Swiss college of art in teaching art to students. I have been invited to collaborate and co-develop the settings within which they can achieve their goals. I experience it as a privilege to work with artists and art teachers, and we are now diving into a one to two year action research project on computer mediated communication in teaching art in dispersed communities.

One of our political entities passes on the task of dealing with feeding, housing, and teaching refugees to private organizations. In the process of this transition the political entity and the private (not for profit) organization want to develop a mutual understanding of their duties and practices to a degree that will assure that the state entities - being a bit removed from the action - will let the experience of the private institutions - who are directly involved with the refugees - influence their decision making and make it transparent to these institutions. This project, too will be action research based and focus on how and how much e-collaboration can contribute to mutual understanding.

- 27. Paulette Lewis:** After grappling with many texts, journals and losing a close family member, I have managed to write, with some coherence, a few ideas toward the proposal for my thesis. These are ideas have been kind of floating around in my head for the last couple of months. Hope Dr. Stavros, my supervisor feels the same way about it.

Its kind of strange but a global Human Resources conference that I attended in Copenhagen gave me the extra push. All these bright people walking around and sharing their knowledge and expertise just reminded that I can do it! Cathleen Benko, author of the ""Corporate Lattice: Achieving High Performance in the Changing World of Work " (Harvard 2010) helped to do it while sharing the ideas from her book.

- 28. Lorri Yasenik:** I have just started the PhD program as of September this year. I have had a very interesting and busy year. I am a child and family therapist and have aspecialty in play therapy and play therapy training. We (my business partner and I) train internationally and twice a year we deliver certified play therapy training in Hong Kong. Each year, after the training, I travel somewhere else in South East Asia and visit other countries. Cambodia has been a special destination for the last couple of years and I now have a relationship with a rural school program for children where I volunteer my time to teach English lessons but I also bring play based activities with me. I am also volunteering at an Orphanage in Phnom Penh and now havelong-distance relationships via email with many of the children who live and go to school there. It has been fantastic and although I have travelled a lot, this has been a great interpersonal learning experience. My husband and I are trying our "first ever" fund raiser event to raise money for the rural school. I am uncertain about the outcome, but our hope is to raise a moderate sum of \$5000.00 so the school may continue. It is the only way these children have to end poverty and achieve some of their dreams to give back to their country.

On another note, I rarely celebrate any "successes" - I usually just keep going. But, having said that, this year I received the John Haynes Award for outstanding contribution to Family Mediation in the province of Alberta from the Alberta Family Mediation Society. I am proud of this award, and I have worked hard to find ways to help parents find peace and maintain their connections to one another post separation and divorce.