

Research Methods in Family Therapy

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Chap 10

Performance
Methodology
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CHAPTER 10

Performance Methodology

CONSTRUCTING DISCOURSES AND DISCURSIVE PRACTICES IN FAMILY THERAPY RESEARCH

SALIHA BAVA

Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.

—KIERKEGAARD (quoted in Magee, 2001, p. 208)

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's words echo my experience of writing various research reports. I often find myself working backwards to construct what I have lived through. Even though I use a blueprint, I find myself at the "end" constructing a story to fit the acceptable frame in terms of using the "right" language, "right" format, and "right" presentation methods. There is a performative quality to the process, from proposal to research report. So when I had to work on my dissertation research, I chose to use an alternative research methodology that I call "performance." The form of performance methodology I used draws heavily from autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 1997) and interpretive writing (Denzin, 2003; Richardson, 1997). Piercy and Benson (2005) describe my research project (which they call a "multimethod computer-assisted autoethnography") this way:

Salihha Bava (2001) recently completed a virtual, completely-on-line dissertation at Virginia Tech. Her dissertation was an autoethnography of her research and personal experience during her family therapy internship at the Houston Galveston Institute. She immersed herself in and reflectively explored both the culture of the Institute, and her experience of it. She used many alternative forms of data representation—poetry, colors, animations, multiple conversations (with others, herself, and the literature), split dialogues, and other methods to bring her findings to life. Her styles of narration (words, graphics, prose, poetry, first person conversational texts, narratives, and collages) blurred the boundaries between academic writing, literature, and art. At the same time, she used hypertext to ground her own experience in relevant literature. She also had her committee reflect on their experiences of reading her dissertation (in a "reflections" section of her dissertation), and then responded to these reflections. In postmodern fashion, she built into her dissertation both recursion and reflection. (pp. 114–115)

In this chapter, I invite you to an overview of performance discourse and methodology, which I illustrate through discussing (and performing) selected parts of my dissertation research. I also provide a reflexive commentary on methodology as performance. Finally, in the discussion section, I address the questions raised by this book's editors in Chapter 1. This chapter itself represents a performance in discourse construction and discursive practices in research.

BACKGROUND

Constructing Performance Methodology

Setting: As the curtain rises, the audience walks into an ongoing conversation. Two researchers (R1 and R2) are seated in a coffee shop.

- R1: I'm confused. Should I call it "performance methodology," or am I deconstructing methodology and reconstructing it as performance?
- R2: What does it matter, as long as your intent is to approach it as performance?
- R1: It definitely matters, since the process is as important as the product. How I arrive at the end product is informed by what I assumed to be my beginning guides and by what and how I choose to include and exclude. My assumptions about performance are informing research and have implications for practice.
- R2: All I care about is getting the research done and accepted as credible and useful.
- R1: And how you go about doing it, and who sanction it as "research," are all parts of credibility building and utility. As Bentz and Shapiro (1998) point out, yesterday's frameworks, problems, and paradigms are replaced by new ones; so too are methodologies. We have adopted methodologies from other fields, and it's time to look and understand what performance studies discourses have to offer methodologically. Often I find that methodologies lag behind the epistemological assumptions that we adopt. Unfortunately, our assumptions of research practices are drawn from traditional schools of thought, even as our assumptions of what we know and how we know are changing. If we believe that we are living in postmodern times, then, in keeping with the performative turn, I ask you this: How are we performing methodologically?
- R2: Wow! That's too heady for me! So is this a new research technique?
- R1: I'm afraid that it will be received as a unitary method, rather than as something that is evolving. I think that in the search for the technique of performance methodology, we may risk losing sight of the idea that it is a way of framing the research process from a political–philosophical perspective.
- R2: So is "performance" a qualifier of the type of methodology one chooses, or is it a philosophy that informs the research process—and thus one uses performance as a philosophical thread that ties together the techniques (drawn from other methods) to create the performance methodology?
- R1: I fear that the editors, readers, consumers, and producers may be looking for a recipe for "performance methodology." I view it as a political–philosophical approach to research process that helps a researcher to construct a methodology in sync with his or her theory of knowledge construc-

tion (epistemology). However, due to the evolving constructions and the fluid nature of meaning making, especially in the realms of performative practices, I am hesitant to state what “performative practices” are or how they are enacted by researchers. I am afraid that if I do so, performance might get institutionalized. Rather than it being “received,” I would prefer it to become part of an ongoing dialogue about our research practices and enhance our reflexivity about our methodological choices.

R2: So what is “performance”?

R1: One of the ideas is that performance is one of the cutting-edge practices of social constructionist theory, *à la* Kenneth and Mary Gergen and the East Side Institute (S. Levin, personal communication, 2003). The performative turn is related to the blurring of the boundaries between art and science, literary and scientific, real and virtual, and nature and nurture. Such turns are not only being heralded as innovative genres in clinical practices but also in research methodologies (Denzin, 2003; Piercy & Benson, 2005). Since both research and practice are imbued by theory, the performative “turn” does just that: It turns theory on itself and questions the boundaries among research, practice, and theory. It thus furthers the dialogue of blurring boundaries.

I entered the performance of writing this chapter with multiple voices, and reenacted the dialogue above as an ongoing internal and external dialogue that I continue to perform. My enactment is a postmodern dialogue I am performing as I write this chapter, complete with multiple voices and postmodern tensions that are informing this production. Hassan (quoted in Carlson, 1996) states:

Postmodernism veers toward open, playful, optative, disjunctive, displaced, indeterminate forms, a discourse of fragments, an ideology of fracture, a will to unmaking, an invocation of silence—veers towards all these and yet implies their very opposition, their antithetical realities. (Carlson, 1996, p. 124)

At the risk of bringing forth a singularity—an antithesis from a postmodern perspective, yet very much in keeping with another postmodern notion of constructing diametrical opposites, herein the case of singularity–plurality—I introduce Kaye’s (1994) notion of “performance.” He states that “the condition of ‘performance’ may be read, in itself, as tending to foster or look towards postmodern contingencies or instabilities,” and that performance “may be thought of as a *primary postmodern mode*” (quoted in Carlson, 1996, p. 123; emphasis added). Denzin (2003) elaborates on this: “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). He distinguishes “performativity” and “performance” as “doing” and “done,” as verb form and noun form. However, one of the pioneers of performance studies, Richard Schechner (2002), discusses performance in terms of “is” and “as”:

What is the difference between “is” performance and “as” performance? . . . There are limits to what “is” performance. But just about anything can be studied “as” performance. Something “is” a performance when historical and social context, conventions, usage, and tradition say it is. . . . One cannot determine what “is” performance without referring to specific cultural circumstances. There is nothing inherent in an action in itself that makes it

a performance. . . . Any behavior, event, action, or thing can be studied “as” performance, can be analysed in terms of doing, behaving, and showing. (pp. 30–31)

There is no consensus, then, about what performance is. All performances or actions that are culturally categorized as “performance” are socially constructed by the collective consensus of that sociocultural group within a particular time and space (historical period). Drawing on Schechner (2002), I assert that any methodology is performative and can be understood “as” performance. What makes it performance is when communities of academics and researchers or other authority-granting mechanisms agree to its performance construction. I view the notions of “performative,” “as performance,” and “performance” on a continuum. So a methodology act evolves from being a performative act to the act being understood as performance, to the act becoming performance. In other words, its construction evolves or is created from an adjective (qualifier function), to a metaphor (comparative notion), to a verb form (an action), or a noun (an object).

Schechner (2002) states that “a performance takes place only in action, interaction, and relation. Performance isn’t ‘in’ anything, but ‘between’ ” (p. 24). Turner (quoted in Schechner, 2002) states that the “liminal space” is “the betwixt and between spaces” where transformation occurs. Thus liminal spaces are where the discourses are constructed. One such space is among the research communities in universities.

Research Performances in Universities

City University of New York Distinguished Professor of English, poet, and essayist Charles Bernstein’s (2000) critical commentary on dissertation styles captures the universities’ research norms: “Let them be radical in what they say but not in how they say it.” Bernstein asserts that “underneath the mask of career-minded concessions to normalcy is an often repressed epistemological positivism about the representation of ideas.” Thus, from a “both–and” position, the research created by universities is guided by the discourses of political institutions (universities) and is not. The “not” consists of attempts by graduate students to experiment with alternative research methodologies (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) such as auto-ethnography. Though some of these institutions offer students latitude with research methodologies, they are constrained by the larger discourse of acceptable and legitimate ways of researching and reporting or re-presenting.

In this chapter I illustrate performative methodologies, methodology as performance, and performance methodology as ways for researchers to situate their research and methodology. I present one way to construct, perform, and critically analyze methodology embedded in the performance discourse.

Philosophical Assumptions

The key assumptions that inform performance research methodology are these:

1. Research is a politically engaged activity. It is a transgressive performance that critically questions the status quo and is itself seeking legitimization or is legitimized by communal consensus of the authority-granting knowledge community.
2. Research is not a representation of an act or phenomenon that is studied; rather, it is a presentation of “exemplary and radical” alternatives and possibilities

(Carlson, 1996, p. 142) of the researched content. The substantive and the methodological aspects of research are critically scrutinized as part of the research process. Thus the methodology also becomes an integral part of the substantive material of the inquiry.

3. The performative aspect of such a methodology is aimed at the destabilization of norms, the dissolution of certainties, and the presentation of critical questioning of what is constructed both as normative research and the researcher's product as research.

4. Research is situated historically, socially, and culturally. It is written and read at particular times; with particular intents; under particular political conditions; and from particular cultural, economic, racial, class, gender, personal, and other perspectives. Research is a performance of contextualized multiple ideologies.

Historical Roots and Development

According to sociologist and social theorist Michal McCall (2003), "the term performance entered critical art and academic discourses in the 1970s, to name a new visual art form and to distinguish dramatic scripts from particular productions of them—that is, from performances on stage" (p. 112). Drawing on conventional histories, McCall locates the root of performance in the early 20th century.

Denzin (2003) describes four groups of genealogical roots of performance text, each telling a different story. He traces performance through (1) language and narrative roots, beginning with Nietzsche and moving through critical pedagogy, feminist theory, and Marxist theory into ethnography; (2) "the dramaturgical turn," beginning with Erving Goffman and moving through anthropologists Bruke and Victor Turner to Mienczakowski's ethnodramas; (3) "performance art and performance studies" roots, as traced by McCall and concluding in the formation of performance ethnography, which draws on both social sciences and the arts and humanities; and (4) the "pedagogical turn," drawing on Paulo Freire's oppositional pedagogy, the discourses of critical pedagogy, and the works of McLaren and Giroux.

Marvin Carlson (1996), professor of theatre and comparative literature at the City University of New York, provides a thorough critical review of the notion of performance from anthropological, sociological, psychological, linguistic, and artistic perspectives. In his book *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, he states that social performance theorists such as philosophers or psychologists tend to "emphasize the activities and operations of the performer" (1996, p. 38). However, sociologists (also identified as social performance theorists) and cultural performance theorists emphasize "the audience, or . . . the community in which performance occurs" (p. 38).

Performance is a social constructionist (Anderson, 1997; Bava, 2003; K. Gergen, 1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1999; M. Gergen, 2001) notion of meaning making as a communal process, in that it occurs in language and dialogue. Performance metaphorically expands the symbolic meaning of dialogue. Such practice raises our reflexivity and heightens our sensitivity to the notion of shared inquiry as we ask one another, "What are we doing here?" (M. Gergen, 2001). The notion of performance as displayed via improvisational theater games¹ (Bava, 2003; Spolin, 1999) brings forth the notion of language games and of "discourse" as verb. It highlights the production of discursive cultural practices not unlike those we are involved in on a daily basis.

¹ A team of therapists at the Houston Galveston Institute has been experimenting with improvisational theater games as an evolving performance practice in therapy, consultation, and training.

Performance allows the unorthodox to occur. It has created space for the blurring of boundaries between science and fiction, academia and the arts (Bava, 2001; M. Gergen, 2001; Piercy & Benson, 2005). "Perform" becomes the verb form of discourse and brings forth the notion of "language games" (Wittgenstein, 1965). It is discourse in action. Consequently, performance is not limited to the postmodern discourse; rather, it expands the notion of discourse in action to include both modern and postmodern ideas and practices. The performance metaphor allows the traditional and the alternative to coexist, which is at the heart of the notion of postmodernism. This metaphor provides the researcher with expanding possibilities for what can be included in research practices. So, depending on one's theoretical frame and chosen discourses, if one wishes to locate oneself with the tradition of traditional academia and produce a report that is criticized by the alternative writing forums as being stale and dry, such a report can also be upheld as a performance. It can reflexively be identified as a *traditional academic performative act*, a "standard" way of writing that is itself a perfected art form.

METHODOLOGY: A PERFORMATIVE ACT

Performance can be viewed as a method of re-presentation or as a methodology. As a method for re-presentation (see Table 10.1), a performance script is created. According to McCall (2003), a script requires a cast and/or a performance and/or a staging. The parallels between research process and performance scripting are presented in Table 10.1, based on McCall's suggestions.

In performance as methodology, the philosophical assumptions are embodied and performed throughout the research process. So how these are performed in the plan-

TABLE 10.1. Parallels between Writing an Ethnographic Report and Writing a Performance Script

Research process	Ethnographic report	Performance script
Reading notes/data	Creating analytic themes	Creating characters that embody themes
	Orienting information	Is embodied in the script
Analysis and explanation	Analytical commentary	Done by the characters Characteristics of the actor
Research report	Writing up notes and reporting	Scripting
Data as quotations	Excerpts from field notes	Dialogue for the characters
Organizing the research report sections	Ordering of sections	Dividing script into acts
Chapter 1	Introduction	The stage setting
Chapter 2	Literature review	Scripts and characterization of the characters
Last chapter	Conclusion	The experience of the script

Note. Entries in the "Performance script" column are informed by or quoted from McCall (2003).

ning, research design, data collection, analysis, and presentation stages need to be reported.

We are consumers, producers, and products of discourses. As researchers, we are both situating ourselves in discourses and discursively producing them. By situating ourselves in selected discourses, we not only exhibit our consumption, but also illustrate how we are products of the discourses. For instance, in my research, by stating that I was drawing on phenomenology, heuristics, and ethnography, I positioned myself as a critical consumer. However, I was also a producer, as I drew critically from these approaches.

All research is performative. That is, an inquiry is a performative study of an activity that is presented as a performance. For instance, my dissertation was a threefold inquiry. First, I constructed the culture of internship in an institute of postmodern training, as experienced by me as a doctoral intern. Second, the work was my performance as a researcher of alternative methodology. Third, I employed hypertext (itself a performance) as a subversive activity to standard research presentations.

My dissertation, *Transforming Performances: An Intern-Researcher's Hypertextual Journey in a Postmodern Community* (Bava, 2001), was an intertextual script, a rendition, of my internship (1998–1999) and research (1998–2001) experiences. I performed the presentation as a dissertation web, a hypertext located within multiple discourses. In my research, I used this web as a performative medium to create a circular text rather than a linear text, where I challenged the canonical norms of how to present a research report. I constructed my dissertation as a website² with inter- and intralinked web pages. The reader is partially free to choose where he or she will go next by choosing from a variety of hyperlinks on any given page. Thus no two readers' experiences will be the same (except for statistical probabilities), due to the linked paths each reader chooses.

Research Questions

What family therapy research questions does this methodology answer? For me, it answered discursive questions subversive of the taken-for-granted ways of being. I raised and pondered research questions that were intertextual and critical, such that they questioned authority—my own, that of my peers, and that of institutionalized norms. Since research is constructed/enacted as political activity, research questions are intended to engage the researcher, the participants, and the readers in transgressive, resistant, reconstructive reflections of our everyday practices. Such questions emphasize relational and interactional understandings of the unit of inquiry (object). Thus the research questions are constructed as “what the object does, how it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings” (Schechner, 2002, p. 24).

In my dissertation research, my main question was this: “What is the culture of internship in an institute of postmodern training, as experienced by me as a doctoral intern?” My goal was to perform this experience critically, as I self-consciously located

² Visit the website (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-01062002-234843>) and select either of two links (11exclusive_diss_web.pdf or 12intertextual_diss_web.pdf).

If the website is unavailable, go to Virginia Tech's Electronic Theses and Dissertations search page (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/etd-search.html>) and enter the search word “Bava.”

myself in the research process and subversively questioned more traditional research presentations via the performance of hypertext. In the ensuing section, drawing on my research, I illustrate how I constructed methodology as performance.

Methodology as Performance: An Illustration

As a producer and consumer of discourses, I drew on Kenneth Gergen's (1997) organization of textual traditions in human science writing. I chose to perform like an “autobiographer.” On his web page, Gergen describes the autobiographer as one who

typically strives to present the fullness of life as experienced. Similar to the mystical and the prophetic, autobiographical writing is replete with expressions of value. However, such expressions are not typically in the service of chastising the reader for his/her deficiencies, but for justifying actions taken. The reader is left, then, to draw object lessons from these accounts. The autobiography does share much with the myth, in terms of the commands of narrative coherence. However, these demands are often sacrificed for purposes of sharing the “lived experience” with the reader. . . . Perhaps the most significant characteristic of the genre is born of its attempt to share subjectivity, to enable the reader to stand in for the writer. This often means a high reliance on affectively charged language (for example, of the passions or the spirit, heavy usage of quotidian discourse (the reality shared by all), and a substantial reliance on metaphor (enabling the reader to sense the qualities of a unique experience).

The autobiographer draws the reader closer to the author, whose experience is rendered transparent and accessible. I further described my relationship with discourse as my reflexive understanding of my preferred position as a writer who is performing intertextually. My work was located within Gergen's scholarship (discourse), which provided me with a “language game” (Wittgenstein, 1965) as I created my performative dissertation web. I co-created the rules of the game along with members of the languaged community of performative scholarship, social construction, writing practices, academics, and other discourses. As I co-created the rules, I was scripting a performance discourse. I was defining how to be as an autoethnographer, an autobiographer—a researcher and an intern. And, recursively, the various discourses molded my performance as a researcher and an intern.

Performing Discourse

The motivating spirit of experimentation is thus anti-genre, to avoid the reinstatement of a restricted canon like that of the recent past.

—MARCUS AND FISCHER (1999, p. 42)

My dissertation web was thus located within multiple discourses—postmodernism, performance, hypertext, academic writing, crises of representation, textual practices, internships, training, and the Houston Galveston Institute's cultural and historical discourses, to name a few. I chose and located myself among the various discourses, depending on the context and the relationships. Harlene Anderson (personal communications, 1998–2001) states that relationships form, inform, and disform our conversations, and that our conversations form, inform, and disform our relationships. Thus at any given moment I was performing a number of discourses, depending on my relationships and conversations.

Performing Meaning

In my dissertation, I performed meaning primarily via intertextual presentations. These intertextual presentations took two primary forms: "narratives" and "hypertexts." Narratives are chunks of texts telling a story of my internship or research process experience. I identified the narratives as "swirling-fragmented narratives." Each story is part of the whole—the dissertation web of my experience. At any given moment, each swirling-fragmented narrative is detached and incomplete; simultaneously, it is also a whole—a story in itself. However, depending on the context of meaning construction, the reader may experience the text as fragmented or as a whole; and as a structured metaphor of my experience or a structuring element of my experience.

Hypertexts consist of chunks of text connected to each other electronically. According to Kolb (2000), hypertext is more of a technological utilization than a literary form, even though the hypertext writing style varies from print text. For some hypertext writers (Bernstein, 1999, 2001; Landow, 1997), hypertext is more about the patterns of link rather than the electronic linking of the text. The pattern of linking adds another level of complexity to the narratives, thus introducing the notion of polyvocality as a performance of the consensual community members co-constructing knowledge.

Another way of understanding performing meaning is to view my research writing as a threefold performance: (1) as an academic discourse acted out, (2) as a creation of the writer in dialogue with self and others/readers, and (3) as an art of re-presenting and re-(new)-creating of the research process.

Performing Writing

In short, the poetic essay offers a more nuanced account in keeping with the spirit of the performative event itself. The performance scholar, then, might wish to articulate what he/she knows not through the mirroring positivistic logic but through a reliance on the poetic.

—PELIAS (1999, p. xi)

I want to tell the story of my struggle with "how I should perform the text." I used three performative writing practices in an effort to draw the reader, as far as possible, into my world—unfamiliar and nonduplicable—to experience my story vicariously. First, I created an experience of circularity—no fixed beginning or end. Second, I (re)created fragmentation as experienced in my internship and the research process as an integral part of the backdrop of the text for the reader. Third, I practiced multiple interpretive positioning (Tillmann-Healy, 1996).

Writing, like an art, is a dynamic process (Richardson, 1997) and a construction among people (the writer and the intended readers—editor, committee chair and members, colleagues, friends and family, etc.). However, most students are not told about how the writing gets done because of the separation of scholarly work from teaching (Becker, 1986). The process of writing, editing, and rewriting is the process of knowledge construction for a consensual community. In this instance, the academic community constituted the consensual knowledge community as deemed by my research committee. However, before I even gave people a draft of my writing, I was engaged in numerous conversations about my writing. I wrote several beginning drafts before I decided upon a particular format. One of my beginning drafts was a description of the year as a play. On reviewing it, I thought it lacked the "oomph" I wanted and did not

convey the story I wanted to share within a particular context. Even though it seemed to be innovative, it lacked certain postmodern dimensions—reflexivity, nonlinearity, multiple entries and exits, scholarly connections to multiple scholarly works—that I wanted to include. So I dropped the story line of a script for a play. However, the incomplete play provided me with a condensed version of my experience. I could see how the plot was built around a conflictual interpersonal relationship. Though that was part of the internship story I wanted to tell, I did not want it to be the only story. I also wanted to narrate the stories of how I grew as a therapist, of myself as a researcher studying myself, and of how I struggled within the challenges of what is doable as research. The initial drafts were ways I processed my intense feelings about the internship. I wrote these over a period of 4–5 months.

Writing-in-Inquiry

The play with writing techniques brings to consciousness and the sense that continued innovation in the nature of ethnography can be a tool in the development of theory.

—MARCUS AND FISCHER (1999, p. 42)

Though Marcus and Fischer (1999) are talking about innovation in ethnography, their statement captures for me the process of writing as a performance of and performing theory. The ensuing text is a reaccount of the process of writing as performing inquiry.

"Writing-in-inquiry" is the process of theory development (co-creating knowledge), innovation, and transformation via writing. It is a reflexive practice that generates creativity and innovation and is not limited by disciplinary boundaries or discourses. Traditional writing practices (third-person, authoritative genres that distance the reader) are limiting for a number of writers and readers (Richardson, 1997). Thus writing-in-inquiry is a practice that includes the traditional and new literary forms, which blur disciplinary boundaries.

Over the past 15 years, writing genres using the new literary forms have been growing in the fields of sociology, anthropology, women's studies, and critical cultural schools, thus closing the gap between scientific and literary discourses that has existed since the 17th century (Richardson, 1997). We have seen an evolution of plurality, polyphony, dialogue, reflexivity, and deconstruction as a critique and response to positivism, objectivism, and crises of representation. Other forms of postmodern praxis include the new writing genres in social sciences, such as performance scripts (McCall & Becker, 1990), second-voice device, decentering original texts (Schneider, 1991), poetry (Richardson, 1993, 1997), drama (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Richardson, 1993, 1997; Richardson & Lockridge, 1991), polyvocal texts (Schneider, 1991), and web text (Pockley, 1999, 2000). However, such genres are relatively new to the disciplines of psychology in general and of marriage and family therapy (MFT) in particular. Both MFT and psychology could gain from these types of writing-in-inquiry. Feminist critique and postmodern approaches have added a critical edge to MFT. Such critique has introduced innovative therapeutic practice strategies; however, postmodern and critical ideas are not very prevalent in the field's research writing practices. There has been a proliferation of qualitative studies, but the push for quantitative methodologies that reflect standard scientific practice remains.

Writing-in-inquiry that uses alternative writing practices is not yet common in MFT, even though qualitative research has increased. The writing has moved to be more inclusive of the research participants' voices; however, an authoritative authorial

presence generally continues. And as long as we continue moving in the direction of being diagnosticians of mental health, we continue to risk privileging a researcher's final word over a participant's word. Writing as being-in-inquiry, rather than as a way of presenting the results of a research, is consistent with our field's move in the direction of therapists as conversational partners who share expertise with individuals, couples, and families.

I describe below how I attempted to bring to life the practice of writing-in-inquiry with respect to data collection, re-presentation, analyses, and interpretation.

WRITING TO COLLECT DATA

Journal.

The journal is a journey. . . . Its purpose, in part, is to give voice to the heart and sound of one's domestic and far-flung thoughts."

—BRONER (quoted in Schiwy, 1996, back cover)

I felt that the process of journaling my experiences at the Institute, though private, could also touch universal experiences—hope, fears, confusions, and magical moments. Journaling has been widely used by writers in women's studies and other fields to make sense of their own experience, to find their own voices, and to heal themselves (Baldwin, 1977); it is a powerful tool of creative expression as well (Baldwin, 1977; Bell-Scott, 1994; Hogan, 1991; Schiwy, 1996; Simons, 1978).

Journaling from the feminist perspective has often been viewed as giving voice to the subjugated, to the other, to what a woman has denied to herself (Bell-Scott, 1994). The emphasis has been on a woman finding her inner self or owning what is rightfully hers. Though all this seemed to make sense to me, it did not fit for me or the purpose for which I wanted to use journaling in my research. My feminist readings did refer to the self in relation to others, but this was very different from the "relational self" (K. Gergen, 1991, 1994b), which refers to the self as constituted by language and dialogue (K. Gergen, 1991, 1994a, 1994b). According to the narrative metaphor, the self is storied and is ever changing (Polkinghorne, 1988). I took a social-constructionist position, which emphasizes the historicity and fluidity of gendering (Agger, 1998).

I used journaling as one of my predominant methods of data collection, for this reason:

Any change in ourselves, any move toward greater self-awareness, authenticity, and openness, will affect those around us. Each step we take toward genuine creative expression sends ripples out into the world, and often, they may spread much further than we might imagine. The personal is universal. (Schiwy, 1996, p. 300)

"Self" means the relational self; self-awareness is a sociocultural product; and culture defines and constitutes the boundaries of the self, just as the self constitutes culture (Lock, 1981). Thus constituting myself as an *intern* in my journals was constructing the sociocultural practices of the Institute in that moment of journaling.

The journals I kept of my internship experience over a period of 10 months were intended to be daily entries. In the initial months of the internship, I kept daily entries of the activities I attended and reflections of my experience. However, as the daily conflictual interchanges increased, the entries became sketchy. There were days when I did not make entries because I found myself exhausted from interactions, and I did not

want to write about negative exchanges since I did not want to relive those moments. When I had proposed the journal as the primary source of data collection, I had not anticipated the potential emotional impact of writing about "negative experiences." Even though I had expected that there might be certain surprises that I might not like, I had not expected the experiences to be so overwhelmingly depressing. In the initial months of my internship, I taped some conversational clusters that I was part of, but discontinued the process as the internship climate changed.

Autobiography.

Autobiography adheres more closely to the true potential of the genre the more its real subject matter is character, personality, self-conception—all those difficult-to-define matters which ultimately determine the inner coherence and the meaning of a life.

—WEINTRAUB (quoted by Broughton & Anderson, 1997, p. 182)

Another form of data collection method of personal experience is autobiography (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Autobiography is closely linked to journal writing. Indeed, a journal is a kind of autobiographical writing. Autobiographical writing attempts to capture the whole context of life, while journals include the small fragments of experience that lack this context (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 421).

In the book *Names We Call Home*, Thompson and Tyagi (1996) illustrate the power of autobiography via contributors' stories of how they "became raced" by recounting their childhood experiences of contradictions about race. Thompson and Tyagi used autobiography to illustrate "why racial identity formation occurs at the intersection of a person's subjective memory of trauma and collective remembrance of histories of domination" (p. xii).

Contributors to Thompson and Tyagi's (1996) book found that autobiography enabled them to explore their individual life histories as they tapped into communal memory and experience. Similarly, in the process of telling my story, I tapped into my memory and experience of how I became aware of the larger social process of discourse and emerging discourse formations. I also found autobiography to be a useful means of data collection, since personal narratives bring forth the politics of self-definition (Thompson & Tyagi, 1996). Self-definition is a process of social meaning-making (Lemke, 1995) via conversations (Anderson, 1997) in the context of ever-present discourses and emerging discourses. One's own self-definition reflects one's values and belief system, which are recursively defined by one's culture (Lock, 1981). My story, then, re-presents a "politics of self-definition." Furthermore, my experiences of the research training I had in ethnography and my dissertation research experiences are captured in the words of Thompson and Tyagi: "Many of the contributors' most complex and startling insights were ones they didn't actually 'know' until they wrote them" (p. xiii). This was certainly true for me, and it is also one reason why journaling and writing are used in therapy as homework and used by therapists in letters to their clients (White & Epston, 1990).

(Re)telling methodology is performance in autobiographical storytelling. Or one may also view (re)telling methodology as performing a story. The former is a creation of a script, and the latter involves acting the script. However, both are performances; one is scripting a performance, and the other is performing a script.

Research Audit. As part of the research process, I kept a research audit from the time of writing the research proposal until the final submission of the dissertation to

the graduate school. The audit included my comments on the process, my feelings, and my notes on how or what I was changing in the research. The audit also included my thoughts on different sections and plans for future writing.

Reviews. Viewing various texts as “data,” I maintained an e-folder with notes from my readings of various texts. Flemons (1998), in his book *Writing between the Lines*, describes a method to manage one’s literature review data. Adopting his method, I had an e-file for each reading—each book, article, dissertation, or website I consulted. I maintained quotes and my reflections for each reading in its e-file. Subsequently, I created a thematic e-file where I collated the notes from various authors by such themes as narrative, hypertext, content and form, collaborative learning communities, and so on.

WRITING TO RE-PRESENT

We write in the moment and reflect our minds, emotions, environment in that moment. This does not mean that one is truer than the other—they are all true.

—GOLDBERG (1986, p. 115)

Goldberg’s words capture my experience with writing. I found myself writing and re-writing a number of times. And I knew everything I wrote was “true.” The questions I kept asking myself were “Which of my experiences do I choose to include or exclude?”, “What goes in or out?”, “How do I decide what goes in or out?”, and the like.

Writing to re-present involved mixing genres. I combined a number of new literary forms along with narrative prose in my (hyper)textual production. The intention was to convey the complexity of the research and internship experiences and to provide the reader with a window into my multiple selves. I used layered accounts, swirling-fragmented narratives, scripts, and poetry as forms of writing to re-present my lived experiences as an intern and a researcher.

Layered Accounts. Ronai (1992) defines a “layered account” as “shifting forward, backward, and sideways through time, space, and various attitudes in a narrative format” (p. 103). I used layered accounts in sections I called “The Story of Stormy Emotions” and “Poetic Re-presentation of Methodology” to invite the reader to my experiences of temporal and spatial shifts.

Swirling-Fragmented Narratives. I combined the notion of fragmentation (Bava, 2001; Bloom, 1998) with narrative to introduce the notion of a “swirling-fragmented narrative.” Each story (a “lexia”) is part of the whole—the dissertation web of my experience. Each lexia is detached and incomplete, and simultaneously a whole—a story in itself. However, depending on the context of meaning construction, the reader may experience the text as fragmented or as a whole, as a structured metaphor of my experience or a structuring of my experience. My intention was (and is) to invite the reader to construct the context jointly with me in virtual space and time, and thus together we will perform each “reading”—fragmented or defragmented.

Scripts. I used dialogues to perform the multiple voices I was bringing to life in my experience as a researcher and as an intern. Utilizing scripts also introduced

polyvocality—that is, other interns’ experiences. I did this not by describing any particular intern’s experience in detail, but by tapping into my various intern conversations. Thus, by blurring the boundary between “fact” and “fiction,” I created an interpreted description of interns’ commentary on the Institute.

Poetry. I interspersed prose with poetry, which emerged as a form of presentation to “capture” my sense of the recreated experiences. Poetry has the power to create subjunctive texts that are fluid and inviting, while conveying a fluid “description” of the experience.

WRITING TO ANALYZE AND INTERPRET

Meanings are made within communities and . . . the analysis of meaning should not be separated from the social, historical, cultural and political dimensions of these communities.

—LEMKE (1995, p. 9)

Analyses and interpretations are cultural practices of the communities we belong to and are matters of opinion (Wolcott, 1994). Coffey and Atkinson’s (1996) position that analysis is a reflexive activity informed my data collection, writing, and further data collection. I viewed analysis and interpretation as a dialogical conversation within a consensual community interwoven with “data collection,” rather than a post-data-collection activity. The reflexive process of writing to re-present was inclusive of my interpretation, since while writing I felt the presence of my colleagues over my shoulders (Wolcott, 1994). According to Wolcott (1994), “our interpretations are our claims to the independent creation of new knowledge” (p. 258) that we do to be proud; however, they are always matters of consensus within the traditions in which we locate ourselves (Bruffee, 1999; Lemke, 1995; Wolcott, 1994).

Approaching analysis and interpretation as social practices of the academic community, and language as social semiotics or communal meaning making (Lemke, 1995), I utilized the following practices in the performances of the various stories of my internship and research.

Stories as Interpretations. I wrote stories about my internship experiences and research as interpretations about my experiences. The stories are not *the* experiences. The practices of making sense of my experiences and presenting them as narratives, poetry, script, or multimedia were all interpretive constructions of the experiences that I was writing about.

Stories about Stories. Related to the preceding was the practice of constructing texts, interpretive texts, as stories about stories. Every storytelling was an interpretive effort; thus the whole dissertation web was (and is) an illustration of stories about stories. The stories of textual production are another layer of interpretation of my efforts at meaning making.

Afterwords. An “afterwords” (Richardson, 1997) included words that I wrote from a reflective position after I completed a thematic lexia. The afterwords might be stories about stories, process reflections of my writing experience (and in turn of my research experience), and/or epilogues.

Interwoven Reflexive Narratives. Within the stories of my internship and research, I interspersed narratives as reflections of what I was doing textually. Drawing on the notion of reflexivity, I created narratives questioning the built-in interpretations of the texts. Thus I was (and am) suggesting that the reader read the text on a number of different levels and continually stay in a critically questioning dialogue with whichever interpretation he or she takes away from the text.

Decentering Text. Drawing on sociologist Joseph Schneider's (1991) critiques of textual authority, I boldfaced certain words as a practice of reflexivity and analysis, so that the focus of the reader might shift from the content of a lexia to the phrases and words in boldface. At times the hyperlinks served the same purpose. My intent was to draw attention to my reflexivity, as a further commentary on the textual production.

Reflexive Afterwords: Constructing Performance Methodology

I have written this chapter as a performance. At many points, the writing is itself a dissent from what should be written or how it should be written (i.e., the editors' guidelines for chapter authors). I have been constantly gripped by thoughts that maybe I should have just written the chapter strictly according to the suggested section sub-headings. But to diverge is to create. Did I do what I did to create divergence or to create dissent? Did I do it because I had a hard time following an outline? Did I do it to illustrate performativity in action? Did I do it because this is more suited to my writing style? To answer any one or all of these questions in the affirmative is in itself a performance of meaning making. This goes exactly to my point about discourse construction. That is, as researchers we are constantly in the processes of constructing discourses. By choosing to be informed by a particular methodology and to "follow the steps" of that particular methodology, we are participating in the formation, building, and legitimizing of that research methodology's community or discourse community. To call it a performance is to recognize our (researcher selves') processes of participating in the political act of discourse or culture (re-)formation (Denzin, 2003). These processes are illustrated in both the reader's reflexivity and the researcher's reflection.

I have chosen to write this chapter in first person, as a way to personalize it and reach out to form a relationship with you, the reader. The writing is an illustrative performance of discourse construction as a performative act. It is the creation of what I call "performance methodology." The distinction between the performative act and methodology as performance should blur. But as a reader, you have to judge whether it is a performance. Thus, as the adjective "performative" and the metaphoric notions of "performance" blur, the act of being a performance is defined relationally and communally, thus bringing forth the process of legitimizing within the knowledge community.

Previously, when I would talk about my dissertation, I would describe my methodology as performance, autoethnography, and writing-in-inquiry. As I stand back in time and reflect on the dissertation processes in the context of the varied dialogues about performance and its application to my clinical, training, and research practices, I view performance today as an umbrella. Autoethnography and writing-in-inquiry are subsumed under performance.

My dissertation is a performance text. Its style and form make it a performance text. In addition to text, I used collages and multimedia to perform my experiences. All of it is a performance script, since I have continued to live it into my everyday life today as an administrator, therapist, researcher, and trainer. So, from McCall's (2003) perspective, I fulfill the criteria of script, character, and staging. The dissertation is a performance space and a liminal space of meaning making and transformation. It is the closest I have come thus far to illustrating how an experience is an experience of the process of making meaning, which is reflexive, contextual, and social. My dissertation is a performative space where meaning making can be acted out.

Though the emphasis of social construction is on communal construction and on a collective that grants this construction legitimacy, there is an inherent privileging of the local. The local can be pegged as the individual. Thus an inherent contradiction is set up between the collective and the individual. I was born and raised in New Delhi, India. I was thus raised in a culture that is labeled "collective," yet in a family that was much more "nuclear" and "individualistic." I became an active consumer of the notion of being a product of my "collective" culture, until I was working toward my PhD in an "individualistic" culture. In this culture, I initially constructed myself as being a critical observer and as becoming a receiver of the individualistic culture. Eventually, I redefined myself as co-constructing my identity and culture. In the process of doing this, I was in the process of privileging my voice, raising my voice. I experienced this as quite healthy and freeing. In this sense, my research project was autoethnographic. Since I was a woman from India headed to do my internship at one of the premium institutes for postmodern practices in the United States, I was entering into a legitimizing community or collective knowledge-making community that not only sanctioned my inquiry, but also legitimized it. The irony was in the process of constructing knowledge as a collective consensus, but through an intertextually individualized voice. Thus, if I had privileged only my voice (role of the performer) or the context (the performance context), I would be playing more of the same role as I did in India—that of a consumer, someone adapting to and legitimizing a particular culture. However, the difference lay in the fact that the performance was a critical performance. I was not aiming to privilege only the performer, as social performance theorist or the context of performance or the audience, as cultural performance theorists. I was focusing on the relationship of the discourses to the construction of the text, and on the relationship among my roles as the researcher, the reader, and the producer. Thus, as I was creating a localized multivocal narrative, I was also creating a transformational text of relational subversive performances. That is, no truth was swallowed whole or performed as *the* "truth."

As I have stated earlier, what is acceptable methodologically still lags behind our assertions that we are living in postmodern times. From a postmodern cultural perspective, there is a blurring of boundaries between avant-garde or high culture on the one hand and mass culture on the other. However, in academia and research, such blurring is slower to come. Often such blurring is questioned in the name of validity, replicability, or some other culture-bound concept of our current specifications for research. Yet I welcome such blurring and questioning in the name of theoretical consistency, and of the vitality that can be part of performance methodology. Schechner (2002) states:

One of the decisive qualities of postmodernism is the application of the "performance principle" to all aspects of social and artistic life. Performance is no longer confined to the

stage, to the arts, and to ritual. Performativity is everywhere linked to the interdependence of power and knowledge. (p. 114)

So performativity already exists in our reports, whatever form we use. By accepting the cultural traditions of "academic writing," we are performing textually. However, varying forms of performativity are rising (Bava, 2001; Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Denzin, 2003; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Piercy & Benson, 2005) and are being legitimized as research.

DISCUSSION

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Methodology

As a researcher turns on an alternative research process to criticize it, he or she does so by using the very medium it was created to subvert. Thus, if the act of subversion is an action of resistance, it is inescapably wrapped in the remnants of the dominant discourses that it attempts to resist. So there is no escaping the dominant. Rather, the subversive act is a performance in reflexivity that questions "what has been" or "what can be." There will be others more committed to the dominant research specifications who will be all too happy to call performance methodology trivial, nonscientific, and more. Clearly, depending on where one stands, reflexivity, multivocality, and interpretive texts will be seen as possessing both strengths and weaknesses (F. P. Piercy, personal communication, 2003).

Reliability and Validity

Denzin (2003) states that some performances work and others don't. Every act of writing and research is assessed by the researcher and its community of evaluators for its structure of values, for its understanding of the phenomenon being studied, and consequently for its worldview—which is based on certain conceptual assumptions, such as what is assumed to be natural or constructed, genuine or fake, credible or incredible, research or fiction. When a research report is approached as a performance of constructing literature, then all aspects of the narrative may be viewed as signs that make claims, often implicitly, about the nature of the world as understood by the narrator. Furthermore, the reader assigns meaning to the research report as the researcher does—on the basis of his or her socially, politically, and culturally positioned discourses, which are informed by economy, race, gender, class, and other perspectives.

The postmodern turn challenges the standard assumptions about what valid knowledge is and how it is constituted (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). The challenge lies in evaluating performances about how knowledge shapes people's lives and "how they enact cultural meanings in their daily lives" (Denzin, 2003). According to Denzin (2003), a "good performance text must be more than cathartic—it must be political, moving people to action, reflection, or both" (p. xi). He states that critical performance ethnographies are doubly reflexive—turning the theory on itself (i.e., reflecting on the researcher's location and the research process). Such performances "forfeit any claim to universal authority," and the final say rests in "its power to affect the world through praxis" (McLaren, quoted in Denzin, 2003, p. 33).

Not unlike literature or art, a performative inquiry calls forth certain types of responses, experiences, and values from the reader. The responses evoked in the reader are informed by the inquiry's style/form, language, narrative, and images. Thus the reader is the judge of the work. Consequently, not only does the substantive content inform the reader, but also the reader's response informs the substantive meaning of the inquiry. In my work, I invited various readers to experience the dissertation web, and I included our dialogue as another lexia of my dissertation. This added another reflexive layer that invited a multiplicity of experiences and experiences of experiences—generative conversations between and among researchers/readers.

Texts have evolved from being representational (reflecting "the truth") to presentational (interpreting and constructing "truths"). Performance texts are more than presentational; they are formative. Not only do they criticize the current performance, but they also perform alternative performances. For instance, in my dissertation I was not only resisting the traditional research discourses of presentation, but also co-creating the alternative forms. In creating the alternative forms, I was hesitant to view and discuss the work in terms of presentational forms, since it was more than such forms. The presentational forms were the contents through which I was constructing the embedded alternative discourse that was criticizing and rewriting what research is.

Skills

The art of doing such performative writing is to transpose oneself from being the writer to being the reader, and to write as if one were distanced from the original writing. This is easier said than done, since one is still the writer, yet one assumes the reader position. This is different from writing to an audience. One is writing as if one is the audience—a sort of participant observer. One observes through participation. One writes as the reader. This removes one from one's own experience, yet it is one's own experience that one is writing about. Perhaps, more importantly, the writing also invites the actual reader to be a coparticipant in meaning making.

If reading the preceding paragraph makes you dizzy, then that comes close to the experience of overanalyzing the accuracy of skillful application. Simply tell yourself, "I'm now going to read and respond [write] as a reader." Ask yourself, "Who is my reader?" Another approach is to ask, "What other historical and/or cultural distance from the research process and substantive area of research can I introduce?"

Bridging Research and Practice

This kind of writing creates evocative text that is more accessible to the reader. The work can be translated into performances that can be conducted in classrooms to explore the research experientially (Piercy & Benson, 2005). Clinicians can become involved in the research process by becoming performers of the discourse. They consume the performance and produce the performance of research as an activity in community meaning making, a shared inquiry. The inquiry does not stop with the product—that is, reports, scripts, or performance. The inquiry continues, furthered by dialogue among the readers, audience, and researchers who continue to make sense of the product, which thus becomes an experience in sense making. Such ideas transform the gap between research and practice.

Future Directions

This approach is relatively new to our field, though the notions of script writing and clinical performances are not. Reflexivity has also been a tool in the clinician's and researcher's toolbox. So it may come more easily to a clinician to be a performative methodologist if he or she is mindful of the role performance plays in clinical work. That is, clinicians co-construct performances with clients all the time. The postmodern clinician is also adept in the process of inquiry as a way to understand a client's story and problem. The performative inquiry thus requires approaching the research process with the tools that one already possesses as a clinician, but utilizing them with a slightly different intentionality.

A FOREWORD

For those who welcome the emerging wave of performance methodologies and alternative writings, I suggest that you review the works of Bochner and Ellis, (2002), Denzin (2003), Ellis and Bochner (1996), Ellis and Flaherty (1992), Patton (1999), and Piercy and Benson (2005), along with my research, to expand on performative ways of research design and implementation.

I now pause this performance with an invitation³ to you, the reader, to communicate your ideas with others and me as an ongoing conversation. Let us critically question how and what we are doing methodologically and how we are constructing our consensual knowledge communities.

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