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Narratives of Educational and Social Endeavour

EDITED BY HAZEL R. WRIGHT
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27. Reflections on a Creative Arts Project to Explore the Resilience of Young Adults with a Muslim Background in Finland

Helena Oikarinen-Jabai

Helena Oikarinen-Jabai discusses her involvement in a participatory project that combines a social science framework and creative methods. She describes how young Finnish women with Muslim backgrounds explored their diverse embodied cultural in-between spaces and sense of belonging by creating artworks as part of the research process. This chapter offers a glimpse of the challenges to be met within an interdisciplinary research project.

In this chapter, I discuss some of the challenges that arose whilst working as a researcher on a project that sought to explore the resilience of young adults from a Muslim background.¹ The project embraced a participatory framework and used arts-based approaches that enabled self-expression. This ‘sharing of control’ and freedom of form allowed the nature of the project to evolve, creating new understandings of diversity among the participant and associated Muslim communities. It also indirectly captured resilience through the

¹ The research project, ‘Young Muslims and Resilience: A Participatory Study’, was based in the Department of Social Research at the University of Helsinki between 2016 and 2018. It was funded by the Kone Foundation, which supports ‘bold initiatives in research and art’.

actions and initiatives that ensued and the tensions that arose during the process. For me, it raised many unanticipated issues and my intention, here, is to discuss the challenges of merging performative and arts-based approaches with a more traditional qualitative social studies methodology; a process that left me feeling that I was often ‘trapezing between paradigms’.

For me this was not a new experience but a continuation of my earlier research with young people with an immigrant or minority background. Previously, I had clearly shown that participants with a Muslim lineage (specifically a group of young Finnish Somalis) wanted the productions they created during the research process (exhibitions, books, TV and radio documentaries) to challenge existing racial, national, ethnic, gender and religious stereotypes and create new positions for cultural citizenship (see Hua, 2011; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2018). The study I discuss here was therefore a natural progression, offering me a chance to understand better the multiple positionings of young adults (aged 20 to 35) belonging to a religious group that is often demonized in public discussions in Finland and other Western countries (Ernst, 2003; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2018). In this new project, I was to concentrate primarily on working with female participants with differing ethnic, religious and national backgrounds — part of a group that also included five young male participants. Among other outputs, the study resulted in an exhibition, ‘Numur — Islam and I’ (in Helsinki in 2017, in Turku in 2018) that presented the artworks of eighteen young people, including the five female and five male participants, plus eight artists participating only in the exhibitions. Members of local Muslim youth organizations arranged additional workshops and seminars.

Our methodological background was performative and arts-based, incorporating a specific resilience methodology, devised by Michael Ungar and colleagues (Didkowsky, Ungar & Liebenberg, 2010; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009). The overall goals and research questions were fairly wide-ranging, but despite this, appeared to steer the research process in ways that caused this diverse group of participants to be categorized in essentialist ways that obscured intersectionality, an outcome I found problematic.

Resilience: The Concept and Ways to Capture It

Though now more broadly applicable, the idea of resilience was originally used in the social sciences, where the concept was generally criticized for being too vague, multidimensional and value-laden (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker 2000). Ungar (2004), a therapist employing a social ecological approach and both solution-therapeutic and system-theoretical thinking, addressed these criticisms by restructuring the concept and deepening its theoretical and methodological underpinnings. This was of particular interest to me, as at the time I was undergoing training in solution-focused therapy. Yet, despite this, I found it problematic to apply the methodology in contexts unconnected to social work or therapy. The resilience method as set out in our research plan, involved each participant taking photographs during a one-week period and researchers videotaping a day in the participants' life. The videos were then to be watched by the research group, who would select a small number of five-minute sections which were deemed to reflect the resilience of the participants. These sections would then be watched and analysed together with the participants, to identify jointly the resilience factors within these sections and, consequently, in the participants' everyday lives.

This kind of methodology may be of benefit in some action research projects, but for our small research group, hours of video filming and subsequent analysis of the material seemed an almost impossible mission. Furthermore, the young adults involved in the research had already found their place in society. They knew their strengths and were familiar with the social structures that supported or rejected their personal decisions. For them, such an approach appeared strange and unattractive. In contrast, being involved in an artistic process would enable them to share their personal experiences and ambiguous questions with the research group and audience, to deepen their own interests and communicate their own visions and views. Moreover, the structured plan was in conflict with arts-based and performative creative approaches, which generally emphasize the process, dialogue, different ways of knowing, potential spaces, transitions and border crossings (Conquergood, 2009; Jungnickel & Hjorth, 2014; Minh-ha, 2011; O'Neill, 2008; Rolling, 2010). This methodological dissonance raised a number

of theoretical and practical challenges that we faced during the research project. Though, as I worked primarily with the female participants, I will concentrate mostly on their processes and artworks but first look generally at how the project unfurled.

Researchers and Schedules

As is often the case with collaborative research projects, our study plan was quickly stitched together by people from different fields, backgrounds and life situations. Furthermore, during the research period, the composition of the researchers and participants changed, and this created further unplanned ambiguities around our intentions and actions. There were initially three of us: a project leader and two researchers comprising myself and my colleague (a PhD student from Somalia who was to be supervised by the project leader). A fourth person, a research assistant was hired at an early stage and, being a Muslim herself, used her networks to find the female participants.

My role in the project was mainly to work with female participants and to help my colleague shoot and analyse the videos and data collected with male participants. This colleague planned to conduct observations and interviews at mosques and other Muslim gatherings and events in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in order to understand the sense of belonging, citizenship, roots of radicalization and resilience factors of young Finnish Muslim men. After that, he would conduct a follow up study with a smaller group of informants using performative, visual and related methods. However, at the beginning of the second year, he decided to abandon his doctoral studies. In late spring, he was replaced by two individuals: a young man who had previously been a participant and a male researcher who was particularly interested in Muslim Youth organizations. An intern was also hired to help in planning the exhibition, so we became a team of six, plus the participants.

By the second year, the female participants had begun working with the art pieces that they wanted to include in the exhibition. However, most male participants were recruited by the former participant — who was now one of the replacement researchers — from the Muslim youth organization to which he belonged. They created photographic material and were interviewed about it as part of the project and

were subsequently invited to participate further. However, they only began working with their ideas in the summer and autumn of 2017, so our timings were disparate. Nevertheless, everything was ready by November 2017 for the exhibition at Stoa, the Cultural Centre of Eastern Helsinki, which is located in an area with a multicultural population. In March 2018 the second exhibition took place at the Institute of Migration, in Turku, accompanied by seminars and workshops organized by people from local Muslim youth organizations, so in respect of its public face, the project fulfilled its intentions. But, at the local level, the research activities were more fluid.

In the Field: Modifying Methodological Approaches

I began work with the female participants and found them reluctant to follow the proposed data-collection procedures. Instead of taking photographs over a one-week period, some wanted to choose photos they already had, others wished to extend the process to photograph their forthcoming travels abroad. They disliked the idea of a 'day-in-the-life' video; so, I agreed to film with them in places they found empowering. Thus, the research assistant and I followed those who agreed to participate to locations that they chose: to cafés, their childhood places, schools, museums, mosques or the countryside. These sessions often ended up resembling a deep, non-directive interview. For example, one participant, caring for her new-born baby on her lap, shared her ideas on motherhood, religion, and her own career at a mosque and Shia cultural centre, where her media company also had a studio. I consider that our meeting was empowering for her: it inspired her to continue filming in her free time and create a video-based artwork for the exhibition even if it failed to follow the planned formats.

In the interviews with the female participants, the central themes that arose were gender and sexuality, motherhood, spirituality, relationship to Islam, aesthetics and being in between different ethnic, gender, racial and class identifications and languages. These were also themes that the participants wished to address with their art works for the exhibition, and I became interested in creating an installation on multilingualism, a topic that connected all the participants. Our project had a limited amount of funds allocated to the artistic activities of the participants

and researchers, so I sought, and managed to get, extra funding to recruit an art student to our workgroup to help with the video works and recordings. Thus, our team gained a new member.

From the outset, some of the female participants had highlighted the need for the exhibition to show respect for diversity and to allow multiple approaches and various perspectives on religion and many of their artworks touched on gender and diversity issues. Although these themes were evident in the exhibition itself, they were overlooked in the seminars and workshops created around the exhibitions. Moreover, in some cases, the male participants even attempted to limit the female participants' artistic expression. Again, I felt that I was balancing on a trapeze traversing two contradictory positions, as the relative importance of the artwork and other qualitative data was never clearly established in our research team. It remained unclear whether the art constituted core research or it was simply visual or textual co-production alongside more important interview material. Such ambivalence is worth discussing further and touches on a range of historical and ideological positions.

Beyond the Field: Considering the Theoretical Frameworks

Resilience studies are usually conducted in a traditional quantitative and/or qualitative research setting, even if the focus of the analysis is the content co-produced with the participants. Moreover, reporting often concentrates on statistical measures of resilience to develop public health, human wellbeing and social policy (Didkowsky, Ungar & Liebenberg, 2010; Windle, Bennett & Noyes, 2011). Visual methods provide an alternative or complementary approach for use in studies of resilience because they may address problems associated with interviews, such as power imbalances, young participants' lack of engagement in the research process, and language barriers (Didkowsky, Ungar & Liebenberg, 2010). Furthermore, by including the participants' own ideas of construction and representation, images act as a catalyst for transforming thoughts and understandings of self and society (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009).

Nevertheless, using visual data does not change the methodological limitations of qualitative research, such as its emphasis on written outcomes. Thus, researchers have increasingly employed practice-based performative research, which is experiential both for the participating informants and for the researcher (Haseman, 2006). Practice-based methodology can be enriched by familiar qualitative methods, but research outputs and knowledge claims are most often created through symbolic language, such as creative writing, music, drama, dance, (audio)visual methods and digital media, with little interest in attempting to translate the findings and understandings of practice into numbers (quantitative) and words (qualitative) (Haseman, 2006). Practice-based performative research can be defined as an independent paradigm, emerging from relativist ontology and celebrating multiple constructed realities and interpretative epistemologies where the knower and the known interact, shape and interpret the other. This represents something more than 'the performance turn', which can be understood as a form of emancipatory action through embodied and enacted storytelling (Bauman, 1977; Haseman, 2006).

Maggie O'Neill (2008) combines ethnography and arts into the idea of 'ethno-mimesis', an approach that includes producing fiction and art works, trusting different ways of knowing through the research process and underlining the enthusiasm for practice instead of the problem (see Barone, 2006; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Rolling, 2010; Tolia-Kelly 2007). Borrowing from different narrative, performative and arts-based epistemologies, the performative approach emphasizes practice as a precondition for engagement, and widens understanding of knowledge and data production in the context of the social sciences (Haseman, 2006; Jungnickel & Hjorth, 2014; O'Neill 2008; Rolling, 2010).

Experimental and performative approaches have various roots. Since the 19th century, racialized people have developed academic strategies that lean on embodied and localized ways of knowing and, in this fashion, have criticized the hegemonic standpoints existing in academia (Conquergood, 2009; hooks, 1990). In addition, many philosophers and educators, including Buber (1970/1923), Dewey (2005/1934) and Freire (1970/1968), have emphasized the empowering capabilities of sensuous, narrative and dialogical knowledge in educational settings and human encounters. Since the 1980s, various scholars working in social science

or ethnographic and (art)educational fields (such as Barone, 2006; Denzin, 2003; Richardson, 1997) have introduced practices that provide the space to understand knowledge production in wider terms.

Many feminist scholars, especially women belonging to diversified groups or minorities, have created fresh approaches for critically examining the standpoints, power relations and hierarchy hidden in academic theories, methods and reporting (see Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1983; Conquergood, 2009; hooks, 1990). Similarly, many continental feminists, such as Julia Kristeva (1980), Helene Cixous (1993) and Luce Irigaray (2002), have emphasized the superiority of experimental and poetic writing, autoethnographies and fiction for deconstructing language and deepening understanding of social structures and human encounters.

In performance studies, the notion of performativity is often linked to J.L. Austin's (1955) linguistic notion of the speech act as a performance. For instance, according to Judith Butler's constructivist approach, subjectivity is established through repeated performances as a result of pre-existing rigid discourses, such as those of 'gender,' 'race,' or 'sexuality' (Butler, 1993; Friedman, 2002). Moreover, Victor Turner's (1967) ideas of betwixt and between have inspired performance and performativity researchers. For Richard Schechner, performance and performativity — understood as intertwined spheres of entertainment, healing, education and ritualizing — are symbolic forms of cultural/artistic expressions that may expand the distance between the performer and what or who is being represented (Friedman, 2002, Schechner, 1993, p. 20). Post-structuralist Derridean performance can be understood as 'representation without reproduction', where performed living bodies 'are forever cut from what they represent' (Phelan, 1993, pp. 148–49; in Friedman, 2002), or as a bridge between individuals, genres and cultures that may lead us towards the other side of speech and as representations where no narrative can describe the opened boundary between different approaches to sensing the world (Minh-ha, 2011, p. 94).

Yet, the ideological position framing our overall research process remained unspecified and unclear. As a personal construction, I felt that my fieldwork process was supported by the idea of unfinished knowledge (Yuval-Davis, 1997), which allows the simultaneous presence of epistemologically diverse perspectives. Unfinished

knowledge is based on Martin Buber's (1970/1923) notion of dialogue, in which 'I' encounters another person not as an objectified 'it' but as part of an interconnected 'I-Thou' relationship, which he also considers the foundation of artistic practice and works of art. Further, 'nomadic inquiry' (St. Pierre, 2005), exploration and writing that departs from representationalism and interpretation, supported the exploration of different intertwined spheres of performance during the material-creation and research process.

The 'potential spaces' and landscapes created within the dialogues and artworks exposed diasporic experiences, multiple senses of belonging and the intersectional practices of differentiation, thereby allowing the fusion of embodied experiences, collected/produced material and different ways of knowing in the research reporting (O'Neill, 2008; Oikarinen-Jabai, 2018). This also allowed the participants' resilience to be approached through embodied intersectional perspectives, where agency and the ability to define their own citizenship and positionings in social, cultural and religious discussions became an important key for appreciating personal empowerment (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2018; Ungar, 2004).

From the Field: Issues Made Visible

Muslims or Young People with a Muslim Background?

Alongside the project's theoretical and methodological confusion, the word Muslim in our research title created certain questions and tensions from the outset. Rather than approaching Tatars (the oldest Muslim community in Finland) or first-generation Muslim immigrants, we had mainly contacted second-generation citizens when recruiting our research participants. It transpired that, even among our small group of co-researchers, their relationship to religion differed. For many, religious identity was just one identification intersecting with other important locations or metaphorical spaces of belonging. Indeed, religious traditions, local ways of living and cultural values vary widely between countries with Muslim majorities, as well as between Muslim diaspora communities around the world. Thus, it is somewhat strange to use Muslims as an essential expression for a group of people

with such varied backgrounds (see Ernst, 2003), and it is important to avoid further ‘othering’ the participants (Cooke & Kothari, 2001) when grouping people together in this way. Furthermore, on a stage built like this, researchers may find themselves trapezing between different academic, social, psychological and embodied domains, and they must be careful to avoid strengthening social hierarchies and reproducing the dominant hegemonic agenda (Koobak, 2014).

Diversity of Approach

Working with the female participants reinforced the idea that people with Muslim backgrounds are an extremely heterogeneous ensemble. From the beginning, it was clear that many of the young women were motivated to participate in the study by the issues with which they were struggling at the time, such as career plans, reflections on women’s roles and rights, and questions about Queer Islam or cultural citizenship. The young women emphasized pluralist values and critically approached, among other things, questions of gender, belonging and some ethnic and religious customs in their artworks.

One young artist with a textile-design background created an installation called *Sufi-Masa*, which depicts a whirling dervish dancer. Through her work, she brought an important dimension of Islamic spirituality to the research setting (see Figure 27.1).

Another participant used her photographs and poems (and collages based on these works) to explore a queer perspective in an Islamic context, which in Finland, as well as in many other countries, is a sensitive topic inside the Muslim community. A third female participant commented on her belonging/not belonging and the stereotypes and restrictions that she encountered as a young woman with a Somali background in both Finnish society and her ethnic community, through her installation *Inside/Outside the Box*. This installation included a video, shown inside a chamber constructed from black cloth, of her encountering artworks at the Finnish National Gallery and wandering in the cultural landscapes of Helsinki. Outside the gloomy box, she hung photographs presenting places that she found important and empowering in Finland and abroad. The fourth of the female participants I worked alongside, wrote poems expressing her different senses of belonging and cultural citizenship

Fig. 27.1 The installation *Sufi-Masa* (2017). Source: Author.

between multiple positions and embodied landscapes, presenting them on a traditional Sudanese cloth embroidered with beads (see Figure 27.2).

A fifth participant discussed her belonging and spirituality by creating a video letter to her daughter. She had already begun filming during the birth of her child and continued over the space of one year by videotaping everyday life, family trips, her work and spiritual life. Furthermore, some photos taken by female participants from my earlier research and photographs, paintings and texts produced by some young

Fig. 27.2 A poem written by a participant. *Source:* Author.

women belonging to a Muslim youth organization were included in the exhibition.

The young men's working process started relatively late. All the participants were active in a Muslim youth organization, and much of the creative work they presented at the exhibition was somehow connected to religion and religious or activist identities. Two of them made videos that were connected to the work of Muslim youth organizations and Islamophobia. One man made digitally produced calligraphy paintings, another produced a series of photographs of the places in Helsinki that were important to him, while a third created little boxes covered with mosaic print that opened like books revealing quotes from, for example, the Quran and Malcolm X. In addition, two other male artists participated in the exhibition, presenting their poems, and, in the case of one, pieces of jewellery inspired by the different traditions and religions in between which he had grown up and exists.

Tensions Within the Group

While planning the exhibition, differences over the proposed content created some tensions, both between the participants

and among members of the research group. For example, a heated discussion arose about the first suggestion for the name of the exhibition, which involved the word Muslim. Two of the female participants were particularly insistent that they should be introduced as people with a Muslim background — not Muslims — and suggested that the name for the exhibition be 'Numur — Islam and I' (instead of Young Muslims). The word Numur, meaning small tigers, had previously been proposed by some female participants as the basis for the exhibition's logo. Although some of the male participants considered the image of small tigers an inappropriate representation for the exhibition in the current Islamophobic climate, the word was retained in the title.

Another image that provoked impassioned discussions was a photograph taken by one of the female participants, which we had also used as the background image on the research webpage. The photographer had captured her feet as she stood on her prayer mat (see Figure 27.3). When pieces of the photograph were used as part of a mosaic print for the background illustration of the exhibition poster, together with some other excerpts of photographs taken by the female participants, some male participants objected, claiming that the photograph was unsuitable in this context because it depicted naked feet. Thus, the clippings showing feet and prayer items were cut from the final version of the poster.

Fig. 27.3 *My prayer mat*, a photograph taken by a participant. Source: Author.

The process of creating the exhibitions became rather chaotic, as nobody really managed the planning and curating, perhaps because so many people were involved. For example, the workshops that had initially been planned around the themes introduced by the female participants never occurred. However, the project assistant and the intern created a guided tour for schools, and this provided an educational dimension to the exhibition. As some of the participants were involved in guiding the student groups around the exhibition, they were able to receive feedback on their artworks and engage in a dialogue with the audience; moreover, some were involved in organizing handicraft workshops for children, alongside the workshops and seminars directed by the local Muslim youth organizations.

Many people attended the opening of the exhibition in Helsinki, including friends of the artists, members of the research group, members of Islamic organizations and local citizens. Nasima Razmyar, one of the deputy mayors of Helsinki and herself a young woman with a Muslim background, gave a moving opening speech. It was apparent that an event like this was significant to many Finnish people having their roots in Islam. In Turku, however, some tensions arose even between different cooperating Muslim youth groups. In the opening ceremony these tensions were apparent when a conservative Imam spoke on behalf of one organization, while two female members of another organization performed pop songs, which were considered impious by the other group.

Leaving the Field: In Which Direction Does the Trapeze Swing?

Katrina Jungnickel and Larissa Hjorth (2014) observe that methods do not remain untouched by practice, rather, they are transformed by the subject and content. This also occurred in our project, which — even by the rather strict methodological limitations imposed upon it — managed to reveal some subjugated realities and provide space for imagination, border crossings and cultural citizenship (Conquergood, 2009; Hua, 2011; St. Pierre, Jackson & Mazze, 2016). Consequently, the exhibition offered a site for a diverse group of young people with Muslim backgrounds to discuss their varied sense of belonging and their relationship to Islam.

The research process itself challenged the divisive epistemology and problem-centred approach defined in the research plan. The methods and goals created for the plan were simultaneously specific and broad, and as such they failed to adequately support the enthusiasm and creativity of the participants and researchers. However, by trusting in the unfinished research process and by travelling the borders where meaning dissipated, a dialogue was opened around the ideas and artworks created and presented by the participants, becoming a kind of nomadic inquiry and transforming the research setting (Haseman 2006; St. Pierre, 2005). For example, the original idea of videotaping a day in the participants' life transpired to be both practically and methodologically problematic. Likewise, the original plan to categorize participants by, for example, their sect, ethnicity, social class, or their own or their parents' occupation appeared strange in a creative research process which wanted participants to explore their sense of belonging (and resilience) by using artistic approaches. Ultimately, for example in the research catalogue, everyone introduced themselves in their own style, and underlying tensions could be found between the lines of these introductions. For instance, the participant dealing with queer perspectives wrote a more poignant text for the second exhibition, expressing her disappointment with patriarchal and dogmatic interpretations of Islam.

Where the Project Leaves the Researcher

I learned a great deal through such a creative research process, and this learning continues. The issues the participants dealt with in their work were inspiring and eye-opening. For example, my perception of Helsinki changed as a consequence of participating with the young Somali woman in making the video that recorded her visit to the Finnish national art collection and in the shadows of Helsinki's cultural monuments and landscapes. Seeing a mosque and Muslim cultural centre through the eyes of a young woman who worked and prayed there, and who wanted to remove the curtain that separated male and female visitors, filled me with admiration for people who give their leisure time to developing such places, which are open to everyone. I also learnt how traditional Kurdish designs are combined

with modern styles and became familiar with Sudanese society and customs, life in Lebanese villages, North-African architecture, the Sufi faith and Queer Islam. Furthermore, I heard many stories of resilience told spontaneously.

Perhaps because of these experiences, I was confused when the male participants and members of the participating Muslim Youth organizations began to transform the exhibition into what I interpreted as a presentation of active and even 'pure' religious values. Certainly, the young women's artworks remained part of the exhibition, but somehow their message was 'veiled'. This both reflected and endorsed the problematic positions and expectations arising from living in between Finnish society and their ethnic and religious communities, which many of the participants had discussed at the beginning of the process.

Where the Project Leaves Research

It is unlikely that the female participants followed all the discussions, for example concerning the layout of the poster, as they were not active visitors on the project's Facebook pages. However, for me these incidents raised many questions concerning the positionings of research and researcher and, moreover, the interpretation of visuality and the arts in different Muslim communities. Furthermore, they also led me to consider who had the right to speak for Muslims, especially for young people with a Muslim background, and decide what was correct and appropriate. At the exhibition, it became clear that some Muslim audiences were disturbed by particular artworks. For example, some interpreted *Sufi-Masa* as unorthodox; others were disturbed by a pair of photographs of Imam Hussain's (a founder of the Shia sect) flag, one of which was depicted in rainbow colours; and some could not accept the collage *Face of God*, which presented the idea of God as potentially female.

These questions, in turn, gave rise to others concerning research practices and approaches to organizing exhibitions. For example, is possible negative feedback from audiences a reason to censor the way an art exhibition is presented? Furthermore, should customs concerning art practices and visual culture be adapted differently to suit people with Muslim backgrounds? And finally, are incidents like those I

describe unavoidable if researchers listen to different epistemological understandings and become entangled in messy ‘rootings’ and ‘shiftings’ (Yuval-Davis, 1997) within the field-research process (Jungnickel & Hjorth, 2014)?

In her essays in *Key writings*, Irigaray (2004) discusses politics, language, art, sensuality, religion and the importance of finding new ways to understand each other in a world where borders are both dissolving and strengthening. In Irigaray’s suggestion to let the subject go and accept the limitations of our ability to co-exist with whom or what exceeds us, extends beyond us and remains exterior and foreign to us (ibid., 2004, p. 25), I hear echoes of Buber (1970/1923). In order to create a dialogue, Irigaray underscores the importance of recognizing the difference between the sexes, as Western culture has cultivated the male subject while leaving women without subjectivity. I wonder, could her ideas promote understanding of epistemological and even ontological standpoints concerning the strict division between gender positions — positions which I interpreted as existing behind the specific phenomena discussed in these pages — and help create encounters and transgressions on the borders (Irigaray, 2004, pp. 26–27, Oikarinen-Jabai, 2019).

Unfencing the Field: Embracing Instability and Plurality

James Haywood Rolling writes:

There is no one set of criteria for judging the artistic quality of a work of arts-based research just as there is no one paradigm for the beauty of a work of art; for some, the beauty of a work of art is in the aesthetics of its forms and the mastery of its techniques, for others, it is in the authenticity and expressiveness of voice, and for still others, in the incisiveness of its social critique. (Rolling, 2010, p. 104)

The same may hold true for research that uses creative methods. In our research, certainly both the researchers and co-researchers had different ideas, not only about methodological inquiries but also about art, its content and its functions. Perhaps the participants from religious organizations considered the project their own in a way that other participants did not. Moreover, their participation probably produced more answers to the questions posed by the original research plan.

Anyhow, the way that different works of art, which — dare I say — even offered varied perspectives and epistemological standpoints on Islam, were presented under the same roof may provoke further discussion inside the community and inspire participants to continue their research and creative artwork.

For me personally, the research has been and, I hope, will remain an eye-opening process, promoting understanding of the multiple realities encountered by different research communities and especially by young women with a Muslim background. Moreover, it is still possible to continue working with the ideas that arose at different stages of the process, including my unrealized plans for a multilingual installation. Research can be conducted in many ways, for example by posing questions about the perception of a phenomenon, explaining that phenomenon through a rich and analytical description of its qualities, or experimenting with the phenomenon in a hands-on intervention that engages with its limits and possibilities (Rolling, 2010). Adopting Deleuze and Guattari's term 'micro-becomings' (1983, p. 70), Rolling (*ibid.*, p. 107) describes how 'Arts-based research practices manifest themselves as poststructural and erosive pathways, flowing over, through, around, and under scientific and social scientific, quantitative, and qualitative epistemologies in a rhizomatic filigree of "micro-becomings"', capturing the flexibility inherent in artistic endeavour.

Maybe it is time to jump from the research trapeze onto a trampoline that may at different times, and in different contexts, fling one in unpredictable directions. Experimental research leaning on performativity, arts and embodied knowledge can take many directions and discover new paths (Pink & Leder Mackley, 2014; Tolia-Kelly, 2007). It was inspirational, therefore, to discover at an international conference in South Africa in June 2017,² that resilience researchers in different parts of the world are open to diverse approaches and practise their work by leaning on multiple methodologies, interdisciplinary sources and embodied knowledge. This flexibility encourages further experimentation and engagement with the field and may enable diverse groups within society to be heard and to claim cultural citizenship rights and dignity.

2 Pathways to Resilience IV: Global South Perspectives, organized by the Resilience Centre in Cape Town, June 2017.

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