



# Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry

**Norman K. Denzin**  
**Michael D. Giardina**  
Editors

## Chapter 3

### Remix Cultures, Remix Methods

#### Reframing Qualitative Inquiry for Social Media Contexts

Annette Markham



In early 2011, I started getting all of my news of the world exclusively through my social media networks, specifically Twitter and Facebook. I wanted to immerse myself in the premise that “while people using media are simultaneously and instantaneously connected with large and multiple groups and networks, they are also increasingly ascribed with a deeply individualized and self-centered value system” (Deuze et al., 2012, para. 28). Homophily, a concept describing the way people tend to flock toward similar others, is one way to describe how our understandings of the world are idiosyncratic, narrowly channeled through our social networks, and therefore polarized.

Not only did I experience homophily, but I soon found myself saturated in situations that I would not otherwise experience. I saw certain tragedies very up close and personal, like the Queensland floods and the New Zealand earthquakes (two of my colleagues lived in Brisbane, Australia; one lived in Christchurch, New Zealand). I learned a lot about the music scene in Britain (I followed a musician who tweeted a lot and lived only one

---

*Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry* edited by Norman K. Denzin and Michael D. Giardina, 63–81. © 2013 Left Coast Press, Inc. All rights reserved.

time zone away from me). I watched a lot of Rachel Maddow and Jon Stewart (as most of my friends in both Facebook and Twitter would forward these clips). I read scholarly articles that were posted when I was awake (and, since I was in Denmark, this meant my stream was primarily European).

As Deuze et al. (2012), write, "the whole of the world and our lived experience in it can and perhaps should be seen as framed by, mitigated through, and made immediate by pervasive and ubiquitous media" (para 3). This became clearer to me on January 25, as the Egyptian Revolution started to flood my Twitter streams. The speed at which tweets flowed on hashtags like #jan25 limited me to quick flashes of statements before they disappeared. Clicking on links became a fairly random act, but led to some amazing pathways of meaning. On January 27, 2011, my mom watched MSNBC News on her TV, listening to the anchor talk about growing concerns about rioters getting ready for a "day of rage," while a video clip over the anchor's shoulder showed crowds of rioters shouting with fires visible in the distance. She learned that rioters had injured eighty-seven police officers and that one was killed (Bloggit, 2011). Meanwhile, halfway around the world, I cried as I watched a remix created by Tamar Shaaban (2011) that clipped footage from various news agencies as well as on-the-ground local video clips. Over a stirring soundtrack, I heard the passionate and committed voices of the Egyptian people, bloodied on the streets of Cairo.<sup>1</sup>

We are witnessing a startling transformation in the way cultural knowledge is produced and how meaning is negotiated. The digital era does not mark the beginning of this sort of activity by any means, yet it has facilitated a remarkable acceleration toward de-privileging expert knowledge, decentralizing culture production, and unhooking cultural units of information from their origins. One way to think about this is through the lens of remix. Although remix has long been associated with hip hop music forms, it is now a general term referring to the processes and products of taking bits of cultural material and, through the process of copy/paste and collage, producing new meaning to share with others. As I experience social reality that has been remixed by my interactions with my social media networks, I

gain a particular understanding of the world, remix it again, and distribute this to others.

Inspired by my experiment of saturating myself in the way our understanding of the world is remixed by our engagement with social media,<sup>2</sup> I have been thinking about the ways in which remix is a powerful tool for thinking about qualitative, interpretive research practice. The form and cultural practice of remix offers a lens through which we may be able to better grapple with the complexity of social contexts characterized by ubiquitous Internet, always-connected mobile devices, dense global communication networks, fragments of information flow, and temporal and ad hoc community formations.

Rather than inventing new methods, a remix approach offers a different way of thinking about what we do when we engage with particular methods to make sense of phenomena. Taking a remix approach begins with the premises of a bricolage approach (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005) and then shifts to a level we might call "below method," where we engage in everyday practices of sense-making. The concept of remix highlights activities that are not often discussed as a part of method and may not be noticed, such as using serendipity, playing with different perspectives, generating partial renderings, moving through multiple variations, borrowing from disparate and perhaps disjunctive concepts, and so forth. Although methods texts offer extensive descriptions of how one might design research questions, collect data, manage and sort data, and apply analytical tools to this data, much of the actual process from data to conclusion remains a black box. Most often, especially in disciplines where interpretive reflexive inquiry is not taken for granted, these processes are not included in anything the audience might read. Instead, we see the tidied-up version of a long, messy, creative process of sense-making.

Adaptation and creative innovation is sorely needed to study the complexity of digital life. Internet research has been plagued by a constant reinvention of the wheel and a significant degree of trying to force fit methods that were invented for and function best in local face-to-face settings. I argue that by engaging in a greater level of attention to our everyday processes of sense-making within research projects, we can

identify and then submit these practices to greater scrutiny. Remix is a metaphor that can help us get to this sort of reflexive attention to practice, product, and purpose and also is a fruitful mindset for engaging in highly responsive, ethically grounded, and context sensitive cultural interpretations.

In what follows, I discuss some of the complications associated with studying Internet-mediated contexts. I offer a research-centered definition of remix and then describe particular elements of remix that have proven to be valuable pedagogical tools for helping disrupt traditional frames for conducting qualitative research in digital contexts: generate, play, borrow, move, and interrogate.

As a brief caveat, remix is a generative tool for thinking creatively about methods, not a new method, or even a framework. It resides alongside other metaphors that seek to challenge how we envision research, such as dance (Janesick, 1994), jazz (Oldfather & West, 1994), crystallization (Richardson, 1994), bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005), or facets (Mason, 2011). These sorts of metaphors remind us that the process of research is, among other things, exploratory and creative, a mix of passion and curiosity. And that the products of our inquiry,

whether an article, a graph, a poem, a story, a play, a dance, or a painting, is not something to be received, but something to be used; not a conclusion but a turn in a conversation; not a closed statement but an open question; not a way of declaring “this is how it is” but a means of inviting others to consider what it (or they) could become. (Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 507)

### Social (Research) Contexts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The past three decades mark tremendous growth in digital social interaction, from early experiments in virtual reality, text-based communities, and role-playing games to today’s saturation in social media, where we are always on, tethered to mobile devices, enacting what Neilson in 2012 labeled “Generation C” (for connected). At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technologies for communication became much more pervasive through mobility and convergence. The collaborative and distributive features of the web were more

fully realized at this time with the rise of blogging. The capacity to easily connect—via commenting, tagging, and sharing—facilitated a huge growth in complex networks among people both locally and globally, across any media form imaginable. In both the blogosphere and commercial spheres, a system developed whereby value was linked to reputation and connectivity in these networks. This reputation and sharing economy has shifted our traditional understandings of authorship, blurring the boundaries between producer and consumer.

Throughout this time, frameworks for understanding and defining identity and social constructs have continued to shift away from the individual and toward networks and information flows. The performance of everyday life is seen as increasingly inseparable from the technologically mediated and mediatized confluences in which our information flows, with or without our attention or intention. Materiality in this mobile epoch is better understood as connection, process, and relationship.

Gergen (1991) discusses this as an inevitable but slow-incoming recognition of the relational self. Turkle (2011) describes it more in terms of fragmentation, or a cycling through of various virtual personae, each with sets of attributes to suit particular situations. Scholars such as Latour (2005; Latour et al., 2012) go further, emphasizing that in contemporary culture, we need to move beyond the notion and privileging of the individual to better understand the multiple agencies influencing any social situation. Characteristic of actor network theorists, the actor is not just embedded in networks but is “defined by its network ... entirely defined by the open-ended lists in the databases” (Latour et al., 2012, p. 3). From this perspective, anything we might call an individual is simply a temporary constitution of attributes.

For social researchers, this means that many taken-for-granted techniques for identifying discrete situational boundaries, individuals, or other objects or for analysis are far less useful than they may have once seemed. As I have noted elsewhere (Markham, *In press*), at least four complications emerge when we consider the entanglements of the social contexts involving humans, Web 2.0 technologies, and smart mobile devices:

1. Boundaries between self and other are often unclear, particularly when information develops a social life of its own, beyond one's immediate circumstances.
2. Boundaries of situations and identification of contexts are often unclear as dramas play out in settings and times far removed from the origin of interaction.
3. Agency is not the sole property of individual entities, but a temporal performative element that emerges in the dynamic interplay of people and their technologies for communication.
4. Performativity can be linked not only to individuals but actions of the devices, interfaces, and networks of information through which dramas occur and meaning is negotiated.

To deal with the challenges of conducting qualitative research in mobile, global, and fragmented mediatized and mediated environments, do we cling to tradition, hoping for steady grounding? Or do we continually experiment? These questions are complicated by other axiological questions. Part of the difficulty of being innovative is linked closely to the persistence of positivist models and procedures. Whether discussed within the larger backlash against interpretivism or postmodernism, or within the economy-driven shifts toward evidence-based research models, it still feels like academia is battering down the hatches. This occurs in the midst of a cultural explosion—outside the walls of the academy—of collaborative, open source, reputation knowledge production.

This becomes an ethical concern on many levels, not the least of which relates to how and whether we are interrogating our methods adequately to protect people (our participants, their communities, and ourselves) from harm. With the automated scraping of data occurring on massive levels across all media platforms and by various agencies, individuals, and privatized interests, how can we ensure data privacy? How can we be sure our techniques for anonymizing sources will work? The simple answer to this question is we can't, unless we adjust our methods of representation. Or take the issue of privacy and informed consent. There are no easy answers, as was emphasized in the latest ethics guidelines of the Association of Internet Researchers (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). People engage in activities that would traditionally be

considered highly sensitive, even when understanding that their actions are public and the potential audience is vast. It's not just that we have blurred the boundaries of what constitutes public and private spheres, it's that the concept itself is changing (see, e.g., boyd & Marwick, 2012; Markham, 2012; Nissenbaum, 2011).

To add to this dilemma, technological advances teach us that we cannot predict how our information will be used in the future. Now, more than ever, we have the obligation to try to proactively protect participants or to consider ways of doing inquiry that minimize the risk of future harms. My effort to invoke innovative metaphors for thinking about inquiry is embedded, then, in a larger argument that interpretive studies of digital experience would be not only stronger but probably more ethically grounded if we more radically disrupted—or revisited previous disruptions of—still taken-for-granted parameters for qualitative inquiry.

### What Is Remix?

Remix is a term that came into usage in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to refer to the practice and product of taking samples from audio tracks and putting them together in new and creative ways. The history of remix is most often linked to the music form of Jamaican Dub, represented well by artist King Tubby. King Tubby, whose work influenced generations of hip hop artists engaged in dub, scratch, rap, and DJ, began deconstructing and reconstructing musical tracks in the late '60s. We're now very familiar with the way songs are remixed in ways that extend or reinterpret them for different audiences. But remix goes well beyond music.

Remix has become a term that is used to describe the widespread practice of mashup videos, most evident on YouTube, or the phenomenon of Internet memes, which are typically composed of small units of cultural information (a phrase, an image, a short audio or video clip) that get mixed in different ways, generally for comedic effect. A meme is characterized by its evolution—in effect, it doesn't exist unless it morphs through reproduction and dissemination.

We could say remix is everywhere, or that “everything is a remix” (Ferguson, N.d.), as both a practice and outcome in all forms of cultural production. Navas (2006) notes that “cut/

copy and paste, the fragmentation of material, is today part of everyday activities both at work and at home thanks to the computer" (para. 13), whereby easy-to-use software applications allow people to develop sophisticated mashups. Lessig (2008) and Ferguson (N.d.) offer extensive discussions of remix, offering many historical as well as contemporary artists and contexts to argue that it's the content of an idea, not the originator, that matters, and that borrowing, sampling, and creatively remixing ideas is an inherent aspect of any culture. Conceptualized broadly, remix is not something we do in addition to our everyday lives, it is the way we make sense of our world, by transforming the bombardment of stimuli into a seamless experience. If we take seriously the idea that everything we take to be real is a constant negotiation of relationships between people and things, and that culture is habit writ large, remix as a form of sense-making embraces this framework.

For purposes of talking about qualitative inquiry and the study of digital experience, I find two aspects of remix to be critical: First, remix relies on sampling, borrowing, and creatively reassembling units of cultural information to create something that is used to move or persuade others. The key to the power of remix is that it doesn't matter where the elements are drawn from as long as the resulting product has resonance for the audience. Remix is about working in the liminal space to create a particular way of connecting the familiar with the unfamiliar, or the original elements and the remixed.

Second, remix always occurs as part of a larger community of remix. It is a process of creating temporary assemblages that change almost immediately after initial production. The very power of remix relies on the participation of others as "producers"<sup>3</sup> or collaborative remixers. Producers of any remix understand that once their product leaves their hands and is distributed, others will potentially remix it, again and again. The form of the remix will change over time. It might grow in quality and cohesion over time through various iterations. Or it might morph into something completely unrecognizable, with very few elements to trace it back to the origin points (or it might wither and die from neglect). A meme might appear to have a life of its own as it

morphs and changes. But it is negotiated, interactive. It is transformed and it transforms its users and creators.

Remix is an inherent part of digital culture. As we surf, we create momentary meaning structures, mini-remixes that get remixed again and again, every time we surf similarly, with different outcomes. Our own actions yield these remixes at one level, yet these remixes are influenced by many other factors.

Indeed, remix undergirds the infrastructures of everything we understand to be part of the Internet. As Navas points out (2012), Google is an excellent example of a very different sort of remix, one that selectively presents us with results based on a complex (and often hidden) set of algorithms. Amazon.com recommendations, YouTube's "related content," and Facebook feeds are likewise remixed for us, based on proprietary algorithms that function beneath the surface of activity. Remix may not be the only lens for thinking about this, but it highlights the ways that meaning, contexts, and structures can be seen as temporary outcomes of interaction, emerging and fading, morphing into something slightly new every time we engage.

Thinking about digital culture through the lens of remix offers powerful means of resisting the focus on individuals and objects to get closer to the flows and connection points between various elements of the media ecology system, where meaning and assemblages and imaginaries are negotiated in relation and (inter)action. At the meta-level, thinking about qualitative research practice through the framework of remix offers a means of reconfiguring some of the practices associated with qualitative research. It allows us to embrace and grapple with complexity (rather than trying to simplify) by focusing less on methods (as templates to either apply to experiences and organize these experiences into particular categories and structures) and more on meaning as derived from a creative process of inquiry.

My application of remix as a concept embraces the essence of bricolage, as described by Kincheloe (2001, 2005). Extending the concept of bricolage, remix focuses on everyday practices of enacting method, as well as the way inquiry is—or can be—situated within a Web 2.0, social media-saturated, remix culture. Remix focuses our attention on the way temporally situated arguments

are assembled and reassembled as they traverse various audiences. Each of these renderings has meaning and will be assessed by the reader/viewer/listener, but the quality and credibility of each is not predetermined by the way the data (cultural material) is collected, or the tools used to manage, sort, and categorize this data into something that can then be reorganized and edited by the remixer. Rather, quality is embedded in the extent to which the production (whether we call it argument, story, or finding) demonstrates resonance with the context, and also has resonance with the intended audience.

Instead of marginalizing the concepts of copy/cut & paste, collage, pastiche, and mashup, these practices become resonant and thus appropriate lenses for thinking about cultural formations as well as adaptive modes of inquiry. By letting go of the idea that our academic projects should provide answers, remix provides the researcher with a greater freedom to build creative and compelling arguments that enter larger conversations, both inside and outside the academy.<sup>4</sup>

This approach also tackles the difficulty of accomplishing the practices that Latour (2005) and others advocate through actor network theory. As Latour notes:

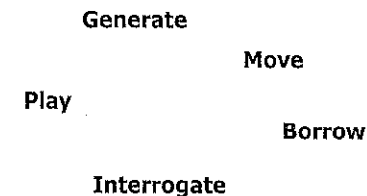
Any given interaction seems to overflow with elements which are already in the situation coming from some other time, some other place, and generated by some other agency. This powerful intuition is as old as the social sciences. As I have said earlier, action is always dislocated, articulated, delegated, translated. Thus, if any observer is faithful to the direction suggested by this overflow, she will be led away from any given interaction to some other places, other times, and other agencies that appear to have molded them into shape. (2005, p. 166)

Remix is a way of following the overflow, being willing to flatten the social by considering all elements to be equal, without trying to identify individuals or contexts or distinguish the local from the global. The outcome of one's activities—if considered an act of making an argument—influences one's process in that it matters less where one begins or ends, because patterns and possibilities always emerge. It also shifts one from matters of fact to matters of concern.

## Looking under Methods to Find Remix Practices: An Experiment in Play

A significant percentage of scholars who study digital culture, Internet-mediated contexts, or social media are new to qualitative inquiry. This is an important consideration when it comes to imagining the common models informing the definitional parameters for how qualitative inquiry gets done. Even when defined as a non-positivist process, procedures still retain linear and compartmentalized foundations. One begins with a phenomenon that informs one's research questions, which, in turn, inform particular strategies for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Various stages are described as separate moments, and findings are written up at the end. Although the process can be displayed as iterative, the fundamental working metaphors are not nearly as innovative as those of us with extensive background or experience with innovative qualitative inquiry might imagine.

From the standpoint of researchers entrenched in positivist forms of inquiry, understanding the strength of interpretive qualitative inquiry requires going back to the basic question: What do we do when we engage in qualitative inquiry? These are the five elements of remix:



These terms have proven very successful in cross-disciplinary workshops exploring innovative or creative approaches, as they help disconnect the practice of inquiry from methodological or epistemological baggage. These five activities of inquiry actually look a lot like what we might think people are doing when they are engaged in the practice of remix. Each of these terms will be conceptualized and operationalized in different ways for any researcher, depending on his or her perspective, discipline, project,



and so forth. Likewise, the terms will take on different meaning at different stages of the project. Thus, the following brief descriptions of each term serve as only a starting point, illustrating how I might situate these terms in my own world of research.

### Generate

When I think of this term, I immediately visualize the physical stacks of material that would collect on my desk over the course of a study. It was easier to understand what the term meant when the stuff of our research was more physically noticeable. The changing dimensions—in width and height—of the stack over time would indicate a state of progress. The more I investigated, the more stuff was generated: draft documents, field notes, concept maps, sketchbooks full of doodles, photos, and drawings, notes on literature I was reading, printed copies of theory and concept articles, untouched transcripts from interviews, the same transcripts coded the first time, the same transcripts coded a second time or in a different way, and on and on. I considered this teetering pile a treasure trove, full of data. Picking up random objects might trigger certain connections among ideas. Flipping open a research journal might spark a memory and open a floodgate of new information to consider. This wonderful chaos of inquiry is less visible when we work digitally. Much of this generative quality of inquiry is forgotten, never experienced, or lost.

We might think about the process of generating as one whereby we transform data according to different thematic classification schemes. Every iteration of this presents a new (in that it is different) data set, which represents the phenomenon in a new way. *The act of transformation is one of interpretation and remix.* Likewise, we generate a “new” participant every time we transform their raw activities into a different form, such as a written text, an edited version of their talk, a grammatically corrected version of their discourse, or a summary of themes emerging from their activities and interactions. Reflecting on these and other practices, we can see that inquiry is not only about simplifying and narrowing, but generating layers upon layers of informational units that influence our interpretations. Focusing only on the first layer of data (the original stuff we collected) doesn’t allow us to fully appreciate what is

actually at play when we engage in the long, involved, inductive, and explorative art and science of “writing culture.”

When this inherent generative process is understood, it can enable fuller analysis of multiple layers of meaning. Simply put, more stuff is laid out on the table to be considered as data.

### Play

Play is sometimes a guided or rule-driven activity, as when we play games. At other times, play is an open-ended leisure activity, as when we play with or play around. It’s easy to see remix as a product of both types of play. As a process of inquiry, remix relies on experimenting with various combinations of elements to produce something meaningful. Successful remixes are inventive and often yield outcomes that seem quite new, despite the fact that the elements that are being combined are borrowed from other sources. So remix is a highly open-ended process. And, like most artistic endeavors, passion and innovation work in tandem with the skillful if not expert performance of one’s art/craft. At the same time, most remix occurs in a larger community of remix, where certain goals and guidelines apply.

In academic contexts, we have been far less willing to characterize research as play, or playful (see Ellingson, this volume). Particularly if one’s practices are closely directed or controlled by outside forces such as supervisors or funders, play may seem a disrespectful, lazy, or non-rigorous form of activity. In qualitative inquiry, this is a mistake, since what we do in the best moments of the interpretive process is just that. As any athlete or musician will say, getting in the zone of play or engaging in improvisation requires at least some element of skillful application of certain techniques and also functions as an important tool for honing one’s skills. Curiosity and exploration mark a significant type of play. Experimentation without any particular purpose allows the researcher to move beyond what is already known to a point of learning, making new connections. Imaginative play allows one to let go of what ought to be done or thought and work in the realm of possibilities. As Marantz Henig (2008, para. 39) notes, “[f]or all its variety ... there is something common to play in all its protean forms: variety itself. The essence of play is that the sequence

of actions is fluid and scattered.” Bekoff likewise describes play as “training for the unexpected. ... Behavioral flexibility and variability is adaptive; in animals it’s really important to be able to change your behavior in a changing environment” (in Marantz Henig, 2008, para. 39).

In terms of exploring complex social media contexts, play can actually become a critical turning point for research design that resonates better with contexts of flow, analysis that moves with or into these flows rather than abstracting and isolating objects arbitrarily and artificially, finding forms of representation that have contextual integrity and finding rather than simply applying conceptual models that help make sense of these phenomena.

### **Borrow**

In the context of copyright, Lessig (2008) reminds us that a basic foundation of writing is quoting from other works. Referring to the writing of a particular individual, he says, “Were it music, we’d call it sampling. Were it painting, it would be called collage. Were it digital, we’d call it remix” (p. 51). In academic research, borrowing is essential, in this and other ways. To make sense of any phenomenon, we borrow all the time, whether or not we recognize it. We borrow ideas about sampling strategies, genres of writing, tools for analyzing data, and so forth.

As I take short-term engagements at various universities, I often end up sitting for days, weeks, or months in other scholars’ offices. While I think or write, I wander around the offices of computer scientists, feminist technoscientists, linguists, post-phenomenological theorists, or actor network theorists, gazing at the titles on their bookshelves. Flipping through books, gazing at art on walls, and reading articles left on desktops, it’s no surprise I find a lot of useful concepts, theories, and phrases that I would never otherwise encounter. Through serendipity, I make new connections and find alternate perspectives. All of this broadens my perspectives, no matter the topic.

Of course, it’s messy when I leave the comfort of my home discipline to struggle with new concepts. But it makes good sense when I consider the target of my inquiry. Most aspects of

Internet-related phenomena occur across multiple platforms, media, and/or devices. Interactions that seem cohesive or complete are just partial traces of interactions, abstracted from lived experience, displaced in time and space. When we consider the way in which people use and relate to technologies for communication, the variation is endless. Borrowing approaches, perspectives, and techniques from not only outside one’s discipline but from outside the academy seems not only natural but essential to figuring out creative ways to grapple with these contexts.

### **Move**

Everything discussed above, whether applied to the activities of remix or the activities of qualitative inquiry, is about moving and being moved. Inquiry is always situated, but never motionless. This is an important thing to remember, particularly in globally entangled networks of cultural flow that comprise ever-shifting terrains of meaning. George Marcus (1998) uses the term “follow” to describe creative ways to engage in multi-sited ethnography: Follow the story, follow the people, follow the metaphors. We can add to this many other ways of thinking about following: shifting one’s perspective, changing the questions, moving in and out of the flows of information, following the silences, gaps, and absences.

In many ways, what’s most important is not how one moves but acknowledging that movement is inevitable, natural, and productive. It is also not necessarily forward, in that many movements will take us back to the beginning or will cause us to see the entire project in different ways, forcing us to mark our current point as a new beginning to move from.

### **Interrogate**

Successful remix interrogates pieces of culture, torquing and integrating them into something unique so the audience can see each piece or the whole in a different way. This has happened throughout time, in literature, painting, architecture, design, film, music, and so forth. Now, we see it in fan fiction, mashup videos, street art, Internet memes—everywhere we see the production of culture, we know we are witnessing the outcome of a process of reflexive interrogation.



Perhaps interrogate seems too forceful to describe the act of reflexively questioning everything we're doing, seeing, feeling, or everything about the project and the phenomenon itself. I use this term to highlight that any close reading, detailed analysis, or inductive interpretation requires a steady stream of questioning. Sometimes we direct this interrogation at the object, to see how it is situated, to focus on what surrounds, embraces, encompasses, or encloses it, to wonder how it might look or be otherwise, to think about its existence in time and space. At other times, we direct this interrogation inward, to consider why we're interested in this and not another phenomenon, to ask how we are situated in relation to this stuff of our curiosity, to consider how we might think otherwise, by focusing critically on what surrounds, embraces, encompasses, or encloses us. This constant questioning may not be directly acknowledged as part of one's method, but it comprises a powerful everyday practice of all inquiry. Noticing it allows us to get better at doing it well, with purpose, and to incorporate the processes and products of our interrogations more clearly, or rigorously.

### Searching for Resonance

These five elements of remix—generating, playing, borrowing, moving, and interrogating—usefully resist disciplining and can prompt more freedom to innovate when exploring contexts that defy easy encapsulation. As with bricolage or layered accounts (see Rambo Ronai, 1995), remix presumes that the resulting pastiche will never constitute a complete or whole picture. Rather, each outcome is an iterative rendering. Each is a work in progress. All are possibilities. Each builds on the others, informs the others, and influences the overall perspective one ends up with at the end. This is an unending process, one that invites conversation, collaboration, and further remixing. Remixes might show connections among elements or present a beautifully cohesive piece, as we see in Eric Whitacre's virtual choirs (<http://ericwhitacre.com/the-virtual-choir>). Or remixes can illustrate juxtaposition, disjuncture, or discontinuity. Rather than trying to resolve complexity in the research project, a remix might illustrate very clearly the irresolvable complexity of the phenomenon.

To be sure, questions of quality and credibility arise. There are many ways to think about criteria for quality,<sup>5</sup> but here I just mention one: The most successful remixes are those that have longevity and can be seen by many to hold a mark of quality. Whether this quality is closely analyzed by experts or simply felt by cultural members, and whether this quality is in the way something is made or in the story it tells, it likely has something to do with how much the product resonates. Successful remix reaches beyond the merely sufficient to the monumental. Ethical, context-sensitive, creative research does the same, if, in the end, it captures the attention of the reader, moves the reader to think differently, or causes the reader to want to engage, contribute further to the conversation, and continue the playful process of remix.

### Notes

1. For more information and to view video, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThvBJMzmSZI>
2. Also inspired by the work of Lashua and Fox (2007), using remix as a method of action research.
3. "Producer" and "prosumer" are both terms that have come to represent the collapsed roles of producers and users and producers and consumers.
4. This sort of work has long been projects of Yvonna Lincoln and Norman Denzin (e.g., 1994, 2003), Art Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (e.g., 2003), Laurel Richardson (e.g., 1994), and many others who comprise the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century interpretive movement in the United States.
5. See, for example, various writers in Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (all editions, published by Sage). Questions of criteria for quality are considered paramount and comprise a consistent theme throughout these volumes.

### References

- Bloggit, H. (2011). The world is changing—Tahrir Square revolution spreads (Jan. 27, NBC). [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-0Hm-n\\_LAM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-0Hm-n_LAM) (accessed January 4, 2013).
- Bochner, A., & Ellis, C. (2003). An introduction to the arts and narrative research: Art as inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9, 506–514.

- boyd, d. & Marwick, A. (2011). Social privacy in networked publics: Teens' attitudes, practices, and strategies. Unpublished manuscript. <http://www.danah.org/papers/2011/SocialPrivacyPLSC-Draft.pdf> (accessed August 11, 2011).
- Deuze, M., Blank, P., & Speers, L. (2012). A life lived in media. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 6, para. 1-37.
- Ferguson, K. (N.d.). Everything is a remix. (Four-part video series.) <http://everythingisaremix.info> (accessed January 4, 2013).
- Gergen, K. (1991). *The saturated self: Dilemmas of identity in contemporary society*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hayles, K. (2012). *How we think: Digital media and contemporary technogenesis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- "Introducing Generation C: Americans 18-34 are the most connected." *Nielsen*. (2012). [http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online\\_mobile/introducing-generation-c/](http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/introducing-generation-c/) (accessed January 20, 2013).
- Janesick, V. J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 209-219). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kincheloe, J. (2001). Describing the bricolage: Conceptualizing a new rigor in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, 679-692.
- Kincheloe, J. (2005). On to the next level: Continuing the conceptualization of the bricolage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11, 323-350.
- Lashua, B. & Fox, K. (2007). Defining the groove: From remix to research in the beat of Boyle Street. *Leisure Sciences*, 20, 143-158.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor network theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B., Jensen, P., Venturini, T., Grauwin, S., & Boullier, D. (2012). The whole is always smaller than its parts: A digital test of Gabriel Tarde's monads. *British Journal of Sociology*, 63, 590-615.
- Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Denzin, N. K. (1994). The fifth moment. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 575-586). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Marantz Henig, R. (2008). Taking play seriously. *New York Times Magazine*, February 17. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/magazine/17play.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed December 1, 2012).
- Marcus, G. (1998). *Ethnography through thick and thin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet contexts. *Information, Communication, & Society*, 15, 334-353.
- Markham, A. & Buchanan, E. (2012). *Ethical decision-making and Internet research: Version 2.0. (Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Committee.)* Chicago: Association of Internet Researchers.
- Markham, A. (In press). Dramaturgy of digital experience. In C. Edgley (Ed.), *Handbook of dramaturgy*. London: Ashgate Press.
- Mason, J. (2011). Facet methodology: The case for an inventive research orientation. *Methodological Innovations Online*, 6, 75-92.
- Navas, E. (2006). Remix: The bond of repetition and representation. <http://remixtheory.net/?p=361> (accessed January 4, 2013).
- Navas, E. (2012). *Remix theory: The aesthetics of sampling*. New York: Springer/Wein Press.
- Nissenbaum, H. (2010). *Privacy in context: Technology, policy, and the integrity of social life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Law Books.
- Oldfather, P. & West, J. (1994). Qualitative research as jazz. *Educational Researcher*, 23, 22-26.
- Rambo Ronai, C. (1995). Multiple reflections of child sex abuse: An argument for a layered account. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 23, 395-426.
- Rheingold, H. (2002). *Smart mobs: The next social revolution*. New York: Basic Books.
- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A form of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516-529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Shaaban, T. (2011). The Most AMAZING video on the internet #Egypt #jan25. YouTube video. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThvBJMzmSZI> (accessed January 4, 2013).
- Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books.

approaches to qualitative research and knowledge construction. The aspects of play described here—passion and pleasure, deep attention, creativity, performance, and multiplicity—offer hopeful possibilities for qualitative research processes that harness the power of exuberance and promote greater freedom of movement within existing and future structures.

## References

- Ackerman, D. (2000). *Deep play*. New York: Vintage.
- Bowker, G. C. & Star, S. L. (2000). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Brooks, L. J. & Bowker, G. (2002). Playing at work: Understanding the future of work practices at the institute for the future. *Information, Communication, and Society*, 5, 109–136.
- Chess, S. (2009). How to play a feminist. *Thirdspace: A Journal of Feminist Theory and Culture*, 9. <http://www.thirdspace.ca/journal/article/view/273/315> (accessed December 12, 2012).
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 1–19). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Eisenberg, E. M. (1990). Jamming: Transcendence through organizing. *Communication Research*, 17, 139–164.
- Ellingson, L. L. (2009). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellingson, L. L. (2011). Analysis and representation across the continuum. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 595–610). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellingson, L. L. (2012). Interviewing as embodied communication. In J. Gubrium, J. Holstein, A. Marvasti, & K. M. Marvasti (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research* (2nd ed., pp. 525–539). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Ellis, C. & Ellingson, L. L. (2000). Qualitative methods. In E. F. Borgatta & R. J. V. Montgomery (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of sociology* (2nd ed., Vol. 4, pp. 2287–2296). New York: Macmillan Library Reference.
- Ethnogs, The, The FemNogs, and Rip Tupp [Trujillo, N., Krizek, R., Sotirin, P., Ellingson, L. L., Mills, M., Drew, S., & Poulos, C.]. (2011). Constructing mythic identity and culture: A performance and critique of The Ethnogs. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17, 664–674.
- Farné, R. (2005). Pedagogy of play. *Topoi*, 24, 169–181.
- Frentz, T. S. (2009). Split selves and situated knowledge: The trickster goes titanium. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15, 820–842.
- Gergen, M. M. & Gergen, K. (2012). *Playing with purpose: Adventures in performative social science*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.
- Gubrium, J. & Holstein, J. (1997). *The new language of qualitative method*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haraway, D. (1991). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. In D. Haraway (Ed.), *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature* (pp. 183–201). London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall.
- Hinthorne, L. L. & Schneider, K. (2012). Playing with purpose: Using serious play to enhance participatory development communication in research. *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 2801–2824.
- Hyde, L. (1998). *Trickster makes this world: Mischief, myth, and art*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Lindlof, T. R. & Taylor, B. C. (2010). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lofland, J. (1970). Interactionist imagery and analytic interruptus. In T. Shibutani (Ed.), *Human nature and collective behavior: Papers in honor of Herbert Blumer* (pp. 35–45). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Lugones, M. (1987). Playfulness, world-traveling, and loving perception. *Hypatia*, 2, 3–19.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 923–943). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Salen, K. & Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of play*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.