

Excerpt from A.Wolska SOWK 659 Assignment #3: Reflections

When Life Gives You Research: What can you squeeze from it?

I am generally a very enthusiastic learner and readily dive into opportunities to expand my perspective and ideas. I particularly thrive when new ideas are challenging my sense of comfort. I think this ability can make me an excellent learner, and potentially a really helpful therapist. On the other hand, I do tend to also feel a bit discouraged by my limitations and need to work through perfectionistic tendencies. Learning how to read, understand, and learn from research, without becoming a researcher myself, was a bit of a let-down. And so I searched for a perspective on research that would encourage a continuation of learning, and maybe even an application of the learning in whatever context I happen to find myself upon finishing this program (instead of dropping it all as soon as I submit this paper).

I read what I could on the various approaches to research and thoroughly enjoyed the different presenters who spoke to our class. In particular, I thought back to a presentation at the beginning of our course by Dr. Wulff and Dr. St. George (2016), on the topic of research as daily practice. In the presentation, Wulff and St. George (2016) argue for the idea that research and practice are actually not as far apart as we have been trained to believe, and in fact, we engage in conducting research daily as practitioners. In their article on this subject, St. George, Wulff and Tomm (2015) state,

In Research As Daily Practice we are embracing the connections in ways that go beyond simply integration research findings into therapeutic practices. Carefully examining how research and practice entail very similar steps or phases (albeit language differently) is, we believe, still a largely unexplored area in the world of practice. (p. 4)

The authors go on to elaborate the ways in which the activities of a therapy practitioner in his or her daily work are very much based on the same underlying themes as the work of a researcher (St. George et al., 2015, p. 6). Then they go on to say that “our working hypothesis is

that these two identified processes could be understood as one and the same, and the two separate labels and their associated languaging (*sic*) are not essential” (St. George et al., 2015, p. 7).

What an extraordinary statement to make! Would this not mean that all methods are made equal if applied to the usefulness of solving actual problems? Would this not mean that we are asking, along with Gergen (2015), “have our traditional practice of research added significantly to human wellbeing?” (p. 45). It’s no wonder that, during this presentation at the very start of the semester, I heard other students grumbling about how ridiculous this idea was. It is very challenging for most of us academia-steeped and studious pursuers of truth to relinquish the much privileged pursuit of *logos*, and the *logocentrism*, amongst other things, that protects and perpetuates our expert positioning (Fox, 2003, p. 85).

What would motivate us, along with Fox (2003), “to re-evaluate the hierarchy of knowledge which situates research evidence in a position superior to other forms of knowing (...) to re-privilege the role of the ‘practitioner’ in generating useful knowledge, without rejecting the skills and perspectives of the ‘academic’ researcher” (p. 82)? I believe, as an emerging social worker, that the values and ethics of my profession must be at the center of the answer. My work of interacting, supporting, collaborating with, and learning alongside individuals, families, communities, and organizations, must be informed by those relationships, by the expert knowledges of the people I am working with, and by my ability to make the necessary connections between their needs and the meeting of those needs. St. George et al. (2015) write that “recasting therapy as shared inquiry or co-research allows each journey of therapy with a family to be a research endeavor” (p. 7). “Well then!”, I thought to myself very happily, “My dreams of being a researcher were saved!”

References (for excerpt)

Fox, N. J. (2003). Practice-based evidence: Towards collaborative and transgressive research.

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Gergen, K. J. (2015). *An invitation to social construction* (3rd ed.). London, UK: SAGE.

St. George, S., Wulff, D., & Tomm, K. (2015). Research as daily practice. *Journal of Systemic*

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