

**Basic principles of relational, dialogical and collaborative
research^{1 2 3}**

Princípios básicos da pesquisa relacional, dialógica e colaborativa

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Abstract

This article, based on the social constructionist perspective, aims to present a methodological possibility for research based on relational, collaboration and dialogue principles. The article presents the theoretical bases of this perspective and its influences in carrying out scientific research. Relational research, which can also be defined as dialogical or collaborative, is mainly concerned about the relationships between people, the dialogue and collaborative work. Although its principles can be useful for various types of investigations, we tend to consider that they relate much more to research involving human beings, especially in the field of Social and Human Sciences. Theoretically, this type of research is based on so-called postmodern perspectives, whose characteristics are critical to the foundations of Modern Science and also to social constructionist studies that presume that any knowledge is socially constructed. This type of research does not bring pre-defined and established methodological proposals, on the contrary, it invites researchers to open up to new dialogues with their research subjects, inviting them to become co-builders of research, creating spaces of inclusion and diversity within scientific studies.

Keywords: relational research, collaborative research, dialogue, social constructionism

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Resumo

Este artigo, baseando-se na perspectiva construcionista social, visa apresentar uma possibilidade metodológica para pesquisas fundamentadas em princípios relacionais, de colaboração e diálogo. O texto apresenta as bases teóricas desta perspectiva e suas influências na realização de uma pesquisa científica. Uma pesquisa relacional, que também pode ser definida como dialógica ou colaborativa, tem como centro de suas preocupações as relações entre as pessoas, o diálogo e o trabalho colaborativo. Embora seus princípios possam ser úteis para vários tipos de investigações, tendemos a considerar que dizem muito mais respeito a pesquisas que envolvem seres humanos, especialmente no âmbito das Ciências Sociais e Humanas. Teoricamente, essas pesquisas se fundamentam em perspectivas chamadas pós-modernas, que tem por características a crítica aos fundamentos da Ciência Moderna e também os estudos construcionistas sociais que partem do princípio de que qualquer conhecimento é construído socialmente. Essas pesquisas não trazem propostas metodológicas pré-definidas e estabelecidas, pelo contrário, convidam os pesquisadores a se abrirem a novos diálogos com seus sujeitos de pesquisa, convidando-os a tornarem-se co-construtores da investigação, criando espaços de inclusão e diversidade dentro dos estudos científicos.

Palavras-chave: *pesquisa relacional, pesquisa colaborativa, diálogo, construcionismo social*

This article⁴ aims to present the basic principles of a relational research, which can also be defined as dialogical or collaborative⁵, and whose main concerns are exactly what the names themselves indicate, that is, the relationships between people, the dialogue and collaborative work. Although these principles can be useful for various types of investigations, we tend to consider that they relate much more to research involving human beings, especially in the field of Social and Human Sciences. We present herein the theoretical bases of these principles and their influence in carrying out scientific research, based on a bibliographic review on the subject.

This type of research stems from the postmodern perspective, which we define here as a set of studies that question the possibility that knowledge is universal and subject to generalization, since every explanation of reality is always local and partial. No matter how organic, systematic and valid scientific knowledge is, it is still valid knowledge within a set of

⁴ This article is part of a post-doctorate research that is being carried out at the Kanankil Institute in the city of Mérida, Mexico. I would like to thank María del Rocío Chaveste Gutierrez y Papusa - María Luisa Molina López for their valuable contributions to the article based on pleasant readings and very educational conversations. I would also thank the participants of the Social Constructionism Study Group, Rita, Uyrá, Pedro, Jaqueline, Luana and Márcia and collaborators, in carrying out this work.

⁵ Collaborative social inquiry is also the name of a type of research that: "... fue desarrollado por Janice DeFehr (2008), el cual es un enfoque que proviene de la comunidad internacional de prácticas colaborativas, está inspirado en Harlene Anderson y sus colegas colaborativos" (Infante, 2013, p. 7). Translation from Spanish to English: ... was developed by Janice DeFehr (2008), which is an approach that comes from the international community of collaborative practices, it is inspired by Harlene Anderson and her collaborative colleagues.

specific principles, paradigms and circumstances and not necessarily better or more genuine than the others.

The dominant research tradition has emerged within a modernist worldview. Modernism assumes that, with the proper tools and techniques, we will be able to discover reality. Of course, part and parcel of this assumption is the belief that there is a reality to be discovered. [...] Postmodernism, on the other hand, challenges the notion that there is one reality to be discovered. Instead, postmodern theorists propose that our ways of talking and relating to each other and the world should be the focus of the study and therefore, the idea of multiple truths, multiple realities, and multiple methods for exploration such realities is paramount. (McNamee, 2014, p. 74)

Apart from this, for some authors, in their eagerness to make social phenomena objective, quantifiable and verifiable in order to obtain the status of science, the human and social sciences need to hide the relational aspects of living phenomena, and the consequence of this is the loss of the central elements of the investigation. According to John Shotter (2012), ... none of the so-called 'social sciences' will fulfill these [basic modern science requirements, such as objectivity, abstraction, systematicity and predictability]⁶, and Kenneth Gergen argues that:

...social psychology is primarily a historical inquiry. Unlike the natural sciences, it deals with facts that are largely non repeatable and which fluctuate markedly over time. Principles of human interaction cannot readily be developed over time because the facts on which they are based do not generally remain stable. Knowledge cannot accumulate in the usual scientific sense because such knowledge does not generally transcend its historical boundaries. (Gergen, 1973, p.310)

Commenting on Wittgenstein, Sheila McNamee argues that it is a mistake to try to systematize what is not systematic and classifies existing research into three categories: quantitative (diagnostic), qualitative (interpretive) and relational (process-oriented) and defines the main characteristics of each one.

⁶ Translation from Spanish of: "... ninguna de las 'ciencias llamadas sociales' llega a cumplir con estos requisitos [básicos da ciência moderna, como objetividade, abstração, sistematicidade e previsibilidade]" (Shotter, 2012, p. 22)

Table 1. Understanding Consistency and Inconsistency across Research Worlds

SCIENTIFIC METHOD Traditional Quantitative Diagnostic Evidence Based Practice	LET'S UNDERSTAND Traditional Qualitative Interpretive	LET'S CHANGE IT TOGETHER Relational Constructionist
Prove	Understand	Change
Observe	Describe/Interpret	Co-Create
Researcher/ subject	Research/participants	Co-Researchers
True or False	Situated Meanings	Generate New Meaning
Discoverable Truth and Cause/Effect Mechanisms	Contextualized Knowledge and Multiple Realities	Generate New Realities
Statistically Valid	Authentic to Participants	Locally Useful/ Generative
Generalizable & Repeatable	Possibly Transferable	Local and Historical, Co-Evolving
Discover Truth	Expand Insight	Generating Possibilities

Source: (McNamee, 2014, p. 77).

For McNamee (2008), three principles mark a relational research: changing the emphasis from the individual to the relational; the understanding that everything we talk about is a social construction and that there is no possibility of discovering an absolute, universal truth, because it is always a creation from certain points of view; and the third is that language does not represent the world, but constitutes it, creates it. Much of this research is based on a metatheory called social constructionism, which assumes that our perception of the world is always socially constructed that we do not see the world as it is, but as we learn to see, from our social contexts⁷. According to the author, it is not a matter of invalidating other types of research and considering that relational research should replace a modern view of science. Each research has its contribution to knowledge and will be even greater if it is recognized as a way of explaining the world, and that it is not the only way or the best one.

Defining a certain knowledge as being superior hides interests of domination and power, as Foucault warns us: Power produces knowledge..., there is no power relationship without a

⁷ For more information on social constructionism, check Gergen (2007) and Gergen and Gergen (2011).

correlated constitution of a field of knowledge, nor knowledge that does not suppose and does not constitute at the same time power relations⁸. Therefore, a dialogical relationship, at first, needs a recognition of the other, of their knowledge, of their way of being and being in the world.

Moacir Gadotti, Paulo Freire and Sérgio Guimarães (1995) state that respecting the difference is very important for public education, which we extend here to a science that is also a generator of useful knowledge for everyone. Nowadays we realize very clearly that the difference must not only be respected. It is the wealth of humanity, the basis of a philosophy of dialogue⁹. However for the authors: ... the dialogue only takes place between equals and different people, never between antagonists¹⁰. I believe that, when they talk about antagonism, the authors call attention to that type of speech that aims to convince or win over the other's opinion. In this case, it is not a question of really listening to the other, but of a struggle, a game of win or lose. When you go into a dialogue with a perspective that there is more adequate or true knowledge, you tend towards a clash of ideas, not a real dialogue.

And what is dialogue? It is a horizontal relationship between A and B. It is born from a critical matrix and generates criticality (Jaspers). It is nourished by love, humility, hope, faith, trust. Therefore, only dialogue communicates. And when the two poles of the dialogue connect like this, with love, with hope, with faith in each other, they become critical in the search for something. An empathic relationship is then established between them. Only then is there communication (Freire, 1967).¹¹.

Paulo Freire's definition of anti-dialogue also helps us to think about how, in general, we carry out our research activities:

⁸ Translation from Portuguese of: "O poder produz saber ..., não há relação de poder sem constituição correlata de um campo de saber, nem saber que não suponha e não constitua ao mesmo tempo relações de poder" (Foucault 1987, p. 31).

⁹ Translation from Portuguese of: "Hoje percebemos com muita clareza que a diferença não deve apenas ser respeitada. Ela é a riqueza da humanidade, base de uma filosofia do diálogo" (p. 1)

¹⁰ Translation from Portuguese of: "... o diálogo só dá entre iguais e diferentes, nunca entre antagonísticos" (p. 94).

¹¹ Translation from Portuguese of: E o que é o diálogo? É uma relação horizontal de A com B. Nasce de uma matriz crítica e gera criticidade (Jaspers). Nutre-se do amor, da humildade, da esperança, da fé, da confiança. Por isso, só o diálogo comunica. E quando os dois pólos do diálogo se ligam assim, com amor, com esperança, com fé um no outro, se fazem críticos na busca de algo. Instala-se, então, uma relação de empatia entre ambos. Só aí há comunicação (Freire, 1967, p. 107)

The anti-dialogue, which implies a vertical relationship from A to B, is the opposite of all of this. It's unloving. It is uncritical and does not generate criticism, precisely because it is unloving. It is not humility. It is hopeless. Arrogant. Self-sufficient. In the anti-dialogue, that “sympathy” relationship between its poles is broken, which characterizes the dialogue. For all these reasons, the anti-dialogue does not communicate. It makes announcements (Freire).¹²

Do the researchers actually go to the field to listen and engage in a dialogue with the research subjects, to get to know, understand or simply to obtain data for the research? Is it possible to carry out dialogical research when the research subjects are considered ignorant, when their knowledge is less recognized or validated?

The following images show, in a creative and fun way, how we tend to consider ourselves morally superior to others, which, after all, can also mean how we think that our knowledge, our way of seeing the world is more correct and adequate than the others, which prevents us from listening or makes it difficult to listen and consider the views that are unrelated or contrary to ours, with due attention and respect. Currently, social networks allow us to block and exclude those who oppose our ideas, but in everyday life, as the images indicate, we often tend to belittle opinions that differ from ours, considering them immature, partial, mistaken or false. Underestimating and ridiculing the perception of the other does not favor dialogue. The following images reveal how arrogant this behavior is. In the certainty that our opinion is the best, we stop listening and considering possibilities to see and understand the world in different ways, which are not necessarily better or worse, but are other points of view¹³.

¹² Translation from Portuguese of: O antidiálogo, que implica numa relação vertical de A sobre B, é o oposto a tudo isso. É desamoroso. É acrítico e não gera criticidade, exatamente porque desamoroso. Não é humildade. É desesperançoso. Arrogante. Autossuficiente. No antidiálogo quebra-se aquela relação de “simpatia” entre seus pólos, que caracteriza o diálogo. Por tudo isso, o antidiálogo não comunica. Faz comunicados (Freire, 1967, p. 107-8).

¹³ When studying interpersonal communication, Theodor Newcomb, in 1950, published the ABX model, in which he seeks to explain how two people A and B behave in relation to a fact, subject or action X tending to consensus or dissent. As per Martino, 2017.



Figure 1 – Moral Superiority Pyramid (Pirâmide de la Superioridad Moral)

Source <https://evolucionyneurociencias.blogspot.com/2016/12/la-ilusion-de-superioridad-moral.html>

PYRAMID LENGEND:

- YOU
- ACTIVISTS
- CYCLISTS/VEGANS
- INTERNET OPINIOLOGISTS/ PEOPLE WHO READ / ANIMAL DEFENDERS
- THE VULGAR AND IGNORANT MAJORITY

As per DeFeher: When we understand dialogically, we open ourselves to the formative influence of the other and of otherness; we allow ourselves to be captured, imprisoned, possessed by things outside ourselves. (2008).¹⁴

In relational research, the researcher gives up control, insofar as he invites his conversational partners as participants in the research processes. Considering that the research that we deal with here starts from the premises already discussed, we will discuss the methodological aspects that involve a relational research.

¹⁴ Translation from Portuguese of: “Quando entendemos dialogicamente, nos abrimos para a influência formativa do outro e da alteridade; nos permitimos ser capturados, presos, possuídos por coisas fora de nós mesmos”¹⁴ (DeFeher, 2008, p. 66).

Relational research and methodological procedures

*Collaborative dialogic inquiry, as a research method,
is inherently generative and transformative,
just as it is in everyday life.*

(DeFehr)¹⁵

How can a relational research be carried out? What kind of methodologies use this type of research? We begin by stating that research of this nature does not present specific methods with defined techniques to be followed by the researcher, precisely because its central focus is not its methodology, nor its theoretical framework, nor its objectives, but people. According to DeFehr: Method, in collaborative therapy practice, is always ‘on the way’, always ‘once off’ and unrepeatable, always a first time ‘premiere’ arising out of a particular, historical dialogical situation (DeFehr, 2008)¹⁶. These are surveys that aim to get to know people and study human and social phenomena in the most relational and collaborative way possible.

When doing a relational research, the researcher must always pay attention, aiming to build a research “with” and not “about” his research subjects, to the point of there being a dilution of roles, in which the participating subjects are invited, whenever possible, to make decisions and actively participate in the research. It is, therefore, a type of work, which is not directed nor controlled by the researcher. Of course, in no research is there complete freedom. There are several limitations: time, financial and personal resources, the expected result of the work: an article, a thesis, a dissertation, a report, whatever it may be. Based on these factors that, in some way, will, by themselves, define what is necessary and what is possible or not to be done, the researcher must seek to involve the participants in the research as much as possible in all phases of the process.

The researcher, very frequently, when carrying out research involving human beings, defines what he wants to research, his objectives, he chooses the theories that can help in the analysis of the data, chooses the ideal subjects to obtain the data he needs and defines the most

¹⁵ Translation from Spanish of: La indagación dialógica colaborativa, como método de investigación, es inherentemente generativa y transformadora, así como es en la vida cotidiana.” (DeFehr, n.d, p. 5)

¹⁶ Translation from Portuguese of: “O método, na prática da terapia colaborativa, está sempre ‘a caminho’, sempre ‘uma vez’ e irrepitível, sempre uma primeira ‘estreia’ que surge de uma situação dialógica histórica particular” (DeFehr, 2008, p. XVI)

appropriate methods to collect that information. Having done that, he goes to the field, collects as much data as he can, returns to analyze and report what he found, then finalizes the work with one or more publications that, in some situations, are not even known to those people who effectively participated in the process of investigation. The aim of this research is to increase scientific knowledge on a given subject, and its results are published for a specific audience, who are in universities, who read scientific articles or attend academic congresses. This is the traditional research model centered on scientific methodology, and not on the people who produce the knowledge.

Taking this involvement with the researchers as of the beginning, means involving the participants since before the elaboration of the research itself, since ideally the study should be of interest to the group, and not just to the researcher. According to Janice DeFehr, in order to do research with people and not about them, research questions need to be thought out differently than they usually are, and should be:

... an inquiry that makes sense, urgency and relevance to individuals and communities. Research questions have personal, social, and political histories. Collaborative inquiry is motivated by questions that matter and make a difference to research participants, rather than questions that apparently derive from the individual astuteness of an individual researcher (DeFehr, no date, p. 8).¹⁷

When you do not know the group with which you are going to work with, it is important, whenever possible, to get closer, make visits, approach the group, know a little about the reality of the context, of the universe which one intends to investigate or where the people surveyed are located. Shotter (2012) also suggests that, instead of starting with theories, we start our investigations from our daily observations.

The research questions, the methodology itself and the main content of the work can be set up together with the participants. If these people cannot, for some reason, participate directly in the construction of the processes, it is important that the researcher, somehow, considers what to him/her seems important and, if he/she realizes, at some point, that what he/she is doing is not important to the group, he/she should be willing to make changes, or at

¹⁷ Translation from Spanish of: ... una indagación que tenga sentido, urgencia y relevancia para personas y comunidades. Las preguntas de investigación tienen historias personales, sociales y políticas. La indagación colaborativa es motivada por preguntas que importan y hacen una diferencia para los participantes de la investigación, en vez de ser preguntas que aparentemente derivan de la astucia individual de un individuo investigador (DeFehr, n.d., p. 8).

least try to get closer to the group's interests and, if that is not possible, as a last resort, to be clear about that too.

The concept of not-knowing, developed by Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian (2008) when addressing therapeutic practice, is also useful to the researcher, within this perspective. The purpose of not knowing is to keep the therapist or researcher deeply interested and open to listening to the other. When the researcher goes into the field full of hypotheses, he tends more to consider what he already imagines he will find than, in fact, being open to fully listening to the other. When you do not know something, it is curiosity, the question that dominates. In this sense, the researcher is much more available to welcome perspectives, ideas, projects that he had never imagined before. Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian, innovators of the collaborative stance in therapeutic practice first introduced the term 'not knowing' in the early 90's¹⁸ (DeFeher, Amam, Barros, & Wai, 2012). Those that practice the not-knowing: Nevertheless, they recognize that professionals, no matter how experienced, cannot know better than others how they should live their lives.¹⁹ (DeFeher, Amam, Barros, & Wai, 2012). When addressing collaborative therapy, Cynthia Infante states:

... client and therapist are conversational partners engaged in a collaborative relationship and in a dialogical conversation; the client is an expert on his own life and the therapist is an expert in creating a conversational space; the client and the therapist come together in a mutual inquiry; the therapist works from the stance of not knowing, which is a skeptical stance about and an attempt of knowledge, it is an attitude in which he believes that a person can never be fully understood, with the need to be constantly informed ... (Infante).²⁰

Transposing the therapeutic context to the context of scientific research, we can say that the relational researcher must know how to provoke dialogue, create and maintain a respectful conversation in which all voices can be heard:

¹⁸ Translation from Spanish of: "Harlene Anderson y Harry Goolishian, innovadores de la postura colaborativa en la práctica terapéutica introdujeron por primera vez el término 'no saber' a principios de los años 90" (DeFeher, Amam, Barros, & Wai, 2012, p. 92).

¹⁹ Translation from Spanish of: "Sin embargo, reconocen que los profesionistas, sin importar cuan experimentados sean, no pueden saber mejor que otros como deben vivir sus vidas" ¹⁹ (DeFeher, Amam, Barros, & Wai, 2012, p. 92).

²⁰ Translation from Spanish of: "... cliente y terapeuta son socios conversacionales comprometidos en una relación colaborativa y en una conversación dialógica; el cliente es experto en su propia vida y el terapeuta es el experto en crear un espacio conversacional; el cliente y el terapeuta se unen en una indagación mutua; el terapeuta trabaja desde la postura del no-conocer, la cual es una postura escéptica y tentativa acerca del conocimiento, es una actitud en que la se cree que nunca se puede comprender plenamente a una persona, se tiene la necesidad de estar siendo informado constantemente... (Infante, 2013, p. 14).

We also became curious about for whom it is most generative. This also invites the constructionism research to ask questions about whose voices are silenced, what practices are being privileged, and what moral orders we are creating in our research. In other words, the constructionism research is invited into a reflexive space where deliberation and curiosity are featured. (McNamee, 2014, p. 82)²¹

One of the main characteristics of this type of research is its proposal to precisely consider what is generally outside the standards, the norm, listening to discordant, less visible speeches, expanding the context of understanding the researched theme.

Each of us is a being in the world, with the world and with others. Living or incarnating this evident finding, as an educator, means recognizing in others - no matter whether literate students or university course participants; whether students of elementary schools or members of a popular assembly - the right to say their word. To listen to them correctly, with the conviction of those who fulfill a duty and not with the malice of those who do a favor to receive much more in return. But, as listening also implies speaking, the right to listen also corresponds to the right to speak to them. Listening to them in the above sense is, basically, talking to them, while simply talking to them would be a way of not listening to them. To always say our words to them, without ever exposing ourselves and offering ourselves to them, arrogantly convinced that we are here to save them, is a good way that we have to affirm our elitism, always authoritarian. This cannot be the way for an educator to act or for an educator whose option is liberating (Freire).²²

As the scientific language is exclusive to a restricted group, one of the first concerns of a researcher who wants to integrate different voices into his investigation is by getting closer to the language of the research group. The use of a common and everyday language brings the researcher closer to the people who contribute to the research:

²¹ Translation from Portuguese of: Também ficamos curiosos de quem é mais generativo. Isso também convida a pesquisa do construcionismo a fazer perguntas sobre quais vozes são silenciadas, que práticas estão sendo privilegiadas e que ordens morais estamos criando em nossa pesquisa. Em outras palavras, a pesquisa do construcionismo é convidada para um espaço reflexivo onde a deliberação e a curiosidade são apresentadas (McNamee, 2014, p. 82).

²² Translation from Portuguese of: Cada um de nós é um ser no mundo, com o mundo e com os outros. Viver ou encarnar essa constatação evidente, enquanto educador ou educadora, significa reconhecer nos outros - não importa se alfabetizando ou participantes de cursos universitários; se alunos de escolas de primeiro grau ou membros de uma assembleia popular - o direito de dizer a sua palavra. De escutá-lo corretamente, com a convicção de quem cumpre um dever e não com a malícia de quem faz um favor para receber muito mais em troca. Mas, como escutar implica falar também, ao dever de escutá-los corresponde também o direito de falar a eles. Escutá-los no sentido acima referido é, no fundo, falar com eles, enquanto simplesmente falar a eles seria uma forma de não os ouvir. Dizer-lhes sempre as nossas palavras, sem jamais nos expormos e nos oferecermos à deles, arrogantemente convencidos de que estamos aqui para salvá-los, é uma boa maneira que temos de afirmar o nosso elitismo, sempre autoritário. Este não pode ser o modo de atuar de uma educadora ou de um educador cuja opção é libertadora (Freire, 1989, p. 17).

Each part of the research event changes when the question is conducted by methods of inquiry that are familiar to its members. The research question emerges collectively from the research participants. Participants are free to communicate in their everyday, familiar and dialogical ways of speaking and writing. The researcher joins with the participants in the role of co-respondent, instead of the analyst or interpreter positioned above and outside what is expressed by the participants (DeFehr).²³

As the idea is to get as close as possible to the daily universe of those surveyed, the use of known ways of relating and obtaining knowledge is suggested, and the main and most basic of all is dialogue. Dialogue is much more familiar to most people than interviews, questionnaires, filling out forms, etc. In relation to the interview, DeFehr states that, as it is planned, defined and conducted by the researcher, who guides the interviewee with his preconceived ideas in relation to what he wants to know and what he expects the participant to contribute, this, no matter how little structured it is, gives the participants a much less chance of involvement, whose role is reduced to answering the questions they are asked. “Once the order and content of what will be asked has been determined, the interview mode contains the respondent's speech within pre-established parameters. Interview questions involve answers; the answers are never far from the questions that precede them” (DeFehr).²⁴

DeFehr quotes linguist Roger Shuy (2003) to distinguish between interview and dialogue. According to the author (quoted by DeFehr, 2008), the interview is a conversation with a series of questions and answers carried out and organized by the interviewer. In the case of a dialogue, there is symmetry between the participants and the conversation is free, with the possibility of changing the content, introducing topics, as is done in a daily conversation. For him, in an interview there is a clear inequality of power, in which the interviewer has the power to conduct the speech lines, while in the dialogue there is a mutual interaction and a horizontal relationship.

No one knows, when starting a dialogue, exactly what points are going to be discussed on that subject. When the researcher arrives with a questionnaire, he already has the map of the

²³ Translation from Spanish of: Cada parte del evento de investigación cambia cuando la indagación se conduce por los métodos de indagación dialógicamente familiares a sus miembros. La pregunta de investigación emerge colectivamente desde los participantes de la investigación. Los participantes los libres de comunicarse en sus formas usuales, familiares y dialógicas de hablar y escribir. Es investigador se une con los participantes en el papel de co-respondiente, en vez de analista o intérprete posicionado encima y fuera de los expresado por los participantes (DeFehr, n.d., p. 21).

²⁴ Translation from Spanish of: Determinado el orden y el contenido de lo que se preguntará, el modo de entrevista contiene el discurso del respondiente dentro de parámetros preestablecidos. Las preguntas de la entrevista implican sus respuestas; las respuestas nunca se alejan de las preguntas que las preceden (DeFehr, n.d, p. 7).

conversation drawn, he just needs to fill in the data that the interviewee brings him. In the dialogue, both the content and the path are made together, with the participation of the researcher and the subject of research and, the more diluted these positions are, the better, since the hierarchies are dissolved and both become partners in the conversation.

Dialogue is a joint action, it depends on all the people involved: “Our conversational expressions and responses do not stand alone as outcomes of our own independent efforts of intentions, separate from outside influence” (DeFehr, 2008, p. 28). The author quotes Gadamer (2004), saying that, for this author, it is more correct to say that the conversation leads the participants, than that they lead it. Genuine conversation, for the author, has its own flow and involves the people within it, who interact and participate in this process, but do not necessarily lead or control what will happen.

Just as the unfolding dialogue itself shapes our participation within it, the influence of joint action spills beyond the parameters of a particular conversation, as it changes us in our ways of being in the world. Attitudes, identities, desires, priorities, and relationships shift us as an unintended result of dialogic engagement with each other (DeFehr, 2008).²⁵

The author suggests that dialogue is a joint action. The dialogue is born from the encounter, but it is not known when it ends, it is an open process. Even if we have left a conversation, we can continue this dialogue for many days, months or years. For DeFehr: “Openness, participation, and response, rather than consensus or agreement, are crucial factors in each dialogue situation” (DeFehr, 2008, p. 26).

Spontaneity and corporeality are some of the characteristics of this research for DeFehr (no date): the first, because there is no exact planning of what will happen, since the researcher depends on the participation of the research subjects. Together, they will give direction to the researched content. The second, because the construction of research is not only cognitive, rational, but involves bodily sensations. The fact of being with the other not only listening, but with a radical presence, perceiving the other also in their entirety.

Yet, there is no technique, method, or specific strategy that accompanies radical presence. Instead, there is a way of positioning oneself in the world. [...] My position (ground) is changed by virtue of considering yours. It is no longer me and my view against you and your view. It is

²⁵ Translation From Portuguese of: Assim como o próprio diálogo desdobramento molda nossa participação dentro dele, a influência da ação conjunta derrama além dos parâmetros de uma conversa particular, à medida que nos muda em nossos modos de estar no mundo. Atitudes, identidades, desejos, prioridades e relacionamentos nos deslocam como resultado não intencional do engajamento dialógico entre eles (DeFehr, 2008, p. 30)

my view in relation to your view. Dialog, as a form of radical presence, encourages curiosity for difference, openness to forming new understandings, and a movement away from agreement or adjudication of perspectives. (McNamee, 2015, p.378)

To start the dialogical work, it is essential that people be at ease, comfortable, participate voluntarily and have the desire to be there. The researcher must be attentive to be a good host, be cordial, clear up doubts, create and maintain a space for free conversation, creating a climate of trust, goodwill, freedom and unconditional acceptance of people. An initial moment should be created for people to get to know each other, introduce themselves, have the opportunity to know with whom they will share their ideas and opinions and feel free to express themselves, disagree and argue.

For DeFehr, the researcher, in this type of research, should never stray from his research group, keeping himself synchronized with the participants. Unlike the traditional qualitative research methodology, the researcher, once he has collected the data he needed for his research, does not withdraw, to analyze the data, select, highlight, eliminate in order to build his research work. In dialogical-collaborative research, the researcher is always in contact, discussing, sharing his doubts, his perceptions, his conclusions with his conversational partners, considering that the authorship of his research is shared with the participants in this process.

DeFehr defends the need for an answer in the dialogue. For her, nothing is worse than the non-response, which suggests indifference, when the other does not participate in the interaction. Furthermore, listening must be total, that is, not only rational, but involve the whole body, all the senses. Whoever listens must be whole in the situation in order to be able to perceive the other person fully as well.

Dialogism also proposes the multiple character of the authorship of the generation of meaning. The author's philosophical views do not rank first. The characters seem to free themselves from the guardianship of their creator. They have ideological authority and are independent. They are free people, capable of facing their creator, not agreeing with him and even opposing him (Infante)²⁶.

²⁶ Translation from Spanish of: El dialogismo también propone el carácter múltiple de la autoría de la generación del sentido. Los puntos de vista filosóficos del autor no ocupan el primer lugar. Los personajes parecen liberarse de la tutela de su creador. Poseen una autoridad ideológica y son independientes. Son personas libres, capaces de encarar a su creador, de no estar de acuerdo con él y hasta de oponerse (Infante, 2013, p. 11).

In most research, the researcher goes to the field, collects his data, returns, analyzes, discusses, interprets, publishes and can even present the data obtained to the investigated population. However, collaborative and dialogical research invites us to go beyond this formal feedback and which brings the final conclusions reached by the researcher. Another characteristic of collaborative research is to try to ensure that everything that is said, produced, written and published by the research has the participation of the participants. One way to involve participants as co-builders of the research is to give them the opportunity to talk about the analyzes, about the productions, before they are finished.

In this type of research, the researcher should avoid, as much as possible, analyzing and interpreting the data collected, alone in front of his computer. As it is a quest for shared authorship, it is important that their reflections and productions be known and commented on by their subjects, who are co-creators of the research. Janice DeFeher, for example, in her doctorate research (2008), after transcribing the conversation circle she had with her research collaborators, made some comments on specific points of the transcript and sent them to the participants, asking them to comment on what it seemed to them, and they sent her new comments about the dialogue. In other words, they were dialogues about dialogues. She also asked them to send, in writing, reflections on her work, which she commented on and returned, receiving more comments. Infante (2003) also, in her Master's thesis, transcribed her interviews and returned them to the participants of her research to comment on what seemed to them and generate new conversations. These dialogues about dialogues can be infinite, but, of course, they will not be when the purpose is to disseminate the results of a research.

It is not necessary to do this, but what stands out here are the attempts to always keep the investigated group not only up to date with what is happening in the research, but giving it the power to add, remove, suggest, change, that is to say, really participate as a co-builder of that investigation, and not as a mere provider of information to be discussed solely through the researcher's lens. If the group is not literate, how is it possible for the participants to know and discuss, in some way, the research data? In addition, it is important to think about how subjects can participate in their final result. How is it possible to take these results to the group that generated the main research data? This is a concern that characterizes a type of dialogical research, since many probably have no interest in reading or the facility to read a scientific article, dissertation or thesis.

As per John Shotter: “Thus the outcomes of our inquiries as practitioners are not to be measured in terms of their end points – in terms of their objective outcomes but in terms of what we learn along the way, in the course of the unfolding movements they led us into making.” (Shotter, 2012, p.1).

A good metaphor for this type of investigation is to think of it as a collective dance or a dance in pairs, in which one person can invite another, suggest certain steps according to the sound of the music, with the momentum, with the space, with the intimacy you may or may not have with your dance partner(s). When people dance together, spontaneously and not as a planned choreography, they complement each other, participate together in the elaboration of the dance. Even if they follow some proposed step, there is no imposition, each one can adapt the proposal to their own way, to what seems most interesting or appropriate, or to what they can accomplish.

Being dialogical as a philosophy of life

DeFeher says that dialogue can also be understood as a philosophy of life and cites Nikulin, “To be is to be in dialogue” (Nikulin, 2006, p. 253, cited by DeFehr, 2008, p. 31). As social beings, we are always around others, with others. Human beings, due to their own characteristics, can hardly survive alone and, if they can, they incorporate the behavior of other animals that they observe and interact with²⁷. “As living beings, we continually encounter and interact with others and with otherness, we are in continuous dialogue with our world” (DeFehr, 2008, p. 32).

Quoting Bakhtin, DeFehr emphasizes that knowledge is between people, and it is not something internal to every human being. Understanding is dialogical, understanding or not understanding is part of a dialogue. Words can have different meanings and, often, it is necessary

²⁷ Obviously, it is very difficult to know what a human being is like who has never interacted with other people. There are some documented cases of children called “savages” who, it seems, were found after a long time without contact with other human beings. These cases showed children or adolescents who had not acquired verbal language and who, despite many efforts, were unable to acquire a fluent use of language, even though they have advanced in the acquisition and understanding of words. These are uncommon cases, but they may point to the need for human interaction in order to acquire higher psychic functions, such as planning ability and verbal language itself. Vigostki was one of the authors who argued that these human characteristics cannot develop without the participation of other human beings, that is, we can say, without dialogical actions.

to know the context in which they are being used to understand the conversation. Also part of the dialogue is the lack of understanding, the attempt to lead the conversation in another direction, the silence, the denial of the answer, in short, not saying is also saying.

Doing teamwork does not mean being collaborative. Horizontal work is not always easy, and it can even be more difficult, because we are not used to egalitarian work in group work. Groups can be built in an authoritarian, exclusive, disrespectful way, invalidating some lines and people. Some people in the group may not be heard, nor considered, or they may have their ideas belittled or ridiculed.

Being collaborative and dialogical, therefore, is not being in a group. When we are alone, we can be collaborative and dialogical, and, being in a group, we can be individualistic and competitive. It is a posture, a way of existing, a philosophy that accompanies us wherever we are.

Genuine innovative changes in institutions and organizations are ‘deep’ changes, in the sense that they are changes in our ‘ways’ of thinking, ‘ways’ of seeing, ‘ways’ of hearing, ‘ways’ of making connections between events, ‘ways’ of talking, and so on – in short, they are changes in our ‘ways’ of being someone, changes in the kind of person we are, changes in our identity. (Shotter, 2012).²⁸

According to Shotter, these changes are not planned, defined by intellectually granted protocols or procedures. It is also not something that comes from the outside in, through a conviction, an exhortation. It is a process that involves deep aspects of life choices, values and personal and social conceptions.

Collaborative and dialogical research also considers doing research (like any other activity), involves a decision and a political position. Every action has effects on the world. We make choices when conducting our research. We decide what to study and how, therefore, we can also ask ourselves what types of dialogues and relationships we want to create, foster and favor with our research and, based on these reflections, decide how to conduct the research. Hence McNamee states that:

²⁸ Translation from Spanish of: Los cambios innovadores genuinos en las instituciones y organizaciones son cambios ‘profundos’ en el sentido de que son cambios en nuestras ‘maneras’ de pensar, escuchar, de ‘hacer conexiones’ entre acontecimientos, ‘maneras’ de hablar, etc. - en síntesis, son cambios en nuestras ‘maneras’ de ser alguien, cambios en el tipo de persona que somos, cambios en nuestra identidad (Shotter, 2012, p. 21).

The most important questions within all research worlds are: In what ways is this inquiry useful? Does it generate new forms of understanding and thus new ways of ‘going on together?’ And most important, we must remember that research itself is a practice - a form of professional practice, if you will. Thus, the research/practitioner divide is not a divide at all but a matter of stepping into diverse discourse communities. Any form or practice (e.g., education, psychotherapy, organizational development, community building, etc.) is a form of inquiry” (McNamee, 2014).²⁹.

Being dialogical does not specifically concern research work, an exclusive choice for temporary and defined work. It is a posture, a philosophy of life, a way of being and being in the world. This attitude can be the main reference for diverse activities, such as education, research, therapy.³⁰. (McNamee, 2014)

Final considerations

We call relational, collaborative, dialogic research here, research whose main characteristic is involvement with the researched groups, not as providers of information, but as co-builders of investigative work. A great deal of research can fit into this denomination, some more, others less.

This type of research does not have a specific, necessary or characteristic methodology. Some methodologies will favor a dialogical investigative process, and others will not. Therefore, it is important that a researcher who aims to carry out this type of work is always aware of his choices, considering the extent to which they bring him or her closer to activities that are truly collaborative and relational. There is not a single path, there are many, there is the possibility of creating one’s own paths according to the context and the relationships that are created throughout the research.

I do not believe that there is an exact measure that defines whether a research was relational or not. What in fact makes up a collaborative and dialogical research is less of a method

²⁹ Translation from Portuguese of: As questões mais importantes dentro de todos os mundos de pesquisa são: De que maneira essa pesquisa é útil? Isso gera novas formas de compreensão e, portanto, novas maneiras de “continuar juntos?” E, mais importante, devemos lembrar que a pesquisa em si é uma prática – uma forma de prática profissional, se você quiser. Assim, a divisão pesquisa/profissional não é uma divisão, mas uma questão de entrar em diversas comunidades discursivas. Qualquer forma ou prática (por exemplo, educação, psicoterapia, desenvolvimento organizacional, construção de comunidades, etc.) é uma forma de investigação (McNamee, 2014, p. 93)

³⁰ There is a group that emerged in the context of family and systemic psychology that favors relational and dialogical therapeutic proposals (Anderson, 1997).

than an intention, a process that seeks, at all times, to involve the people researched in the construction of the investigation. It is a process that involves trust, dialogue, exchange, respect, democracy, ethics and, above all, care for human beings. It involves an optimism that it is possible to do things differently and that together we do better. This type of research is based on a fundamental belief that, in a dialogue, we will build better ways of being and being in the world. The belief that, if we come together, look at each other and listen to each other, we can produce a more horizontal, inclusive and, a befittingly human science.

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