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The quest for genuinely participatory and inclusive research approaches: exploring and expressing experience through Cultural Animation and Transcription Poetry

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Abstract

This paper discusses approaches used in an AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) research project across a number of sites in the UK. The (D4D) project explores issues around disability and community, investigating diverse topics related to inclusion/exclusion.

The D4D project is distinctive in the combination of academic and non-academic Co Investigators. One objective is to contribute to the evolution of a research language that is accessible to a wider public. Using arts-based approaches, the research team also seeks to develop research methods and an ethical framework that will be appropriate for co-constructed community research.

This paper focuses on different ways of exploring and expressing participant experience. Firstly, it considers the use of Cultural Animation (CA) as an alternative to the traditional interview, providing participant and researcher reflections. Cultural animation is a participatory arts-based and embodied methodology of community engagement and knowledge co-production that draws on everyday experience of participants. Transcription Poetry (TP) converts interview transcripts into poems. Short interview extracts and poems are selected here to illustrate the approach. D4D team members believe that CA generates authentic and rich data while there is not

only fidelity to participant experience through the TP process but a greater resonance in the words than would have been the case in traditional representations.

Introduction

In setting up a collaborative community project (D4D) [Disability and Community: Dis/engagement, Dis/enfranchisement, Dis/parity and Dissent] exploring issues around disability and community, involving academic and non-academic investigators and community partners, the research design was discussed in depth across our research team. In particular, the Principal Investigator (PI) (Levinson) and Co-Investigator (Co I) (Sue Porter) spent considerable time arguing the relative merits of Critical Ethnography and Participatory Action Research, debating subtle differences of approach and potential outcomes, a topic about which the PI has written with regard to a separate project (Levinson, 2017). Ultimately, the team opted for PAR, which seemed to offer a framework that was natural for a co-constructed project involving community partners.

The selection of an approach left decisions to be made about precise methods. The team is keen to capture participant voice in a way that is meaningful and authentic. There is also a desire to move away from narrow academic conceptions of 'impact'. In seeking actual change for our participants, we wish to evolve a 'discourse that troubles the world' (Denzin, 2010, p.10). We want to take risks and to utilise innovative arts-based methods as a means both to explore and to express participant experience. In the case of the former, the team has opted to incorporate a data

gathering approach developed by a non-academic Co I, Susan Moffat, and her associates in other PAR projects. This approach, Cultural Animation (CA), offers dynamic and exciting possibilities, constituting an interesting alternative to the traditional interview. Exploring experiences and feelings through activity and play, it seems particularly well suited to the participants in our study, who are not only discussing sensitive issues around experience and identity, but are often accustomed to being in weak positions where decisions have been made on their behalf without opportunities for them to contribute. With regard to articulating participant experience, the team is keen to utilise a transcription poetry (TP) approach that had been developed by another Co I, Allan Sutherland. This entails the conversion of interview transcripts into poetry, communicating research findings in a novel way and seeking a wider audience than the academic milieu.

Data gathering: Our reasoning and reservations about conventional interviews

Problematizing the interview is by no means a recent phenomenon. Malinowski (1922), Benney and Hughes (1956) and Spradley (1979) are among those to have raised salient issues, questioning intrinsic power inequalities as well as procedural flaws. However thoughtful critiques may be (see e.g. Alvesson, 2003; Qu & Dumay, 2011), we are left only with different ways of approaching interviews rather than something radically dissimilar. In linking reflections on the interview to approaches such as narrative collage, performative writing and ethnodrama, Denzin (e.g. 2001; 2010) invites us to think in a more creative, potentially iconoclastic, manner.

Although questions have been raised about the efficacy and malleability of the research interview when working with participants viewed either as vulnerable or just

ill-at-ease with the spoken word (see e.g. Affleck, Glass & Macdonald, 2012; Briggs, 2002; Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005), it has continued to be used as the 'gold standard' in qualitative research (Haines-Saah & Oliffe, 2012; Silverman, 1998), including much work involving such participants. There are, of course, good reasons for this, though it is not the intention in this article to explore them here. The focus here is to investigate contexts in which the traditional (and typically, semi-structured) interview might not be the most effective approach and to provide an account of CA as an alternative, a means of generating, developing, and understanding data that may facilitate the inclusion of participant voice in a more meaningful and democratic way.

In passing, there is a need to acknowledge other alternatives such as the unstructured interview, which deliberately eschews a directive and focussed course, as well as the evolution of approaches to the interview that seek to achieve many of our objectives in terms of inclusivity and interviewer-interviewee equity, including conversational and dialogic approaches founded on Bakhtin's theories (Harvey, 2014; van Enk, 2009). Mention might be made, too, of initiatives drawing on Buber's concept of dialogical knowing, privileging the intersubjectivity between participant and researcher, and in the context of vulnerable participants or of theoretical knowledge about sensitive topics (Brown, 2017), seeking more nuanced understandings of subjective experiences. Indeed, we acknowledge the strength and pliability of the interview, with new forms constantly evolving. When, for instance, a distinctive feminist model of interviewing took shape, employing a strategy termed by Cotterill (1992) as the participatory model, the intention was to produce "non-hierarchical, non-manipulative research relationships with the potential to negotiate the separation between the researcher and researched" (Cotterill, 1992, p.594). A key strategy in achieving this was an explicit emphasis on building rapport with

respondents. As it happens the approach was soon challenged (Lyons & Chipperfield, 2000), with the counter-argument that, even with the participatory model, interviewers and interviewees remain placed on intersecting axes of power. Furthermore, the act of building rapport can result in a level of trust that leads to participants revealing more than they may have initially intended. In the absence of shared reflection – or co-interpretation (Newkirk, 1996), the participant's ownership of her/his experiences remains limited.

It might be queried, too, whether the very process of asking questions is necessarily the best means of extracting deeper information concerning feelings about experience. Given the relative experience of researcher and participant, there is also a question as to the ethics of the interview in the exploration of ideas and experiences in a collaborative manner. However sensitive and empathetic the interviewer, (s)he is working within a framework familiar to the researcher but not to the researched. There is no escaping the power inequality however one adapts the interview. Essentially, the process remains the same: the researcher seeks information; the participant provides it; the researcher then searches for meanings in the context of existing knowledge. The situation may vary: the participant may freely hand over information or be persuaded that it is the right thing to do. In an extreme scenario (s)he may be perceived to be complicit in an act of *theft*. Whatever the case, the intrinsic mechanics of the encounter remain in place.

Cultural animation

Cultural animation (CA) seeks to 'engage in knowledge co-production in an ethical, non-hierarchical and safe environment', enabling all participants to have 'a voice in the conversation of research' (Kelemen, Mangan, Phillips, Moffat & Jochum, 2016).

The aim is to create an informal framework, facilitating situations in which participants can 'draw on personal aspirations, heritage, culture and experiences' (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017, p.141).

Setting off from the premise that community participants are gatekeepers to their own worlds, and that there is an ethical imperative to involve them whatever the difficulties (see e.g. Nierse, Schipper, van Zadelhoff, van de Griendt & Abma, 2012; Nind, 2008), CA seeks to break down power relationships and inequities between the researcher and the researched, building a genuinely collaborative approach from the outset with co-produced agendas and shared understandings (Kelemen, Surman & Dikomitis, 2018). Feelings about experiences and their meanings are explored through participation in playful activities. Steele (2015) describes how bonds are developed between participants through informal interactions and playful ways of engagement and exploration of experience. Such activities take time and ingenuity, and result in the gathering of quantities of extraneous information that can be unexpected and of little value in answering pre-planned questions. However, CA can also provide rich data that expand the initial conceptualisation of the research.

Finally, and as noted by our colleague, Susan Porter, many researchers may have been carrying out CA practices for several decades without ever referring to their techniques under an umbrella term.

Data representation

Similarly, concerns have been raised regarding representation. Lévi-Strauss (1969) highlighted the failure to incorporate the other's way of reasoning, a difficulty to which Geertz (1973) also alluded:

> *The line between mode of representation and substantive content is as*

undrawable in cultural analysis as it is in painting; and that fact in turn seems

to threaten the objective status of anthropological knowledge by suggesting

that its source is not social reality but scholarly artifice. Geertz (973, p.16).

Mindful of these overarching issues, the D4D team has also been anxious to address specific concerns about the absence of the participant (see e.g. Byrne, 2017) and simplification of voice (see e.g. Mazzei & Jackson, 2012).

Transcription poetry provides an alternative way of reporting findings. The conversion of interview transcripts into poetry as a means of exploring experience and conveying participant voices has been adopted as an alternative approach in the past two decades, (see e.g. Faulkner, 2009; Gasson, Sanderson, Burnett & van der Meer, 2016; Glesne, 1997; Smart & Loads, 2016; Sparkes & Douglas, 2007). Burdick (2011) described a particularly rich and collaborative process through which she initiated both participant and researcher poetry around participant experiences, leading to a dialogue in which the outcomes could be compared. Despite such examples, the approach remains on the fringes, a degree of mistrust and resistance persisting within the academic community – as identified during its early use (Richardson, 1992).

The nature of poetic inquiry can take multiple forms (Prendergast, 2009), but suggesting that acceptance is unlikely to emerge without a consensus over clear criteria, Faulkner (2009) proposed that poetic inquiry may be evaluated on the demonstration of artistic concentration, embodied experience, discovery/surprise, conditionality, narrative truth, and transformation. While all the above seem to constitute potentially valuable criteria, they also carry the risk of reducing a varied *smörgåsbord* into a fixed recipe. A courageous position would be to take each inquiry

on its own terms, considering whether profound or novel understandings have emerged as a consequence

Methods across the D4D project

Drawing on a large AHRC programme (Connected Communities), and conducted alongside disabled participants, the D4D research project [2016-20] (Disability and Community: Dis/engagement, dis/enfranchisement, dis/parity and dissent) seeks to develop appropriate methodologies and an ethical framework for research with marginalized groups, particularly for people for whom conventional research methodologies may be inappropriate or inaccessible. Using PAR approaches, the project explores experiences of disability, community, inclusion and exclusion. The investigation involves work in a range of settings, involving participants of all ages who live with a variety of conditions, encompassing physical and sensory impairments, invisible disabilities, mental illness, and learning disabilities.

As well as changing attitudes within institutions and agencies, the project is committed to the development of more democratic and inclusive research practices that enable the experiences, needs and aspirations of disabled people to be expressed and realized at the level of policy and practice.

The project team has set out to raise awareness around issues of inclusion in all contexts among both disabled and non-disabled people. A central aim is to co-construct research approaches with participants, enabling them to play a shared role in developing understandings and achieving change. We also hope to develop a more rigorous ethical framework for future research, appropriate to research concerning participants such as those in our own project.

In all, there are eight workstreams, across which a range of approaches are being utilised. The project was designed with as great a degree of fluidity as possible, with the intention of being able to listen to participants from the outset, and the possibility of amending our methods if deemed desirable. So even with the Cultural Animation workshops, each research encounter should be viewed as a unique event, shaped to some degree by the make-up of those involved and their moods on a given day. We are aware of the risks in such a position, of questions around such concepts as *reliability*, *consistency* and *replicability*. We would respond that research is invariably contingent and messy, and that understandings shift across participants who have had similar experiences, and that those experiences are also constantly prone to reconsideration and amendment at an individual level. Indeed, our research design invites participants to analyse and evolve attitudes throughout the project.

In summary, our view is that fluidity and flexibility do not equate to chaos. We would contend that the nature of experience is complex and kaleidoscopic, and should not be fixed and simplified within a single pattern. For that reason, we eschewed a rigid research design that would have established the research team in the position of auteur, which we believe pre-determines the shape of the inquiry and limits the range of possible outcomes.

To explore participant experience, the research team is utilising a range of approaches, including interviews, but also a range of arts-based approaches, that include the creation of artefacts, the use of images, photo-story and film, and the creation of transcription poetry. What we are looking for are alternative arts-based approaches that foster more intensive co-production.

The D4D team seeks to develop approaches that allow participants to retain ownership of their experiences and the right to a share in the interpretation of those

experiences. The aspiration is to involve participants at all research stages, our belief being that communities need to be understood in context, as co-constructed and performed. This seems to us to be essential in the investigation of situated, contingent and intuitive ways of knowing that rest outside of University domains of knowledge (Pool & Pahl, 2016).

Exploring participant experience: The Cultural Animation workshops

Our CA workshops have involved groups of people who were disabled and non-disabled, during which time researchers and participants considered evolving attitudes and feelings. As already suggested, each workshop needs to be viewed as a unique research event, with participants reacting in different ways to the activities undertaken. The workshops took place with young participants in school contexts and in youth zones.

This article focuses on one workshop at a small school in the South West of England. The school involved in the event described below is a small, democratic school committed to student-centred learning, which has been set up with the notion of 'community' as central. Of the 67 students attending the school, 12 have an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan). In all school records identify 20 students as being on the autistic spectrum. A range of background features are involved: some students are school refusers; some have severe learning difficulties and are accompanied by a TA (Teaching Assistant); 2 have been diagnosed with ADHD combined with Tourette Syndrome; 1student has CHARGE syndrome, in this case, the most salient element being hearing impairment. The student's EHC plan (Education, Health and Care) also referring to a non-verbal learning difficulty. The workshop contained a representative

sample of the school community. There were thirty participants involved, including seven adults. The youngsters involved were aged between 11 and 16.

This was the first workshop at this school. As the school has been admitting a greater proportion of students with EHCPs, there is an interest within the school in investigating through the workshops how inclusion is working in practice. In this case, the focus was on each student's sense of self in the community and the social dynamics of the institution. At a subsequent workshop we plan to develop activities to explore more specifically how the idea of 'community' changes to accommodate a growing number of incoming students with disabilities.

At this particular workshop the following took place:

1.   Students were invited to select an object and animal to describe themselves. The descriptions were written down, folded and placed in a box, before being read aloud.The rest of the group had to guess identities of classmates from the words. The purpose of this was very clear: exploring how well they knew one another, how individuals perceived themselves/ were perceived within the community.

2.   Balloon game – Students were invited to imagine the school as a balloon. They were told the balloon was too heavy. They then had to make a case for retaining the person next to them in the balloon. Apart from exploring relationships within the community and feelings about one another, this activity led to discussion around e.g. Darwinism/survival of the fittest,

and tensions between interests of the individual and the community.

3.   In small groups or as individuals, students were invited to create a picture, collage, human tableau, etc. that captured their community, using materials from inside and outside. Our interest here was in exploring what the artefact told us about the community, how that community is evolving, what are its core values, who is most visible/invisible, etc. – and then, at a future workshop, we can pick up on these themes, considering how the community members deal with difference, and how 'inclusion' actually operates in that environment. In effect, the artefacts themselves are secondary; the meaning of the artefacts for community members is what matters.

The picture below is an example of one of the artefacts.

Collection of objects that were viewed by one group of students as encapsulating them as a tribe

Participant Reflections on the CA workshops

As the school encourages students to develop thinking skills and to be active learners, it was not surprising that they were quick to articulate their views and reflect on the activities. When invited to suggest how more traditional interview approaches might have engendered different responses, participants were positive about CA. For instance, two girls aged 12 had a discussion during which they gave the following feedback:

"It is a much better way of doing things, as in interviews some people would find it much harder to open up."

"Interviews can be distracting. Sometimes it's not knowing how to answer.'

"I thought it was really interesting, especially when I discovered stuff like the natural selection thing."

"I really liked it. It was actually fun."

"That exercise where we did writing and drawing helped other people know about us."

"I was proud of what I put on the piece of paper."

"It felt like people were pretty honest."

"It made me think about friendship. I find friends here so exciting."

Other participants commented on the relaxed, unthreatening nature of the process. A few welcomed the way that it encouraged them to be creative.

The artefacts that emerged from that workshop included pictures on a desk and a collection of objects outside the school, as in the image shown above. To us researchers, they felt like statements, saying: 'we are quirky and creative'. One of the students involved, a girl aged 13, said, subsequently, that it reflected the fact that "you have to be different to belong here".

MY REFLECTIONS AS A RESEARCHER ON CA

There were moments when it was necessary to resist the temptation to push the agenda forward with direct questions. It can take a hell of a long time for in-depth exploration of ideas to form shapes that look like 'data'. While you want everything to occur in a more organic and collaborative manner, there is a vestige of the old researcher inside you, hopping up and down, shouting: 'Just tell me. I want to know how you feel about X.'

It has a very different texture from traditional research methods, another game altogether. Traditional interviewing feels like the researcher pitching balls, participants hitting them back. There ensues existential fumbling as the researcher rushes into the field, waiting for meanings to fall from the sky. This is more

haphazard and anarchic, but also democratic. The researcher creates a scenario, and then everyone throws balls up into the air, catching and exchanging understandings.

It may be that CA is of greatest value in exploring narratives of precariousness and precarity, shifting situations in which individuals are likely to have had to re-orient themselves to changed circumstance, and may have had relatively little time to reflect on new situations. In such contexts, CA enables participants to speculate and play, allowing the pieces to settle in multiple configurations, before attempting to understand patterns and meanings.

Such an approach will yield truths that will often appear as provisional, contingent and contradictory. The lack of control can feel disorienting, but there seems a greater honesty in conceding the elusive nature of understanding the experiences of self, let alone the lives of others. (Fieldnotes, 2.7.18)

Expressing Participant experience: Transcription poetry

Since 2003 writer and D4D Co-investigator, Allan Sutherland, has been editing the transcripts of life history interviews with disabled participants and converting them into poems. He connects his approach to a long tradition:

> *This procedure of working with words that I did not create myself fits into a long artistic tradition. In particular, the incorporation of found materials was an important aspect of twentieth-century modernism, most strongly evident in visual art. Marcel Duchamp from 1913 created what he was to call 'readymades', exhibiting such items as a bicycle wheel, a bottle rack, a snow shovel and, with the infamous 1917 'Fountain', a urinal.* (Sutherland, 2010)

Sutherland suggests that his approach differs radically from that taken by academics, and urges caution in its use:

> *What I am doing is documentary, but it is creative, not academic. I am not trying to be impartial. My telling of these stories is to some extent a dramatisation, a quite strongly edited version of the original transcription.*

> *I am finding that this is an immensely valuable way of documenting the lives and experiences of disabled people. Its strength is an ability to deal in emotions, to make the reader really feel the truth of those experiences. But I would emphasise that the devices that are valuable to me in producing a literary work are potential dangers for the academic interviewer, particularly if adopted unconsciously. Story and characterisation and the timing of dialogue are immensely powerful tools. Words can have meaning in written form that was not there in speech.* (Sutherland, 2010)

In the D4D project Sutherland has been interviewing disabled artists. In general, he has been working with people with whom there was already a strong existing relationship. Prominent figures in the Disability Arts movement, they are used to being interviewed and have expressed a preference to be identified. Sutherland summarises his overall intention as being to find out about artists' experience of disability and impairment, exploring relationships between experience and art, while the latter part of the cycle becomes about documenting participants' work.

Interviews are preceded by pre-discussions, outlining processes, identifying potential outcomes and setting parameters. Each interview is an intense event, that can last two to three hours depending on the energy levels and preference of the participants. Beginning with earliest memories and following a life-history approach, Sutherland declares himself content to let his participants 'ramble' – 'because they may get to unexpected places' (e-mail correspondence, 8.1.19).

Keeping written notes as well as recording the interviews, Sutherland avoids interrupting participants. He transcribes the poems himself, retaining repetitions and hesitations which may be used to give the poems 'texture'. After transcribing the interviews, Sutherland edits selected passages into poetry. The process is intensive and gradual - 'about whittling away more and more extraneous material, while leaving the interviewee's voice and essential narrative'. Subsequently, the poems go through two drafts, a structure edit and a fine edit. Sutherland identifies sentence division as being particularly tricky in the process. Each poem is then given a title, providing it with an 'identity' and directing the reader's attention.

The poetry below emerged from a series of interviews conducted with sculptor Tony Heaton[1], a leading figure in the Disability Arts movement. Tony was disabled after a motor-bike accident. The poems explore Heaton's life and works, showing strong fidelity to the interview transcripts.

Spinal Cord Injury

I don't know how many nerves

---

[1] In common with all participants interviewed by Sutherland so far, Tony Heaton expressed a preference to be named and visible in the research.

I've severed in my spinal cord.

Not all of them, obviously,

because I'm incomplete.

But, you know,

how big's a spinal cord?

It's like a fucking telephone wire, isn't it?

How much damage?

Milli..well not even millimetres,

you know, you're measuring in

thousandths of inches, aren't you?

Which is why it's so difficult to fix, you can't fix it,

such a complicated bunch of wires.

And yeah, I mean slightly more damage,

you're completely paralysed,

you only have to do a small amount of damage,

you're fucked, aren't you?

The interview transcripts read as follows:

> *Participant: I don't know how many nerves I've severed in my spinal*
>
> *cord. Not all of them, obviously, because I'm incomplete. But, you*
>
> *know, how big's a spinal cord? It's like a fucking telephone wire, isn't*
>
> *it? How much damage. Milli..well not even millimetres, you know,*

you're measuring in thousandths of inches, aren't you? Which is why

it's so difficult to fix, you can't fix it, such a complicated bunch of

wires. And yeah, I mean slightly more damage, you're completely

paralysed, bit like your brain injury, you only have to do a small

amount of damage, you're fucked, aren't you?

Even with the identical words, the arrangement into poetry changes the rhythm. The choice of line-breaks directs the stress. (Consider the difference if the final line were split into two, 'you're fucked/aren't you?, which would introduce a much more hesitant note.) The giving of titles to the pieces directs the reader's attention to specific aspects of the poems.

It might be worth considering the way in which this might have been dealt with in a conventional academic paper. Perhaps, it might read something like this:

X spoke about the damage to his spinal cord, describing himself as

'incomplete'. Referring to the complexity of the spinal cord, he noted the ease

with which damage could occur: "Which is why it's so difficult to fix, you

can't fix it, such a complicated bunch of wires". Such a reaction, as noted by

Smith and Sparkes (2004), etc. ....

In such a style the words of the participant have been subsumed within the argument of the academic concerned. Sutherland suggests that the anonymisation enables the academic to take credit for the disabled person's words in a process he refers to as a kind of academic colonialism. This denies Heaton his status as an established artist, which is the very reason he is being interviewed. To a wider (non-academic) audience seven thousand words of such material in an academic article

might feel like slow sedation. The form loses much of the power and immediacy of the original words, let alone the additional qualities of the poetry.

Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that meaning is still manipulated. The following poem about Heaton's experiences, 'Homecoming', begins as follows:

Homecoming

And I came home,

my dad used to carry me upstairs,

extraordinary to think about it, you know,

literally carry me upstairs.

He went in the shed,

went in his shed and made a wooden support

for the wash-hand basin in the bathroom,

said to lean on it to have a wash,

so I didn't, basically didn't

drag the wash hand basin off the wall, you know.

No fucking OT, physio, home visits,

none of that,

he carried me up to bed and had a wash.

In the interview transcript, this section was written as follows:

Participant: But she (the physiotherapist) *would come and get me*

when she knocked off work. And get me up on me sticks, calipers. And

she took me up the steps in the hospital. Every step was killer, because

you've got two full-length calipers on, couldn't bend your knee,

literally got to sort of wobble, wobble, you know flight of stairs, walk

all the way along, down the stairs at the other side, all the other way

back along. She must have had immense patience, because that took a

long time. It was incredibly tiring, you know, it was dragging your

body. And she'd just sort of walk along, half a pace at a time. Come

on, you lazy bastard. But thanks to her and other people, it was tough

but you had to become robust and get on with it. So I was out of there

in three months, it was a record time. Nobody'd been out that quickly.

So, I'm sure they are now, but back then it was a record.

And I came home, my dad used to carry me upstairs, extraordinary to think

about it, you know, literally carry me upstairs. He went in the shed, went in

his shed and made a wooden support for the wash-hand basin in the

bathroom, said to lean on it to have a wash, so I didn't, basically didn't drag

the wash hand basin off the wall, you know. No fucking OT, physio, home

visits, none of that, he carried me up to bed and had a wash.

The first section of this had been put into the previous poem – 'Physio'. The

sections could easily have been run together – under a theme such as 'Dependency'.

In effect, while the words belong to the participant, the contextual meanings are

shaped by the researcher-poet.

Sutherland points out that the very inclusion of the poem has contextual reasons:

As a a statement about Tony's impairment, I'd regard this as a little banal, not adding much to what has gone before. What justifies its inclusion is that it prefigures the theme of making, which is a significant part of Heaton's later descriptions of the creation of individual sculptural works, and introduces a possibility that Heaton has been influenced by his craftsman father. (Personal communication, 2018.)

Through the poetry we would contend that the participants' words gain far greater resonance than would be the case with typical accounts from the field, which select short quotes and tend to place together the words of different participants to support the argument that the academic author wishes to make.

Nevertheless, there remain difficult questions around ownership and representation. One way this will be addressed through the project is by giving the participants the right to reply through an invitation to reflect on the poems, commenting on that which has been selected and what has been excluded, discussing titling and sequencing, and evaluating the *truthfulness* of the final *product*.

Conclusion

Our commitment in this project is to the growth of new approaches to explore participant narratives and a new language to express them. We seek approaches that are genuinely inclusive and democratic. We wish to represent findings in creative ways that will be meaningful to a wider audience.

Considering the position that, even with the participatory model of interviews, interviewers and interviewees remain placed on intersecting axes of power (Lyons & Chipperfield, 2000), we would not contend that CA allows such axes to vanish.

However, we do believe that the process constructs dynamics that differ markedly from those in the traditional interview. Through the act of *doing* rather than *speaking*, researchers and participants negotiate new spaces, new channels of communication, in which ideas are exchanged in fluid and less researcher-led ways. CA creates spaces for intersubjectivity (as distinct from solipsistic individual experience that is likely to emerge from interviews), and its playful nature tends to diminish the power dynamics that can channel focus group interviews in certain directions. This is not to claim that there do not emerge similar risks of privileged voices and hierarchies. However, the rather speculative, at times, whimsical, framework tends to encourage the less confident members of the group to explore their feelings and take more risks in expressing them. As a result, there is greater likelihood of the generation of negotiated understandings and shared meanings.

The CA process is more difficult to manage and it can be challenging to pin down meanings, but it is also richer and more democratic, and if the process still leads to some appropriation of the experiences of others, it feels to us that this occurs in a more transparent way through co-constructed interactions. As such, CA seems to be an alternative approach worth consideration when exploring feelings or difficult and complex issues that require the gradual growth of understandings on the part of the participant, rather than putting her/him in a situation that invites quick answers. CA is also particularly appropriate within projects that seek to address inequity, co-producing narratives of change, making it appropriate for both Participatory Action Research approaches and those drawing on Critical Ethnography.

Similarly, transcription poetry seems well suited as a means of exploring and conveying the experiences of our participants. Inevitably, it converts those experiences into an artefact, and when conceived as research, there are challenges.

The technique demands real skill, and as suggested by Sutherland (2010), if mishandled, it could be dangerously misleading, conjuring up distorted segments of life stories.

No-one in the D4D team would contend that arts-based research methods do not generate their own challenges. In critiquing Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Dwyer (2004) argued that a reflexive, critical approach needed to acknowledge that Boal's techniques were never based on a stable theoretical foundation. Audience was critical in shaping outcomes. Precisely the same is the case with both Cultural Animation and Transcription Poetry, with participants involved in a process of co-creation. We have no issue with the fact that, operating on tacit and experiential knowledge produced by aesthetic experience, findings are inevitably contextual and situated (Barrett, 2007). However, just because it is not easily replicable does not mean that is any less meaningful or trustworthy.

Models for criteria for arts-based research have been proposed (see for example, Chilton & Leavy, 2014 and Lafrenière & Cox, 2012). Preferring to focus on *vigorous application* and *transformation of craft*, Faulkner alludes to "the flexibility of fun of language to present conditional truths" (2016, p.665). This conditionality seems significant, and is perhaps, more in keeping with Eisner's (1981) suggestion, when considering the differences between scientific and artistic inquiry. Eisner suggested that artistic forms are closer to a hermeneutic activity than a technical one (Eisner, 1981). As such there is a contingency and playfulness about both Cultural Animation and transcription poetry, which lead to what James Clifford referred to as *partial truths* (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). On such a canvas it might be appropriate that a few key insights should take precedence over swathes of superficial fact.

Acknowledgements

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