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JEALOUSY, JEALOUSY: Exploring discipline envy and method jealousy in developing research topics in Information Science (Lightning Talk)

Abstract:

In this lightning talk I use an autoethnographic and narrative approach to discuss the generative and obstructive potential of discipline envy and method jealousy in developing research topics in Information Science (IS). I describe how envy and jealousy shaped the development of my doctoral research topic, information-sharing of artist-researchers, and aim to provoke reflection on cross-disciplinary research.

1. Introduction: Discipline envy + method jealousy

This presentation outlines the hopscotching leaps in the development of my doctoral research topic, information-sharing of artist-researchers, as it is shaped by discipline envy and method jealousy. Drawing on an autoethnographic approach I explore my personal experience as an emerging scholar. Autoethnography “acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, n.p.). In the presentation, I draw particular attention to emotions of envy and jealousy.

Learning about discipline envy gave name to the wish I had of borrowing from artistic disciplines. “Discipline envy” speaks to the boundary disputes of academic disciplines. Cultural critic Marjorie Garber (2001) argues that there is a desire, a coveting of other disciplines’ insights. Envy here is understood as a mechanism or energy—a desire to be equal or to emulate. Garber argues that “disciplines are constituted, precisely, on the site of their own lack” (Garber 2001, 89). I found that I was also experiencing method jealousy—a resentfulness of other disciplines access to the engagement with artistic methods. These motivations and/or inspirations of envy and jealousy can be generative, leading to novel and innovative outcomes or outputs. They can also be obstructive by blocking awareness of assumptions or obfuscating findings.

The lightning talk builds on the ongoing discussions regarding disciplinarily and boundaries of Information Science (IS) (cf. Furner 2015; Gorichanaz et al. 2019). IS draws on theories and methods from a variety of disciplines (Sonnenwald 2016; Hartel 2019), leading to discussions regarding the perceived strength and weakness of the IS discipline (Madsen 2016). Recently, scholars have drawn from humanities (Feinberg 2012), design (Clarke 2020), and feminist technoscience (Costello & Floegel 2021; Floegel & Costello 2022) approaches to challenge the prevalent procedures and framing of information research. These ongoing expansions and extensions influence the type of questions and how they are asked and legitimized within the IS discipline.

I describe how my doctoral research topic, the information-sharing of artist-researchers engaged in research-creation—an approach that brings together creative and academic research procedures and processes—was shaped by discipline envy and methods jealousy.

2. Research-creation, Artist-researchers, + Information-sharing

My doctoral research investigates the information-sharing practices of artist-researchers to explore the possibilities, challenges, and tensions of research-creation as a means of conducting and sharing research. I was first introduced to research-creation, while conducting research into arts-based research (Kampen & De Forest 2023). Research-creation offers a distinct but varied approach to research that focuses on the generation of knowledge through different kinds of artistic practice (Loveless 2019). The more I engaged with research-creation projects and literature the more envious I was of the approaches and jealously wanted to draw on them gain insight to IS phenomena—specifically information-sharing.

I chose information-sharing as an IS phenomena because I want to be shared *with*. My discipline envy, the exploration of lack and the fantasizing of an ideal elsewhere, was generative as I developed a focus on how the developing research topic could connect and be informed by artistic approaches. My jealousy of artistic methods inspired curiosity about roles and expertise—who gets to be and do the work of artist-researchers.

However, this envy and jealousy was obstructive as I struggled to see beyond my own interests and desires to explore connections and tensions. By oscillating between these different framings, I was not honouring research-creation approaches or methods, nor was I engaging with IS in a meaningful way. Drawing attention to the motivations helps me with parsing how and of what I am asking questions.

The lightning talk will culminate by offering reflection prompts for attendees regarding their own experiences of cross-disciplinary research.

Guided and motivated by envy and jealousy, and shaped by the conditions of possibility in IS, I continue to develop my approach and understanding of what can be explored through an IS lens and how.

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