Friendship as a Methodology: Multimodal cogenerative study of motherscholar wellbeing

A.S. CohenMiller & Denise Demers
Presentation for The Qualitative Report Conference
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, January 12, 2018
Denise Demers <denised@uca.edu>
to Anna.CohenMill.

I just finished reading your PPT from your ethnography of Inside Out....and LOVED it! May I just say, well done! I am part of that study...without really being part of it. My dissertation was very similar and I want to be able to use some of your findings for my own research. Maybe in the future we might be able to work on something similar. I teach at the University of Central Arkansas....I'm sure the sentiment is the same although the geographical area is vastly different.

Thanks for sharing your research!

Anna CohenMiller <anna.cohenmiller@nu.edu.kz>
to me

Hi Denise,
Thank you so much for reaching out! I feel so humbled that you took the time to read my work and to contact me. Interestingly, I have found that many of us motherscholars, we first get a chance to meet each other in this type of way. So you do work, or did, on this topic? I would be really interested to read more or hear more about it. And absolutely, I would LOVE to collaborate :) 

Looking forward to chatting!

All my best,

Anna
Let Collaboration Begin - A Topic is Born

Anna CohenMiller <anna.cohenmiller@nu.edu.kz>

11/10/16

This is so perfect Denise that I was just in shock reading it. I've been doing research on a multiyear international grant on student wellbeing in Kazakhstan. So while that looked primarily on developing a scale for assessing wellbeing for students in lower grades, the concept of wellbeing has been on my radar a lot lately.

Let's start something!

All my best,
Anna

A. S. CohenMiller, PhD
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/A_S_Cohenmiller

concept of WELLBEING
Our First Call: Skype and audio only

JAN 12, 2017

ONE YEAR AGO ... TODAY...on this very campus
Dear Anna CohenMileir,

Thank you for submitting to the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Your submission, "The Ambivalence of Being Neither Fully at Work nor Fully at Home: Arts-Based Participatory Action Research with Motherscholars to Enhance Wellbeing," will be reviewed, and you should expect to hear from us within 2-4 weeks from the deadline for submissions.

For inquiries, please email the address below:

sub.icqi@gmail.com

Denise Demers <denised@uca.edu>

to Anna

Awesome!!! Thanks - can't wait to begin
Dear Anna Cohen Miller,

I am pleased to inform you that we have accepted your proposal:

The Ambivalence of Being Neither Fully at Work nor Fully at Home: Arts-Based Participatory Action Research with Motherscholars to Enhance Wellbeing

to present 17-20 May 2017 at the Thirteenth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in Champaign-Urbana, IL. We request that you be available to present during any day of the Congress.

Please register for the Congress at http://icqi.org/registration/

This is an official letter of acceptance, but you also have another acceptance letter and a visa letter which you can downloaded at any time from the main menu in your All Academic account. A preliminary program will be posted in the next few weeks.

Sincerely,
Communication Developments: From emailing, phone, and Skype to Google Docs

Denise Demers <denised@uca.edu>

to Anna

YAYYYYYYYYY!!!! Let’s get to work!!!
Let me know when we can chat...
Denise

Anna Cohen Miller <anna.cohenmiller@nu.edu.kz>

to me

Whoooo hoo!! Look at us!!

I’ve started a google doc that I just shared with. not much on it right now, but it can be a place to put our ideas. If there’s something we want the other to see, I’ve learned that we have to create a “comment” with “@” and the person’s name and it will send an email. (But you may have already known this!)

Considering the time difference, are you available in the evenings at all? Perhaps Monday, January 30 or Tuesday January 31 at 8:30pm CST?

All my best and yay!
Anna
Our Collaboration: Quick overview of the motherscholar wellbeing study

Hello All! This will be our common space for posting to interact with one another over the next few weeks. We will be have coloring pages that you can access (or you can use your own!) and you can take pictures of your coloring you completed for the day and then write a few comments.

Here is the link for the informed consent approved by the University of Central Arkansas. Currently Denise Demers is the primary PI and later, Anna CohenMiller from Nazarbayev University will join as PI upon official review from the University. By entering your name below, you acknowledge your participation in the study and electronically sign.
Arts-based Participatory Research: With one another and with our participants

- Example data collection
- Coloring pages
- Reflection
- Shared between all participants

"...I started with a coloring page that I had already started with. This meant that I went through some ups and downs during this coloring time. In some parts it was great and relaxing and very zen. Then it was very stressful and frustrating. Then it was incredible to have the time with my daughter coloring at the same time. Then it went back to being a bit frustrating and stressful as I wanted more time to color and my son (five) showed up wanting to color too, and my daughter took the full set of colors. This has meant that I’m now planning to color at the office tomorrow, out of the sight of little hands (or not expect to work in peace and quiet!)"
Qualitative Methodology: Where does friendship fit?

Typical methods of data collection:

- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Observation
- Case Study
- Ethnography
- History
- Content Analysis
- Friendship?
Friendship as Method

As cited by Tillmann-Healy (2003)

“Someone to talk to, to depend on and rely on for help, support, and caring, and to have fun and enjoy doing things with” (Rawlins, 1992, p. 271)
How Our Friendship Grew

Tillmann-Healy talks about spending TIME …. That is how she built friendships and thus used it as a methodology.

Our extended time has been continuous and naturally emerged. Methods of Communication included:

- Skype
- Phone Calls
- Text
- Google doc messages
- Emails
This was *not* work but a development of a friendship that included working together
What Makes Friendship Our Methodology?

- Interpersonal bond characterized by ongoing communicative management
- Provided emotional AND identity resources (e.g., Our wellbeing study with motherscholars)
- Creativity with connection to McKay et al
- Quality of emotional, intimate, companionship type support Demir et al, 2017
Our friendship grew and strengthened and began to influence our research, our findings, and enhanced the study.
Signs of Developing Friendship: Ease of communication

- Humor and support
- Honesty and vulnerability
- Ex. Sharing emoji’s and gifs, asking about each other’s lives, sharing details
From Serious Talks to Laughing and Sharing
Offering Support and Humor: Texting Bitmoji’s

Anna

IT’S TUESDAY!

Whoa that’s fancy!! How do you do it?
Very creative too 🎈

Sooo that took a while but finally figured out the bitmoji!!

But is WAS fun now wasn't it!!?!?!

Whoa hoo! It was fun...except seeing the lines to add and such on the face...that just made me feel old and remember I'm turning 38 in May

Let's hope I can

Besties!

Super Fun Times

Get the Bitmoji app and create an avatar
An Emerging Friendship Affected our Research

Through multiple conversations, multiple platforms, our friendship developed and we were more able to think deeply about our topic, reflecting individually and together.
Time and Friendship

- As Tillmann-Healy (2003, 2006) mentions, time is the most important factor for friendship as methodology.
- Our friendship development directed our work including
  - consistent interactions (e.g., texting almost daily)
  - maintaining contact throughout the entire year
  - relationship of openness
  - authentic interactions
Hearing / Seeing Our Voices

- Similar to a face-to-face friendship, the voice of the other person came through in our online interactions.
- Facilitating our research, included our ability to talk and consider things from another angle and be open and vulnerable in the process.
Clarifying Our Thoughts / Analysis with Someone We Trust, a Friend

- The greatest results in the study came from discussion and constant comparison between us in developing an agreed upon understanding of the data.
Friendship within Analysis

- Our analysis was at times informal:
  - checking in with one another first thing in the morning and before going to bed
  - When one of us would text in the evening, it was just the start of a new day for the other living on the other side of the globe.

- The time zone difference, seemingly a hindrance, helped keep each other accountable.
  - When one person was asleep, the other was working and would leave notes and/or a text to wake up to, thus giving direction and support for the analysis.
Findings – Friendship Improves Methodology

“Someone to talk to, to depend on and rely on for help, support, and caring, and to have fun and enjoy doing things with” (Rawlins, 1992, p. 271)

- Utility of technology - finding one another online, video, texting, emailing, calling,
- Communication
- Openness
- Vulnerability
- Sharing
- Ongoing communicative management helped to develop a bond
- Provided emotional and identity resources
Thank you!

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