



David:

Hi, my name is David, and I am a co-researcher at The Hub.

Mark:

Hello, my name is Mark and I'm one of the core team at The Hub.

Dorota:

Hi, my name is Dorota. I'm a research fellow at The Hub.

David:

I've really liked it, it was clear on the mix of the co-researchers and the actual people who were actually getting it on paper for us, Dorota and... instead of just us, having them on it as well makes it more clearer.

Mark:

So kind of you're talking about this mix of academic researchers and people who are not academic researchers, but working together to create the survey and understand the survey. It was a whole new experience for us, wasn't it?

David:

Yeah. It was, it was. Because we're a performing arts company and we don't usually do stuff like this.

Mark:

Dorota, what was it like from your perspective as you are a postdoc researcher and working with a lot of people who aren't?

Dorota:

Yeah. Just to follow up on these comments and some reflections I think that, again, this kind of standard research model would be that you are the expert in something and there is a knowledge gap. So you kind of use your expertise to find out the answer to certain questions to this knowledge gap. But I think this acknowledgement that you learn along the way is somewhat lost. Which is a bit not intuitive at the same time. I think that with our group, all the core researchers, including, me as an academic, you Mark, I think we were open. We are open to the public and we show that in fact, throughout the research process, we all learn.

There is nothing like you have to be the expert in something to find out an answer to a question. It's okay to say that as a group "These are our strengths, these are our weaknesses." We kind of together try to find out and learn along the way. I think in general, we all acknowledged that as human beings we are all curious. Every one of us has this curiosity inside. Every one of us has the right to do research as defined as being curious and trying to find answers to any questions that we have in life.

Mark:

You've always liked discussion groups that we've had at Allsorts. You've been keen to kind of have conversations and talk about important things. But it felt to me in terms of what Heart n Soul has done before, we've never had this amount of time to really talk, and discover, and listen to what is important for people.

David:

Our other project Allsorts, it's about everything, we're learning about everything, but this is being concentrated on near enough one subject.

That's like near enough psychology and things like that. So it's put in now we could take it away to... [dog growling]  
Sorry, the dog is going nuts.

Mark:

I think it felt to me as though before the project started, we had to have some big themes that we've said we were going to explore. Then when we actually started it felt like we needed more detail, and we needed a clearer steer than just a big theme. So that process of Pino's tea parties, and the conversations that came as a result of that. That invitation from everyone who Pino had invited to talk about what was really important to them now. That freed us to be able to focus in a direction about what we were actually really going to explore.

It was really interesting because I think, I mean actually now I'm looking back on it, I don't think at any stage Dorota really had the opportunity to talk about all the things she'd done before. And even explain what a postdoc researcher was. In a way by not using that language at the beginning, it allowed us all to kind of gradually wear the clothes of being a researcher.

It wasn't sort of, "Oh, Pino thinking and making up a list of the sorts of people who needed and ticking every box." There's none of that going on. But he picked the right people. But it was very interesting, I could see you nearly say lived experience. I think that's so interesting because it's actually two words that we barely, barely ever use. I don't feel are particularly owned by the co-researchers necessarily. But actually, the fact that people are bringing the experience of the world through their own eyes, and how they've lived their lives, and the schools they've been to and the experiences they've

all had. They really informed the conversations that we had and they were the basis for the themes that kind of came up that we wanted to explore. So it was really powerful to have all of those different perspectives in the room and to have the space for them to be shared.

Even people who've been involved in Heart n Soul for a really long time have revealed new sides to themselves and had space to talk about things that maybe they've not had a chance to talk about before.

David:

Yeah. It was easy talking to everyone because everyone's open and honest and guarantee they've gone through things like what you have as well. So it's easy to relate to people at Heart n Soul. No judgment in the room and that's, what's good about it.

Mark:

The culture of respect and trust, I was going to say is very much alive at Heart n Soul. Getting the space to feel and look right with portraits of people that you knew around the space. To have the working space in such a way that it was actually comfortable to physically sit there, and that there could be musical instruments or art materials around. It didn't feel formal. That all added to creating an atmosphere and an environment that then made it natural to, to be able to have these very deep and sometimes quite personal conversations. Also, to have spaces that we could go to if the conversation got too much, there was always the option to leave the room and come back.

Dorota:

I think in this space of trust and respect, of course at the beginning everyone knew that, that's what... I don't want to even use the word expected of us, but that was our normal to behave like this in this way. But at the same time, co-researchers were very vocal about this as well. I remember Ife's song, which she kind of created in one of the very first session, about love, care, and support, how do we want to behave? What do we expect from others? What others expect from us? I think that song had the kind of huge impact on me personally, as one of these very key moments in the process.

David:

I've enjoyed people listening to me as well over the project. Sometimes it could take a long time, but in a process could be like sad, happy, it's the way conversations go. It's good that people can have the space to sit down and talk. I like the way other people express themselves. The music, what people have done.

Mark:

I was listening to the way that Michaela was talking the expression from the soul. We often forget that's the name of this organisation, Heart n Soul. But it's called that because there seems to be a fast track to being able to represent very authentic, true feelings and expressions that is a hallmark of the people who are Heart n Soul. It's an unusual quality and it's an infectious quality. Creativity is not something that you suddenly create a session specifically to do. It was more that it was always available as an option for any of us at any time.

Dorota:

Co-researchers explain in such a perfect way why we need to be creative as... Why human beings in general are creative. I think, creating this space where people can in fact be creative, and express themselves in a different way is probably, such a core part, of course of our project. But then the question is how other teams could implement this as well. This is what our society in general has a problem with, of how to make sure that people feel safe and have this opportunity to speak about important and difficult topics.

David:

The atmosphere in where we're based, at The Albany and the Wellcome Collection are two different places, because we don't get the space (what we get at The Albany) to talk like the way have been. Just being around people like us and having our own space. That is what I liked about the Wellcome Collection is because that was our space. We all got to open up so much that we achieved so much.