Methodologies and Theories within Academic Research

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article	

ABSTRACT

This paper enters into scholarly debate and discussion about data, methodologies and theories within academic research. It proposes that critical and cultural theories and methodologies are not some isolated intellectual game. It explores how they are that, but they also offer us ways in which we can identify those things that we most take for granted in our society. Once we have identified their existence, then we can begin to see how they are constructed. We question cultural metanarratives and confront normative but constrictive ways of knowing. In doing so, we identify those who benefits from these 'givens' and those who are locked out from the central aspects of culture through the unthinking application of such 'givens'. Reading against the dominant cultural texts enables scholarly critiques of cultural metanarratives. It can be seen that such questioning is disruptive in the sense that it calls upon us to undertake scholarly research that takes knowledge forward. In doing so, we must clearly challenge that which we take for granted. For example, language embodies that shared cultural view in a flawed way. The flawed ways in which language establishes that shared cultural view is the best that we can do to share meaning. Language is a social 'given' or 'norm' that constructs the individual as well the culture. Meaning (fact) is never 'fixed' and stable: It is always in interpretation. Thinking thus acts to displace social reverence for 'fact' showing it to be a cultural invention necessary to the maintenance of social orderliness and order.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Qualitative critical and cultural theories have evolved to become significant elements of scholarship. I choose to identify and to discuss some of these as exemplars of this move in this paper. In doing so, there is no attempt to produce a taxonomy: Indeed, such would act against the purpose which is to identify how academic research has been extended and even 'freed up' through being viewed through the prism of such methodologies and theories. Elsewhere, I have discussed in detail my view of scholarship as the 'subjective academic narrative' [1,2]. Briefly, such a view recognises that all academic texts are a personal story at base. Hence, in this paper, I am not seeking to identify a knowledge gap, but to add to the scholarly discussions of the place and possibilities of narratology within the academy [3,4].

Such an understanding advances knowledge as it admits to the academy ways of knowing that may have been ignored. In doing so it facilitates critical views of western dominated knowledge structures and opens up possibilities for changing scholarly thinking and gatekeeping assumptions within research.

Scholars are aware of the necessity to read against as well as with the culture. It's not by chance that one of the things repressive societies do first is to burn books that they disagree with…not only in Germany and the American South in the 1930's but in, for example, Tibet under the Chinese in the 20th and 21st centuries, in Afghanistan under the Talibans in the 2000's and in East Timor under the Indonesians in the same period. Most Western societies simply don't publish books if they are considered too disruptive…unless they will make the publisher a great deal of money.

In the late 20th century, most cultural commentators thought that the fascist influences on thinking and government were on the run. Since the World Trade Centre demolition by terrorists in 2001, however, it seems as though a new set of 'givens' has emerged in the Western World. Many cultural critics in American Universities, for example, didn't have their contracts renewed. Others were silenced: There was a real threat to civil liberties. The Bush Regime went from the least popular presidency to one of the most popular ever! This leads us to identify new cultural metanarratives and to ask are they being constructed in circumstances which are much more constrictive.

The ideas given by critical and cultural theories espouse the concept that we should not as academic thinkers and creative practitioners go along with the majority, with received cultural wisdom, but that we should analyse, critique and deconstruct it. As Ben Highmore says: '…the everydayness of everyday life might be experienced as a sanctuary, or it may bewilder or give pleasure, it may delight or depress. Or its special quality might be its lack of qualities. It might be precisely, the unnoticed, the inconspicuous, the unobtrusive' [5].

It is basic to scholarship that we identify, investigate and interrogate what might otherwise remain un-noticed, acceptable and unquestioned. The purpose of such scholarship is to continue academic dynamism, to add to knowledge and to take privileged academic discourse forward.

2. CRITICAL CULTURAL THEORIES: PRISMS FOR CRITICAL VIEWINGS

The intellectually satisfying 'game' of playing with critical and cultural theories has very serious implications for scholarly discussions and research as critical, literary and cultural theories have converged in the late 20th century. They provide a rich prism through which to view the many facets of the knowledge. The major way these theories are utilised is to show how you can 'read' and 'write' each situation and person in life, including self, as a text and also how you can enter into dialogue about this. Thus, 'textuality' and 'discourse' have a new meaning in the late 20th/early 21st centuries. These words and their correlative underlying concepts no longer refer to publications, the visual and the lived experience (etc) that clarify and reveal social, personal and cultural givens: They indicate that every aspect of human existence is open to problematisation, to re-thinking. They indicate that there is no 'norm', only a variety of texts and discourses and a variety of ways of writing/producing and reading/interpreting them. Some critics see this notion as destructive, others as mere relativism. There is a great deal of resistance to many of these theories as there is to any attempts to apply them to the discrete areas of knowledge in which many academics

and thinkers feel comfortable, derive their status and even their living and to which they are committed as gatekeepers of their knowledge areas. By their very nature, such critical and cultural theories are disruptive to the accepted. Such theories as postcolonial theory give voice to repressed non-western colonised subordinates. Others that I discuss in this paper open up possibilities for new critical understandings.

These theories have not just arisen as a result of an idiosyncratic or even mischievous intellectual debate that is essentially selfish and sterile, however. They are a response to many of the imponderables that have affected humans since industrialisation, the growth of capitalism, World War 2 and European decolonisation. They have become particularly apposite since the introduction of popular and mass media and the new electronic communications technologies and their growth in the 21st century. Such theories enable us to take a different slant upon a given meaning and hence open up new possibilities and ways of viewing ourselves and our cultures.

It is very useful to practice applying theories to a given example rather than the other way round. This enables us to look at any mediated experience and then 'read against' it by utilising a critical theory. The process gives life to theory itself, showing it to be useful for social understanding and change rather than an abstruse positioning of over-clever academics and intellectuals.

This leads us to interrogating complex cultural constructions through applying critical and cultural Theories. Once we see that we can apply theories to our experiences, we begin to understand the rich complexity of identifying and then problematising the 'givens', 'norms', or the 'natural'. It also becomes clear that 'reading *against* the cultural text' is not just a theoretical or academic activity. It enhances our culture because it opens up space within the expected, anticipated, authoritative and authoritarian for the new, the unexpected, the personal and the immediate.
It is not too hard to see that such problematisation of the 'given' acts against centralised decision making and the empowerment of the few over the many in a similar manner to the shoring up Nazi Germany under Hitler and his minions and the USSR under Stalin and the nomenkultur. It is more difficult to see that the subtext of our own apparently democratic political, judicial and cultural activities can also be problematised, particularly in relation to the activities of the communications media and to the definition of scholarship.

When we take cultural norms for granted, we are blind to the ways in that they act to empower one group over another or to enact one series of behaviours and activities as 'natural' thereby marginalising as 'unnatural' all who are different from them. The goal of identifying, examining and critiquing cultural metanarratives is to bring theories closer to the complexity of real-life situations so that we can understand social practice in terms of theories that enable us to see more deeply the complex issues in cultural textuality and discourse.

Broadly, critical and cultural theories look at the culture in which we operate and attempt to critique it from an exterior position. Clearly, this is difficult, as we are immersed in that culture as well as formed by it. Thus, every act based on critical and cultural theory is one that calls for us to move beyond 'givens' or 'social metanarratives' in our application of critical and cultural theories. Critical theory helps us, then, to look at what we have taken for granted in our thinking and actions and to scrutinise them using other prisms to highlight them in different ways.

The purpose of this is to illuminate our thinking and to enable us to move beyond the restraints of 'cultural imperatives'. Such 'cultural imperatives' dominate accepted ways or producing or even recognising knowledge. For example, since the Enlightenment scientific methods of thinking have been accepted as more 'real knowledge' than other modes of enquiry. This means that only certain modes of knowing became accepted as 'important'. Within knowledge domains, there has been an emphasis upon the certainties that developed during the Enlightenment, particularly in regard to scientific methodologies. Such Enlightenment thinking based upon the well-known Cartesian binary 'I think therefore I am' (cogito ergo sum), emphasised research as based upon replicable quantitative methodologies.

This metanarrative has been challenged since the middle of the 20th century and today many 'qualitative' ways of doing research are accepted as well as the scientific 'quantitative' modes, and many researchers use aspects of both. Despite this, there remains echoes of dominance of

scientific methodologies, and many more creative ways of knowing that may come from feminists, non-euroamerican knowledge processes or even the arts generally have found opposition in seats of learning.

Critical and cultural theories enable us to value multiple ways of producing knowledge. In his discussion of the essentially political and active nature of this critical view of culture, Dwight Conquergood says that: 'Critical Theory is not a unitary concept. It resembles a loose coalition of interests more than a united front…Critical Theory is committed to unveiling the political stakes that anchor critical practices-research and scholarly practices no less than the everyday' [6].

Critical theories act to introduce us to the broad nature of reading against the givens of the culture through various prisms. In his discussions of the idea and practice of culture, Terry Eagleton, academic, literary and cultural critic and Marxist theorist says of the very word 'culture' that it is replete with tension between the lived, the natural and the socially imposed [7]. He proposes that the 'word 'culture', which is supposed to designate a kind of society, is in fact 'a normative way of imagining that society' [7]. Thus it gives us an unconscious template of how we are involved in a way of life so as to enable us to believe that we exist at all. It is: 'The taken-for-granted beliefs and predelictions which must be dimly present for us to be able to act at all' [7]. In his study of the rise of English and the teaching of English and English Literature, Eagleton shows us the ways in which it contributed to the rise of a dominant ideology [8]. Such ideologies are the unspoken force of culture, and are difficult for us to identify much less critique to produce further insights that add to knowledge.

As Gaytari Spivak says, 'meaning/knowledge intersects power' [9].

3. PRACTICE LED/BASED RESEARCH

Practice Led/Based Research (PL/BR) is an overarching term that describes the many ways in which we can bring practice into the academic knowledge domain. PL/BR is a challenge to traditional research practices and paradigms. There are many opportunities offered the academy through seeing PL/BR as an alternative as well as a traditional pathway into academic knowledge and credentials. These include bridging the gap between theory and practice by

bringing postmodernist theories of textuality and discourse to life as academic practice, as well as theory, thus showing dynamic relationships between theory and practice and galvanising what could become moribund practices of traditional critical analyses models arising from the natural sciences standing alone as academic insights into practice. It enables practitioners to develop further insights and extensions of knowledge about their own practices and to place them within the academy. In doing so, it moves the production of knowledge from a narrow research-based concept dominated by natural sciences models to models more appropriate for a wider range of major contributions to knowledge. This encourages deeper and broader concepts of knowledge and enriches the range of activities developed within the academic structures of the university. This enables candidates from demographics that are not readily recognised by university models of knowledge to credential cultural knowledge practices such as narrativity or cultural status/awareness and knowledge. It thus bridges the Cartesian gap and shows that practice can lead the research rather than being its subject.

Practice-led/based research is a pathway by which practitioners may enter the academy. It is also a challenge to the academy to accept such 'uncredentialled' practice as knowledge. Creative projects show how practitioners learn about their 'doing', develop high-level skills in relationship to what they are 'doing', undertake their practice, place their practice in the public arena for consideration by their peers as well as other experts in their field, and are open to public critiques of their work from academic and other experts who may not be practitioners in their field. Furthermore, research arising from practice maybring another dimension to practice without acting to place or displace it as a binary opposition of 'practice' and 'research'. Such PL/BR does not act as academic justification for the creative work, rather, practice and theory 'talk to one another'.

I have named this 'a dynamic way to knowledge' because it:

- Brings practice into the academic domain;
- Recognises non western ways of knowing;
- Values practice alongside academic insights into that practice and academic debates about it;
- Does not act to validate practice through traditional academic research models;

- Enables practice to take a robust and lively position as knowledge in itself;
- Enriches the traditional knowledge domains;
- Bridges the Cartesian binary of practice and theory;
- Does not demand that traditional natural-science academic research models be skewed into models for research arising from practice;
- Broadens the ways in which a university can fulfil its duty to provide credentials;
- Provides pathways into credentialed learning that might not otherwise be available to certain demographics; and
- Enables scholars whose expertise arises from different cultural knowledges and insights as well as narrative methods of learning (such as Australian Indigenous peoples) to bring that expertise into the university domain and the academy.

There is no single model of Practice Led/Based Research: Rather the term is an umbrella term indicating that the practice leads the research rather than being announced as merely the subject of it. The practitioner has her or his own ways of working. They are usually very creative people who need to work in their own ways on their practice, and this is often quite alone.

The Practice Led/based Research model is suited to the Arts and Social Sciences for many reasons. For me, the most important is that it addresses the limits the Cartesian binary places upon research models and practices in the Arts and Social Sciences. The Cartesian binary that underpinned the Enlightenment has resulted in some wonderful advances in knowledge that have established the quantitative model espoused by the natural sciences. At the same time, it set the scene for the qualitative vs. quantitative debate that has overshadowed non-traditional modes of enquiry. Rather than 'cogito ergo sum' that sets reason above all other forms of human enquiry and knowledge, the 21st century, following the postmodernist dispersal of paradigmatic thought, has begun to accept alternative ways of knowing. These draw together multiple ways of thought, enquiry, research, theory and practice.

For example, in her discussions of the need to readdress and essentially redress the Cartesian binary, Mary Midgely contends that: '…All reasoning is powered by feeling and all serious feeling has some reasoning as its skeleton.

Thought and feeling are not opponents, any more than shape and size'. [3]. Midgely sees traditional research based on the natural sciences as one of the myths that we live by that produce '…patterns of thought that are really useful in one age [that] can make serious trouble in the next one' [3]. In this sense, traditional research constructs proclaim themselves as logical and reasonable within a given framework and then establish, de facto, that framework as the 'norm' by which all other research is judged.

In PL/BR, unlike traditional research protocols and traditional thetic demands, practice LEADS the research, hence the scholar articulates the research 'question' in an emergent way so that trajectories develop provisionally and indeterminacy is permissible. For example, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner refer to: 'Personal narratives…lived experiences, critical autobiography…reflexive ethnography …ethnographic autobiography …autobiographical ethnography, personal sociology…autoanthropology' [10]. Moreover, surely it is a central concept of PL/BR that the individual experiences of the practitioner are able to be seen as knowledge and to lead the scholarly conversation forward regarding the intersection between the subjective self as practitioner and the subjective self as researcher? For example, Nicholas Holt states of autoethnography that it produces texts that are:

> …usually written in the first person and feature dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture…authors use their own experiences in a culture reflexively to look more deeply at self-other interactions [11].

Such personalized academic authorship may be described as a subjective academic narrative wherein the author is not silent has not gone unchallenged just as/because it challenges more traditional academic modes of discourse. The self as data, then, has become a more recognised and accepted methodology in academe, even though there is still vigorous debate about its academic veracity and standing.

4. ACTOR NETWORK THEORY

A fascinating theory that is very applicable to studies of this communication age is actor network theory (ANT) that is concerned with the ways in which human activities inevitably involve

a large number on non-human actors. ANT, otherwise known as the sociology of translation, rejects the idea that 'social relations' are independent of the material and natural world. It brings multitudinous non-human influences into our research frame that Bruno Latour calls 'the missing masses' [12]. Andrea Whittle and Andre Spicer relate ANT to discourse on environmental discourse about '…the physical and spiritual connectedness of all human beings in a world of finite resources' [13]. ANT is also central to contemporary debates about the interactions between people and technology.

Latour's ANT directed researchers to the importance of open-minded observations; of recognition of the biases of their own research perspectives; and of recognition of the enactors' observations and ideas as well as their own [14]. Tommaso Venturini describes ANT as a 'cartography of controversies', by which he means that ANT is complex and ever-changing: 'The cartography of controversies was developed largely because of the increasing difficulty on separating science and technology from other social domains' [14]. This brings to ANT a recognition of the complex interplay of research and the inadvisability of undertaking it to seek closure. This 'comes from the fear of shortcutting the debate before it had the time to deploy its full richness, of pushing an interpretation before all actors had a chance to express their own' [14].

ANT does not seek the certainty of closure but lives with uncertainty as the actors within a situation are responsible for the narrative: 'Scholars have no right to jump in and impose their solutions' [14]. In expressing their roles, all actors interpret the full richness of the discussion as 'issues are always too complicated, subtle and ever-changing to be sliced…'Latour recommended 4 steps: Perplexity; consultation; hierarchization and institution [15]. In doing so, this theory enables researchers to recognise that all social enquiry is complex and should not be rendered uncomplicated.

Social order is queried by ANT as it is explained through identifying connective networks between humans, technology and other objects. Networks operate to utilise some links and to ignore other possibilities that may then be seen as blanks or interstices. However, a net operates because of these as well as because of the connective lines: It also fails to represent other possible linkages. ANT implies interest in a connective structure rather than in its content, and in its

'…infrastructure of human action, not its dynamic content' [16].

ANT encourages scepticism towards given and metanarratives. In doing so it:

…provides the necessary critical distance' that enables researchers to discover the processes of attempts to uncover human interactions with technology rather than to seek closure [16]. [So it offers]'…a precise and non functionalist account of how actors become established as powerful through the stability of networks that pass through them. The actor (human or non-human) that is an obligatory passing-point in a network has power, and the more networks in which that is true, the more power that actor has. As a result, over time, the ability of that actor to act effectively on a larger scale becomes established [16].

Interestingly, Nick Couldry sees a weakness in ANT as it establishes the 'how' without clarifying the 'why'', hence there is no space for resistance or even reinterpretation by users and consumers. He recommends that we need to 'think about how people's cognitive and emotive frameworks are shaped by the underlying features of the networks in which they are situated' [16]. He describes power relationships as becoming so normalized ('hardwired') that they remain uncontested and hence increase in power, and recommends that we use ANT to move beyond a 'sociology of networks' to a 'sociology of action' using Emile Durkheim's 'notion of social categories' and Pierre Bordieu's of 'habitus'.

The socio-philosophical/technical network can become politically activated so as to critique the ways in which human activities alongside non-human entities can be fruitfully deconstructed [17] and hence more fully understood. According to Rafael Alcadipani and John Hassard, ANT offers multiple approaches for achieving critical insights and making critical evaluations about organizational structures as it 'suggests that things take form and acquire attributes as a consequence of their relations with others' [17]. Thus heterogeneity occurs through the differing performances of actors , 'the relational stance' wherein 'things are always 'assembled' into being rather than existing 'out there' independently, or being the product of exclusively human interpretation' [17]. As reality is shaped, traditional forms of representation can be seen as problematic and disputed as well as being shown to be networked in particular ways.

This leads to the recognition of the existence of multiple realities thus allowing for the possibilities of change rather than accepting and respecting the inevitability and domination of the status quo.

For Annemarie Mol, ANT plays with its own terms so as to encourage 'a set of sensitivities' that 'helps to tell cases, draw contrasts, articulate silent layers, turn questions upside down, focus on the unexpected, add to one's sensitivities, propose new terms, and shift stories from one context to another' [18]. This aspect of ANT she describes as not a theory but a way of generating, transforming, translating, enriching and even betraying. That is, it is a very adaptable way of critiquing and understanding the network of actors within a given situation. So much so that the endeavour to even describe it as a coherent theory is seen by Mol as counter-productive. Briefly, in redefining ANT, she describes the actor as going somewhere rather than being in a given space or place, network as being fluid and adaptable and theory tracing effects rather than seeking 'to draw the findings of various studies into an overarching explanatory framework.' For her, ANT 'takes the form of a repertoire…the point is not to fight until a single pattern holds, but to add on even more layers…' [18]. In this way, ANT '…helps to train researchers' perceptions and perceptiveness, senses and sensitivity' [18]. Her following definition of ANT as a theory, then, means a radical re-think of that term from overarching explanation to descriptive and critical adaptability. This is so as ANT reconsiders modes of social order as 'always a precarious achievement' [18] and is interested in the ways the order occurs rather than the end results.

5. COSMOPOLITAN AND TRANSNATIONAL THEORIES

Cosmopolitan theory and transnational theory offer prisms through which to identify and critique globalized institutional power structures. William Robinson claims that such theories as transnationalism and cosmopolitanism go beyond traditional imperialism and also new Imperialism. He describes transnationalism as being:

'…marked by a number of fundamental shifts in the capitalist system, among them: The rise of truly transnational capital and the integration of every country into a new global production and financial system; the appearance of a new transnational capitalist class, a class group grounded in new global markets and circuits of accumulation rather than national markets and circuits; the rise of transnational state apparatuses, and the appearance of novel relations of power and inequality in global society' [19].

This, he states, is not "ultraimperialism", nor "superimperialism", as it calls for a new critical lens through which to examine the global which is not related to national rivalries.

The impact of oppression, particularly as a cause for transnational migration, is a central concern of transnational theory that has 'drawn attention to the significance of attachments to people and places that transcend the confines of a particular nation [20]. Karen Olwig notes that migrants often have connections to more than one nation state, and 'this points to the slippery nature of the notion of a nation' [20], asserting that transnationalism differs from diaspora. For her, sociocultural issues of transnationalism are '…narrowed down to studies of constructions of national identity in relation to North American or European national ideologies' [20], whereas transnational systems offer global insights and possibilities that transcend narrow geographic considerations.

To be cosmopolitan is to be a 'citizen of the universe' [21]. Pheng Cheah investigates how, as a conceptual and theoretical prism, 'new' cosmopolitanism today offers insights into international media networks, global sociocultural diversity, international operations of capital, and underprivileged under-privileged migrant groups. For Gerard Delanty, cosmopolitanism theory relies upon the 'cosmopolitan imagination' [22]. He argues that it should now be recognised as '…a cultural medium of social transformation that is based on the principle of world openness, which is associated with the notion of global publics…created out of the encounter of the local with the global' [22]. He identifies as 'strong' cosmopolitanism 'as manifest in a fundamentally new political context brought about by globalization' [22]. Cosmopolitan citizenship and cultural rights do not reside in national citizenship but in global networks and mobility that together form relational hybrid identity and institutions. This relies upon an opening up of the question of the normative and a recognition that cosmopolitanism is not universalism but rather 'a post-universal cosmopolitanism is critical and dialogic, seeing as the goal alternative readings of history and the recognition of plurality rather

than the creation of universal order…' [22]. Delanty sees the tensions between the local and the global 'as constituting the basic animus of cosmopolitanism', whilst recognising a distinction between it and globalization. It is the global public who form the cosmopolitan, who act to shape the social process as 'a plural condition in numerous discourses' [22]. Understanding this, Delanty argues, relies upon self-problematization based upon the openness offered by the cosmopolitan imagination seeing that 'cultures are related rather than different' [22]. The transformative actions offered by cosmopolitan theory reside in both the local and the global being brought together in the individual's imaginative constructs.

Transnational theory offers a prism through which to identify and critique globalized institutional power structures. It can be seen in ecocritism that began with the local, but can act transnationally if, as Ursula Heise states, it acts to '…engage more fully with the insights of recent theories of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism' [23]. William Robinson claims that such theories go beyond traditional imperialism and also new Imperialism. He describes transnationalism as being:

 '…marked by a number of fundamental shifts in the capitalist system, among them: The rise of truly transnational capital and the integration of every country into a new global production and financial system; the appearance of a new transnational capitalist class (TCC), a class group grounded in new global markets and circuits of accumulation, rather than national markets and circuits; the rise of transnational state (TNS) apparatuses, and the appearance of novel relations of power and inequality in global society' [19].

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6. NARRATIVE THEORY AND NARRATIVE METHODOLOGY

The academic discourse that separates qualitative and quantitative methodologies is under revision across many subject areas within academic research and teaching. As the researcher's self is becoming more readily recognisable as an integral element of all research, the possibility of not mentioning "I" in research is under siege. This recognition of the self as data within the field of research indicates the movement within the academy to recognise that the traditional scholarly detachment is an imposed rather than real disinterested stance in which the research is not mentioned. This imposed scholarly stance of the disinterested researcher becomes more evident to us when we see it as what many scholars from Indigenous ways of knowing describe as continued eurowestern imperialism [9].

The postmodernist review of givens within the authority of the text means that scholars are aware of the evanescent nature of certainty within every model of knowledge, but most particularly within those areas most claiming to be producing and writing up researched knowledge from a position of authority. Roland Barthes's famous claim the 'the author as god is dead' is a significant element in building this understanding.

This has presented an on-going challenge to academics who consider their data and papers to be authoritative without understanding the many pressures on knowledge production from their cultural backgrounds, their areas of knowledge and even their age and gender. Just as the author is no longer the authoritative voice within any performance or text, so the reader comes from a particular place. Once the 'author as god is dead', there are many possible individual readings available to the reader. It is the presence of the self-conscious researcher that opens up these possible readings and interpretations within scholarship.

For many academics this has been troubling. Yet it also offers opportunities that others have grasped. Once academic writing can be understood as related to and made up of multiple ways of respecting various personal experiences, the presence of the self-conscious subjective self as researcher opens up the text to many possible readings: There is no 'one way'. Thus the academic life and academic writing and language

are now able to be seen as open, explorative and aware of their own transitory nature in the same way as any other form of written or lived discourse.

In her famous aphorism that she thinks with her viscera and feels with her brain, Barbara Myerhoff shows her concern with researchers making sense of themselves for themselves and hence for others [24]. By enabling and respecting self-reflection, this intrusion into scholarly discourse of the self acts to challenge 'givens' and cultural metanarratives. It highlights that 'the stories we tell about ourselves, the roles we play, the artifacts we construct, and the relationships we negotiate continually generate and revise who we are.' [24]. Academic discourse modes themselves are clearly a form of 'expertising' lived personal stories. Academic prose is readily identifiable as having a self-conscious writer as all writers leave traces of themselves in their reports, but also in their applications and data collections [25]. From the first identification of their research areas, academics invest themselves in their problem identification, data collection and literature reviews: they are far from disinterested [26].

The story of self within the research is a significant element of all research methods and theoretical prisms. Whilst it may well seem self-evident that the self is an intrinsic enactor and definer, and personally present in every aspect of research, this is not always, or even generally, accepted. The sciences, for example, have an established methodology that until quite recently assumed that a detached report containing only what appeared to be data observed under conditions that excluded the personal was not only possible, but was essential.

In an age that ascribes to what Mary Midgley [3] describes as the 'myth' of the impersonality of scientific knowledge that we thrive upon, it is apposite to remind ourselves that all research writing is in significant part 'the literature of self'. Midgely enables us to see that if we can accept this about science, it will allay the fears of many who see it as a dominant paternalistic ideology against which other research is measured and fails. This leads to a faulty binary based upon fear of dominant paternalistic quantitative methodologies. Midgely abjures us thus:

...people who fear science today are chiefly disturbed by the way in which these imperialistic ideologies import irrelevant,

inhuman standards into non-scientific aspects of life and lead people to neglect the relevant ones. Throughout the social sciences and often in the humanities too, distorted ideas of what it means to be 'scientific' and 'objective' still direct a great deal of life and of research [3].

However, even if there is the reality that scientific writing involves 'the literature of self', this is not how it is read by traditionalists. I am arguing that science is neither omnicompetent or ubiquitous: it is one narrative non-fiction amongst many. Angel Laureiro [27] discusses how the literature of self was one of the earliest forms of writing, how it contains the illusion of self-knowledge and how autobiographical truth is from oneself: it is neither external nor verifiable. It is about the unrecoverable but imaginable past, and'…no single discourse can be privileged in the unveiling of the multiplicities that conjoin to form the subject nor should any of the discourses be deemed fictional…' [27].

Whilst the self is always involved in academic work, the explicit description, analysis and interpretation of self is not a traditional element of research methodology: It has become so due to the advancement of the subjective self in the postmodernist moment. We may refer, for example, to Roland Barthes's assertion that 'the author as god is dead'; to Jacques Derrida's application of the 'readerly-writer' and to Deleuze and Guattari seeing the creeping fescue of the academic text rather than the root tree of knowledge.

Robert Bullough and Stefinee Pinnegar state that 'narrative research traditions are diverse and encompass methods developed in folklore, psychology, literature, history, anthropology and education. Differences arise in data collection, analysis and presentation among those approaches [26]. They then ask a very interesting and even provocative question: 'What, after all, makes a self-study worth reading?' I might add to that question another that is just as pertinent: 'what, after all, makes a self-study a significant contribution to academic knowledge?'

7. CONCLUSION

Narrative research contains dynamic possibilities. The strain caused by the apparent depersonalisation that is claimed as a significant element of quantitative methodologies is more clearly inappropriate for many qualitative

methodologies, although I believe it is inappropriate for both. However, the ethical questions presented in narratives that acknowledge their own narrativity are quite different from those that arise in narratives that assume a scientific methodology. How can scholarship address these questions? William Smythe and Maureen Murray say that 'true anonymity is a problematic requirement to meet whenever a person's story is presented and analysed as a whole and in detail' [28]. While they are considering the narratives of the subjects, it is also true of the storyteller. Indeed, who does own the story? For them:

> ...narrative discourse is structured more temporally than conceptually, concerns relations among particulars rather than abstract generalities, addresses the vicissitudes of human intentions and motivations and aims to be convincing more by virtue of its believability than in terms of its logical coherence or empirical testability…narrative accounts are told from multiple perspectives …narrative meaning is multiple as well [28].

Since the middle of the 20th century, then, methodologies have arisen that propose alternative models to the scientific model that underpins traditional quantitative research. Although much debate has occurred, and much movement has resulted, this old 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' debate/dilemma is still alive in relationship to ethics determinations, as we can see even from the form itself which is skewed to traditional quantitative research models. The story of self, however, inevitably involves others. The University is responsible for seeing that there is an ethics clearance even for one's own observations. For example, The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research issued by the Australian government in 2007 states that an ethics clearance must be sought for observation.

> Observation involves the researcher observing participant/s in their own environment, or in the environment being studied. Data collection through observation can be structured or unstructured, with the observer as a collaborative participant (participant observation) or external to the environment [29].

For the academy, then, who owns one's own story? Obviously not oneself alone: Inevitably,

the self as data involves those observed or relevant to one's own story. The self as data has a huge impact upon traditional ways of viewing research that Mary Midgely describes as 'conceptual monoculture' [3] and states that 'the right way to remedy the Cartesian split is not for one half of the world to swallow the other' [3].

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history.php?iid=817&id=21&aid=7063