

## Introduction

- ❖ Researchers continue the attempt to represent, reflect, explore, illuminate, or describe aspects of individual or social life without considering the role of **researchers as world-making** (Gergen, 2015)
- ❖ “The traditional assumption is that research produces knowledge, facts, and evidence about the world *as it is*.” (McNamee, 2014, p.75)
- ❖ Thus, traditional research is “data driven” instead of process, relationally driven (Gergen, 2015). We believe **research is a relational process** (McNamee, 2014)
- ❖ “We co-construct realities with the people we study when we engage in research” (McNamee, 1994,p.79)
- ❖ Gergen (2015) understands that the aim of **research is not to illuminate what is, but to create what is to become**.
- ❖ “**Relational constructionist philosophy does not offer research methods**; it offers resources that help to orient us toward inquiry in ways that *give precedence to the constitutive nature of all forms of inquiry*.” (McNamee & Hosking, 2011, p.xiii)

## Background and Activities

- ❖ The Taos Institute – Home of the Relation Research Network since 2014. First global meeting in Prague
- ❖ Organizing Team: Multidisciplinary group of practitioners and scholars from US, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Spain and Denmark (see poster authors) Founding team from the Netherlands, and Prague
- ❖ 350 researchers from 44 countries; 132 online community members
- ❖ Four years of creating relational inquiry online dialogues and collaborations
- ❖ Bi-monthly meetings: 6-8 online meetings per year
- ❖ Held first international online conference in 2016
- ❖ Summer and Fall Article Series 2017
- ❖ Facilitated face-to-face sessions, including at TQR Annual Conference 2016 in Florida and the 3rd ICCP Conference 2017 in Tenerife, Spain

## Towards a Definition of Relational Research

- ❖ It is an approach to research, a way of being in relationship with all the implicated
- ❖ It is a “philosophical and ethical *stance* which embraces reflexivity, engagement, transparency of the researcher(s), relational awareness and dialogical coherence between that which is being researched [how we conduct the research, how we relate with others during the research process] and how research material is shared with others” (Simon, 2013)
- ❖ As a form of inquiry it does not propose specific methods, steps, or strategies, but rather ways of thinking about, positioning, and being engaged in research from a relational perspective
- ❖ It presumes all research is relational. Relational Research as a form of practice (therapeutic, organizational, community, and educational) reflects on how all are relating through the research and what the research is creating that becomes of primary concern
- ❖ It invites us to consider the importance of collaboration and joint inquiry as core concepts to constructing knowledge and new possibilities.

## Exemplars of Relational Research

1. *Calidoscopio* (Tenerife, Spain). Group of elementary school teachers doing relational research with children
2. *Collaborative Research* (International). Practitioners from the ICCP Program innovating on collaborative, dialogical research
3. *Instituto Kanankil* (Yucatan, Mexico). Dialogic Social Inquiry. Students and professors facilitating inquiry **projeemale** leadership, infidelity, masculinity, reflective processes as a tool for learning, families with children with severe diagnosis, process of becoming a collaborative practitioner, etc.) based on dialogue; relationally driven and not methodologically driven
4. *Relational Ethnography* (UK)
5. *Designing Research* (Netherlands, US)
6. Taos PhD Program (US and International)
7. Narrativ Institute (Prague, Czech)



## Creating Space for Dialogue

### Learning about Relational Research:

- What is Relational Research?
- What does Relational Research look like?
- How is it different from traditional ways of thinking about research?
- How could the Relational Research Network support your research?

### Practice:

- How does inquiry from a Relational Research perspective affect how we choose methodologies?
- What are examples of Relational Research?
- What are you doing with your research that is exciting, relationally different?
- What kind of potential research collaborations would you like to explore with other network members?
- What questions do you have about your research related to relational processes?

### Conceptual:

- What is the conceptual framework for Relational Research that you use?
- How can we develop different approaches as accepted way of doing Relational Research?
- How can we create a field of Relational Research that is accepted and respected in our universities and research communities?
- How do we bring about a shift from more traditional ways of thinking about research to one of a relational inquiry focus?



## Final Questions

- How might we consider Relational Research’s ethical imperatives in the worlds we are constructing?
- How might we explore the implications that epistemological changes may have on the way we think about how knowledge is produced?
- How might we explore innovations in how relational research is practiced, share practical examples of its application, and collaborate with others in generating knowledge that catalyzes people’s, families’, communities’, and organizations’ transformations?
- How can we develop practices of inquiry that explores organizational life from within?
- How can we support developing viable communities in the process of “discovering” (creating with?) them?
- How can research look like if it embraces reflexivity, responsiveness and radical presence?
- How might we engage in research acknowledging and embracing it’s generative capacities?
- How does assuming all practice as research influence in how we understand and transform our co-constructed realities?

## About the Taos Institute

- The Taos Institute is a community of scholars and practitioners concerned with the social processes essential for the construction of reason, knowledge, and human value
- Social constructionist theory and practice locates the source of meaning, value and action in the *relational connection among people*. **It is through our social and relational processes that we construct the world**
- Work at the interface between the scholarly community and societal practitioners from different fields and communities

## References

- Gergen, K.J. (2015). From mirroring to world-making: Research as future forming. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 45(3), 287-310.  
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