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Innovations in Reflexive
Practice Research

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everything *is* connected

Performative Practices, Performative Relationships: in and as Emergent Research

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Introduction

I have been in love with research since I accompanied my mother on her doctoral data collection trip when I was nine years old. My first formal attempt at research was eight years later in the last year of my high school or grammar school. Subsequently, I went on to do research projects in my Bachelors, Masters, Post-Graduate and Doctoral programs. From 1998, I formally started supervising research projects. My research encounters made me curious about the process of research itself.

By the time I was in my Doctoral program, I was determined to make the focus my research the methodological constructions themselves and not solely apply methodological formulas to a substantive issues (or area of inquiry). Often the first time a graduate student is immersing herself[1] in research is during her doctoral dissertation where there will be an emphasis on learning about research process. The traditional idea is to learn the methodology as per the research questions that are preferred within the discipline or by one's research advisor. Experimenting with methodology may not be considered good scientific research (Bernstein 2000).

Scientific research has been reduced to empirical methodologies that are often located within the positivist paradigm. Often, such popular methodologies are considered the true and tested pathways we use for knowledge construction. However, methodological canons are not always reflective of the researcher's philosophical orientation but they shape what we see which is the substantive area (subject matter/ area of inquiry or research focus) of study. What we see is shaped by how we see it (Pearce 2007). The result is a philosophical disconnect between the methodology and the researcher's framework which guides the substantive. This disconnect occurs because the area of inquiry is expected to change and evolve overtime; as it is the subject that is under

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[1] I will use the male and female gender interchangeably throughout the chapter, to cultivate the image of researchers as contextual beings (gendered in this case).

knowledge construction, while popular methodologies which are the pathways we use for this knowledge construction are not expected to change (Bernstein 2000). This distinction is inherently reflective of a modernist view point where the constructed knowledge is independent of the knower or ways of knowing. Further it fuels the false notion that methodologies do not shape knowledge, thus creating the notion of objectivity. This myth of objectivity is double layered: free of researcher bias and methodological bias.

The process of inquiry is shaped by a community of researchers, people like you and me, who deem certain methodologies as established and thus credible. Researchers and methodologies are embodiments of values and assumptions. Both as researchers and in our ways of knowing we habituate and cultivate certain practices. These practices are value and community-based. Thus, not only is the knower shaping that which we know but the pathway to knowing also shapes that which we know.

The path to knowing is discursive, that is, a responsive dialogic process. Dialogue or conversation is performative, i.e. it is constitutive. By constitutive, I mean that through the discursive process the interlocutors bring into being that which they name. We are doing/acting when we are speaking or communicating with each other (Gergen 2009; Pearce 2007). In the process of coordinating (Gergen 2009) the activity of dialogue with each other we create the meaning of that which we are speaking. We are creating meaning together that constitutes itself and shapes what emerges next. Such joint action could be experienced as understanding, next steps and/or action items.

Thus, the activity of dialogue, inherent to the research process and our participation within communities of research practices shapes the emergence of methodologies. Any development of new methodologies or ways of knowing are often referred to as emergent methods (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006). However, Hesse-Biber and Leavy claim "Emergent methods are often driven by new epistemologies on knowledge production, which in turn creates new research questions (methodologies) that often require an innovation in methods" (p.xxx). I agree that new methodologies emerge as a response to changing issues such as, "to unearth previously subjugated knowledge" or "new research questions" (p.xxx). Additionally, in the process of doing any research project new methodological practices are potentially being created and recreated. In this chapter I will illustrate how research is a "made-up" activity and thus emergent. I will introduce the notion of research as a community of practice and a construction followed by research as performance and performative. Further, drawing on examples from

supervision of research I will introduce an alternate notion of *emergent research*.

Research as community of practice and research as performance and performative form the basis for what I identify as emergent research. I am claiming that all research is *made up* and inherently emergent thus we need to approach research not only as a planned or designed process but also as a messy, chaotic process with surprises that requires one to improvise during the process. And as research supervisors we need to be able to be responsive, playful and flexible with our students or advisees in the process. Let's read on to explore why and how.

Research as Communities of Practice

Community of practice is a term coined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991 which Wenger expands on in his book *Communities of Practice* (1998). According to Wenger "Communities of Practice" are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and how to do it better as they interact regularly. He emphasizes that it has three elements –domain, community and practice – that sets apart a community of practice from a group of people who share an interest or are in a geographical or online community. It is a group of members who are *practitioners* with *shared domain of interest* who *interact and learn together* and *share resources* (tools, stories, experiences and ways of addressing a problem) (Wenger 1998).

Each research project is not only a product of a community of practice but the concept of research itself is a community of practice. Based on Wenger's notion of Communities of Practice, research methodologies are domains that have groups of practitioners who share stories of tools and approaches when they interact (through conferences, journals, books, online discussions etc). They learn from each other about their shared area of interest (experimental design, observation, interviewing, content analysis, autoethnography, etc). So, not only do we have methodologists grouped by types of methodologies but we also have an umbrella group, to which we all belong by our shared interest in research. The act by which this book was produced and is in your hand is a statement of such a community of practice. This book is a resource for furthering our community of practice about research methodologies by systemic practitioners. This is one of the ways we create traditions and rituals of practice.

McNamee (2004) states, that we create traditions and rituals by coordinating our situated activities. And research is one such tradition

that has been created to constitute how knowledge is produced. Research practices that emerge as rituals become standards of practice and grow as the community of practice grows. Over time, these standards of practice get calcified as credible and legitimate practices and determine which processes can be labeled as "research." In the scientific and academic communities, we value the knowledge that is produced in the course of research. Media often privileges such knowledge and promotes it as legitimate knowledge (Figure 1) while distorting it or reconstituting it (depending on your perspective).

We have created traditions, as illustrated in the comic (Figure 1) titled *The Science News Cycle,* where we value the exclusivity of research based knowledges[2] over lived and practitioner knowledges even as it filters through our everyday news sources. In the West, the status of knowledge produced via research is valued higher than the knowledge produced via practice or everyday lived experiences. In fact, we have set up practices where one needs to validate the practitioner's knowledge via research for it to achieve legitimacy; i.e. the distinction of scientific credibility. (How else would you term this distinction?) Practice is seen as more an everyday activity while academic and scientific research is viewed as a more rarified set of communities and practices. We create a dichotomy between research and practice, failing to see research as a form of practice.

People tend to be immersed in "practice" by the very act of living and working in their everyday contexts. Research on the other hand, is crafted within rarified spaces as bounded practices that must embody certain traditions such as research questions, hypothesis, design, validity, reliability, trustworthiness, for example, to be counted as research. And in some disciplines, to be deemed as scientific, the gold standard is the adoption of the experimental research design, specifically the randomized controlled trials, especially in USA (Christ 2014; Denzin 2008). Thus, research spaces become not only rarified spaces but can also become calcified. Whatever innovation occurs has to be within these bounded walls of research to be deemed scientific. Further, we have created methodological practices which are stratified; a form of classism in the guise of classification or categorizing of methodologies. By classism I mean practices by which we create privilege for one set of practices, ways of being and/or people over another. One broad classification continues to hold quantitative as a premier research method

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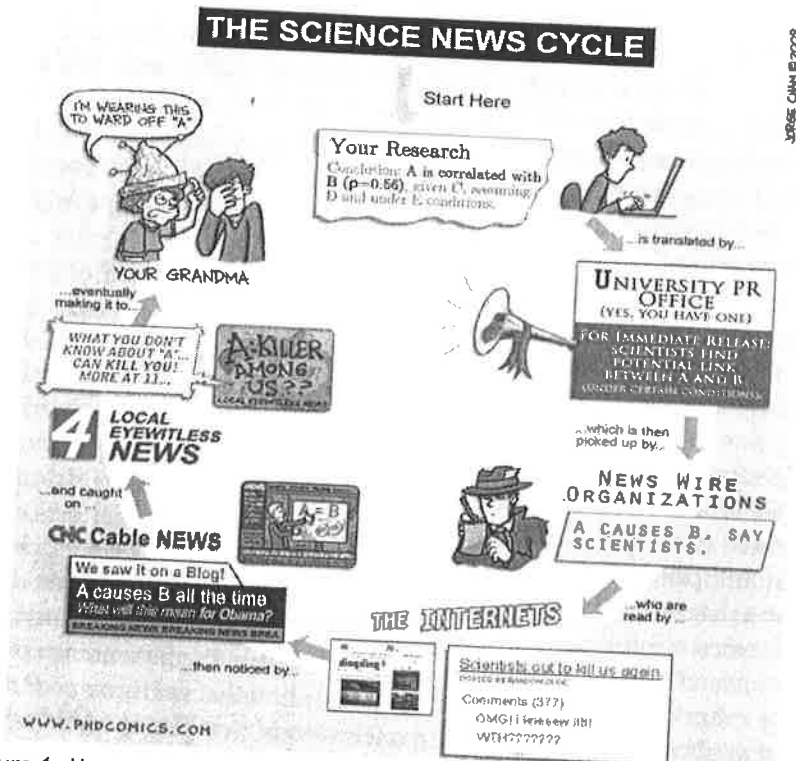[2] I am using the notion of knowledge here to connote it as a product or commodity to be marketed, sold and acquired.

Figure 1. How research results get reconstituted through the news cycle
Source: "Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham www.phdcomics.com http://www.phdcomics.com/comics/

compared to qualitative which Denzin (2008) refers to as the "paradigm disputes of the 1980s" and "the paradigm dialogue." This represents the continued legacy of positivist, dualistic thinking. However, there is a move towards mixed methods and increased appreciation of qualitative methods identified as the "third methodological moment" (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003, p.9).

In a knowledge-based economy (Druker 1969; Smith 2002) where we are seeking equality and equity, the question is whose knowledge counts? And who decides whose knowledge counts? Research is a base for knowledge production and researcher's assumptions of knowledge production need to be critically reflected on. We need to ask the question who does it serve to have a class-based approach towards research methodology? One answer, for example, might be that it serves the people who have access to conduct "gold standards" of research in

order to undermine practice-based forms of knowledge, privileging instead practices that are identified as "scientific" forms of knowledge production.

Thus, I invite us to view the performance of "what is research" and how we research (the methodologies) as forms of practice that is grown in coordination with each other as members of the research community. And as we grow, we collectively define what acceptable performances are, and thus we grow our communities of practice. Let us now explore what is research as performance.

Research as Performance

I view performance as a social constructionist turn, so there is no one way to define it. "All performances or actions that are culturally categorized as 'performance' are socially constructed due to the collective consensus of that socio-cultural group within a particular time-space (historical period)" (Bava 2005, p.173). An interdisciplinary notion, performance has multiple definitions depending on the context of its use. Denzin (2003) states "Performance is an act of intervention, a method of resistance, a form of criticism, a way of revealing agency... performance is a form of agency, a way of bringing culture and the person into play" (p. 9). I prefer to draw on Kaye's (1994) notion that performance "may be thought of as a *primary postmodern mode*" (emphasis added, cited in Carlson 1996, p.123). For me performance is "related to the blurring of the boundaries between art and science, literary and scientific, real and virtual, and nature and nurture" (Bava 2005, p.172).

I see currently four ways in which the notion of performance is being used in research discourses. Firstly, as an activity, that is the production of "a thing" that we present as a research project (Bava 2005). From this view point, all research projects are performances. Secondly, it refers to researches that are art-based. The whole production of research is through the medium of art or the purpose is to produce art or inquiry of art and design through the practice of it (Barrett & Bolt 2007). Such work is sometimes also referred to as "practice-led research[3]" (Barrett & Bolt 2007; Hasseman 2006) though it applies to disciplines beyond art and design. Thirdly, as identified by Denzin (2003) performance is a movement of resistance, intervention and a political change-maker. This includes both the way research is produced and the "results" being presented as poetry, prose, art, theater and movies etc. And lastly, the

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[3]   See special issue "Practice-led Research" of Media Information Australia, February 2006.

notion of performance is being increasingly drawn on as a means of evocatively expressing one's research results using art-based methods, such as poetry, stories, theatre, movies etc (Gergen & Gergen 2012; Piercy & Benson 2005). The last two notions of research as performance, are not mutually exclusive rather they depend on the researcher's intentions and how the researcher positions research as a political activity.

Research as performance can be seen in at least two ways: as a form of theatre and/or as a textual performance. Theatres have the potential to give voice. Brecht, German playwright and theater director, states that in the form of popular theatre, called bourgeois theatre, one hangs up their brain along with their hat (Boal, n.d.). Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal 1997) grew in resistance to the bourgeois theatre as an art form for social transformation to unpack the power constructions by engaging in discursive practices via theatre. Thus, rather than viewing research as a form of bourgeois theatre but as a form of activism, we move away from it being as a representational act to a dynamic space for social discourse (Denzin 2003; Madison 2008). In the latter view, research performances are not only giving voice to the subject of inquiry but more so to the research participants, who are not simply objects or subjects of the study, but are co-creators of what is at the heart of the research focus. In the process of giving voice to the heart of the subject matter, there is also the researcher, who has a voice and a supervisor. For instance, as a research supervisor, it is critical for me to create space, conditions for researchers to be directors of their play, for them to have their voice such that I am creating an alternate form of theatre rather than one where the advisees suspend their thinking when adopting research methodologies. I want them to actively question and shape their methodologies in dialogue with their participants as an act of responsiveness. How do we do that? One way is to reflect on research (processes, relationships and outcomes) as a form of theatre and another is to view it as a textual performance.

Research is a text; a performance text of a particular community. Each knowledge community will prescribe and perform what are their dos and don'ts of research practices. A knowledge community can be defined along discipline lines (e.g. management studies, psychology, sociology, economics, marketing, etc) and/or methodology lines (e.g. experimental, ethnography, phenomenology, autoethnography, narrative etc). A distinctive example of this is the research report that is developed at the end of a project which is formatted and styled according to the established communities of practice such as American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association of

America (MLA) or Harvard style. In the Taos Institute-Tilburg Doctoral programme, where I am an advisor, our students are not told which style to follow but are required to stick to a consistent format. This guideline gives the student space to develop a style that fits with the material and intent that they are crafting within the scope of their inquiry. I think this is critically important. Research reports, though viewed as part of the research process, are seen within a modernist scientific framework as a reporting tool: a story about the research, rather than seeing the reports as part of the tool that is shaping the narrative of research focus. Once again, the idea of objectivity is subversively present within the performance of what is labeled as the "Research Report." Our research reports are political playgrounds (whose voice, who speaks for whom, whose voice is heavier, who decides and how is it decided) (Madison, 2008) which are located within our communities of practices and the context of research. Our experience of the research narrative is shaped not only by its presentation but also in how it engages the reader. Richardson talks about the written performance in academic writing in her book *Fields of Play* (1997). Not only does she introduce the notion of writing as research but also the notion that the written style is not neutral. She states how the academic writing is performed to keep the researcher within the folds of the academia while it fails to engage the reader. To understand the purpose of such a textual performance, let us explore the notion of text in performance.

Research: A Performance Text

W. B. Worthen, a performance theorist, draws on Roland Barthes' uses of the word *text* in performance studies, to state that there are "three interlaced ways we think of a "text": (1) as a canonical vehicle of authorial intention; (2) as an intertext, a field of textuality; (3) as a material object, the text in hand" (1995, p. 14). Drawing on Worthen's interpretation of Barthes, I will unpack research as a textual performance.

Research as a vehicle for authorial intention (power and traditions): In most disciplines, research is used as the authoritative voice to proclaim or sanction practices. It carries the status of being legitimate and credible. Thus, as consumers of knowledge we value statements that are based in research. In fact, we have created the myth that if something is researched, it is fact. We don't see how research is a production and so are "facts" that are produced by research processes. Research which was constructed as a tool now becomes the vehicle

for authorial power and a self- perpetuating process to keep alive the traditions by which it was created (Bateson 1972).

Research as intertext, a space for 'play, activity, production and practice': Research is not just an activity it is also a practice of the communities we belong to and their production. An intertextual (Lemke 1995) production that we hope gives us entry into a particular community and/or is making of that community. In the process of making of communities there is often play and textual politics. We play with textuality and conventions as witnessed in a number of recent works (Barrett & Bolt 2007; Denzin & Giardina 2008; Gergen & Gergen 2012). Elizabeth Bell, performance theorist, states,

> *Textuality [Research] plays with the notion of writing itself-its conventions, its histories, and its interplay with other works in the canon-challenging anyone's claim to authority and enforcement. In this use, texts [research] are open fields, a place of 'play, activity, production, and practices.' (2008, p. 77 parenthetical insertions are mine)*

Research a material object: This is the most common or familiar view of research as performance. In performing research we create a thing called a report or dissertation which is a material object. We often point to the report as if it is the research. Rather it is one of the objects that is crafted in the process of doing an activity that we call research. The production of the research and the report are both performances. One can view both as objects, though the latter is the one that carries the materiality in its form. And we fail to see the materiality of the process or for that matter the process as product.

Research Supervision: An Example of a Situated Performance

Supervision, as the name suggests is inherently hierarchical. As a collaborative practitioner my focuses shifts from the role to the relationship with the question of 'how to re-script the conventional performance of supervision?' I attempt to create a practice of reflection and dialogue about our relationship and process in my supervision to cultivate an openness for us to explore what is being produced in our advising relationship. I use the terms supervision and advising interchangeably to refer to the process of guiding or mentoring a researcher. I stay curious by asking questions such as "how are we working to create this relationship?" or "what do you want me to listen to/for?" I make this a

public performance and invite the advisee to reflect with me on how our relationship is fostering and shaping his/her research. Our research is an embedded practice. And one of the spaces that the research is embedded is within our relationship (in addition to the context of the discipline and study, with the participants, committees and universities). So it is important for me to seek reflection on our relationship in relation to the project itself and the researcher's expectations and goals. Such a conversation foregrounds both our relationship and its relationship to the project. These conversations are also spontaneous. It is an invitation to be in a relational and responsive space that is constitutive of the process rather than be in a role. Thus, I attempt to foreground supervision as a space of spontaneous play, activity, production, practice and a product of dialogue, reflection, and responsiveness that is constitutive of our relationship.

In this section I have described how, from a performance theory perspective, research can be understood as forms of practice that can be viewed as theatre, as a vehicle, as a place of play, as an activity, as a production, and as an object – all at the same moment. Furthermore, not only can research be performance but it can also be understood to be performative. In the following section, I describe how research is performative.

Performative: Making of (Research) Practices

Research is Performative

Performative is that which we make in the process of naming and enacting it to be as such. In comparing research to text (as above), I invoke Worthen's (1995) notion that "Barthes' sense of *text* is self-consciously performative" (p. 15). *Research is performative.* I identify the following three processes/movements by which to understand the making of research or its construction as performative:

1. *Speech acts:* According to speech act theorist J. L. Austin (1975), certain utterances are declarative and constitutive of creating particular realities, though later Austin "purported that *every speech is an act*" (Pandey 2008, p.151). Drawing on Austin's view, utterances such as "As a researcher I state" or "Research results reveal" or "Based on scientific research" are declarative and constitutive of what gets created as being real or factual since they are uttered as being research driven.

2. Language movements or moments/Communicative action: The activity of pointing and naming something, is a way of making it into an entity or reality. This activity of pointing and naming happens in language which Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian refer to it as "communicative action" (1988, p.378).   For instances, researcher often 'explain' their results. These explanations are "made-up" as they are plausible ways of understanding results. They become tentative statements awaiting verification. Or one could say potential hypotheses for another research. Explanations are sense-making practices which are constitutive. We declare or birth a possible reality in the course of giving explanations. It also can function like the game we called Chinese whisper game[4] that I played as a child in India. In this game a phrase or a sentence gets transformed some times as it is whispered by one person to the next. In Figure 1 (above), we observe a similar process where, in language, research explanations moves through the news cycle. The explanation or its understanding gets reconstituted by the media channels to be responsive to its audience or to make news. In language movements, new realities are produced. Language movements are possibilities of coordinated action (Gergen 2009) outlined in the third point here.

On shifting our gaze from invoking structure to invoking communicative action we are stepping from performance into the performative space. Rather than performing functions of set roles, we are engaged in a creative activity of mutual engagement and inquiry. This mutual engagement and inquiry is not limited to the dissertation topic rather it starts out by inquiry into the advisory/supervisory relationship that we are seeking to create. I often start out by asking my advisee or student, "what is important for you in this topic and how would you like me to listen and attend to it within our relationship?" It is within this mutual engagement that we script our performances as advisors/supervisors and advisees/supervisees. Thus, we are improvising our relational dance just like we are improvising the research process. The relationship is emergent like the inquiry. And they shape each other.

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[4]   Chinese whisper game is where people get in a circle and one person starts by whispering a sentence or word in her neighbor's ear. Then the receiver whispers it to the next person and thus it travels through the circle until it gets back to the first person, who says it out aloud and states the original phrase or word. In the course of it going around the circle, the phrase or word change based on what one hears.

3. *Coordinated actions:* "Only in coordinated action does meaning spring to life" (Gergen 2009, p.31). According to Gergen, all human action lies within co-action. It is within the relational space that we bring to life the world as we know it. Coordinated action is a process of communicative action of making meaning. What I say here are words on a page, but in our back and forth, within our relational space, we bring these ideas to life. This process is no different than when I am positioned as a research supervisor.

Our way of being, what we say and do, is shaped and understood within the relationships that host those actions. Similarly, the whole process of research is a coordinated activity among the various people (researchers, participants, advisors, reviewers, publishers etc). The meaning created in the relational responsiveness between the researcher and participants or among the committee members with the researchers is a communicative action. It is through this coordinated action that the conducted activity is deemed to be research *and* real.

In these ways, the process of enacting design and methods and naming it to be as such, we make the thing called *research*. The supervisory process is one such research process we make in enacting it to be as such.

Supervision: An Example of a Performative Relationship

As stated earlier supervision is a situated practice that is traditionally structured to be a hierarchical relationship which tends to emphasize the static performance of the roles rather than the dynamic nature of the relationships. Being a supervisor or a research student is a relationship not just a role. Though we use a noun to identify our position, our gaze needs to be on the performative, the practice of what we are constructing and not on the noun which constitutes a dormant or static performance.

How to be, that which we are being *and becoming*, is shaped in the conversations and the relationships we share with our advisee and the various people within that context. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1986) notion of text and context, our conversations and relationships are the texts which become the contexts for the emerging (becoming) relationships. Research advising as a learning context is a conversation about the processes, relationship and the community (McNamee 2007) and not limited to the content or focus area of the research. Thus, an advisor who positions himself/herself as a learner within the research process creates space for an emergent process.

My expertise, as a supervisor, lies in the attention to the practices and the values of my advisee and my own rather than mechanistically applying a series of skills to the process of advising. It is at the intersection of these values and practices that we constitute our supervisory relationship.

Central to the process of advising for emergence is the notion of *coordinating performative practice.* As an advisor, I position myself as a person who is cultivating and coordinating practices with my advisee to help us develop a performative gaze. I believe by developing our performative or constitutive gaze, we can value the messiness of our research process and stay open to emergence.

For instance, with one of my advisees, Greg[5], I had a sense that our relationship was bounded in some kind of a formal relationship of what it means to be advisor and advisees. Greg was an established practitioner and had facilitated many student activities and teaching as part of his career. We often socially chatted about his life outside his dissertation sphere. Yet I felt I didn't have a sense of Greg outside of his dissertation world, though he had located his topic as having a personal note. During one of our meetings, I brought up my sense of how something was amiss for me. We explored together how we understood our conversations. How we decided where we had bounded the dissertational space. During that meeting, I ventured to learn more about Greg's passion and hobbies and what he did in his free time. I discovered that he was a photographer and a creative; a part of himself that he kept out of his dissertation. We then explored how we go about making choices about what is in and what is out when we construct research spaces and what counts as skills and what doesn't. Later during a workshop which I was facilitating, we were exploring creative methodologies and how to think outside the box and we made a new connection about his process. We realized that the understanding that we created was not how to step outside his box, but rather how to bring Greg's creative presence into the box he had demarcated as research. Since, then Greg has been exploring his approach not only in writing but also via photographs and pictures. Thus, by coordinating our views of research, we reconstituted the notion of research.

Emergent Research

Drawing on the notions of research as performance and performative, I will introduce the notion that all research is emergent. By emergence

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[5]   Name changed to protect confidentiality.

I mean what is created, in the communicative action, among people. Thus, with every interaction, research and research designs are reborn as illustrated in the example with Greg. Emergence is not just the "order arising out of chaos" (Holman 2010, p.18). Rather it is inclusive of the messy process of chaos and meaning making; the back and forth of messiness *and* making order. The two cannot be unlinked. Chaos is the sense of disorder and disequilibrium that *seems* unclear and unknown to us. It is the liminal space where there are many options and nothing is yet clear. In chaos, there are numerous possibilities and one has to actively engage in sense making (order). The process of sense making is a creative social/relational process which occurs in dialogue, collaboration and coordination (Anderson 1997; Gergen 2009; McNamee 2004, 2007). This communicative action, is what John Shotter (2004) identifies as 'withness'-talk which is a "spontaneous, expressive, living, bodily, and responsiveness" activity (p. 205). Such a dialogic activity is a process of understanding and sense making which occurs in language communities we habituate, utilizing the traditions we have created along with anticipation of "what-next might happen" (Shotter 2004, p.205). This process can include what Holman identifies as differentiation and coherence (2010). She defines differentiation as *becoming* distinct or unique and coherence as "a stable system of interaction" (Holman 2010, Kindle Locations 533-534).

Holman has adopted the notion of emergence as a way of life. She states "My own story has become more open-ended and nonlinear as my quest for *uncovering* the deeper patterns of these methods" (2010, Kindle Locations 171-172, emphasis added). In this statement, lies the difference of her view from mine with regard to emergence. Holman's view of emergence is reflective of the field of complexity and chaos theory where one of the goals is to discover (uncover) "deeper patterns." Mining for such patterns and discovering them becomes the way we start to see the world around us and makes the existence of these patterns independent of the person(s) who discovered the pattern. However, from a constructionist and performative view it is in our language communities that we *make* these patterns – they are 'made' or come into being through the co-creative practices and processes in our research. And we recognize, through our spontaneous, reflective responsive practices, our construction of reality. Our claim that reality is made of patterns is a temporal myth or a cultural construct. Pattern making is created from the sorting and dividing parts of an interconnected whole. These patterns cannot be separated from the knower (maker) (Bateson 1972) or the community of knowers. Further, as Bateson (1972) points

out in his Introduction to *The Steps to Ecology of Mind,* pattern making cannot be separated from the substance which it is classifying. What are the implications of the performative emergent view for research?

From Holman's view, one could conclude that emergent research is one that breaks apart from the status quo to create a uniqueness that differentiates itself and creates a coherent system. This view fits closely with Hesse-Biber and Leavy's view as espoused in their book *Emergent Methods in Social Research*. I am referring to what Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) identify as the new methods which are crafted in response to the "complex questions that arise from a range of newly emerging theoretical perspectives" (p.xxx).

However, my view of emergent research also recognizes the chaotic messy space of any research. It is where, in communicative action, the creative responsive process of making methods of inquiry arises out of the vocabulary of the discipline, substantive/focus area of inquiry, context and in collaboration with people (supervisors, participants, committee of readers, institutional review boards, colleagues, friends, and family etc) invested in the research. The resulting methodology might be traditional or it can be innovative and possibly disruptive of the traditional. The key emphasis is on the process of communicative action and the evolving process of making the direction and purpose of an inquiry, the research question(s) and the crafting of the method, which all go hand in hand, thereby being responsive to the local context and in synch with our epistemic position. Such a process *recognizes that the performance of research is performative,* that is, it creates the thing that we call research by the activities (traditions or new rituals) that are commonly referred to as designs and methods.

Another important implication of the emergent perspective applies to the notion of research outcome. Research has typically tended towards sort and divide (a way to analysis) discover and name patterns (Bateson 1972). "Analysis was seen as the best means to make sense of our world" (Holman 2010, p.19). Analysis typically means breaking down the whole into parts to make meaning. Holman's view is that because of limited capacities we were unable to study complex systems but the study of emergence is back in favor due to increase in nonlinear mathematical models that allow us to study whole systems. Further, the analysis focuses on outcomes, however from an emergent perspective not only outcome but also "our relationships, how we interact with each other, and how we relate to our environment" (Holman 2010, p.101) become central to the inquiry. The latter has been one of the central foci for systemic practitioners. Thus, approaching research as emergent

relocates that focus on activity in research relationships, interactions and what is being created as well as on outcome (what is created). However, as Bateson (1972) who draws on Alfred Korzybski, Polish-American philosopher cautions us "*the map is not the territory*" (p.455) that is, the named interactions and relationships (our analysis identified as patterns or forms = outcomes) are not the "material" or "substance" rather they are forms (Bateson 1972, p.xxxii). Thus, emergent research reminds us that the research outcome is a temporal activity and it is one way of understanding and not *the* way of understanding.

Thirdly, emergent research highlights that methodology and the area/focus of the inquiry are interlinked and intertextual activities shaping each other (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006). These linked, mutually shaping processes can be viewed as performance and performative. The process of designing methodology and implementing it could be viewed as a textual performance as described above. However, in the process of applying methodologies, we adapt practices to our own process and create what we call methodology. This process of making, labeling and declaring it to be so is the performative element that the members of a research community coordinate with each other via papers in journals and conferences. Such coordination is what further builds our communities of practice while we make new methodological practices; thus, recognizing that all of research is made-up and is continuously re-making itself.

Conclusion

Coming back full circle, I love the process of making. I believe all researchers are designers and makers of methodology - not simply consumers of methodology. In this chapter I aim to encourage readers to be curious not only about the products that arise out of the research process but also about the communicative actions and discourses that produce the narratives of research and their methodological practices; and about the processes that link the methodology to the research focus (substantive). I illustrate the performative practices and relationships which are the making of emergent research by drawing on the processes of research supervision. I suggest that research is a developed activity in the communities of practice that we inhabit. While research is an activity of the communities of practice that we inhabit simultaneously it is being reborn and redesigned leading to its emergence and reconstitution. Thus, inspiring a playful quality towards conventions and traditions as an expressive responsive activity created with its stakeholders and from

within the context of the inquiry.

In closing, drawing on Bakhtin (1986), research - the construct, the processes, the relationships and outcomes and what we mean by each of these terms- is constantly being reborn. He states,

> *there can be neither a first nor a last meaning; it [anything that can be understood] always exists among other meanings as a link in the chain of meaning, which in its totality is the only thing that can be real. In historical life this chain continues infinitely, and therefore each individual link in it is renewed again and again, as though it were being reborn. (1986, p.146. Parenthetical insertions are mine)*

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